ABSTRACT: The intensive modernisation occurring in Chinese cities has been described as “down with character”, however, there is an emergent tendency in which one finds some bottom-up campaigns opposing the mainstream of “the Generic City”. These spontaneous groups are expanding, especially in Shanghai, due to increasing overseas immigration and a regenerated multi-cultural consciousness that resists the predominant processes of stripping urban identity. This paper proposes that the arrival of overseas immigrants and the renaissance of *Hai Pai Culture* underpin the process of preserving and regenerating the Tianzifang. Foreigners’ strong appreciation of the place reverses the ideas of the local, coupled with the rise of the “Shanghai Bourgeoisie”, has meant a revival of *Hai Pai culture* which can be observed in some details of the Tianzifang creative quarter. It is concluded that there are three problems, over-commodification, lack of democratic planning processes for different interest groups and no well-organized system for overseas immigration.

KEYWORDS: *Hai Pai Culture* Renaissance, Regeneration, Historic Space, Immigration, Shanghai

1 INTRODUCTION

Intellectuals and the public in the West have been increasingly aware of arguments regarding “Orientalism” since Edward Said published his book *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978). Throughout discourses between the East and the West, or China and the West, several mediating features or opinions are significant, such as Roland Barthes, Barrie Shelton and Rem Koolhaas. Barthes (1970 in French, 1983) and Shelton (1999) described a developed and pleasant Asia through their research on Tokyo, and conversely, Koolhaas has, in more recent years, made closer observations on a developing, challenging, and not “so-pleasant” Asia, such as the Pearl River Delta (PRD) of China. In his viewpoint, contemporary cities in China, described as “the Generic City”, have no “history”, are “superficial”, “easy” and entirely instrumentalist or pragmatically geared for development (Koolhaas and Mau, 1995, p. 495-516, 957-971, 1239-1265).

It is a reality that cities in China are experiencing modernisation at its most intense, resulting in “down with character”, which means the identity derived from its history and context is stripped (Koolhaas and Mau, 1995, p. 1248), however, there is an emergent tendency in which one finds some spontaneous groups opposing the mainstream of “Generic”. These spontaneous groups are expanding, especially in Shanghai, due to increasing overseas immigration and a regenerated multi-cultural consciousness that resists the predominant processes stripping urban identity. This deserves closer observation.

Although there are many scholars discussing the urban regeneration of Shanghai, most of them focus merely on urban form, or the relationship between urban regeneration and creative industry. Very few of them have noticed overseas immigrants and their influences on the local culture as well as urban transformation.

This paper proposes that the arrival of overseas immigrants and the renaissance of *Hai Pai Culture* underpin the whole process of preserving and regenerating the Tianzifang as a creative quarter. Foreigners’ strong appreciation of the place counters the ideas of local residents and authorities. This coupled with the rise of “Shanghai Bourgeoisie”, has led to a revival of *Hai Pai Culture* in contemporary Shanghai. These two
impetuses work together in the Tianzifang, supporting the meeting and dialogue of west and east.

First of all, the paper defines Hai Pai Culture alongside a brief review of Shanghai’s colonial history. Secondly, the story of Tianzifang is described, including its early establishment and transformation processes, its primary features and the bottom-up preservation campaign from 1996. Thirdly, this paper documents two underlying impetuses, overseas immigrants and Hai Pai Culture renaissance, in the success of this campaign, reviewing some details after regeneration. Finally, three problems, over-commodification, lack of democratic planning processes for different interest groups and the necessity for a well-organized system for overseas immigration, are drawn as conclusions.

2 HAI PAI: THE CULTURE OF SHANGHAI STYLE

In many senses, Shanghai is not a typical Chinese city. Some Asian cities, like Shanghai or Hong Kong, act as both the lens through which eastern and the western societies observe each other, and the medium through which the East meets the West. But, what makes them so different? Where does this character derive from? Looking into its colonial historic context can help us to understand.

2.1 The Colonial Era (1843-1943)

“Colonisation” is a term which the Chinese and the Shanghainese are ashamed of and try to avoid. The local literature of this era contains many narratives about weakness, tragedy and humiliation. Few focus on discussing the other side, such as the positive influences of western civilization on the local culture and society.

Before colonisation, Shanghai was a small fishing village. It was compelled to open up to foreign trade by the Nanjing Treaty in 1843, due to its special geographic location at the mouth of Yangtze River. As a result of unequal treaties, small enclaves formed known as concessions, or as “countries within the city”, ruled by foreign powers. In Shanghai, these extraterritorial zones kept expanding finally covering approximately 32.6sqkm by 1914 (See Figure 1), including 22.5sqkm for The International Concession (shared by the British and Americans) and 10.1sqkm for The French Concession (independent from the former one since 1862) (Governmental Office of Shanghai Chorography, 2009).

![Figure 1](DATA SOURCE: GOVERNMENTAL OFFICE OF SHANGHAI CHOROGRAPHY (2009))

It is in these foreign settlements that the Chinese first realised the power of modernisation and industrialisation. As described by Jianfei Zhu, in those concessions, “modern urban facilities (gas, electricity, water), modern urban construction (roads, bridges, waterfronts), modern building types for public use (railway stations, department stores, hotels, banks), modern building technologies” (Zhu, 2009, p. 43) were largely introduced and adopted in association with the “Western classical and historicist styles” (Zhu, 2009, p. 44). However, there was considerable lag in these practices being taken up in urban areas governed by the Chinese adjacent to these concessions. Accordingly, the concessions grew larger and surpassed the Chinese districts in total area and by 1914, increasingly became the center of the city as whole (Zhu, 2009, p. 43).

In association with the provision of modern urban facilities, architecture, and construction, the local
residential style was also influenced. The French Concession was regarded as the best living place in Shanghai including terraced and detached Western-style houses, as well as a Chinese-English hybrid, the *Lilong* house manifest in various styles. For the case of this research, Tianzifang Block was previously located in this area and belongs to the *Lilong* style.

2.2 **International and Domestic Immigrants**

Even though the modernisation process of turning Shanghai into a primary colonial-international city seemed swift and chaotic, it attracted a large number of international immigrants mainly from Britain, France, America, Japan, Germany and Russia. According to the statistics of Governmental Office of Shanghai Chorography, the number of international immigrants reached a peak of nearly 150,000 (Governmental Office of Shanghai Chorography, 2009) (See Figure 2).

Meanwhile, frequent wars occurred during this period, forcing farmers to leave their lands to seek survival in Shanghai (See Figure 3). Three intensive domestic immigration periods occurred, which were ① the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement (1855-1865), during which the population of Shanghai increased by 110,000 people; ② World War II (especially the period of 1937-1941), in which the incremental number was 780,000; and ③ the War of Liberation (1945-1949), when 2.08 million people streamed into the city. The majority of these domestic immigrants were from Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Province with the minority being from Fujian and Guangdong Province (Governmental Office of Shanghai Chorography, 2009).

Due to the privilege offered by concessions, people in the concessions did not suffer the direct effect of wars. Millions of Chinese witnessed the fact that The French Concession provided refuge to them as humanitarian care. When Shanghai Walled Town was razed to the ground by Japanese Air Force bombing, the French Concession saved many Chinese by allowing them to pass through the gates between the concession and the walled town. 8.25 million Chinese settled in The French Concession during the Anti-Japanese War. This history also gave the older generation of Shanghainese a strong appreciation of the West.

2.3 **Hai Pai Culture: The Mix of West and East**

*Hai Pai Culture*, at the root of Shanghai’s energy and charm, came from the 1920s and 1930s during ‘Old the golden time of Shanghai’. Before 1843, Shanghai culture was drawn mainly from the ancient kingdoms of Wu and Yue, from the Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces. After its opening, industrialisation, the introduction of science and technology, the arrival of modern professionals, as well as the development of a modern public society, all occurred with growing strength despite wars and interruptions (Zhu, 2009, p. 43). Thus *Hai Pai Culture*, the combination of Chinese and Western cultures, was gradually shaped.

The term *Hai Pai* (literally “Shanghai style”) was coined by a group of Beijing writers in 1920 to criticize some Shanghai scholars and styles of writing for their admiration of money and western culture (Xu, 2009). *Hai Pai* was described as “rebellious” while its opposite *Jing Pai* (literally “Beijing style”) is traditional. They represent two opposing kinds of Chinese cultures. As written by Cao Juren in the article *Jing Pai and Hai Pai in the 1920s*, “Jing Pai is like a fair lady while *Hai Pai* is like a modern babe” (Xu, 2009).

However, life in treaty ports and foreign concessions was not easy, as the Chinese had to learn to
understand, to adapt, and to train in Western ways (Ng, 2002, p. 193). Nevertheless, in thriving modern Shanghai, a budding “Chinese Bourgeoisie” emerged, including Chinese industrialists, capitalist, bankers, small business owners, professionals, intellectuals, students and revolutionary activists. They lived along with foreigners in the concessions and elsewhere. Many of them played different roles, were engaged in daily work with Westerners, and were allied with explosive changing ideological positions (Zhu, 2009, p. 44). They learnt from Westerners about matters ranging from manners to technology, and combined them with the ancient cultures of the Yangtze River. This vibrant colonial-cosmopolitan urban culture was clearly visible (Zhu, 2009, p. 44) (See Figure 4).

Hai Pai Culture is understood to be open and generous. In contemporary terms, it would be described as a kind of “multicultural”, sometimes exotic culture. Taking Shanghai fashion as an example, Qi Pao, alternatively called Cheong-sam was the most popular dress at that time. Those who have seen Wong Karwai’s movie, In the Mood for Love, would have been impressed by this elegant fashion. For many, the various new styles of Qi Pao were a symbol of modern Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s. The best example illustrating Hai Pai Culture as the combination of Chinese and the western cultures is the Shanghai Chinese shortening of Qi Pao in imitation of the western skirts in vogue at that time (See Figure 5) (Xu, 2009).

Hai Pai Culture is also feminine, beautiful and ornamental, likely derived from the ancient cultures of Yangtze River. Literature, painting and cinema were the primary spheres in which these characters were represented. A group of scholars in Shanghai art and literary circles spontaneously organized “Yuanyang Hudie Pai”, literally “the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly Genre” of popular romance in the early 1900s. This style of writers, such as Zhang Henshui and Qin Shou’ou, entertained the audience with amusing and light literature. “Yue Fen Pai” (literally calendar) or poster advertisement with pictures of pretty girls (See Figure 6) were very popular due to their aesthetic and commercial values, which semiotically showed how the traditional Chinese culture was transformed by western culture.

After 1949, however, Hai Pai Culture began to be forgotten when people throughout the country were required to study Mao’s writing and Soviet Russian ideas (Zhu, 2009, p. 75). Hai Pai was regarded as representative of the “bourgeois”, the opposite of “proletarian”.

3 THE STORY OF TIANZIFANG

3.1 Origins

Our story has at least three beginnings: in the metropolitan location, in its initial establishment, and in its early transformation process. Tianzifang is an historic precinct of 7.2ha located south of the Shanghai city center within a 3km radius of the Shanghai commercial center. It is defined by four city roads, namely Middle Jianguo Road (northern boundary), Taikang Road (southern), Second Ruijin Road (western) and Sinan Road (eastern). Along the Middle Jianguo Road two minutes walk east is The Bridge 8 Creative Cluster.

Tianzifang dates from the 1900s when The French Concession expanded its territory for the third time (See Figure 1). This is our second beginning. There were three stages to build up the block: ① its western and northern boundaries, Second Ruijin Road and Middle Jianguo Road, were completed by 1902; ② the eastern boundary, Sinan Road was finished by 1914; and ③ finally the southern boundary, Taikang Road...
was built up by 1926.

Our third beginning is the urban transformation process. In order to accommodate more immigrants moving into The French Concession, the precinct was built for residential purposes initially, adopting the style of Lilong, a mix of western and eastern architectural forms. From the 1930s to 1940s, industrialisation fuelled a long boom in Shanghai whereby the northern part of Suzhou Creek was occupied by the Japanese Army during World War II. It became difficult to find suitable industrial sites along the Huangpu River, which were occupied by large foreign and domestic manufacturing complexes, such as the Jiangnan Shipyard. Tianzifang provided affordable places for small capitalists. Accordingly, by 1947, small firms, craft workshops and factories were established there. The frontages of the southern Taikang Road were occupied by small business owners and craftsmen while bigger industrialists built up new plants with large spaces.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the urban form of the Tianzifang remained stable although the factories were state-owned, after socialisation in the 1950s. Things began to change dramatically, after China’s move from a Marxist-Leninist vanguard to the current position of a socialist market economy. There were numerous moments of transition and crisis, including the bankruptcy and closing down of factories in the Tianzifang and its surroundings. Since then, nearly 20,000sqm of the former factory sites in the Tianzifang were leased to small individual businesses, such as hair salons, dressmakers or snack shops.

In the late 1990s, the real estate business was opened to the market, which negatively impacted the area surrounding Tianzifang. High-rise residential and mixed use towers were built up around the precinct, such as Sinan New Garden, two 33-storey apartment towers, on the corner of Taikang Road and Sinan Road. The urban fabric and historic spaces of the Tianzifang became threatened by three factors: ① local government’s initiative to clear up the slums and update old urban spaces; ② local residents’ desire to leave the place and to move to new modern life due to the poor condition of building stock and infrastructure; and ③ external developer’s motivation to redevelop this area for profit.

3.2 Features

According to a survey of historic spaces, there were more than 9,000 examples of Lilong styled residences, which occupied 65% of the total found in Old Shanghai (China Culture.org, 2009). The questions then are, why we should preserve the Tianzifang, and what features make it distinct and valuable? From reviewing relevant literature, Tianzifang’s vibrancy has been derived from its diverse population, building style, and functions.

3.2.1 Historic Space for the Early Creativity and Art

The name “Tianzifang” is derived from an ancient painter. The word “Fang” means streets or lanes with storefronts and workshops, especially for craftsmen, artists or other skilled people. Here, Tianzifang refers to a gathering place for painters, writers, artists and intellectuals. Tianzifang was the site of Xinhua Art College established in 1937. Consequently, Chinese painters, Western painters, musicians, educators and students gathered here, which made the precinct more artistic, vivid and attractive. Furthermore, some painters and educators, such as Yachen Wang, resided in Tianzifang. Their houses, as well as surrounding public spaces, such as tea house or cafés, facilitated those artists and students to discuss, debate and engage in pioneering art and social movements.

3.2.2 Lilong Styled Fabric, Hybrid and Diverse Houses

From the 1860s, numerous immigrants moved into The French Concession sheltering from wars. In order to accommodate these people, a new high density residential style was studied by architects, named Lilong (literally “lane”). This style is hybrid, a combination of the western terraced house or row house and the eastern three-courtyard house. These narrow row houses with 3 or 4 courtyards inside, normally 2 or 3 storey’s, were aligned along lanes within blocks. This structure formed the fine scaled urban fabric of Old Shanghai. Lilong style is another symbol of Shanghai, another example to represent its Hai Pai Culture.

This style had been developed into three types by 1930s: ① the standard Lilong, named “Shikumen” (literally “black door with stone frame”), the simplest and oldest style; ② New Styled Lilong, with more western decorations on the façade; and ③ Garden Lilong or Apartment Lilong, having broader space with
garden or green space inside. The interesting issue is that all these three Lilong styles can be found in the
Tianzifang, which makes it more representative and valuable (Research Center of Historic Conservation and
Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute (TJUPDI), 2005) (See Figure 8).

3.3.3 Mixed Functions
Tianzifang was mixed use, containing residential, educational and industrial uses. There were
approximately 10 small firms and 17 bigger factories. The main industrial types were textile, knitting, silk
and leather, stationery, condiments and chemical products (Research Center of Historic Conservation and
Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute (TJUPDI), 2005).

These industrial land uses occupied the central area and separated Tianzifang into three parts. New
Styled Lilong and Garden Lilong residence were on the western side while standard style houses were on
the east. The land use structure of Tianzifang from east to west was clear and can be described as “new style
residential”—“industrial”—“old style residential” (See Figure 9).

3.3 A Bottom-up Conservation Campaign
The campaign to “Save the Tianzifang” was promoted by several artists with the experience of overseas
study or living. Initially, Meisen Wu, the chief consultant and planner of Tianzifang, invited Yifei Chen, a
painter and a film director famous for describing Old Shanghai, to visit the site. Yifei was attracted by vast
spaces of abandoned plants and chose unit A, No.2 of Lane 210 to set up his sculpture studio immediately.
Later, other artists, Dongqiang Er, Qieyin Wang and etc, joined the team to promote the idea of Tianzifang
as a creative and artistic quarter like SoHo in New York—not a slum to be demolished. They were concerned
for both Shanghai’s historic preservation and its industrial restructure. Since Yifei set up his other three
studios—pottery, oil painting and photography—in the Tianzifang, more media intensified the campaign.
Visitors, overseas friends, and professionals were attracted by this burgeoning reputation. The creative class
entered the precinct gradually. They began to rent spaces from locals and set up business – their positive
attitudes helped change local opinion, and realize the areas values.

This bottom-up process attracted the attention of the local authority. In 1999, the authority’s director
prepared a strategy to preserve the quarter and retrofit it for cultural and creative industry. An administrative
committee was established. Tianzifang was established as one of the eighteen culture and creative clusters in
Shanghai in 2002, by which time there were 83 artistic shops, exhibition spaces and studios in the area. As
per the latest statistics, 132 firms from 18 countries are located in this precinct, which provide 773 positions
for employment with a considerable annual turnover of more than 70million RBM. Nearly 100 foreign artists
or professional work there.

4 TWO UNDERLYING IMPETUSES
The existing literature discusses at length the negative influence of globalisation on local identities that
lead to cities without history (Koolhaas and Mau, 1995, p. 1248-1264). However, in the case of Tianzifang,
this argument needs to be reviewed. In some senses, “the Generic City” is the desire of the locals. Their
admiration of modernisation and the thirst for ‘modern life’ allow unrestricted development by sacrificing
history, character, and place memory.

The arrival of overseas immigrants and the renaissance of *Hai Pai Culture* underpinned the entire process of preserving and retrofitting the Tianzifang through the idea of a creative quarter. Foreigners’ strong appreciation of the place reversed the ideas of local residents and the local authority. This, coupled with the rise of “Chinese Bourgeoisie”, meant a revival of *Hai Pai Culture* in contemporary Shanghai. These two impetuses worked together in the Tianzifang, supporting the meeting and dialogue of west and east (See Figure 10).

### 4.1 A New Round of Overseas Immigration

From the late 1990s, Chinese society enjoyed generally stable conditions with strong economic growth (Zhu, 2009, p. 137) after experiencing pain from market reforms over the last two decades. Numerous and spectacular projects are being built on the “tabula rasa”, which attracts the western world to seek the potential of easier and more affordable transportation and communication.

The number of foreigners holding working visas reached 180,000 by 2006, which is double that of 2003, according to the 2006 Annual Report of Labour and Social Security. The top city for immigration is Shanghai with 54,608 foreigners while the second place goes to Beijing with 30,484 persons. In Shanghai, these foreigners come from more than 130 countries, including 28.6% are Japanese, 12.3% American and 8.9% Korean (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2006). However, it should be understood that those foreigners who work in China with travel visas, and other immigrants from Hong Kong and Macau with strong western cultural backgrounds, have not been calculated in this report. It is not clear how many exactly how many immigrants live in Shanghai or China, but it is expected to be greater than these numbers. It is also worth considering the character of these new immigrants. In term of position, 25.4% work as executives, 6.1% as high-tech staff and 3.1% as representatives of foreign business. As for occupation, the majority work in the service sector, such as rental and business, communication and software design. Furthermore, most have high degrees, 69.4% of them having bachelor and 16.4% having master degree (Guangzhou Daily Yang Cheng Wan Bao, 2007). These percentages are greater than the local.

As per the survey by Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute (TJUPDI), foreign cultural and art firms in Tianzifang come from the UK, France, USA, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, Germany, Hong Kong and Taiwan with a wide range of businesses including design, artist, pottery, photography, galleries, painting studios, antique shops and relevant consultation services. They provide a variety of exhibitions, from painting to sculpture, to music salons, individual concerts or jazz cafés, which attract more external visitors and consumers.

The two founders of the Tianzifang creative quarter, Yifei Chen and Dongqiang Er, have both experienced living abroad for many years, which gives them a good understanding of both eastern and western cultures. From the process of industrialisation and de-industrialisation in the west, the values of the urban historic spaces and methods to regenerate a city center in decline have been learnt. As proclaimed by Dongqiang “I can not endure these old houses disappearing in front of me” (Pan, 2008), what they introduce to the place is not only works and business but also a new ideology after their return from the west in 1990s.
Furthermore, new foreigners also play a significant role in Tianzifang, as described by Meisen Wu in an interview:
“Initially, very few Chinese firms were interested in these abandoned plants…but one of my foreign friends held a party here and invited his nearly 100 friends. To my surprise, those plants were leased shortly after that night. These Chinese historic environments, lower rental price and broad spaces are all appreciated by foreign artists…later, there is a social circle formed in Tianzifang” (Sky of Real Estate Di Chan Xing Kong, 2007).

4.2 Renaissance of Hai Pai Culture

The new generation of “Shanghai Bourgeoisie” is rising, and includes white collar workers, business owners, professionals, intellectuals, artists and college students, with a high educational or overseas study background, abundant incomes, busy schedules and international perspectives. They demand an elegant life and exciting working environments with strong identity, taste, good quality and fashion.

Accordingly, this emergent “Shanghai Bourgeoisie” is keen to get back its own cultural identity. With the arrival of new overseas immigrants, the lost Hai Pai Culture is again in vogue. The best example is the performance of “Hai Pai Talk Show”. The performer, Libo Zhou, has become a cultural icon of Shanghai. Zhou focuses on the transformation process of Shanghai, including dressing, eating, dwelling and traveling, with the dialect of Shanghai. The vivid stories of the old days are so attractive that tickets are sold out shortly after issue. As proposed by Xiaolong Shen, a Chinese literature professor of Fudan University, a local recognition of Hai Pai Culture is evident from the popularity of the talk show (Gong and Shen, 2009), which suggests the lost Hai Pai Culture is in the progress of resurgence.

Some blocks surrounding the Tianzifang were developed as apartments and mixed use offices, which are the living and working places for some “Shanghai Bourgeoisie”. They are popular, with high prices due to the proximity of the city center. Moreover, 200m from the Tianzifang, The Bridge 8 is another creative cluster with modern styled architectural features, where architects, digital, and graphic designers gather. Those two groups of “Shanghai Bourgeoisie” visit the Tianzifang frequently, enjoying a lazy coffee or afternoon tea in the lane of the Tianzifang with Hai Pai milieu (See Figure 11).

5 AS A CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC QUARTER

5.1 Retrofitted from Plant to Art Studio

The first area targeted for lease was Lane 210 where the industrial plants with large spaces, good floor heights, and cheap rental prices were abandoned. These factories were redesigned and retrofitted carefully and gradually by artists. Yifei Art Studio keeps the original and dignified architectural features. A fireplace in the living room is the centerpiece. Dongqiang’s photographic studio is designed to trace the memory of industrial revolution. The hoist on the second floor is more than a decoration. It is workable. The roof was changed into semi-transparent material for more natural light, also exploring the nature of its early industrial past (See Figure 12).

5.2 Chaotic Vitality

As a result of its good reputation, more firms entered the area. There are no restrictions to as to what kind of creative activities are acceptable. This is extremely liberating. Chinese landscape painting galleries, modern art galleries, pioneer photography, contemporary design and graffiti have no conflict here. Later, some fashion shops, craft shops, musical instrument shops, cafés, bars and restaurants were also set up. People are not displeased to see these different groups together. Almost everything is spontaneous and it is difficult see an underlying logic to this layout. In Berrie Shelton’s words, it is chaotic, but vital (Shelton, 1999).
5.3 Public Realm in Linear Space

The same as a normal Lilong, the lanes in the Tianzifang are zigzagged, connected and very narrow: ① 3.10m-4.74m wide in Lane 210; ② 3.10m-4.24m wide in Lane 248; and ③ 2.68m-3.13m for wider lanes and 1.46m-2.10m for narrow ones in Lane 274 (Research Center of Historic Conservation and Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute (TJUPDI), 2005). Although a few tiny plazas are provided at the gate or the joint of two main lanes, these linear spaces are used mainly for social purpose in Shanghai. Differing from the western public realm, linear public spaces are for small group gossip rather than large group gatherings. Local residents are accustomed to chat, play chess or poker at the corner of two lanes, or along these linear spaces. The positive aspect of this urban form, is its ability to make people closer. The older generations of Shanghai residents generally miss this close community and neighbourhood interaction. Today, these linear spaces are still used for public functions. Tables with chairs, western or Chinese style, are served at the corner or along the lanes to provide places for eating and communication (See Figure 14-15).

5.4 Signage Forest

Going through the Tianzifang, it is easy to be baffled by the variety of signage. They are displayed with titles in English, Japanese, simplified Chinese, and traditional Chinese (See Figure 16). Some of them are well designed, while some are rough. It is interesting to see a group of partly western people sitting below a sign of a traditional Chinese beauty (See Figure 11). They compete with each other individually while the group as a whole expresses a symbolic meaning of mixture, openness and diversity.

6 CRITIQUE AS CONCLUSION

The transformation of Tianzifang is a story of a bottom-up preservation campaign, demographic change, local cultural renaissance, and urban design transformations. In many ways, this process meets the criteria of preserving and regenerating historic spaces. It is also successful from an economic perspective. However, there was little concern about preventing over-commodification, no democratic process to solve the conflicts between different interest groups and no well-organized system for overseas immigration.
6.1 Over Commodified?

The openness policy is in all probability good for fostering the creative industry. However, is it good if the area opens totally to all business? Does it have negative influence on the creative milieu if it provides excessive commercial functions? There have been approximate 85 retail tenants (52 for food and beverage, 33 for fashion) in Tianzifang till now, with the noise causing complaints from locals. Furthermore, over-commodification will affect the relaxing and artistic atmosphere which is a vital feature of the Tianzifang. Lastly, its reputation as a creative industry quarter is threatened if people regard it as a commercial or tourism ‘hot spot’.

6.2 Democratic Planning, How Far?

Several groups with different interests exist in the Tianzifang, including local residents, the creative class, commercial owners, the administrative committee, and outside visitors. The administrative committee of 15 members has been established since 1999 under the leadership of Luwan District and Dapuqiao Community. The committee acts as a medium between local residents and the creative class or commercial owners. They lease state-owned plants to firms and help them rent private-owned spaces which belong to local residents. The committee also invites planners and takes care of providing infrastructure.

The planning of Tianzifang should consider more carefully mediating the conflict of interests among different groups, requiring a wide range of public participation while getting the payment from the committee. Planners need to build up close communication with these groups, rather than just imposing their professional judgments on the locals. It has been four years since the plan of Tianzifang was made, however, the conflict situation between residents and business owners has only deteriorated.

6.3 Negative Municipal Attitude to Overseas Immigration

Finally, back to the demographic change issue, it is a fact that many foreigners work in China holding a tourism visa. They have to renew visas in Hong Kong before expiration, normally every six months. The first reason is that local firms are not willing to provide sponsorship to foreigners because of concerns about risk. The second is the negative municipal attitudes to overseas immigration. Legislation regarding working visas seems optional. It does not appear to be a serious issue if you do not hold a working visa but are still employed. There is also no taxation requirement for foreigners, which is totally depending on their conscience. However, it is important to have a positive attitude if we accept their positive influence on the country’s history, society, and local culture.

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