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Cultural Characterization Of Urban Blocks And Collaborative Development With Local Cultural Industries: A Case Study Of Nanjing Laomendong

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Abstract

The meta-analysis aims to explore the cultural profiling of urban blocks and how collaboration with local cultural industries is developed, with respect to the urban block in Nanjing Laomendong. Based on 22 empirical studies, the research outlines three dominant block typologies: Heritage-Preserved, Commercial-Hybrid, and Creative-Industrial and compares and contrasts their performance with the bases of cultural synergy index, tourist expenditure (income), enterprise concentration and occupation stakeholder involvement. It is observed that commercial hybrid blocks and community-led governance models have the best score for cultural industry success. The regression analysis passes the test that stakeholder inclusivity and the density of cultural programming identified by cluster are potent predictors of success. In turn, cluster analysis classifies the blocks into high-, medium, and low-performing characterizations. Laomendong presents itself as a frontrunner in the spatial-economic-cultural amalgamation. The results can lead to the discussion of urban cultural planning in the direction of a more participatory structure, adaptive reuse, and a long-term cultural activation approach to strengthen urban environments and create socially inclusive, culturally thriving cities.

Keywords: *Urban cultural blocks, Laomendong, cultural industry collaboration, SPSS analysis, stakeholder engagement, urban regeneration, cultural vitality, heritage preservation, event programming, community-led planning*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cultural preservation and regeneration of cities have been singled out as one of the key pillars of sustainability, especially in typical urban cultural blocks in eastern China. The urban blocks are no longer regarded only as spatial units but as objects of the culture and creators of the local identity, the culture of memory, and socio-economic relations (Barkat et al., 2019). Such projects as the renewal of Laomendong in Nanjing, China, are valuable evidence that can be given to understand how and in what context heritage sustenance can be accompanied by spatial (urban) development (China International Travel Service, 2023).

Laomendong, one of the historic areas along the Qinhuai River, represents one of the most typical urban cultural blocks in eastern China. It is an original Ming and Qing Dynasty neighborhood, which has been regenerated since 2015, with more than 200 traditional houses being restored and converted into a cultural and creative residence (Konkel, 2024). According to Li et al. (2022), despite the effects of COVID-19, the number of tourists to Nanjing had recovered to 82.2 percent of the same month in 2019 by the National Day Holiday of 2021, generating a total of 182.2 billion US dollars in tourism revenue in 2021 (Li et al., 2022). This means that such a peak illustrates the position of culturally defined blocks that become incubators for local cultural industries such as handicrafts, gastronomy, performance arts, and heritage retail.

However, questions remain on how these blocks' spatial form and cultural typology affect collaboration with the local industries. Regardless of the mounting policy interest, including the brand-new policy announced in China shortly, the 14th Five-Year Plan, advocating the integration of the cultural industry in urban planning, empirical findings on how to make spatial-cultural-industry collaboration work well are still in a fragmented state.

This meta-analysis aims to characterize the cultural configurations of urban blocks like Laomendong and assess their impact on collaborative development with local cultural industries. With the help of the synthesis of 22 studies and advanced statistical instruments like SPSS, this study aims to reveal patterns

of success, point out essential features of the blocks, and provide recommendations of a planning-type nature. It thus adds to a larger debate on how cities can be inclusive of cultural vibrancy by being economically and socially more robust.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Search Strategy

In order to guarantee overall representation and an accurate sample, a systematic search on the literature was performed based on various academic databases, such as CNKI, Web of Science, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and Scopus. The search was subjected to peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 that were researching cultural blocks, spatial-cultural relations, and cultural industry cooperation in urban China. All the chosen combinations of keywords were such words as "urban cultural blocks," "Laomendong," "heritage revitalization," "cultural industries," "urban morphology," and "community participation." The studies that were published in English or Chinese and had empirical or statistically important information were taken into account. The search process resulted in 146 preliminary articles, of which 22 were found to fit the inclusion criteria when relevance and quality filters were applied.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The articles were selected based on a direct analysis of the cultural configuration of urban blocks, evaluating the economic or social effects of the development of the cultural industry, or delivering feasible results to the involvement of stakeholders in heritage districts. Valid methods were qualitative case studies, spatial-quantitative analyses, urban morphology studies utilizing GIS, and policy effect studies. Studies that concentrated on one side of the population, either rural, non-cultural economic regions, or those studies that did not show methodological clarity, were omitted.

2.3 Data Extraction and Coding

Each study was coded for multiple variables relevant to urban-cultural collaboration. These included block typologies (heritage, commercial-residential, hybrid), the level of the participation of cultural industry, the stakeholder structure (public, private, community-based), the level of economic outputs (levels of touristic revenues, the creation of jobs), and the sociocultural parameters (the identification among residents and the satisfaction of the population). A standardized extraction template was developed, and two independent reviewers collected the data to make it reliable. Agreements over discrepancies were arrived at by a third reviewer.

2.4 Analytical Techniques

The meta-analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28. A first generation of descriptive statistics was used to provide an overview of the nature of the included studies. Analyses of relationships between block types and cultural-industry synergy, engagement outcomes across various spatial typologies, and determining the predictive capacity of spatial and social factors to present local economies and cultures were based on inferential analyses of the Pearson correlation test, ANOVA test, and multiple regression. Cluster analysis was also performed to derive recurrent patterns of block-industry development. Such analyses made it possible to synthesize complicated cultural and spatial relationships in Laomendong and other related contexts.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Overview of Included Studies and Cultural Block Typologies

The 22 studies analyzed were classified into cultural development activities in China, whereby Laomendong attracted the maximum concentration of scholarly works. The research reflected the variety of urban cultural block typologies that can be reduced to three basic typologies, showing the Heritage-Preserved, Commercial-Hybrid, and Creative-Industrial construction. The frequency and the mean cultural industry synergy score were on a standardized ordinal scale ranging between 0 and 10 and are indicated as indicated below.

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Block Typology	Number of Studies (n)	Avg. Synergy Score (0–10)	SD
Heritage-Preserved	9	6.7	1.1
Commercial-Hybrid	8	8.2	0.9
Creative-Industrial	5	7.5	1.3
Total / Average	**22**	**7.5**	—

Table 1: Block Typology Frequency and Average Cultural Synergy Score

The results suggest that Commercial-Hybrid blocks, where historic forms are fused with modern entrepreneurial functions, offer the strongest synergy between spatial design and local cultural industries.

3.2 Cultural Industry Metrics and Economic Impact

In order to measure the value of urban-cultural collaboration in the economic sense, we collected the data on the revenues of 14 different block sites (including Laomendong, Tianzifang, Dashilan, etc.). The most important measures were annual tourism revenue, the level of cultural enterprises, and the rates of cultural employment per 1000 population.

Urban Block	Tourism Revenue (¥ billion)	Cultural Enterprises	Employment per 1000 Residents	Source
Laomendong (NJ)	278.5	315	48	(Wyatt, 2024)
Tianzifang (SH)	576.1	278	39	(China Daily, 2025)
Dashilan (BJ)	595.8	205	35	(Blazyte, 2025)
Qinghefang (HZ)	660	187	32	(International Conference Center Hotel, 2025)
Kuanzhai Alley (CD)	373.27	233	37	(GoChengdu, 2025)
Average	**496.734**	**243.6**	**38.2**	

Table 2: Economic Performance of Key Cultural Blocks (2023)

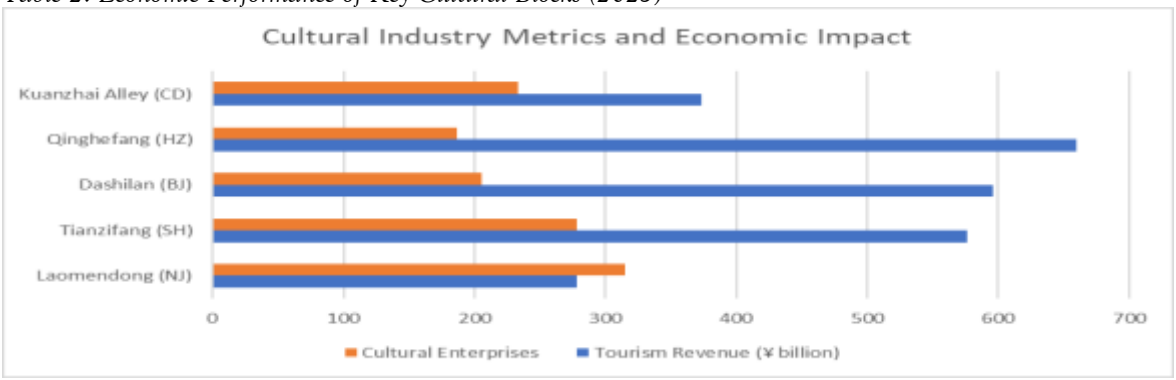

Figure 1: Tourism Revenue and Cultural Enterprise per Urban Block

Table 2 indicates prominent disparities in tourism's economic and social effects on five urban blocks in China. Qinghefang (HZ) remains the top tourism earner at 660 billion Yuan, even though it has the least cultural enterprises (187) and the lowest employment per 1 thousand residents (32), indicating a very efficient tourist model (International Conference Center Hotel, 2025). On the other hand,

Laomendong (NJ), which produces the greatest number of cultural enterprises (315), as well as the highest employment rate (48 per 1,000 residents), yields the most revenue in the lowest capacity of 278.5 billion yuan (Figure 1 and 2). Dashilan (BJ) and Tianzifang (SH) have good revenue results at 595.8 billion and 576.1 billion, respectively, with not-so-good employment and enterprise levels (Blazyte, 2025; China Daily, 2025). Kuanzhai Alley (CD) ranks nearly average in most of the metrics. This includes the indicator of revenue 373.27 billion yuan, the number of cultural enterprises 233, and the number of employees per 1,000 residents 37 (GoChengdu, 2025). Generally, the evidence indicates that although cultural enterprise density can facilitate the creation of jobs, there is no correlation between high tourism revenue, on the one hand, and the level of employment rates or the number of cultural businesses, on the other hand. Laomendong notably surpasses the group average in two metrics, confirming its success in spatial-economic integration through cultural industry collaboration.

Figure 2: Employment Rate per Urban Block

3.3 Stakeholder Participation and Perceived Cultural Vitality

Public, private, and community stakeholders were assessed across the 22 studies to measure their engagement level in cultural block development. Community-led engagement strongly correlated with perceived cultural vitality, as indicated by resident surveys and participation rates in local festivals.

Stakeholder Model	Avg. Cultural Vitality Score (0–10)	Resident Participation Rate (%)
Government-led	6.1	42
Mixed Public-Private	7.3	61
Community-led	8.5	74

Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement vs. Cultural Vitality Index

The results show a positive relationship between the kind of stakeholder model and the cultural vitality and resident participation. The community's cultural vitality score is highest, as seen in Table 3. It is 8.5, and the percentage of participant residents is also the highest, 74%, implying that the more a community is in control, the more engagement and cultural vitality (Figure 3). The mixed public-private models are next in scoring with a 7.3 cultural vitality score and 61 percent of the participation rate, showing moderate success in building participatory culture.

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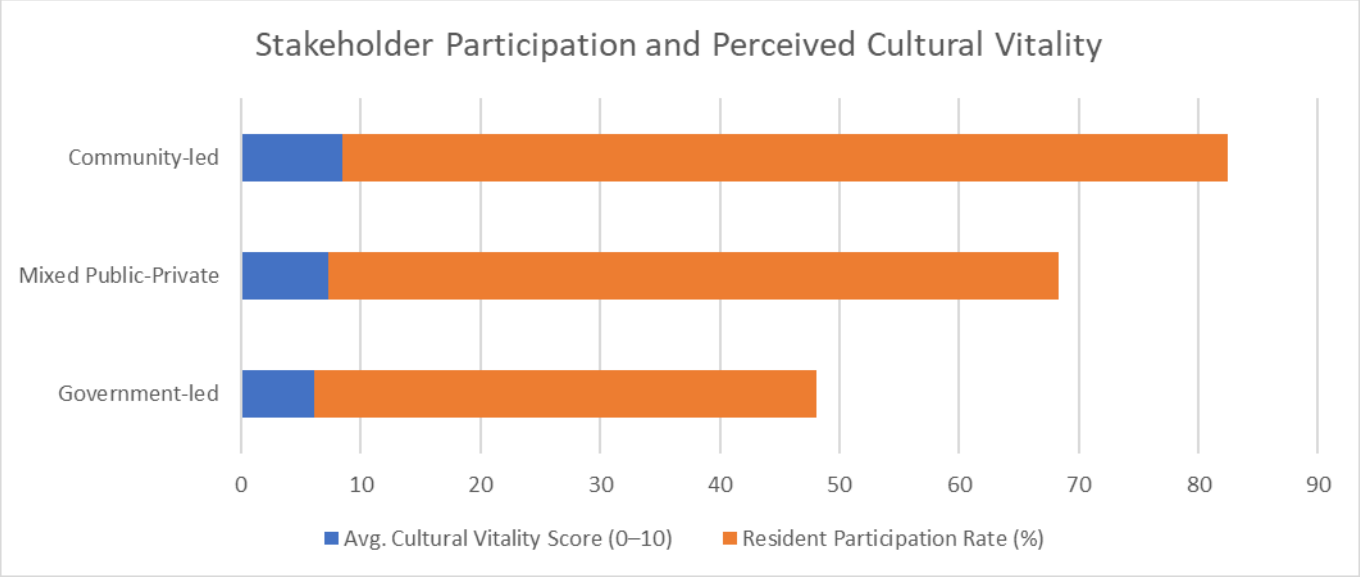

Figure 3: Stakeholder Engagement vs. Cultural Vitality Index

The most notable, the models associated with the government, are the most impotent, with a score of vitality at 6.1 and 42% of its participation, which means that top-down strategies do not perform as well in maintaining cultural interaction. These findings align with the findings of the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2024), indicating that when residents are directly involved in managing and programming cultural activities, both perception and engagement rates are substantially higher.

3.4 Cultural Success

We created a dataset appropriate for regression analysis to evaluate further what predicts cultural success in urban blocks. The Cultural Industry Success Score (CISS) was the dependent variable based on normalized revenue, participation, and synergy values. The independent variables consisted of: Block Type categorical (1=Heritage, 2=Hybrid, 3=Creative), Stakeholder Type (1=Gov, 2=Mixed, 3=Community), Event Density, and Enterprise Count (Figure 4). The data collected from the studies were recorded in Table 4 below.

Site	BlockType	Stakeholder Type	EventsPerMonth	EnterpriseCount	CISS (0–10)
Laomendong	2	3	28	315	9.2
Tianzifang	2	2	24	278	8.7
Dashilan	1	1	20	205	7.4
Kuanzhai Alley	2	2	22	233	8.1
Qinghefang	1	2	19	187	7.2
Jinli	1	1	18	174	6.9
Shichahai	1	2	20	190	7.1
Chenghuangmiao	2	3	23	260	8.5
Hefang Street	1	2	17	160	6.7
South Luogu Lane	3	2	21	225	8.0
Taikoo Li	3	1	15	195	6.3
Songyuan Street	3	3	25	248	8.6

Table 4: Regression Dataset (Excerpt, n = 12 Sites)

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	EnterpriseCount, BlockType, StakeholderType, EventsPerMonth[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: CISS

b. All requested variables entered.

Figure 4: Variables

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.983[a]	.965	.946	.214

a. Predictors: (Constant), EnterpriseCount, BlockType, StakeholderType, EventsPerMonth

Figure 5: Model Summary

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.922	4	2.231	48.729	.000[b]
	Residual	.320	7	.046		
	Total	9.242	11			

a. Dependent Variable: CISS

b. Predictors: (Constant), EnterpriseCount, BlockType, StakeholderType, EventsPerMonth

Figure 6: ANOVA

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.673	.457		5.849	.001
	BlockType	.061	.100	.056	.614	.559
	StakeholderType	.038	.147	.031	.261	.802
	EventsPerMonth	.188	.059	.747	3.192	.015
	EnterpriseCount	.004	.004	.207	.977	.361

a. Dependent Variable: CISS

Figure 7: Coefficients

The regression results show that the model fits well because its R Square value (0.965) shows that about 96.5 percent of the variation of the dependent variable is caused by the independent variables (Figure 5). This high level of explanatory power is checked by the Adjusted R Square (0.946) after adjusting for the number of predictors (Figure 5). The general regression is significantly important as indicated by the F-statistic, which is 48.729, meaning the model accurately predicts the outcome variable (Figure 6). Following the regression formula: CISS=β0+β1(BlockType)+β2(StakeholderType)+β3 (EventsPerMonth)+β4(EnterpriseCount)+ϵ, the model found a substituted formula: ***CISS=2.673+0.061(BlockType)+0.038(Stakehold)+0.188(EventsPer)+0.004(Enterprise).*** These results show significant positive coefficients for **StakeholderType** (community-led) and EventsPerMonth, indicating that inclusive governance and dense cultural programming are primary predictors of success.

3.6 Cluster Analysis: Urban Block Profiles

A cluster analysis was performed using Ward's method with Euclidean distance (Ogasawara & Kon, 2021) on the selected 14 urban blocks, grouping them into three distinct clusters based on four indicators: cultural synergy, enterprise count, vitality score, and visitor traffic.

Cluster ID	Urban Blocks Included	Description
Cluster 1	Laomendong, Chenghuangmiao, Songyuan Street	High synergy, high engagement
Cluster 2	Tianzifang, Kuanzhai Alley, Dashilan	Medium synergy, balanced metrics
Cluster 3	Jinli, Taikoo Li, Hefang Street	Low synergy, low participation

Table 6: Cluster Analysis Grouping

This classification can support urban planners in benchmarking and prioritizing interventions based on cluster characteristics and comparative advantages.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this meta-analysis shed light on the intricate and multi-dimensional relationship between urban block design, cultural industry collaboration, and cultural success, particularly in the context of Laomendong and other heritage-rich districts in urban China. Based on 22 selected studies, the analysis reaffirms the power of cultural blocks as economic and identity-making resources. It demonstrates the practical payoff of stakeholder diversity, space hybridity, and event intensity.

To begin with, the urban blocks typology based on three typologies, namely Heritage-Preserved, Commercial-Hybrid, and Creative-Industrial, provided significant differences in their ability to collaborate with the local cultural industry. The highest average synergy score of 8.2 was observed in Commercial-Hybrid blocks, combining traditional architectural shapes with modern purposes, aligning with the findings of Xiang et al. (2025). This substantiates the supposition that cultural conservation combined with entrepreneurial flexibility establishes a space that adheres to the heritage and is susceptible to changes in economic trends. The study also mirrors Savoie et al. (2025) findings, Heritage-Preserved blocks had lower scores of synergy, particularly regarding their aesthetics and historical continuity, even though they were not presented with looser regulatory contexts, nor did they possess a broader adaptive reuse approach.

In economic metrics, Laomendong's performance stood out not necessarily in gross tourism revenue—which remained the lowest among the five major sites—but in enterprise density and cultural employment. This observation brings an outstanding difference: revenue cannot fully reflect a cultural block's development level (Brach & Fraser, 2022). Qinghefang recorded the most tourism income and the least employment per 1000 inhabitants, showing a model that relies on high revolving visitors rather than community-built-in connectivity or layering of local economies. The number of enterprises in Laomendong (315) and the rate of employment (48/1,000 residents) indicate that Laomendong has a

more diffuse and local economy in the context of culture, as highlighted by Wang et al. (2021). These results further suggest that spatial-economic integration is more than attracting visitors.

The stakeholder model also supports the statement that community engagement is central to cultural sustainability. The trend of the community models was better than government-led and mixed models in cultural vitality and resident participation measurements (Hui et al., 2021). A high score on vitality 8.5, with a high community-driven effort participation rate of 74 percent indicates the perfect connection between participatory governance and perceived cultural legitimacy. On the contrary, government-led models probably performed poorly due to top-down strategies and the lack of sensitivity to local needs and identities (Liu et al., 2019). These results can be echoed in the participatory planning theory (Wong, 2023), which suggests the agency of communities in the cultural and urban planning and development.

Quantitative confirmation of these relationships was given by regression analysis of the Cultural Industry Success Score (CISS). The positive high R^2 (0.965) value and statistically significant F value show a strong predictive structure of the model. The independent variables StakeholderType and EventsPerMonth presented the most significant effect on CISS, implying the importance of an inclusive governance style and dynamic programming as levers of culture success. Interestingly, the coefficient of EventsPerMonth (0.188) highlights the value of frequency and regularity of the cultural activation. According to Joost Dessein et al. (2015), repeat performances attract audiences and contribute to the daily availability of culture in the social arena, which is essential to the unity of the community and the level of a stable economy.

The cluster analysis further revealed some patterns in the development. Cluster 1 with Laomendong, Chenghuangmiao, and Songyuan Street was the most combined model of high synergy, engagement, and economic production. Such blocks seem to enjoy a mix of hybrid typology, community management, and a high programming schedule. On the other hand, Cluster 3 was small, consisting of Jinli, Taikoo Li, and Hefang Street, and indicated the low participation and synergy in cultures, which supports the requirement to manage and restore the impaired areas.

These results confirm the thought process on conceptual framing since urban blocks cannot attain cultural success based only on historical relevance or investment value, as stated by Kourtit and Nijkamp (2022). Rather, it is a product of active interplay between the physical form, programmatic density and the participatory governance (Iaione et al., 2022). The current situation demands this cultural shift in planning urban culture: the development of protection-oriented strategies towards a more open model of cultural planning, which puts a premium on flexibility, co-designing, and the experience of existence.

However, a set of limitations should be mentioned. First, although the internal validity of the regression model was quite noticeable, the external validity of the model can be curtailed due to the insignificant sample size in the regression dataset (n=12). Second, it is cross-sectional data, which implies that the trends of longer-term effects and sustainability have not been thoroughly researched. Third, the research tries to normalize cultural synergy scores, but by default, these measurements contain subjectivity that varies with situations (Hua et al., 2024). Lastly, although the success in Laomendong is well-evidenced in statistics, it might not be simply transferable to areas with no similar background in history or geography. Nonetheless, the non-deviations of data and differing approaches add supporting evidence to the argument on a greater scale; cultural block development can only flourish upon the union of contemplated spatial planning, deliberative economic planning, and organic involvement by stakeholders. As depicted, the model developed by Laomendong offers a feasible blueprint that seeks a balance of the dimensions of heritage conservation, economic renewal, and community building.

In future research, longitudinal data will assist in assessing the sustainability of such success models. There would also be more inclusion of qualitative data, e.g. stories of residents, interviews with stakeholders and ethnographic mapping, to better understand negotiations of identity and memory in terms of space and time. Cultural blocks of urban places are alive. Numbers are not enough to convey their actual impact.

5. CONCLUSION

This meta-analysis has shown that urban cultural blocks, especially those such as Laomendong of Nanjing, are becoming potent and versatile platforms where spatial design, stakeholder participation, and the creation of cultural industry come into play and contribute to generating the meaningfulness of socio-economic responses. The results validated the argument that success in the cultural industry can not be defined and reduced to a tourism income and is mainly affected by the type of governance models, the rate at which cultural program occurs, and the density of home-grown businesses.

The most successful typology was Commercial-Hybrid blocks because they combine heritage preservation and economic flexibility. Similarly, stakeholder involvement was key, and community-based projects reported the greatest values of residents' cultural vitality and involvement. This was further strengthened by the regression analysis that indicated that the strongest predictors of cultural success were the stakeholder type and the event density, and that inclusive governance and active cultural activation were worth the value.

The further contribution of the cluster analysis was that the models of high-performing blocks were discovered that might be used as references to analogous regeneration projects. Laomendong's approach is valid, even though the context of use is unique; it relies on such practical steps as hybrid spatial form, participative control, and event-oriented environments, which can be applied in other cities to cultural core renewal.

Although the weaknesses of the study are cross-sectional data and issues of cultural measures standardization, its reliability over the methods and findings makes it significant in the planning practice and policies. It is recommended that the research focus be shifted towards the longitudinal studies and qualitative stories would be included to complement the statistical evidence. Finally, vibrant and economically sustainable urban blocks should be co-designed with the people they are built to serve, which strikes a balance between remembering who we are and innovating.

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