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Con-fronting the Edge of Modern Urbanity – GAPP(Global Artivists Participation Project) at Treasure Hill, Taipei

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The urban edge conceived as a place

Arguably, modern urbanity dissolves both the bond and constraints of local identification. It implies anonymous freedom as well as alienation from community ties, and it is therefore often seen as a sword that cuts both sides – on the one hand liberating parochial exclusivism and on the other sabotaging coherent community life. Modern urbanity meets harsh reality when urban density grows to an unprecedented magnitude in certain cities, especially in those that have undergone colonial experiences and dependent development. Traditional urban planning fails to provide solutions to establish rationality or to envision the future for those cities, and more sarcastically, terms such as “solution”, “rationality”, and “vision” sometimes cannot even defend themselves against the onslaught from post-structuralist critique. In many dependent Asian cities, such a conundrum often appears not only to question the legitimacy of exogenous Western planning models, but also to reveal an alternative urban “organic-ness” which appears chaotic yet energetic, intrinsic and un-designable.

Taipei is of no exception. Its urbanization processes are the consequences of the drastic transformation of Taiwan’s agrarian sector\(^1\) and of dependent capital accumulation. Adding its own colonial history and post-war political tension with Mainland China to the complexity of urban development, Taipei’s urban experiences seem to be caught between a kind of compliance dictated by the undisputed power core and random deviances derived from grass-roots re-interpretation/adaptation of urban spaces according to everyday needs. While the capital city hardly ever ceases to reinforce the regulated urban order imposed by the central regime, there always exists a strong and unyielding vitality disseminated from the edge of the urban structure. As a contrast to the homogeneity of modernist development and the controlled aesthetics of zoning ordinance and design guidelines, the urban edge is a hotbed for unrestrained individual expressions and collective hodgepodge of cultural forms. And since the urban edge induces spatial interventions which may not be legally allowed but socially agreeable through tacit understanding, it also beckons new urban immigrants who seek transitional shelters in the city. Squatting sometimes evolves into an organic village type of setting if the zoned-development or administrative pressure lags behind the influx tide of urban immigrants. Unmitigated activities of the informal sector at the urban edge, though dynamic and vibrant, expose the vulnerability and constantly shifting conditions of modern urbanity. They collapse the ideological dominance of the power core at the most basic level of practicing mundane life, and crawl quietly into many overlooked corners of the city landscape. In Taipei, the phenomenon was especially obvious after the surge of more than 330,000 post-war immigrants rushed into the city in the late 1940s and the rural-urban migration during the

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1 Agricultural modernization, agricultural production supplanted by export-oriented production, and the consequent expulsion of peasantry by industrial producers all push rural emigration to the urban areas. (Armstrong and McGee, 1985; Burbach and Flynn, 1980)
rapid urbanization of the 1960s. As it gradually evolves and expands, traces of the “generic city”\(^2\) (Koolhaas, 1995) become more visible and detectable, and the unified planning order is infected and fragmented by the sprawling fungus of the “informal city” (Brillembourg and Klumpner, 2005).

The duality between the “mechanic” solidarity of the core and the “organic” solidarity of the edge heightens the fragmented nature of modern metropolis, and “the entwined notions of modernity and fragmentation also make up the backbone of modern art.” (Jacobs, 2002) The edge of modern urbanity is therefore both the physical locus of “anything-goes” and the conceptual “heterotopia” of artistic projection. The underwhelming realities of the urban edge, once delved into from a critical angle of modern art and literature, provoke new possibilities of social imagination. Yet the disempowered subjects often associated with the urban edge, either romanticized or stereotyped, can be perceived as the target objects of outsiders’ gaze and concern, and the interpretations of their situations raise the ethical question of planning, art, and literature of whether incorporating them into the creative “works” or mobilizing them to initiate social “actions”. Con-fronting the edge of modern urbanity thus exhibits particular attitudes of making judgment of spatial intervention in front of the dialectic struggle between identification, modernity, urbanity, and reality. The edge becomes the frontier of exploration and action, and con-fronting, a conscious gesture of encountering differences or making differences.

Urban edge can be a generic description as well as an identifiable place. Place itself is occasionally confused or made inter-changeable with territory, locale, area, community, or even space. To re-establish place as a concrete concept with a theoretical underpinning, Agnew (1993) argues that the conception should consist of at least three levels of analysis: “locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); location, the effects upon locales of social and economic processes operating at wider scales; and sense of place, the local ‘structure of feeling’.” And through the experiences of everyday life, these three elements interact within a bounded area -- a place which people can identify -- and cover the imagined, the lived, and the perceived aspects of place construction. Pred (1984) also points out that “the production and distribution projects occurring within a local area are directly or indirectly connected to the dialectics of more macro-level structuration processes.” These place constituents, particularly in the case of conceiving urban edge as a place, are not static taxonomy; rather, they are critical social-spatial

\(^2\) According to Grönlund’s interpretation (1999) of Koolhaas’ concept, “the generic city is the city without history, without layers, superficial like a film studio, in a process of never ending self-destruction and renewal. This city is liberated from the captivity of the center and of identity.”

\(^3\) “Structure of feeling” is phrased by Williams (1977) to describe a kind of social experience which is historical but is also embedded in the present cultural process, a lively felt meaning and value which is also a continuum. Pred (1983) uses a similar expression to describe it as a “felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time.”
analyses tied with dynamic historical processes. The integration of various scales of place analysis provides important clues to fathoming the place-making processes, and contributes directly to evoking and sustaining an endogenous autonomy from within.

Here lies the multi-layer meaning and complexity of Treasure Hill, an urban squatter settlement in southwest Taipei which looks like a branch product out of the informal city at first glance, yet bears the essential ingredients of a particular place with its own *genius loci*. Its humble existence resembles a pre-modern organic village but in the meanwhile poignantly implicates an understated resistance to the planning rationality and cosmopolitan mode of Taipei. Having survived the vicissitudes of transformation and adaptation, the physical space and social network of the Treasure Hill settlement are tightly woven into the everyday life of the locale. Its highly imageable landscape and bleak ambiance are also captured by many film directors and photographers as symbolic scenes of Taipei’s forlorn memory. That intimate sense of place in Treasure Hill’s cultural landscape somehow becomes a perceptible nostalgia of a bygone period as well as a constant reminder of how the physical edge of modern urbanity mirrors the city’s subconscious and exposes the mechanical sternness of the city’s rational planning and political–economy development.

**Treasure Hill’s predicament and forced turn**

The Treasure-Hill settlement is a fringe urban village characterized by its close physical relations with the Guan-Yin hill and the Hsin-Dian river. Ever since it was zoned for an urban park according to the city’s physical plan of 1990, the settlement has been overcast in a gloomy shroud of insecurity. And conservation of Treasure Hill has confronted the rationale of modernist planning in Taipei which prioritizes urban function as a whole rather than collective memories of the few. Stigmatized by some urban discourses as a tumor of a pro-growth city, the informal and pre-modern appearance of the settlement not only reminisces the spatial fabric of the city’s organic past, but also houses the secular living of many immigrants and families of different periods of urbanization, many of whom are senile veterans and the disempowered social underclass. This illegal congregation where squatters maintain their basic subsistence on piecemeal self-help mode was later preserved due to a series of social movements contending that a progressive government should stress its role in advocacy planning for social justice rather than cover class struggle under the upturned soil of the “green bulldozer” of the Park and Recreation Department. Ironically, Treasure Hill was then re-envisioned as a hill-side village setting which might be potentially transformed into an artistic community to acquire certain legitimacy of conservation after the planning responsibility was transferred to the Bureau of Cultural Affairs. And the cultural imagination soon faced the challenge of re-programming a "planned" village out of an "organic" settlement of gradual evolution.

OURS (the Organization of Urban Re-s) was commissioned by the Bureau of Cultural Affairs to undertake the planning task of rezoning the land use without changing Treasure Hill’s status as a
public-owned land. The new program intended to propose a quasi commune “Treasure Hill Co-living Artsville” which would incorporate the original resident units as "welfare homeland – an alternative social housing," a youth hostel, an ecological learning field, and an artist-in-residences program instead of a fuzzy concept of a public art-and-culture facility. All the residents of the new village would share a co-kitchen, a co-dining room, a bakery, a café and a “music” juice bar, waterfront organic gardens and farms, a co-op neighborhood self-help center (including a food bank), a collective bookstore, a weekend bazaar, and various workshops for recycled-material-based arts and creative theatres, darkroom, etc. Restoration of the physical structures would call for the help of International Workcamp, and all the labor put to the care of the community could be transferred as substitute for rent or meals.

When the highly political and calculated tactics of conservation persuaded the city government to recognize the settlement’s artistic potentials for public good and the original squatters as an integral part of the unique and artistic milieu, the settlement became officially perceived as an artists-in-residency setting for struggling poor artists. Yet the residency status of the squatters was far from secure. It was hardly an easy task to persuade both urban planning committee and historical heritage committee that conservation of this cultural landscape and the community did not diminish the public value of Treasure Hill’s existing land use as a public park. To argue the legitimacy of replacing the green park with an artistic village was controversial, to advocate a social welfare program within the artistic village to preserve the social network of the Treasure Hill community was an even more challenging idea. But first of all, Treasure Hill had to be seen and its value appreciated by the general public to precipitate necessary legal procedure of rezoning. One of the tacit missions for the 2003 GAPP (Global Artivists Participation Project), therefore, was to raise Treasure Hill’s publicity and public support through arts program. But the media exposure also caused disturbing consequences in the community’s low-key lifestyle.

GAPP at Treasure Hill: a spatial experiment and social practice

In order to evaluate the suitability of artistic creation at Treasure Hill, GAPP officially ushered in several groups of artivists to station at the settlement, and induced a series of writings, installations, performances, and actions based on artistic representations. At such a fringe location which hardly has any contact with concrete artistic form, the multilayered interference and dialogues - from landscape art and tectonics, photography, installation art, music, audio installation, to ecological architecture, theater, etc. - suddenly rush in. The “artless” community was obliged to take part in art projects or to have contact with arts on their daily routines to boost the opportunity of being exempt from eviction. Indeed some projected scenes were rather surrealistic and alienated, but art might be a ticket to permanent residency, practically speaking.

The concept of artivism was employed here to further explore new possibilities of art-involved planning. Artivism was a conscious combination of art and activism, and was adopted to demonstrate
a more radical approach and value-loaded attitude to engage in social-spatial issues through arts project. **Artivism** was also an intentional attempt to bring about the community and environmental concerns and collaborate with the participant subjects to precipitate the transformation of certain social meaning. Even though GAPP set up a strategic game to attenuate the impact of high-concept and avant-garde arts on the extant community and to get as much participation from the community as possible, the insistence of maintaining *artivists’* autonomy did leave indelible traces on the community and the fragile landscape. The effect of art on community could hardly be overlooked when some individuals were inspired and some others were disturbed.

A majority of sensitive creators, besides being astonished by the landscape form of the settlement accumulated by self-help endeavors outside the system, also paid attentive gaze at the role of spatial subjectivity. Veering from an artistic point of view, action strategies were no longer a mere response to the residents’ needs. Through the subjective interpretation of deep consciousness of the place, the creative texts in diverse forms, no matter being indirect, metaphorical, direct descriptive, or lyric, presented an abundant narrative energy of Treasure Hill landscape outside the historical writings.

These artivists did not regard themselves as the saviors of the community. They even did not completely understand the planning issues imminently confronted by the settlement. Some of their artist-in-residency relationships with the village ended rapidly, merely leaving behind the interpretation angles of their works. But some of them sustain and extend their viewpoints, and are still developing new possibilities of their dialogues with the community life. Anyway at this ambiguous timing, artivists’ projects have recorded the awkward but precious process of Treasure Hill’s publicization. They need to be read and examined so as to expand the meanings of the conservation planning. Particularly when the unrestrained growth of settlement can no longer be permitted, the openness for the boundary of identification would perhaps launch a new platform for the Co-living Artsville.

*The Other Home-land* theme

Before there was GAPP, the Treasure Hill New Discovery Film Festival programmed in 2002 Taipei International Arts Festival had put Treasure Hill on the city’s art map. The community was thereafter transformed from the setting for multiple filming locations into the scene for cinema arts happenings. The Treasure Hill Family Cinema Club, informally organized by graduate students at National Taiwan University Graduate Institute of Building and Planning and community members, screens popular and alternative films - from propagandist military films to art-house documentary films - every Wednesday at the re-painted white wall of a defunct building left blank after the large-scale demolition in 2001. The Club has tacitly become a new community tradition, simply by showing films at regular hours at a ruins-turned-plaza to draw residents out of their living rooms to gather for a weekly event at a new public arena.
The 2003 GAPP further expanded the collaboration experiment between the community and the artivists by bringing in artists and activists from all over the world to initiate artivist programs related to landscape and settlement conservation. The 2003 overarching theme was designated “the Other Home-Land” – a dialectic between the social and cultural others and their transitional shelters into the alternative homeland, as well as a reflection of the collective identity of many immigrants in the community from different eras and native lands - inviting global artivists to probe into the historical roots, marginal status, current reality, ecological aspects, and subconscious psyche of the Treasure Hill settlement.

The lineup for the 2003 GAPP included: the multiple-dimension landscape art project Organic Layer Taipei, the collaborative lomography project Asia 108 and the Street Gallery of Treasure Hill Flood Images, the Ethnography and Chorography Film Festival at the Treasure Hill outdoor cinema plaza, the 3-week 3-group environmental theatre and workshop series Happening, the field experimental actions and international forum of Ecological Homeland and Micro-climate Architecture, the subtle Garden Portraits project, the international Creative Sustainability and Self-help Center participatory workshops and forum, the domestic Artists-in-Residency Program and the Treasure Hill Tea +Photo, and the paper-pulp based landscape art project Blue River. The interested artivists came from Finland, Japan, Germany, Spain, the US, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and other regions of Taiwan to participate in the experimental event. Unfortunately due to the constraints of time, budget, resources, and artivists’ own schedules, very few of them could stay more than a month to really blend in or establish long-term relationship with the community. Their proposals and actions had to rely on the second-hand descriptions of Treasure Hill and their brief observations and perceptions about the site. However, they all seemed to find inspirations from the uncommon setting and context of Treasure Hill which, unlike a planned artistic village composed only of artists, was blunt, honest, real, unpretentious, and socially critical. Some of the invited proposals were targeted towards community needs or planning purposes – in another words, their artivist goals and expected outcomes were clear at the outset. The artivist projects which were more ambiguous in setting objectives were eventually more open to artistic interpretations. Their scrupulous moves between artistic imaginations and community activism became dynamic and unpredictable processes in exploring the meaning of place identity in the most unlikely place.

To elucidate the impact of GAPP, the following is a review of one of the artivist projects that brought Treasure Hill to the spotlight again but caused quiet a stir in the community:

**Organic Layer Taipei**

The Finnish architect-landscape artist Marco Casagrande proposed an artistic concept “the attic” for his project at Treasure Hill based on his keen observation, sensitive intuition, and personal
social-ecological concern. Attic, excluded from specific use types in the Western dwelling unit, is a special space which takes in many less used yet not to be discarded objects of the family. The attic space does not follow any architectural order, and may not be considered necessary for a house. Yet at some afternoon, one crawls up the attic, withdraws a photo album from ten years ago at this corner and opens up a diary from five years ago at that corner, memory surges up as each page turns, then she realizes that the attic is the indispensable subconscious and soul of a house. Casagrande argued that Treasure Hill was the Attic of Taipei edged out from the city’s land-use plan. He found a used military belt and a family photo album in an abandoned house, and the memento stimulated a personal scale of association which connected his own memories with Treasure Hill’s idiosyncratic social context. He thereby conducted a series of artivist projects to converse with Taipei’s subconscious.

Casagrande and the participant students first put on black jumpsuits (costume used for the underground city workers in Fritz Lang’s classic film *Metropolis*) to dig out a huge amount of garbage and deserted stuff to search for traces of community memories from piles of thrown-away and left-over on one hand, while on the other hand, to directly help the community cleaning up the living environment. The deserted objects were displayed in the grassy lawn like a free flea market after general classification, and very soon many of them were picked up again by different community residents. Casagrande then applied some of the remnant materials for props and lighting to develop a nocturnal environmental theatre based on his concept of the attic. Treasure Hill at the daytime was so much taken for granted, but at night when the fire lit up, the subconscious of the city began to manifest itself through a mysterious and surreal unfolding.

Casagrande and 30 torch-holders dressed in black stood at various dark corners on the ruins façade (de)constructed by the bulldozers which demolished 38 riverfront dwelling units in 2001. Each empty window frame was lit up by flickering fire, altogether reflecting a bizarre yet tangible dreamscape. Casagrande disappeared into a dim chamber for a few minutes, and then came out through fire as a veteran running from the threat of war. His costume, symbolizing local veteran’s casual dress code, came directly from the discarded materials cleaned out of the memory lane earlier. He sat on a broken chair for a while and took a sip of alcohol; then all of a sudden, he gushed out flame from his mouth like an anguished beast. Right above him, torches of fire descending from the top of the hill lined up a zigzag route which re-connected the upper-level dwellings with the ground. That was the “flow of consciousness” meandering through different chambers of memory, and would be the pattern of a future stairway to be constructed in the second mode of the artivist project.

When the fire gradually faded, the bright spot-lights illuminated a series of larger-than-life photo

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4 The attic concept appears also in the phenomenological study of Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*. 
portraits hanging on some of the remnant building walls – images of the original residents who were cast out when their houses gave away to the claws of the “green bulldozers.” At the beginning of the theatre, the first torch was lit up by the 78-year-old neighborhood chief lady; the still-burning flame came back to her when the performance was over. She did not seem to understand what the theatre all meant, but she was affected as many community neighbors were mesmerized and claimed that Treasure Hill had never been more spectacular.

The second mode of the project conducted by Casagrande lasted 10 days. Extremely hard labor by the “underground city workers in black” and local residents removed many truck-loads of garbage; finished a series of stairways, platforms, and a bamboo bridge, connecting the community daily-life route with used construction materials; cultivated more than 20 plats of vegetable garden; constructed a view deck and a garden tool space under the trees; diverted slope drainage into a made-over ecological pond; and built an organic-form shelter out of bamboo stems for future farmers’ market. These impressive works were not only the outcome of an artist conception, but also evidences of what the community used to be and was to become, made possible by intensive collaboration between the artivist team and the community.

Besides, Casagrande and the collaborative team also completed four sets of “book-stop” made out of used steel scaffold, containing soil, native plants, photo albums, memento, and swings to carry local residents. At the end of the second mode project, more than 100 community residents and participants, dressed in black “Who Cares Wins” T-shirts, pushed the wheeled book-stops from Treasure Hill to the “independent book-store streets” of the nearby Gong-guan area for a themed parade entitled “Transporting the Fire, Delivering the Books.” Each resident and every story at Treasure Hill was regarded as a dust-sealed book, and when the book was re-opened and the light in the attic re-kindled, the city would be re-reading the brewed scenario of the overlooked settlement. The community’s grand march into the city brought in new energy and new perspective from the very margin. It was a bold claim to request the city to look straight at Treasure Hill, as well as a reflexive attempt to help the Treasure Hill community re-visualize themselves via the others’ gaze.

The parade was itself a street theatre. The underground city workers in black jumpsuits put on white masks and red wide-brimmed leaf hats, carrying tall red banners and banging pots and basins along the way. AM radio tunes and buzz, often pressed to the ears of the senile veterans in the community when they paced around the neighborhood, was amplified through a loud speaker and accompanied by impromptu tenor saxophone to set the parade’s eccentric and jazzy tone. Many curious bystanders and passersby were so overwhelmed that they couldn’t but follow the pied piper to march on.

The parade stopped at a used bookstore to purchase used books and left a Treasure Hill native plant at the store corner. The native plant was also planted at the entrance corners of many idiosyncratic coffee
shops along the route, where their street-front windows were showcasing images of Treasure Hill taken by a group of Asian artists (Asian 108) and some community residents in the manner of a street gallery. The parade marched on to Jing-jing gay bookstore to present the book-stop, the bookstore owner raised their pink triangular flag to gesture a grand welcome and recited a radical paragraph from a manifesto book which most represented the spirit of the independent bookstore. The Treasure Hill community purchased the book and placed it in the book-stop as an enthusiastic support for gay community.

The parade continued onward to the feminist bookstore, the leftist underground bookstore, the Taiwanese-culture themed bookstore, and the Mainland-Chinese literary publication based bookstore to present book-stops and purchase books. Each owner of the independent bookstores personally picked the most significant book of the store to recite out loud in front of the street crowd and put it in the book-stop, then the parade team replied with the most energetic cheer and scream. The “Transporting the Fire, Delivering the Books” parade was not only a declaration of squatter settlement conservation, but also an unexpected meeting of Taipei’s different social groups and communities and a warm exchange of their cultural emotions. They expressed their individual identities and dignities through the art form of an action theatre on the public streets, and they treasured each others’ voices of differences. The encounter was brief, yet the meaning was extraordinary - as art critique Wang Moe-Lin put it, the parade was a leftist re-writing of the city map charted by a dynamic flow of citizens at the margin.

Marco Casagrande’s Organic Layer Taipei project at Treasure Hill attracted extensive medium attentions and gained explicit governmental support. For the very first time, the Bureau of Cultural Affairs of the Taipei City Government agreed in public that the illegal squatter residents were an integral part of the settlement conservation when the commissioner of the Bureau had a direct conversation with Casagrande. The conversation content was published in China Times, a major newspaper in Taiwan, which cheered up the community and the planning crew’s morale. Many community residents expressed to Casagrande and the participant students their hospitality and friendship, regardless of the language barrier. But Casagrande’s progressive move and zealous artivist actions were not without controversy.

For a project this ambitious and of this magnitude, the 2-week span of planning and implementation was less challenging than problematic. Other than the few key persons, most participants were not able to fathom the meaning of the project, let alone the community residents. Some people were touched and inspired by Casagrande’s actions (a carpenter resident living close to the constructed stairway later self-built a step garden on the ruins façade, to be described later), but some residents were annoyed that their daily lives were affected by the project. Some critiques even questioned, did Casagrande see the Treasure Hill community as only the provisional actors or the subject of his artivist performance? Did the entire event fulfill the artist’s own artwork or the community need? Casagrande was audacious to touch on the issue of community psyche despite the expectations for him to mobilize and organize a
marginal society toward common goals through artivism. But what could be the consensus on the public interest of Treasure Hill, and how long might it take to reach that goal? The past social actions and protests focused on the imminent crisis of community banishment, but once the crisis was changed into opportunities, can the community come up with a new vision without knowing itself? Casagrande interpreted the meaning with such an intense empathy, but how far was that from the truth of the community?

**Con-fronting the realities of Treasure Hill through artivism and planning**

GAPP was at first consciously developed as a strategic tool for cultural landscape conservation at Treasure Hill. It was meant to turn a pre-determined, somewhat dogmatic and unilaterally wishful idea of implementing an artist village in a grassroots squatter community into a conservation tactics as well as a contextualized program to explore the social outreach of liberal arts. The original intention of GAPP, admittedly, questioned arts’ autonomy and did not see arts for arts sake. Artivism was derived from and at the same time antithetic of art. Artivism’s punctuating activism challenged art for not being serviceable to more meaningful social purposes, and this critique might just subvert art’s understated essence – the use of being useless. Artivism is affiliated to the Frankfurt School’s “negative aesthetics” (Adorno, 1984; Marcuse, 1978), but not yet built up at a firm aesthetic ground. It’s more of an activist proposal than a manifesto of aesthetic movement. Adorno’s argument of social meaning within the autonomy of art is a long contemplation on the nature of art as well as a critique of high-culture aesthetics being dominated by the institutional powers. But the fine balance between social critique and autonomy of art needs to be learned through practice. Casagrande’s attic concept for Treasure Hill (and his associated actions) was artistic and exotic, but it did capture the spirit of the place more precisely than many previous social jargons. Then we can examine where the autonomy of art inclines (if there indeed is an autonomy) and if it achieves the intensity of social critique in this case.

The artivism of GAPP also contains a part which is not dominated by the model of “artsy” creative concepts; for instance, the renovation experiment of micro-climate ecological architecture in cooperation with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences of the National Taiwan University, or the workshop of the neighborhood self-help center established in cooperation with the Sustainable Creativity Studio id22 of Ufabrik, Berlin. On the one hand, they extend the definitions of art in the community; and on the other, more lucid and personal issues are employed to exchange and share creative proposals for the future with the residents. These transitional experimental projects, implemented on a base which the “formal” sector will dominate the future repair and management, still appear to be rather awkward and paradoxical. As to why the past “informal” mode of building and construction can no longer be adopted, the main considerations of the public sector are mostly on the public safety issues for public land and infrastructure, and the cumbersome not-made-for-exception administrative procedures from bidding to contracting to inspection, especially the sequence of urban planning barriers for rezoning the land use of “park” into
“preservation area” (the acceptable alternative which could permit residency in public land). If not in the name of artivism, the overall planning might still be restricted as an operation of writing reports due to the zoning ordinance of activities in the park.

To a certain extent, the paradox of “artivism” in Treasure Hill has been exposed. Originally it should have been a positive “activism” and counter-institutional power gathered from civic grassroots mobilization, but eventually, it is incorporated as a quasi “art-curatorial” project connived by the gray area of regulations but under the supervision of the city government. From another perspective, it is a subtle balance of planning goals achieved by continuous negotiations between the public, private, and the third sector under the administrative consensus; however, the radical spirit of “artivism” has indeed been reduced relatively. Therefore, at the transitional rezoning stage, artivism is more like the practice and operation according to the contents of the Co-living Artsville. And behind the maneuver lurks an ineffable pressure – the win-win prospective plan about the dynamic settlement conservation and the public land for public use has to be proved superior to the original land use as purely a park. At such crucial timing of renovation and temporary relocation, hence, the entire action planning must try to congregate the community’s will to return after the building and landscape renovation, even if the original residents shall be required to pay for under-market-value rent instead of squatting, and their offspring may not be granted a status of permanent residency based on the principles of social justice of a citywide scale.

All these issues have been continuously testing the operation modes of the planning professionals who came to the scene after the conservation movement and were coerced to augment expectations of public discourses and actions in the squatters’ private domain, while at the same time attempting to maintain local characteristics based on the everyday life of the settlement.

In comparison with the past cases of evicting squatters or demolishing expropriated settlements, the conservation efforts of the Treasure Hill Settlement which attempt to preserve both the buildings and residents exhibit a kind of progressive self-expectation of an administrative institute. But suffice it to say that the isolated location and self-sufficient pattern of the settlement has also alleviated the potential pressure of the administration from the citizens (and ballots) when promoting the Co-living Artsville. Gradually, the Treasure Hill settlement has been recognized as a place of social practices and spatial experiments. Public, private and the third sectors seems to be expressing sincerity in communication, intending to cultivate and enrich the concept of a generic “art and culture facility” which was roughly proposed in the early days. Yet the unavoidable hands of the authorities are always there, helplessly changing the constitution of the settlement. And the critical nature of the squatter settlement of provoking the ideology of the capitalist city’s rapid development and rational planning by its mere existence is unfortunately diminishing and conceding under the “good-will” interference of the institutional powers. This is the real dilemma that Treasure Hill conservation is often caught in. The
academic and social discourses about conservation seem to be highly convincing, and the planning ideal extending from these arguments is hardly violating the theoretic-correctness; nevertheless, strangled between a web of planning regulations and the living reality of a particular group of ordinary denizens who suddenly became the subject of conservation yet still undergo indescribable difficulty of transition from “collectiveness” to “commonness,” the idealistic planning concept has been degraded into complicated and trivial administrative negotiations, legal interpretations, policy lobbying, and communications with local residents.

These front-line operations test the decision-making professionals who ponder over the matter at the site day in and day out, and even reflectively query their original value judgment and the bottom-line for conservation. In the meanwhile, the exogenous artivist experiments in conjunction with the planning objectives unexpectedly draw apart a perceivable critical distance – not necessarily complying to the government (despite being sponsored by the government), nor simply a service to the community (despite the direct clash with the interface of community life); they unfold another perspective of understanding Treasure Hill in another layer of contradiction and conflict. Perhaps, it’s not art itself but the intensity of arts implemented within a short span of time that really affects the squatter community, and that evaluation is a significant reference for future actions.

From rags to tags, from squatter movement to institutionalized artists-in-residency program, whether Treasure Hill will become an obsolescent urban settlement of organic nature or a progressive urban planning model of creative sustainability remains uncertain. In the forthcoming management experiment of the next stage, organic farming and the concomitant farmers market and arts bazaar, along with a cooperative grocery store, a food bank and a collective bookstore will be established to try out their feasibilities. This would be another rigorous test to the conservation planning as to how to develop micro-business in the park land under the restriction of Treasure Hill’s fringe location, and maintain the non-tourist industrial vitality simultaneously. Although some independent music and film makers have expressed their interest in performing in Treasure Hill’s open spaces, and in consideration of the relatively insufficient space for independent performances in the general environment of the Taipei city, Treasure Hill does have a special vantage to offer. But the interference thus brought to the lives of the settlement residents might perhaps be the beginning of another level of conflict, or might as well be a chance for mutual respect and learning between art and the community.

An urban planning policy forces the Treasure Hill Settlement to face public demand and the inevitable transformation. Crisis may be regarded as an opportunity to change, but once the transformation is not according to the residents’ will or bottom-up consensus, the road of change is doomed to be rough and bumpy. Consequently, as to whose expectation and imagination those progressive planning slogans have satisfied, or how artivism and the settlement residents can maintain the autonomy of arts creation and everyday lives within the planning framework, the prospect remains to be hazy. But con-fronting
the realities of Treasure Hill through continuous commitment may lead to the clues of the urban edge’s next chapter and the still-entangled mystery of modern urbanity.
Bibliography


When war broke out in Europe in 1914, nearly every combatant foresaw a short decisive conflict. Experience would soon prove, however, that this belief was sorely misplaced. Eventually, excessive economic dislocations would topple every authoritarian regime. Only the intervention of the United States would save the British and the French from collapse. This book traces the trilateral struggle between the Entente, the Central Powers, and the United States to determine the outcome of the war. Stubbs focuses on a few essential factors vital to understanding this three-way race: the acquisition of Con-fronting the Edge of Modern Urbanity-Global Artivists Participation Project at Treasure Hill, Taipei. Paper presented at Asian Culture Symposium. Min Kang. Urban planning in many parts of the world reflects an increasing gap between current approaches and growing problems of poverty, inequality, informality, rapid urbanisation and spatial fragmentation, particularly (but not only) in cities of the global South. Given past dominance of the global North in shaping planning theory and practice, this article argues that a perspective from the global South can be useful in unsettling taken-for-granted assumptions about how planning addresses these issues. Democratic ideals and levels of political participation: The role of political and social conceptualisations of democracy. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Vol. 20, Issue. 3, p. 711. CrossRef. Google Scholar. Ackermann, Maya Ackermann, Kathrin and Freitag, Markus 2018. The personality of stealth democrats: How traits shape attitudes towards expert-based governments.