

How to Revitalize the Bridges Street Market and Its Adjacent Area Using Cultural Strategies?: A Cultural Production-led Approach

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Abstract

This paper is theoretically situated within the context of urban entrepreneurialism that has emphasized culture as capital which drives urban growth with symbolic capital or sustains cultural and creative industry. It aims to provide a series of consultancy advices on revitalizing a declined/disused historical area for the presumptive client of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in Hong Kong.

Several normative theories are applied from the areas of place making, event-place design, historic conservation and cultural quarter making. The site for plan comprises the Bridges Street Market (BSM), its surrounding buildings and open spaces in Central. A study was conducted regarding the topography of the site, historic building status, and the connections between the site and the surrounding cultural sites and symbolic economic components for strategic positioning of the project.

As for main advices, to counter against the bias towards cultural consumption, the BSM is advised to be cultural production oriented and culture related uses would be given top priority. The overall strategy for revitalizing the site applies the idea of "cultural quarter". Various cultural and recreational uses will be accommodated in the quarter. Suggested consumption venues will enhance the robustness of the buildings and vibrate the open terrace with chairs and tables for informal exchange of knowledge and interactions among tenants and residents. Conversion from the recreational park on the site leads to an open air theatre. Regarding historic conservation, the site reconnaissance shows that the BSM suffers from physical/structural and functional obsolescence; suggestions about the corresponding revitalization methods (refurbishment and conversion) will upgrade the image of the site and restructure its economic functions. The entire tenement buildings have been diagnosed with physical/structural, functional, image, as well as legal and official obsolescence; conversion for functional restructuring and image improvement is recommended. In addition, several urban design recommendations are included.

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