

**The Impact of Revitalization
on the Vibrancy of Historic Districts:
The Case of Hefei City God Temple District**



Image Source: Author

by

ZHOU Limao

July 31, 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of revitalization projects on the multi-dimensional vibrancy of historic districts, with a primary focus on the Hefei City God Temple District and comparative analyses of three similar cases: Shanghai City God Temple, Xi'an Capital City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed to assess cultural, social, and economic vibrancy, integrating GIS spatial analysis, stakeholder questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and text mining of Dianping reviews.

Findings revealed that Hefei's revitalization achieved significant physical space restoration, including infrastructure upgrades and architectural preservation, but concurrently led to a decline in intangible cultural vibrancy, as evidenced by the homogenization of cultural activities and displacement of traditional crafts.

Socially, formal interactions were enhanced through improved public spaces and organized events, yet informal public engagement was eroded due to the removal of spontaneous gathering spots and street vending. Economically, while a boost in commercial activity was observed, rising rents, the disappearance of specialized markets, and the proliferation of homogenized retail have threatened its long-term sustainability.

Drawing on the Hefei case and conducting cross-case comparisons, it was concluded that the success of historic district revitalization depends on a context-sensitive strategy that balances physical upgrades with the preservation of cultural authenticity and the fostering of social cohesion. This approach is critical to addressing the tensions between development and heritage conservation, ensuring vibrancy is sustained across cultural, social, and economic dimensions.

August 2025

Table of Content

Preliminaries

Abstract.....i

Acknowledgements..... 错误!未定义书签。

Table of Content.....ii

List of Figuresv

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 Research Background 1

1.2 Research Objectives and Significance 2

1.3 Research Questions 3

1.4 Site Introduction..... 3

1.4.1 Research Scope 3

1.4.2 History and Heritage Value 4

1.4.3 Policy Context: Phased Revitalization Strategies 5

1.4.4 Physical Updates 8

1.5 Conceptual Framework..... 9

Chapter 2 Literature Review 10

2.1 Key Words Definitions 10

2.2 Research on Historic Districts..... 11

2.3 Research on the Revitalization of Historic Districts 12

2.4 Methodology for Assessing the Vibrancy of Historic Districts 13

Chapter 3 Methodology 16

3.1 Research Design 16

3.2 Sample Selection..... 17

3.2.1 Quantitative Sample (Questionnaires)	17
3.2.2 Qualitative Sample (Interviews)	17
3.3 Data Collection Methods.....	18
3.3.1 Quantitative Data Collection	18
3.3.2 Qualitative Data Collection.....	19
3.4 Data Analysis Framework	19
3.5 Limitations.....	20
Chapter 4 Findings	22
4.1 Cultural Vibrancy	22
4.1.1 Heritage Conservation	22
4.1.2 Cultural Activities.....	25
4.1.3 Cultural Representation	26
4.2 Social Vibrancy	28
4.2.1 Public Space Utilization	28
4.2.2 Community Interaction	31
4.2.3 Perception of Vibrancy.....	32
4.3 Economic Vibrancy	33
4.3.1 Commercial Diversity (POI Density)	33
4.3.2 Consumption and Income Levels.....	37
4.4 Cross-Stakeholder Analysis.....	38
Chapter 5 Discussion	40
5.1 Comparative Case Studies	40
5.1.1 Nanjing Confucius Temple	40
5.1.2 Shanghai City God Temple (Yuyuan Bazaar)	42
5.1.3 Xi'an Capital City God Temple	43
5.1.4 Cross-Case Comparison.....	44
5.1.5 Key Findings	45

5.2 Differential Impact of Revitalization Across Three Dimensions of Vibrancy	46
5.3 The Paradox of Hardware Upgrade and Vibrancy Erosion.....	47
5.4 Over-Commercialization and the Erosion of Authenticity	48
5.5 Policy-Practice Disconnect: Structural Tensions in Chinese Revitalization	49
Chapter 6 Conclusion	51
Appendices.....	54
Bibliography	63

List of Figures

Fig 1. The research scope of Hefei City God Temple District	4
Fig 2. The changed facades of Luyang Palace Market	6
Fig 3. Conceptual framework.....	9
Fig 4. The north gate of Luzhou City God Temple	23
Fig 5. Perceptions of conservation effectiveness across stakeholder groups	24
Fig 6. Post-revitalization participation patterns across stakeholder groups	26
Fig 7. 2014 reviews word cloud	27
Fig 8. 2024 reviews word cloud	28
Fig 9. Road network density	29
Fig 10. Comparison of historical images at main entrances and exits.....	30
Fig 11. Change in social interaction across stakeholder groups.....	31
Fig 12. Perceived vibrancy across stakeholder groups	33
Fig 13. Types and density of POIs (2014)	34
Fig 14. Types and density of POIs (2025)	35
Fig 15. Perceptions of commercial diversity across stakeholder group.....	36
Fig 16. Change in consumption pattern of tourists	37
Fig 17. Change in income of workers	38

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

After the Second World War, economic recovery and resumption of production led to an increased recognition of the importance of historic heritage conservation. Afterwards, the focus of conservation shifted from individual buildings to their surroundings and historic districts. In China, experts already advocated for the preservation of magnificent historic buildings before the 1950s. However, due to political factors and the priority pursuit of rapid urbanization, it was not until the 1980s that China aligned itself with global trends in heritage conservation (Ruan and Sun, 2001). Since then, many scholars have introduced Western theories of heritage conservation to China, while the country's focus on heritage has gradually shifted from magnificent buildings and historic cities to historic districts at the meso level. In the 1990s, the burgeoning real estate market led to a surge in the construction of old city lots, resulting in the destruction of many historic districts in favour of new constructions (Ruan and Gu, 2004). Over the past two decades, urban revitalization initiatives have gained momentum to stop this destruction and enhance the infrastructure and spatial quality of historic districts. Notable projects include Xi'an City God Temple, Shanghai City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple. However, many revitalization projects in historic districts have only achieved hardware upgrading but failed to enhance vibrancy, leading to "colder" streets and the erosion of district character.

Throughout China's history, City God Temples have been prevalent in many cities, serving as central districts for religious activities and public life (Zhang, 2018). Despite substantial damage from wars and political movements, these temples continue to serve as carriers of collective memory for citizens. The Hefei City God Temple District stands as a representative case among a wide

range of historic districts in China. Located in the urban center, it integrates diverse elements, including commerce, culture, daily life, and heritage (Chen, 2020). The revitalization of the Hefei City God Temple also represents the aspiration of a group of historic districts with considerable heritage value to achieve infrastructure renovation and neighbourhood revitalization. However, many of these revitalization efforts have experienced a decline in both popularity and cultural significance, reflecting a broader loss of vibrancy and failing to meet public expectations regarding commercial and heritage value.

1.2 Research Objectives and Significance

This research seeks to assess the impact of revitalization projects on the vibrancy of historic districts. It focuses on the Hefei City God Temple as the primary case study, while undertaking a comparative analysis with other similar Chinese contexts, including the Shanghai City God Temple, Xi'an Capital City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple. The study investigates the changes in historic districts following revitalization and the effects of these changes on the tangible and intangible aspects of urban vibrancy valued by diverse stakeholders. It identifies the deficiencies in revitalization projects that negatively affect urban vibrancy. Employing a mixed-methods approach which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research evaluates the vibrancy of historic districts from multiple perspectives, including those of residents, tourists, and workers. The findings aim to assist historic districts facing vibrancy loss in identifying their shortcomings and inform upcoming revitalization programs. Additionally, as current Chinese guidelines for the preservation and revitalization of historic districts prioritize physical space preservation, this study will offer insights for enhancing these policies, both within China and in the broader region.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question is: What is the impact of revitalization projects on the vibrancy of historic districts in terms of cultural, social, and economic dimensions?

The specific research questions are as follows:

1. How are cultural, social, and economic dimensions integrated into assessments of urban vibrancy in historic districts?
2. Which specific measures and evaluation systems can be used in assessing the success of revitalization projects in historic districts?
3. How do various stakeholders (residents, tourists, and workers) perceive the change of vibrancy as an outcome of the urban revitalization project at Hefei City God Temple?

1.4 Site Introduction

1.4.1 Research Scope

Situated in the core of Luyang District's old urban area, the Hefei City God Temple District is bounded by Anqing Road (south), Huaihe Road (north), Huoqiu Road (central axis), Lu'an Road (east), and Mengcheng Road (west), spanning 18 hectares.

This study focuses on the main area of the Hefei City God Temple District. The district integrates religious structures (e.g., the City God Temple, Sihui Tower), commercial complexes (e.g., Antique Market, City God Temple Mall), and residential areas, though fragmented land ownership and mixed land uses (commercial, residential, educational) hinder functional integration. Traffic congestion persists due to narrow secondary roads (e.g., Huaihe Road: 22m width) and illegal parking, despite recent infrastructure upgrades.

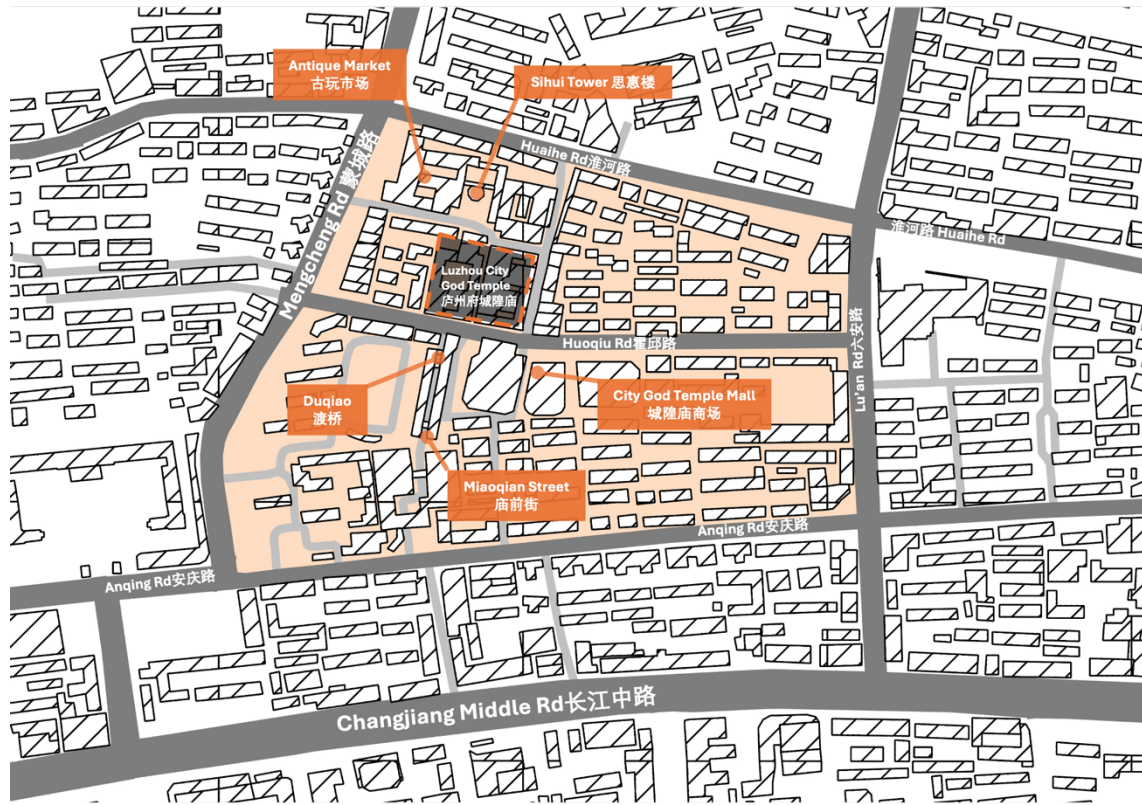


Fig 1. The research scope of Hefei City God Temple District

Source: Author

1.4.2 History and Heritage Value

Statement of significance

The Hefei City God Temple District is the material and spiritual embodiment of Hefei's historical evolution, integrating religion, commerce, folklore, and architectural art. Its core significance lies in the preservation of a unique fusion between a Daoist ceremonial complex and Luzhou-style commercial streets. This heritage site bears witness to City God Temple's continuing identity as a historical religious and trading district, while serving as a living center for collective memory and social activities.

1) Historic value

Established in 1051 AD (Northern Song Dynasty), the temple complex survived damage during the Taiping Rebellion (1854) and post-1949 neglect. It retains Ming-Qing architectural elements such as the opera stage, main hall, and Sihui Tower. Its revival in the 1980s as a wholesale market exemplifies China's

transition from planned to market economy, with daily foot traffic exceeding 150,000 in the 1990s. The layered urban fabric that combines a Taoist ritual axis with Luzhou-style commercial blocks reflects historical adaptation to shifting social needs (Dong, 2014).

2) Social Value

The district has long been a focal point for communal life. It annually hosts the Spring Festival Temple Fair and is committed to preserving intangible cultural heritage, including Luzhou opera and time-honored brands such as Taoyongxiang Roasted Nuts (陶永祥炒货). Its mixed-use character maintains Hefei's traditional urban fabric.

3) Cultural Value

Architecturally, the axial symmetry and "harmony with nature" (道法自然) design principles reflect Taoist philosophy, while Hui-style elements (horse-head shaped gables, woodcarvings) dominate commercial zones. The temple's role in sustaining folk beliefs (e.g., city god and goddess) and craftsmanship (e.g., calligraphy and painting works) reveals its cultural significance.

1.4.3 Policy Context: Phased Revitalization Strategies

The revitalization of Hefei City God Temple district has been shaped and driven by a series of policy frameworks operating at multiple governance levels.

Understanding this policy context is crucial for analyzing the strategies, priorities, and ultimate outcomes of the revitalization effort. This section analyses the phased revitalization approach, with a focus on examining the distinct objectives, key interventions, and guiding policy documents for each stage.

Phase 1 (2014–2016): Infrastructure and Architectural Restoration

Under the guidance of the *Phase 1 Architectural Style Restoration Plan*, this phase prioritized retrofitting utility systems (including water, electricity, and fire safety facilities) and restoring Huizhou-style features (such as granite archways,

stone lions). Meanwhile, it incorporated modern glass curtain walls into some buildings (for instance, facades of old Luyang Palace Market). It reflected the province's mandate to promote functional upgrades (Chen, 2020). Wholesale vendors were relocated to reposition the district as a cultural tourism hub.



Fig 2. The changed facades of Luyang Palace Market
Source: Baidu map (2014, 2017)

Phase 2 (2016–2018): Cultural Revitalization

Building on Luyang District's *Old City Renewal Strategy*, this phase expanded revitalization to northern part of the City God Temple District, restored temple fairs and historical murals, and launched a night market to attract visitors. Integration with Metro Line 2's underground commercial space aimed to alleviate congestion (Kan, 2019). These measurements mirrored the provincial strategy to “activate cultural resources for tourism”.

Phase 3 (2018–2020): Heritage Linkage

Upgraded to a city-level policy, this phase drew from the national-level “14th

Five-Year Plan for Cultural Relics Protection and Scientific Innovation” (2021), which emphasized “*systematic protection of large heritage sites*” and revolutionary cultural relics. The integration of the restored Old No.4 Middle School into the cultural cluster reflected the national directive to link heritage with education and public services. Additionally, the Hefei City Urban Renewal Special Plan (2021–2035) introduced the “*three-dimensional integration*” (*production-life-ecology*) concept, guiding the creation of underground parking and public facilities to enhance livability.

Post-2020 Optimization

In alignment with the *Hefei City Land Space Master Plan (2021–2035)*, recent efforts focus on diversifying retail (e.g., subsidizing traditional crafts), improving accessibility (ramps, Wi-Fi), and enhancing cultural programming. The property rights of the idle former provincial government office buildings were transferred to Luyang District for unified cultural reuse and development, demonstrating a holistic resource allocation model. Subsidies allocated to traditional crafts and standardized signage systems were designed to tackle the perception of low-quality commodities. This approach reflects the provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Plan’s emphasis on *sustainable livelihoods for heritage practitioners*.

In general, the policy transformation throughout the revitalization of Hefei City God Temple reveals three distinct shifts:

1. From isolated conservation to systemic integration: The early phases (Phase 1–2) focused on physical restoration. In contrast, subsequent policies (Phase 3–Post-2020) emphasized cross-sectoral collaboration, linking heritage with urban planning (e.g., Metro Line 2 integration) and economic development (e.g., night markets).
2. From top-down intervention to participatory governance:
The promotion of community-driven cultural programming (e.g., Luzhou

opera performances) after the revitalization marks a move towards inclusive community participation. However, challenges persist in ensuring equitable representation among all stakeholders.

3. From static preservation to dynamic adaptation: The retention of Ming-Qing architectural forms alongside modern amenities (e.g., underground parking) reflect a notion of heritage conservation. However, the tension between commercialization (e.g., wholesale market removal) and cultural authenticity persists, highlighting the need for balancing economic viability with heritage values.

1.4.4 Physical Updates

The policy-driven revitalization of the City God Temple District resulted in tangible physical transformations across four key domains: infrastructure modernization, architectural restoration, public space enhancement, and commercial reconfiguration. The following outlines principal updates in these areas.

Infrastructure upgrades: Replaced aging pipes and electrical systems; Huoqiu Road repaved with asphalt. Coordination with Metro Line 2 reduced surface traffic congestion.

Architectural restoration: Demolition of illegal structures; granite restoration of archways and stone lions. Reactivation of second-floor commercial spaces through structural reinforcements.

Urban design enhancements: Restored ground-level and upper-level pedestrian streets with four "duqiao" bridges, preserving the unique spatial identity. Introduction of pocket parks and seating areas, though greenery remains limited.

Commercial restructuring: Phased removal of wholesale markets; introduction of cultural exhibitions and standardized signage. Subsidized rents for traditional crafts to counter perceptions of low-quality goods.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework drawn based on the research content of this paper is shown in Figure 3.:

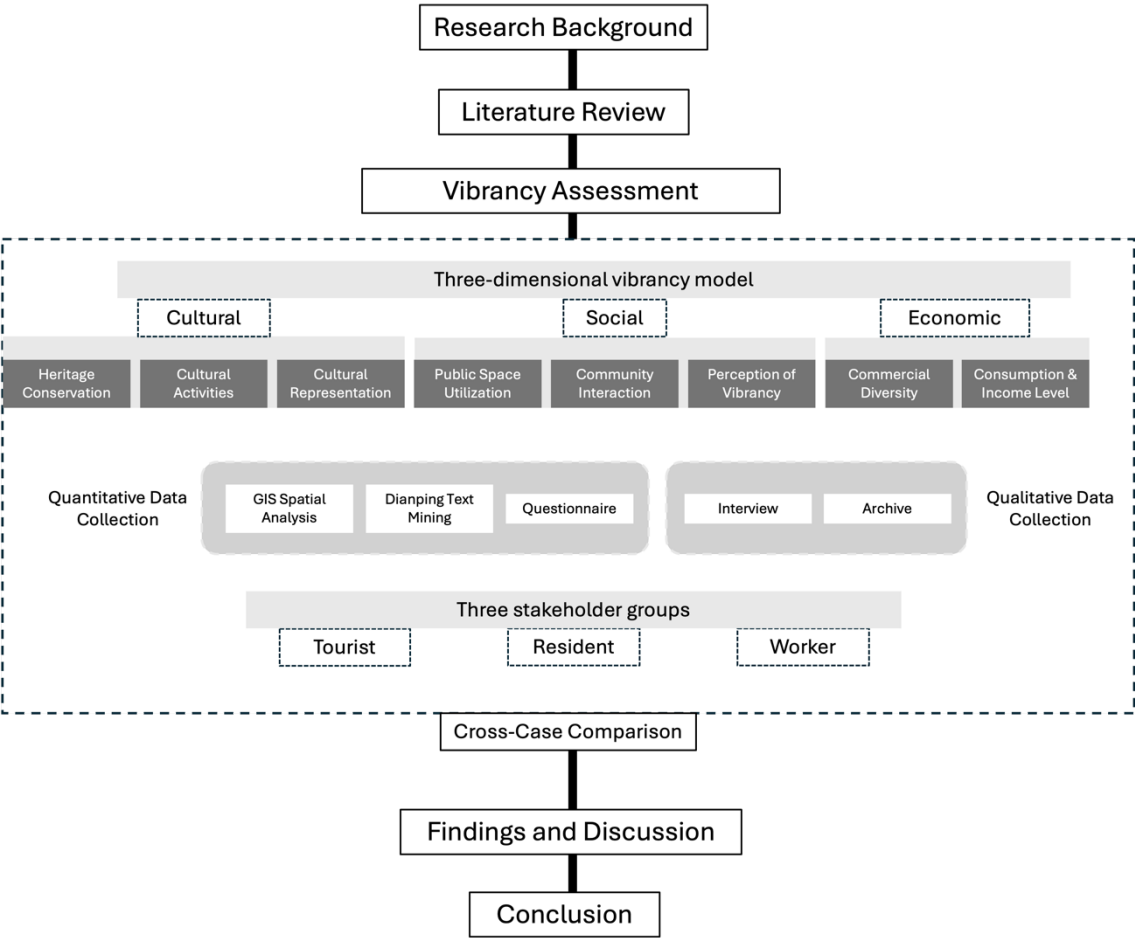


Fig 3. Conceptual framework
Source: Author

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Key Words Definitions

Historic districts

In China, the concept of historic districts can be expressed as districts with a relatively high concentration of cultural relics and monuments, or districts that can more completely embody the traditional style and national and local characteristics of a certain historical period, an expression that originated from the Historical and Cultural Reserves proposed by the Ministry of Construction of China in 1985 (Shi et al., 2023). Based on the academic terminology commonly used in China, the following defines a historic district as an area “with clear historical scope, relatively intact structure and style that require protection and control” (Li, 2011).

Vibrancy

The definition of vibrancy has been widely discussed, with some pioneers such as Jacobs (1964) and Montgomery (1998) arguing that vibrancy is closely related to human activity, while other scholars have focused more on the physical space of the city, such as abundant public space and good urban form (Lynch, 1984). But in general, their definitions all involve people (especially pedestrians) and physical attributes of urban space/areas (especially streets).

Revitalization

The concept of revitalization was first introduced by Wallace (1956), who defined the revitalization movement as “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture” (Wallace, 1956). This concept has since been expanded and applied across multiple disciplines. Today revitalization is defined as a many-sided effort including revalorization, restoration, reconstruction, modernization, and actions aimed at the revival of a building, district or town devastated in various aspects, including economic and social. Unlike renovation, which places more emphasis on the functional

restoration of physical spaces, revitalization involves not only the restoration of buildings but also the stimulation of economic vitality, the promotion of cultural functions or the satisfaction of community living needs.

2.2 Research on Historic Districts

Internationally, as early as 1933, the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments included a statement about 'areas surrounding historic sites' (ICOMOS, 1931). In the aftermath of the Second World War, heritage conservation emerged as a critical topic, driven by discussions surrounding the post-war rehabilitation of cities.

From the 1960s onwards, the object of heritage conservation was extended from individual buildings to related areas. Notably, the Venice Charter of 1964 proposed for the first time the protection of historic areas, referred to as "the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event" (ICOMOS, 1964). The Nairobi Recommendation of 1976 (UNESCO, 1976) further defined the importance and heritage value of historic areas and called for the protection of historic areas and their surroundings. Subsequently, the Washington Charter of 1987 (ICOMOS, 1987) emphasized the preservation of historic towns and urban areas, and put forward relevant methods and instruments. By this stage, a more comprehensive system for the protection of historic districts had begun to take shape. At the beginning of the 21st century, the conservation practices of historic districts began to involve the urban environment as well as its geographical setting. A notable example is the Xi'an Declaration (ICOMOS, 2005), issued by ICOMOS in 2005, which outlines the concept of the setting of heritage areas.

In China, the State Council released the first list of national historical and cultural cities in 1982. This initiative fostered awareness regarding the protection of areas beyond individual architectural monuments. In 1985, the

State Council put forward the concept of 'Historical and Cultural Reserves'. In 1986, in order to improve the protection of famous historical and cultural cities, the concept of protecting historic districts was further proposed. The Huangshan Conference in 1996 explicitly acknowledged that "the protection of historic districts has become an essential component of safeguarding historical and cultural heritage." Since then, China's approach to historic district protection has evolved from the micro-level protection of cultural relics and architectural monuments to the macro-level protection of historic and cultural cities, and later to the meso-level protection of historic districts (Ruan and Gu, 2004). In 2002, the Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People's Republic of China established the concept of "famous neighbourhoods of historical and cultural value," thereby providing further legal safeguards for the conservation of historic districts. Huang and Shi (Huang and Shi, 2015b) summarize the development of the international concept of historic districts and related charters and regulations into three distinct stages. The first stage (1840 to 1960) emphasized the protection of cultural heritage, including historic buildings and monuments. The second stage, occurring in the 1960s, marked a shift towards the preservation of historic environments and residential areas. The third stage, following the post-industrial era after 1980, saw the emergence of international literature addressing conservation practices for historic towns and townscapes. Additionally, Zhang (Zhang, 2018) conducts bibliometric analysis methods to analyze the trends and characteristics of historic district preservation research in China during the period 1952-2017. This analysis reveals that, while numerous studies have assessed the outcomes of revitalization programs in historic districts from planning and management perspectives, there remains a significant gap in evaluations that consider urban vibrancy.

2.3 Research on the Revitalization of Historic Districts

In the 1990s, the Chinese government implemented a series of regulatory

policies aimed at strictly controlling the occupation of arable land and the approval of development zones. These measures were introduced in response to the issues of excessive urban expansion and the proliferation of development zones that emerged during the 1980s (Ruan and Sun, 2001). However, many old urban areas, which historically served as the living and economic centres of cities, possess significant heritage value and favourable locational advantages. Concurrently, these areas often suffer from poor living conditions, prompting urgent calls for redevelopment among residents. As a result, city management and property developers have increasingly identified these historic neighbourhoods as hotspots for new development. While numerous revitalization projects have been initiated in this context, such efforts also pose serious challenges to the preservation of historic districts.

In urban design, Chen's systematic literature review (Chen, 2024) explores innovative strategies for the preservation and revitalization of historic districts using literature analysis from the Scopus database. Huang and Shi (Huang and Shi, 2015b) introduce key techniques and models for the conservation and revitalization of historic districts, including GIS (Geographic Information System) and space syntax, which are usually used for data analysis before the commencement of a project. Other techniques include the conservation judgement model and model analysis, which are constructed for conservation and renewal of historic districts, and provide a good scientific basis for evaluating the whole revitalization plan. Zhou et al. (2017) examine critical success factors in historic district regeneration projects. All these tools provide a good way to quantify the effects of revitalization projects.

2.4 Methodology for Assessing the Vibrancy of Historic Districts

Recent studies on vibrancy of historic districts have increasingly adopted multidimensional approaches, focusing on social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

Within the social dimension, Cai (2018) proposed a five-dimensional model encompassing behavioral integration, cultural continuity, industrial linkage, spatial sharing, and participatory governance. Through the application of confirmatory factor analysis, the study identified a significant positive correlation between social integration and vibrancy. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) developed an evaluation framework for public space based on accessibility, comfort, and functionality. In their study of Suzhou's Changmen area, the team designated transportation convenience, green visibility, and functional mix as key factors influencing activity density.

In the cultural dimension, researchers have examined how heritage value and cultural perception influence vibrancy. Zhang et al. (2024) introduced a three-level framework of historical value, usage value, and sustainable value. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process, she quantified the integrity of heritage buildings, the density of cultural-creative industries, and the frequency of cultural events. Guan and Yang (2023) applied semantic analysis of social media data to study Macao's historic areas and found that the perceived "historical atmosphere" was the main driver of tourist vibrancy.

In the economic dimension, studies have focused on the effectiveness of commercial activities. Ren (2024) used POI entropy to show that diversity in business types (retail, food, and cultural spaces) is positively associated with consumer duration. Zhuang (2023) conducted a national comparative study and argued that excessive commercialization weakens long-term vibrancy. The study emphasized the need to balance spatial environment and historical resources.

Advancements in spatial big data and interdisciplinary research have encouraged the use of multi-source datasets and integrated methodologies. Mixed-method frameworks have proven effective in capturing diverse dimensions of vibrancy.

Quantitative methods remain a foundation of assessment. Foot traffic is measured by mobile phone signals, Wi-Fi sensors, and pedestrian counts,

serving as indicators of public space usage (Zou et al., 2023; Sung et al., 2013; Zhang and Han, 2022; Tu et al., 2020a). POI data are widely used in economic analysis (Ren, 2019). A study in Guangzhou (Gao and Lu, 2020) used POI entropy to measure functional diversity and demonstrated a positive correlation with human density from heat maps. Spatial data, such as street connectivity, building density, and social media check-ins, have also been used in GIS-based models to map vibrancy patterns (Huang et al., 2020). However, such methods may overlook cultural and social dimensions.

Qualitative methods address these limitations by exploring lived experiences and cultural meanings. Zhang et al. (2021) conducted questionnaire surveys and on-site observations to measure travel intention and perceived vibrancy. Exploratory factor analysis and AHP were used to assess the weight of influencing factors. Xu (2014) conducted interviews in Tianjin's Gulou commercial street, finding that commercialization disrupted cultural identity. Masuwan and Lertwattanak (2020) combined stakeholder interviews, facade analysis, and expert evaluation to show that Form-Based Codes enhance architectural coherence and community engagement.

In summary, the integration of multidimensional indicators and mixed-methods approach can reveal the complexity of vibrancy in historic districts. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches across social, cultural, and economic dimensions offers a more comprehensive framework for evaluating the effectiveness of revitalization efforts.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how revitalization processes impact the vibrancy of historic districts. The design is structured in two phases: first, quantitative data collection and analysis to identify patterns and trends in vibrancy indicators; second, qualitative data collection and analysis to explore the underlying mechanisms, stakeholder perceptions, and contextual factors that explain these patterns. This sequential approach employs multiple data sources to validate findings, thereby ensuring the capture of both breadth (via quantitative measures) and depth (via qualitative insights) in the assessment of the Hefei City God Temple District's revitalization.

The rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach derives from the multi-dimensional character of "vibrancy," which encompasses cultural, social, and economic dimensions that cannot be fully captured by a single method.

Quantitative methods are used to quantify observable, numerical indicators (such as social media comments and commercial diversity), while qualitative methods investigate subjective experiences, cultural meanings, and stakeholder perspectives that are critical to understanding vibrancy as an experiential phenomenon.

Specifically, multiple data collection and analytical strategies were adopted as follows:

1. Historical maps and images were examined to identify physical transformations within the district before and after the revitalization project.
2. Social media data from platforms such as Dianping was extracted to analyze changes in the frequency of words related to the City God Temple District in the review data before and after the revitalization project.

3. A comparative case study was conducted with other historic districts that share analogous characteristics—including the Shanghai City God Temple, Xi'an City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple—to pinpoint factors that may contribute to the potential diminishment of vibrancy.
4. Semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires were administered to residents, tourists and workers, aiming to assess their perceptions of the alleged loss of vibrancy from the standpoint of diverse stakeholders.

3.2 Sample Selection

3.2.1 Quantitative Sample (Questionnaires)

A structured questionnaire was distributed to 80+ participants, with sampling stratified by stakeholder type to ensure representation across key groups:

Residents: Individuals living within a 2-km radius of the Hefei City God Temple. This group included long-term residents (≥ 11 years) to capture historical perspectives on pre- and post-revitalization changes.

Tourists: Individuals visiting the district, using random sampling to balance age, gender, and frequency of visitation.

Workers: Employees and owners of businesses within the district, including diverse commercial types (retail, food, cultural enterprises) and tenure (pre- vs. post-revitalization operators).

3.2.2 Qualitative Sample (Interviews)

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants, purposively selected to complement the questionnaire sample and capture diverse viewpoints:

- 3 residents to explore changes in daily life and community attachment.
- 3 workers to assess economic impacts and business adaptation.
- 4 tourists to understand experiential perceptions of vibrancy.

Interviewees were selected to ensure a range of ages (27–60+), genders, and

socio-economic backgrounds, maximizing the diversity of perspectives on revitalization outcomes.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

In this methodology framework, quantitative data (spatial metrics, questionnaires, social media) and qualitative data (interviews, archives, case studies) were systematically gathered. Multi-source validation ensures the rigor of capturing the district's physical and socio-cultural changes.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Collection

1. Spatial Metrics

GIS: Spatial data was collected using QGIS (v3.44.1) to map road network density and POI (Points of Interest) distribution (e.g., shops, cultural sites).

Data Sources: All spatial data were extracted from Baidu Maps API (2014 and 2024) and cross-validated with on-site surveys.

2. Questionnaire Survey Data

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure:

- a) Socio-demographic information (age, residency, visit frequency).
- b) Satisfaction with the revitalization project.
- c) Perceived vibrancy (in three dimensions of social, cultural and economic).

Distribution: Administered in person (2024) with 25% response rate; 75% of questionnaires were digital (via QR codes) to capture more visitors.

3. Social Media Data

The data was scraped from Dianping using Python, with the time ranges being before 2016 (before the revitalization) and after 2024 (after the revitalization) respectively.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

1. Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews lasted 15–30 minutes, guided by open-ended questions (e.g., “How has the district changed since revitalization?”).

The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, audio-recorded with consent of some interviewees, and key viewpoints were documented for analysis.

2. Archival Analysis

Government open reports: Revitalization plans (2014–2024), policy documents (e.g., *Hefei Land Space Master Plan 2021–2035*), and online announcements released via the WeChat official account of the relevant authorities.

Historical photos: Comparing images from Baidu Historic Streetview from 2014 and 2024 to identify physical changes and estimate pedestrian flow vibrancy.

3. Case Comparisons

Comparative data were collected for three historic districts with similar revitalization contexts:

- a) Shanghai City God Temple (commercial-tourist focus).
- b) Xi’an Capital City God Temple (cultural-religious focus).
- c) Nanjing Confucius Temple (mixed cultural-commercial).

Data included policy documents, academic studies, and official statistics to identify cross-contextual drivers of vibrancy.

3.4 Data Analysis Framework

A three-dimensional vibrancy assessment model was constructed with the following variables:

Table 1. Variables of the three-dimensional vibrancy assessment model

Dimension	Sub-Dimension	Indicator	Measurement Source/Method
Cultural	Heritage	Change in number/condition of	Archive data,

	Conservation	historic buildings	questionnaire
	Cultural Activities	Frequency of cultural events	Archive data, questionnaire
	Cultural Representation	Volume on social media (Dianping)	NLP analysis, interview
Social	Public Space Utilization	Road network density and pedestrian flow in public spaces	GIS heatmap analysis, field observation, historic photos
	Community Interaction	Frequency of neighbor interactions	Questionnaire
	Perception of Vibrancy	Perceived vibrancy	Questionnaire
Economic	Commercial Vibrancy	POI density	POI Data, GIS spatial analysis
		Consumption level	Questionnaire, Interview
		Income level	Questionnaire, employer interviews

3.5 Limitations

While rigorous measures were implemented, methodological constraints remain that require explicit recognition:

Temporal Constraints: Pre-revitalization data scarcity (e.g., 2014 POI density) persisted despite archival records, which themselves exhibited significant gaps.

Sampling Bias: Convenience sampling for tourists may overrepresent visitors,

underweighting infrequent residents.

Platform Bias: Social media data (Dianping) skews toward users aged 18–50, underrepresenting older residents' perspectives.

Generalizability: Findings are context-specific to Hefei City God Temple; cross-case comparisons help mitigate this but may not apply to all historic districts.

To address these limitations, data triangulation (e.g., cross-checking survey results with interviews) was used to enhance validity.

Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter synthesizes empirical evidence on the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of vibrancy in Hefei City God Temple District across pre- and post-revitalization phases. Through spatial-temporal analysis (GIS, archives), stakeholder perception survey (questionnaires, interviews), and cross-case validation, findings reveal significant differences in vibrancy manifestation among stakeholder groups. Notably, residents perceived net gains in safety and cultural accessibility, whereas workers and frequent visitors reported diminished social ecosystems and commercial authenticity.

4.1 Cultural Vibrancy

4.1.1 Heritage Conservation

The only legally protected heritage building in the City God Temple District is the Luzhou (the ancient name of Hefei) City God Temple. In 1985, the temple was announced by the Hefei Government as a municipal key cultural relic protection site; in 2012, it was announced by the Anhui Provincial Government as a provincial key cultural relic protection site. The Luzhou City God Temple faces south and covers an area of 4,000 square meters. In the early days of the Republic, only the gate, theater, main hall, and Niangniang Hall remained. Later, due to the construction of a new city god temple market nearby, Luzhou City God Temple was renovated, a pair of stone lions were installed at the gate, and two memorial archways were erected in front of the temple across Huoqiu Road.



Fig 4. The north gate of Luzhou City God Temple

Source: Author, 2025

The revitalization project took targeted interventions to highlight the historical and architectural significance of the temple buildings. The main hall was renovated to feature statues of Hefei's historical city gods, including Sun Jue, accompanied by murals depicting the stories of six successive city gods, aiming to enhance the site's uniqueness. The 24 side chambers were repurposed as cultural exhibition spaces, creating facilities such as the Fortune Hall, Hefei Memory Museum, and Folk Custom Exhibition Hall on the ground floor, with a Sinology lecture hall, restored inscriptions, and bell-and-drum sets on the upper floor. The ancient opera stage was reactivated for performances of local Anhui operas and folk shows.

Questionnaire data revealed significant disparities in perceptions of conservation effectiveness across stakeholder groups. Among occasional tourists, 55.10% regarded the conservation outcomes as "average," 40.82% considered them "good," and only 4.08% viewed them as "poor." In contrast,

regular tourists (daily or weekly) expressed more positive attitudes. Workers, however, demonstrated a polarized perspective: 35.71% of occasional workers rated conservation as "average," 50% as "good," and 14.29% as "poor," while a striking 66.67% of daily workers perceived the conservation effects as "poor." Residents showed the most favorable evaluations, with all occasional residents affirming the conservation outcomes as "good."

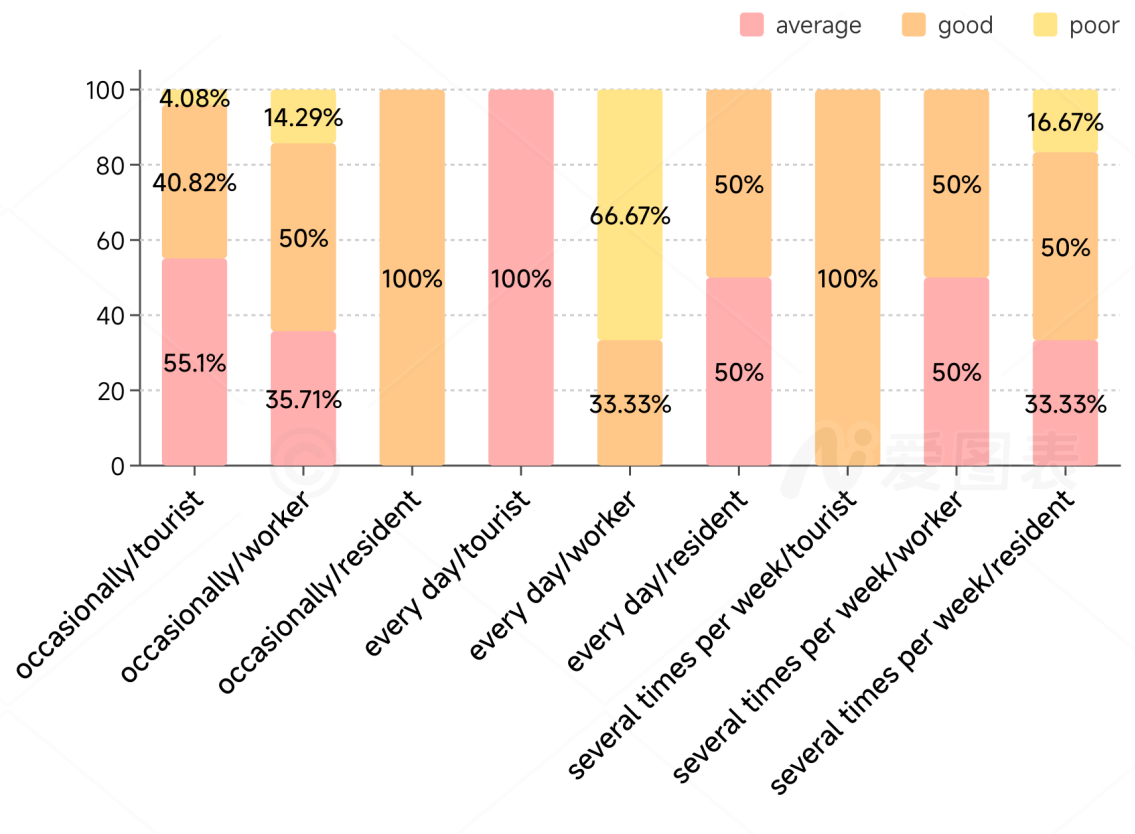


Fig 5. Perceptions of conservation effectiveness across stakeholder groups

Source: Author

Interview findings further illuminated these discrepancies. Many interviewees, particularly tourists and occasional visitors, exhibited limited awareness of the temple's heritage value, with their activities concentrated in commercial areas like Miaoqian Street rather than the core heritage precincts. Mr. Tian, an expert observer, criticized the "superficial element of Huizhou-style architecture" as inconsistent with Hefei's indigenous architectural traditions. This separation between symbolic restoration and local historical authenticity highlighted a key tension in heritage conservation.

4.1.2 Cultural Activities

The revitalization project marked a key turning point in the cultural ecology of Hefei City God Temple. Before the revitalization (2000–2013), public cultural events were characterized by seasonal concentration and monotony, predominantly clustered around major festivals. Among these, the Spring Festival temple fair was the centerpiece, a centuries-old tradition formally institutionalized as a major annual event since 1994, supplemented by more events such as New Year's Day and Labour Day. The "Weekend Stage" functioned as the sole regular cultural fixture, hosting local opera performances on a weekly basis except during extreme weather. Event types were largely restricted to traditional folk performances (e.g., Luzhou opera, a regional theatrical form unique to Hefei), exhibitions, and small-scale markets featuring Chinese medicinal herbs and handicrafts, with occasional non-festival activities such as community cultural weeks.

Following the revitalization, the district underwent a large-scale and systematic expansion of cultural activities. Beyond the annual Spring Festival Temple Fair—still its most iconic event—the calendar was enriched with new celebrations including the Qixi Festival, Mid-Autumn Gala, and regular night markets, significantly increasing opportunities for public participation. Content diversification was also evident: markets began incorporating more intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products and creative merchandise, while performances expanded beyond local traditions to include cross-regional music and dance, reflecting efforts to attract younger audiences and broader interest.

Post-revitalization participation patterns varied across stakeholder groups. Questionnaire data indicated that 60.38% of tourists participated in cultural activities "occasionally," 24.53% "never," and only 15.09% "regularly." Workers showed slightly higher engagement, with 63.16% participating "occasionally," 21.05% "never," and 15.79% "regularly." Residents demonstrated the strongest involvement, with 71.43% participating "occasionally" and 28.57% "regularly,"

with no respondents reporting "never" participating.

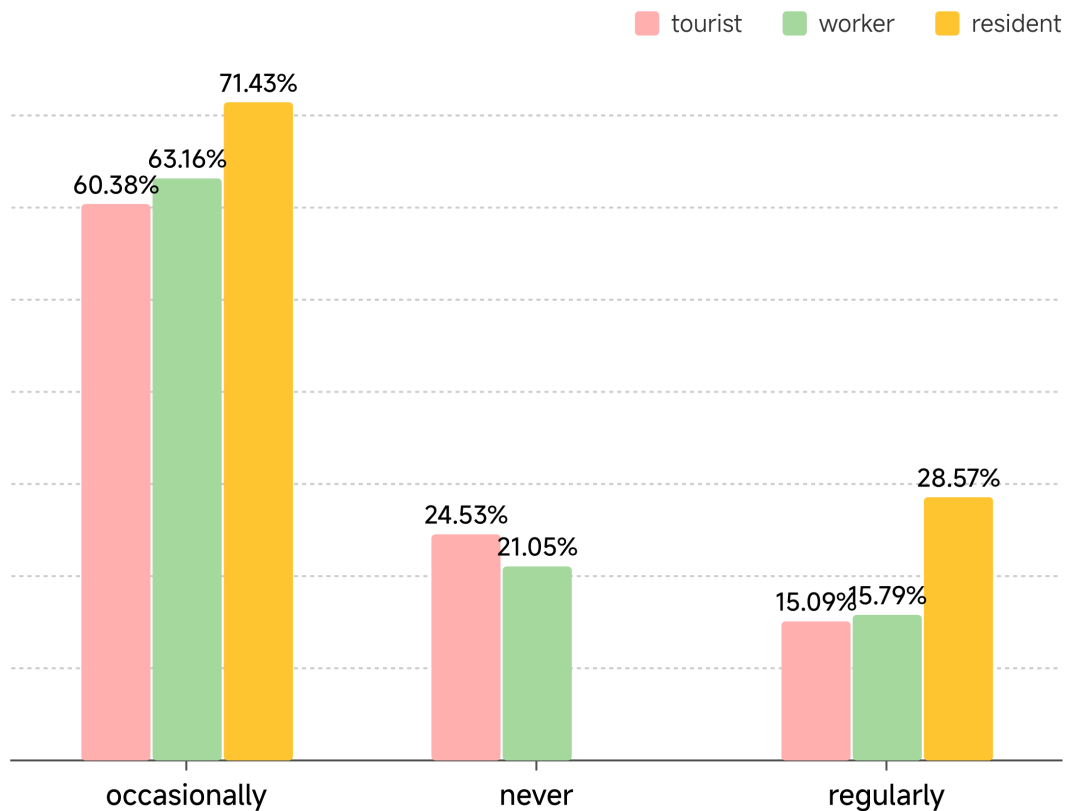


Fig 6. Post-revitalization participation patterns across stakeholder groups
Source: Author

Interview narratives highlighted practical barriers to participation, including limited parking, inconvenient timing of events, and competition from other urban entertainment venues. The Spring Festival Temple Fair remained the most popular event, with 80% of interviewees citing it as their primary or sole form of cultural participation, often linked to nostalgic traditions ("just come for the New Year feel," as Ms. Tao noted). Information dissemination was also identified as a challenge, with all interviewees relying on social media (Xiaohongshu, Douyin) rather than official channels for event updates, indicating a need for targeted communication strategies.

4.1.3 Cultural Representation

Word frequency analysis of reviews on Dianping (pre-2016 vs. 2024) revealed shifts in the focus of reviewers' attention to City God Temple Historic District in

City God Temple District shows that, apart from the surrounding urban arterial roads, the more active areas are concentrated in the Luzhou City God Temple and the Miaoqian Street area.



Fig 9. Road network density

Source: Author

Additionally, post-revitalization, illegal street vending and unauthorized parking were eliminated, with Huoqiu Road repaved and standardized signage implemented. However, these improvements coincided with reduced spontaneous social interaction: pre-revitalization images showed dense pedestrian clusters around street stalls, whereas post-revitalization scenes revealed wider, emptier thoroughfares with formalized commercial spaces.

	Before Revitalization	After Revitalization
South Entrance		
South-west Corner		
West Entrance		
North Entrance		
Luzhou City God Temple		
City God Temple Mall		

Fig 10. Comparison of historical images at main entrances and exits

Source: Baidu Street View

Field observations confirmed interviewee reports of inadequate amenities: respondents noted a lack of seating, shade, and greenery, with Mr. Zhang, a tailor, remarking, "Nowhere to sit and chat freely like before." This deficiency disproportionately affected elderly residents and workers, who previously used

street-side spaces for both commerce and socializing. Historic images comparison correlated with these perceptions, showing an obvious decrease in pedestrian density in core areas.

4.2.2 Community Interaction

Questionnaire data revealed divergent interaction patterns. Tourists show a relatively neutral attitude in their interactions with neighbors. Among them, 39.62% chose "no change", while 33.96% said "slightly increased". In contrast, the interaction situation of workers is more scattered: 31.58% of them said "slightly increased" or "no change", but 21.05% chose "slightly decreased". The interaction situation of residents is the most significant, with 64.29% indicating a "significant increase", showing that their interaction with neighbors is significantly higher than that of other groups. This was attributed to improved lighting and traffic management ("safer to walk and chat in the evening," as one resident noted). On the other hand, tourists and workers have relatively fewer interactions, which may be related to their identities and the nature of their activities.

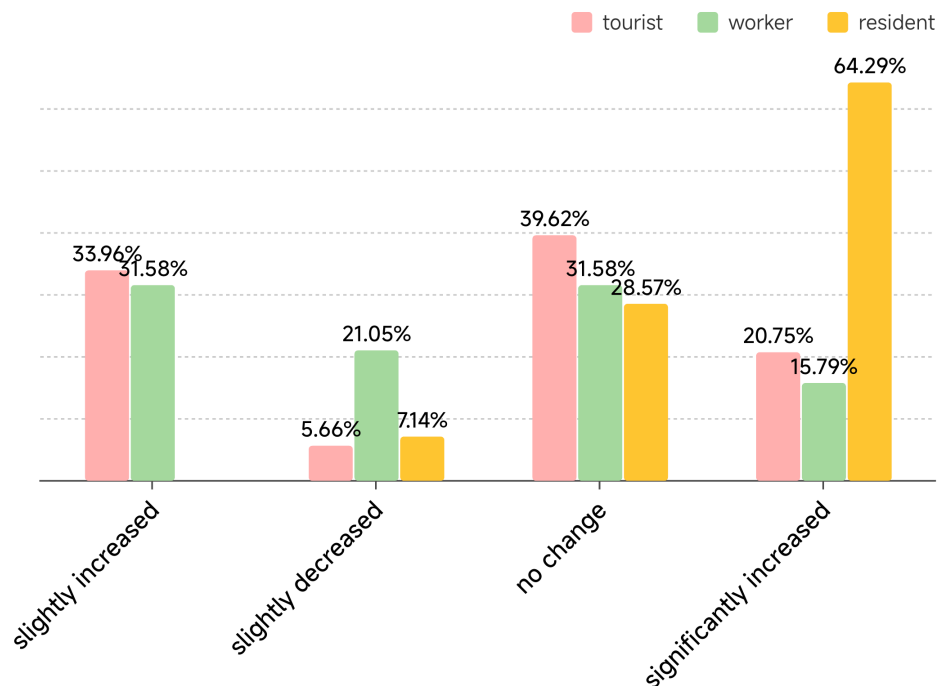


Fig 11. Change in social interaction across stakeholder groups
Source: Author

Interviews highlighted the displacement of informal social networks. Mr. Zhao, a former seller, mourned the loss of street vending: "Whole street was acquaintances; I'd mend zippers for free." Mr. Zhang similarly noted that relocating from a street stall to a rented shop had reduced his customer interactions significantly, reflecting how physical restructuring of public space disrupted longstanding social ecosystems.

4.2.3 Perception of Vibrancy

Comparative analysis of perceived vibrancy yielded striking demographic disparities. According to data analysis, tourists have a relatively low perception of the level of vibrancy. Among them, 58.49% think the environment has become quieter. Among workers, 47.37% think it has become quieter, and 15.79% think there is no difference than before. In contrast, the perceptions of residents are more conservative. 57.14% of them think there is no different from before, and only 21.43% think it has become either quieter or livelier. This indicates that tourists are more sensitive to environmental changes, while residents show a stronger sense of adaptation and stability.

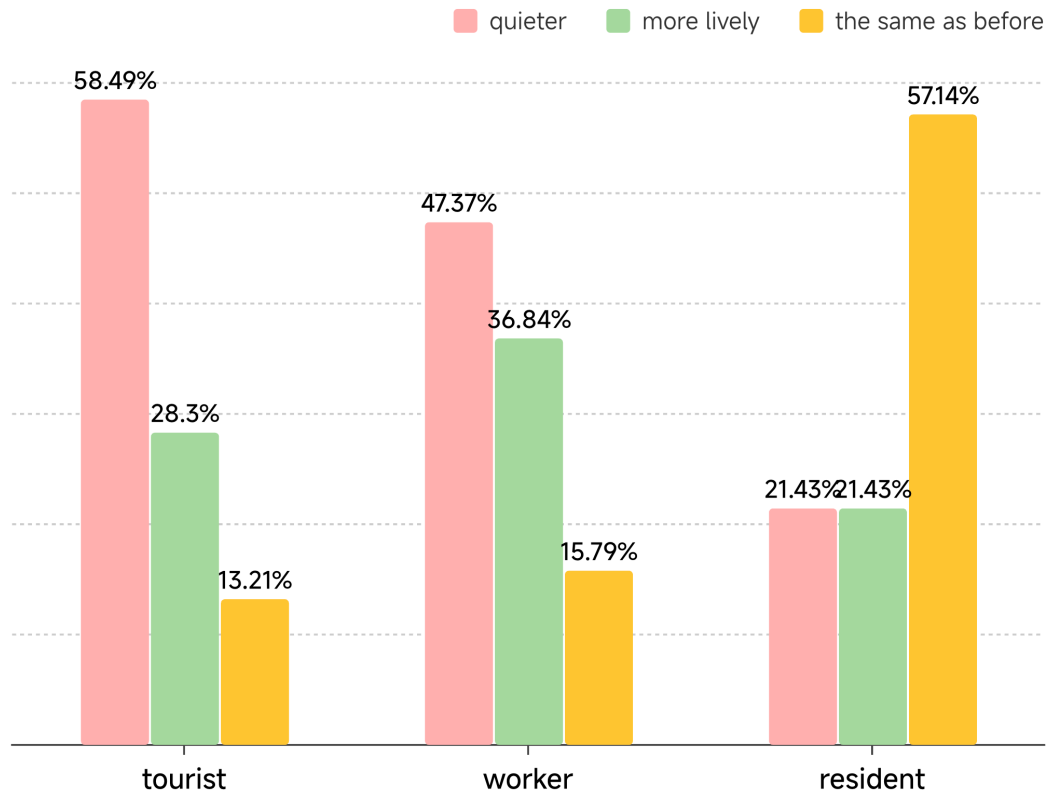


Fig 12. Perceived vibrancy across stakeholder groups

Source: Author

These differences correlated with usage patterns: residents valued improved safety and cleanliness, while tourists and workers missed the "bustle" of informal commerce. Mr. Zhou, a long-term visitor, acknowledged, "It's cleaner, but less vibrant," capturing the tension between order and vitality that emerged as a central finding.

4.3 Economic Vibrancy

4.3.1 Commercial Diversity (POI Density)

Spatial analysis of POI (Points of Interest) data (2014 vs. 2025) showed a redistribution of commercial activity. Pre-revitalization, 70% of commercial vitality was concentrated in Miaoqian Street and major intersections, creating hotspots with high foot traffic. Post-revitalization, POI distribution became more uniform, with activity spreading to previously underutilized areas like the shopping malls, though Miaoqian Street and the temple nearby area remained

primary hubs.



Fig 13. Types and density of POIs (2014)
Source: Author



Fig 14. Types and density of POIs (2025)

Source: Author

Perceptions of commercial diversity varied significantly across stakeholder groups, differentiated by their frequency of district visits. Regarding daily visitors, the only tourist who responded showed a less favorable view of “average,” while workers held more critical views, with 66.67% deeming commercial types “limited” and 33.33% considering them “average.” Among

daily residents, evaluations were mixed: 33.33% perceived business types as “diverse” or “very diverse,” whereas 16.67% viewed them as “average” or “limited.” For visitors frequenting the district several times weekly, tourists showed strong positive perceptions, with 66.67% describing commercial diversity as “diverse” and 33.33% as “very diverse”; workers held a balanced view, with 50% rating diversity as “average” and 50% as “diverse”; and among residents, 50% perceived business types as “diverse,” reflecting a moderately positive stance. Among occasionally visiting stakeholders, tourists exhibited a favorable assessment, with 40.82% rating commercial diversity as “diverse,” 34.69% as “average,” and 22.45% as “very diverse”; workers presented a nuanced perspective, with 35.71% perceiving it as “diverse,” 28.57% as “very diverse,” 21.43% as “average,” and 14.29% as “limited”; notably, occasional residents held an overwhelmingly positive view, with 100% rating commercial diversity as “very diverse.” Overall, occasional visitors (especially residents) and weekly-visiting tourists tended to evaluate commercial diversity more positively, whereas daily visitors adopted a more conservative stance.

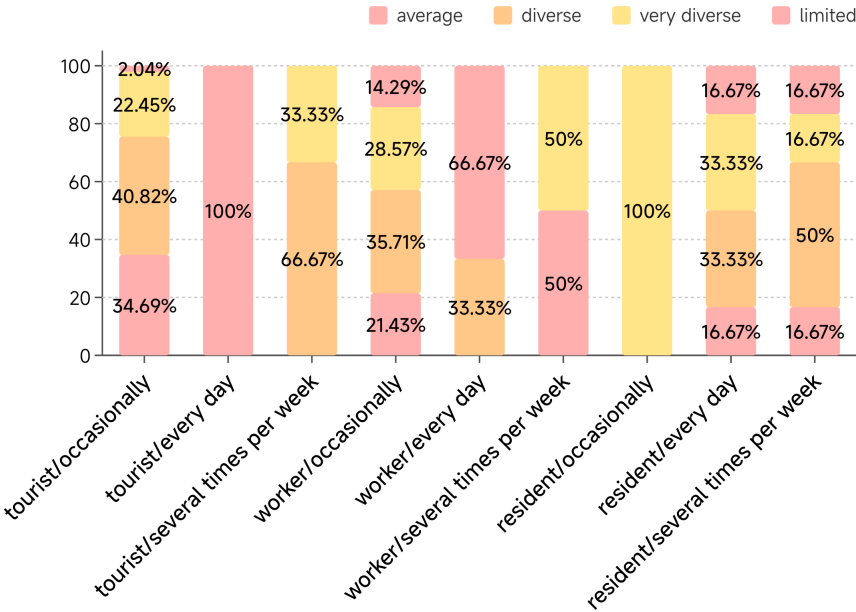


Fig 15. Perceptions of commercial diversity across stakeholder group

Source: Author

The interviews identified three key issues: 1) Homogenization: 80% of respondents noted excessive concentration of clothing, festival goods (节庆用

品), and low-end retail, with Mr. Zhao criticizing "too many Yiwu-style commodities"; 2) Loss of specialized markets: The decline of antique and stationery clusters, once a district hallmark; 3) Underutilization of space: 7 vacant shops on Miaodong Street and 10 on Huoqiu Road, as reported by Ms. Zhou.

4.3.2 Consumption and Income Levels

Consumption patterns showed a moderate upward trend post-revitalization. Overall, 43.40% of visitors reported increased spending, 33.96% stable spending, and 22.64% decreased spending. Visitors often combining traditional purchases with new amenities: "Come for the old friends, stay for milk tea," as one interviewee explained.

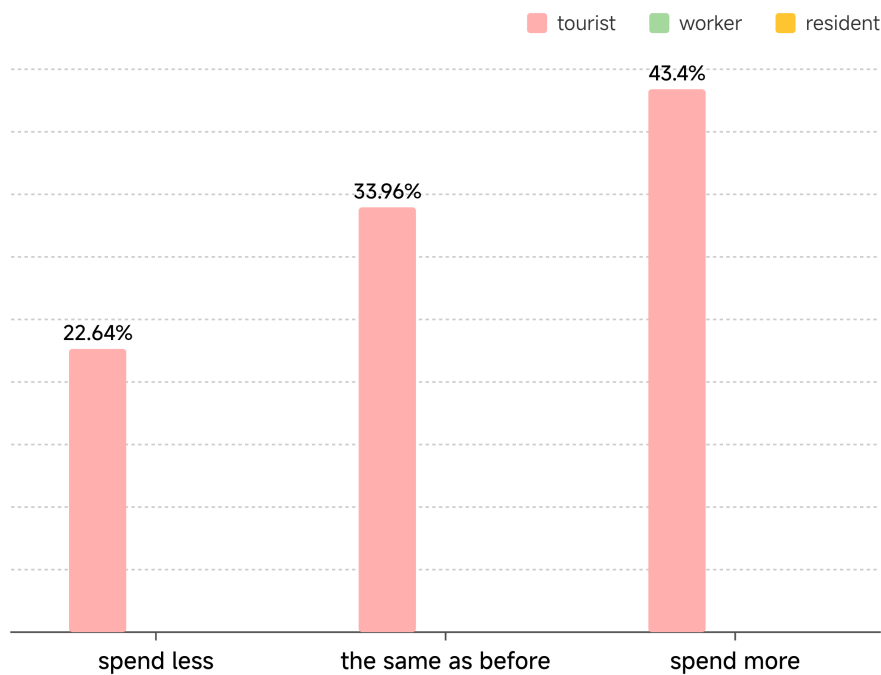


Fig 16. Change in consumption pattern of tourists
Source: Author

Worker economic outcomes were stable but also uneven. A substantial majority (68.42%) of workers reported no change in their income, indicating that the revitalization had limited direct impacts on earnings for most. Meanwhile, 16.32% perceived an increase in income, and 15.26% felt their income had decreased. This suggests the revitalization’s economic effects on workers were

neither broadly transformative nor uniformly negative, but rather unevenly distributed. Interviews revealed significant stratification: established businesses with owned premises (e.g., "Zhou Guifei Noodle") maintained stability, while tenant businesses faced rising rents (up 200% for some, according to Mr. Zhang) and competition from online retailers. A milk tea shop worker summarized the challenge: "Tourists take photos but don't buy; locals come once and don't return."

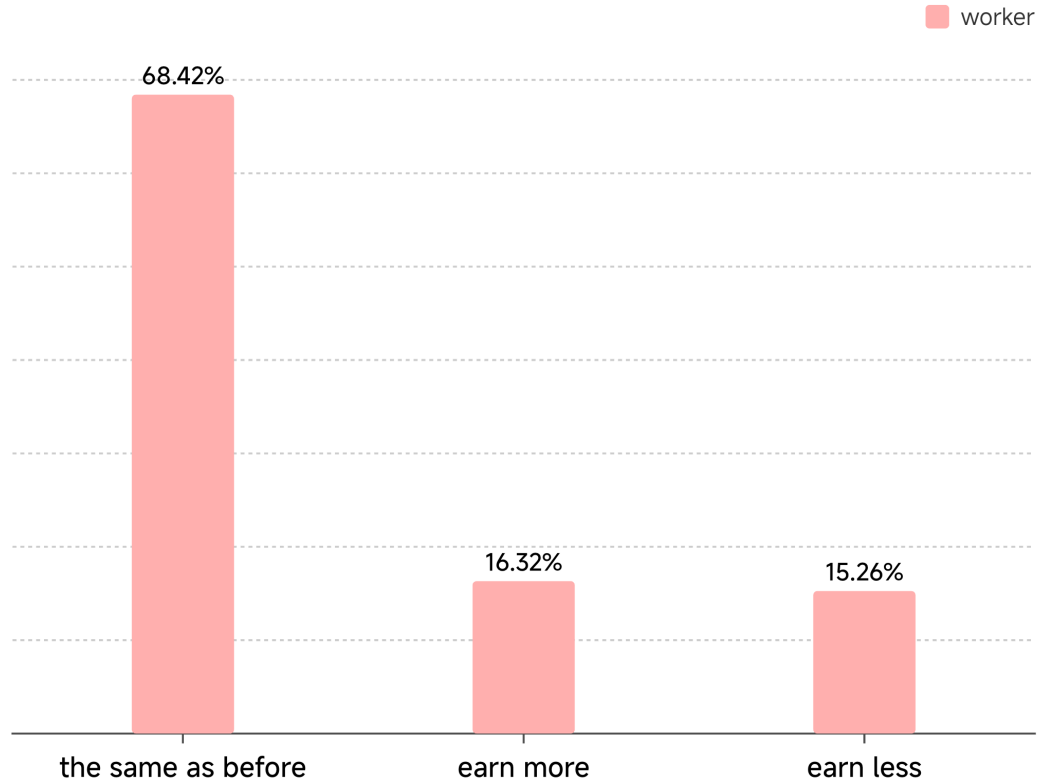


Fig 17. Change in income of workers
Source: Author

4.4 Cross-Stakeholder Analysis

Comparative analysis across demographic and stakeholder groups revealed consistent patterns:

- 1. Temporal Frequency Effect: Regular visitors/workers (daily/weekly) expressed significantly more critical views than occasional visitors across all dimensions: 66.67% vs. 4.08% negative ratings for heritage

conservation; 63.16% vs. 24.53% low cultural activity participation; 33.33% vs. 51.02% low satisfaction with infrastructure.

2. Residential Attachment: Residents showed strongest support for revitalization outcomes, with 71.43% positive ratings for cultural atmosphere and 83.33% satisfaction with environmental improvements, correlating with increased neighborhood safety and aesthetic enhancements.

3. Generational Divide:

Younger visitors aged 18–30 prioritized “unique experiences” and “photo-worthy attractions,” while older respondents (aged 60+) valued “familiarity” and “convenience.” Notably, 65% of senior respondents, despite recognizing the revitalization’s positive improvements, expressed nostalgia for the pre-revitalization commercial patterns.

These findings underscore the multidimensionality of vibrancy, with different stakeholder groups prioritizing divergent aspects of cultural, social, and economic life in the historic district.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Comparative Case Studies

This section presents a cross-case analysis of three other comparable historic districts in China, including Shanghai City God Temple (Yuyuan Bazaar), Xi'an Capital City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple, exploring how revitalization strategies shape social, cultural, and economic vibrancy. Each case is contextualized by its historical evolution, revitalization timelines, core interventions, and subsequent changes in vibrancy. A systematic comparison follows to identify replicable patterns and context-specific challenges.

5.1.1 Nanjing Confucius Temple

Historical Context and Revitalization Phases

Nanjing Confucius Temple (Fuzimiao) has a millennia-long history intertwined with China's educational and cultural legacy. Established in 337 CE as an imperial academy during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, it expanded in 1034 CE with the addition of a Confucian temple and later integrated the Jiangnan Examination Hall (founded 1168 CE), once the largest imperial examination venue in ancient China. This integration transformed the district from a residential quarter into a complex public space comprising squares, courtyards, and alleys (Liu and Li, 2015).

The district sustained extensive damage during the Anti-Japanese War (1931–1945) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), with many historic structures demolished or repurposed. Its revitalization unfolded in two key phases:

First Phase (1984–1994):

Guided by state-led heritage conservation policies, the project reconstructed core historic buildings such as Dacheng Hall, Mingde Hall, and the Jiangnan Examination Hall, and restored the Qinhuai River waterfront. The goal was to revive its cultural identity while addressing post-war dilapidation.

Second Phase (2012–2014):

In response to over-commercialization, the government launched a "culture-first" upgrade, prioritizing the goals of "enhancing cultural ambiance and reducing commercial clutter." This phase included constructing the China Imperial Examination Museum and reorganizing commercial functions to align with cultural themes.

Key Revitalization Measures

Three interrelated revitalization measures were implemented, focusing on cultural heritage preservation, functional diversification, and spatial connectivity:

1. **Cultural Heritage Integration:** The district preserved its axial layout, with the Confucian temple at the core, flanked by the examination hall and historic alleys (e.g., Wuyi Lane). Reconstructed buildings, such as the Wang Xie Ancient Residence, adopted Suzhou-style and Huizhou-style architecture, blending local craftsmanship with historical accuracy.
2. **Functional Diversification:** While retaining traditional local snacks and handicraft shops, the district introduced cultural experiences such as Kunqu opera performances, calligraphy workshops, and lantern-making classes, and integrated modern amenities like boutique hotels and immersive theaters. Time-honored brands including Qifangge Restaurant and Jiangyouji Noodle House were restored to anchor cultural authenticity.
3. **Spatial Connectivity:** The Qinhuai River waterfront was revitalized as a pedestrian-friendly corridor, linking scattered historic sites into a cohesive tourist route. Small plazas and alleyways were widened to improve accessibility without disrupting the traditional street grid.

Vibrancy Changes

Social: Daily foot traffic saw a significant increase with a balanced mix of residents, students, and tourists. Community engagement rose through participatory events such as the Qinhuai Lantern Festival, where a large number of volunteers are residents.

Cultural: The district transformed from a commercial tourism hub into a cultural leisure destination. Since its opening in 2017, the Imperial Examination Museum has experienced a gradual increase in the number of visitors. Currently, the average annual number of visitors has exceeded 1.25 million, showing a significant growth compared with the early days of its opening. This shows its role as a cultural repository.

Economic: Small businesses thrive due to government subsidies for heritage-related enterprises. Driven by diversified income streams including nighttime economy (river cruises, night markets) and cultural experiences, the revenue risen.

5.1.2 Shanghai City God Temple (Yuyuan Bazaar)

Historical Context and Revitalization Phases

Shanghai City God Temple was founded during the Ming Dynasty (1403–1424) and evolved into a commercial and religious hub by the late Qing Dynasty. Severely damaged during the Cultural Revolution, it was restored in 1994 as a Taoist temple, with subsequent renovations in 2005 and 2018–2020 to adapt to Shanghai's "global city" ambitions (Zhang, 2009).

The 2018–2020 revitalization marked its most significant transformation, aiming to balance heritage preservation with high-end commercialization. This phase aligned with Shanghai's strategy to position itself as a global tourism and consumption center.

Key Revitalization Measures

To revitalize the district, several key revitalization measures were adopted, centered on heritage-commerce integration, spatial connectivity, and cultural branding:

1. Heritage-Commerce Symbiosis: The 2,000-square-meter temple complex with nine halls (e.g., Huo Guang Hall, God of Wealth Hall) was restored, while surrounding areas were redeveloped into a luxury shopping district.

Historic structures like Yuyuan Garden were integrated with international brands (e.g., Starbucks Reserve) and local heritage retailers (e.g., Nanxiang Steamed Buns).

2. Spatial Integration: The district formed a "temple-garden-commercial" complex, with pedestrianized lanes and plazas linking the temple to Yuyuan Garden and surrounding markets. The Ancient City Park, built in 2002, served as a buffer zone, channeling crowds from the Bund to the bazaar.
3. Cultural Branding: Traditional festivals (e.g., Chinese New Year lantern displays) were expanded into tourist spectacles, blending folk customs with modern marketing. The temple's religious rituals were preserved but framed as cultural performances for visitors (Xu, 2013).

Vibrancy Changes

Social: Daily visitors surged after revitalization, dominated by tourists. However, residents decreased a lot due to rising rents and displacement of affordable shops.

Cultural: Architectural heritage was preserved, but intangible culture (e.g., traditional craftsmanship) declined. A 2023 survey found 68% of visitors perceived the district as "overly commercialized".

Economic: While merchants' incomes are growing, rental costs are also soaring, which is forcing some small businesses to relocate. Luxury retail and tourism now contribute the main proportion of total revenue.

5.1.3 Xi'an Capital City God Temple

Historical Context and Revitalization Phases

Xi'an Capital City God Temple, built in 1384 during the Ming Dynasty, is one of China's "Three Great City God Temples," with a core role in Taoist religious life (Xie, 2010). Neglected in the 20th century, it underwent major restoration in 2003–2005 to reverse decades of decay and commercial encroachment. The project, supported by national heritage policies, prioritized religious

continuity and community engagement over tourism, reflecting Xi'an's strategy to position itself as a "historic cultural capital".

Key Revitalization Measures

1. Religious and Architectural Restoration: Over 90% of the temple's original murals and wooden structures were restored, with commercial stalls relocated outside the temple perimeter. Taoist rituals including seasonal ceremonies and fortune-telling were reinstated as core activities.
2. Community-Centered Management: A local advisory board, comprising residents and Taoist priests, oversaw daily operations, ensuring events (e.g., Chinese New Year blessings) served both devotees and the neighborhood.
3. Cultural Preservation: A heritage center was established to document and transmit intangible practices, such as Taoist music and shadow puppetry, with workshops open to residents and students (Yuan, 2004).

Vibrancy Changes

Social: Most visitors were religious devotees or locals. Community participation in temple maintenance and festivals strengthened social cohesion.

Cultural: The temple regained its status as a national Taoist center, with visitors citing "authentic religious atmosphere" as a key draw. However, cultural innovation is limited, with few modern interpretations of heritage.

Economic: Tourism revenue grew, but commercial activities remain restricted to traditional handicrafts and religious items. Annual revenue from cultural products lags commercialized districts, reflecting its low-key approach to development.

5.1.4 Cross-Case Comparison

The cross-case comparison of these three cases illustrates their differences across four dimensions: Core Strategy, Social Vibrancy, Cultural Vibrancy, and Economic Vibrancy.

Table 2. cross-case comparison of these historic districts

Dimension	Nanjing Confucius Temple	Shanghai City God Temple	Xi'an Capital City God Temple
Core Strategy	Culture-led regeneration with balanced commercialization	Market-driven revitalization prioritizing luxury consumption	Heritage preservation centered on religious continuity
Social Vibrancy	Balanced visitor mix; strong community engagement through cultural events	Tourist-dominated; reduced local participation due to gentrification	Resident-devotee focus; high community involvement in religious/cultural activities
Cultural Vibrancy	Innovative blend of tradition and modernity	Architectural preservation but weakened intangible culture due to over-commercialization	Strong religious/cultural authenticity; limited innovation
Economic Vibrancy	Diversified income (culture, retail, nightlife); supportive policies for small businesses	High revenue from luxury retail/tourism; rent pressures displace small enterprises	Modest, stable growth; limited commercial diversity

5.1.5 Key Findings

Nanjing's model demonstrates that "culture-first" strategies, combined with diversified functions and community participation, can sustain long-term vibrancy. Its success lies in framing heritage as an active, evolving resource

rather than a static commodity.

Shanghai's experience highlights the threats of market-driven revitalization.

While such approaches are economically profitable, they may undermine social and cultural vibrancy through gentrification and the loss of authenticity.

Xi'an's approach shows that giving priority to religious and community needs preserves cultural integrity. However, it may restrict economic dynamism, emphasizing the need for a balance tailored to the district's specific circumstances.

These cases confirm that the success of revitalization depends on aligning strategies with local identity. Nanjing's educational heritage, Shanghai's commercial legacy, and Xi'an's religious significance each require distinct approaches to foster holistic vibrancy.

5.2 Differential Impact of Revitalization Across Three Dimensions of Vibrancy

The findings from the Hefei City God Temple District case study show that revitalization exerts varying impacts on cultural, social, and economic vibrancy. This challenges the oversimplified perspective that revitalization is either entirely successful or a complete failure. These differences across dimensions highlight the need for targeted, dimension-specific strategies rather than uniform, one-size-fits-all approaches.

Culturally, the revitalization achieved partial success in tangible heritage preservation. Restored architectural features such as the Sihui Tower and opera stage have enhanced the district's visual recognizability. However, this progress has been counterbalanced by a decline in intangible cultural vibrancy. This is indicated by the homogenization of cultural activities: post-revitalization events have focused more on generic performances rather than the unique Luzhou opera traditions. It is also reflected in the displacement of traditional crafts by mass-produced souvenirs, specifically Yiwu-style commodities. In contrast, the

Nanjing Confucius Temple's experience showed how sustained cultural vibrancy correlated with deliberate integration of intangible heritage practices alongside physical restoration, suggesting that cultural vibrancy depends on balancing material preservation with living traditions.

Socially, the results highlight a paradox: improved physical infrastructure (wider streets, better lighting) increased perceived safety and interaction among residents (64.29% reported enhanced community interaction) but reduced spontaneous social engagement in public spaces, as illegal vending and informal gathering spots were eliminated. This contrasts sharply with Xi'an Capital City God Temple, where community participation remained robust in part due to resident involvement in temple management and religious ceremonies. This difference suggests that the social vibrancy of historic districts is not only influenced by improvements to physical conditions, but also by maintaining spaces that accommodate both formal and informal social practices—a factor often overlooked in China's infrastructure-centric revitalization model.

Economically, the investment and redistribution of commercial activities involved not just a shift from concentrated zones to a more dispersed pattern but also from temporary stalls to fixed storefronts. This change gradually led to an economic downturn: rising rents pushed out many pre-revitalization businesses, while new businesses faced challenges in finding return customers. The case of Shanghai City God Temple illustrates this process, as the growth of upscale retailing coincided with the erosion of small, community-oriented businesses, with the implication that the economic vibrancy of historic districts requires regulatory measures to protect traditional businesses from market pressures.

5.3 The Paradox of Hardware Upgrade and Vibrancy Erosion

A central finding of this research is the counter-intuitive relationship between physical upgrading and diminishing vibrancy in Hefei City God Temple District. The revitalization initiatives, such as the dual-corridor pedestrian system,

regulated parking, and standardized signage, quite effectively solved practical problems such as congestion and safety but appear to have inadvertently compromised the very characteristics that contributed to the vibrancy of the district: its organic structure, mixed-use character, and informal public spaces. This paradox manifests in three interrelated ways. Firstly, spatial regularization enhances appearance and accessibility but diminishes the potential for informal interaction. Comparison of historic photographs demonstrates a significant decrease in pedestrian flow in major squares due to the removal of street vendors and temporary seating. Secondly, functional zoning divides commercial, residential, and cultural areas. It broke the all-day activity cycle that kept the area vibrant. Residential areas grew quieter, while commercial districts stayed active only during tourist hours. Thirdly, architectural homogenization (imposing Huizhou-style facades) eliminated locally distinctive characteristics, minimizing the district's uniqueness.

Comparative analysis with Nanjing Confucius Temple suggests one possible answer: Nanjing's retention of narrow alleys in addition to broader corridors preserved both character and functionality, and its mixed-use zoning (residential over retail) maintained all-day activity. This suggests that avoiding the revitalization paradox requires balancing physical improvement with the preservation of a long-formed local complexity, which fosters the interaction of space and activities that keep the historic district vibrant.

5.4 Over-Commercialization and the Erosion of Authenticity

Hefei City God Temple District's experience highlights a critical tension in historic district revitalization: the pursuit of economic viability through commercialization often comes at the expense of cultural authenticity. Post-revitalization, the district saw an increase in retail POIs, but this growth was dominated mostly by chain stores, while traditional enterprises (antique dealers,

local craft shops) declined a lot. This pattern aligns with Shanghai City God Temple's experience, indicating that excessive economic activities will undermine the cultural value that attracts visitors in the first place. The erosion of authenticity occurred through two mechanisms. First, performative heritage (e.g., staged cultural events like the festival performances) replaced everyday cultural practices associated with vernacular traditions (e.g., Luzhou Opera). Social media data (Dianping reviews) show an increase in references to "photo opportunities" but a decrease in mentions of "local character." Second, tourist-oriented consumption displaced community-focused services: pre-revitalization, businesses were catered primarily to residents; post-revitalization, this has dropped.

Xi'an Capital City God Temple offers a contrasting model, where strict limits on commercial activities (confined to traditional handicrafts) preserved religious and cultural authenticity, albeit at the cost of economic diversity. Together, these cases suggest that authenticity is not inherently opposed to commercialization but requires curation—ensuring that economic activities remain embedded in local cultural practices rather than replacing them.

5.5 Policy-Practice Disconnect: Structural Tensions in Chinese Revitalization

The Hefei case reveals a persistent gap between revitalization visions and on-the-ground outcomes, rooted in structural tensions within China's built heritage governance. The emphasis on material space over social dynamics reflects a broader national tendency to equate revitalization with visible, quantifiable upgrades. This is evident in Hefei's phased policies (2014–2020), which prioritized physical infrastructure but lacked continuous consideration of community engagement. Besides, the top-down policy formulation often ignores contextual specificity. Hefei's adoption of Huizhou-style architecture, while aesthetically coherent, disregarded local Luzhou architectural traditions (as

criticized by interviewees). This mirrors the Shanghai case, where global tourism imperatives overrode local commercial traditions, suggesting that policy transfer from local commerce to global tourism without contextual adaptation risks cultural alienation.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study examines the impact of revitalization projects on the vibrancy of historic districts in three dimensions: cultural, social, and economic, with the Hefei City God Temple District serving as the primary case study. This study includes a comparative analysis of Shanghai City God Temple, Xi'an City God Temple, and Nanjing Confucius Temple, using a mixed-method approach that integrates GIS spatial analysis, stakeholder questionnaires and interviews, and social media text mining within a three-dimensional vibrancy framework.

Through this design, the study seeks to unpack the complex interactions between revitalization projects and the multifaceted vibrancy of historic districts, addressing tensions between conservation and development.

The empirical findings reveal dual outcomes of revitalization in the Hefei case. Culturally, physical heritage elements such as the opera stage and Sihui Tower were restored, thereby enhancing visual recognizability. However, intangible cultural vibrancy declined. Traditional handicrafts and business formats were replaced by Yiwu-style commodities and chain stores, and local cultural activities became homogeneous with those in other commercial streets across China. Socially, upgraded infrastructure improved formal community interactions and perceived safety. Yet, it undermined informal gathering spaces, reducing spontaneous social engagement among residents. Economically, commercial diversification initially enhanced pedestrian flow, but the rising rents and the loss of specialized markets posed risks to long-term sustainability. Cross-case comparisons further illuminate context-specific dynamics. Nanjing Confucius Temple balanced heritage preservation and commercialization through mixed-use alleyways. Shanghai City God Temple's market-driven approach exposed risks of over-commercialization. Xi'an Capital City God Temple's community-centered model highlighted the value of aligning revitalization with local identities. Collectively, these results confirm that revitalization success depends on context-sensitive strategies that coordinate physical upgrades, cultural

authenticity, and social cohesion.

This study demonstrates that in terms of shaping the vibrancy of historic districts, the revitalization projects involve trade-offs. Physical improvements often conflict with intangible heritage preservation, and economic growth can weaken social cohesion. Yet, context-sensitive interventions tailored to local cultural narratives, community needs, and economic structures can provide a pathway to balance these tensions, as seen in the contrasting outcomes of the four cases.

In terms of practice, this study provides some actionable insights. First, intangible cultural heritage should be prioritized. For example, supporting traditional crafts and community-led events (e.g., Luzhou opera performances) can counter commercial homogenization. Second, urban design should balance order and spontaneity: preserving informal spaces like street vendors and pocket parks, as Nanjing did, can sustain social vibrancy. Third, participatory governance is essential. Information disclosure and public consultations can align top-down plans with grassroots needs and enhance regional cohesion. Finally, economic sustainability requires inclusivity and regulations. Regulating rent increases and subsidizing local traditional businesses can prevent displacement.

The mixed-methods design used in this study provides a relatively comprehensive assessment of vibrancy. However, this study has certain limitations in terms of methodology. Temporally, pre-revitalization data (e.g., 2014 POI density) relied on incomplete archival records, limiting the precision of before-after comparisons. Spatially, the focus on Hefei City God Temple, while deeply contextual, restricts generalizability—though cross-case analysis with three comparable sites mitigates this to some extent. Methodologically, the convenience sampling of tourists may overrepresent younger, more frequent visitors, underweighting the perspectives of infrequent users or non-visitors. Therefore, this study also calls for the establishment of long-term information monitoring and recording of the historic district's operational status, which will

provide valuable comparative longitudinal data for ongoing urban construction and policy regulation and related research. In addition, exploring the role of digital technologies (such as the public voice reflected by social media and real pedestrian data provided by geographic big data) in bridging the gap between policy and practice may produce valuable insights, particularly as China's historical districts increasingly integrate smart city technologies.

Taken together, a vibrant historic district is not merely a product of physical design but emerges from the dynamic interplay of cultural continuity, social cohesion, and sustainable economic activity. Success in revitalization is not about creating a static urban garden or heritage exhibit, but about fostering a living space that can continually adapt to changing needs while retaining a connection to local identity.

Appendices

Informed Consent Form

The impact of revitalization on vibrancy of historic districts: the case of Hefei City God Temple

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Zhou Limao in the *Department of Landscape Architecture* at the University of Hong Kong.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore how the revitalization of Hefei City God Temple District affects its cultural, social, and economic vibrancy. The findings may help improve future revitalization plans for historic districts.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will either complete a questionnaire (taking about 10–15 minutes) or take part in a semi-structured interview (lasting 15–30 minutes). For interviews, with your permission, the conversation may be audio-recorded to ensure accurate records.

POTENTIAL RISKS / DISCOMFORTS AND THEIR MINIMIZATION

Participating in this study involves very low risk. You may feel slightly uncomfortable when asked about personal or economic matters (e.g., income). You have the right to skip any question that makes you uncomfortable, and the research team will respect your choice. If you experience any discomfort, please contact the researcher for support.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

While there are no direct benefits to you, your participation will help us better understand the effects of historic district revitalization. This may inform future projects, contributing to better community environments and improved quality of life for residents.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and used only for this research. Your personal identity will be removed from all data, which will be stored and analyzed anonymously. If your interview is recorded, the audio file will be labeled with an anonymous code. You have the right to review or request the deletion of the recording at any time. All data will be stored on encrypted devices, accessible only to the research team.

DATA RETENTION

Data containing personal identifiers will be kept for 5 years after the publication of the first research paper. After this period, all personal identifiers will be removed, and only anonymous research data will be retained for long-term archiving.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. This means that you can choose to stop at any time without negative consequences.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact [**Title & Name of the principal investigator (telephone number (for studies conducted in Hong Kong)/email address (for overseas studies))**]. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Human Research Ethics Committee, HKU (3917-5267).

SIGNATURE

I _____ (Name of Participant)

understand the procedures described above and agree to participate in this study.

I ** agree / do not agree to the [video-recording / audio-recording] during the procedure. [Please delete this sentence if the process does not involve video-recording and audio-recording.]

I ** wish / do not wish to be identified. (if the procedure will involve personal interview)

(** Please delete as appropriate.)

Signature of Participant Date

Date of Preparation: [Date]

HREC Approval Expiration date:

HREC Reference Number: [The reference number is indicated in the letter of approval for ethical clearance issued by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).]

历史街区活化项目对街区活力的影响调查问卷
Questionnaire on the Impact of Historic District Revitalization Projects on District Vibrancy

尊敬的参与者：

您好！本问卷旨在研究合肥城隍庙历史街区活化项目对街区活力的影响。您的回答将为本研究提供重要数据，所有信息仅用于学术分析并严格保密。感谢您的支持！

Dear Participants,

Hello! This questionnaire aims to study the impact of the revitalization project of Hefei City God Temple District on the district's vibrancy. Your answers will provide important data for this research. All information will only be used for academic analysis and strictly kept confidential. Thank you for your support!

第一部分：基本信息

Part 1: Basic Information

1. 您的身份是：

Your identity

- ☐ 本地居民（住____年）resident (has lived for ____ years)
- ☐ 游客（从____来）tourist (come from ____)
- ☐ 工作人员（工作____年）worker (has worked for ____ years)

2. 您的年龄：

Your age

- ☐ 不到 30 岁 under 30 years old
- ☐ 30 岁-60 岁 30-60 years old
- ☐ 60 岁以上 over 60 years old

3. 您来城隍庙的次数：

How often do you come to City God Temple District?

- ☐ 天天来 every day
- ☐ 每周几次 several times per week
- ☐ 偶尔来 occasionally
- ☐ 第一次来 the first time

第二部分：对活化项目的整体评价

Part 2: Overall Evaluation of the Revitalization Project

1. 您认为本街区的活化项目是否改善了整体环境？

Do you think the revitalization project has improved the overall environment?

- ☐ 显著改善 significantly improved
- ☐ 略有改善 slightly improved
- ☐ 没有变化 no change
- ☐ 略有恶化 slightly deteriorated
- ☐ 显著恶化 significantly deteriorated

2. 您对活化后的街区满意度如何？（1-5 分，1=非常不满意，5=非常满意）
How satisfied are you with the revitalized district? (1-5 points, 1=Very dissatisfied, 5=Very satisfied):
- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 基础设施 Infrastructure: | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] |
| 文化氛围 cultural atmosphere : | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] |
| 商业多样性 commercial diversity: | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] |
| 公共空间（广场、公园） public space (squares, parks): | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] |

第三部分：文化活力评估

Cultural Part 3: Cultural Vitality Assessment

1. 活化后，您认为城隍庙的遗产保护效果如何？
How do you think of the protective effect after revitalisation?
- ☐ 很好 Good
- ☐ 一般 Average
- ☐ 较差 Poor
2. 活化后您是否还会参与街区的文化活动（如庙会、非遗展示）？
Do you still participate in cultural activities after revitalisation?
- ☐ 经常参与 regularly
- ☐ 偶尔参与 occasionally
- ☐ 从不参与 never

第四部分：社会活力评估

Part 4: Social Vitality Assessment

1. 您认为目前街道对比之前是否更热闹了？
Do you think the current district is livelier than before?
- ☐ 更安静了 more quiet
- ☐ 和以前一样 no difference from before
- ☐ 更热闹了 more lively
2. 您在公共空间停留的时间和改造前的对比？
Compare the time you stay in public spaces with that before the revitalization
- ☐ 比改造前更爱待着了 more
- ☐ 差不多 no difference
- ☐ 不如以前待得久 less
3. 改造后您和邻里的互动有何变化？
How has your interaction with neighbors changed after the renovation?
- ☐ 显著增加 significantly increased
- ☐ 略有增加 slightly increased
- ☐ 没有变化 no change
- ☐ 略有减少 slightly decreased
- ☐ 显著减少 significantly decreased

第五部分：经济活力评估

Part 5: Economic Vitality Assessment

1. 您认为活化后街区的商业类型是否多样化？

Do you think the types of businesses in the district are diversified after revitalization?

- ☐ 非常多样化 very diverse
☐ 比较多样化 diverse
☐ 一般 average
☐ 较为单一 limited
☐ 非常单一 very limited

2. 您认为活化项目是否带动了本地就业？

Do you think the revitalisation project has driven local employment?

- ☐ 显著带动 significantly driven
☐ 略有带动 slightly driven
☐ 没有影响 no effect
☐ 略有减少 slightly decreased
☐ 显著减少 significantly decreased

3. 您认为现在的收入和改造前相比如何？

How do you think your current income compares with that before the renovation?

- ☐ 挣得更多了 earn more
☐ 和以前差不多 the same as before
☐ 不如以前 earn less

4. 您在城隍庙消费的金额跟改造前相比如何？

How does the amount you spend in City God Temple District compare with that before the revitalization?

- ☐ 消费更多了 spend more
☐ 和以前差不多 the same as before
☐ 比以前更少 spend less

第六部分：开放性问题

Part 6: Open-ended Questions

1. 您认为城隍庙活化项目效果如何？

What do you think of the effect of the Chenghuang Temple revitalization project?

2. 您对未来的城隍庙历史街区有何期待？

What are your expectations for the future of Hefei Chenghuang Temple Historic District?

问卷结束

感谢您的耐心填写！如有其他意见，欢迎联系：18510281213

End of the Questionnaire

Thank you for your patience in filling out the questionnaire! If you have any other comments, please feel free to contact us: 18510281213

Interview Outline on the Revitalization Project of Hefei City God Temple Historic District

I. Changes in Spatial Functions and Usage

1. What changes have occurred in the areas you frequently visited before and after the revitalization? Have the main functions (such as shopping, socializing, leisure, etc.) been adjusted? How have these changes affected your usage habits?
2. During the revitalization period, did you turn to other alternative places (such as City God Temple Grand World) for activities? What are the differences between these alternative places and the renovated district?
3. Has the physical environment of the district after revitalization (such as widened aisles, unified stalls, street scale) improved the walking experience? Is there a contradiction between this improvement and the "shopping atmosphere" in your memory?
4. How familiar are you with the core buildings in the district (such as Sihui Tower, Niangniang Hall, Stage Square)? Have the functions or attractiveness of these buildings changed?
5. How has the frequency of your visits to the district changed compared with before the revitalization? What are the reasons?

II. Residential Structure and Social Interaction

1. After the revitalization, have there been obvious changes in the residential structure around the district (such as age, occupation, length of residence)? How do your ways of interacting with neighbors and merchants (such as communication content, frequency) differ from those before the revitalization?
2. After the revitalization, has the street scale (such as widening) affected the communication distance or frequency between you and neighbors? In what specific aspects?
3. Has urban polycentrism (such as the rise of other business districts) dispersed the flow of people in the district? How has this affected your interaction with old merchants?
4. After the revitalization, has the content of your communication with merchants changed due to changes in store types?

III. Cultural Elements and Authenticity

1. What do you think of the architectural style of the district after revitalization? Do you think it reflects the traditional architectural characteristics of Hefei?
2. Do the visual elements of the district make you feel that "memories of the old city have been lost"? What specific visual changes are the most obvious?
3. Have you paid attention to the venues where specific cultural activities in the district are held? What is the current usage status of these venues?
4. Through what channels do you learn about cultural activities in the district? Are there differences in the willingness to participate in these activities among different age groups (such as childhood vs. now)? What factors affect the willingness to participate (such as activity form, time, content)?

IV. Commercial Formats and Operational Status

1. After the revitalization, have you noticed the operational status of some characteristic old shops? What factors do you think are related to changes in their customer flow?
2. Does the location distribution of new business formats affect their complementarity with old shops? How do you think the two can coexist better?
3. Do you think there are problems with the current business formats in the district? What are the problems (such as homogenization, idle shops, etc.)?
4. Do you think the disappearance of characteristic business formats such as old goods markets and affordable convenience services has weakened the uniqueness of the district? Is it necessary to restore such business formats?

V. Infrastructure and Environmental Experience

1. After the revitalization, does the infrastructure of the district meet your needs? What problems most affect your visit frequency?
2. Has the hygienic condition of the district improved after the revitalization? How has this improvement affected your activity experience?
3. What do you think of the "ban on street vending" policy? While regulating operations, has it affected the vitality or convenience of the district?

VI. Suggestions for Improvement and Future Expectations

1. Compared with historic districts in other cities, what advantages or disadvantages do you think Hefei City God Temple has in terms of vitality, cultural characteristics, or commercial operation?
2. If you were to put forward a suggestion for the subsequent revitalization plan, which problem would you prioritize solving? Why?

合肥城隍庙历史街区活化项目采访问题大纲

一、空间功能与使用变化

1. 改造前后，您常去的区域有哪些变化？主要使用功能（如购物、社交、休闲等）是否有调整？这些变化对您的使用习惯有何影响？
2. 改造期间，您是否会转向其他替代场所（如城隍庙大世界）活动？这些替代场所与改造后的街区有何差异？
3. 改造后街区的物理环境（如过道拓宽、统一摊位、街道尺度）是否改善了步行体验？这种改善与您记忆中的“购物氛围”是否存在矛盾？
4. 您对街区内核心建筑（如思惠楼、娘娘殿、戏台广场）的认知度如何？这些建筑的功能或吸引力是否有变化？
5. 改造后，您到访街区的频率与改造前相比有何变化？原因是什么？

二、居民结构与社会互动

1. 改造后，街区周边的居民结构（如年龄、职业、居住时长）是否有明显变化？您与邻里、商户的互动方式（如交流内容、频率）与改造前相比有何差异？
2. 改造后，街道尺度（如变宽）是否影响了您与街坊的交流距离或频率？具体体现在哪些方面？
3. 城市多中心化（如其他商圈兴起）是否分散了街区的人流？这对您与老商户的互动有何影响？
4. 改造后，您与商户的交流内容是否因店铺类型变化而改变？

三、文化元素与原真性

1. 您如何看待改造后街区的建筑风格？是否认为其体现了合肥本地传统建筑特色？
2. 街区的视觉元素是否让您觉得“丢失了老城记忆”？具体哪些视觉变化最明显？
3. 您是否关注过街区内特定文化活动的举办地点？这些地点的使用现状如何？
4. 您通过哪些途径知晓街区的文化活动？不同年龄段（如小时候 vs 现在）对这些活动的参与意愿是否有差异？参与意愿受哪些因素影响（如活动形式、时间、内容）？

四、商业业态与经营状况

1. 改造后，您是否注意到某些特色老店的经营状况？您认为它们的客流变化与哪些因素相关？
2. 新业态的位置分布是否影响其与老店的互补性？您认为两者如何更好地共生？
3. 您认为街区当前的业态是否存在问题？存在哪些问题（如同质化、闲置店铺等）？
4. 您认为旧物市场、平价便民服务等特色业态的消失，是否削弱了街区的独特性？是否有必要恢复此类业态？

五、基础设施与环境体验

1. 改造后，街区的基础设施是否满足您的需求？哪些问题最影响您的到访频率？
2. 改造后街区的卫生条件是否有改善？这种改善对您的活动体验有何影响？

3. 您如何看待“禁止沿街摆摊”政策？它是否在规范经营的同时，影响了街区的烟火气或便民性？

六、改进建议与未来期待

1. 与其他城市历史街区相比，您认为合肥城隍庙在活力、文化特色或商业运营上有哪些优势或不足？
2. 如果让您给后续的改造方案提一个改进建议，您会优先解决什么问题？为什么？

Bibliography

- Aletta, F. and Kang, J. (2018) Towards an Urban Vibrancy Model: A Soundscape Approach. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15 (8): 1712. doi:10.3390/ijerph15081712.
- Alias, Z., Zawawi, E.M.A., Yusof, K., et al. (2014) “Determining Critical Success Factors of Project Management Practice: A conceptual framework.” In Abbas, M.Y. (ed.). *AMER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON QUALITY OF LIFE, AICQOL2014*. Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences Amsterdam, 2014. Elsevier Science Bv. pp. 61–69. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.041.
- Botta, F. and Gutiérrez-Roig, M. (2021) Modelling urban vibrancy with mobile phone and OpenStreetMap data Mehmood, R. (ed.). *PLOS ONE*, 16 (6): e0252015. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0252015.
- Cai, Z. and Lu, M. (2018) Social Integration Measurement of Inhabitants in Historic Blocks: The Case of Harbin, China. *Sustainability*, 10 (8): 2825. doi:10.3390/su10082825.
- Chan, E. and Lee, G.K.L. (2008) Critical factors for improving social sustainability of urban renewal projects. *SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH*, 85 (2): 243–256. doi:10.1007/s11205-007-9089-3.
- Chen, D. (2024) Examining urban design strategies in historic districts: a systematic literature review. *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers - Urban Design and Planning*, pp. 1–8. doi:10.1680/jurdp.24.00046.
- Chen, L., Zhao, L., Xiao, Y., et al. (2022) Investigating the spatiotemporal pattern between the built environment and urban vibrancy using big data in Shenzhen, China. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 95: 101827. doi:10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2022.101827.
- Chen S. (2020) 城市历史肌理改造与更新研究——以合肥市城隍庙为例 [Research on the transformation and renewal of urban historical texture: A case study of Hefei City God Temple]. *安徽建筑 [Anhui Architecture]*, 27 (5): 3–4. doi:10.16330/j.cnki.1007-7359.2020.05.001.
- Chen, T., Hui, E.C.M., Wu, J., et al. (2019) Identifying urban spatial structure and urban vibrancy in highly dense cities using georeferenced social media data. *Habitat International*, 89: 102005. doi:10.1016/j.habitatint.2019.102005.
- Chhetri, P., Stimson, R.J. and Western, J. (2006) Modelling the Factors of Neighbourhood Attractiveness Reflected in Residential Location Decision Choices. *Studies in Regional Science*, 36 (2): 393–417. doi:10.2457/srs.36.393.
- Dong Y. (2014) 合肥市城隍庙片区历史演变及发展研究 [Research on the Historical

- Evolution and Development of Chenghuangmiao District in Hefei City]. 硕士学位论文, 清华大学 [Master's thesis, Tsinghua University]. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD201502&filename=1015038826.nh> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Doratli, N. (2005) Revitalizing historic urban quarters: A model for determining the most relevant strategic approach. *European Planning Studies*, 13 (5): 749–772. doi:10.1080/09654310500139558.
- Dougal, C., Parsons, C.A. and Titman, S. (2015) Urban Vibrancy and Corporate Growth. *The Journal of Finance*, 70 (1): 163–210. doi:10.1111/jofi.12215.
- Gao Y. and Lu X. (2020) Quantitative study on the vitality of Guangzhou historical and cultural blocks under the background of big data. 中国名城 [Famous Chinese Cities], (7): 53–61. doi:10.19924/j.cnki.1674-4144.2020.07.008.
- Guan, Y. and Yang, Y. (2023) *Research on the evaluation of tourism route vitality in historical urban areas based on review data: Taking the historical urban area of Macao Peninsula as an example*.
- Hao, H., Yao, E., Yang, Y., et al. (2024) How to build vibrant communities by utilizing functional zones? A community-detection-based approach for revealing the association between land use and community vibrancy. *Cities*, 155: 105431. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2024.105431.
- Huang, B., Zhou, Y., Li, Z., et al. (2020) Evaluating and characterizing urban vibrancy using spatial big data: Shanghai as a case study. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 47 (9): 1543–1559. doi:10.1177/2399808319828730.
- Huang, Y. and Shi, Y. (2015a) Review on Historical District Preservation And Renovation Practice. *Planners*, 31 (4): 98–104. Available at: https://traverse-cnki-net.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CCJD&dbname=CCJDLAST2&filename=GHS�202300029&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=jvAQuqqbGAFh92al4EGeezwWsaMS4dRPcaNO_-gtXH3vAQdP8bKUGmCNn8p0w7F (Accessed: 27 November 2024).
- ICOMOS (1931) *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*. Available at: https://civvih.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Athens-Charter_1931.pdf (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- ICOMOS (1964) *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter)*. Available at: <https://www.icomos.org/en/participer/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/157-the-venice-charter> (Accessed: 31 October 2024).
- ICOMOS (1987) *CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC TOWNS*

- AND URBAN AREAS (WASHINGTON CHARTER 1987)*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/towns_e.pdf (Accessed: 31 October 2024).
- ICOMOS (1994) *The Nara Document on Authenticity*. Available at: <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- ICOMOS (2005) *XI'AN DECLARATION ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE SETTING OF HERITAGE STRUCTURES, SITES AND AREAS*. Available at: <https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/xian-declaration.pdf> (Accessed: 31 October 2024).
- Jacobs, J. (1964) *The death and life of great American cities*. Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with Cape.
- Kan X. (2019) 合肥市城隍庙保护与发展策略研究 [Research on the Protection and Development Strategy of Hefei City God Temple]. 安徽建筑 [Anhui Architecture], 26 (2): 13–15. doi:10.16330/j.cnki.1007-7359.2019.02.006.
- Kong Z., Xiao J., Xia Y., et al. (2023) 公众视角下的城市更新满意度评价及规划启示 [Urban renewal satisfaction evaluation and planning enlightenment from the public perspective]. 规划师 [Planners], 39 (3): 57–63. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2023&filename=ghsi202303008> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Li C. (2011) “历史文化街区” 相关概念的生成、解读与辨析 [The Generation, Interpretation and Analysis of the Concept of "Historical and Cultural Block"]. 规划师 [Planners], 27 (4): 100–103. doi:10.3969/j.issn.1006-0022.2011.04.018.
- Li, L. and Tang, Y. (2024) Towards the Contemporary Conservation of Cultural Heritages: An Overview of Their Conservation History. *HERITAGE*, 7 (1): 175–192. doi:10.3390/heritage7010009.
- Li, M., Liu, J., Lin, Y., et al. (2021) Revitalizing historic districts: Identifying built environment predictors for street vibrancy based on urban sensor data. *Cities*, 117: 103305. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2021.103305.
- Liu, M., Jiang, Y. and He, J. (2021) Quantitative Evaluation on Street Vitality: A Case Study of Zhoujiadu Community in Shanghai. *Sustainability*, 13 (6): 3027. doi:10.3390/su13063027.
- Liu S. and Li Y. (2015) 城市更新中城市传统文化与当代文化的处理策略研究——以合肥市城隍庙地段城市设计为例 [Research on the Treatment Strategies of Traditional and Contemporary Urban Culture in Urban Renewal: A Case Study of the Urban Design of Chenghuang Temple in Hefei]. 中外建筑 [Chinese and foreign architecture], (7): 107–110. doi:10.19940/j.cnki.1008-0422.2015.07.030.
- Lynch, K. (1984) *Lynch, K. (1984) Good city form*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

- Masuwan, K. and Lertwattanakur, P. (2020) Incorporating Form-Based Codes into the Design-Based Approach to Historic Building Conservation in Phuket, Thailand. *Sustainability*, 12 (9): 3859. doi:10.3390/su12093859.
- Meng, Y. and Xing, H. (2019) Exploring the relationship between landscape characteristics and urban vibrancy: A case study using morphology and review data. *Cities*, 95: 102389. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2019.102389.
- Montgomery, J. (1998) Making a city: Urbanity, vitality and urban design. *Journal of urban design*, 3 (1): 93–116. doi:10.1080/13574809808724418.
- Ren T. (2019) *Research on the Strategy of Shaping Towns of Tourism and Leisure in Beijing Based on SPSS / POI*. In 中国重庆 [China Chongqing], 19 October 2019. pp. 1282–1303. doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2019.024682.
- Ren, X. (2024) Comparative Study on the Vitality of Typical Historical Districts in Beijing from the Perspective of Scene Theory. *Academic Journal of Architecture and Geotechnical Engineering*, 6 (1). doi:10.25236/AJAGE.2024.060101.
- Ruan, Y. and Gu, X. (2004) An Analysis about the Practical Patterns to Consene the Historic Districts in China. *Tongji University Journal Social Sci ence Section*, 15 (5). Available at: <https://tra-oversea-cnki-net.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2004&filename=TJDS200405000&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=xTXyGW8wQ1sfkJER9ehy9-LtFzWOg5Zymgjx06OoTpk8aIuvW0IS-mNqdE014Ghs> (Accessed: 31 October 2024).
- Ruan Y. and Sun M. (2001) 我国历史街区保护与规划的若干问题研究 [Research on Several Issues of Protection and Planning of Historic Districts in my country]. 城市规划 [urban planning], (10): 25–32. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2001&filename=csg200110004> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Rypkema, D. and Cheong, C. (n.d.) *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation, A Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*.
- Shelton, T., Poorthuis, A. and Zook, M. (2015) Social media and the city: Rethinking urban socio-spatial inequality using user-generated geographic information. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 142: 198–211. doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2015.02.020.
- Shi Y., Zhao Y. and Hu G. (2023) 国内外历史街区保护理论、实践与管理体系统研究进展及启示 [Research progress and enlightenment on the theory, practice and management system of historical block protection at home and abroad]. 规划师 [Planner], pp. 257–269. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CCJD&dbname=CCJD LAST2&filename=ghsl202300029> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).

- Smelser, N.J. and Baltes, P.B. (eds) (2001) *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*. 1st ed. Amsterdam ; New York: Elsevier.
- Steinberg, F. (1996) Conservation and rehabilitation of urban heritage in developing countries. *Habitat International*, 20 (3): 463–475. doi:10.1016/0197-3975(96)00012-4.
- Sung, H.-G., Go, D.-H. and Choi, C.G. (2013) Evidence of Jacobs's street life in the great Seoul city: Identifying the association of physical environment with walking activity on streets. *Cities*, 35: 164–173. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2013.07.010.
- Tu, W., Zhu, T., Xia, J., et al. (2020a) Portraying the spatial dynamics of urban vibrancy using multisource urban big data. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 80: 101428. doi:10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2019.101428.
- Tu, W., Zhu, T., Xia, J., et al. (2020b) Portraying the spatial dynamics of urban vibrancy using multisource urban big data. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 80: 101428. doi:10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2019.101428.
- UNESCO (1976) *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-concerning-safeguarding-and-contemporary-role-historic-areas> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Wallace, A.F.C. (1956) Revitalization Movements[J]. *American anthropologist*, 58 (2): 264–281. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20121004221923/https://www.sjsu.edu/people/mira.amiras/courses/c10/s2/AFC_Wallace_RevitalizationMvt.pdf (Accessed: 27 November 2024).
- Wen, Z., Zhao, J. and Li, M. (2024) A Study on the Influencing Factors of the Vitality of Street Corner Spaces in Historic Districts: The Case of Shanghai Bund Historic District. *Buildings*, 14 (9): 2947. doi:10.3390/buildings14092947.
- Xie Y. (2010) 城隍庙及其周边空间形态的演进——以西安都城隍庙民俗大观园设计实践为例 [The evolution of the spatial form of the City God Temple and its surroundings: A case study of the design practice of the Folk Customs Grand View Garden in the City God Temple in Xi'an]. 硕士学位论文, 西安建筑科技大学 [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology]. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD2010&filename=2010134652.nh> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Xu, R. (2014) 大城市歷史街區活力調查與提升對策研究——以天津市鼓樓商業街地段為例 [Activity Investigation and Promotion Strategies of Historical Blocks in the Metropolis: A Case Study of Gulou Commercial Lots in Tianjin]. 華中建筑 [Central China Architecture], 2014,32(07):109-112.DOI:10.13942/j.cnki.hzjz.2014.07.022.

- Xu W. (2013) 上海城隍庙旅游的国内外游客感知差异研究及其营销策略 [A study on the differences in perceptions of domestic and foreign tourists on Shanghai City God Temple tourism and its marketing strategies.]. 硕士学位论文, 复旦大学 [Master's thesis, Fudan University]. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD201601&filename=1015422821.nh> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Yildiz, S., Kivrak, S. and Arslan, G. (2019) Contribution of Built Environment Design Elements to the Sustainability of Urban Renewal Projects: Model Proposal. *JOURNAL OF URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT*, 145 (1): 04018045. doi:10.1061/(ASCE)UP.1943-5444.0000493.
- Yu, B., Sun, J., Wang, Z., et al. (2024) Influencing Factors of Street Vitality in Historic Districts Based on Multisource Data: Evidence from China. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 13 (8): 277. doi:10.3390/ijgi13080277.
- Yuan X. (2004) 西安城隍廟歷史街區保護與更新研究 [Research on the Protection and Renewal of Xi'an City God Temple Historic District]. 碩士學位論文, 西安建筑科技大学 [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology]. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD9904&filename=2004072799.nh> (Accessed: 26 November 2024).
- Yue, W., Chen, Y., Zhang, Q., et al. (2019) Spatial Explicit Assessment of Urban Vitality Using Multi-Source Data: A Case of Shanghai, China. *Sustainability*, 11 (3): 638. doi:10.3390/su11030638.
- Yue, Y., Zhuang, Y., Yeh, A.G.O., et al. (2017) Measurements of POI-based mixed use and their relationships with neighbourhood vibrancy. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 31 (4): 658–675. doi:10.1080/13658816.2016.1220561.
- Zhang, A., Li, W., Wu, J., et al. (2021a) How can the urban landscape affect urban vitality at the street block level? A case study of 15 metropolises in China. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 48 (5): 1245–1262. doi:10.1177/2399808320924425.
- Zhang, F., Liu, Q. and Zhou, X. (2022a) Vitality Evaluation of Public Spaces in Historical and Cultural Blocks Based on Multi-Source Data, a Case Study of Suzhou Changmen. *Sustainability*, 14 (21): 14040. doi:10.3390/su142114040.
- Zhang, F., Liu, Q. and Zhou, X. (2022b) Vitality Evaluation of Public Spaces in Historical and Cultural Blocks Based on Multi-Source Data, a Case Study of Suzhou Changmen. *Sustainability*, 14 (21): 14040. doi:10.3390/su142114040.
- Zhang, W. and Xin, J. (2023) Green Spaces and the Spontaneous Renewal of Historic Neighborhoods: A Case Study of Beijing's Dashilar Community. *Sustainability*, 15 (24): 16566. doi:10.3390/su152416566.

- Zhang X. (2009) 关于历史的主题公园——都市历史空间的文脉窘境：以上海城隍庙、豫园地段为例 [A Theme Park About History: The Contextual Dilemma of Urban Historical Space: A Case Study of Shanghai's City God Temple and Yu Garden]. *In* 28 October 2009. p. 18. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CPFD&dbname=CPFD0914&filename=jzxsx200910001015> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Zhang X. (2018) 我国历史街区保护研究综述 [A review of research on the protection of historical blocks in my country]. *In* China Zhejiang Hangzhou, 2018. p. 10. Available at: <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CPFD&dbname=CPFDLAST2019&filename=zhcg201811009092> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).
- Zhang, Y., Chen, Z. and Chen, Z. (2021b) *Temporal and Spatial Characteristics and Influencing Factors of Public Space Vitality in Historical Blocks—Taking Songcheng First Road in Zhaoqing as an Example*. *In* Xiamen, China, 2021. doi:10.2991/assehr.k.211122.148.
- Zhang, Y. and Han, Y. (2022) Vitality evaluation of historical and cultural districts based on the values dimension: districts in Beijing City, China. *Heritage Science*, 10 (1): 137. doi:10.1186/s40494-022-00776-5.
- Zhang, Y., Li, C., Li, J., et al. (2024a) Understanding street-level urban vibrancy via spatial-temporal Wi-Fi data analytics: Case LivingLine Shanghai. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 51 (4): 803–822. doi:10.1177/23998083231198721.
- Zhang, Y., Li, C., Li, J., et al. (2024b) Understanding street-level urban vibrancy via spatial-temporal Wi-Fi data analytics: Case LivingLine Shanghai. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 51 (4): 803–822. doi:10.1177/23998083231198721.
- Zhou, T., Zhou, Y. and Liu, G. (2017) Comparison of critical success paths for historic district renovation and redevelopment projects in China. *Habitat International*, 67: 54–68. doi:10.1016/j.habitatint.2017.06.008.
- Zhu, X.Q., Sun, J.J. and Fu, J.Y. (2013) Research on Mixed Vitality of Historic District and Space Mode Optimization: A Comparison between Hefang Street and Xinyifang in Hangzhou. *Applied Mechanics and Materials*, 357–360. doi:10.4028/www.scientific.net/AMM.357-360.1724.
- Zhuang (2023) 历史文化街区项目改造中活力影响因素研究 [Reserch on Influencing Factors of Vitality in The Reconstruction of Historical and Cultural Blocks Project]. 硕士学位论文，东北财经大学 [Master's thesis, Dongbei University of Finance and Economics]. doi:10.27006/d.cnki.gdbcu.2022.000901.
- Zou, H., Liu, R., Cheng, W., et al. (2023) The Association between Street Built Environment and Street Vitality Based on Quantitative Analysis in Historic

Areas: A Case Study of Wuhan, China. *Sustainability*, 15 (2): 1732.
doi:10.3390/su15021732.