

# THE INSPIRATIONS ON REGENERATION OF THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL DISTRICT OF TAISHAN IN LIGHT OF “EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE”

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**Abstract:** The culture-oriented regeneration of the historical and cultural districts has been a significant trend in Europe. In this study, three strategies for regeneration of the historical and cultural district of Taishan are constructed in light of the successful experiences of “European Capital of Culture”: “Target-Plan” master planning, “Government-Public” multi-participant organization and “Space-Action” synergy. And some inspirations regarding the regeneration of the historical and cultural district of Taishan are stated tentatively.

**Keywords:** European capital of culture; Culture-oriented policy; Taishan; Historical and cultural district; Regeneration

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cultural construction has attracted more and more attentions in the regeneration of historical and cultural districts (HCD). As a culture-oriented policy tool and implementation strategy for the regeneration of HCD, “European Capital of Culture” (ECC) has been adopted around the world constantly since the end of last century. Concerned cultural development policies are formulated in order to promote the expression of urban characteristic cultural values, strengthen local people’s self-identity and drive urban development and social integration[1]. Since 1985, more than 60 cities and regions in Europe have been awarded as ECC (Table 1), such as Ruhr[2] in Germany and Liverpool[3] in the UK etc., which have broken a new ground for urban regeneration to present local cultural feature, cultural heritage and cultural innovation by exploring the original urban cultural characteristics. Similar renewal programs also have been implemented for the HCDs in China, such as Yong Qing Fang[4] in Guangzhou and Blue House Conservation[5] in Hongkong and so on, demonstrating the vitality and effectiveness of the culture-oriented regeneration of HCD.

However there are rare systematic studies regarding the influence of ECC on regeneration of HCD at present. It is discovered existing studies typically focus on individual cases of the awarded cities in Europe when the keywords such as “cultural capital”, ECC, “culture-oriented” and “cultural city” etc. are inputted for literature retrieval, which are the small sample research and inadequate to guide the construction project for regeneration of current HCDs due to lack of systematic applicability.

This study mainly discusses the three aspects as follow: the regeneration modes of HCDs under the policy of ECC in a holistic view, suggestions to regeneration of the HCD of Taishan based on the guidelines of ECC and the analysis on the motivation and social background of ECC for providing some experiences and inspirations.

## 2 REGENERATION MODES OF HCDS UNDER THE POLICY OF ECC

As a practice of urban regeneration, ECC has formed relatively completed regeneration modes after 35 years of development since 1985. The study attempts to elaborate the key points of the implementation of ECC and its application in the regeneration of HCDs (Table 2) and takes Ruhr in Germany which was awarded as ECC in 2010 as the typical case for analysis (Figure 1 & Table 3). Total three types of modes are classified and summarized including the “Target-Plan” master strategy planning mode, “Government-Public” multi-participant mode and “Space-Action” synergistic mode as below:

**Table 1:** Cities Awarded as ECC from 1985 to 2021

Stage of Development	Selected Cities	Distribution Area	Development Feature	
Stage 1 1985 - 1996	1985	Athens (Greece)	1. The project was hosted by the 12 EEC countries internally in turn, the cities were nationally nominated and 1 city was nominated per year (most of which were capitals or important cultural cities) 2. The planning term was no more than 2 years 3. Cultural festivals and celebrations were the main events	
	1986	Florence (Italy)		
	1987	Amsterdam (Netherlands)		
	1988	Berlin (Germany)		Twelve EEC countries
	1989	Paris (France)		
	1990	Glasgow (UK)		
	1991	Dublin (Ireland)		
1992	Madrid (Spain)			

	1993	Antwerp (Belgium)		
	1994	Lisbon (Portugal)		
	1995	Luxembourg (Luxembourg)		
	1996	Copenhagen (Denmark)		
	1997	Salonica (Greece)		
	1998	Stockholm (Sweden)		
	1999	Weimar (Germany)		
Stage 2		Avignon (France), Bergen (Norway), Bologna (Italy), Brussels (Belgium), Helkising (Finland), Krakow (Poland), Reykjavik (Iceland), Prague (Czech Republic) and Santiago de Compostela (Spain)	13 EU nations, 2 nations about to join in EU and 1 non-EU nation	1. The selection scope was expanded to other European nations 2. The procedural selection criteria were fulfilled 3. The balance among different areas selected was considered 4. The number of applicant cities was increased at the millennium
1997 - 2004	2000			
	2001	Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Porto (Portugal)		
	2002	Bruges (Belgium) and Salamanca (Spain)		
	2003	Graz (Austria)		
	2004	Genoa (Italy) and Lille (France)		
	2005	Cork (Ireland)		
	2006	Patras (Greece)		
	2007	Luxembourg (Luxembourg) and Sibiu (Romania)		
	2008	Liverpool (UK) and Stavanger (Norway)		
	2009	Vilnius (Lithuania) and Linz (Austria)		
	2010	Eisenruhr (Germany), Pegg (Hungary) and Istanbul (Turkey)		1. The legal documents formally established the selection criteria, procedures and evaluation system 2. The applicant cities submitted their application materials 6 years in advance, the cities selected were announced 4 years in advance and 2 cities selected per year prepared for the 1-year cultural events
Stage 3		Turku (Finland) and Tallinn (Estonia)		3. Initiatives of ECC were adopted in the whole Europe
2005 - 2021	2011	Guimaraes (Portugal) and Maribor (Slovenia)	28 EU members and 2 non-EU members	4. The applicant cities must provide a project plan regarding European Dimension 5. The EU Commission conducted a short-term and long-term evaluation after the events were finished
	2012	Marseille-Provence (France) and Kosice (Slovakia)		
	2013	Umea (Sweden) and Riga (Latvia)		
	2014	Mons (Belgium) and Bilsen (Czech Republic)		
	2015	SAN Sebastian (Spain) and Wroclaw (Poland)		
	2016	Aarhus (Denmark) and Paphos (Cyprus)		
	2017	Valletta (Malta) and Leeuwarden (Netherlands)		
	2018	Matera (Italy) and Plovdiv (Bulgaria)		
	2019	Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland)		
	2020	Timisoara (Romania), Elefsina (Greece) and Novisa (Serbia)		
	2021			

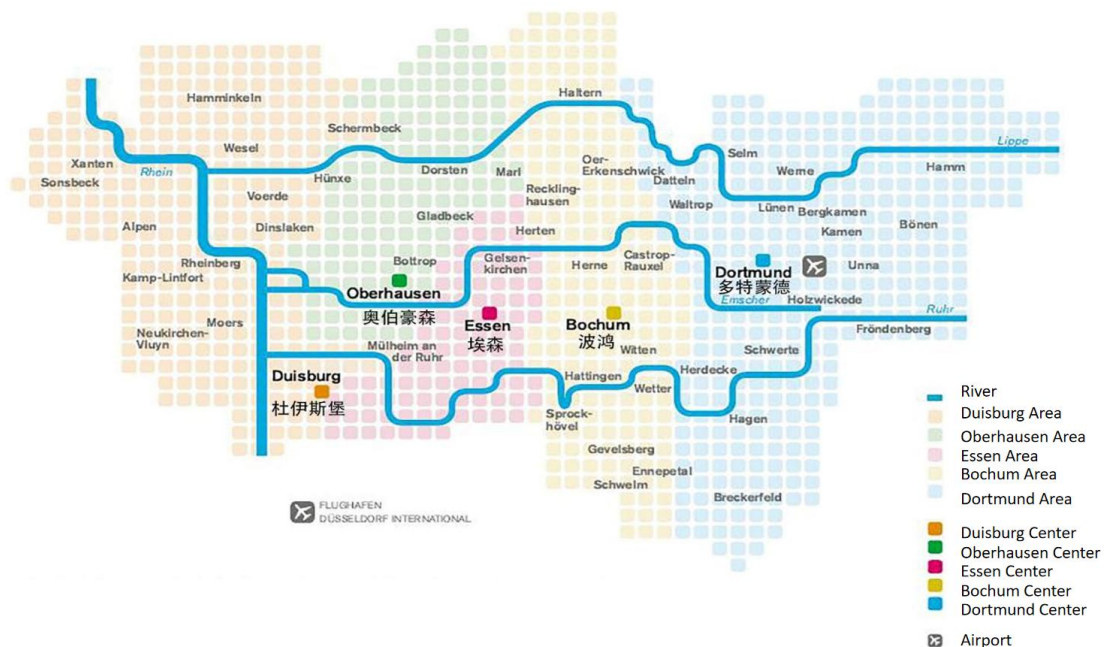
The "Target-Plan" master strategy planning mode mainly involves a strategic plan, nation/region selection and application program, master plan for the city concerned, the development of the themes for annual cultural events and a long-term cultural strategy and cultural promotion initiatives for the near future etc.

The "Government-Public" multi-participant model includes the establishment of a cross-regional selection mechanism, foundation of a dedicated preparatory organization, raising and appropriation of EU/regional government/private funds, an evaluation on annual and long-term benefits for the host city and relevant EU official agencies and civil participation in construction and voluntary service.

The "Space-Action" synergistic model contains urban infrastructure renewal, construction of urban cultural space nodes, media publicity of cultural project and planning on cross-regional cultural events and activities etc.

**Table 2:** Regeneration Modes of HCDs of ECCs

“Target-Plan” Master Strategy Planning Mode	“Government-Public” Mode	Multi-participant	“Space-Action” Synergistic Mode
Applicant Region or City: to formulate the cultural development plan, construct a local cultural axis, set up a characteristic cultural area and design the cultural nodes	EU: The European Parliament revises its cultural policies, organizes evaluation teams and other departments to select the applicant cities, sets up special funds for construction and evaluates ECC regularly.	Spatial Construction: renewal of the urban green spaces, restoration of cultural heritages, improvement of urban infrastructures and construction of cultural activity venues	
Cultural Project Planning: planning on the annual project “Cultural Year” for the short term and consideration for the subsequent extension of the project for the long term to improve the overall benefits	Applicant Country and City: to collect city campaign posters, select and determine the candidate cities, prepare construction funds, formulate development themes and other plans, implement the plan after winning the selection and conduct post-evaluations	Event Planning: to introduce urban events for continuous activation of urban space, plan urban touring routes and hold events and activities in conjunction with peripheral areas	
Establishment of Institutions and Organizations: to establish a project operating company, introduce a consultation and post-evaluation agency and develop relevant fund and implementation plans	Operating Company: to coordinate architects, developers, local governments, foundations and other organizations, take charge of cultural projects, publicity and promotion of governmental plans and fund raising	Community Participation: the volunteers participate in project construction, project publicity, supervision and post-evaluation	



**Figure 1:** Tourist Map of ECC - Ruhr in Germany in 2010[6]

**Table 3:** Key Points for Implementation of the ECC Regeneration Project in Ruhr of Germany[7]

Establishment of Goals for Cultural Development	The overall goal is to establish the metropolis of Ruhr, making it a new cultural district in Europe. The core agenda of “Cultural Transformation - Reshaping Cultural Development” is proposed to drive a culture-oriented reformation and reconstruct the culture in Ruhr. The short-term goal is to create experiences with projects and communications and the subsequent goal is to innovate the social mechanism and improve the buildings and infrastructures.
Cultural Planning for Regional Integration	The 53 cities and towns in Ruhr, Germany participate in the construction of ECC through regional cooperation and development jointly, focusing on 5 portal areas including the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Essen, Bochum Festival Center, Dortmund Music and Multimedia Center, Cultural Harbor of Duisburg and Industrial Recreation Site of Oberhausen
“Target-Plan” Master Planning	The path of “Experience Creation”: "Legend of Ruhr", "Reconstruction of Metropolis", "Stage Transformation", "On-site Music", "Language Exploration", "Creative Industry Activation", "Celebration Moment", "Europe Forward" and other initiatives are put up in respect of project planning. With regard to communication, connections and project exchanges are strengthened by brand building and image development based on the concept of promoting marketing and communication.
Two paths to "cultural transformation" : experience creation and infrastructure reconstruction	The path of “Infrastructure Reconstruction”: "Development of Regional Network Planning", "Trans Regional and Institutional Cooperation", "Development of Culture Jointly with Infrastructure ", "Structure Expansion of Creative Industry" are proposed for network mechanism and planning. With respect to construction and urban structure, the cultural planning is combined with architectural planning, construction of transportation infrastructures (public transportation stations, local transportation network construction and bicycle paths etc.) and establishment of tourist facilities (5 tourist centers)
Contributions from Both Government and Private Sectors	The total budget of ECC is nearly 81 million euros, including the governmental funds (from Ruhr Regional Association, Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, The Federal Government of Germany and the EU) which accounts for 74.9%, contributions (21.7%) from third-party organizations (including sponsors etc.) and some incomes (e.g. ticketing income etc.) which takes up 3.5%. RUHR.2010 GmbH is responsible for the control of project budget.
"Government-Public" Multi-participative Operation	<p>Establishment of Coordination Mechanism : Composed of Ruhr Tourismus GmbH, RUHR.2010 GmbH, The Agencies Invent GmbH and Tao GmbH and relevant urban tourism experts</p> <p>Expansion of Original Urban Project Organizations : Original urban project organizations are expanded and integrated as the resources of project organization: EmscherLandscape Park, Route of Industrial Heritage, CultureRuhr, Ruhr Tourism and Wirtschaftsfoerderung metropol Ruhr GmbH</p>
Public Participation in Project Consultation and Third-party Organization's Evaluate on Construction	Public: to provide advices and suggestions to project construction and participate in volunteer programs individually or as an organization. According to relevant statistics, 1165 volunteers have participated in 9600 projects. And the cultural projects were evaluated by RUHR.2010 GmbH and related experts after they were completed.
"Space-Action" Synergistic Planning	<p>Establishments of 7 spatial nodes are the construction emphases as below: The North Duisburg Landscape Park, the Oberhausen Gasometer, the Zollverein Pit Shaft12, the “Nordstern Tower”, the Dortmund U, the Emscherblick Spoil Tip-Tetrahedron and the “Slab for the Ruhr”</p> <p>Planning of Large-scale Urban Theme Activities : The big festivals are held as joint projects: the Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and the Ruhrtriennale</p>

Strengthening Publicity and Public Participation	Residents of communities are encouraged to join in the construction of cultural projects for children, young people and the disabled etc.. Publicity and guidance to the public are strengthened with roadshows, publications and websites
Regional Planning	More than 200 sister cities peripheral in Europe have been brought together to create twin-city programs and over 100 activities have been held jointly.

### 3 RENOVATION PRACTICE OF HCD OF TAISHAN

#### 3.1 Overview of HCD of Taishan

The HCD of Taishan exhibits the distinctive characteristics and cultural resources of a hometown of overseas Chinese. Taishan is well known for “the first hometown of overseas Chinese in China” and its HDC was built up approximately in the 1920s and 1930s featured with the historical arcades. The material carrier of culture and activities of the residents shows the cultural atmosphere of a hometown of overseas Chinese in modern times, which is all-inclusive, delicate and elegant with commercial elements (Figure 2 & Table 4). Today the reserved area mainly includes the Central District of Taicheng Ancient Town and HCD of Xining City, which was honored as a provincial HCD in 2009.

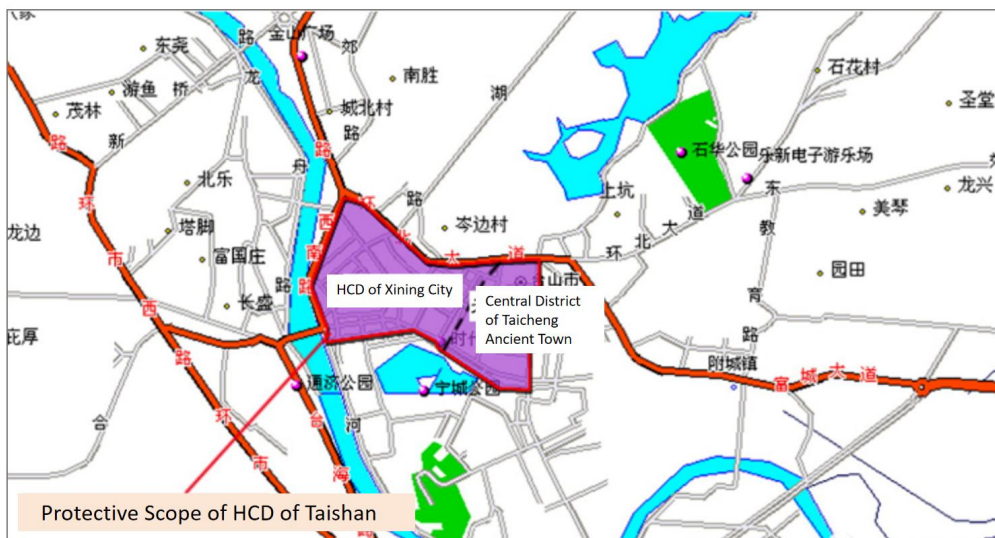


Figure 2: Protective Scope of HCD of Taishan[8]

Table 4: Summary of Cultural Elements in HCD of Taishan

<p>Texture of HCD of Taicheng</p>	<p><b>Material Elements</b></p> <p>Decorative elements of the arcade street, historical buildings, texture of the arcade street, postal agency of overseas Chinese, Nanchang Vegetable Market, Taishan specialty, Historic Site of Sunning Railway etc.</p>
	<p><b>Cultural Events</b></p> <p>Festivals, fairs, Taishan dialect, stories about remittances of overseas Chinese, deeds of patriotic overseas Chinese, Cantonese opera and religious beliefs etc.</p>

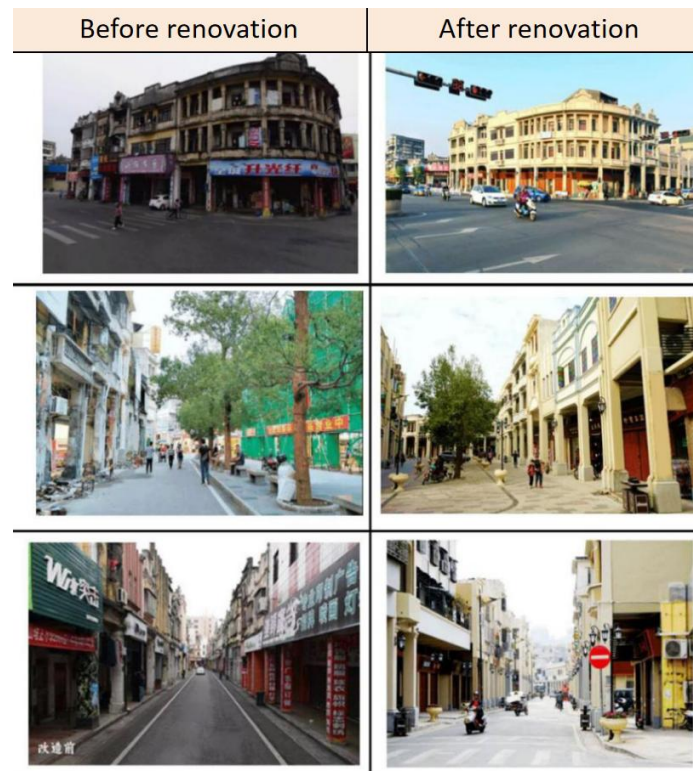
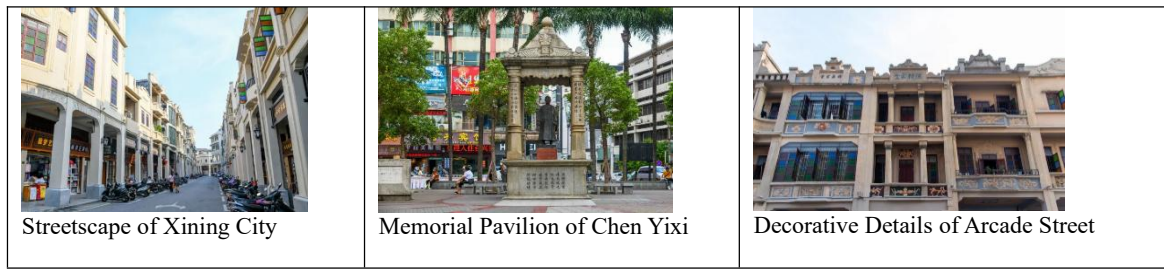


Figure 3: HCD of Taishan before and after the Renovation[9]

### 3.2 Core Issues in Regeneration of HCD of Taishan

The regeneration project of the HCD of Taishan is in the preliminary stage at present. The local government has commenced the design work for the HCD since 2011 and implemented the revitalization and renovation project for the HCD since 2017 step-by-step[9]. By now the renewal of the HCD has made some progresses (Figure 3). Meanwhile some downsides have been found in the regeneration of the HCD based on my observation and participation, mainly involving the three aspects as below.

The organization in charge of the regeneration is relatively simple as the local government is the main actor and dominates the urban constructions. Civil participation in the constructions is relatively inadequate. Plus the lack of local cultural creative industry, the regeneration of HCD hasn't created a significant positive effect on local economic development and autonomous initiatives from the private sectors for the regeneration are not sufficient.

And the fund for renewal of the HCD mainly comes from the fiscal budget of local government. Thus the regeneration of the HCD is short of effective funding support. For example, some programs of node space have been canceled due to fund shortage and the post-construction maintenance expenditures of some construction projects are not taken into consideration. In addition, the uncertainty of approval time for some fiscal investments makes it difficult to carry out the construction projects for HCD regeneration orderly.

In regard of the implementation effect, HCD regeneration emphasizes on physical space restoration and renovation currently, such as street facade renovation and improvement of municipal roads, sidewalks and public facilities and so forth. These measures commonly are restricted by existing unified and routine practices, creating a result similar to other districts without exploring the cultural values behind the HCD, which may affect the presence of local cultural highlights to some extent.

### 3.3 Discussion on Regeneration Strategies for the HCD of Taishan

The regeneration of the HCD in Taishan with a long history is similar to the small and medium-sized cities of Europe in the 1980s and 1990s in some ways. In this study, it is intended to explore a unique regeneration pathway in terms of the three aspects stated below for the HCD of Taishan in light of some construction experiences of ECC.

Some cultural strategic plans and action plan guidelines may be introduced as a whole for the "Target-Plan" master strategy planning. Specifically, the strategic positioning should be made satisfactorily for the master urban planning especially cultural promotion planning in respect of the regeneration of the HCD of Taishan, which should make the best of the advantages of Taishan as the No. 1 hometown of overseas Chinese and show the multi-cultural characteristics of Taishan. Policies regarding cultural and artistic encouragements and rewards may be established tentatively during the regeneration so as to facilitate the protection and revitalization for the cultural and art resources in Taishan and relevant annual cultural events and monthly action plans may be developed to strengthen the supports for local cultural and creative industries and literary and artistic talents.

In the regard of "Government-Public" multi-participant, the mechanism of governmental leadership, common prosperity of industries and civil participation should be enhanced. A project coordination and operation organization that is of governmental nature and similar to Glasgow Action[10] in the UK may be established to take charge of the promotion and publicity of cultural projects and government programs, related matters including fund raising and coordination of all parties involved during the regeneration of the HCD of Taishan. A certain proportion of the public construction fund may be appropriated for cultural project planning and the mode of cooperative development between local government and private capital may be set up tentatively for establishing the scope and intensity of cultural improvement. The third-party mechanism without project stakeholder may be introduced to conduct regular supervision and evaluation, collect opinions and suggestions from local residents and strengthen the publicity of the measures, processes and results associated with regeneration of the HCD.

The planning of public cultural activities should be integrated in the reconstruction of urban infrastructure in respect of the "Space-Action" synergy. Experts in the field of historic preservation may be invited to evaluate and value the cultural facilities in the HCD. The historical stories and clues hidden in the space should be explored and transformed into tailor-made literary and artistic creations for the symbolic cultural nodes in the HCD especially the spaces of significant historical value. The public service facilities should be improved, regional traffic conditions should be optimized, a linear cultural touring route for the hometown of overseas Chinese should be planned, event planning should be made in conjunction with peripheral areas and public art activities should be used as the catalyst to continuously activate the HCD.

#### 4 REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

Initiatives those are similar to ECC and related to the culture-oriented regeneration of HCDs have been implemented in European cities for many years and expanded to Americas, Middle East and East Asia etc., such as "Arab Culture Capital (1996)", "American Culture Capital (1997)" and "Cultural Capital of East Asia (2013)", demonstrating that the culture-oriented urban renewal presents a trend of globalization to a certain extent. The social background and motivation of the initiatives are discussed preliminarily besides using their key points for reference during the research. The policies and measures related to culture-oriented regional integration construction have some explicit and implicit demands[11]. As a cultural policy carried out in Europe for many years, ECC takes the renewal of old urban spaces and planning of urban cultural activities as the explicit media to promote the European integration process in terms of culture, implying the intent of the EU to expand its power transregionally to a certain degree. In particular, the European Commission added "the European Dimension"[12] into the selection criteria in 2007, requiring the host and non-host countries to strengthen their cultural exchanges and inter-regional cooperation in Europe, reflect the whole European consciousness and highlight the European cultural consensus that is both diversified and unified. The impetus behind these EU initiatives can be interpreted easily relatively according to the statement of Soft Power[13] proposed by Joseph Nye. After World War II, some EU countries have lost their political, economic and military superiority gradually. But the series of cultural construction measures based on ECC can promote EU's external image to a certain extent in an effort to alleviate the political and economic confrontation, economic sanctions and other estrangements during the Cold War, convert the cultures into a kind of "Soft Power" and create a vision of common prosperity of diverse cultures in Europe.

The small and medium-sized cities like Taishan have been staying in a state of isolated development for a long time with insufficient influence and regional synergy; thus they are likely to be left behind while other cities around are developing jointly and rapidly. In the context of integration of culture and tourism[14] in the Guangdong-Hongkong-Macao Greater Bay Area constructed by the nine cities of the Pearl River Delta, the potential of Taishan may be developed if it joins in the integration process to strengthen the brand positioning for the regional construction of culture and tourism and complementarity of the cultural industry.

The culture-oriented regeneration reflects the intention of local government to seek a role transformation and promote social integration and economic reconstruction in the new era. Modern Western urban planning has always been acting as a tool to shape the cities for the governments and markets[15]. The imperative planning was prevailing in some areas with emphases on scale economy and agglomeration effect and the measures including urban master planning and large-scale construction of new districts etc. during the period of urban rapid development from the beginning to 70s of the 20th Century. And the phenomenon of excessive development of land and industries had attracted more and more concerns in some European and American countries after experiencing a period of sustained high growth in the 1970s,

showing it is not advantageous any more to develop simply by means of economic growth planning. ECC that was prompted in such context exhibited the intent of the local governments to release development vitality by transformation to the service economy and create an atmosphere for industrial innovation by implementation of service-oriented governance and inclusive cultural development. For instance some strategic initiatives for cultural development were put up and fulfilled in London, Britain in succession to stimulate the formation of new economic pattern[16]: “London: Cultural Capital - Discovering The Potential of The World” (2004), “Cultural Metropolis: The Mayor’s Priorities for Culture 2009 - 2012” (2008) and “Cultural Metropolis 2012: The Mayor’s Culture Strategy for London” (2010). Stimulated by relevant cultural policies, London has gradually moved from an industrial city to a creative metropolis, laying the foundation for a new urban development trend driven by the creative economy.

The development of Taishan has been mostly benefited from the top-down guidance of the local government and regulated investment of the private capitals[17]. The HCD of Taishan was built up approximately in the 1920s and 1930s, during which the construction of Sunning Railway that was advocated and supported by Chen Yixi, an overseas Chinese in the United States, brought the prosperity to Taishan. As the intersection of Sunning Railway, Sunning Station was located in the area belonging to Taicheng and the convenient regional transportation could reach out to Guangzhou, playing an important role in establishment of the local commercial center. The vitality of autonomous regeneration was released in Taishan after it was granted as a pilot city of autonomy by Sun Yat-sen in 1924. And the local government implemented the policies including the “Taishan Material Construction Plan” to establish the mode of unified management and commissioned development for introducing investments from the overseas Chinese and allow the local residents to elect the members for the District Office for administration on relevant urban constructions. These measures had the government and the civil organizations to play their roles fully and shaped the distinctive image of Taishan as a hometown of overseas Chinese. Nowadays the development environment is better than before; thus the historical experiences and wisdoms should be learned to enhance the inclusive construction and public service and introduce more civilian forces to construction of the HCD during the regeneration promoted by the government.

Reshaping HCD with culture construction, to a certain extent, is in favor of the construction of social environment necessary for external investors. In 1998, Richard Rogers of Britain mentioned in his book “Towards the Revival of the City” that urban revival required a change in cultural cognition, which was a change in beliefs and values[18]. The regional construction of Taishan in modern times was the result of the in-depth interactions of economic and social environment. In the late of Qing Dynasty, Zhao Tianci, a provincial graduate from Taishan once described that “Local production often was in the condition of food shortage and needed import of foreign food”, indicating Taishan often needed the external investors to improve the local industrial structure due to limited land resource, shortage of manpower and land and weak industries in history. The local government intended to attract the groups of overseas Chinese, especially the overseas Chinese with some economic strength to settle down in the city and promote the commercial development. That’s why the exotic arcade block representing the lifestyle of overseas Chinese businessmen in the modern times has become an important part of urban construction in Taishan. Under the multi-culture influence, Taishan had developed from a maritime village into community of overseas Chinese with “Taishan Wall Street”, which owned nearly 100 financial institutions founded by the overseas Chinese, showing a flourishing societal landscape: western lifestyle and concepts had gradually been integrated into the life of ordinary citizens, the social environment was open and the local people supported some new economic patterns and new ideologies.

ECC has become the regeneration mode prevailing in Europe without doubt; but there are still some issues in its implementation. As some studies mentioned, the culture-oriented regeneration focused on cultural image excessively and a large number of investments were used in not the community development and long-term cultural construction but the large-scale events and flagship infrastructures advocated by the social elites, seldom beneficial to the urban bottom population etc., which should be noticed and improved for the regeneration of HCD.

In general, EEC displays the mature and stable development of European cities, the orderly construction of urban culture and economic development and the inclusiveness and vitality of the social environments. In recent years, the regeneration of HCD has emerged in many areas of China, aligning with the development trend that more and more attentions are paid to urban cultural connotations and endogenous values in the transformation of urbanization[19]. Although there are some discrepancies in ideology and social culture between European cities and the areas in China, we should notice the meaningful aspects: we should emphasize on the adaptation of cultural policy to regional development situation, advocate the mechanism combined governmental guidance with non-governmental participation and promote urban space renewal and cultural activity planning when exploring the way for culture-oriented regeneration of HCDs so as to achieve an overall balance among the space for culture promotion, economy and society.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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