

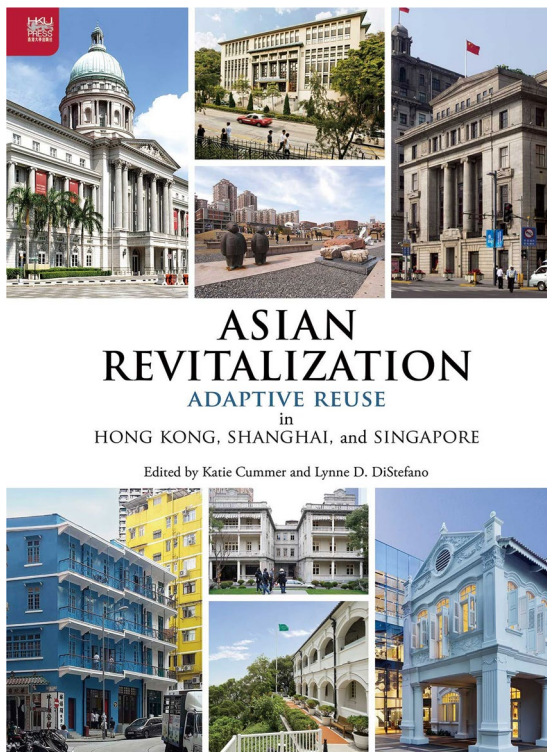
BOOK, CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION REVIEW

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Asian Revitalization: Adaptive Reuse in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore, edited by Katie Cummer and Lynne D. DiStefano. Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2021. ISBN 978-988-8528-55-4

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Reuse of abandoned or underused historic buildings and sites has become an increasing global trend within the built environment in the past two decades (Bullen and Love 2011; Gravagnuolo et al. 2017). Bypassing the wasteful processes of demolition and new construction, adaptive reuse prolongs the lifespan of cultural heritage, contributes to environmental sustainability and enhances urban livability (Ikiz Kaya et al. 2021). Focusing on three Asian global cities — Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore, the book of *Asian Revitalization: Adaptive Reuse in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore*, edited by Cummer and DiStefano, provides a needed analysis of adaptive reuse trends, policies and practices in Asian context. This volume successfully addresses two knowledge gaps in literature on adaptive reuse: a non-Western regional perspective and coverage, and a policy- and practice-based discussion of challenges, opportunities and limitations of adaptive reuse implementations in various local contexts.

The book is divided into two main sections preceded by an introduction and concluded with final remarks from the editors. The introductory chapter explains the state-of-art of the adaptive reuse literature and contributions of this volume. Next, the first section includes 10 essays that bring forward current theoretical debates on recent adaptive reuse trends and their impact, and present the historical development of reuse policies and practices in the three Asian cities. The three cities are covered individually with discussions over the shifts of heritage conservation and reuse approaches, legal frameworks and applications over the decades, followed by a historic

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timeline highlighting the milestones of these shifts in policies and practices. The second section introduces 15 case studies that cover five different heritage function and typologies (industrial, institutional, military, residential and mixed use), presenting best practices of adaptive reuse from each city. The authorship in this section includes experts and practitioners from different professional backgrounds, and their collective experience enriches the multiple case study analysis. This format allows the readers to make better connections between the theoretical, historical and practical dimensions of adaptive reuse trends and applications that are covered separately in the entirety of the book.

The introductory chapter by DiStefano starts with insights on the conceptual framing of the term *adaptive reuse*, addressing the multifaceted regional and local interpretations of the concept both at theoretical and policy-based contexts. Reuse was previously considered within the limited scope of functional and structural/material change. With the growing instrumentalisation of cultural and economic values of heritage towards sustainable development recently, adaptive reuse has been recognised and employed as an instrument for environmentally sustainable and financially feasible regeneration and heritage conservation (Shahi et al. 2020). While DiStefano brings to attention the connotations regarding functional and material change, and the lack of such a terminology in Chinese language that has implications on policy level, she also indicates the importance of taking into account the economic, social, legislative and environmental dimensions during the process (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 3–4). In this chapter, she also highlights the importance of two Asian policy documents, the China Principles on appropriate use and the Hoi An Protocols on authenticity of heritage places, that play a vital role in the shaping of the adaptive reuse approach within Asian contexts (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 7). Ahuja later examines the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation program as an indicator of best practices and discusses its influence on shaping the adaptive reuse implementations in the region (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 38). As the global discourse on adaptive reuse rotates around Europe-centered terminologies and policy frameworks, this book brings forth an original regional perspective regarding their interpretations and applications in Asia.

The first section meets the main purpose of the book defined as ‘widening the understanding of adaptive reuse’ (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 9). In his essay, Turner associates adaptive reuse terminology with the ‘survival of the fittest’ connotation derived from natural sciences (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 13). He then complements the wider contextualisation of adaptive reuse by bringing

forth the complex layers of urban heritage, and indicates the necessity to expand beyond the physical fabric to include economic, environmental and social processes in adaptive reuse, moving the focus from use to wider attributes. He also introduces synchronic (considering moment in time) and diachronic (considering development and evolution over time) reading of adaptive reuse practices to better incorporate the widest understanding of layers of urban heritage and its reuse (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 14–15). Van Steekelenburg further adds to this wider contextualisation of adaptive reuse practices as a driver for sustainable urban development, explaining the economic, environmental and social benefits. Discussing also their interpretations in the Asian context, she asserts the limitations of existing heritage policies and emphasises the importance of bringing the economic value of heritage and long-term economic impacts into the debate with decision makers (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 27). Building upon the discussion over impacts of adaptive reuse, Rypkema then introduces a multiple metrics system with internal (affecting the property itself) and external (affecting externalities) metrics to quantitatively measure the impacts of adaptive reuse.

The three Asian global cities, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore, are then introduced in individual essays and a timeline that examine the development and evolution of adaptive reuse trends, legislations and practices in each city. These essays present the history of heritage conservation and integration of adaptive reuse into policy and practice frameworks with case examples from different periods. Cummer, Lee and DiStefano explore the development of adaptive reuse legislations and practices in Hong Kong, pointing out the problems and challenges of the local approaches in certain periods, and conclude with remarks on the future of adaptive reuse in the city. Chan and Lee also discuss the same in Shanghai with reference to heritage conservation practice in the city, highlighting how heritage conservation has become a priority in the urban development agenda over the years. Cheung and Lee then introduce the evolving heritage conservation frameworks and certain practices in Singapore, dealing with its particular pragmatism in adopting a stakeholder-led place management approach towards adaptive reuse in recent examples. The evolution of heritage conservation and reuse field in each city shows similarities in terms of increase in private sector and community involvement, as well as distinctions in regards to ownership, financial and business models employed in the process. A brief comparative analysis of the cases from three cities is provided in the concluding chapter where Cummer discusses the interplay between government-led, public-private initiated and private-led adaptive reuse projects (Cummer and DiStefano 2021,

229). While there are numerous commonalities, the book also clearly shows that each geographic setting is unique with its existing legislative, governance and financial structures, socio-economic formation, limitations, barriers and drivers that influence the decisions made regarding the built environment.

In the second section of the book, the 15 case studies examined present a well-balanced distribution of adaptive reuse practices varying in building usage and function, ownership status, governance and business models employed, and their socio-economic and cultural impacts. Each case is presented in a similar structure outlining the project information, vision, site history, revitalisation concept, process and partnership, development environment, commercial sustainability, key success factors, key challenges, and value creation. This format facilitates comparison between case studies and reference to key elements in the adaptive reuse process for each project. The recent cases presented from Hong Kong, for instance, exemplify different public-private partnership models: A local social enterprise was established to fund the renovation project of the Savannah College of Art and Design, whereas a short-term leasing model was adopted for the reuse of the Crown Wine Cellars. The transformation of the Blue House Cluster, on the other hand, exhibit a more participatory and community-led reuse process where the distinct council, experts and a NGO worked together with the local residents. As for the cases from Shanghai, we witness how the adaptive reuse of neglected historic buildings have contributed to the wider development and regeneration agendas for certain districts initiated by the government, such as the Waterhouse and Bund 18 projects undertaken within the waterfront historic district of Bund. In cases from Singapore, the authors present cases where the government plays different roles in the administration, financing and development processes: The Warehouse Hotel, the Singapore National Gallery and the Gillman Barracks were all initially publicly owned buildings but different public authorities and private companies were involved in the reuse phase. This variety of cases complements the theoretical, historical and policy-oriented debates on recent adaptive reuse trends and implementations, specifically in these three cities, with applied practices. Cummer highlights that the case studies presented in the book thus entail a societal impact, helping to inform, guide and inspire decision makers regarding sustainable and economically feasible adaptive reuse project applications in Asia and worldwide (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 230).

The editors define the main goal of the book as to provide a better understanding of adaptive reuse within Asian context in order to contribute to more informed decisions, highlighted as 'a call to responsible action'

(Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 9). The adaptive reuse discourse generally follows a Western trend as the international and cross-regional policy documents define concepts, set standards and provide toolkits that are not always adaptable to diverse local contexts. The existing literature also mainly concentrates on case studies that are representative of examples from Europe, North America and Australia (Pintossi et al. 2021). As indicated by the editors, there are a limited number of scholarly contributions regarding Asian context (Cummer and DiStefano 2021, 229). The published work from Asia so far focuses on individual cases and heritage typologies, yet missing an integrated approach towards adaptive reuse policies and practices in the region as a whole (Tan et al. 2018; Lu et al. 2020). The biggest accomplishment of the book is thus to introduce a holistic regional approach towards the assessment and better understanding of the adaptive reuse field with a wide coverage of applications, policies and examples. It thus fills an important regional gap in the existing literature.

Although the editors have targeted to address all the relevant cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions of the adaptive reuse processes in the examination of the trends in the three cities and the case studies, the scope of the assessments have mainly concentrated on the cultural, and to a certain extent, economic aspects. The social relevance, concerning population shifts and social gentrification, and environmental impacts, such as raw material usage, waste disposal, energy transition and retrofitting, have not been addressed regarding the cases examined. These aspects can be covered in future studies concerning the region. Nevertheless, this volume assembles vital theoretical and practical knowledge that functions as a helpful resource for adaptive reuse experts, practitioners and decision makers, as well as scholars, wishing to deepen their knowledge and experience on adaptive reuse.

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Competing interests

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