

City Image Analysis of Western Taipei

Historic and Modern?

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Abstract: Taipei city is the capital of Taiwan, and the city government has applied to host several international events since 2000. Meanwhile, mayors have proposed the slogan “axis retroflexion” indicating the urban regeneration of old town areas. In July 2016, the city government and the National Geographic Channel started a documentary project “Inside: Reinventing Taipei” that cost 5 million NTD for the propaganda of the upcoming Taipei Universiade 2017. The narratives in the documentary indicate the interweaving of historical and modern city images. In this research, the development history of western Taipei is reviewed, and several official and non-official advertisements, movies, music videos, landscape architecture, events, and policy plans are chosen as texts to analyse the representation of the city images of western Taipei (Zhongzheng and Wanhua districts) under an iconological approach. To understand how those city images were produced, various aspects of urban politics and power are explored through this research. It is found that specific buildings and places, such as Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, the North Gate, the Red House Theatre, Longshan temple, and the Ximending shopping area, appeared in those texts frequently, epitomizing the development history of Western Taipei and policies across different periods. The historical, cultural images are represented as buildings, and trendy, energetic commercial images are presented in the official representation, while negative images, such as the ruined, the hopeless, and the order-less, are presented in the non-official representations. Furthermore, with the political intention of “change,” the new governance institution selectively represents some “negative” images that have been absent in previous official representations to emphasize the differences between the old and new governance institutions. Generally, the city images and representations of western Taipei manifest the issues of power and visibility clearly.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, cities adopt strategies of “differentiation” rather than those of “homogenization” in inter-city competition. Within this context, the development of city characteristics becomes important in issues about urban governance ([Liu, C. Y., 2013](#)). Many case studies in the UK and US have indicated that city image is important to urban branding and promotion ([Bradley, Hall, & Harrison, 2002](#); [Short et al., 1993](#); [Paddison, 1993](#)). Former industrial cities have struggled to get rid of the negative “legacy” of past industrial times, and have reconstructed new, positive images ([Bradley, Hall, & Harrison, 2002](#); [Short et al., 1993](#); [Paddison, 1993](#)). It is worth noting that in the research of [Bradley, Hall, and Harrison](#)

(2002), they have indicated that city image is an important factor for meeting organizers in the decision-making processes in place-making.

It was indicated that a cultural turn in urban governance strategies based on the cultural images and characteristics of a city has occurred, and the cultural “soft power” has become an approach and a trend in urban development (Liu, C. Y., 2013). In the shaping of city image identification, Liu, C. Y. (2013) indicated four urban-cultural strategies were used to strengthen and transform the urban-cultural identities of citizens: strategic combination of urban cultural images, shaping of distinctive symbols, shaping of spectacles, and the selection of cultural values and ideologies.

In contrast to those cases mentioned above, Athens, Florence, Paris and other historical cities showcase their histories through cultural heritage and humanistic values (Li, P. T. & Liu, 2013). In this research, the western districts (Zhongzheng and Wanhua) of Taipei city (*Figure 1*), the capital of Taiwan, are focused on. The western districts constitute the area with the longest history and the most profound cultural background in Taipei, and once became the economic centre (Chang & Wang, 2013). But the saturation of commercial spaces in the western districts in the 1970s triggered a shift of urban development to the eastern areas (Chang & Wang, 2013).

Since the 1990s, the mayors of Taipei have proposed the slogan “axis retroflexion” indicating the urban regeneration and revival of the western old areas. In the meanwhile, the city government has applied to host several international events, such as the World Capital Forum (1998), Baseball World Cup (2001 and 2007), FIFA Futsal World Championship (2004), Summer Deaflympics (2009), International Flora Exposition (2010), International Design Alliance Congress (2011), World Design Capital (2016), and the 2017 Summer Universiade. In July 2016, the city government and the National Geographic Channel started a documentary project “Inside: Reinventing Taipei”¹ that cost 5 million NTD for the propaganda of the upcoming Taipei Universiade 2017. The narratives in the documentary indicated the interweaving of the historic and modern city images of the west districts, which triggered the problems addressed in this research: What are the images of the west districts? How were those images produced? And how did they affect the development of western Taipei?

In this research, iconology is chosen as an approach for analysing the images of western Taipei. According to the theory of Gottdiener and Lagopoulos (1993), people understand a city and form images through the observation of the icons of the environments and shapes in a city. Fuery and Fuery (2003) took the approach of Lacan’s psychoanalysis, indicating that visual media through televisions, advertisements, and flags represent the culture, and the relationships between cultural topics were formed through the observation.

Mitchell (2013) has indicated that the ideology of icons reflects the symbolic representation systems of historical conditions dominated by specific classes, the values related to authenticity, and preference structure. Much research about city images has emphasized the importance of representation (Shields, 1996): De Certeau and Benjamin have indicated that representations blanket the city, change the way a city appears to us, and make the city available for analysis and interpretation; Simmel and Goffman considered the issues of visibility in representations; Habermas, Simmel and Sennet have indicated that the visible city in the public sphere dominates the invisible daily life in the private sphere. Those perspectives are concerned

¹ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/gX2PdgY1yGY>

with the linkages among the visible things and what could be expressed through representations. In addition, the power and politics in those representations were also reiterated ([Shields, 1996](#)).

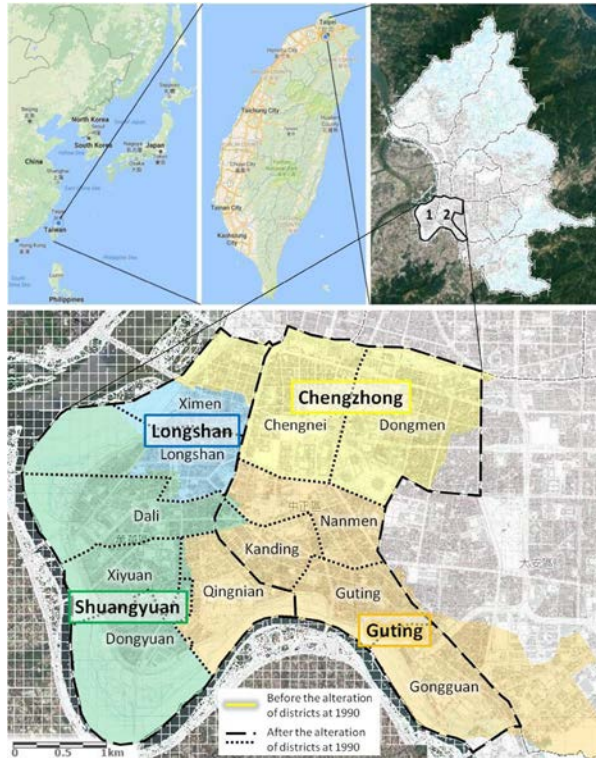


Figure 1. Location of the case study (1: Wanhua District, 2: Zhongzheng District)

2. FROM THE OLD TAIPEI'S THREE MARKET TOWNS TO THE "GATE" OF MODERN TAIPEI

2.1 Taiwan under Qing Rule (18th Century-1895)²

Due to the slackened ban on maritime trade of the Qing state since the mid-18th century, numerous immigrants from Quanzhou, Fujian migrated to Bangka, the former place name of Wanhua. Wanhua became a market town near Danshui River due to the development of international trade. In the mid-19th century, immigrants from Sanyi launched a fight (Dingxiajiaopin) against other immigrants that resulted in the moving of Tongan immigrants to Dadaocheng. This is the context of how the Qing dynasty chose the land between Bangka and Dadaocheng to establish the Taipei prefecture walls after the Japanese invasion of Taiwan in 1874. After the construction of the prefecture walls and official buildings, Taipei became the political and cultural centre of Taiwan.

2.2 Taiwan under Japanese Rule (1895-1945)³

Due to the defeat of the Qing dynasty in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, the sovereignty of Taiwan was ceded to Japan when the Treaty of

² Refer to Su, S. B. (2010). *Invisible and Visible Taipei*. Taipei: Socio Publishers.

Shimonoseki was signed the following year. The Japanese colonial government continued to construct Taipei as the political and economic centre of Taiwan and launched a series of modern urban planning and infrastructure construction projects. During the first 20 years, the former prefecture walls and the West Gate built by the Qing dynasty were demolished, except for four gates, and sewers and roads were constructed. In 1914, a project that filled and reclaimed land in the lowland area outside of the former West Gate was begun and resulted in the development of the commercial zone of Ximending.

The outside area of the former Taipei prefecture walls was planned as the residential zone for the staff of the Office of the Governor-General. In the 1920s and 1930s, the construction and establishment of Xindian railroad branch line, Taihoku Imperial University, Showa Bridge, and Kawabata Bridge promoted the development of the southern areas.

2.3 Republic of China, Rule I: Post-war (1945-1989)

In 1945, Taiwan was under the control of the Republic of China due to the defeat of the Empire of Japan in World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s, the master plan of Taipei city was implemented on the basis of that released in 1932 ([Lin & Kao, 2015](#)) with construction focused on infrastructure such as bridges, arterial roads, and embankments ([Lin & Kao, 2015](#)). The undeveloped riverside areas of Xindian River during the period of the Japanese Rule were planned as the sites of military dependents' villages and resettled tenement communities for the numerous immigrants from China after the defeat of the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

In the late 1960s, due to urban development and an increase in the number of automobiles, construction of pedestrian bridges and elevated bridges had begun. The systematic planning of southern Wanhua was promoted in 1972, and several wholesale markets were established. But after the 1970s, the economic centre moved to the east and resulted in the stagnation of development in the west. This phenomenon was the background of the slogan "axis retroflexion" that implied the "revival of the west" proposed by the current and several previous mayors.

For the establishment of China-cantered ideology, many Chinese-style buildings were constructed, such as the Nanhai Academy in the 1950s, the renovation of three gates in the 1960s, and the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in 1976.

2.4 Republic of China, Rule II: Post-Railway Era (1989-)

In the late 1980s, the riverside elevated bridge and railway underground projects were completed. After the elimination of railroad crossings, the Zhonghua Boulevard and Ximending car-free zone projects were begun in the 1990s. In 1993, the 245-meter Shin Kong Life Tower was completed and became an important landmark of Taipei before the construction of Taipei 101. In addition, the National Theatre and Concert Hall on the site of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall was completed in 1987. The following planning of artistic and cultural facilities and cultural heritage movements after the end of the period of martial law reflected democratization, localization, and the rising of the middle class ([Wang, 2003](#)).

The Taoyuan airport metro that connects the Taipei Main Station and Taoyuan International Airport was opened to traffic in 2017, as well as the Taipei Main Station district, constructed as "the Gate of Taipei", that

integrates high speed rail, railway, metro system, airport metro, and freeway schedule bus services.

3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In Kong's (2012) research of city branding, She categorizes city branding into four main stages: planning a city brand, city brand identity development, implementation of the city brand, and subsequent monitoring of the city brand. In the stage of city brand identity development, contributions such as culture, history and people need to be drawn upon to create an image reflective of the city ((Kong, 2012), p. 88). Furthermore, in the next stage, actions and activities like launching campaigns, marketing activities and related policies are essential for the implementation of the city brand ((Kong, 2012), p. 89). Therefore, in this research, the official advertisements made by the Department of Information and Tourism⁴ in Taipei City Government were used as the main materials to analyse the images of Zhongzheng district and Wanhua district.

First, those advertisements made during Ma Ying-jeou's⁵ second term in office, the two terms of Hau Lung-pin⁶ in office, and the current term of Ko Wen-je⁷ in which buildings or places in Zhongzheng or Wanhua district appeared were collected as texts. Second, the buildings, sites, and places were counted, and their attributes were analysed by using photo-elicitation methods. Finally, several non-governmental texts were chosen to compare the differences of images represented between governmental and non-governmental texts (see Figure 2). Combined with the urban development process mentioned in the previous section, the analytic framework is constructed as shown in Figure 3.

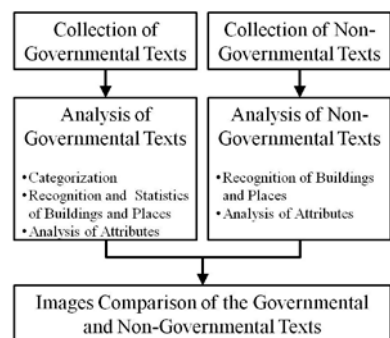


Figure 2. Methodology and Research Process

⁴ Changed from the former Information Department on September 11th, 2007.

⁵ The second term of mayor Ma Ying-jeou was from December 25th, 2002 to December 25th, 2006.

⁶ The terms of mayor Hau Lung-pin were from December 25th, 2006 to December 25th, 2014.

⁷ The current term of mayor Ko Wen-je began December 25th, 2014, and will end on December 25th, 2018.

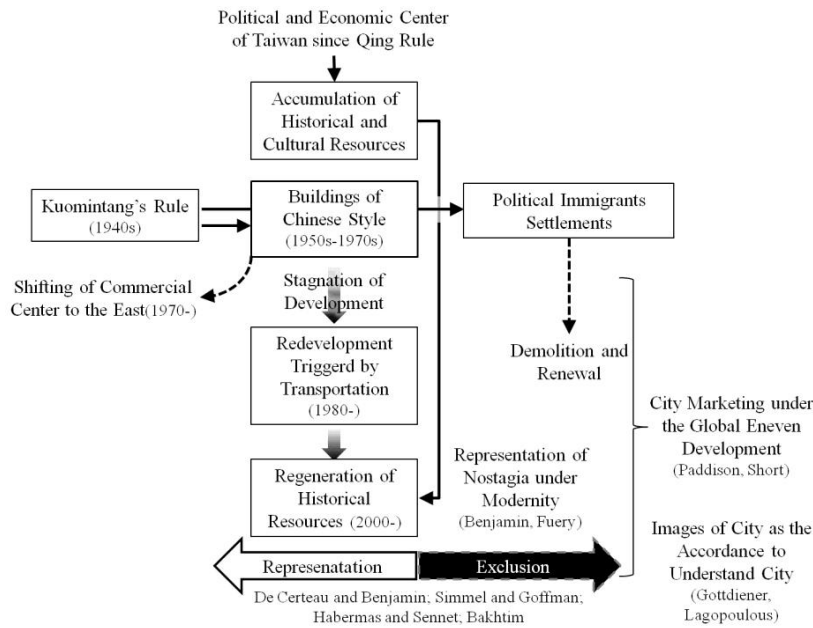


Figure 3. The Analytical Framework

4. ANALYSIS OF THE “OLD WEST” CITY IMAGE REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 In the Government Texts

It has been indicated that the official city images advertised as an important part of city selling for the promotion of tourism (Chou, 2010) and events were used as tactics to bring about economic opportunities, promote local culture, and highlight attractions to create a must-see destination (Li, C. J., 2014). Therefore, the governmental advertisements have been chosen as representative texts, and the images of the city that the government was eager to shape could be explored. From 2002 to 2016, 62 governmental advertisements⁸ were collected in total and categorized into five groups: city image, images of areas/places, advertisements for international hallmark events, advertisements for municipal major events, and advertisements for local events.

Overall, 55 buildings and places were identified in total. The frequencies of occurrence are shown as Table 1, and their attribute occurrence frequencies are shown in Table 2. While the category of city image is focused on, for advertisement for international hallmark events, or advertisement for municipal major events, the numbers of buildings or places identified lowers to 15 to 16 (see Table 1). But in general, the C.K.S. Memorial Hall, Ximending shopping area, the Red House, and the North Gate appear with relatively high frequency in the governmental texts. In addition, the images of the western Taipei as “profound historical and cultural background” and “energetic commercial activities” were presented in the government texts (see Figure 4). As the findings in the previous research of Lu (2013) indicate, the city uses the original accumulated culture as capital for the development of tourism.

⁸ Materials were collected from

<http://www.tpedoit.gov.taipei/News.aspx?n=3FBCB6F7F75AAF7D&sms=1E42BEB0F68720CB>

Table 1. The occurrence frequency of buildings or places in Zhongzheng or Wanhua in governmental advertisements from 2002 to 2016.

Building/Place	Frequency of Occurrence
Total (55 identified in 62 advertisements)	
Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall	48
Ximending Shopping Area	25
The (Ximen) Red House	18
The North Gate	17
Bopiliao Historical District	12
Longshan Temple	11
Shin Kong Life Tower	9
The First Fruit and Vegetable Wholesale Market	7
Ximending Cinema Street	6
The Herb Alley	6
Others	Fewer than 5
City Image (16 identified in 26 advertisements)	
Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall	17
The (Ximen) Red House	8
Huaxi St. Tourist Night Market	4
Taipei Water Park	4
Others	Fewer than 3
International Hallmark Events (16 identified in 19 advertisements)	
Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall	25
Ximending Shopping Area	7
Longshan Temple	4
Shin Kong Life Tower	3
The (Ximen) Red House	2
The North Gate	2
Bopiliao Historical District	2
Huashan 1914 Creative Park	2
The East Gate	2
Others	1
Municipal Major Events (15 identified in 13 advertisements)	
Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall	10
Ximending Shopping Area	8
The North Gate	4
The (Ximen) Red House	3
Ximending Cinema Street	3
The Presidential Office	3
Others	Fewer than 2

Table 2. The occurrence frequency of buildings or places in Zhongzheng or Wanhua in governmental advertisements from 2002 to 2016.

Attributes	Frequency of Occurrence (in percentage)			
	Total	City Image	International Hallmark Events	Municipal Major Events
Artistic and Cultural Activities	32	55	56	36
Tangible Cultural Heritage	18	17	11	19
Folk Customs	9	2	11	3
Traditional Markets	4	--	--	--

Local Cultural Industry	3	4	--	2
Shopping Tourism	12	12	13	19
Recreation	2	--	2	--
Adolescence Subculture	4	--	--	7
Political Organization	3	--	2	7
Urban Development	8	10	5	2
Deteriorated Area	4	--	--	--
Transportation	1	--	--	5



Figure 4. Scenes of activities held in front of the monument “The Red House” at Ximending shopping area in the bid video for World Design Capital 2016⁹

It is worth noting that the images of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall, completed in 1980 in order to commemorate the dictator Chiang Kai-shek, were turned into artistic, cultural and civil images in the governmental texts of the last 15 years (Figure 5). Liu, S. T. and Li (2011) discussed the “symbolic places” in the city which act as channels for marketing the city. In Chen’s work (2015), she suggested that the variation of meanings of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall was not only the product of political logic, but also the multitude of everyday practices of citizens who used this place. In addition, in Yen’s research (2016), using the “Capital Plaza Redesign” project as an example, he indicated that those landscape preservation programs related to colonisation led by the government tended to strengthen the legitimacy of state power. As Certeau said, “...representations blanket the city, changing the way it appears to us.” (quoted in Shields (1996), p. 228). It could be said that the original authoritarian image of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall was “de”-commemorated through its representation as part of civil everyday life on purpose, and the image of the de-commemorated place turned it into an attractive symbol of “Taipei”.



Figure 5. A boy and his father played with a ball in front of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall in the advertisement for Taipei International Flora Exposition 2010¹⁰

⁹ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/8ge0UiyKITw>

¹⁰ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Oh-ieS2z-EU>

4.2 (In)Visibility in the (Non-)Governmental Texts

As the reminder from Simmel and Goffman about the issue of power in city images and representation (Shields, 1996), it is required to notice what is “hidden” while what is “visible” is focused on in the representation of city images. In this research, some non-governmental texts like movies and music videos were selected and analysed. Compared with the government texts, those “absent” or “hidden” images of the western Taipei like “coldness” (see Figure 6), the “order-less” and “decadent” (see Figure 7), the “erotic” and “underworld” (see Figure 8), the “ruined” (see Figure 9), and the “authoritarian” (see Figure 10) were represented in some non-government texts. As previous studies have noted, for branding the city, the government promotes film-making in Taipei, and the buildings, landscapes and activities appearing in the films are integrated into the image of the city, enhancing the “reality” and familiarity of the films (Lo, 2010) and (Cheng, 2013). But some non-governmental texts have been blamed for strengthening the “negative” images of western Taipei, such as their prostitutes and faction in the popular movie “Monga” (Wu, 2011). In Wu’s report, professionals and local residents thought that the city marketed by film works should emphasize “locality” to display the “uniqueness” of the city (Wu, 2011). This argument unveiled the “authenticity” issues regarding representation and visibility, that is, if those representations were not the “real” contexts, or just like the city image reconstruction cases of former industrial cities in previous discussion (Bradley, Hall, & Harrison, 2002; Short et al., 1993; Paddison, 1993), those eager to show the new, bright images may want to aim to override those of the “negative” legacy.



Figure 6. The homeless and walk-by passengers at Taipei Main Station in the music video “The Loneliest”¹¹

¹¹ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/0-bTOn4RVYY>



Figure 7. The mob riding motorcycles on the street in the music video “Taipei didilong”¹²



Figure 8. Young gangsters going through the red-light district in the movie “Monga”¹³



Figure 9. A scene of the Nanjichang apartment in the film “Sleeping with Her”¹⁴



Figure 10. The barbed wire barricade in front of the Presidential Office in the music video “Why Nobody in Taipei?”¹⁵

¹² Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/xwwMSXoId7U>

¹³ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Nqj5NyywbMg>

¹⁴ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/EnE6oLYEUj8>

¹⁵ Retrieved from https://youtu.be/MRIR-gjGc_U

4.3 Politics in Representations: Campaigns for Elections and Performances

In Taiwan, the quadrennial election democracy institution affects the competition of power. Therefore, the city images represented in the campaign for elections and performances with specific ideology are also the texts that deserve to be analysed. But while talking about Taipei's city image in current research, most of the discussion was about the struggles between state and civil society. Struggles in the political arena were seldom discussed. So far, only [Wang \(2003\)](#) and [Chuang, Wang, and Wu \(2004\)](#) have studied the cultural politics of Taipei in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. During mayor Hau's government, only [Che and Lee \(2015\)](#) analysed the relationship between political participation and city image during the 2010 Taipei International Flora Exposition, and they found that political participation did negatively affect people's cognition of the city image. In their findings, information propagation and marketing strategies are recommended to strengthen the spill-over effect, so people would agree with the positive benefits derived from hallmark events, and combine the hallmark events with city images ([Che & Lee, 2015](#)). As a result, both the reputation and image of the city would be enhanced ([Che & Lee, 2015](#)).

Compared with the politically "bland" 2000s era, the 2010s era was politically energetic due to a series of political-social movements such as the anti-media monopoly movement in 2012 and the sunflower student movement in 2014. Those protest movements launched by youths that aimed at the "China factor" and Kuomintang significantly enhanced the local awareness of Taiwan, and thus resulted in party alternations in 2014 and 2016.

As previously discussed, images of the C.K.S. Memorial Hall were transformed from the authoritarian to the artistic, cultural, and leisurely. But during the 2016 legislator election, the image of that building in the campaign advertisement of the candidate recommended by the New Power Party, Freddy Lim, became political and authoritarian again due to his exhortation of local awareness and transitional justice (see *Figure 11*).



Figure 11. Freddy Lim dashed to the C.K.S. Memorial Hall in his electoral propaganda video¹⁶

In another example, the second-year performance campaign video of the incumbent mayor, Ko, revealed some spaces that were not presented in other videos of the former mayors. Those spaces could be classified into two types: one being "ruined urban spaces", represented as a negative image to be changed (see *Figure 12*), with the other being "traditional markets and industries" represented as humanity and indigenusness (see *Figure 13*). Those selectively represented urban images could be linked to slogans such as

¹⁶ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/kzJvG75xdU>

“Change, Realised” and “Citizen Participation”, and exhibited a specific political ideology.



Figure 12. An informal settlement, the Shaoxing Community, in an urban renewal project shown in the performance propaganda video of the “Zhongzheng Wanhua Reviving Plan”¹⁷



Figure 13. One traditional shop in the “Herb Alley” with the subtitle “An Old Trunk with New Branches” in the campaign documentary video “See the Changes of Wanhua”¹⁸

5. REPRESENTATIONS IN LANDSCAPES AND EVENTS

In previous sections, the analysis, taking advertisements and audio-visual materials as texts, revealed the images of history, culture, and commercial activities as characteristics of western Taipei. In this section, several cases are chosen to discuss the influence of city images on the spaces and activities in the city.

Zhonghua Road, the modern boulevard on the edge of Ximending, was constructed on the basis of the west 3-lane road and railroad where the western part of the prefecture walls established by the Qing dynasty once existed (Lin & Kao, 2015). After the Chinese civil war, numerous immigrants from China built informal housing there, followed by the Zhonghua Shopping Yard in 1961. After the railway underground project and metro construction of the 1980s to 1990s, Zhonghua Road was designed as a modern boulevard with wide sidewalks and lines of trees (Lin & Kao, 2015). In the meantime, some historical elements were introduced into the design, such as the pedestrian bridge designed in the form of the Zhonghua Shopping Yard, demolished in 1992 (Lin & Kao, 2015) (see Figure 14), brass street plaques and market signs embedded in the sidewalk (see Figure 15), and the emergency exits of the

¹⁷ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/erAQIKhIONM>

¹⁸ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/WUAoGeXQXhE>

underground railway representing the stone-made prefecture walls (see *Figure 16*).



Figure 14. The pedestrian bridge crossing, Zhonghua Road.



Figure 15. Metal plaque with a relief of an image of the West Gate on the sidewalk of Zhonghua Road.



Figure 16. The emergency exits of the underground railway on Zhonghua Road

In 2014, mayor Hau's government launched a series of events to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the Taipei Prefecture Walls. Some landscape architecture projects were conducted at the location where the prefecture walls and the West Gate demolished by the Japanese colonial government once stood. Two works of installation art were installed near the original site of the West Gate: the "Impression of the West Gate" is made of steel structures that

resemble the contour of the West Gate, and the metro exit behind the main part of the installation is covered in a texture resembling the stone-made prefecture walls (see *Figure 17*). Another work of art named “Memories in Taipei” is composed of statues that resemble Liu Ming-chuan, who planned the Taipei Prefecture by talking to an urban planner, a model of Taipei Prefecture, and young couples who symbolize the adolescence subculture of Ximending (see *Figure 18*).



Figure 17. “Impression of the West Gate” (A. The main part of the installation; B. The wall-like coverage of the metro exit)



Figure 18. “Memories in Taipei” (A. Statues of Liu Ming-chuan and an urban planner; B. Statues of selfie couples)

In the beginning of 2016, Mayor Ko’s government demolished the Beimen elevated bridge that hid the North Gate, the only gate with its original appearance, for almost 40 years. After the demolition, the North Gate became a landmark of the central station area, and a North-Gate-centred historical square project was proposed. In the 2017 Taipei Lantern Festival, the North Gate became the major element of the master vision, as a chick wearing a North-Gate-shaped hat (see *Figure 19A*). In addition, the North Gate became an important element in the competition of light art works (see *Figure 19B*). Either the representation of the West Gate in the forms of installation art or that of the North Gate as a symbol demonstrate the expectation of merging the elements of historical “past” into the modern “present”.



Figure 19. Images of the 2017 Taipei Lantern Festival (A. The master vision of the slogan “Westside Story, Taipei Glory”¹⁹; B. The North-Gate-shaped light art works)

6. MAYOR KO’S TERM AND THE FUTURE: INTERWEAVING WITH THE HISTORIC AND THE MODERN?

Although the historical elements seem to be important in the images of western Taipei, like the construction of the Shin Kong Life Tower, high-rise buildings have been conspicuous landmarks in developing countries since the 1980s (Jou & Lin, 2008). In the past, the landscape composed of the Shin Kong Life Tower and other high-rise buildings in the central station area have presented hopeful, visionary, and progressive images (see Figure 20). In mayor Ko’s current regeneration and redevelopment plans of western Taipei, ideas to construct many high-rise buildings have been proposed (see Figure 21).



Figure 20. Scenery of western Taipei from Danshui River in propaganda videos (A. The electoral propaganda of mayor Ma for his second term in 2002, the slogan stated “The future of Taipei is not a dream”²⁰; B. The propaganda of mayor Hau in 2010²¹)

¹⁹ Retrieved from <https://2017.lanternfestival.taipei>

²⁰ Retrieved from https://youtu.be/_x0E2lNmCKw

²¹ Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Rs0iyb0cRTo>

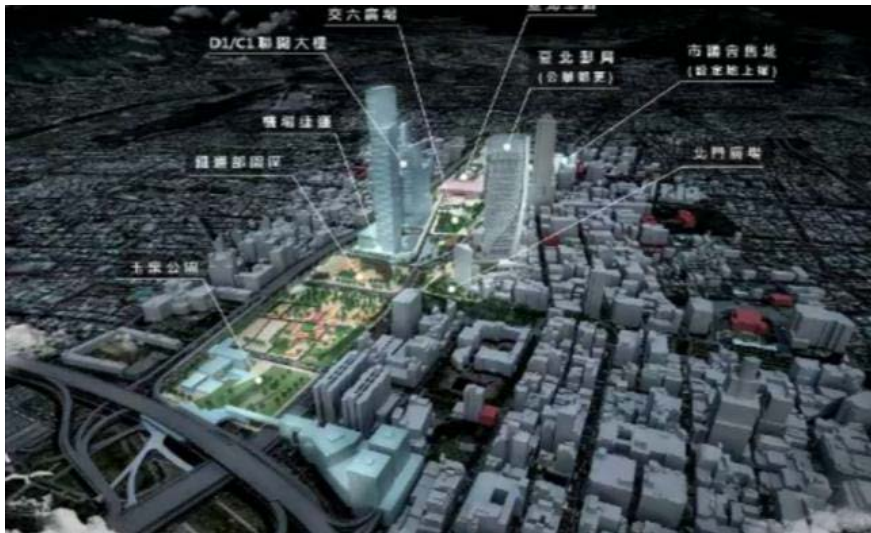


Figure 21. Perspectives of the “West District Gateway Project” by the Department of Urban Development, Taipei City Government in 2016²²

In the meantime, the idea of an “historical urban landscape” has been introduced into the urban design guideline of this area (see *Figure 22*). And in some recent cases of public buildings or buildings designed by the government, it has been found that the original historical elements were transformed into the design (see *Figures 23* and *24*). This phenomenon might reflect the critique from Benjamin (quoted in [Shields \(1996\)](#), p. 230) that “under modernity, nostalgic representation produces corpses, and melancholic representation produces souvenirs.”



Figure 22. The idea of a North-Gate-centred square with other monuments and landscape architecture designed with historical elements proposed by the Department of Urban Development, Taipei City Government in 2016²³

²² Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/pg/%E6%9E%97%E6%AC%BD%E6%A6%AECharles-Lin-505552919587906/videos/?ref=page_internal

²³ Same as 27



Figure 23. The renewal project of the former Taipei City Council (A. Appearance before demolition; B. Perspective designed by the Department of Urban Development, Taipei City Government in 2015²⁴)



Figure 24. The renewal project of Nanjichang apartment (A. Current appearance; B. Perspective designed by the Department of Urban Development, Taipei City Government in 2015)²⁵

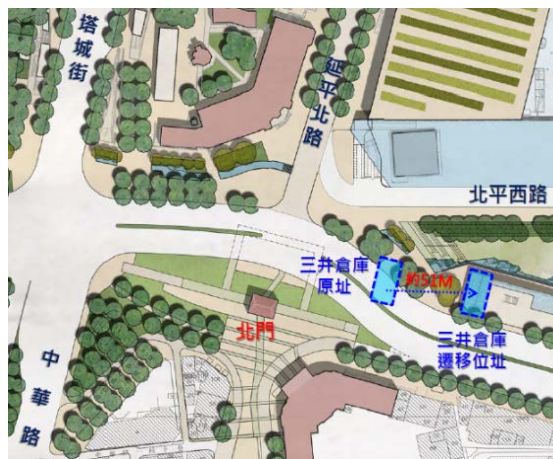


Figure 25. The North Gate square project resulting in the disassembly and displacement of the Mitsui warehouse built during the period of Japanese Rule proposed by the Department of Urban Development, Taipei City Government in 2016²⁶

It has also been queried whether urban design based on the idea of the “historical urban landscape” claimed by governors and planners only valued specific elements at the sacrifice of the historical elements. For example, the North Gate square project resulted in the disassembly and displacement of the Mitsui warehouse (51 meters from its original site), built during the period of Japanese Rule, to establish a “wall” with a waterscape representing the ever-

²⁴ Same as 21

²⁵ Same as 21

²⁶ Retrieved from [https://www-
ws.gov.taipei/Download.ashx?u=LzAwMS9VcGxvYWQvcHVibGljL0F0dGFjaG1lbnQv
NjlyNTE0NDI0OTEucGRm&n=NjlyNTE0NDI0OTEucGRm&icon=..pdf](https://www.ws.gov.taipei/Download.ashx?u=LzAwMS9VcGxvYWQvcHVibGljL0F0dGFjaG1lbnQvNjlyNTE0NDI0OTEucGRm&n=NjlyNTE0NDI0OTEucGRm&icon=..pdf)

existed moat and prefecture barbican of the past (see *Figure 25*), resulting in conflicting opinions and remonstrances to those of the government.²⁷

To the governor and planner of the city, it always seems to be a difficult task to balance between preservation of the historical “past” and construction of “modern” buildings: the Japanese colonial government demolished those built by the Qing dynasty, and the Republic of China demolished those built by the Japanese colonial government. Today, Neoliberalism as a power rewrites the landscape of the city through urban renewal processes. But it would be better to regard the relationship between tradition and modernity as “interweaving”, rather than as oppositional and contradictory. The buildings left by governors of different eras are the legacy of Taipei, and they might provide a route for Taipei to undergo urban regeneration by maintaining its uniqueness in the global competition among cities.

7. CONCLUSION

As one of the four main pillars of a “happy city”, a “stimulating city” is defined as a city “in which people can easily explore their own historical background and identity, share diverse experiences and cultures, and come up with creative ideas and innovate in their daily lives”²⁸. By reviewing the development history of western Taipei, it has been shown that historical contexts cause specific buildings or places to become the images of Zhongzheng and Wanhua districts, or even a label of Taipei city. In the analysis of government representations, it was found that the images of western Taipei were “history and culture” with buildings and “energetic commercial activities”, while the analysis of some non-government representations revealed the “negative” images absent in the government representations. In addition, the new governance institution represents some absent images of the city in the past as tactics to shape an image of “change.” There is a tension existing in the issue of “visibility” among different interpretations and representations of images, which reflect the struggles among ideologies. From the perspective of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design, it is found that the design of public buildings and landscape architecture proposed in recent years has represented the “traditional” image while chasing the “international” and “modern” images.

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²⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/02/26/2003640262>

²⁸ Retrieved from <https://www.spsdcommunity.org/spsd-2017-seoul/>

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