

## Article

# Reconfiguration of Cultural Resources for Tourism in Urban Villages—A Case Study of Huangpu Ancient Village in Guangzhou

Liyang Lin, Desheng Xue and Yi Yu \* 

School of Geography and Planning, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou 510275, China; linly25@mail2.sysu.edu.cn (L.L.); eesxds@mail.sysu.edu.cn (D.X.)

\* Correspondence: yuyi39@mail.sysu.edu.cn

**Abstract:** In the course of China's rapid urbanization, rural places are brought into urban areas, forming semi-urbanization. These semi-urbanized sites suggest a dual urban–rural structure in their form and management. With the slowing down of urbanization, the Chinese government adopted heritage tourism to boost the local economy. Local historic buildings and cultural resources were regenerated and restored in this process. This paper aims at examining the role of heritage tourism in blurring the boundary of rurality and urbanity, boosting local economy, and revitalizing the areas with cultural-led development. In this paper, we analyzed the Huangpu Ancient Village's regeneration process. We argue that the Huangpu Ancient Village integrates local historical and cultural resources to boost the local economy, simultaneously adopting urban renewal and rural revival strategies. This paper contributes to the body of literature addressing villages in urban areas, breaking the duality of urbanity and rurality.



**Citation:** Lin, L.; Xue, D.; Yu, Y. Reconfiguration of Cultural Resources for Tourism in Urban Villages—A Case Study of Huangpu Ancient Village in Guangzhou. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 563. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11040563>

Academic Editors: Tao Liu, Qiujie Shi, Raymond Yu Wang and Guangzhong Cao

Received: 20 March 2022

Accepted: 8 April 2022

Published: 11 April 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Keywords:** urbanization; cultural orientation; China; urban village regeneration; sustainable development

## 1. Introduction

China has undergone rapid urbanization since the 1990s. In 2021, China's urbanization rate reached 64.72%. However, some urbanization has caused social inequality, poverty, and unemployment issues. Urban renewal was adopted as a revival strategy [1], shifting the attention from the material environment to comprehensive improvement, including the social, economic, ecological, and cultural dimensions. Urban renewal is often dominated by large-scale urban renewal and old city transformations in China. Industrial spaces are often transformed into creative spaces driven by significant events or creative arts. These places are demolished and reconstructed, and their land-use type changes [2–5]. With the slowing down of the urbanization rate, research on urban renewal started to explore cultural strategies and sustainable renewal paths. These strategies and renewal paths are expected to promote neighborhood social cohesion, in which the national government plays an important role [4,6].

In China, urbanization also transformed villages into urban areas. Villagers were transformed into urban residents. To manage the land collectively owned by the village, the government often set up a managing organization, including urban communities and village committees, forming an urban village with a dual urban–rural structure. These villages often simultaneously suggest features of rurality and urbanity, known as semi-urbanization. The phenomenon of semi-urbanization challenged the current theorization of urbanization and rural development, in which they are usually studied separately [7]. In this paper, by studying the semi-urbanized area in Guangzhou, we bridge the gap and break the duality of rurality and urbanity. Moreover, villages are often reconstructed for heritage tourism as a method of urban village renewal.

In the middle of the 21st century, western countries and city governments began implementing culture-oriented urban renewal strategies for city image building. The government attracts external capital to revitalize urban decaying centers [8]. Thus, culture has played an increasingly vital role in stimulating consumption and promoting economic growth [9–11]. In China, urban villages often have a rich history with diversified architectural forms [12], which are often reconstructed for urban renewal. However, Gao et al. argue that the existing renewal model in China ignores public interests, such as traditional culture and historical memory-deprived villagers' emotional rights [13]. Moreover, the current urban renewal mode in China was criticized for subscribing to the circulation of materiality and land use, where more attention should be paid to residents' emotional communities and protection of traditional culture [14–16].

Rural renewal and urban regeneration are strategies taken to revitalize rural and urban areas. In rural renewal, the governments have redeveloped rural land and transformed it into other functions, such as industry and settlement [17], while urban regeneration has normally involved adopting cultural resources for urban economic growth to enhance the city's competitive position [18]. The key difference between rural renewal and urban regeneration lies in the characteristics of key actors [17], the detailed processes of property transaction [19], and different governance modes. This paper fills the research gap that discussed rurality and urbanity separately by addressing semi-urbanization of urban villages. The current discussion on semi-urbanization focuses on populations or migrant workers [20,21]). Rarely does it apply to urban villages that describe not only the population, but also places.

With globalization and deindustrialization, the cultural competitiveness of cities has become more critical [18]. The Chinese government has advocated beautiful town development with historical memories, cultural relics, and regional features. Urban villages' heritage tourism has become an essential strategy for urban renewal. Taking Huangpu Ancient Village in Haizhu District, Guangzhou, China, as an example, this paper analyzes the integration of rural villages' historical and traditional cultural resources into the urban renewal process, breaking the rural–urban dual structure.

This paper has two objectives. The first objective is to examine the production of heritage tourism in Huangpu Village, closely connected to its history and the broad social, cultural, and economic shift. This paper captures the historical context and image building that integrates historical villages into urban development. The second objective discusses China's semi-urbanization as processed by villages in urban areas. Semi-urbanization suggests features of both rurality and urbanity, breaking the dual rural–urban structure that has dominated urban studies in China. In this paper, we argue that the urban village has reconstructed historical sites to develop heritage tourism and boost the local economy, a new strategy that weaved rurality into urban renewal.

This research is innovative in two ways. First, it breaks the duality of rurality and urbanity by discussing the phenomena of semi-urbanization. On semi-urbanization, our paper's contribution lies in reconstructing heritage sites for urban regeneration where cultural resources are taken for rural–urban integration, economic growth, and city image branding. This is innovative, as urban villages become involved in Guangzhou's city branding while catering to its historical, cultural, and social context. Here, culture was redefined to cater to social, economic, and political needs [18]. This paper breaks the duality of rurality and urbanity in urban studies by discussing the phenomena of semi-urbanization. Moreover, this paper discusses the engagement of heritage sites for bolstering the local economy as a strategy for urban regeneration. We further clarified this in the Introduction section.

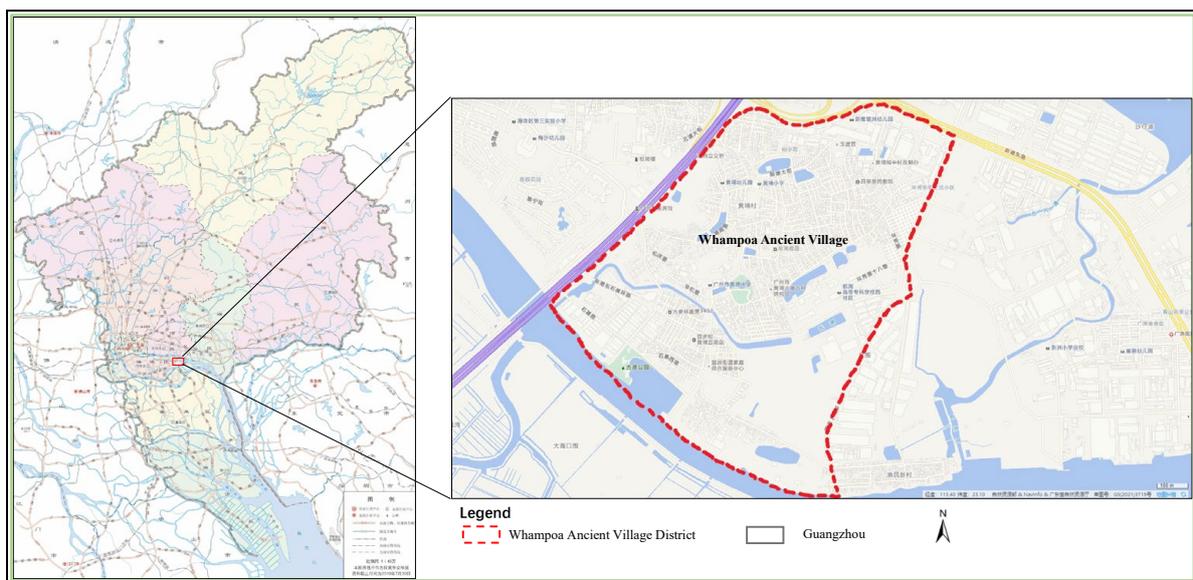
This paper is divided into five sections. The following section introduces the research sites and methods adopted in this study. The third section examines the production of heritage tourism in Huangpu Village. Specifically, it traces the village's development in maritime trade, building manufacturing after the Open and Reform period, and recent heritage tourism development as a strategy for urban renewal. The last two sections discuss

the problems that emerged from heritage tourism in Huangpu Village, highlight findings, and conclude this paper.

## 2. Research Site and Methods

### 2.1. Research Site

Huangpu Ancient Village is located in the east of Pazhou Island, Guangzhou. It is close to Huangpu Ancient Port and approximately 3.5 km away from Pazhou International Exhibition Center, China Import Commodities Fair (Canton Fair) (Figure 1). As this ancient village was once one of the starting points for China to link the global Maritime Silk Road, its history was created by international trade and a complicated clan and overseas Chinese network. After the Qing Dynasty, water around Huangpu Ancient Village Port Pier replaced the increasingly congested Fuxu Port, becoming the anchorage of foreign commercial ships in Guangzhou [22]. The total foreign trade volume of this ancient port in 1817 was CNY 19.71 million [23]. Due to the development of foreign port trade, Huangpu's historical village gradually became an important hub of transnational maritime trade and cultural exchanges. The village layout was also influenced by the international marine trade, which includes the ancestral hall, former port, and the rear village of the ancient town village of the Silk Road port.



**Figure 1.** Location of Huangpu Ancient Village in Haizhu District, Guangzhou.

Huangpu Ancient Village is dominated by four surnames: Liang, Feng, Hu, and Luo. There is a clear correspondence between the distribution of “comb-shaped fragments” and the clans’ locations. Each clan has its own texture and spatial pattern, and the spatial organization reflects the family organization. In addition, the family school and library donated by officials and businessmen and the Beidi Temple symbolize Lingnan marine culture, e.g., many celebrities’ former residences, traditional houses from the late Qing Dynasty, docks, archways, ponds, ancient trees, ancient wells, and squares. In addition to historical buildings, the village also has agricultural and forestry lands. It has 568 mu of vegetable fields and 803 mu of papaya, banana, and wolfberry orchards.

Before 2000, located in the suburb of Guangzhou, Huangpu Ancient Village was not included in Guangzhou’s urban planning and management. After 2000, with Guangzhou’s urban expansion and China Import Commodities Fair in Pazhou, Huangpu Ancient Village was gradually included in the metropolitan area. Some historic buildings were demolished, and the agricultural land was reduced by half. Since then, the quintessential agriculture and industry have become the main driving forces of the local economy. In October 2002, Haizhu

District abolished the village committee system, and the original village committee was changed to “Village in City Reform Office”. Villagers in Huangpu Ancient Village became urban residents. To boost the local economy, Huangpu Ancient Village started developing tourism-related industries. In 2013, it was included in the second batch of traditional Chinese villages. According to Guangzhou’s planning, the municipal government plans to transform Huangpu Ancient Village into one that displays Guangzhou’s foreign trade culture and beautiful natural scenery. It balances environmental protection and rural development and integrates historical villages into Guangzhou’s city image building.

## 2.2. Research Methods and Data Collection

From April 2019 to January 2022, the leading author conducted ethnographic fieldwork. To examine Huangpu Ancient Village’s rural culture, history, community identity, and “local sense”, the leading author conducted 20 semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, document analysis of government policies, and planning document. Interviews with local community workers, residents, renters, and tourists help understand their opinions of heritage tourism and their everyday lives. Their everyday lives are closely mediated by heritage tourism. In addition, the leading author conducted participatory observation in the village by observing the local village’s everyday lives, tourists’ tourism performance, and local community workers’ work. This allows the leading author to better understand the village’s tourism development, its outcome, and its impact on different stakeholders. Lastly, the leading author collected related government policies and Huangpu Village’s preservation planning document to better understand the major ideologies involved in Huangpu Village’s development, which is mainly government initiated.

The research participants included community workers, museum workers, shop workers, residents, renters, and tourists. The interview questions included the following: (1) What is the development of the historical villages and ports? (2) What is the development of local culture, industry, and community? (3) What is the process in the regeneration of historical landscapes? What features and images of the ancient village are promoted by architecture and landscape? What is the image of Guangzhou? What are the factors affecting cultural cultivation? (4) What are the developmental suggestions? The leading author conducted interviews with different local stakeholders to obtain other opinions. Different views were combined with the actual urban planning to analyze the historical village’s regeneration strategy. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the leading author. The leading authors has conducted thematic analysis by targeting major themes reflexively and inductively.

## 3. The Production of Heritage Tourism

### 3.1. Background and Process of the Formation of Port Villages and Towns and the Decline in Suburban Villages

Huangpu Ancient Village was the oldest village built in Northern Song Dynasty [24]. It flourished in the Ming and Qing Dynasties after the establishment of Guangzhou as an outer port [25]. In the 24th year of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1685), Guangdong Customs was established, and the number of foreign merchant ships berthing in Huangpu Ancient Port increased. At that time, Gothenburg of Sweden and the Empress of China from the United States were the major foreign merchant ships. The Gothenburg sailed to Guangzhou three times, in 1739, 1741, and most famously in 1743, and it sank in Gothenburg in 1745. In 1757, after the Qing government put restrictions on trade, Guangzhou improved China’s customs system [26], and Huangpu historical port officially became China’s only Sino-Western trade port [27]. The facilities of foreign-related institutions, such as Huangpu Tax Hall, Foreign Affairs Office, Comprador Hall, and Yongjingying Camp, were built by the Qing government [28]. Due to transnational trade, the appointed Chinese personnel, foreign ships, and businessmen, etc., all gathered in Huangpu Ancient Village [23].

Although foreign businessmen were allowed to engage in trading activities in Guangzhou during the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty, foreign merchant ships were

restricted from berthing in the waters of Huangpu's Ancient Port. The court expressly stipulated that "all foreign merchant ships carrying foreign goods . . . must anchor Huangpu (port)" and "open their guns at Huangpu and then trade" [23]. At that time, the goods on foreign ships were transported to Guangzhou by Chinese feeder barges. Goods purchased by foreign businessmen from Guangzhou also needed to be transported by barge to Huangpu's boat. Foreigners who needed to engage in trade activities could live in Guangzhou's commercial pavilion, except the upper class and managers. Other foreign vessels, including the captain, first mate, and sailor, could only live in Huangpu, and their activities were limited to Huangpu Ancient Village.

Huangpu Ancient Village built many foreign-related official facilities and other supporting facilities for foreign businessmen and ship personnel. The historical village was full of storehouses, warehouses, comprador shops, ship repair carpenters' shops, blacksmiths' shops, painters' shops, etc., along both sides of Wharf Avenue, East City, and West City, and some even opened shops all night. Although Guangdong Customs supervision and comprador were selected and controlled by the government, their work involved many complicated procedures, requiring many assistants, sampan secretaries, clerks, and errands to cope with the increased business. Meanwhile, the village also provided services for loaders and repairers where carpenters, blacksmiths, hairdressers, and washerwomen dwelled in the village [29,30]. Since then, Huangpu Village had constructed a port landscape with both Chinese and Western cultures. When an American Hunter came to Huangpu Ancient Village in 1826, he recorded that Huangpu Ancient Village was "a big town with thousands of residents, and almost all the residents had direct or indirect contact with foreign merchant ships" [31].

After the Opium War, western countries forced China to open trading ports, such as Shanghai, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Fuzhou, ending China's trading autonomy system [32]. Foreign capital controlled Guangzhou's shipping, customs management, and navigation administration rights [32]. Since then, Guangzhou's trade status in China had gradually declined. Huangpu Ancient Village's foreign trade status, nature, and port structure started to change. It was transformed into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal social port serving the predatory trade of international capitalism where foreign merchant ships and warships entered freely. During the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, the river sand at the harbor of Huangpu Ancient Port silted up, affecting the berthing of merchant ships. Huangpu Customs moved to the north shore of Cheung Chau Island, and the port function declined. Huangpu Ancient Village's former prosperous foreign port business disappeared. Villagers relied on farming and fishing for their livelihoods [33].

After establishing the People's Republic of China in 1949, the ancient village was still dominated by agriculture. Some ancestral temples were demolished or turned into public buildings, such as primary schools and middle schools, and Guangzhou Navigation College was built. These newly built public facilities and buildings changed Huangpu Village's spatial pattern [34]. After the Open and Reform policy in 1978, Huangpu Ancient Village used the village's collective land to attract foreign capital and developed township manufacturers, such as shipyards and textile mills. These township manufacturers also relied heavily on the clan network of overseas Chinese manufacturers [35]. During this time, the agricultural land gradually reduced.

Manufactures in Huangpu Village were under-developed and managed by the rural community. Moreover, these manufacturers were not included in Guangzhou's urban planning. Industrial enterprises only built a small number of factories around the village, which lacked systematic planning. With Guangzhou expanding its urban space rapidly, more villages were included in the city area. Huangpu Ancient Village was incorporated into Guangzhou's downtown area. In October 2001, Huangpu Village began to implement "Village to Residence", and the original village committee changed its name to "Village in City Reform Office" in 2002. Subsequently, Huangpu Village was brought into urban control. Villagers became urban residents. The village's governance was incorporated into

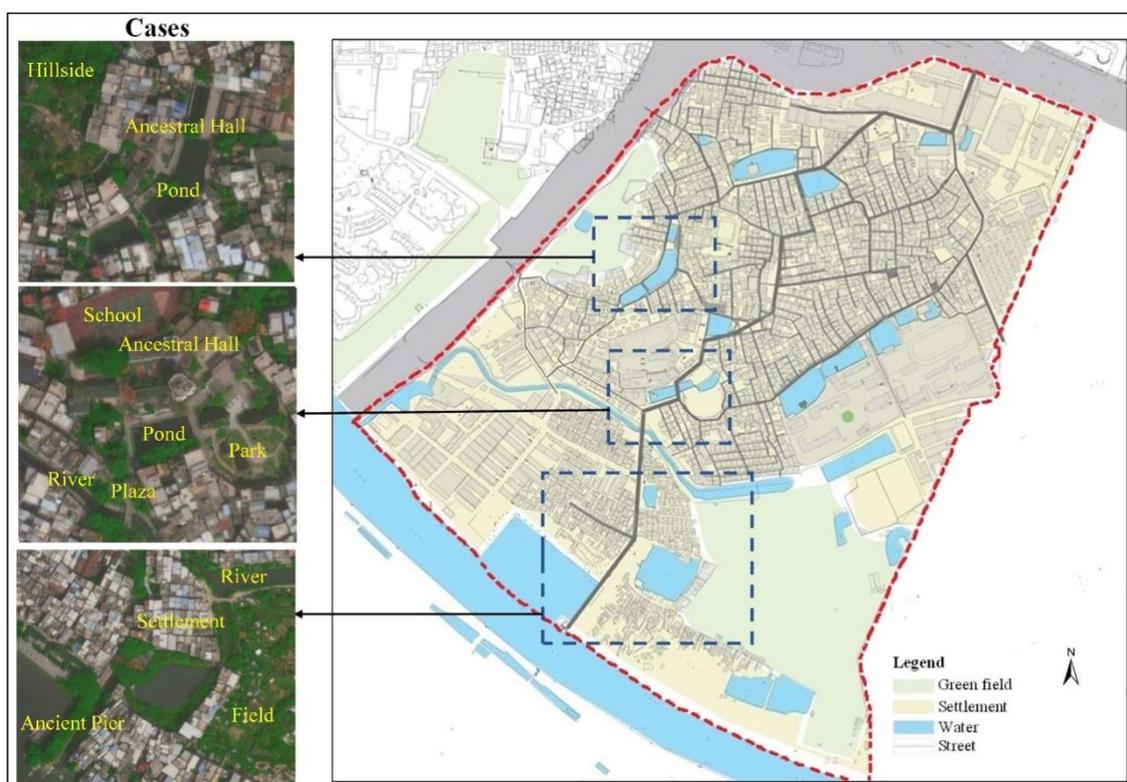
urban governance. Huangpu Village started to lease disorderly and developed small-scale businesses.

Most historical and cultural architectural relics, such as ancestral halls, are vacant or dilapidated, and the material environment of traditional village features has further changed. As an urban village with Chinese characteristics, due to its historical complexity and imperfect policies, collective land in the village cannot be transferred entirely to state-owned land. Hence, Huangpu Ancient Village is a rural village with incomplete urban community governance. Huangpu Ancient Village set up the Pazhou Street Huangpu Economic Union to manage its collective property. Meanwhile, the union also acts as the village committee. This dual management structure marks Huangpu Village's semi-urbanization, a unique space in urban areas.

### 3.2. Regeneration and Rehabilitation

#### 3.2.1. Diversified Landscape Types and Resource Recognition

Huangpu Village's land types reflect its rich history. Although it no longer serves as a foreign trade port, the village has formed a space prototype of representative port villages and towns in Guangzhou's Millennium foreign trade history development, representing the history of Guangzhou Maritime Silk Road and Lingnan characteristic buildings. The village's land-use status includes green space, residential area, water area, and roads. There are three types of land use. The first type is ancestral halls distributed around wind ponds, and some ancestral halls have been built against hillside green spaces. The second type is the square, park, wind pond, and ancestral hall along the Hucun River, with schools next to the ancestral hall. The third type is the mixture of historical docks, rivers, residential areas, and farmland (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Different types of landscapes in Huangpu Ancient Village. Source: the author collected the photos.

Huangpu’s heritage tourism is based on its material and immaterial culture. Huangpu Ancient Village’s protection plan identified nine categories of cultural relics, namely, ancient ancestral halls, ancient houses and garden buildings, wind ponds, temples, historical port and institutional sites, historical gate archways and stone plaques, ancient commercial street sites, ancient wells, ancient trees, and ancestral tombs. There are 19 historical temples, 11 historical houses and garden buildings (Figure 3). Most ancient dwellings are located in the historical streets and lanes paved with bluestone slabs where the nearby buildings have adopted Lingnan characteristics. Some sculptures are used for decoration, such as flower bases, pot-ear gables, wall paintings, sculptures, leaky windows, door joints, and gray plastic. In addition, there is the Beidi Temple, the historical port, Huangpu Historical Port Wharf site, and Huangpu’s registered port set up by Guangdong Customs. There are also historical gate archways and stone tablets, including Fengpu Gate Site, Huangpu Village archway in Huangzhou, and the stone tablet of the East Gate near the sea. In addition, there are two ancient commercial street sites, historical trees, historical wells, and Feng’s ancestral tomb. Most of these historical sites and cultural resources were built in the Qing Dynasty. The material cultural resources, such as Huangpu historical port site and the stone plaque near the East Gate, show evidence of its participation in foreign sea trade. Many ancestral halls and traditional houses demonstrate the Lingnan Guangfu Villages’ characteristics and clan culture.



**Figure 3.** Distribution map and typical landscape of material cultural resources in Huangpu Historical Village (photo collected by author).

Huangpu Village also has intangible cultures, including gray sculptures, mural paintings, pottery sculptures, various carvings, and other Lingnan-style traditional architectural decoration techniques. It also has food processing technology, such as “ginger milk” and “boat porridge”. Moreover, Huangpu Village celebrates the Northern Emperor’s birthday. The immaterial culture also includes the dragon dance, dragon boat race, Gothenburg’s

visit to Huangpu Ancient Port, and the Empress of China's voyage to Huangpu Ancient Port (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The intangible cultural resources of Huangpu Ancient Village: (a) dragon dance celebrating the honoring of the birth of Emperor Zhenwu; (b) group photo of the leaders of China and Switzerland in front of the sculpture to welcome the return of the Gothenburg; (c) the limestone-sculptured decoration on the ancient residence in the village; (d) group photo of Chinese and foreign guests at the 230th anniversary of the Queen's maiden voyage to China (photo collected by author).

Driven by the “beautiful countryside” project, the government took the history of marine commerce and traditional ancestral halls as local cultural symbols and explored the combination of natural landscape and cultural resources to protect and revive the local culture, develop the local economy, and enhance local identity.

### 3.2.2. Cultural-Led Planning and the Revival of Port and Village Integration

Around 2000, with the development and construction of Pazhou International Convention and Exhibition Center, Huangpu Ancient Village gradually merged into the downtown area. It became an important area for Guangzhou's urban expansion during the 13th Five-Year-Plan period. As the historical village has unique marine trade history and traditional cultural resources, the government began to seek ways to activate local cultural resources to boost the local economy and build Guangzhou's city image. In this way, instead of only focusing on materiality, the urban renewal of Huangpu Ancient Village also re-evaluated creativity, cultural value, and residents' lives. Ten series of protection or landscape special plans were compiled to protect historical sites, playing an essential role in protecting and revitalizing the historical villages (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Main planning for the protection of Huangpu Ancient Village and Port.

Age	Planning Name	Development Goals and Strategies
2001	Improvement and Protection Plan for Huangpu Village (2000–2002)	Protection of foreign trade, historical and cultural tourist areas, and ancient villages.
2004	Planning for Comprehensive Improvement and Landscape of the Surrounding Environment of Huangpu Ancient Port	Brand scenic spot with rich historical and cultural connotations and long-term vitality, ancient harbor view Designing the ancient port landscape and reconstructing the ancient village’s commercial street.
2005	Detailed planning for the Renovation and Construction of the Landscape Area at Huangpu Ancient Port	Important landscape nodes and historical and cultural landscape areas on the backchannel of the Pearl River Reconstruction of buildings and roads around the Ancient Port.
2005	Landscape renovation planning on both sides of Huangpu Village’s main tourist routes	Characteristic scenic spots with rich historical and cultural connotations and lasting vitality, Ancient Village tourism route planning and environmental improvement.
2005	Protection Planning for Key Areas of Huangpuzhi Street and Panshi Street in Huangpu Village	City-style tourist attractions and love of foreign trade ports in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Nationalist education base and an important window for foreign exchange.
2008	Comprehensive Environmental Improvement Planning and Landscape Nodes Design for the Historic Area at Huangpu Ancient Ports	A modern place for world commercial and cultural exchanges in south China with the coordinated development of Pazhou International Convention and Exhibition Center on Pazhou Island.
2012	Beautiful countryside—Model Village Planning of Huangpu Village, Haizhu District	The new socialist countryside suitable for living, working, and traveling, restoring the original historical, residential, and commercial atmosphere.
2015	Site Selection and Conceptual Planning of the Empress of China Theme Park in Huangpu Ancient Port, Haizhu District	Reshaping the historical and cultural status of the ancient port building a cultural brand.
2017	Protection and Development Planning of Huangpu Ancient Village Traditional Village as well as Development Planning of Surrounding Area	Protect and build cultural relics, historical sites, ports, and wharfs characterized by the birthplace of the Maritime Silk Road. Build Huangpu Ancient Village into a dynamic area that highlights the traditional features of Lingnan, combines Chinese and Western, and blends ancient and modern elements.
2019	Huangpu Gugang Ancient Village Historic Landscape Area as well as Huangpu Village Traditional Village Protection and Development Plan	The height of the new buildings in the core area should be below 12 m. The illegal buildings that conflict with the historical features will be demolished, and the existing facilities and enterprises that pollute the environment will be relocated or treated within a time limit Comprehensive protection-oriented development.

Source: Author’s collation.

Upon Gothenburg’s visit to Guangzhou, Guangzhou compiled Planning for Comprehensive Improvement and Landscape of the Surrounding Environment of Huangpu Ancient Port and allocated special funds to build Huangpu Ancient Port Scenic Area. In 2006, Huangpu Village completed the renovation and reconstruction project. The government repaired the Whampoa Ancient Port wharf site, built the Gothenburg visiting monument and garden area, and built the Guangdong First Pass Memorial Hall at the original Huangpu Tax Museum to show the history of Guangzhou Maritime Silk Road. This played a positive role in strengthening Huangpu’s historical value and activating the ancient port culture.



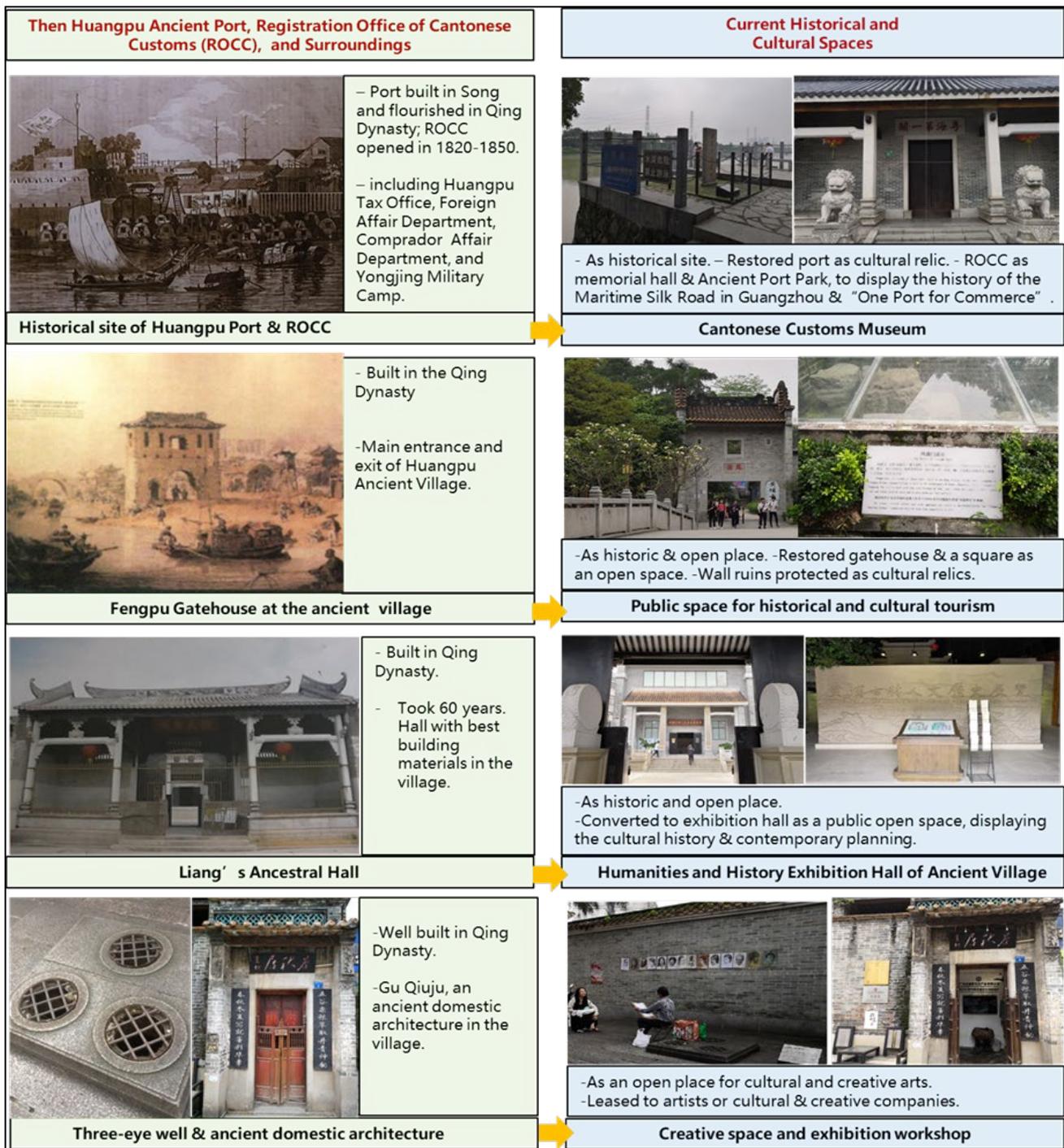
Meanwhile, it also held a memorial exhibition of Hu's ancestors. Through media publicity, many cultural and creative industries and leisure catering practitioners were attracted by the village's history and culture, and began to set up art workshops and restaurants. In 2015, Guangzhou Huangpu Historical Village Tourism Development Co., Ltd. became responsible for the Chuangxu Wenchuang block project, which combines the traditional culture with youth fashion Wenchuang products [38].

Maritime trade history and culture are unique local cultures that revitalize tourism and creative industries, further boosting regional development. Old and abandoned historic ancestral temple buildings, maritime trade history, and culture are considered as cultural resources. These resources were additionally integrated with modern fashion for Guangzhou's city image building. They became cultural symbols, and Huangpu Ancient Village obtained government resources to transform the material space. The ancient port has a thriving business culture, clan culture, and overseas Chinese culture, and it is now one of the most crucial rural tourist attractions in Guangzhou.

### *3.3. Marine Business History and Traditional Architecture*

Modern urban and rural reconstruction planning has changed from improving the physical environment to paying attention to the place's historical context, residents' identity, and emotional belonging [39]. Modern urban and rural reconstruction planning has transformed local materiality into a cultural and art product [40]. A place is a complicated structure defined by economic, social, and cultural processes, which affects residents' and tourists' lives. Huangpu Village's revival created a place with historical context and traditional characteristics rather than a standard and homogeneous space. In this process, the traditional local features and community networks should be protected and restored as much as possible, and the indigenous residents' right to live should be safeguarded [41]. Regeneration mainly occurs in the central areas of the historical villages and the port area.

Tourism companies include these cultural relics, historical ancestral halls, historic houses, and streets into creative cultural spaces for local regeneration. The government also grants artists and painters access to historical buildings and spaces for protection and other utilizations [42]. For example, Guqiuju, a historical folk house, was rented by a painter as an art gallery of seal cutting and traditional Chinese painting, creating an intangible cultural brand. The painter respected its pattern and texture when repairing the old house (Figure 6). In this way, the old house could be rejuvenated without losing its traditional features. By retaining the uniqueness and historicity of heritage sites and representing local specific place resources, Huangpu Ancient Village has changed from a port to a heritage site, representing the symbol of the birthplace of the ancient Maritime Silk Road. This village has also been transformed into a "famous historical and cultural village" with a thousand-year commercial port character.



**Figure 6.** A case diagram of cultural resource transformation with characteristics of places (photos collected by author).

**4. Discussion**

China has a large number of historic villages and towns located in cities. Through rapid urbanization, these villages were included in the urban areas where their historical buildings were reconstructed to develop heritage tourism. Recently, scholars have paid attention to local cultural heritage protection, people’s identity, and sense of belonging [43–46]. The local government in Huangpu Village collaborated with companies to develop heritage tourism, a typical government-led planning project.

As a rural village included in the urban area, Huangpu Village experienced semi-urbanization. It maintained features of rurality and transformed historical sites into heritage tourism, as influenced by the urban regeneration and renewal strategy. Huangpu Village mainly promoted culture-oriented regeneration from three dimensions. First, it established a new economic foundation centered on Huangpu Ancient Village and the ancient port landscape area. Huangpu Village used the Huangpu Ancient Port Site, traditional ancestral temple buildings, modern cultural and creative resources to build the landscape area, developing the revitalization and economic foundation centered on history, culture, and tourism.

Meanwhile, it created income and employment opportunities for village residents, revitalizing the ancient village economy and driving popularity. Second, Huangpu Village improved the village's environment, including municipal engineering, house facade decoration, landscape greening, water conservancy, and river reconstruction. Third, the villages were integrated into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to strengthen innovation and sustainable development. As the birthplace of the "Maritime Silk Road", Huangpu Village was developed into a historical and cultural landscape area, with local characteristics of the Millennium commercial capital.

As a traditional village prospered by Hong Kong in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Huangpu Ancient Village has now been transformed into a modern historical city village symbolizing Guangzhou's foreign trade window city. These cultural heritage resources can construct historical identity and enhance social cohesion. Due to the entry of cultural and creative artists and tourists, the streets centered in the ancient village landscape have now become lively. The historical village's environment has been improved through two phases of upgrading and renovation. The number of tourist reception facilities on both sides of the original street has increased, which has brought certain income and employment opportunities to residents. Meanwhile, the Huangpu Village government has repaired the decaying buildings to attract foreign tourists to improve the competitiveness of urban historical villages. The reliance on the government and commodification of historical buildings for heritage tourism has limited the revival to commercial spaces. As a result, the scenic areas have not yet been included in the tourism development.

The historical and cultural resources of ancient villages are inseparable from the residents' living space. With the development of commercial space and the increase in tourists, the ancient village has become more lively than before. However, due to the rise in land prices and rent, some residents have moved away. Residents' living spaces have thus become tourism destinations. Although the physical living environment has been improved through the renovation project, the problems brought about by the increase in tourists, such as the safety and environmental pollution of restaurants, cannot be ignored. The regeneration policy aimed at tourist-centered external demand inevitably leads to the expansion of commercial space. Therefore, to revitalize the ancient village without marginalizing the residents, we should further consider the continuity of the residents' living environment and create more places for residents' everyday lives. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the residents' perception of commodification. Therefore, this paper recommends a government-led top-down regeneration policy considering a bottom-up response, promoting local stakeholders' communication and participation.

As a result of government-led tourism development, the local infrastructure has been dramatically improved, and the number of tourists increased. This is obvious when compared to the little number of tourists before heritage site modification. As revealed by one research participant, before revitalization/regeneration, architectures were dilapidated with little public service infrastructure. With the co-investment of government capital and social capital, the historical village has been re-branded with a new look. Based on the leading author's observation during the fieldwork, tourists are mainly young people or families with young children. Their tourism motivations are mainly leisure, photo taking, nostalgia, and creative arts tourism.

Moreover, tourism development has primarily benefited the local population. First, based on the information provided by Huangpu Village's preservation planning, Huangpu Village's collective income is CNY 15,000,000, and Huangpu Village's economic union's income is around CNY 1,790,000. Tourism development has significantly improved locals' income compared to their reliance on income from agriculture and leasing. Second, Huangpu economic union received income from tourism companies and other entrepreneurs by signing a lease contract. Third, tourism development has attracted the migrant population to rent and live in the village. Lastly, tourism development has provided employment opportunities. Based on the ethnographic fieldwork, some older adults would sell agricultural products in the village that tourists would purchase.

However, tourism development also negatively impacted the local villagers. Due to the village's boom, villagers rented their houses to migrate a population with a diverse background. This has influenced the village's environment, where sanitation has become an issue. Second, tourism development has brought in lots of restaurants and food carts. These restaurants and food carts have produced waste, and the fume air also negatively impacted the historical sites. Third, similar to other historical sites that develop heritage tourism, Huangpu Village is at risk of over-commodification, especially where many stores sell products that are inconsistent with the village's historical and cultural environment. Lastly, the increasing number of tourists has disturbed the local village's living environment, impacting their everyday lives.

## 5. Conclusions

There are many models for revitalizing ancient urban villages, which are different from the homogenization model centered on material facilities. This study provides a case study that combines historical and cultural heritage resources with artistic and creative arts industries, promoting heritage tourism. The sustainable innovation of the historical and cultural heritage activates the Millennium ancient village model, emphasizing the importance of historical culture and innovative tourism in historical village regeneration. Huangpu Ancient Village is experiencing a typical "cultural turning point" and industrial transformation. This process revitalizes the declining traditional historical ancient villages in cities, creating employment opportunities, improving the living environment, promoting community integration, and achieving standard integration with urban and rural areas.

Based on the ethnographic fieldwork, local villagers are willing to change the development model for sustainable development. They realize the importance of tourism to revitalize ancient villages and cooperate with the local government and tourism companies to improve local heritage sites. This research proposed two policy recommendations. First, after the foreign-funded manufacturing industry retreats from the ancient village, it is necessary to change the traditional view of developing an industry-led economy and redefine the main architectural landscapes, port sites, and festivals of the ancient village as material and intangible heritages with valuable maritime trade history and cultural resources of Lingnan traditional villages with culture-led planning. Second, the spatial symbols reflecting the local history, culture, and sense of place are closely related to the ancient village's ancestral temple and wind pond. Most villagers have nostalgic memories of the ancestral temple and pond landscape. Hence, it is necessary to preserve the spatial symbols, especially the ancestral temple and wind pond.

Meanwhile, we argue that Huangpu Village's development aligns with sustainable development from two perspectives. First, based on the government planning, Huangpu Village's development prioritizes protection where the government utilizes the heritage resources to brand Guangzhou. Meanwhile, the government incorporates tourism companies' investment to attract tourists for consumption, improving the historical village's vibrancy. Second, heritage tourism facilitates historical villages' sustainable development. The booming tourism has provided Huangpu Village's rehabilitation and preservation budget, enriched its vibrancy and fostering sustainable development.

This research is limited in the following two ways. First, the number of interviews is limited. The recruitment of research participants is based on their availability and willingness to be interviewed. Hence, it is biased regarding the distribution of the research participants' identity. Moreover, those willing to be interviewed tend to have very positive or negative opinions toward heritage tourism. Hence, this sample is biased. Second, due to the limited number of research participants, this paper's analysis of tourists' tourism experience, motivation, and characteristics is limited. The leading author's participatory observation supplemented all this information. In the future, this research would benefit from conducting surveys with tourists to better understand tourist flows. More research on urban villages' semi-urbanization and urban regeneration strategies should be conducted, especially comparison research involving multiple urban villages.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, D.X.; data curation, L.L.; formal analysis, L.L.; funding acquisition, D.X.; writing—original draft, L.L.; writing—review and editing, Y.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, grant number 41930646.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are grateful to the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Ding, F.; Wu, J. The Evolution of the Concept of Urban Regeneration and the Practical Connotation in Today's Society. *Urban Plan. Forum* **2017**, *6*, 87–95.
- Dong, J. Research Report on "Villages in Cities"—Countermeasures for the process of rural urbanization in downtown areas of economically developed areas. *City Plan. Rev.* **1999**, *23*, 7.
- He, S.; Liu, Z. A follow-on study on the impact of urban redevelopment on local residents induced by the Asian Games: An investigation in three affected communities in Guangzhou. *Geogr. Res.* **2013**, *32*, 1046–1056.
- Yang, J.; Chen, Y. Review on the development of urban regeneration in China from 1949 to 2019. *City Plan. Rev.* **2020**, *44*, 9–19; 31.
- Wu, F.L.; Zhang, F.Z.; Liu, Y.Q. Beyond Growth Machine Politics: Understanding State Politics and National Political Mandates in China's Urban Redevelopment. *Antipode* **2022**, *54*, 608–628. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Liu, Y.Q.; Wu, F.L.; Liu, Y.; Li, Z.G. Changing neighbourhood cohesion under the impact of urban redevelopment: A case study of Guangzhou, China. *Urban Geogr.* **2017**, *38*, 266–290. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Ye, C.; Yu, J. Towards Rural-urban Integration: Key Issues and Trends on Linking New-type Urbanization to Rural Revitalization. *Sci. Geogr. Sin.* **2020**, *40*, 528–534.
- Levine, J.; Lockwood, C.; Worpole, K. Rethinking regeneration. *World Archit.* **1997**, *58*, 4.
- Evans, G.; Shaw, P. *The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Review of Evidence: A Report to the Department for Culture Media and Sport*; London Metropolitan University: London, UK, 2004.
- Evans, G. Measure for measure: Evaluating the evidence of culture's contribution to regeneration. *Urban Stud.* **2005**, *42*, 959–983. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Sochacka, E.; Rzeszotarska-Pałka, M. Social Perception and Urbanscape Identity of Flagship Cultural Developments in Szczecin (in the Re-Urbanization Context). *Land* **2021**, *10*, 398. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Wu, F. Land Development, Inequality and Urban Villages in China. *Int. J. Urban Reg. Res.* **2009**, *33*, 885–889. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Gao, Q.; Yin, D.; Zhu, H. Urban regeneration and emotional politics of place in Liede Village, Guangzhou, China. *Habitat Int.* **2020**, *103*, 102199. [[CrossRef](#)]
- He, H. Cultural-policy-led Urban Regeneration: Experience and Inspiration of Development of Western Cities Based on Cultural Resources. *Urban Plan. Int.* **2006**, *1*, 34–39.
- Wang, T.; Zhang, J. Culture-orientated Urban Regeneration: A Critical Perspective. *Urban Dev. Stud.* **2009**, *16*, 113–118.
- Huang, Q.; Wang, D. Cultural-led Urban Regeneration: The Oretical Framework, Practices and Implications. *Urban Stud.* **2018**, *25*, 68–74.
- Wang, R.; Eisenack, K.; Tan, R. Sustainable rural renewal in China: Archetypical patterns. *Ecol. Soc.* **2019**, *24*, 32. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Miles, S.; Paddison, R. Introduction: The rise and rise of culture-led urban regeneration. *Urban Stud.* **2005**, *42*, 833–839. [[CrossRef](#)]

19. He, S.J.; Wu, F.L. Property-led redevelopment in post-reform China: A case study of Xintiandi redevelopment project in Shanghai. *J. Urban Aff.* **2005**, *27*, 1–23. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Han, J.; Miao, J.; Shi, Y.; Miao, Z. Can the semi-urbanization of population promote or inhibit the improvement of energy efficiency in China? *Sustain. Prod. Consum.* **2021**, *26*, 921–932. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Liu, X.; Cao, G.; Liu, T.; Liu, H. Semi-urbanization and evolving patterns of urbanization in China: Insights from the 2000 to 2010 national censuses. *J. Geogr. Sci.* **2016**, *26*, 1626–1642. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Yi, Q. *History of Huangpu Port (Ancient and Modern Part)*; China Communications Press: Beijing, China, 1989.
23. Xian, Q. *Guangzhou: The Cradle of the Ancient Maritime Silk Road*; China Review Academic Publishers: Hong Kong, China, 2007.
24. Zhao, L.; Huang, W. Changes of Huangpu Port. *Lingnan Cult. Hist.* **1986**, *2*, 46–49.
25. Yang, H. *Guangzhou Fanshisanhang Shangbu Wenhua Yizhi Kaifa Yanjiu*; South China University of Technology Press: Guangzhou, China, 2006; p. 353.
26. Pan, A. *Shangdu Wangshi: Guangzhou Chengshi Lishi Shouji*; China Architecture & Building Press: Beijing, China, 2010; pp. 145–147.
27. Zhou, X. Research on the Traceability and Development Process of Guangzhou Haisi Road. *China Anc. City* **2018**, *1*, 48–57.
28. Li, Y. *Guangzhougang Yu Haishang Sichouzhilu*; Guangdong Economy Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 2019; pp. 30–33.
29. Dyke, P.A.V. *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast (1700–1845)*; Social Science Academic Press: Beijing, China, 2018; pp. 48–75.
30. Liang, T.; Yuan, Z.R. *Guangdong Customs Record*, 2nd ed.; Guangdong People's Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 2014; p. 224.
31. Hunter, W.C. *The Fankwaie at Canton and Bits of Old China*; Guangdong People's Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 2009; p. 26.
32. Guangzhou Local Records Editorial Board Office. *History of Guangzhou*; Zhuying Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 1989; pp. 33–48.
33. Feng, B. *Huangpu Cun he Huangpu Gugang*; Guangdong People's Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 2002; p. 134.
34. Shen, K.; Feng, J. Another Strategy of Historical Environmental Protection and Renewal Planning—A Case Study of Guangzhou Huangpu Village (Port) Planning and Design Event. *Archit. J.* **2010**, *6*, 32–36.
35. Pan, X. Xinxinxiangrong de Huangpu Cun. *Gaz. People's Gov. Guangzhou Munic.* **1996**, *13*, 51–52.
36. Zhao, J.; Zeng, Z.; Zhao, X. Investigation and Improvement Strategies of Ancestral Temples in Huangpu Village. *Guangdong Landsc. Archit.* **2017**, *39*, 48–53.
37. Guangzhou Yearbook Compilation Committee. *Guangzhou Yearbook, 2012*; Guangzhou Yearbook Society: Guangzhou, China, 2012; Volume 30, p. 658.
38. Fang, W. *Research on Tourism Community Participation*; Southwest Jiaotong University Press: Chengdu, China, 2019; p. 134.
39. Friedmann, J. Place and Place-Making in Cities: A Global Perspective. *Plan. Theory Pract.* **2010**, *11*, 149–165. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Kwon, M. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*; MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2004; pp. 1–28.
41. Harvey, D. The right to the city. *City Read.* **2008**, *6*, 23–40.
42. Wan, S. *Guangzhou Chengmai*; Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House: Guangzhou, China, 2017; p. 250.
43. Luloff, A.E.; Bridger, J.C.; Graefe, A.R.; Saylor, M.; Martin, K.; Gitelson, R. Assessing rural tourism efforts in the United States. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **1994**, *21*, 46–64. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Fleischer, A.; Pizam, A. Rural tourism in Israel. *Tour. Manag.* **1997**, *18*, 367–372. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Hall, D.; Buhalis, D. Rural tourism management: Sustainable options conference. *Int. J. Tour. Res.* **2000**, *2*, 295–299. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Zhang, J.; Li, M. Investigation and improvement strategies of ancestral hall buildings in Huangpu Village. *J. Party Sch. CPC Jinan Munic. Comm.* **2013**, *4*, 61–64.