

## Reviewing “Duoluojie” the creative student-led urban transformations in China

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### Abstract

This article explores “Duoluojie” around Chinese university campuses which are informal adaptations of streets to serve the needs of University students and promote creative economies. From reviewing the meaning of “being a university student” in the Chinese context and how this has transformed in the past decades, we seek the origins and emerging literature of Duoluojie. “Duoluojie” in this paper is a creative approach to regenerating urban spaces with grassroots interventions from university students and local communities. It is rooted in but also beyond the street vending economy. Duoluojie, as a unique phenomenon, serves as a vital connection between the university and the city, bridging the gap between campus life and the external urban environment. Reviewing two “Duoluojie” regarding failures and successes, we wish to open up the discourse on its future in relation to current debates and theories on urban regeneration and place branding.

**Keywords:** Studentscape; Creativity; Culture-led urban regeneration; creative tourism

### 1 Introduction

The term “Duoluo” etymologically translates to “depravity.” However, in the context of Chinese urban culture, “Duoluojie,” or “a depraved street,” has paradoxically served as a source of joy and nostalgia for countless Chinese university students since the late 1990s. The use of “Duoluo” to describe the recreational street around universities eventually contradicts the traditional Chinese results-focused connotation and expectations of university students, “Liang er bu wen chuang wai shi, yi xin zhi du sheng xian shu”<sup>1</sup>. It is noteworthy that Duoluojie has thrived as a veritable haven for university students, offering a rich tapestry of amenities that include street food vendors, karaoke bars (KTVs), budget-friendly lodging options, affordable fashion merchandise, and pre-owned digital devices, see Figure1. Additionally, it has emerged as a fertile ground for aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to launch businesses with creative minimal financial outlay and access to a sizable market. While most Duoluojies have been swallowed up in substantial transformation over the past decade, only a few have been preserved and reconsidered as part of urban regeneration

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<sup>1</sup> Statement in “Gu jin Xian Wen”, means that regardless of external trivialities, be concentrated on the study.

projects led by university authorities and civil organizations. In fact, there are successful cases where Duoluojie is kept and even has driven the growth of the creative economy around the university campuses such as Shapowei Creative District around Xiamen University. The agglomeration of student-led creative economies, cultural organization and venues, and leisure facilities in Shapowei is widely recognized as a creative milieu to develop a contemporary cultural vibrancy attracting a new wave of creative tourists. These genuine, and dynamic cultural segments with a distinctive lifestyle possess a unique role in contemporary urban regeneration.



Figure 1 Duoluojie kept in Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan (photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, July 2023)

To coincide with the global context, The connection between universities and the city stemmed from the debated concept of 'town-and-gown' (Arbo and Benneworth, 2007), which is seen to have the potential to repopulate the city, with a dynamic new community, and produce substantial transformations of the social and cultural landscape. Landscape of creativity has been conceived as the result of the emerging needs regarding students' lifestyles and habitats. Such appealing spaces for cultural consumers also extend to tourism development strategies for correspondence with the increasing needs expressed by tourists' genuine and creative experiences and ultimately increase city resilience to global change. However, in this picture, the impact of how student communities impact the production of creative space and drive local urban regeneration is singularly under-investigated.

This article intends to cast more light on how such a specific phenomenon developed around Chinese universities, and further discuss the potential of Duoluojie as a specific studentscape in the Chinese context to stimulate the landscape of creativity for future urban regeneration. Its specific spatiality and student lifestyles become the epicenter of a process of driving local regeneration, toward a more sustainable integration to correspond to the graduate within the transitional edge. In the next section, after introducing working concept of studentscape, landscape creativity. The case studies of Hua Shi Cultural Street in Wuhan City and Shapowei Creative District in Xiamen City are the illustrations of this process and help us to identify and discuss how this phenomenon exists and is kept for local culture-led urban regeneration. The final section concludes with some summary and future recommendations.

## **2 Studentscape-driven urban regeneration**

In this study, the selective concept involving studentscape and the landscape of creativity has been applied to explore the phenomenon of Duoluojie. Its distinctive student-based segregation stands out as a valuable studentscape of urban change, particularly the important memory of Chinese university students. During the change in city, students' lifestyles have driven the transformation of the Duoluojie. Such authenticity and liveliness of Duoluojie has been regarded as key attributes of the successful creative milieu and cultural quarters in the process of urban regeneration.

### **2.1 The studentscape concept**

The research regarding students' geography, segregation, and pattern originally started from the conflicts in the neighborhood and studentification for the residential concentration (Sage, 2012a; Smith, 2014; Nakazawa, 2017). Residents specify such transformation negatively due to the resulting displacement and exclusion, which is akin to gentrification. To release the relationship between neighborhood and students, local authorities shed light on the more strategic development of student accommodation and services to embrace and regulate studentification, especially in the UK, with Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO), and Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). In fact, Smith (2014) elucidates the geographic distribution of studentification in England and Wales by researching the spatial segregation of both students and student housing. While studentification is a global phenomenon, the residential patterns will develop with a "place-specific" (Zasina, 2023) nature.

Some researchers in urban planning and geology have carried out exploring the relationship between student geographies and the urban restructuring process. The student lifestyle has evolved into a profitable possibility for business industries and is recognized as a dependable niche market for rental income and the supplementary services students demand. Gregory and Rogeson (2019) maintain the commodification of student lifestyle on this accommodation, retail, and services to cater to the student market which has been seen as a lucrative sub-market to attract private sectors. Such student-led residential patterns, namely gated 'student-enclaves' (Smith and Hubbard, 2014), 'student villages' (Kim, 2022) and 'urban dormitories' (Revington, 2021) have a supply-side economics mechanism that encompasses all privately-leased, off-campus student housing within an urban area.

The term 'studentscape' is dynamic, highly depending on the relationship between a university and the surrounding town. Its use can be traced back to the 'settlement structure' (Russo and Tatjer, 2007) in parallel with campus planning and refers to a school's facilities and space. Along with global studentification, this term has been highlighted by urban geographers to explore new spatial patterns produced specifically by students as urban agents, and their impacts on the urban social, cultural, and economic landscape (Russo, 2007; Russo, 2009; Chatterton, 2010; Holton, 2013). Those areas tend to be geographically segregated near a campus (Chatterton, 2010), the studentified communities (Hubbard, 2008; He, 2015), and in a city (Chatterton, 2000; Chatterton and Hollands, 2002). Russo and Capel Tatjer (2007) believe the studentscapes are the 'spatial configuration of the interaction between students and their living and working environments', which are integrated with multiple landscapes encompassing both formal (education) and informal attributes (social conditions of students). Such configurations, defined as the place involving students' education, accommodations, and the place where they develop their social (entertained) activities, could be overlapped in concentrated areas, as opposed to being scattered across urban spaces and thus separated (Zasina, 2023).

Not limited to educational facilities, students can permeate into the street, space, and even district to experience the emergence of student urban services sectors constituted by clubs, pubs, and other consumption venues (Smith and Hubbard, 2014). From the description of a studentscape by Chatterton (2010) students have been regarded as the dominant audience for the economy in urban playscapes and also named the 'commercial studentification' (Zasina, 2021). Their physical concentration spurs urban service sectors to cater to them and their roots in the rise of consumerism,

providing retail, service, and entertainment. He also illuminated students' contribution for the night-time economy in urban playscapes where youthful nightlife is produced and consumed (Chatterton, 2002). Beyond these economic contributions, most students preferred 'the equally deluding greyness of dilapidated place', which they feel responsible for transforming through various activities, like spraying colourful graffiti and placing posters in students' districts, and also new social networking has been built up (Russo, 2007).

## 2.2 The landscape of creativity

Higher education institutions, concentrating on being the carriers and mechanisms of knowledge delivery and sharing, are defined as core elements of the regional creative and innovative systems that are increasingly decentralized to correspond with local variations. Florida remarked (Chatterton, 2002) that educated young people are presently as backbone of the 'creative city'. Russo and Sans (2009) have conferred the students as the main components of producers, mediators, and consumers contributing to the landscape of creativity in the city.

University students as an important part of cultural consumers contribute to the local creative economy. Universities have acted in the role of cultural production and preservation by establishing art collections, museums, and galleries, and currently continue the connections with art and culture through arts events and research (Gilmore and Comunian, 2016). However, it was being altered for social and economic restructuring, which is drawn upon consumption, rather than only production-based. Moreover, Consumer demand has become more diverse primarily due to the rise in educational attainment levels (Chatterton, 2000), and the young generation with stronger personalities devoted to expressing specific dimensions of themselves. Business sectors have to stay agile and adapt quickly to adjust trends for corresponding new lifestyles, ideologies, and cultural practices resulting from diverse preferences. Additionally, students, as the young generation with stronger personalities devoted to expressing specific dimensions of themselves. The bonding between consumer self-concept in line with the symbolic meaning promotes the regeneration and development of cultural consumption, then devoted to the local creative economy.

Students with distinct lifestyles, social networks, and information assert generate new centralities and city image through the interaction with the urban public and private space, for instance contributing to a tolerant and cosmopolitan atmosphere (Russo and Sans, 2009). Such places with openness, inclusiveness, diversity,

and tolerance, act as an incubator for nurturing creative talents' and align with the condition described by Mommas (2004) for the 'creative cluster' serving as a key ingredient of the post-Fordist urban economy. Meanwhile, the creative people are progressively coalescing within where their ideas and identities are accepted, and fully local diverse amenities are provided. Indeed, 'studentified' spaces with a full infrastructure base have long been meteoric and open to all people, who prefer a diverse and broad range of social and cultural options. The urban infrastructure and services affected by student activity are equipped with stronger 'symbolic value' has been seen as a 'unique, vibrant and authentic' landscape in the city. Hence, students as both producers, mediators, and consumers of creative groups subsequently intermesh with creative economic development and the opportunities posited by local planning and policy-making (Florida, 2003; Atkinson, 2008; Gilmore, 2016)

The city continues to look towards culture as a driver initiative of its reimagination and revitalization to enhance its global competitive position. The arts have converted enthusiasm for regeneration due to their symbolic potential like identity preservation, supporting the transformative process and cultural expression that might remain untouched by other efforts (Evans, 2005). Beyond its rootedness in the city, how culture has been defined is also changeable, referring successively over time to the thinking, social status, meanings, and values of life (Miles and Paddison, 2005). Indeed, from the global perspective, culture currently plays a strategic role in driving the development of physical amenities, public space revitalization, and entrap activities (Evans and Shaw, 2004), which can be put to embrace social, economic, and political problems during urbanization.

Creative economies have become extremely popular in urban development projects that reimage cities as places for tourists, investment. Florida (2013) suggest the success of regeneration relies on the people climate constituted by creative communities as an impetus for the local economy, and ways to retain and develop this people climate is essential to the production of creative cities ".Thus, investment and strategies are needed to create spaces for amenities responding to their unique lifestyle and build infrastructure to enable the growth of businesses for and with the creative communities. This resonates with Landry's concepts of "creative cities" (1995)and "creative milieu"(2011). Studentscape, marked by distinctive student cultures, initiatives, and interests (Florida, 2003) cultivates a dynamic and thriving environment that nurtures creativity and cultural expression. In essence, the presence and activities of students are dedicated to the formation and vibrancy of creative milieux, thereby contributing to the

development of the creative city.

Creative resources are also recognized as a pillar of the foundation supporting the consumer society, which is relevant to the facilities of culture as the arts, media industries and design festivals transformed into a 'cathedral of consumption' (Richards and Wilson, 2006) consisting of restaurants, shops, markets, entertainment facilities, and so on. Students, as important sectors of cultural consumption (Chatterton, 2000), contribute creative economy with their diverse lifestyles, ideologies, and cultural practices. As a result, the bonding between consumer self-concept in line with the symbolic meaning promotes the regeneration and development of cultural consumption, then devoted to the local creative economy.

The lifestyle of students has been referred by policymakers to as the core attribute of cultural alternatives, which delivers the function, symbolism, and emotion to evoke the reflection of people who encounter the place. Its knowledge-based characteristics have been regarded as an extended diversification strategy of cultural tourism, stimulating interactive experiences for visitors with personal identity. Additionally, the provision of student activities is the fundamental pillar in the production and consumption of creative tourism. From this perspective, the specific place image in the public mind has been collectively generated by multidimensional tourism elements (Chatterton, 2000).

### 3 Case studies

This section will illustrate the results-focused exam system of Chinese Gaokao and the history of university expansion driven by Chinese studentification. The further exploration of how such duoluojie as an incubator nurtures the creative culture from grassroots intervention to be creative district has been evaluated through the two cases.

#### 3.1 Context: "Gaokao" and University Campuses in PRC

Chinese Higher Education can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (140-80BC) manipulated by the highly centralized feudal monarchy. Guozijian, the first imperial college, was established during the Han dynasty through a sequentially rigorous and competitive examination called "*keju*"<sup>2</sup>. The famous saying "*Shi nian han chuang wu ren wen, yi ju cheng ming tian xia zhi*"<sup>3</sup> describes the

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<sup>2</sup> Keju, Chinese traditional imperial examination for selecting candidates for the state bureaucracy.

<sup>3</sup> Statement in "Zeng guang xian wen", means people will be famous after being selected in "keju", even they devotes to work hard in obscurity for many years.

ruthlessness of “*keju*” and the life-changing experience after being selected. This mechanism lasted nearly 1300 years until 1905 in China and was replaced by “Gaokao”, the “National Higher Education Entrance Exam”, in 1952 after the PRC was founded. Even the “Gaokao” experienced several disruptions and reforms during the Cultural Revolution, its current system based on “test scores” was established in 1977 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. While not a direct descendant, the “Gaokao” seems generally a distant relation to “Keju”. The rigid and results-focused exam system has compelled thousands of Chinese students to endure years of stress and impossible expectations, leading to profound lifelong consequences. For Chinese students, the university serves as an inclusive and open-minded place to explore the personal spirit, cognition, and personality after disregarding the toxic levels of stress that have been directed to the Gaokao, which is also comparatively distinguished from school life.

Encouraged by government initiatives, the late 1990s through the early 2000s witnessed a remarkable boost in university admissions increasing from 0.61 million to 2.2 million (Wang, 2021); in return, China also experienced studentification that reshaped the urban landscape in cities with a large university student population. Rather, in the meantime, hundreds of urban villages specified by collective ownership, as stipulated in the Land Management Law of the People’s Republic of China (LMLPRC), emerged in a wave of land enclosure led by dramatic urbanization. Notably, students during this period experienced the rapid economic growth of the nation and participated in mass entrepreneurship endeavors. Distinguished by their distinctive attributes from preceding generations, they exhibited a pronounced interest in exploring the external world and accruing diverse social experiences. Such specific student lifestyles, with their profitable possibilities, contributed to diverse (formal-informal) urban services and economies, which spontaneously aggregated around campus (urban village), aligning with Smith’s (2005) observation of ‘student-oriented’ cultural and retail services in high demand within a specific location for students living in university-maintained accommodations.

Chinese universities are mostly designed with ‘enclosing walls’ (Xu and Yang, 2009) to provide a self-sustained environment for university students and educators with built-in accommodations, teaching spaces, canteens, shops, nurseries, etc. Such universities which have longer histories including Wuhan University, and Peking University started to experience the wave of rebuilding and expanding these campuses after the form of the PRC to correspond upsurge in demand for nurturing talents (Qian, 2014). University-managed dormitories (UMD) (Ministry of Education of



the People's Republic of China, 2004) even with rigid attendance, are generally considered as compulsory and the sole housing choices for students. Compared to the early 2000s, the less-regulated student lifestyles are gradually reinforcing urban geographies of socio-spatial segregation. As such, studentification in China is not driven by a shortage of accommodation, but by the prospect of a symbiotic connection between the 'gown' (university campus) and the 'town' (adjacent urban villages) (Arbo and Benneworth, 2007), a phenomenon that has attracted scholars' concerns (Chen, 2012; He, 2015; Qing, 2015; Gu and Smith, 2020). Consequently, according to He (2015) and Gu (2020) Chinese studentification is purposely mingled with the students' demand for alternative housing and cultural consumption, which also can be defined as 'consuming studentification'.

### 3.2 Huashi Cultural Street: a grassroots approach

Huashi Cultural Street (HSCS) was once a well-known Duoluojie in Wuhan near the Central China Normal University (CCNU) campus. Located at the heart of Wuchang district, CCNU is surrounded by several big retail stores and next to two other big universities, namely Wuhan University and Wuhan University of Technology. Given its propitious location, HSCS attracted numerous young entrepreneurs to set up businesses catering for students' lifestyles. As noted by Zhan (2010) the autonomous entrepreneurs populating HSCS encompassed current students, alumni, and international scholars. The principal domains of business operations, as ascertained through a 2010 field survey, included: 17.8% devoted to small accessories, 26% specializing in clothing, 8.2% oriented towards food services, 6.9% engaged in footwear and millinery, 4.1% dedicated to cosmetics and literature periodicals respectively, 2.8% involved in educational supplies, and 30.1% categorized under "other" commodities. This confluence of formal and informal enterprises effectively addressed the needs of university students while concurrently propelling creative economies. The ensuing diverse and symbiotic creative ecosystem, harmonized with the student demography, blossomed in tandem with the proliferation of creative businesses such as studios, art boutiques, and avant-garde culinary establishments.

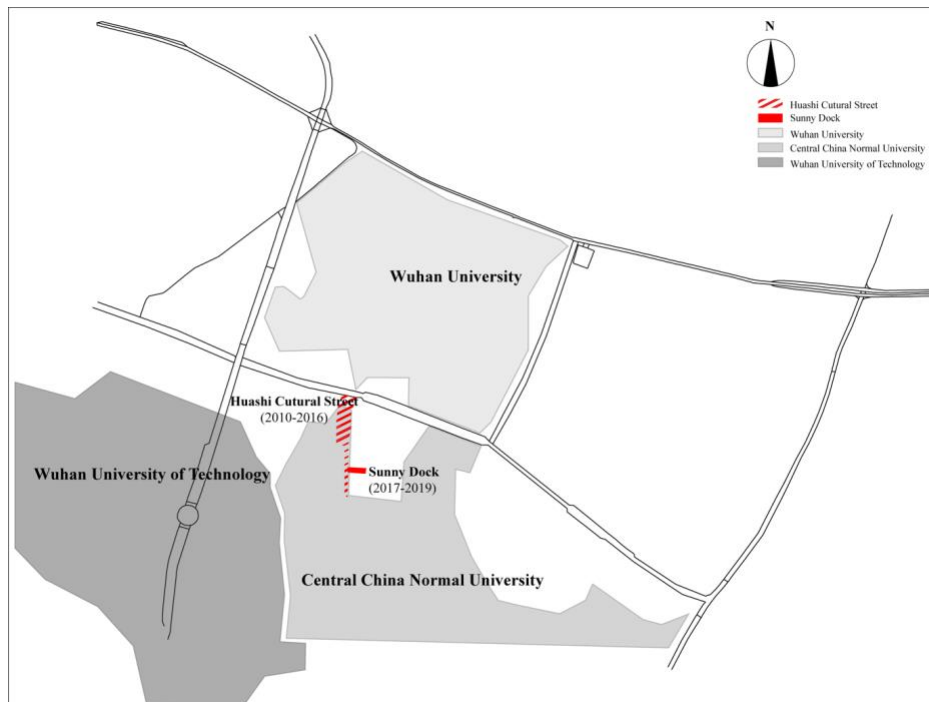


Figure 2 Huashi Cultural Street (Duoluojie) and Sunny Dock  
(drawn by Xiaoyi Xu)

When the campus expansion happened in 2016, CCNU, as the proprietor of the land, envisioned a fully modernized and branded Entrepreneurship Center that would level up the experience and environmental quality in HSCS. The original street was demolished and replaced by newly built multi-story buildings run by the university. The majority of students expressed profound melancholy at the prospect of Hua Shi Cultural Street's disappearance, prompting a proliferation of divergent online discourses regarding the feasibility of preserving this distinctive recreational enclave (Wang, 2021). Grassroots interventions emerged in line with these voices outside the expanded CCNU campus boundary by previous business owners in HSCS to bring back the "Duoluojie" culture. Sunny Dock, a creative enclave was formed in 2016, providing spaces for small businesses with a creative mind to stay, see figure 2. In a visit during the period from 2016-2019, the businesses include a bookshop, a hostel, a café, a dance club, attracting a high volume of students to explore and experience.



Figure 3 Main gate of the sunny dock  
(photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, July 2023)

Here, they engendered a milieu conducive to creative endeavours and events, harmoniously interfacing with the realms of arts and culture, while concurrently manifesting their collective vision for the evolving urban landscape. Furthermore, “Sunny Dock” serves as a space with the agglomeration of urban services sectors catering to student markets, see Figure 3. Its composition is dominated by homestay accommodations, clothing boutiques, clubs, studios, street food vendors, flea markets, and more. Compared with the demolished HSCS, this creative enclave, arising organically through the collaboration of multiple business owners, metamorphosed into a highly acclaimed haven for the younger generation and students, serving as a canvas to capture fleeting moments and share them across social media platforms. Many influential establishments emanated from this creative hub, amplifying its sphere of influence.

Beyond these economic contributions, most students preferred ‘the equally deluding greyness of dilapidated place’, which they feel

responsible for transforming through various activities, like spraying colorful graffiti, installation expressions, and placing posters in students' districts. Also, new social networking has been built up through students and exterior environments. Evans (2005) refers to arts-based projects that aim to combat social exclusion, enhance the well-being of urban residents, and foster increased community engagement. In 2019, the world was put in a great lockdown due to the global epidemic attack. Extremely strict risk management measures were applied in Chinese universities to cut off any connection with exterior campuses. The "Sunny Dock" comprised of self-employed businesses that highly rely on students, precipitated into a dilemma and terminated due to financial constraints.



Figure 4 Vintage shop in Sunny Dock  
(photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, July 2023)

Duoluojie, in its essence, functions as an inclusive catalyst for the stimulation and aggregation of creative economies. Universities, serving as pivotal repositories and dissemination hubs of knowledge, constitute integral components of regional creative and innovative systems that are progressively decentralized to align with localized nuances. Duoluojie, therefore, emerges as a critical conduit aimed at bridging the schism between the campuses and the surrounding environment, thereby cohorts at different stages of



life can all be identified as part of a broader process of identity formation, fostering dynamic and creative channels of awareness and communication. Moreover, the intersecting activities emanating from both the academic enclave and the extramural sphere synergistically contribute to the consolidation of industries oriented towards creative students, a phenomenon exemplified by Hua Shi Cultural Street. Despite its ultimate demise, it is worth noting that Hua Shi Cultural Street bore witness to multiple attempts aimed at resisting the tide of urbanization in order to safeguard these grassroots-driven creative economies.

### 3.3 Shapowei Creative District: institutional interventions

While most Duoluojie have been affected by urbanization and university expansion, their student lifestyles and related cultural consumption have only rarely been reconsidered as drivers of the city image. The cases of Shapowei Creative District and Xiamen University stand out as notable exceptions. In addition to preserving the authentic Duoluojie, government and university authorities contribute to the regeneration and rebranding of urban space through creative economics based on the distinctive student lifestyle.



Figure 5 Shapowei as traditional port  
(photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, Feb 2024)

Shapowei is strategically positioned within the Port of Xiamen, situated close to Xiamen University (XMU) and Xiamen University of Technology (XMUT). Historically, this district transformed from a

traditional port with daily fishing activities to an important transportation node with local fishermen-driven enterprises enhancing the port's standing as a vital maritime hub in China, see Figure 5. However, as developmental paradigms shifted in China, stringent fishing restrictions imposed in 2000 hastened the decline of marine industries in the area. This fishing community settlement, distinguished by its characteristic features of arcade-style architecture, industrial heritage, and religious landmarks, has redirected its economy toward businesses driven by the needs of nearby students. Shapowei is now recognized as a dependable niche market for rental income and supplementary services for students. This unique locale has gained significant popularity among young people exploring affordable creative products, services, leisure, and budget-friendly start-up businesses, and some consider it a Duoluojie for students of XMU and XMUT. However, the informality and shabbiness of Shapowei have been criticized by local authorities, who have labelled the district a 'grotty student slum' (Nakazawa, 2017).

The redevelopment objectives for Shapowei are underscored by a concerted effort to foster collaboration among governmental entities, local communities, and universities to keep the characteristics of a Duoluojie and transfer them to the creative cultural district. The Shapowei Maritime Cultural Creative Harbour Action Plan has been adopted as a strategy to organize the agglomeration of student-led creative economies, cultural organizations and venues, and leisure facilities. This plan will contribute to branding the space as a genuine and dynamic cultural environment. This initiative preserves the locale's indigenous cultural roots and infuses it with contemporary cultural vibrancy.

Pourzakarya (2019) distinguishes between traditional cultural and creative districts in that cultural districts are concerned with heritage protection, tourism, and assorted cultural consumption, whereas creative districts are dedicated to knowledge-based trade that externalizes the creative economy. These districts integrate and overlap due to blurred economic mechanisms. Through its representation of alternative lifestyles and student subcultures, Shapowei has led to core bonding in creative districts and creative networks and is also part of the contemporary urban branding machine (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002). Meanwhile, people prefer authentic places where they can add more value. Such spaces, aligned with bohemians and subcultures, are embedded in the image of the city.



Figure 6 Creative graffiti in Shapowei  
(photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, Feb 2024)

Creative industries have a wide and dynamic appeal that is directly linked to innovation. According to Landry (1995), creative industries represent a cross-fertilization of art-based industries and digitalization that generally includes the three categories of performing and visual arts, media and entertainment, and creative business services. The transformation process of Shapowei exhibits a symbiotic relationship with Xiamen University and its students. Businesses with a youth-oriented focus such as coffee shops, skateboarding areas, exhibition spaces, and creative markets have been introduced to revive the heritage of the formerly abandoned factory community. For example, the abandoned frozen warehouse in Shapowei has been transformed into Fujian's first performing venue. This venue features live festivals and events, art exhibitions, and fashion shows, and it has become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Xiamen City. Chatterton and Hollands (2002) also argue that students have contributed to the night-time economy in urban playscapes where youthful nightlife is produced and consumed. Shapowei has been strategically designed to appeal to a substantial youth demographic, infusing vitality and liveliness into the space, see figure6.



Figure7: Sha Powei Art zone the main art cluster in Shapowei  
(photo taken by Xiaoyi Xu, Feb 2024)

Shapowei Art Zone, at the heart of the creative district, is a marketplace for entrepreneurs selling vintage, artworks, and handicrafts, surrounded by restaurants, cafes and shops, see figure7. In comparison with traditional brick-and-mortar businesses, the marketplace offers flexibility and affordability for university students who are entrepreneurs with low start-up costs. The openness and tolerance of Shapowei for creative ideas has also contributed to its success and growth. For example, “Cat Street” is created in the district to provide space for cat lovers and related businesses, particularly selling derivatives from popular animations about cats. The street is decorated with cat statues and wall paintings open to visitors coming from the main street and sub-lanes. Like other interventions in Shapowei, the “Cat Street” blended well into the existing neighbourhood as a micro regeneration rather than gentrification. Compared with other creative districts such as Wuhan Tian Di and Chengdu Jin Li, Shapowei provides a strong sense of students’ lifestyle which is a core feature of Duoluojie. The “authenticity” of spatial features of the existing neighbourhoods and the marketplace atmosphere in Shapowei has made it a distinguished place as tourist destination of its kind.





Figure8 Mao Jie- a Cat Street without cats in Shapowei (Photo taken by Jieling Xiao, Jan 2023)

The development trajectory of Duoluojie is conspicuously attuned to the proclivities and preferences of the student demographic. The infusion of young people's creative and innovative ideas into local communities engenders a symbiotic amalgamation of emerging youth attitudes with established traditional cultural underpinnings. Notably, Cat Street (Mao Jie in Chinese) derives its name from a historical anecdote about cats being introduced into the antiquated fishing village to deter rats from pilfering seafood, a practice common to other early Duoluojes catering to student populations. Cats have historically held a distinctive status as cherished pet companions for young people. During the process of regeneration, the Cat Street community embraced its identity by incorporating

embellished cat motifs and illustrations into the street's visual tapestry. Consequently, Cat Street now alludes not only to the presence of cats on the street but also to the diverse array of cat-themed creative expressions in the space. The infusion of cat-related elements evokes the ambiance of an erstwhile Duoluojie in decline.

The Shapowei revitalization project has yielded mutually advantageous outcomes for the local creative economies and the national initiative for urban regeneration. Universities have emerged as instrumental agents in cultivating and disseminating creativity as part of the project, infusing Shapowei with vibrancy and vitality. The regeneration efforts have retained the distinctive historical attributes of the space, preserving its cultural identity and historical significance. The active creative involvement of young people in the project has further catalyzed endeavours to explore innovative and interactive spatial possibilities. Consequently, an abandoned maritime cultural enclave has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into an emblematic destination that seamlessly harmonizes elements of antiquity and modernity. This transformation has positioned Shapowei as a prominent tourism landmark within the city of Xiamen.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the Chinese higher education system, early colleges primarily functioned to serve imperial objectives and adhered to a rigid, hierarchical, and tightly controlled administrative structure. The educational paradigm at the time was characterized by the isolation of the elite within enclosed settings, where education was predominantly oriented toward standardized tests with the aim of altering students' social prospects. However, the significant transformation in Chinese higher education since the mid-to late 1990s has led to a transition from an elitist system to one of mass education. This shift has not only facilitated the growth of associated industries but has led to the proliferation of educational institutions. Concurrently, economic revolutions have dismantled the constraints that previously curtailed freedom of thought and cultural expression. The resultant interplay of activities within and beyond the campus environment has led to the phenomenon of Duoluojie, which transcend the rigid confines of Chinese universities and are characterized as 'socio-spatial interfaces' by the local community. The Duoluojie, composed as a specific studentscape, possesses the latent potential to evolve from a street-vending economy into a thriving creative cluster.

Chinese studentification is distinguished by geography, degree, and content. Duoluojie with specific student-based segregation

offer a valuable asset to urban change, particularly due to the important memory of Chinese university students. These spaces nurture a high volume of creative talents and expressions, as in the example of Sunny Dock. These genuine and dynamic cultural segments with distinctive lifestyles play a unique role in contemporary urban regeneration and city branding, and they appeal to tourists who are disenchanted with the global homogeneous consumption landscape (Maitland, 2007).

Shapowei is an exemplary case study of the development of complex creative cluster spaces in which the fusion of land functions and synchronization of activities over time are drivers of spatial vibrancy. In this context, community-based businesses are retained while modern fashionable culture is incorporated into the space. The enhancement of functional diversity is instrumental for nurturing creative activities. Achieving a harmonious blend of residential living spaces, recreational spaces, and employment opportunities is a crucial element of the revitalization of Duoluojie and the surrounding universities. These clusters encompass a variety of establishments, including shops, restaurants, and complementary services, as well as mixed-use structures that combine residential and office spaces and cater to the diverse needs of the local population. The broadening scope of functional diversity not only enriches the temporal engagement of individuals within the locale but promotes the feasibility of recreational activities. Moreover, the optimization of street efficiency through multifunctional integration establishes a communicative interface between residents and users, ultimately contributing to the formation of a cohesive and enduring community. The preservation of Shapowei's local identity has been meticulously curated to meet the demands of young people.

The regeneration of Duoluojie enhances the surroundings of Chinese campuses, nurturing the growth of creative enterprises while forging a mutually beneficial collaborative mechanism that brings together universities, communities, and municipalities. The collaborative synergy between universities, communities, and local authorities has played an instrumental role in the success of Shapowei at Xiamen University. While each of these entities fulfils distinct societal functions in the urbanisation framework, they must work together to establish a harmonious and collaborative development mechanism that ensures the sustainable growth of each constituent and the overarching success of the initiative. Consequently, these three stakeholder groups should cultivate bilateral or trilateral relationships, fostering an interconnected network system that serves as a cohesive driving force of urban development.

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