

Lecture Report:

## Participatory Planning for Diversity: Treasure Hill Urban Conservation in Taipei and its Public Policy Implications

MND Auditorium  
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## Participatory planning for “greater social equity and justice”

By Leong Wen Shan

Slated for demolition in the 1980s, Taipei’s Treasure Hill was an illegal settlement of urban farmers and Kuomintang veterans. In a bid to preserve the community, a group of scholars and civil society organisations took on a partnership role and called on the government to designate Treasure Hill as a “settlement preservation area”. Today it is an example of a revitalised and distinctive community with a sustainable ecological masterplan.



Professor John K C Liu of the Building and Planning Research Foundation was one of the key actors in this movement. A champion of participatory planning — the urban planning paradigm that emphasises the entire community’s involvement in urban planning processes, Prof. Liu has worked on more than 500 related projects in over 25 years.

Describing some of these projects to a CLC Lecture audience, the professor outlined some distinct features. They usually run up to no more than US\$10,000, with a strict 30:70 rule where 30 cents to every dollar is spent on training while the rest goes to capital expenses on the actual work.

Examples of such projects range from restoration of roofs to the transformation of empty compounds into children's playgrounds. In one instance, an abandoned house that was first considered for solving a pedestrian issue, through community participation, was transformed for another function; the community took over and used it as a kitchen where the elderly would cook together and serve meals.



Today Prof. Liu sees a growing need to find meaningful ways for users and stakeholders to participate in urban planning and design. “Greater social equity and justice can be gained when people are able to participate in [the] design process,” he said. “You need to bring people directly into the decision-making. Even if the final plan isn’t perfect, people [will] identify with it and [be] willing to take care of it.”

What about Singapore? Is it ready for such participatory planning? Prof. Liu replied, “[It] seems to me the government here in Singapore is carrying a lot of the burden; everything is on the shoulders of the government. It is a well structured and working society. But faced with challenges of population growth and transition into a more democratic system, the role of civic institutions needs to be more apparent.

“The opportunity I see is that there is a great strength in multicultural interactions here. There is a great deal of respect and appreciation for cultural differences. And there is very strong and working law and order. Today, Singapore is leading in Asia in the economy, and it is resource-driven; it can innovate, spur and create.”

# About the Speakers

*Speaker:*



**Prof John K C LIU**

Chair, Board of Directors  
Building and Planning Research Foundation  
National Taiwan University (NTU)

Prof Liu is a Professor in the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, NTU, since 1999, Principal of John K.C. Liu Architects and Chairman of the Board, Building and Planning Research Foundation, NTU. His interests are in cross-cultural issues in design, methods of collaboration in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural settings, and community participation. He is currently on leave from the NTU and teaching at the Department of Architecture, School of Design and Environment of the National University of Singapore.

*Moderator:*



**Ms HWANG Yu-Ning**

Director, Land & Liveability Strategy Group  
Prime Minister's Office

Yu-Ning currently serves in the Strategy Group which supports the Prime Minister and his Cabinet to establish priorities and strengthen strategic alignment across Government. Prior to her current appointment, Ms Hwang was the Group Director for Physical Planning at the Urban Redevelopment Authority, overseeing preparation of the Master Plan for Singapore and facilitating realisation of various planning proposals. Her team also spearheaded the development of key growth areas like the Jurong Lake District, Woodlands Regional Centre and Paya Lebar. She has also served in the Ministry of National Development before, where her responsibilities included overseeing land use planning and development control policies, the conservation of built heritage and land sales.

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