

# Revitalizing Historic Buildings through a Partnership Scheme: Innovative Form of Social Public–Private Partnership

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**Abstract:** This paper looks at a new innovative form of social public–private partnership (PPP) introduced by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government, where service providers are invited to revitalize historic buildings for new functions. Under this scheme the government will provide all the initial financial assistance required unlike traditional PPP projects. Focus-group meetings were conducted with visitors of the first revitalized project under this scheme, that is, the Savannah College of Art and Design Hong Kong, formerly known as the North Kowloon Magistracy. The participants were asked to share their views regarding the effectiveness of the scheme, the impacts of the scheme, and also their views regarding the general public participation. The findings found that, in general, the revitalization scheme was well received by the participants. Although they did not feel that the project benefited the local community or Hong Kong in terms of uplifting economies or providing suitable services, the project was praised for being a good example of preserving historic buildings for new usages effectively. The revitalization scheme presented in this paper has demonstrated how projects can benefit from the private sector's expertise but at the same time be funded by the government. This model is particularly attractive for those governments where money is not their greatest concern, but to tap in the expertise from the private sector is their priority. The findings in this paper have shown positive support toward this scheme, showing that there is a large possibility for further future developments in both Hong Kong and other similar jurisdictions. **DOI: 10.1061/(ASCE)UP.1943-5444.0000161.** © 2013 American Society of Civil Engineers.

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## Introduction

The public–private partnership (PPP) model was first used for social public-works projects back in the 1990s. Initially, these projects included those for schools, hospitals, and prisons in the United Kingdom, Australia, and United States. Over the years these projects have further expanded to include sports arenas, art and exhibition facilities, colleges for higher education, etc. (Hodge and Greve 2005). Some specific examples of social PPP projects are the Victoria Dock Primary School, which was the first private finance initiative (a form of PPP) school to be conducted in the United Kingdom. It began operating in 1999. Gibson and Davies (2008) conducted a study looking at the reasons for its success. Their findings suggested that firstly the partners were open to new ideas and willing to take risks. This factor was particularly important as PPP projects tend to be subjected to more risks compared with those projects that are procured traditionally because of their complexity (Cheung and Chan 2011). Second, the partners had a good relationship. And third, the school itself was well situated locationwise. Another example of a social

PPP project is the Asia World Expo in Hong Kong, which opened in 2005. The project was initiated to increase competition in the exhibition sector, and as a result to make Hong Kong more attractive to the outside world. Cheung's (2009) study revealed that the project was successful due to the concessionaire's drive and desire to make it happen, and also the operator and contractor were made stakeholders of the project, which meant that they made their best efforts to prevent cost overruns. The success of these projects was not because they were social PPP projects. Their success factors could be applicable to economic-type PPP projects too. Technically, all PPP projects should be successful as the approach was evaluated as the most suitable approach beforehand, and whether they are economic or social should be irrelevant. Anyway, the success of these projects widened the scope of using PPP (Chan et al. 2010). It was once also seen as an innovative approach for delivering social public-works projects. Over the years, the continuous use of the PPP model for social public-works projects has demonstrated that they have been very successful in achieving the targeted outcomes (Malone 2005).

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government (hereafter referred to as the Hong Kong government) introduced the Revitalizing Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme (hereafter referred to as revitalization scheme) in 2007. This revitalization scheme takes a further step forward in the area of social PPP projects. Traditional PPP projects tend to be financed fully or partially by the private party, and this is also one of the major attractions of using the PPP model for many governments. With private financing, governments could fund projects that they could not otherwise afford, avoid complex and lengthy procedures for government funding approval or even spend the money on other projects or investments (Khasnabis et al. 2010). Especially for those early PPP projects this was probably the main driver (Chan et al. 2009). On the contrary, the revitalization scheme presented by the

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Hong Kong government will finance all the initial costs covering the renovation of the historic buildings performed by the selected service providers. The newly developed facilities will then be rented to the service providers at only a fraction of the cost (Development Bureau 2012). The service providers would be responsible for renovating and transforming the historic buildings into new functions. The completed buildings would then be run and maintained at their own costs.

This paper presents the findings of a research project looking at the effectiveness, impacts, and the extent of public participation of the revitalization scheme, and the possibility of expanding the use and development in both Hong Kong and other similar jurisdictions.

## Background of the Revitalization Scheme

Many cities are faced with similar problems that their economic success has overridden important elements such as heritage. Hong Kong is one of these places where for a long time economic benefits were regarded as highly and probably the most important aspect of the jurisdiction. Aware of the potential consequences, the Hong Kong government introduced the revitalization scheme, to preserve selected historic buildings for new purposes. Service providers have been invited to participate in these projects. Unlike the traditional practice of PPP projects, these projects do not require any financial input from the private party. The Hong Kong government will provide the initial funding to restore and renovate these buildings.

As stated by the Hong Kong government (Development Bureau 2012), the main objectives of the scheme are (1) to preserve and put historic buildings into good and innovative use; (2) to transform historic buildings into unique cultural landmarks; (3) to promote active public participation in the conservation of historic buildings; and (4) to create job opportunities particularly at the district level. It is hoped that pumping in public expenditure to upgrade these historic buildings will in turn generate jobs, uphold conservation principles, and also subsidize the social enterprises in running their businesses, which may not otherwise remain feasible without financial support. The service providers of this scheme must be nonprofit-making organizations with prior experience in the area proposed. Service providers are invited to submit proposals for using these buildings to provide services or businesses in the form of social enterprises. In their submissions, they should propose detailed plans to demonstrate how these buildings would be preserved, how their historical significance can be effectively used, and also how the enterprises would operate to show financial viability and benefit to the community. The successful service providers will be awarded a one-off financial package to support the renovation of the buildings, paying only nominal rent for the buildings and also be given a one-off grant for the initial costs. The maintenance works will be conducted solely by the service providers themselves.

The Hong Kong government has identified a total of 14 historic buildings that they feel are appropriate for this scheme. These are to be preserved in three batches. In the first batch, seven buildings were identified (Lui Seng Chun, Lai Chi Kok Hospital, North Kowloon Magistracy, Old Tai O Police Station, Fong Yuen Study Hall, Mei Ho House, and Old Tai Po Police Station). Service providers for the first six of these were selected. The unselected project, that is, Old Tai Po Police Station, was relaunched under the second batch of this scheme with four other historic buildings (Blue House Cluster, Former Fanling Magistracy, Old House at Wong Uk Village, and Stone Houses). The service providers for

only three of these projects were selected including Old Tai Po Police Station, Blue House Cluster, and Stones Houses. The Former Fanling Magistracy was relaunched in the third batch of historic buildings together with three other newly selected buildings including King Yin Lei, Haw Par Mansion, and Bridges Street Market. The proposals for these projects are still being considered and the selected service providers are yet to be identified.

Although the intention of this revitalization scheme should be praised, the Hong Kong government has still received much criticism over the appropriateness of the service providers selected. For example, the Chinese Artists Association had proposed to use the North Kowloon Magistracy as a center for Chinese opera. However, their bid was unsuccessful and instead an American service provider was selected. According to the Legislative Council papers, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) was selected for a number of reasons. They require no government funding, they are experienced in the preservation of historic buildings, and lastly, synergy with other revitalization projects in the district will be created (Sing Tao 2009). Despite this rationale, the appropriateness of the selected service provider is doubted, as many feel that local organizations should be given higher priority. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of this scheme, the impacts that have resulted, and also whether general public participation can be achieved.

## SCAD Hong Kong Revitalization Project

### Background of the North Kowloon Magistracy

The North Kowloon Magistracy is the first building under this scheme, which has been fully revitalized, and hence it is used in this research study as a source for data collection. The building was one of the first selected historic buildings among the first batch of the revitalization scheme. The building is located at 292 Tai Po Street, Shek Kip Mei, which is in a central location of the Kowloon Peninsula of the HKSAR of China. The building served the Kowloon district community as a Magistracy from 1960 to 2005 (Leisure and Cultural Services Dept. 2012). The Magistracy was finally closed down as part of the local government's cost-saving policy by reducing the number of magistracies in Hong Kong (Antiquities and Monuments Office 2012). The building contained four magistrates' courts, one juvenile court, and government offices on the upper levels. The Magistracy handled minor offences such as prostitution, littering, and traffic. The maximum imprisonment given at this magistracy was 2 years and the maximum penalty was HK\$100,000 (HK\$1 = US\$7.76, Yahoo! 2012). During its service there were between 40 and 80 defendants that attended court on a daily basis (Judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 2012).

### Background of SCAD

The SCAD was selected as the service provider for the North Kowloon Magistracy revitalization project. It is an American institution providing education in topics that were not readily available in the areas of arts back in the late 1970s (SCAD 2012a). The first campus in Savannah comprises 70 facilities over 2 million sq ft, serving 8,000 students (SCAD 2012b). The Savannah city is a renowned national historic landmark and SCAD has taken advantage of this by revitalizing historic buildings within the city for its college facilities. Their success in adaptive reuse and urban revitalization has been recognized by the Historic Savannah Foundation, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, the Art Deco Societies of America, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the International Downtown

Association, the Victorian Society in America, and the American Institute of Architects, etc. (SCAD 2012c).

The SCAD currently offers a range of programs including the Master of Architecture, Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Urban Design, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, graduate certificates, and undergraduate certificates (SCAD 2012a). In addition, SCAD has expanded to four campuses including Savannah and Atlanta in the United States, Lacoste in France, and Hong Kong in China.

### Revitalization Process

For each heritage building selected under this revitalization scheme, a detailed resource kit was prepared by the Hong Kong

government. The resource kit provides information on the project's background, administrative procedures and guidelines, and also on technical issues. These resource kits are readily available online and allow potential service providers to consider their interest in the projects. An important component of the resource kit is that it states the features of the project that need to be preserved and in some instances the recommended treatment method is also indicated. Table 1 shows a summary of these for the North Kowloon Magistracy (Commissioner for Heritage's Office 2012).

This comprehensive list mainly includes those features to be preserved, but other features to be removed are also included. In general, the Hong Kong government requested few changes in order not to destroy the heritage value of the building and its surrounding area. The preserved features included those that have

**Table 1.** List of Building Features and Their Recommended Treatment as Requested by the Hong Kong Government (Data from Commissioner for Heritage's Office 2012)

Features	Recommended treatment
<b>External</b>	
Facade of building	Clean with water and undamaging tools, no corrosive cleaning chemicals, do not install protruding structures
Main entrance staircase and railings	Repair and clean with appropriate cleaning agent, modification works to railings to meet with safety requirements allowed but must be reversible
Name tablets at main entrance staircase and building front	Keep original or new letterings, change should be reversible
Road signages on exterior walls	Remove, clean, and repair walls
Main entrance door and frame	Repair and clean with appropriate cleaning agent
Side entrance door and frame	Preserve
Metal-framed windows and balconies	Repair and clean with appropriate cleaning agent, modification works to railings to meet with safety requirements allowed but must be reversible
Canopy and flagpole	Repair and clean with appropriate cleaning agent, do not install structures covering flag pole and base
Garages	Preserve
Two-story temporary structure and fire-services room	Remove
Two trees at southeast car park entrance	Preserve
<b>Internal</b>	
Painted walls	Preserve
Stone flooring of foyer	Preserve
Central staircase, railings, and ceiling lights	Upgrading work of railings to meet current standards
Window handrails and guardrails	Preserve
Marble cladding of walls and columns	Preserve
Door openings and frames of staff canteen and shroff office	Replace with salvaged paneled doors
Wooden paneled doors and frames of offices, toilets, police general registry, summons office, changing room, courts 1-4, staff canteen staircase, meters and switches room	Reuse paneled doors
Doors and frames of police duty room, lavatory and reception room	Preserve
Concrete benches and iron bars of one detention cell	Preserve
One courtroom and the staircase leading to it	No additional floors within courtroom
Central lightwell, roof light, exhaust fan housings, windows, guardrails of internal corridor	Preserve
Safe number GSD1297 and keys, old furniture, equipment, plaques	Return to government
Notice boards, built-in furniture/furniture, partitions, etc.	Remove and renovate wall surfaces
Wooden floor boards	Sand and wax or remove and replace
Internal walls and partitions	Non-load-bearing walls can be removed
Ceilings	Remove false ceilings to check and repair roof leakage, reinstating false ceilings allowed
Redundant building services	Remove and rewire
Interior signages	Remove and renovate walls
Toilets and kitchen	Remove and renovate walls and floors

given the building its identity. Some of the main features preserved are one of the courtrooms and its leading staircase; a detention cell with its stone bench and railings; the main entrance staircase and railings; the stone flooring of the foyer; the marble cladding of the walls and columns; the central staircase and railings; the window frames, balconies, handrails, and guardrails; the doors and frames; the central lightwell; the canopy and flagpole; the signages on the building front; and the garages. Most of these features were just cleaned to avoid damage.

There were other features of the building that were believed to be unnecessary and were requested to be removed. These included the toilets, kitchens, signages, furniture, abundant fire services, and temporary structures outside the building.

## Research Methodology

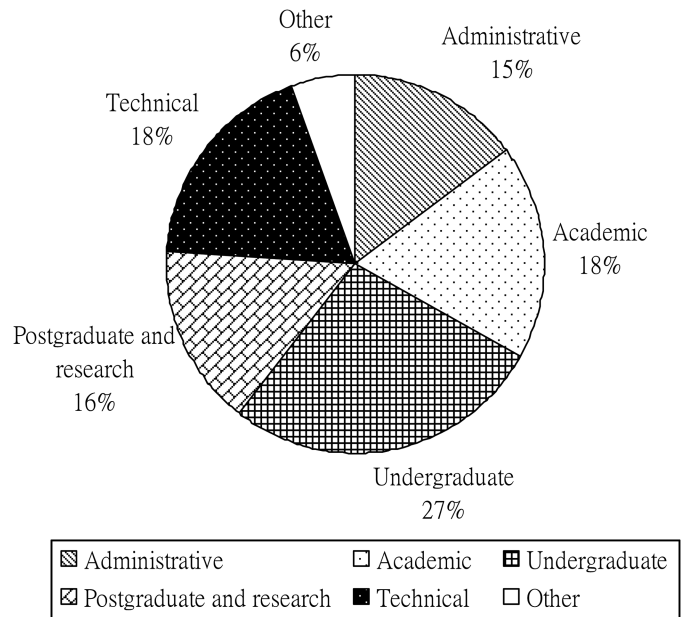
In this study, focus-group meetings were conducted with participants after an arranged guided tour of SCAD. In the focus-group meetings, the participants were invited to share their views regarding the effectiveness of the scheme, the impacts of the scheme, and also their views regarding the general public participation. This approach was believed to be the most suitable as SCAD had only recently been completed and very few people had ever visited it to give an accurate and fair view of the project. Therefore, a site visit before the focus-group meeting would allow them to have a clearer picture of the topics to be discussed. The focus-group meetings were conducted immediately after the site visits to ensure that the participants still had a fresh memory of the project. Furthermore, the focus-group meetings allowed a large amount of data to be collected within a short period effectively. Further details of the site visits and focus-group meetings are given in the following sections.

### Site Visits

A total of 109 participants were invited to join a guided tour of SCAD Hong Kong (SCAD HK; Fig. 1). Fig. 2 shows the background of these participants, which included undergraduate students (27%), academic staff (18%), technical staff (18%), postgraduate students and research staff (16%), administrative staff (15%), and other participants (6%) from a local university.



**Fig. 1.** Front view of SCAD (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)



**Fig. 2.** Background of site-visit participants

They were invited through a campuswide advertisement, which included posters, e-mails, and word of mouth. There were no particular selection criteria, but it was believed that all participants had a generally good educational background of undergraduate or above. Because of the large number of participants, the group was divided into two groups to visit the site on separate occasions between May and June 2011. Each guided tour lasted 45 min and was led by the admissions staff of SCAD HK.

As part of the revitalization scheme's requirement, the service provider is responsible for engaging and involving the general public, and consequently SCAD HK offers guided tours that are open to all visitors given that advanced booking is made. During the tours, the participants were briefed about the historical and preserved features of the building as well as those new additions, which had been included to provide for the necessary facilities required for the building's new function. Some of the highlights of the tour included the old courtrooms, which had been transformed into a lecture hall (Fig. 3), student workstation, and room for photography shoots; the juvenile courtroom that had been converted to a library; the car-parking areas that have remained for the same use; the preserved cell (Fig. 4) and the cells that had been converted to small study rooms, offices, and storage areas; the old office areas that have been converted to classrooms; the old kitchen and canteen that had been converted to an art gallery (Fig. 5); and the preserved foyer, open areas, and staircases (Fig. 6). Other information, such as those related to the college and programs was also provided to the participants during the tour. The participants were also given the opportunity to ask additional questions regarding any other aspects.

### Focus-Group Meetings

Focus-group meetings are a convenient, effective, and fast way to collect a vast amount of information from a reasonable number of participants compared with the traditional one-to-one interview technique. Focus groups have been found to provide a highly effective and efficient way of investigating (Haslam 2003). Vaughn et al. (1996) believe that focus groups should possess two core elements: (1) a trained moderator who sets the stage with prepared



**Fig. 3.** Old courtroom transformed into a lecture hall (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)



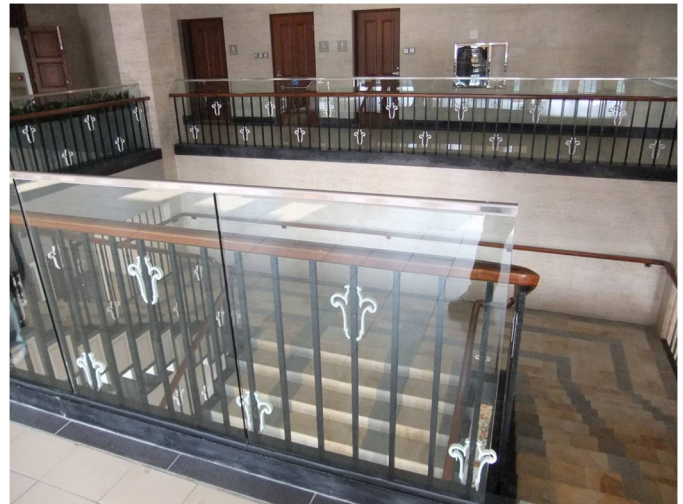
**Fig. 5.** Old kitchen and canteen converted to an art gallery (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)



**Fig. 4.** Preserved cell (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)

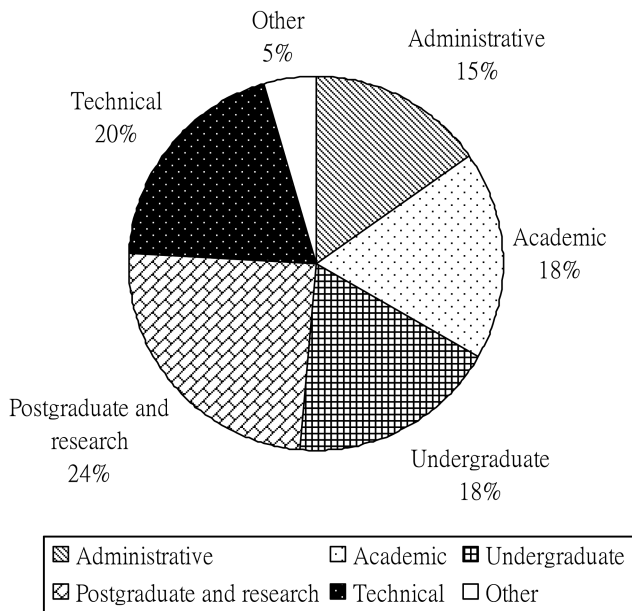
questions or an interview guide; and (2) the goal of eliciting participants' feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about a selected topic. In a focus-group meeting, it is best that there are at least six participants in a group (Morgan 1997). The reason is that below six it may be difficult to sustain a discussion. The groups are given an introduction: this part of the focus-group meeting is vital to its success. The typical introduction generally includes a welcome, an overview of the topic, the guidelines for the discussion, and the opening question (Krueger and King 1998). The interaction between group members is known to be an effective way in obtaining adequate information.

This technique was used to gather information for this research study on the effectiveness of the scheme through the SCAD HK project. Among the participants who joined the site visits,



**Fig. 6.** Open areas and staircases (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)

66 attended the focus-group discussions. Fig. 7 shows the background of these participants, which included postgraduate students and research staff (24%), technical staff (20%), undergraduate students (18%), academic staff (18%), administrative staff (15%), and other participants (5%). The participants were arranged into groups of approximately 10 with various backgrounds (Fig. 8). Each group of participants was led by an academic facilitator. The facilitator introduced the respondents to the format of the focus group, the items which would be discussed, and also took the responsibility for initiating a discussion among the respondents regarding some predefined questions. The questions were based on three major areas including the effectiveness of the revitalization scheme, the impacts of the scheme, and also the extent of general public participation. The discussions lasted approximately 40 min for each group, and the findings from the discussions are presented in the following section of this paper. Table 2 shows the seven questions according to the three areas which were asked.



**Fig. 7.** Background of focus-group participants



**Fig. 8.** Focus-group discussion (photograph courtesy of Dr. Bingqing Zhai)

## Results and Discussion

### *Effectiveness of the Revitalization Scheme*

The participants were asked four questions regarding the effectiveness of the revitalization scheme based on their observation from the SCAD HK project. The first question they were asked was “Has the revitalization scheme been effective in conserving and adaptively reusing the former North Kowloon Magistracy building into the Savannah College of Art and Design?”

Among the six groups of respondents, the majority of groups ( $n = 5$ ) responded positively agreeing that the project was well conserved and reused. Group A commented that the building structure was revitalized very successfully. Nevertheless, they also mentioned some drawbacks including the small library and the high tuition fees. Similarly, Group B also mentioned that the building was well utilized and that little damage had been done to the building. They also commented that the original building was well suited for the new purpose and that the tour was interesting to visitors. Group C was the only group with negative comments on the project. The participants of this group suggested that there

**Table 2.** Focus-Group Questions

Area	Question
Effectiveness of the revitalization scheme	Has the revitalization scheme been effective in conserving and adaptively reusing the former North Kowloon Magistracy building into the Savannah College of Art and Design? Has the revitalization scheme been able to preserve the heritage value of the former North Kowloon Magistracy building? Was a balance between heritage conservation and adaptive reuse achieved via this scheme? The local Development Bureau had originally wished that SCAD HK would become a landmark, has this been achieved?
Impacts of the revitalization scheme	What other purposes could this building have been used for? For example, a community education base, a site to protect the local collective memory What impacts or significance does this project have on the local community or Hong Kong society? Please discuss according to the social, cultural, and heritage conservation perspectives
Public participation	Have the local community been active in participating in this project effectively? Considering the diversified needs and requirements of the local community, how can they participate in this project?

was limited interaction between SCAD HK and the local community and that visitation would be impossible without going through a complex registration process. Group D agreed with Groups A and B in that the project was successful in conserving heritage and also that the original building was suited for the new purpose. However, in addition, Group D also agreed with Group C that interaction between SCAD HK and the local community was lacking. The respondents felt that SCAD’s understanding of the local community was very different from the reality. Group E also felt that the project was well revitalized in aspects such as the stone flooring. There are certain features that they felt could be better preserved such as the sanitary facilities, which had been modernized. In addition, they made some further comments to improve other revitalization projects. For example, building requirements for revitalization projects could be made more flexible as some old features would be difficult to comply with new standards. Another example is that more information on the preserved and historic elements could be provided and advertised to the general public, as well as the activities offered by the service provider. Similar to Group C, they also mentioned that a key limitation is that walk-in visitation was not permitted without arrangements beforehand. Furthermore, revitalized elements should be reversible where possible. Group F also agreed that the project was successful in terms of conservation. They appreciated the fact that the original elements were well preserved in that outsiders would not notice it was functioning as an arts college. They also supported the reuse of the building so that it could serve a new function. However, unlike other groups, the respondents felt that the interaction between SCAD HK and the local community was also successful.

Regarding the effectiveness of the scheme, the participants were asked to discuss a second question: “Has the revitalization scheme been able to preserve the heritage value of the former North Kowloon Magistracy building?”

In general, the participants felt that the historic features of the project were well preserved. Group A felt that the scheme has been very successful in preserving the original features. Their only concern was that the project may not be financially sustainable in the long run due to the low student enrolment. Group B agreed

that the historical significance had been maintained due to the minor alterations. Similarly, Group C agreed that the building had been well preserved. Group D suggested that revitalization should be considered across different industries and that integration should be achieved. Group E discussed that there are two elements, which can be preserved, namely, the hardware and the software. From the hardware perspective, they agreed that the physical structures have been well preserved. However, from the software perspective the project has not been conserved for its original use. The participants added that the project was suppose to merge with the local community but they felt that interaction between SCAD HK and the local community was lacking, and that the project was very different to the surrounding area. Group F agreed that the heritage conservation of the project was carried out very well, due to the sizeable financial support from SCAD. Small features were also preserved and the features in general matched the new function. They felt that the building was well suited for the new purpose as an arts college.

For the third of the four questions on effectiveness, the participants were asked “Was a balance between heritage conservation and adaptive reuse achieved via this scheme?”

The participants did not agree nor disagree strongly whether a balance between conservation and reuse had been achieved. Instead they discussed the different perspectives that surround this topic. Group A did not feel that the new use was inappropriate but felt that it could be better utilized as a law school so that more of the original features could be reused. Nevertheless they felt that the new building service facilities were cleverly incorporated, bringing in modern features to an old building. This group also discussed that there were two modes for financially supporting reuse of buildings. The first mode is where the majority of funding comes from the government such as the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. The second mode is for nongovernmental organizations to support the project by running a business out of it like SCAD HK so that the funding would be more relied on the organization. The participants did not come to a conclusion whether which mode would be better, but just highlighted that there are two options for how reusing buildings could be financed. Group B suggested that a balance between conservation and reuse is difficult to achieve. In addition, they suggested that the project would be difficult to maintain in the long run due to the minimal works conducted. Maintenance would be much easier for conservation projects where more new finishes are incorporated such as the 1,881 shopping mall in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. For the SCAD HK project, Group C felt that the local government was unclear about the scheme. They questioned whether the project should be considered a conservation project or a redevelopment one, as they felt that SCAD HK had few local interactions and much of its reputation was achieved overseas. Group D shared the same view as Group A that the project would be better utilized as a law school to synergize the original purpose with the new one. Group E discussed each party would have a different view on whether a balance between conservation and reuse had been achieved. From SCAD’s point of view it has but from the local residents’ angle it may not have. Group F was the only group to think conservation and reuse had been well balanced. They discussed that the building was well preserved and that the project was self-finaceable.

The participants were asked a final question regarding the effectiveness: “The local Development Bureau had originally wished that SCAD HK would become a landmark, has this been achieved?”

The majority of views suggested that SCAD HK has not become a landmark locally. Group A suggested that there were several reasons why SCAD HK has not become a landmark. First, its

location itself dooms it from becoming a landmark, as it is located on the outskirts of an old town area. Second, there has been little government publicity regarding this project. In addition, the arts college has a high-end image, which may not match with the local grassroots community. The participants suggested that a local service provider such as the Chinese Artists Association may have been more appropriate for the area. Group B also agreed that as SCAD HK was located on the outskirts of the town it was difficult for it to become a landmark within the area. The participants felt that people would consider the better known computer shopping malls in the area. Although so, the participants still felt highly about the project and believed that it would be recognized as an example of a successful revitalization project on an international level. Group C suggested that the project has little connection with the local community, and so it cannot be considered a landmark. Group D shared similar feelings to Groups A and B that the location of the project is too remote to become a landmark. Group E did not suggest whether SCAD HK had become a landmark, but instead suggested that a good example has occurred in Newcastle of Australia where an industrial site had been transformed into a recreational venue while maintaining many of its original features that have attracted many visitors. The participants of Group F shared mixed views, where some felt that the project had become a landmark but others disagreed. For those who felt that it was not a landmark, they felt that both the original and current functions did not draw many visitors, and also felt that the current usage did not merge well with the local area.

### ***Impacts of the Revitalization Scheme***

The participants were asked two questions regarding the impacts of the revitalization scheme. The first question they were asked was “What other purposes could this building have been used for? For example, a community education base, a site to protect the local collective memory.”

Some of the participants supported the building to be used as an arts college whereas some did not, but it was agreed that the building could have been better utilized for usages related to its previous functions. Group A did not feel that this site could serve as a site of collective memory for the local residents as its former function was not a place that they would have visited. They added that there is a Chinese saying that “you would never go to court when you are alive just like you would never go to hell when you die.” With this mind-set the participants felt that the local community would not have visited the site voluntarily, and therefore, there would be no collective memory worthy of preserving. Group B supported the fact that the site had been revitalized as an arts college but they felt that improvements could be made to enhance community participation. For example, they felt that the introductory tours could be made more flexible so that visitors would be welcome throughout the day rather than having to make prior arrangements with SCAD, and that this would allow more flexibility for the interested visitors. The participants also valued the introductory videos, which were shown but felt that the information provided in them was not detailed enough in terms of the revitalization process; instead, much information was based on SCAD’s activities and background. An example of a good introductory video is the one produced for the Dr. Sun Yat-sen museum in Central of Hong Kong. Furthermore, the art gallery was unattractive as the majority of Hong Kong locals are not particularly interested in arts and culture, plus the gallery is small in scale and hold few exhibits. Group C also supported the new usage of this building and felt that it has set a good example for other revitalization projects in Hong Kong. However, they felt that the original and new usages of

historic buildings should not differ drastically. For example, they supported the idea of Murray House in Hong Kong, which was an old officer's barracks to be transformed to the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, but they did not support the idea of allowing restaurants on the upper floors of the building. Group D felt that the current usage as an arts college could not benefit the local residents, but instead they suggested that it could have been reused as a museum, library, or another similar public function. Similarly, Group E agreed with Group D that the current arts college drew few local residents due to the high tuition fees and high-level image. Instead they felt that a Chinese opera house would arouse more interest among the aging community, which it is within. Group F's comments were similar to that of Group C's in that they believed the previous and current usages of the building should not differ too much. Their suggestions included a museum for Hong Kong's legal system or a mock courtroom for Hong Kong law schools. They added that the new function of a historic building should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Regarding the impacts of this project, the participants were also asked "What impacts or significance does this project have on the local community or Hong Kong society? Please discuss according to the social, cultural, and heritage conservation perspectives."

In general, the participants felt that there were few impacts or significance generated from this project if any. Group A felt this was due to the minimal marketing conducted. The participants suggested that photos of the original building could be displayed within the building for visitors to compare with the current state. From the economical impact perspective, the participants felt there was limited impact derived from the staff and students of SCAD. From the cultural and heritage conservation perspective, the impact affected the staff and students more than the local community or Hong Kong society as they get to know the culture of Sham Shui Po better. Group B once again echoed that the local community would not benefit from SCAD HK as the tuition fees would be too high for them to afford. Even for those Hong Kong residents who could afford the tuition, they may consider to study elsewhere or even overseas. Again, the location was a primary factor causing minimal interaction between the local residents and SCAD. Regarding the economical benefits, they also felt that this was minimal as academics were drawn from the United States rather than locally, and hence few employment opportunities have been created. On the contrary, SCAD has benefited in providing their students with another campus. Although so, they feel that this project has bought a positive image to Hong Kong in preserving historical buildings and reusing them for something rather than shopping centers or restaurants, which has been the more common practice adopted in Hong Kong. These previous projects were more commercial rather than focusing on the preservation of the buildings. Therefore, they felt that the reuse as an arts college was innovative and should be supported. The participants still felt that they and even the local residents would have preferred a local service provider with whom they could better connect with. Group C simply reflected that there was limited impact to the local community, as SCAD HK could not serve the needs of the local community. Group D believed that the project's social and economical impacts were limited due to the remote location of the building and the limited employment opportunities derived from the construction and operation. Regarding the heritage aspect, the participants felt that the current introductory tours about the former usage were informative, and they suggested that it would serve as a good base to educate the local community and students about heritage conservation. Group E agreed with the majority that there was little social impact created from the project, and they believed that the local government should have encouraged this by requesting

SCAD HK to provide either free or cheaper short courses for the local community. Another suggestion is to encourage co-organized courses between other local educational institutions at discounted prices. These requests could have been incorporated as a condition within their agreement. In addition, this group was the only that believed economic benefits could be created from the business opportunities for the local restaurants, shops, and hotels. Group F did not have any comments regarding this question.

### **Public Participation**

The participants were asked about their views regarding public participation of the revitalization scheme through the following questions: "Have the local community been active in participating in this project effectively? Considering the diversified needs and requirements of the local community, how can they participate in this project?"

Group A felt that the local community is aware of this project or the other revitalization projects, and that regular visitations should be made available for the locals. Some of the participants within this group felt that public participation would be better achieved if the project was used as a shopping mall rather than an arts college. Similar to Group A, some of the respondents of Group B supported the idea of similar projects being reused as shopping malls to draw public participation. They felt that projects that have been reused as shopping malls attracted more visitors, whereas SCAD HK benefitted their students only. Nevertheless, they felt that the location of SCAD HK would not be convenient as a shopping mall as it was too remote. Their conclusion was that only historical buildings within the city center should be reused as shopping malls. Therefore, they felt that it was wasteful for the government to spend money on buildings not in the city center and where few visitors would be attracted. Group C suggested that more promotion materials should be produced to attract visitors, such as a small booklet describing the project. Group D agreed with the other groups that public participation was lacking. The participants suggested some measures to increase the general public's interest including inviting the local community to see the exhibitions, arranging guided tours for the local community, and SCAD HK staff and students could combine local craftsmen's artworks with their works. Group E added a further suggestion for improving public participation by easing the visitation process for the local community. Group F shared an interesting view that introducing the previous occupants of the building would ease public participation, but in this case it may not be feasible.

### **Conclusions**

This paper has presented the findings from a case-study analysis of the SCAD. This project is the first completed under the Revitalizing Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme, introduced by the Hong Kong government. This revitalization scheme can be considered as an innovative form of social PPP, in which the local government works together with service providers of social enterprises to revitalize selected historic buildings to serve the community in a new form. Participants were invited to take part in a focus-group discussion, to provide their views regarding the effectiveness, impacts, and extent of public participation of the scheme through this project.

Regarding the effectiveness, in general, the respondents reflected that the project was revitalized successfully and that the new purpose was suited. Nevertheless, they also reflected that some of the drawbacks included the lack of interaction between SCAD HK and the local community and also the need for prior



arrangements to visit. During the focus-group discussions, some suggestions were also provided by the respondents to improve future similar projects. These included allowing more flexibility for building requirements of revitalization projects as old features can be difficult to comply with new standards. Projects can be better advertised so that the general public can get to know the historic building and its services available. Revitalized elements should be reversible where possible. In general, the participants agreed that the heritage of the building was well preserved. Regarding the balance between conservation and reuse, the participants expressed mixed views. The majority of participants did not feel that the project had become a landmark for the Hong Kong people mainly due to it being a high-end organization in an old grassroots community. In addition, the location is not conveniently located for visitors. However, the participants did suggest that the project would be renowned on an international level for being a successfully revitalized project.

The participants also discussed the impacts as a result of the revitalization scheme in the case of SCAD. The discussion showed that the impacts created were not huge but the revitalization scheme is innovative and has helped uplift Hong Kong's image in heritage preservation. The building was not believed to hold many collective memories as it was not a place the general public would visit often during its original usage. The participants recommended that the new and original usages of historic buildings should be related, so that the revitalization becomes more meaningful and that the buildings could be better utilized. It was felt that minimal impacts have been created due to the lack of marketing, the remote location, and the high tuition fees.

Regarding the aspect of public participation, it was felt that this was limited due to the reasons discussed. Recommendations for improving public participation were to arrange visitations especially for the local community to see the exhibitions and participate in the guided tours, to produce promotion materials, and for SCAD HK to work with local craftsmen. Nevertheless, the revitalization scheme has still been regarded as an effective approach in reusing and preserving historical buildings. Consequently, the image of Hong Kong in the area of heritage development has been uplifted on an international level.

This research study has demonstrated how the revitalization scheme was able to deliver the SCAD project effectively as well as satisfy the relevant stakeholders. It is hoped that governments around the world would look at this as an example and see that PPP projects can be delivered differently to best suit their needs. It is believed that one method cannot be applied to all projects and certain adjustments should and can be made to best suit all stakeholders' interests.

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