

Reconstruction of Wujiaochang Plaza: A Potential Avenue Towards Sustainability

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Abstract : The reform and opening-up stimulated economic and technological take-off in China while resulting in massive urbanization and motorization. Wujiaochang area was set as a secondary business district in Shanghai to meet the growing demand, with the reconstruction of Wujiaochang Plaza in 2005 being a milestone of this intended urban renewal. Wujiaochang is now an economically dynamic area providing much larger traffic and transit capacity transportation-wise. However, this rebuilding has completely changed the face of the district. It is, therefore, appropriate to evaluate its impact on neighborhoods and communities while assessing the overall sustainability of such an operation. In this study, via an online questionnaire survey among local residents and daily visitors, we assess the perceptions and the estimated impact of Wujiaochang Plaza's reconstruction. We then confront these results to the 62 answers from local residents to a questionnaire collected on paper. The analysis of our data, along with observation and other forms of information -such as maps analysis or online applications (Dianping)- demonstrate major improvement in economic sustainability but also significant losses in environmental sustainability, especially in terms of active transportation. As for the social viewpoint, local residents' opinions tend to be rather positive, especially regarding traffic safety and access to consumption, despite the lack of connectivity and radical changes induced by Wujiaochang massive transformations. In general, our investigation exposes the overall positive outcomes of Wujiaochang Plaza reconstruction but also unveils major drawbacks, especially in terms of soft mobility and traffic fluidity. We gather that our approach could be of tremendous help for future major urban interventions, as such approaches in municipal regeneration are widely implemented in Chinese cities and yet still need to be thoroughly assessed in terms of sustainability.

Keywords : China's reform and opening-up, economical revitalization, neighborhood identity, sustainability assessment, urban renewal

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