

Heritage Perception and Identity Construction Among Residents in Industrial Community Transformation: A Case Study of National Creative Park, Nanjing, China

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Abstract

In the context of China's deindustrialization, the redevelopment of industrial heritage sites has become central to urban transformation strategies. This study examines the regeneration of Nanjing National Creative Park (NCP), tracing its evolution from a major Qing-era factory to its closure in 2011 and subsequent conversion into a creative industry park. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzes dominant narratives over different historical periods. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with various community residents to assess heritage perception and identity construction. The findings formed an unofficial "community narrative." This study reveals the dynamic interaction between dominant narratives and community narratives in the redevelopment of Chinese industrial heritage sites. It highlights the complexity of local residents' perceptions and argues that these perspectives should be incorporated into the framework of industrial heritage conservation. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of considering community voices in ensuring the sustainable development of heritage sites.

Keywords: Industrial Heritage; Dominant Narratives; Community Narratives; Urban regeneration; Place identity

1 Introduction

1.1 State-led redevelopment of industrial heritage sites

Post-industrialization and urban regeneration have become key global trends in urban governance and spatial transformation. While sharing similar drivers, their mechanisms and narrative practices differ significantly across contexts (Harvey, 2007). Industrial heritage has emerged as a site of cultural narration and identity construction. In China, as the world's largest manufacturing nation, post-industrial redevelopment is shaped by a unique socialist governance model and land regime. Under this context, state-led redevelopment and cultural re-narration have reshaped industrial heritage. Sites like Nanjing's National Creative Park (NCP) have been reframed through discourses of "creative industry parks" in planning texts, policy discourse, and curated exhibitions. Unlike the overt political expressions of working-class resistance in the West, China's former industrial community residents often respond to dramatic spatial and social restructuring through subtle, depoliticized forms of "silent resistance" and negotiated identity (Zhao and Nichols, 1996; Bray, 2005).

1.2 Industrial Heritage Communities under Divergent Policy and Cultural Contexts

In recent years, researchers have begun to highlight the "north-south divide" in China's industrial heritage landscapes. Similar to well-studied cases like Germany's Ruhr Valley, northern Chinese cities (e.g. Shenyang, Tianjin) typically exhibit single-industry clustered communities, where heritage regeneration primarily focuses on addressing systemic community decline (Zhang et al., 2023). In contrast, cities like Nanjing feature small-scale industrial sites embedded within existing neighborhoods, where heritage overlaps heavily with residential life. Here, urban regeneration is entangled with multiple pressures—historic preservation, industrial restructuring, and everyday livelihoods. Spatially and socially, such mixed-use heritage areas differ significantly from traditional "industrial satellite towns," which were once highly unified in terms of work and living arrangements.

In these hybrid heritage districts, residents are not limited to former industrial workers, but may include indigenous households, relocated residents, tenants, and homebuyers. This "internal heterogeneity" challenges the conventional class-based frameworks of identity and calls for analytical tools based on narrative negotiation. Studying the regeneration processes in these areas can therefore enrich our understanding of how identities are shaped across diverse social groups.

This paper applies critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), three-level positioning framework (Bamberg, 1997), and narrative structural approach (Riessman, 2008) to analyze how different types of residents engage with policy discourse, spatial change, and cultural reinterpretation. It examines how narrative positions are chosen, senses of belonging evaluated, and social roles reconstructed. Responding to the emerging academic focus on narrative governance, this study argues for pluralistic and dialogic mechanisms in heritage-led urban regeneration, providing insights into more inclusive approaches to community renewal.

Specifically, it addresses the following questions: In the face of transformation, how do residents from different backgrounds within hybrid industrial communities perceive their neighborhoods and construct their identities? Under the control of China's socialist institutional system, how can industrial heritage sites undergo a social transformation from "industrial relics" to cohesive "heritage communities" in the process of deindustrialisation?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Narrative Contestation in Post-Industrial Urban Regeneration

In the context of post-industrial urban regeneration, the reproduction of space is frequently accompanied by struggles and negotiations among narratives. Urban space becomes a site of multi-actor narrative competition (Jensen, 2007). Amid industrial transformation, heritage reuse, and community renewal, governments, developers, indigenous residents, and cultural actors engage in discursive battles over how the city should be remembered, represented, and envisioned for the future (Raco & Henderson, 2009). Such contestation reflects conflicts over historical legitimacy, cultural identity, and social spatial justice, often involving the restructuring of power and the marginalization of alternative knowledge systems (Lees, 2008).

Mainstream narratives, underpinned by policy language, development strategies, and capital logic, dominate through urban branding, spatial aesthetics, and elite discourse production (Balibrea, 2001). However, these narratives frequently neglect or marginalize the voices of vulnerable communities, particularly in terms of their sense of loss and displacement, resulting in what Lees (2008) terms "narrative silencing." The emotional energy and historical significance embedded in post-industrial ruins are often sanitized or instrumentalized under official discourse (Emery, 2019).

In response, residents, local actors, and critical scholars have developed "counter-narratives" that challenge elite representations and reassert local history and identity (Till, 2005). These alternative narratives are grounded in memory, affective landscapes, and lived experience, emphasizing locality and a "sense of historical presence." In China's socialist and post-socialist context, narrative contestation exhibits unique characteristics. First, the regeneration process is highly centralized, with limited community participation. Second, the functional and symbolic values of industrial heritage are explicitly embedded within national economic development agendas (Sun & Chen, 2023).

Narratives are not static but continuously negotiated through multi-actor interaction. Fairclough (1995) highlights the process of "selective recontextualization," where dominant narratives absorb, alter, or discipline individual voices—a phenomenon especially pronounced in post-industrial heritage settings. Thus, narrative contestation in post-industrial urban regeneration concerns not only cultural reproduction but also has profound implications for identity formation, spatial belonging, and civic participation.

2.2 Identity in Heritage Discourse

The reconfiguration of heritage spaces not only reshapes urban landscapes but also directly impacts residents' identities and sense of place (van Knippenberg & Boonstra, 2024). Studies indicate that functional changes in space often accompany symbolic reconstructions. For instance, transforming former labor sites into commodified exhibition spaces or art districts can impose a certain cultural narrative, leading residents to adopt new "identity frameworks" associated with the redefined "locality" (Mathur, 2014).

Residents' identities in industrial heritage spaces are often shaped by both official mainstream narratives and grassroots local discourses. Mainstream narratives, through institutional frameworks, planning contexts, and cultural reinterpretations, often shape residents' identities based on institutionalized discourses rather than personal experiences or grassroots collective memories. Zhang et al. (2023) argue that local identity has been "cultural symbolized" by dominant discourses, reducing it to an object of passive reception. In contrast, community narratives are articulated through personal and collective experiences and memories.

Preece (2020) introduces the concept of "biographies of belonging," highlighting how individuals in working-class communities construct identities through emotional and experiential connections to local spaces. These narratives not only reflect personal self-understanding but also maintain the historical continuity and collective memory of communities. Such participation is crucial for forming a sense of spatial belonging (Jones & Leech, 2015). For example, community-led redevelopment models are more likely to preserve residents' familiarity

and intimacy with spaces, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging. Conversely, neglecting or marginalizing residents' narratives can exacerbate their sense of spatial alienation (Preece, 2020).

While existing research acknowledges the importance of incorporating residents' narratives into industrial heritage renewal processes, discussions have primarily focused on the emotional memories and historical experiences of the working class. However, industrial heritage communities often have diverse demographic structures. The perceptions and emotional attachments of other types of residents to heritage renewal have been marginalized in current research. Moreover, existing literature has yet to reveal how narratives serve as mediating forces in shaping place perceptions and community identities amidst the interplay of multicultural and social structures.

3. Study Area

The Nanjing Creative Park (NCP), located in the heart of Qinhuai District, Nanjing, occupies a site historically used by two significant institutions: the Jiangnan Mint (formerly responsible for coin casting during the Qing Dynasty) and later the Nanjing No. 2 Machine Tool Plant, a major manufacturing base in the early industrialization of the People's Republic of China. In response to national deindustrialization policies, the site has undergone a series of transitions, including factory relocation, property restructuring, industrial heritage designation, and both park and community redevelopment. Its role has shifted from a self-contained industrial unit to a mixed-use urban precinct (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). Although now positioned as a creative industry park, NCP is spatially and socially interwoven with adjacent residential neighborhoods, making it a key case for understanding policy-driven transformation and community integration.



Figure.1. A photograph of a public space in this residential community), photo by Wenjing Dong



Figure.2. A photograph of houses in this residential community (Lai Feng Xin Cun), photo by Wenjing Dong

Surrounding areas such as Lai Feng Li, Ling Jiao Shi, and Lai Feng Xin Cun, many former workers and their families, who represent important community voices in this research (Fig. 3). Following the closure of the factory, these residents experienced institutional detachment, employment insecurity, and identity dislocation. Conversely, the commercialization has created new interactions for residents with no prior connection to the industrial past. The NCP thus exemplifies the dynamic interplay between dominant state narratives and plural community discourses in the context of heritage-led urban regeneration.



Figure.3. Location of NCP community, author self-painted.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This qualitative study investigates narrative construction and identity formation in the redevelopment of NCP. Two stages were conducted: (1) critical discourse analysis of policy texts, and (2) narrative analysis of resident interviews, aiming to explore the interaction of spatial discourse, place attachment, and identity.

4.2 Data Collection

Two datasets were used: (1) 10+ planning documents, exhibition texts, and media sources (1900s–2024), capturing official narratives of transformation; (2) 32 semi-structured interviews (Sept 2024–Jan 2025) with residents categorized as “old” and “new”. “Old residents” include former No. 2 Machine Tool Plant workers and their family members (“worker group” and “worker family group”), as well as long-term dwellers with no direct factory affiliation—such as original inhabitants, relocated households, and residents assigned housing from other work units (“other old residents”). “New residents” refer to homebuyers and renters who moved in after the park’s redevelopment. Interviews focused on memory, experience, attachment, and heritage perception. All were anonymized and transcribed.

4.3 Data Analysis

Official texts were analyzed via Fairclough’s (1995) CDA model to uncover discursive mechanisms legitimizing redevelopment. This involved examining language use, discourse production, and the underlying ideologies. Special attention was given to keywords such as “industrial revitalization” and “heritage activation” to uncover how official narratives construct heritage discourse. Resident narratives followed Bamberg’s (1997) identity positioning framework and Riessman’s (2008) narrative structuring, examining how individuals negotiate identity and space in response to policy and change.

By comparing the structures and strategies of two narrative logics, this study aims to present a tension-filled context of industrial heritage redevelopment, revealing how personal memory and policy planning intersect, conflict, and negotiate within local narratives.

5 Official Narratives: Functional Transformation and Discursive Reconstruction

5.1 Functional Narratives in Spatial Transformation

The origin of Nanjing Creative Park (NCP) is closely tied to state-led policies. Initially established in the early 20th century as the Jiangnan Mint under the Qing court, the site was later transformed into the Nanjing No.2 Machine Tool Plant after the founding of the People's Republic of China (Xu, 2012) (Fig. 4, Fig. 5). In 2012, under the "retreat of secondary industry and advancement of tertiary industry" strategy, the plant began its industrial transformation. By December 2013, under the guidance of the Nanjing Industrial Heritage Protection Plan, the site was redeveloped into a national innovation and entrepreneurship hub (Li & Chen, 2022).

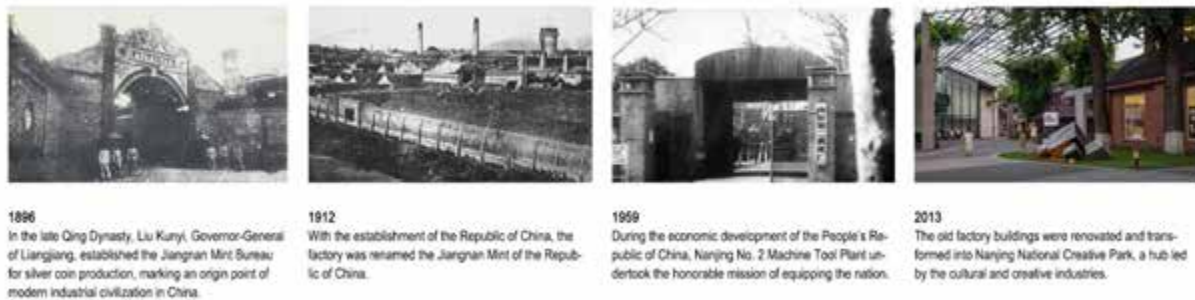


Figure.4. NCP during the different historical stages, author self-painted.

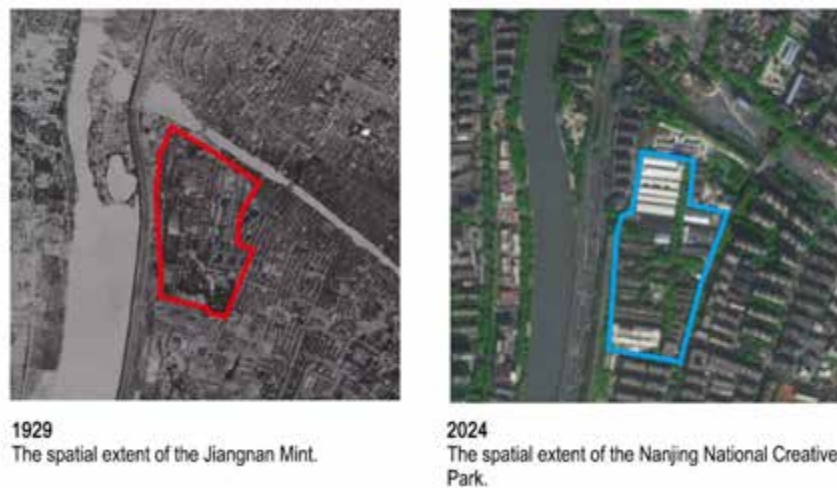


Figure.5. The spatial extent of NCP, author self-painted.

Currently, guided by the strategic goals of constructing a "national all-area tourism demonstration zone," building an "innovation-driven city," and promoting "high-quality development," NCP has become a key node in the spatial restructuring of Qin Huai District (Qin Huai District Development and Reform Commission, 2019). According to the mid-term evaluation report of the 13th Five-Year Plan, the old southern city area has been designated a national cultural demonstration zone (Qinhuai District Government, 2018). In this narrative of "all-area tourism," industrial heritage sites like NCP are framed as cultural and tourism assets.

Multiple policy documents indicate that the NCP's identity has undergone a shift from "industrial relic" to a hub for "cultural and creative industries" and the "digital economy." In this transformation, the park is no longer regarded solely as a historical site but reimagined as a complex industrial space symbolizing innovation and integration (Qinhuai District Government, 2019a).

The official narrative strongly emphasizes NCP's economic function, especially its roles in cultural industries and tourism. On one hand, the park is promoted as a cultural IP incubator and a key site for implementing the "Ten Measures for Cross-border E-commerce in Qin Huai." On the other hand, it is integrated into tourism strategies like "Night Stay in Qin Huai," aimed at fusing industry and tourism consumption experiences (Qin Huai

District Government, 2019b). This narrative logic reflects a systemic embedding of the “production–exhibition–consumption” chain into the traditional industrial community.

5.2 Shifting Policy Subjects and the Redistribution of Discursive Power

An analysis of policy texts across different historical periods reveals a significant shift in the subject of NCP’s official narrative from the “working class” to “enterprises,” “investors,” “park managers,” and “tourists.” This semantic shift reframes the park not as a site of industrial production, but as a spatial tool for project implementation, resource aggregation, and productivity enhancement. For instance, the Qin Huai District Bureau of Commerce (2025) emphasizes supporting enterprises’ global expansion and building a cross-border export ecosystem, highlighting a “park–enterprise–government” cooperation model. Similarly, the Qin Huai District Government (2019a) stresses the creation of a full industrial chain for IP development, with the operative subjects being park operators and tenants. This discursive strategy restructures the actor network of the park and reallocates discursive power to new entrants.

Driven by these dominant narratives, NCP has redefined its institutional identity. First, it is positioned as a key platform for cultural display, technological innovation, and industrial upgrading, and as a model for policy implementation. Second, while policies highlight the roles of government and enterprises, local residents are largely absent from these texts, with little attention to their emotional needs, lifestyle shifts, or identity struggles. Third, policies do not offer pathways for former residents to engage with or reestablish roles in the transformed park. Thus, while the official narrative facilitates spatial and functional renewal, it simultaneously neglects the reconstruction of local identity and community continuity, transforming the park from a “social space” into a purely “functional space.”

5.3 Fractures Within the Dominant Narrative

The official narrative, which centers on an integrated framework of “technology, culture, tourism, consumption,” has effectively repositioned NCP within Nanjing’s high-quality development discourse. However, this narrative model also exposes certain limitations, particularly its unidirectionality and closure. While emphasizing “innovation driven” development and a “showcase city” image, it tends to overlook the social fractures and cultural exclusions that may arise during redevelopment. The de-contextualization of daily life, the fading of historical memory, and the weakening of place-based identity present latent challenges behind the polished official discourse. This analysis provides a critical foundation for subsequent examinations of community narratives and lays the groundwork for exploring the dynamic between policy frameworks and lived experience.

6 Community Narratives and Place Identity in Industrial Heritage Redevelopment

6.1 Emotional Narratives and Identity Reconstruction among Former Workers

Interviews with former workers revealed diverse and emotionally charged narratives. These accounts not only addressed physical spatial changes but also reflected nostalgia for industrial identity, cognitive dissonance toward urban transformation, and emotional responses to shifting social status.

Some retired workers retained strong place attachment. Long-term residents of former factory housing described frequent visits to the site (Fig. 6), calling it a place “with feelings,” often using collective terms like “we workers” to affirm historical bonds—demonstrating group cohesion. Such narratives carried implicit loss. When discussing deindustrialization and relocation, one respondent expressed alignment with official discourse: “National policy comes first,” indicating both trust and resignation. When asked whether the redevelopment had affected his life, one respondent replied, “Now it’s the young people in there,” and “preserving the site allows us to reminisce,” acknowledging the historical retreat of the worker community. He also noted that the redeveloped NCP “can boost consumption,” suggesting not hostility but an attempt to understand its economic rationale. These responses represent a “compliant-adjustive identity,” shaped by dominant narratives of reform and development.



Figure.6. A photograph of the former factory housing (Lai Feng Li), photo by Wenjing Dong

Others, especially laid-off workers, expressed sharper criticism. One respondent explicitly rejected the redevelopment: "It was not good! Workers were laid off with nothing to eat," signaling forced identity loss and resistance to mainstream discourse. These "protest narratives" reveal emotional rupture and identity crisis among marginalized groups.

Some older workers exhibited silent acceptance. One elder noted, "We're too old to go there," showing emotional distance and disengagement. This "withdrawal narrative" reflects the exclusion of elderly residents from heritage reuse processes.

In sum, worker narratives are emotionally complex and heterogeneous, combining memory, belonging, grievance, and disengagement, offering insight into contested identity reconstruction.

6.2 Domestic Narratives and Collective Belonging among Workers' Families

Elderly women, particularly as wives or mothers of former workers, expressed strong place attachment despite not working in the factory themselves. Their narratives reflect a shared memory of household life under the "work-unit system" (housing, employment, and welfare were tightly bound to one's workplace), and highlight a gendered experience of spatial cohabitation. As one group of elderly women noted, "This whole row was factory's dormitories," constructing a sense of spatial belonging through the nested relationship of house and family. Although most had not worked in the factory themselves, phrases like "our husbands and sons were in the plant" enabled indirect identity formation and reinforced their narrative legitimacy as members of worker families.

Compared to workers, these family members tended to view redevelopment more positively. One respondent commented, "The renovation is nice; I go for walks in the evening," and participates in volunteer activities. Their narratives focus on everyday spatial use and temporal rhythms rather than political loss or class identity, representing a pragmatic, life-oriented mode of storytelling.

6.3 Marginalised Narratives and Functionalist Tendencies among Other Old Residents

An analysis of narratives from "other old residents", including original inhabitants, relocated households, residents assigned housing through other work units, and those who moved in through marriage, reveals a pattern of structural marginalization, especially when compared to the identity-secure and memory-rich narratives of former factory workers. Although these individuals have lived long-term in the area surrounding the original factory, their lack of affiliation with the "work-unit system" has largely excluded them from dominant historical narratives and cultural identity frameworks. Many respondents clearly distanced themselves from the factory's legacy, stating "I wasn't part of the factory" or "it has nothing to do with us." While some acknowledged the reputation of NCP as a "good unit," their accounts emphasized practical belonging, such as "we've lived here for a long time" or "we're used to it", but without emotional or historical resonance. As institutional "outsiders"

inhabiting shared spaces, they experience a tension between spatial inclusion and narrative exclusion. These non-worker residents tend to frame their narratives around everyday concerns such as convenience, social ties, and housing stability. Their recognition of NCP reflects a utilitarian orientation.

Their narratives often focused on everyday concerns like convenience, housing stability, and neighborhood ties, reflecting a utilitarian mode of place identification. Many expressed functional approval of the redevelopment, noting the area's walkability, food options, and livability, while deliberately withholding affective attachment.

Some, however, voiced strong disaffection. One resident, resettled in the 1990s, strongly rejected any association with community life, describing the area as "dirty," "expensive," and "annoying," and dismissing both the present and historical identity of the NCP. She expressed no sense of belonging: "I don't join activities" "I don't like living here". This group, resettled through policy-driven arrangements, remains excluded from prevailing community narratives, revealing a structural contradiction: spatial embeddedness without socio-cultural inclusion.

In sum, this group experiences dual marginalization, which excluded from both institutional memory and cultural representation, highlighting the need for inclusive heritage regeneration that embraces diverse social identities and lived experiences.

6.4 Instrumental Narratives and Cultural Reception among New Residents

Within the newly formed community structure following NCP's transformation, new residents constitute a key variable in identity dynamics. Their sense of place attachment often increases significantly with the length of residence. Younger tenants with shorter residency often display an instrumental narrative orientation, viewing the site primarily in terms of amenities like dining or leisure, showing little emotional connection or historical awareness.

Longer-term homeowner residents, though lacking direct historical involvement, gradually establish a connection to the site through everyday use and begin to develop interest in its history and culture. Those with even longer residence accumulate a strong sense of belonging through daily engagement. One interviewee, for instance, demonstrated a shift from functional engagement to cultural reflection by actively discussing the relationship between industrial heritage preservation and public education, suggesting that new residents can become potential agents in the transmission of industrial heritage.

Narratively, this group tends to follow a trajectory of "relocation, engagement, usage, and understanding," with role positioning evolving from "user" to "identifier." While situated on the cultural periphery of NCP's legacy, they possess strong potential for discursive integration. Though new residents are not directly involved in memory construction, they are actively shaping the contemporary meanings of industrial heritage.

7 Discussion

7.1 Selective Interaction Between Dominant and Community Narratives

During the redevelopment of NCP, dominant narratives have been actively constructed through policy documents, media representation, and exhibition spaces, emphasizing themes such as "industrial heritage renewal" and the clustering of "cultural and creative industries." These future-oriented discourses serve to reframe the post-industrial transformation in a positive light. In contrast, community residents' memories of the former factory, their attachment to the work-unit system, and their experiences of cultural disconnection and identity marginalization throughout the redevelopment process form an unofficial counter-discourse. Rather than directly opposing the official narrative, these local stories engage in an "interactive dynamic". Policymakers have selectively incorporated elements of community narratives, particularly those with positive emotional value, into heritage and tourism storytelling. However, this selective integration tends to marginalize expressions of loss, skepticism, and resistance, constituting what can be described as a state-led "curated fusion." In the Chinese socialist context, where the working class is valorized in official ideology, the identity of working-class residents is shaped differently depending on whether it is viewed through the lens of political propaganda or social reality (Xin & Xiaofan, 2020). While individuals may outwardly conform to dominant narratives, they also demonstrate active support for aspects that align with their class interests. This reflects a characteristic interplay between dominant and individual narratives in socialist systems, where conformity coexists with pragmatic negotiation.

7.2 The Complexity of Community Narratives and Narrative Aphasia

Former workers of the No. 2 Machine Tool Plant often articulate emotions marked by a mixture of pride and sorrow. Their narratives reflect both a sense of dignity rooted in their industrial past and grief over its loss. Family members of workers, particularly women in domestic roles, focus their narratives on the everyday spatial transformations, expressing a strong attachment to the worker community. Other long-term residents, such as original inhabitants or resettled households, have undergone a shift in identity from peripheral observers to engaged participants, due to the influence of industrial heritage discourse. In contrast, new residents primarily engage with the community through ownership or economic interest, reflecting a more instrumental orientation in their narratives.

A significant number of residents exhibit what may be termed “narrative aphasia” in the face of media interviews or official surveys. This silence does not stem from an inability to speak, but from a lack of appropriate discursive space within the dominant narrative. Some former residents expressed sentiments like “no one listens when we speak” or “we don’t understand what is written,” revealing a broader “loss of narrative agency.” In other words, residents lack the authority to define or reinterpret the place they inhabit.

This discursive marginalization is rooted in structural constraints. Many residents share the belief that they have no control over their living environment. Although many are dissatisfied with their conditions, few are willing to voice complaints or seek change. A key reason lies in property rights: residents often possess only the right to renovate their interior living spaces, while control over streets and public infrastructure remains with government authorities. Another contributing factor is the enduring influence of collectivist ideology. As former dominant actors in the community, the working class and their families have long internalized a trust in and compliance with state policies, much like their acquiescence during deindustrialization. Meanwhile, other residents, marginalized for nearly 80 years, lack both the power and the confidence to articulate their concerns.

This exclusion from discourse is not merely an individual issue but a reflection of how narrative positions are stripped away through interactions with dominant discourses. These fragmented and non-mainstream narratives reveal the deep entanglement of historical trauma, identity anxiety, and cultural discontinuity.

7.3 Integrating Individual Narratives into Dominant Discourse to Enhance Community Belonging

Although the dominant narrative of NCP emphasizes “historical and cultural regeneration,” it remains largely focused on the visual reproduction of space (Fig. 7), with limited incorporation of residents’ collective memory. While some industrial artifacts have been preserved, the individual voices of the working class have been intentionally overlooked. This “depersonalized” approach to heritage transformation has led to a sense of disconnection and weakened identity attachment.



Figure.7. Factory structures preserved within NCP, photo by Wenjing Dong

Systematically incorporating individual narratives into dominant discourse constitutes a form of cultural justice. Resident narratives should not merely serve as resources for cultural tourism but ought to be embedded within spatial redevelopment, policy formulation, and participatory governance. Such integration can disrupt the unidirectional narrative dynamic of “government planning—resident compliance,” and instead foster a co-creative, co-governed, and co-shared model of spatial governance. Moreover, narrative pluralism may alleviate intra-community tensions, strengthen social cohesion, and promote the transformation of industrial heritage sites into inclusive “heritage communities.”

8 Conclusion

This study focuses on the narrative practices surrounding the transformation of NCP within the broader context of urban regeneration and industrial heritage redevelopment. Employing an interpretive qualitative approach, it uncovers the dynamic interaction between official narratives and individual community accounts, and explores how local identities are continuously negotiated and reconstructed through spatial restructuring and cultural reproduction.

Findings reveal that individual narratives are selectively excluded from official discourse. Both long-term and recent residents exhibit complex emotions regarding identity positioning and place attachment. This divergence highlights the heterogeneity of narrative positions and the risks of narrative silencing faced by marginalized groups within institutionalized discourses.

The study argues that incorporating diverse personal narratives into mainstream heritage discourse enriches cultural meaning and enhances community belonging and intergenerational continuity. It calls for a more inclusive “narrative governance” framework in heritage-led urban regeneration. Theoretically, the research extends the application of narrative identity theory to post-industrial spatial contexts, demonstrating that identity is actively constructed through individual responses to space and policy. Practically, it advocates for dialogic planning processes that recognize resident experiences as a source of heritage value. Furthermore, studying mixed-type industrial heritage can offer globally relevant perspectives, especially for cities undergoing industrial restructuring, demographic shifts, and cultural hybridity.

It is important to note that the study is based on a single case, which limits the generalizability of its conclusions. Future research could benefit from cross-regional comparisons to explore how residents engage with industrial heritage spaces in varied socio-spatial contexts. Additionally, integrating spatial analysis and participatory ethnography would further illuminate the mediating role of narrative in urban heritage landscape reconstruction.

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