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The Contesting Dynamics in Cultural Policy and Heritage Conservation Policy between Hong Kong and Macao

This paper is an integration of postcolonial studies, studies of globalization and neoliberalism, a theoretical integration that is necessary for the study of the supposedly “postcolonial” post-1997 and post-1999 era respectively in Hong Kong and Macao. It aims at finding the cultural and political implications of the contesting dynamics in cultural policy and heritage conservation policy.

In order to analyse the political and cultural implications of the buildings, I will pay close attention to one significant cultural infrastructure respectively in each city and explore the background of the buildings, including the related cultural policy, history of the building, programme history, etc. I will argue that top-down heritage conservation policy tend to emphasize the physical condition of the heritage building, and the culture and history represented is selective and some even intentionally hidden. This situation happens not only in Hong Kong, a place that is notorious in preserving its own history, but also in Macao, which has successfully transformed “The Historic Centre of Macao” into a UNESCO prestigious World Heritage List item under the terms of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (“World Heritage Convention”). The government and developers pay very little attention to the negative impacts on the cultural landscape. Some development even altered the history of the historical buildings to fit the projects’ needs. The cultural and political implications of the disrespectful and manipulative measures will be analysed. I will also analyse how cultural infrastructures respond to neoliberalism, and how they shape the identities of the local people in response to the postcolonial and globalizing conditions.