

Youth Impact Communication

Bacheng Story By Bacheng People: The Documentary Project Of Urban Renewal In Kunshan, China

Kaifeng Wang,

Wenchen Sun,

Qihao Wang,

Zhouyan Gao,

Hanqing Chen,

Yicheng Li,

Summary

Urban renewal is a prevailing trend in China, including advantages and limitations at the same time. People enjoy the results of urban renewal of an old city but somehow ignoring some drawbacks. According to many cases in China, we notice one of the biggest negative impacts is that a place undergoes urban renewal will lose its memories: this place will be forgotten.

Bacheng is the nearest place to us that experiencing urban renewal. Before participating YIC, our team already did lots of research on Bacheng with great interests. We designed questionnaires, sent them, and interviewed people locally in order to understand this special place. Shortly after, we noticed that there is a YIC platform that allowed us to pay some actual works.

Our project is to create a documentary to save memory of Bacheng and locals, preventing this place from being forgotten. The reason we choose to make a documentary is that it is a realistic, clear, and direct way to show landscapes and stories in Bacheng.

Through this process, we faced obstacles and challenges. For once, we tried to record a video when we were interviewing a store-owner in Bacheng. However, when we asked her attitude toward this urban renewal project, she seemed to be uncooperative and afraid of being known to her responses by local government. Moreover, during the process of accomplishing YIC project, we faced the epidemic condition. As our platform for spreading messages is offline considering our target audiences (most of them are elders), our project was extremely difficult to progress. However, we made an appointment with Bacheng local community development association. They promised us that after the outbreak, we will be able to implement our plans. If everything is going well, we will carry out this plan in half a year. According to our research, urban renewal has many limitations, nevertheless, it is effective to boost the economy. We cannot stop this thing happening, but we made a great job, great teamwork, and great efforts on saving locals' memory and culture. This is our strengths.

Identify the Topic

| Topic Description

Bacheng is a water town whose history as an administrative unit dates back over 2,500 years. Famous in China for Yangcheng Lake Crabs and its Kunqu(a form of Chinese opera) culture.

Since China initiated reforms and adopted an open-door policy, Bacheng has been focused on developing its economy with a liberal mind and in an enterprising spirit by taking advantage of its superior geographical location and environment to seize growth opportunities. It has maintained a fast, sustained and healthy momentum in socio-economic progress. Particularly in recent years, Bacheng followed a differentiated approach to economic growth by focusing on the development of hi-tech industries, software, leisure-oriented tourism and modern agriculture.

Like other towns in China, it faces an urban renewal issue as an old town.

Considered as the origin of Kunqu, Bacheng was rebuilt under the cause of cultural conservation, thereby enjoying distinctive characteristics and a great number of tourists.

| Why it is important

Currently, many places in the world have faced the same process of urban renewal as Bacheng. By discussing and investigating the old street of Bacheng, the case study proves extremely conducive to identifying the impact of the urban renewal process on the locals and their right to residency, which, in turn, can stimulate reflection on the pros and cons brought about by such development process.

| Project Objective

China is experiencing the era of rapid development, and the most obvious example is urban renewal projects of old streets in China. However, as those typical Chinese old streets reconstructed, it will ultimately lose memory. If it no longer retains any memory, their culture and history will be forgotten.

Bacheng, a Chinese old street that undergoes urban renewal project, is exposed

under the risk of losing memory. Therefore, through this YIC project, our team aim to save memories of Bacheng Old Street for locals through creating a realistic documentary.

Identify the Target Audience

| Who Are They?

Our project “Bacheng Story by Bacheng People: The Documentary Project of Urban Renewal in Kunshan, China” is targeted at people who are experiencing urban renewal in Bacheng, Kunshan. During the 1980s, many people in Bacheng moved to the downtown area of Kunshan, seeking job opportunities. At the beginning of the 21st century, some of these people stayed in Kunshan or moved to other cities, while others came back. By looking at the time, it clearly shows that young and talented people left their hometown for survival for nearly two decades. People came back to Bacheng mainly because of three reasons: nostalgia, failure, or the fact that they wanted to contribute to their hometown. These people were educated and dutiful. Their children, the younger generation in Bacheng, mostly moved to somewhere else to be employed in more developed cities. This historical context caused most residents in Bacheng to be the elderly. They are no different than a stereotyped Chinese old man or woman, who loves community activities and traditional entertainment such as playing Chinese Chess or Mahjong, and Square dancing. However, one thing does set them apart from others: the majority of these residents experienced China’s Reform and Opening, and was educated in Kunshan’s downtown area but later came back. In Bacheng, if you see some elders playing chess or dancing in the square, they probably once went to high school. In the case of the younger generation who stays in Bacheng, they are not loafers. Instead, they are pioneers. Bacheng is a city of culture. It has a nickname “The home of Kun Opera” , and Kun Opera is known as the “origin of Chinese operas” . It is also a city of development and patentability. Up until 2012, the first milk tea store was just opened nearby the Bacheng Old Street. Many young people are working hard to help develop their hometown. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that Bacheng does not hold many immigrants; i.e. most of its residents are born and bred at this town.

| Why Are They?

People who are experiencing Bacheng Renewal are those who live in the buildings that might be pulled down. The elders’ memory towards their houses and this

Bacheng old street began in their childhood until now. As for the compensation—they are not poor people, not because they are financially rich, but because they are satisfied with what they have. Bacheng has a resourceful lake named Yangcheng Lake and a branch canal, which allows them to be materially fulfilled; spiritually, they do not seek wealth either, and they also successfully raised children who are now working in other cities. After all of the investigations and in-depth interviews, we can notice that locals are deeply in love with their homes.

Thus, as they are so affectionate toward their home, we want to target Bacheng locals as our audiences and restore memories of Bacheng and their life for them.

| What is your scope?

To guarantee the feasibility and accuracy of our research project, our scope is narrowed to 3 main categories of people who are experiencing urban renewal in Bacheng: business owners, residents, and local cultural historians.

Business owners are people who help to boost local economies, which means they are contributors to this urban renewal project. Residents are people who have no power, therefore affecting by this project. Local cultural historians are people who lead this project with local government, and meanwhile trying to solve conflicts.

| How to reach them?

As we mentioned in “Who Are They” , because of the certain historical background of Bacheng, it caused most residents to be elderly. These elders are no different than a stereotyped Chinese old man or woman, who loves community activities and traditional entertainment. It indicates that the main way of communicating for elders is in-person communication.

Therefore, in our opinion, the best way to reach them is by direct social-intercourse. Therefore, based on the upper conclusion, we did an in-depth interview and on-site observation regarding our target audiences. Applying previous methods, we investigated experiences of local cultural historians, local residents, foreign businesses that moved in for boosting Bacheng’ s economy, and various actors.

Identify the Key Message

| The Key Message

To sum up, our key message is “Care More About Locals” .

The local government of Bacheng is achieving its urban renewal project through the name of cultural revitalization, and among this, Kun opera is its main cultural element. However, even though the result may be good, but through this renovation, we may lose memories of Bacheng.

Hence, we strongly expect the local government, tourists, and all people around China to pay more attention to locals instead of the economic growth of Bacheng.

| The Tactics Behind

To attain our goal that we mentioned in “The Key Message” , which is to lead people paying more attention to Bacheng locals, we will mainly apply a concept of “pathos” throughout our documentary. Such a tactic helps strike a chord with our audiences.

We will implement our tactic through visual and audible designs for the documentary.

First of all, there will be large amounts of video clips respecting Bacheng landscapes as well as the real-life of locals. These video clips are detailed, well-structured, and also effective when transmitting information and emotions.

Moreover, soundtracks that we added in this documentary is our tactic as well.

There’ s a piece of Kun Opera music to introduce the culture involved in this revitalization, and there’ s another one that effectively renders the overall emotion of videos. This one is quiet, mysterious with a few scenes of old buildings in Bacheng. Therefore, such soundtracks can efficiently and directly appeal to the audience’ s emotions.

Choose the Platform

| The Platform Chosen

For us, the documentary is not merely a video for recording and saving locals' memories, it is meanwhile a power for us to intervene in its re-development process. Moreover, as we mentioned in the "Who Are They" part, elders take a large part of the population among our target audiences. One of the main characteristics of them is that they are not familiar with any electronic devices and social media. Based on this, we' ve got 2 platforms.

One is temporary: picking an evening time in a space where locals will be concentrated and inviting locals to watch the documentary. Since they are gathered, we will hold a workshop together, sharing memories of Bacheng with each other and the impacts that were brought by its changes and development as well. Another one is permanent: renovating and applying an old cinema that was remained from The Cultural Revolution in China to play this documentary repeatedly. Hence, it allows visitors to deeply understand Bacheng. This platform is distinctive, therefore perfect for playing documentary and highly attractive for visitors.

| The Alternative Platforms

The alternative platforms will focus on the online channel. Considering Chinese people are not able to view YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, such as international social media, we narrowed our choice to Sina Weibo. It is one of the biggest social media platforms in China, with over 445 million monthly active users. Its biggest strength is that people post their content through blogs, and thus viewers can freely look at them. Besides, people don' t need to be certain online confirmed friends or followers, which is a freer way to show our informations. Another alternative will be WeChat, which is like a combination of Snapchat and Instagram. However, there is another special function in WeChat (微信公众号): you can subscribe, follow, and even interact with accounts that you are interested in. It is

similar to youtube, but the way authors deliver their messages is through articles with some videos and pictures. There is already an established Bacheng account in such platform called “Aqua Rhyme Bacheng” (水韵巴城), therefore we can try to contact the author or organization behind this account to post our documentary. Because this platform is already established, this will be more time-saving comparing to other platforms.

| The Criteria to Evaluate

Our criteria to evaluate is based on 1) popularity, 2) preparation time, 3) practicability, and 4) interaction with target audiences.

The way to evaluate “popularity” is to estimate potential audiences of each platform that may receive our information, according to the property and trait of each platform.

Moreover, the way to examine “time preparation” is to assess the costs of time including times spent on posting the documentary on platforms and getting in touch with each platform.

For “practicability” , it may be evaluating and comparing difficulties that we may face when spreading our messages.

Last but not least, for “interaction with target audiences” , this is to determine how possible will our target audience see our documentary.

| The Rating Sheet

 [Rating Sheet](#)

Set the Agenda

| Set the Agenda

1. Design and send out 100 paper questionnaires

Date: 2019.07.14

Location: Bacheng street All members

Conducted by all members

2. Organize data from questionnaires

Date: 2019.07.20

Result: Analyze and calculate data and draw conclusions

Conducted by Yicheng Li & Qihao Wang

3. Interview locals to record their stories

Date: 2019.10.12

Location: Bacheng Old Street

Conducted by All members

4. Prepare elements for documentary

Specific goals: video in-depth interview and local landscapes

Date: November 2019 — January 2020

Location: Bacheng Old Street

Conducted by Kevin Wang & Alex Chen & Esther Gao & Wenchen Sun

5. Creating Documentary

Date: February 2020 — March 2020

Edit video clips

Add soundtracks and filters

Conducted by Kaifeng Wang

6. First draft

Date: 2020.2.17

Conducted by all members

7. Second draft

Date: 2020.04.1

Conducted by Zhouyan Gao

8. Add subtitles for our videos

Date: 2020.04.12

Conducted by Wenchen Sun

9. Complete documentary

Date: 2020.04.20

Conducted by Kaifeng Wang

10. Finish final report

Date: 2020.04.22

Conducted by Zhouyan Gao

Design the Packages

[Bacheng Story by Bacheng people: The Documentary Project of Urban renewal in Kunshan, China](#)

Create and Track the Impact

| The Execution Plan

1) Collection of Questionnaires

We visited Bacheng Old Street in Kunshan, a place with semi-commercial and semi-residential houses and Kunqu (Kun Opera) culture. We made questionnaires, and the questions are aimed at local tourists, residents, and shop employees. We hope to get some views on the old street from them and learn more about the local situation.

2) Interviews and Documentaries

Afterward, we hope to learn about their opinions on the Kunqu culture and residents' relocation through interviews with tourists, shop owners, and residents. We collected interview transcripts, videos, and photos. The stories they told were put together and presented as documentaries.

3) Exhibition

We are going to show our documentary on the local stage of the old street. At the same time, we will explain the film on this special occasion. The documentary will also be displayed in the well-known local Kunqu Studio, which can be seen by not only tourists visiting the site and residents passing by, but also people visiting the studio. Of course, we will carry out the same activities in our school. We discussed with the school teachers and decided to show the documentary and give some lectures when the school held a rally. Students can even use the school's cable TV, which is available during the breaks.

| Impact Statistics

 [Impact statistics](#)

| Collect Feedback

Feedbacks chosen from short answers in our questionnaire:

1) Participator one: "The idea of this documentary is very creative because I don't even know that there is a place called Bacheng. I will add it to my travel destination list. Also through the interview from different people, I can feel that the influence of rebuilding can be significant on both the positive and the negative sides."

2) Participator two: "As the government is trying to make the place change by introducing Kunqu, it might be a good way to spread the cultural message to more teenagers."

3) Participator three: If by my side, bystanders, it's a documentary that clearly shows how a place experiences changes after an urban renewal, including both of its advantages and limitations. Although there is no way to really see the critics of this development, but the film presents different perspectives for me. It's a wonderful documentary.

Review and Reflections

| Overall Self Check

This part is absent or not available temporarily.

| What Are Successful

Our team and our project are successful since the very beginning. During the research and planning phase, we were able to decide on our scope and successfully constructed an action plan, and then we gradually actualized our thoughts into field investigation. Then, after collecting sufficient information such as anecdotal and historical data, we have also worked hard on the product (the documentary). We aimed to make an industrial level documentary, so we interviewed residents on the Bacheng Old Street, and used the recorded material as the main component of the documentary. The roles we assigned to each member include the interviewer, the screenwriter, the cameraperson, the narrator, and the director. Every relevant detail about the documentary proves that we wish to tell Bacheng people's story, just like how we have decided at the start of the project. When we told those residents at the old street about our plan of making a documentary, they felt excited and believed that it is going to be fantastic. Our documentary does have a great impact. One of our group members wrote an essay about this project and won the qualification by an international competition (ISSCY), and received international approval; besides, we successfully promoted our documentary to the Bacheng museum and the tourists at the old street, and they acknowledged our efforts.

| What to Improve

Because our team members are from different schools and departments (AP or IB), we often had conflicts in time and communication. Also, because of being in different regions, it was hard for us to achieve our goals on time or efficiently. The time difference became the biggest difficulty for us and the teacher. Of course, in the course of our interviews, we were often thought of as salespeople. Only a few people could accept our interviews during the day. Taking one day to reach

Bacheng Old Street is difficult, and the interview could not be completed in one day. This has put us in trouble many times. Furthermore, editing documentaries, collecting materials, and distribution of video-posting tasks were not simple, either. Because of the time difference, we could not smoothly carry out each trip task, and because of the delay of one trip, we needed to adjust the time of later trips, but because of different circumstances, later trips may be delayed.

| Summarize Learnings

The members of our group come from different places, some in the United States, some in China, so we do not go to the same school. Even the instructors are busy and sometimes it is difficult to have regular meetings. Even if we know each other, how to cooperate perfectly and the challenges brought by time conflicts have put us in trouble many times. However, we tried our best to work together to complete this huge project.

In order to regulate everyone's free time to come to class, American students always insist on attending classes with us and the communication would last till 3 or even 4 a.m. This directly gives us better tacit understanding and work division capabilities. We are very happy about this achievement.

During interviews, questionnaire visits, and filming, we were often considered salespeople by others and were rejected so many times. Yet instead of giving up, we became more committed. We spent more time adjusting the project, assigning tasks to the end, so that in the end we successfully collected what we needed. In the process, we not only learned how to communicate with strangers, but also learned the importance of persistence. We also learned how to be patient with passersby and residents with different personalities. Some people have a bad temper, or they might just say a little bit or lie to us out of fear, which is why we must be patient. Because the research area is too broad, we must deeply understand the structure, geographical location, history, cultural heritage (among other factors) of the old street. This also allowed us to conduct extensive data search and exploration before the research, and also taught us how to observe and learn.

More importantly, in the process, we came to understand the importance of teamwork. Each member also came to understand the importance of trusting and supporting others.

Team Credits

- 1) Kaifeng Wang: Director & Editor
- 2) Zhouyan Gao: Planner
- 3) Yicheng Li, Hanqing Chen, Wenchen Sun, Qihao Wang: Investigator & Interviewer

Judge Comments

" Very smart to focus on business owners, residents, and local cultural historians for the scope of your project. That helps keep your focus narrow and allows for much more feasible execution. Centering your message around your documentary puts a lot of pressure on your video, but you've definitely done a great job of following through. The videography is gorgeous, the sequencing and framing is truly excellent. The biggest suggestions when it comes to the video -- get your subjects earlier into the video. This will help avoid audio monotony where we hear from a single subject (whether that's a source or your narrator) for too long. Also it allows for more authenticity of your documentary because real people and real issues are highlighted much earlier in the video. Consider ducking down your bed music considerably, especially during interviews, to make your voices much more understandable. Overall however, this is a beautiful documentary and showcases truly tremendous storytelling skills. From the surveys conducted after airings, it seems as though your audience would agree. Excellent work. "