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Opinion

香港老番

圖片由作者提供

本欄目隔周刊出

還記得年輕時在英國北部城市里茲的日子，特別是在出外購物時，總會不時遇上強風暴雨。我會躲進市中心「維多利亞購物區」內那些以維多利亞式建成的商場，在這裏繼續購物，又或滴雨不沾地喝一口茶稍稍休息。那是多麼美妙的經驗！這些商場與倫敦英國皇家學院附近的伯靈頓拱廊商場很相似，當然這裏的商店價格更為親民。

事實上，西方國家有很多城市的商場都聰明地採用了「有瓦遮頭」的設計，又或在行人路加設柱廊。意大利城市博洛尼亞便是其中一個好例子，這裏的商場舉世知名，有蓋行人路總長達40公里（25哩），路人走在風格各具特色的有蓋行人路上，可以直抵市中心每一個角落。在街道上加入連綿的開放式商場，其實是古希臘城市的一大特色，設計原意是加強城市的舒適度。

很多年之後的1993年5月我來到香港，發現這裏很多舊建築都有類似的連續開放式騎樓，提供與別不同的有蓋購物體驗，特別適合本地的天氣環境。初來甫到

的幾個月內，我見識了香港夏天雨季時的實況，也親身體會到走在斷斷續續由柱子支撐的騎樓底，是如何一件賞心樂事。這種設計完美地與香港的氣候和文化融為一體。不論這個原創設計在構想時有否考慮社區層面，這片風景是自然發展而來的，它所提供的城市閒適，和雅典古希臘人所享有的如出一轍。香港的有蓋行人路為人們遮陰擋雨，既可避開灼熱的陽光，也能在大雨時有處容身。

然而，在我到來後的不久，我便發現這些舊建築物慢慢地消失。有一兩幢較幸運的得到保留，被改建成高檔酒吧和餐館，但有更多被清拆掉，取而代之的是什麼？絕大部分情況都是現代化而高效的玻璃幕牆高樓，而且理直氣壯地表達出另一種性格。城市閒適被安全地鎖在大廈之內，而且明顯地把裏面和外面的世界分割。你要不就是在建築物內享受着室內的閒暇、保護和清涼（或寒冬時的溫暖），要不就是在室外抵受着風吹雨打。

這種現代化高樓將社區為本的人性化城市設計取向完全拒諸門外，它所包含的

是完全相反的理念：排外和分隔。傳統的本土街道建築展現友善的面貌；相對而言新的構想只有決絕和小氣。

傳統建築代表着一個城市的文化。就是這種文化吸引着旅客，讓他們樂意遊走於與自己熟悉城市不一樣的空間。把這種難能可貴的特色抹去，實屬可悲。

在文章的尾聲，我想提提最近讀到有人提議把中環區的電車也連根拔起，那會成為事實嗎？這些電車和那些本土街角唐樓一樣，是香港獨特文化的一部分，電車更是香港其中一種行之有效的公共交通模式。只要往電車上坐上一程，便可以清楚看到它們不只是接載遊客拍照的觀光車（雖然電車對他們來說充滿吸引力），事實上也是很多本地人的日常代步工具，讓人們以便宜的車費出外購物和通勤。如果這個計劃真的落實，那麼在不久的將來，所有令香港與別不同的特色都會消失得一乾二淨。英國政府會不會把倫敦中心區街上的紅色巴士和黑色的士取締？意大利政府又會不會把運河中的貢多拉小船拿走？顯然，這個立心不良的計劃實在太過分了。

失城 市蹤 閒適 記適



登入下列網址，可以閱讀英文原文
<http://www.abhk.org/the-disappearance-of-urban-comfort/>

The disappearance of urban comfort

Patrick S. Ford
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I still have strong memories from my youth in Leeds, a city in northern England when, caught out in a rainstorm during a shopping trip (a frequent occurrence), I dodged into one of the Victorian arcades in the city centre that have since been combined into the 'Victoria Quarter' shopping district. Here it was possible to continue shopping or to take a cup of tea safe from the downpour. What a wonderful experience it was! The arcades were similar in appearance to the Burlington Arcade near to the Royal Academy in London, except that the shops were much more affordable.

In fact many cities in the West wisely built covered shopping arcades or colonnaded pavements, one notable example being the famous arcades in the Italian city of Bologna where there are around 40 kilometers (25 miles) of covered walkways in a variety of styles that allows pedestrians to reach every part of the city centre. In fact streets featuring continuous open arcades are expressions of the ancient Hellenistic city that was intended to improve urban comfort.

Many years later when I arrived in Hong Kong in May 1993, I discovered that the old buildings of Hong Kong had similar continuous open arcades providing a different type of covered shopping experience and one uniquely suited to the local climate. During those first few months in the city I learnt what Summer rain could be like in Hong Kong and how pleasant it was to walk the streets under the cover of the overhanging buildings that were supported at intervals by columns. This was a design perfectly in tune with the climate and culture of Hong Kong. Whether it was originally designed with this community-based concept in mind or not, that is what developed. This was surely providing the same kind of urban comfort that the classical Greeks of Athens also enjoyed. The covered walkways of Hong Kong provided shade from the blistering sun and shelter from the bouncing rain.

However, not so long after arriving I noticed that these old buildings were disappearing. One or two lucky examples were retained and reconverted into up-market bars and restaurants but many were demolished, and what was erected in their place? More often than not it was a modern, efficient, glass block tower that emphatically made a different kind of statement. The urban comfort was locked away safely inside and there was a very explicit separation between those on the inside and those outside. You are either inside enjoying the comfort, protection and cool air (or warmth in summer) or you are outside at the mercy of the elements.

This does not embody a community-based, humanist approach to urban design; it embodies the opposite: exclusion and separation. The traditional, vernacular street architecture presents a friendly face; the new vision seems decidedly mean in comparison.

These buildings also serve to represent the culture of the city. This culture is what draws visitors here, eager to wander around a city quite different from their own. What a terrible tragedy to erase this valuable characteristic.

As a footnote I have recently read of plans to remove the trams from Central, can this be true? These trams are just as much a part of Hong Kong's unique culture as the vernacular architecture with the wonderful 'corner buildings', and yet they are also more than that. They are a viable mode of public transport. One journey on a tram will illustrate perfectly that they are not filled by tourists taking photographs (although that is certainly an attraction for them), they are full of local people shopping and/or travelling to or from work at a very affordable cost.

If this scheme has any truth to it, before long everything that has made Hong Kong unique will have been erased. Would the UK Government remove the red buses and black taxicabs from the streets of central London? Would the Italian Government remove the gondolas from the canals?

Surely this is one ill-advised 'scheme too far'.