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Aldo Rossi's interpretation of collective memory and its relevance for contemporary Asian urbanism

A key contribution of the book *The architecture of the city* was its introduction of Maurice Halbwachs' term *collective memory* into the architectural discourse. The paper presents Aldo Rossi's particular interpretation of Halbwachs' term and reconsiders it in the context of the contemporary urbanism debate, particularly in Asia. In the new millennium, the term "collective memory" had a sudden rebirth in the controversies about urban renewal and heritage in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region just after the handover to the People Republic of China. It reappeared in a city which is otherwise known for its economy driven urbanism and rapid change. The paper tests the relevance of Rossi's arguments in this new and different cultural context. In addition, it highlights the changes of Rossi's own understanding of *collective and autobiographic memories* as well as *permanence and change* after his travels to Asia. The paper attempts to give a non nostalgic assessment of Rossi's key theses of *The architecture in the city* identifying those aspects which still are relevant to understand of the radical urban transformations in Asian cities at the beginning of the 21st century.