

Diversity History Oriented Mixture Urban Transformation Project analyzing of Hongkou historical district, Shanghai, China

Chi Zhang
Tongji University

Abstract

This paper took the relationship between history and development as the reflection of the culture diversity and mixed social demands, which showed the conflicts between different classes and strategies during urban transformation. The author took the urban design project in Hongkou Historical District as an example, in which laid traditional Lilong, revolution events and mixture contents of commercial streets, landmarks and modern buildings, under the context of “International Settlements of Shanghai”, explaining how the government, developers and publics focused on the culture information for their claims in a same space. As for strategy, the designers came up with a network based on history connection which consisting of culture line, functional linkage and extension areas, corresponding to three spatial forms for each actor. In conclusion, the paper emphasized the culture diversity came from continuously superimposing of history working as intangible connections which distinguished itself from mixture. In the dynamic future, the culture would be the contents forcing the space to be more affordable and adjustable as the container. People would not only rely on the breakthrough of the technology to vary their lives but also expected the urban diversity and mixture could be a way of thinking to stimulate the proposal of space both in real society and virtual world.

This paper is subsidized by NSFC project named as < Research on Time and Space Elements and Expression System of "Sharing Architecture">, No. 51978468.

1 Background

City is complex with various phenomena, but still presenting an integral characteristic. While the public among all ages are enjoying the multi-functional lives and feeding themselves in bottom level, the upper planners are struggling to make statistical analysis of all the happenings and even spare no efforts to calculate the future. Under this circumstance, the designers are acting as bridges linking different roles in the middle. Therefore, the diversity serves to an intangible order, which distinguishes itself from chaos and promoted urban transformation.

Shanyin Historical District was based on the contemporary development of Shanghai during the unstable time of China from late 19th to early 20th when the war occurred. From the results, the International Settlement of Shanghai and the traditional Lilong composed the fundamental space context, which made the culture mixed Chinese and Western. Hongkou district is one of the most typical historical areas filled with delicate buildings, roads, and several revolution pioneers' residences like Lu Xun and Mao Dun's houses. Apart from that, Hongkou Football Stadium, Hongkew Cinema and other typical functional buildings represented another unforgettable contemporary memory in this place. Besides, there are ten historical protected alleys and one commercial streets connect the blocks. On the one hand, Hongkou was trapped by the diversity context which made itself difficult to move forward with protected doctrine. On the other hand, this information also brought the site full of potentials and opportunities for further transformation. Therefore, it's unquestionable that the history needs to re-organize the past and the future of urban atmosphere.

2 Problem

The conflicts always occur when the historical condition cannot afford the modern situation, which in fact reflects the demands of different roles work together in one spatial environment. Government as the center of power who always dominated the region renovation. In the view of Hongkou officers, used as a resource, the heritage promotes the city atmosphere and strengthen the culture context which built an integrated city image and by making a culture-oriented district, people would be self-confident during their daily life which also contribute to a better reputation of the government. As to developers, they are expected to get the permission from the officers to invest the new buildings and renovate the old projects which would benefit a lot in a short future. In addition, there may be more opportunities for small vendors and self-employed people. However, the public seems to be more complex. It is a paradox that the local residence and other visitors from different ages actually bears all the results behind the transformation without any words. The protected buildings are in poor living condition but with delicate facades, the demands of open space are restricted by limit land resource which used for endless high-rise buildings and commercial centers and no one has energy to fund public welfare. On one hand, the district is experiencing low vitality brought by the aging of the population, on the other hand, it continues to put reality living pressure on young people. The contradictions between three roles are opposite, but the relationship is nested. The problem is that the history has become the meeting point of their contradictions but not the solution. As the consequence, the diversity of culture seems to be equal with different claims mixed up.

Taking into further consideration, three roles correspond to three values and act on different spatial scales. Government represent the value of heritage, which contains the historical buildings, the protected streets or alleys, the city texture, the ecology resource and so on. Developers represent the value of consumption, including the functional buildings, offices, the commercial street, as well as small retail shop. The public represent the value of use which are the living condition, the open space, the infrastructure, the circulation of resource and so on. In spatial scale, streets, buildings, open space, ecology, micro intervention are the most common strategies using by designers.

Therefore, the design mainly focuses on road active, building renovation and extension design which reflect to the three.

Mapping the site, the street usually working for a tangible network serves the government to build an integrated image, especially the historical protected roads are related to each other. By creating different levels of recesses and protrusions, the infrastructure will be placed inside the nodes. Road renovations are not as profitable as buildings, the developers would like to invest the projects that can be economically returned in the short term. There are already two landmarks in the commercial street which highlight the connection part in the district from North to South and historical buildings providing potential places will come to next step. Urban furniture, open squares, time sharing space and other interventions should be considered as extension design for the public. Actually, the majority protected houses are still used as residence. For both local residents and other visitors, they need more fundamental open space promoted by the idle space, the pedestrian way, the waterfront and so on. Besides, the inner living space also works in an intangible way strengthening the urban diversity.

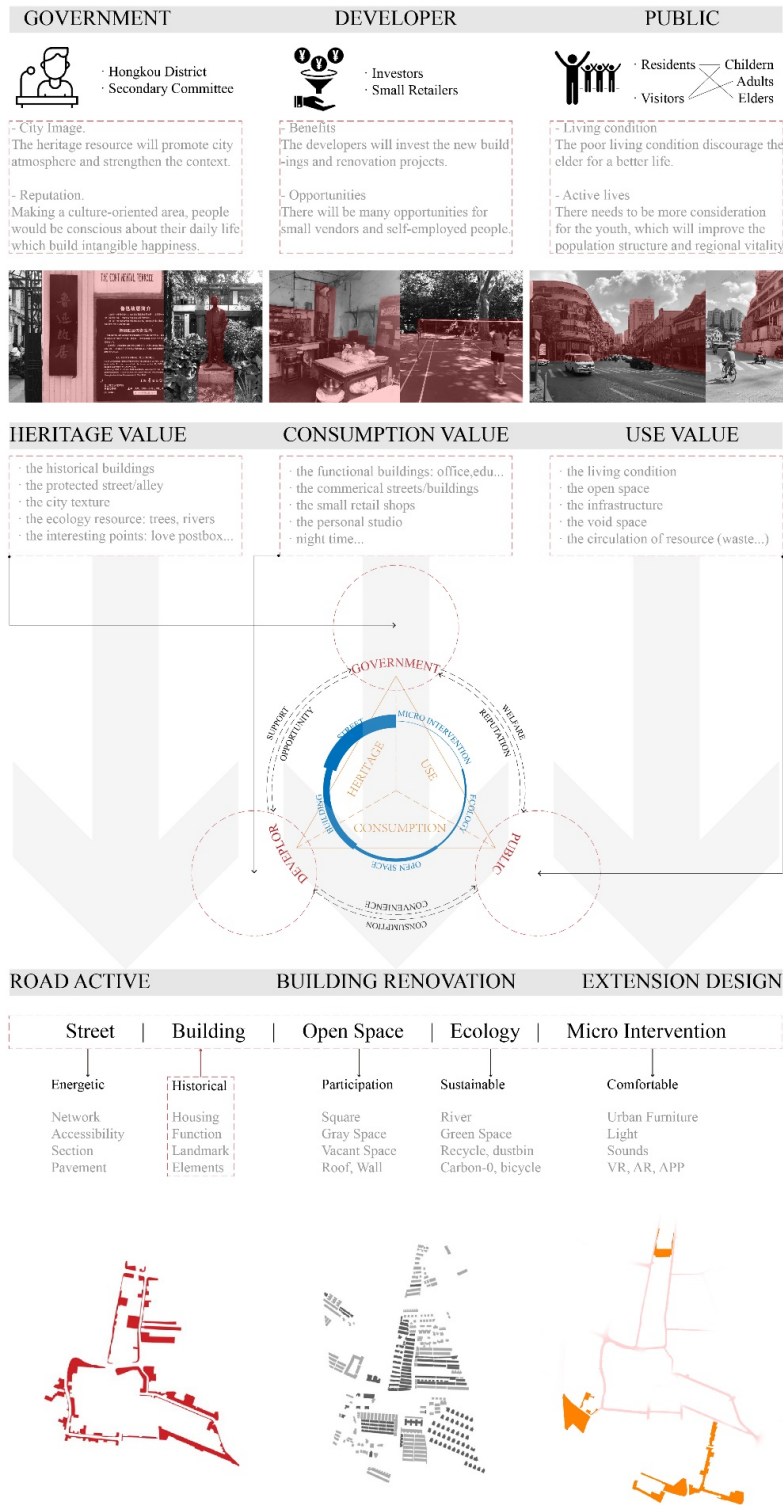


Figure 1. Problems analyzing in Hongkou Historical District. Source: Drawn by the author

3 Strategy

3.1 Timeline

Through basic research, we marked majority of the historical information in Shanyin district and analyzed them by time order, then divided them into three different parts and tried to make a guidance for people coming here:

Part A- Tracing for tradition memory (1920-1930). Shanyin Road, formerly known as Scott Road, was built in 1911 under the background of “International settlement of Shanghai”. It was because of its political status and culture environment that provided a stage for the special time as a protected area. Nearly in 1920, the district was established. Lu Xun (1881-1936), as one of the most famous critical thinkers in China, suffering from both political and social reasons at that time moved to Shanghai in 1927 (until 1936, after 9 years he died here). Therefore, we took it as an original point having an overview of the tradition life in Shanghai.

Part B- Discovering for turbulent age (1930-1945). During the WW II (1939-1945), China and Japan were in fierce conflicts. In 1930, Luxun made an important speech of “Opinions on the alliance of Left-wing Writers”, then he and other outstanding writers set up the League of Left-Wing Writers in Duolun Road, Shanghai. The organization was a revolutionary literary group under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. During 6 years, the Left-wing represented the most critical and deep thinking about society and politics and educated a group of revolutionary pioneers. In 1936, Luxun died and the alliance was dissolved. In 1937 the war erupted, lasting 8 years, China had trapped into continuously conflicts until Japan surrendered in 1945.

Part C- Experiencing for international culture (1945-1949). After WW II, it became more peaceful, stable and opening-up. By moving forward, people would go through an alley of Yuqing Fang, a typical district of Lilong under the new political environment. Then coming to Liyang District, there were 48 English townhouses where the international social stories happened. During that time, the society made a big step in both living conditions and the international status. Additionally, in 1943, the Road changed its name from “Dickens” to “Liyang”.

While people were walking/cycling along the whole route, whether following the order or just picking part of places they are interested in, the nodes will guide people into the situation of that age and have a generally thinking of “the old time”. Their moods will be up and down, their steps will be quick and slow, their memory will overlap on this historical district.

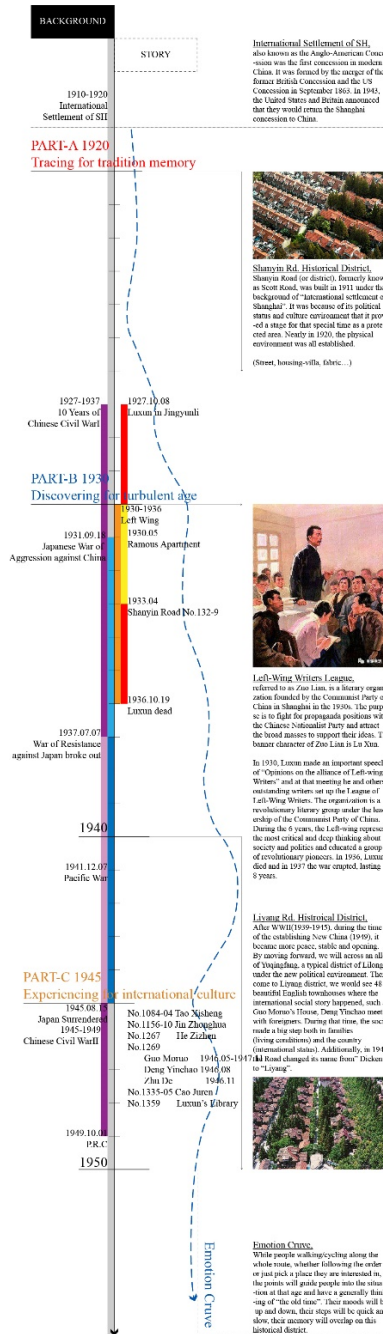


Figure 2. Timeline of Historical Resource. Source: Drawn by the author

3.2 Network

At spatial level, we created a network centered on history, which consists of three parts. The first is the cultural ring tracing the history in time order as mentioned above, which the government will dominate the entire process. The second is the functional linkage, which is composed of a part of North Sichuan Road and the historical protection roads in Shanghai, where are the mainly parts to indirectly update the city's infrastructure and multi-functional space. These building renovations would be potential opportunities for both investors and small retails not only during the day but also at nights. The last extension parts are new projects based on idle lands to provide opening living places for citizens, such as the square in Tian'ai Road and the abandoned parking place. Besides, the waterfront and the pedestrian way are supposed to become a harmonious space as walking streets for local residents to daily using.

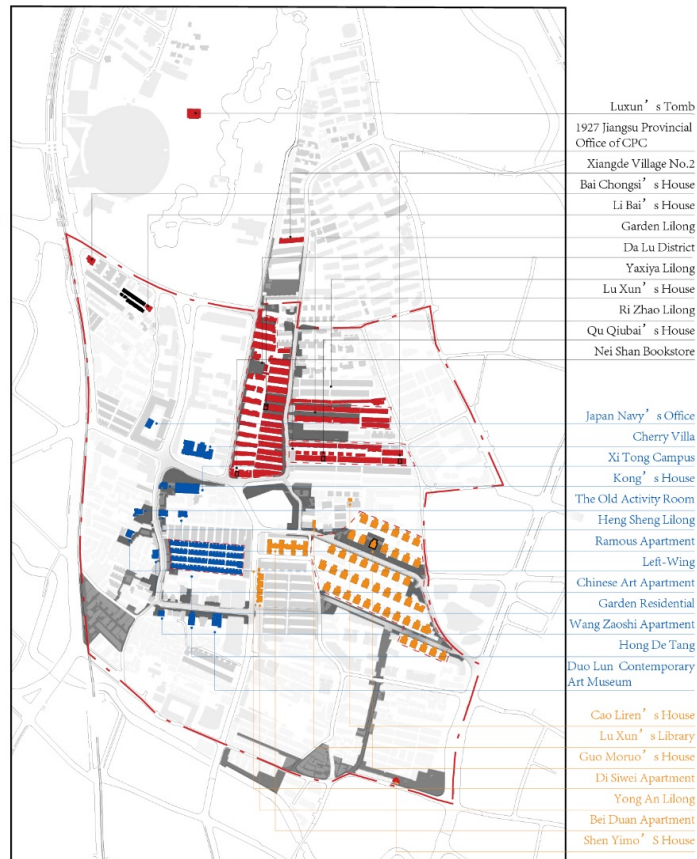


Figure 3. Historical Map of Hongkou District. Source: Drawn by the author



Figure 4. Master Planning of Hongkou District. Source: Drawn by the author team

3.3 Compare Project

In June of 2019, our team did an urban competition in Lychen, Germany, which also comes up with the culture line. However, the government already planned a network according to the historical "Pins Line" with orders. The difference of the project was the "Building Connection" in the second step of the whole planning.

From system thinking, we took six nodes to strengthen and designed two new buildings which were used as a scenario for constructing the network, rather than a fixed design. The quantity and scale needed to continuously adjust according to the detailed planning. Since in the long-term development, it was always necessary to constantly discuss the central issue of "who decides what for whom" which addressed by Turner, 1977. Therefore, we wish to emphasize that our progressive design concepts still have strong adjustability and resilience, and their realization is inseparable from the extensive participation and common design of Lychen residents.

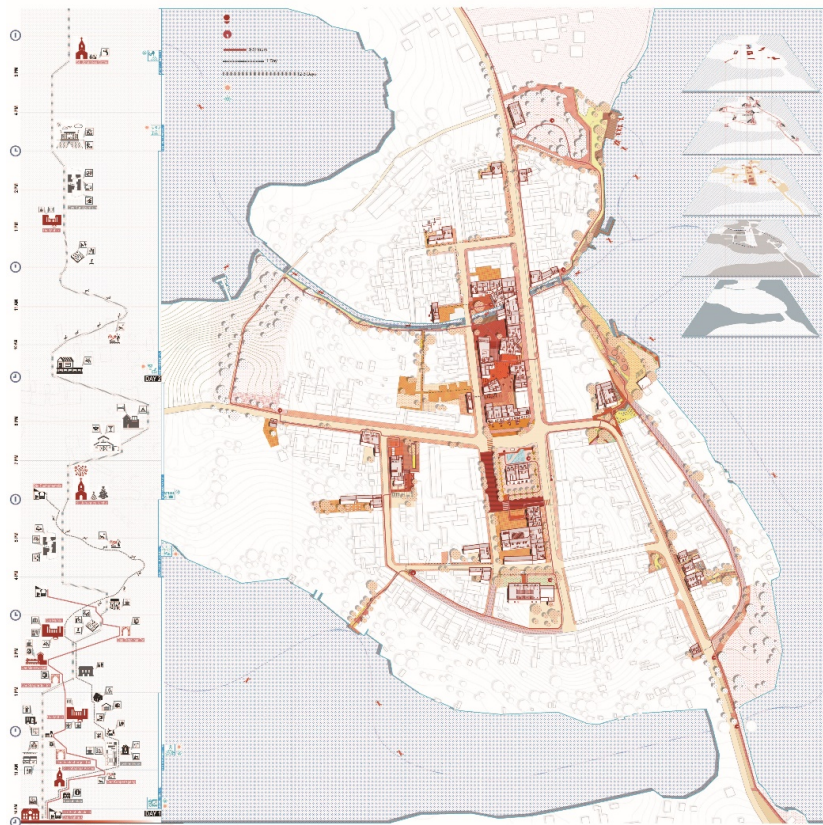


Figure 5. Master Planning of Lychen, Germany. Source: Drawn by the author team

4 Conclusion

Briefly, city is time accumulated and people are continuing to superimpose their own previous history. Space is usually as a physical carrier to present all these things in final. However, the spatial level is complex: housing (poor but protected), open space (scarce and limited), important nodes (strong but in-harmonious), districts (homogeneous but boring), texture/fabric (neat also chaos), everywhere from small points to big areas is filled with conflicts and helpless abilities. Consequently, as Alejandro Aravena (2014.10, TED) said, if there is any power in design, that's the power of synthesis and the more complex problems, the more needs for simplicity. Therefore, with the historical network as a test field, we need to expand the place where we make intersections, walking outside from our own circles and sharing together to evoke the inside lifestyle. This connection just works as a medium that is not only breaking different boundaries of self-protection but also alleviating the isolation status.

The diversity seems to work as an intangible connection which distinguishes itself from mixture. Taking the culture as an example, the timeline could be a clue to connect each block into an integrated atmosphere and create a historical city image for all the three roles, making themselves confident in conscious culture in the site, which could also serve as a guidance for strangers coming for at the first time. However, in the spatial level, it is still questionable that how the network displays in both architecture and urban scale. Nowadays, with the development of the technology, the immaterial space is taking more participation in common design and the data analysis makes it more ration for urban operation even the future forecasting. People won't be stuck by the roads, buildings, open space and even the urban resources, as Professor Li Zhenyu (2017) said we were toward to "Sharing Architecture", which claims as new forms of space and typology are emerging.

In a dynamic future, the diversity of culture would still be accumulated by both history and contemporary, the contents force the containers to be more affordable. In personal view, it seems that the revolution of technology changed ahead and brought a variety of cultures behind. However, there is usually a cultural breakthrough or suppression of other development in the existing multiple cultures or

overcome problems we stuck ourselves in a long time, then leading to another diversity starting from mixture of all the elements and forcing technology to be reformed as a carrier. Therefore, it takes more responsibilities for architects to respond in the middle of space level in both real society and virtual world.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.bahnstrecken.de/indexkarte.htm>
2. Entwicklungspotentialstudie Heilstätten (Memento des Originals vom 26. August 2014 im Internet Archive) der LEG des Landes Brandenburg (2000), abgerufen am 22. August 2014
3. Übernachtungen in Lychen (1912-1914, 1935[Jan.-Ost], 2014-2018). Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg-Tourismus im Land Brandenburg nach Gemeinden 2015-2018
4. Aktuelle Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Prognosen für Lychen, Landkreis Uckermark, Land Brandenburg, Deutschland. Bevölkerungsprognose Brandenburg bei Wikimedia Commons.
5. Neue Lychener Zeitung. Ausgabe 124/29. März 2007. Seite 6