

The Fusion of Cultural Heritage and Urban Development: Findings from the Huis 'Street, Xi'an

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Abstract: The urbanization process rose rapidly since the Reform and Opening up policy of China. With the increased construction land almost up to the limit, the key of urban planning and development turns to the stock construction land. To that end, the government is paying more attention to the fusion of historical cultural heritage and the development of city, especially metropolis. This paper is based on literature research, supplemented with the survey of local resident of Huis' Street to describe the advantage of fusion and the problems Xi'an are facing, in order to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the buildings on the Huis' Street, to finally comment on the present situation of cultural heritage and urban development in Xi'an.

1. Introduction

Since the Reform and Opening up of China in 1978, the urbanization rate of China rose rapidly, have already reach 50% in 2011, and the newest data shows that it achieved 64.7% in 2021. In the early 2000s, for the sake of increasing the data, the main methods are expanding the scale of city. But with the urban expansion gradually reach the limit, the key of urban development will turn from "increment" to "stock" and "decrement", which is turn the "urban expansion" to "urban regeneration"[1]. Different from easily expand the scale, urban regeneration could be subject to the interests of different stakeholders such as large enterprises or political groups, which means there will be greater resistance in the process[2]. There's a conclusion from the history of urban regeneration that the protection of historical buildings and urban texture are as important as eliminate the urban decay[3]. Therefore, a new key in urban development is to balance the demand of economic and the cultural feeling from citizens, to finally manifest the cultural characteristic of a city. Huis' street used to be inhabited by foreign envoys and businessmen who came to Xi'an for business. People in the square are descendants of these ancient immigrants

At the begin of Chinese urban regeneration, the government didn't pay much attention to the protection of cultural building. Some of them were removed, and the rest didn't get enough cultural publicity. Meanwhile, the lack of experience in urban planning led to the absence of public service facilities such as museums and the introduce of cultural heritage. As a result, though it still has the ornamental value, the cultural value of the building was intangibly destroyed. In particular, the lose of historical memory will eventually lead to the loss of characteristic of the city.

Under this circumstance, this paper will investigate the Huis' Street, Xi'an, combine the relevant literature to analyze the advantages and problems faced. As the ancient capital city of 13 dynasties of Chinese history, Xi'an have the most cultural heritage in China, which made it a perfect case to investigate. Then to explore how to make good use of cultural heritage in urban development, to finally reach the fusion of them.

2. Literature Review

As there is a major acknowledgement of the rapid changes that the world is facing, mainly through globalization and urbanization processes, concerns on the impacts on local culture and heritage are rising[4]. Because culture could contribute to “the better understanding of our world and its development under societal bases”[5]. There are also some believes that cultural heritage is a type of non-material culture advantage under the background of globalization as they can bring unique urban texture and tourism resources for the city[6].

The urban texture formed by historic buildings is an important part of a city’s culture. The historical information transmits through visual, memories and multiple ways. Buildings carries memories about city by its special form, and the collective memory of a city depends on the accumulate of historical buildings. Though the buildings from different times couldn’t form scaled complex, but they still can offer different urban experience for citizens and tourism[7].

To that end, how to avoid overcorrect and to balance the historical culture and the need of develop of the city is an important problem to be solved. As the protection is only the means, the end is to make a better life[8].

Li dates back to the history of the protection of historical buildings and roughly divided it into the French school represented by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, the English school represented by John Ruskin and William Morris, the Italian school represented by Luc Beltrami and Camillo Boito, and at last the Austrian school represented by Alois Riegl. Among them, he discussed that the French school overemphasized the “creative repair” led by designer’s personal preference, a lot of cultural relics was damaged during the late 1850s to 1920s as a matter of fact. In the meantime, the English school deeply influenced by Romanticism believes that the building has its own life cycle like human being, when they reach an end of its life, there shouldn’t be more protection but the celebrities that make them go deep into the hearts of people and redevelop on its original address[9].

The Italian school was accepted most widely around the world as they integrated lots of opinions, their representative opinion “Historic Restoration” and “Philological Restoration” was finally accepted and rewrite into the famous Athens Charter, and finally extend out to Venice Charter, Nairobi Recommendation, Washington Charter and Vienna Memorandum.

However, Chen take Notre Dame de Paris as an example[10], discussed that from the result, the Notre Dame that was criticized as “fake antiques” at the time of rebuild, but still got many people’s sigh with regret when it got accidentally burned. Thus, considerable that Viollet-le-Duc’s “creative repair” got lots of approval nowadays. Wu take BIKINI Berlin’s rebuild to argue Viollet-le-Duc’s opinion “a good way to protect the historical building is to find a new use for it”[11]. It also shows that its widely believe that theoretically the adaptive reuse is a better way for urban regeneration.[12]

Not only should inherit the urban texture and unique culture to avoid lack of characteristic, but there shouldn’t be make something new in order to be different. As a result, during the process, there should be a monitor and evaluation system for public and perfect the legislation to standard urban renewal [13].

The term of Urban Regeneration has experienced many changes, since the Urban Renewal after the World War II to Urban Redevelopment, Urban Renaissance, Urban Revitalization to the most commonly used today, Urban Regeneration, there’s no doubt that dates back to different times the different term has its own emphasis and historical meaning, but at the core they are solving the problem of how to revitalizing a decaying urban area [14].

In the discovery of urban renewal, the Western country had formed a “4R” mode rely on the cooperation between material, economy, environment and social policy. The 4R refers to Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Redevelopment and Reservation[15]. Combined it with the present situation with China, for the construction land reached the limit but the rate of urbanization still needs improvement, there were perspective that the protection and regeneration of city could cooperate with the Compact City theory, “jump into the old city to build the new”[16]. The Symbiosis Theory from biology was led into urban regeneration too. The theory believes that the city, building and human being should be integrated organically, focus on tradition, history, and regional culture, to reach the fusion of past, present and future[17].

Under the circumstance of limited land resource and the transformation of social economic, the significance of Urban Regeneration to Urban Development is undeniable. Within the process of Urban Regeneration, the trade-off of historical building is a major issue that cannot be bypassed. To most of the Chinese cities nowadays, there's still a long way to go on urban regeneration, there are more complicated market environment, interest pattern with multiple game and the ascending need of urban development. The urban planning should change the outdated way of thinking and strengthen the study with multidisciplinary and systematic. With the importance mentioned above, the paper continues by introducing the Huis' Street, Xi'an and the methods used in the case and benefits of having the fusion of cultural heritage and urban development.

3. Methods

3.1 Status

China is a multi-ethnic country, the minority ethnics in China have lived together over vast areas while each ethnic inhabit a region down the ages. Huis' Street is the largest and most representative regions where Huis ethnic live in compact communities in Xi'an. The locals call it "Huifang", its history dates to the late Tang Dynasty (AD 905-960). At the time of Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644), the Huis began to gather there, till the Qing Dynasty (AD 1636-1912), a pattern of "7 temples and 13 lanes" had formed. The Huis began to make a living by open restaurants since 1990s, when the government started to renovate the nearby historical heritage. After that, the government started to support the locals to combine the Xi'an local customs and Huis' customs to develop a food street in order to attract tourism.

At the same time, there's still a lot of historical heritage in Huis' Street nowadays, such as the Duchenghuang Temple, the Great Mosque at Huajue Alley and courtyards with style of Qing Dynasty. As the Huis' Street across the street from the very heart of Xi'an's Drum Tower, the combination of Han, the majority ethnic in China and Huis not only enlarged the resource of tourism, but also make food with Muslim feature like Paomo, cured mutton and beef, soup dumplings became a part of Xi'an. Therefore, a huge number of tourists filled Huis' Street, which brings remarkable economic returns and social benefits.

In addition, the convenient transportation nearby brings not only the tourism performance, but also better facilities for the locals. Centered with the Drum Tower and Bell Tower, Xi'an build a modern commercial street at East Street and an ethnic featured commercial pedestrian street at Huis' Street. As one of the most indispensable parts of Xi'an central commercial area, the Huis' Street has its unique meanings in the study of fusion of Cultural Heritage and Urban development.

3.2 Problems Faced

3.2.1 Position

Since the success of Wuzhen Ancient Town, the commercial ancient town in China gradually formed a routine: the so-called food street filled with food from all over the country, light show, souvenirs from wholesale markets. All the same pattern will eventually lead to the aesthetic fatigue. It seems Huis' Street had its own unique position, but shops with high revenue mostly have no connection with the street's culture such as snacks and toys.

Besides, as a tourist city, there are many significant cultural heritages in Xi'an such as Terra Cotta Warriors, Dayan Pagoda and Daming Palace of Tang dynasty. With the lack of publicity, tourists just recognize Huis' Street as a food street. Therefore, the position of Huis' Street still has room for improvement.

3.2.2 The lack of use in the facilities related to culture

Huis' Street is roughly divided into commercial area, living area and scenery area. It seems to have a clear pattern and worth viewing, but the truth is unsatisfactory. Seemingly the areas have kept the customs and publicize the Huis' culture, but in fact the tourist mostly visit and consume in the main street and rarely get into the alley to visit the museums and the mosques. The main reason is that the

space in the alley is limited, only a few would get into the alley to appreciate the culture. Besides, the main street shops are mainly halal food, ethnic clothing and jewelry and souvenirs, and the streetscape has its unique taste for the combination of Huis' and Han's. To that end, compared with narrow alley, tourists in a hurry prefer the main street.

3.2.3 Planning and design

How to integrate the cities own style with the modern city is always a key point in urban planning. Take Shamian Island in Guangzhou as example, the coffee shops and bookstores represent the modern element, but also well combined with local culture at the time of design. However, too much preference on modern style will lead to the disappearance of the core of Ancient Street and relatively decline the tourism of itself. Too incline to the tradition style will lead to the lack of function of the street, which take the street will disappear gradually and eventually abandoned by times.

3.2.4 Conflicts between locals and government

The entrance of living area always occupied by the shop, which cause the rise of potential safety risk. Eventually brings the dispute between the locals and the business. Blindly pursuing the commercial effects but forgetting the original function of the block, not only make the locals didn't enjoy the fruit of development, but also make them sacrifice the quality of life.

Besides, at the beginning of reconstruction, as the division of government is unclear, the conditions haven't reached an agreement. Even once there were the locals objected the develop of the block. Some of the resident still have no confidence in the local government until now.

3.3 Survey Strategy

A questionnaire survey was conducted in Huis's Street region. The personal information of respondents is shown in Tables 1 and Table 2.

The interviewee was chosen randomly in the living area and commercial area of Huis' Street, mostly the locals because they have more thoughts and feelings as they experienced the history and change of Huis' Street.

The contents of interview with the locals include age, profession, ethnicity, residential area and their personal thought about Huis' Street. The interviewees were divided into two groups because the Huis' Street starts develop in the late 1980s, so the interviewee born in 1970s experienced the pure living version of Huis' Street that the younger generation haven't seen.

Table 1. Information of the new generation.

Sort	Explain	No.	Gender	Age	Profession	Ethnicity	Residential area
The new generation: XS01-XS05	Locals born in the 1980s and 1990s	XS01	Male	90s	Homestay Boss	Han	Currently living in Huis' Street
		XS02	Male	90s	Student	Han	Childhood living in Huis' Street
		XS03	Male	80s	self-employed	Han	Currently living in Huis' Street
		XS04	Male	80s	State-owned enterprise employee	Hui	Currently living in Huis' Street
		XS05	Female	90s	bookstore Boss	Hui	Childhood living in Huis' Street

Table 2. Information of the old generation.

Sort	Explain	No.	Gender	Age	Profession	Ethnicity	Residential area
The old generation: LY01-LY04	Locals born in the 1970s	LY01	Male	70s	self-employed	Hui	Has been living in Huis' Street
		LY02	Male	70s	self-employed	Hui	Has been living in Huis' Street
		LY03	Male	70s	State-owned enterprise employee	Hui	Has been living in Huis' Street
		LY04	Female	70s	State-owned enterprise employee	Hui	Has been living in Huis' Street

4. Results

4.1 Findings from survey

According to the survey and questionnaire interview (see Table 1&2), the interviewees can be roughly divided into the new generation (XS) and the old generation (LY).

4.1.1 The old generation: The nostalgia for courtyard-style living spaces

Since the late 1980s, the government have made plans for the Huis' Street, successively developing tourism in Beiyuanmen, Xiyangshi Street, and Guangji Street, demolishing some old buildings and repair and protect the cultural heritage in the block. For the older generation, although the living environment has been greatly improved, the frequent and harmonious communication between neighbors before the reconstruction has become what they miss most about the cultural memory of the Huis' Street community. The courtyard-style buildings have also become the main carrier that carries the nostalgic feelings of the old generation of residents and become an important medium for narrating the cultural memory of the community.

On the one hand, the old generation has experienced the transformation process of Huis' Street from a purely residential area to a commercial street. To a certain extent, the tourism development has broken their original living environment and daily life space. "There were not many people, and it is very smooth (on the street). Now, after tourists come in, the walking becomes very hard, and it is very difficult to go home." (LY01), and through the confirmation that the Huis' Street is now a tourist space, expressing the fact that the Huis' Street used to be a single living space, "At that time (Huis' Street) was not a tourist attraction, but a pure residential area" (LY02) "The kind of yard living in with family affection, and the neighborhood is harmonious" (LY02) And under the contrasting emotions, take the building before the renovation and the daily life space to create an important symbol of the cultural memory of the ideal community, "I like the kind of yard when my grandma was there, and I like the kind of atmosphere, it was a Pure living environment" (LY03) "At that time, the human kindness was very strong and the relationship was harmonious" (LY03) "Now there is no family living together like it used to be" (LY02).

On the other hand, the old generation regards the old courtyard buildings as an important medium to carry the cultural memory of the community. "We all lived in courtyards when we were young, and every household had fruit trees. And the atmosphere is very good. We have experienced the kind of close neighbor relationship." (LY04).

At the same time, the old generation often reconstructs their own identity and community identity

with the cultural memory of the Huis' Street community by looking back at the space and time related to individual life experience, and attaches personal past daily life memory fragments to the architectural space. , "I remember when I was a child, everyone could drop round when eating, just get together, eat at home and then eat at neighbor's home, it's like that kind of alley feeling, and it's very close, everyone's door were all open the whole day" (LY03).

4.1.2 The new generation: take tourism landscape as an important memory space

Compared with the old generation's nostalgia for the courtyard-style living places on Huis' Street, the new generation of residents are unfamiliar with the neighborhood cultural memory described by the old generation. In the new generation's memory, the cultural memory of the Huis' Street created by the courtyard-style building space has been broken and missing, and replaced by the tourist landscape and space.

On the one hand, the constant change of the tourist landscape of Huis' Street is accompanied by the birth and growth of a new generation, which is the most distinctive cultural memory symbol in the new generation's cultural cognition of Huis' Street. "I remember when I was five or six years old, there were a lot of tourists on Muslim Street" (XS01) "Huis' Street is more like a commercial tourist attraction" (XS02) "Huis' Street is now a scenic spot" (XS03) "Now Mainly for tourism, it is not suitable for living. When I was a child, I used to play hide-and-seek on the street, but now there is basically no space" (XS04).

On the other hand, in the expression of memory space, the new generation use the back alleys in the non-tourist area as a space to express the cultural memory of Huis' Streets. "Occasionally going back to Huis' Street is to go to one or two restaurants, which I grew up with, and the location is really deep" (XS02) "Now when we come back to eat we will find the deep alley where is not tourist area" (XS05) "The real things in the street have to go to those back streets, where they are all traditional snacks, those small shops doesn't have good environment, but the taste is really good" (XS03). At the same time, the eating space of a specific street is used as an important symbol to distinguish the identities of "locals" and "tourists", "We locals do not eat in this pedestrian street (referring to main Commercial Street)" (XS03) "We live here but we never go to restaurants like Drum Tower Commercial Street" (XS04).

4.2 Solution

Through the summary and analysis of the survey results, various protection and restoration suggestions for the entire block are as follows:

4.2.1 Conservation Improvements

(1) Make the sign system more conspicuous to attract tourists to the alleys and museums. (2) Increase the construction of public infrastructure for both the tourists and locals. (3) Increase the area of public green space (4) Break the barriers between dwellings and museums, bring back the residents will make the protected buildings alive. To that end, museums will become dwellings again, which will bring the moods back to the building. At the same time, keep the courtyard open as always, the mood of life could always bring a lot of tourists.

4.2.2 Protection of traditional dwellings

The protection of traditional dwellings is not only the protection of traditional buildings themselves, but also the embodiment of traditional dwelling culture. Therefore, in the protection of traditional dwellings, it is more important to use them rationally and protect them as "living life". The best way to use traditional houses is to give full play to their original functions. In fact, most well-preserved traditional dwellings are in the form of a part of life instead of museums. Restore the traditional dwellings so that residents can live better in them not only makes the building itself vibrant, but also protects the traditional dwelling culture and the residents' own interests.

For traditional dwellings with display value or no longer having the original residential function, one or two places in the residential area can be selected to exhibit. For instance, make it a folk museum to combine historical dwellings with tourism.

4.2.3 The role and method of participation for residents and tourists

Resident and visitor participation refers to organizing local residents' efforts to improve living conditions through the use of raw materials and human resources. It is not limited to the direct participation of individuals in conservation activities, but generally refers to strengthening the effect of social network that operates from the bottom up and from the top down. In the early stages of conservation, residents and tourists were among the subjects of an extensive survey and analysis of the historic district. At the same time, their opinions and reflections sometimes bring unexpected inspiration and ideas to professionals; using residents and tourists as design resources has become the most respected and common practice standard for participatory conservation and renewal planning and design today. The knowledge and understanding of their communities and houses are far more in-depth and detailed than foreign professionals.

5. Discussion

The disappearance of places brings the extinction of memory, while the new space changes the new community memory. Due to the changes and differences of residential buildings and living spaces, the disappearance of courtyard buildings as memory storage media, the new generation cannot have a strong sense of common and nostalgia for the close neighborhood in the memory of the old generation. And the back alley that has not been developed by tourism has become an important memory space and cultural symbol for the new generation of residents to express their cultural memory of the Huis' Street, especially the old restaurants and food culture remaining in the back alley: shops selling steamed buns, Shengjia liangpi, dried beef, and hutong barbecue and so on. It can be seen that under the intervention of tourism and cultural landscape, the old restaurants in back streets have not only become the spatial carrier to store the memory of the new generation of residents to continue the traditional culture of The Huis' Street, but also serve as an important memory storage medium to strengthen the cultural identity of the new generation of residents to the Huis' Street.

Nowadays, in order to combine cultural heritage with daily life and urbanization, the protection of cultural heritage should connect to the surrounding environment and recognize in its entirety instead of heritage itself. This study analyzed the status and pros and cons of Huis' Street, sought to discover the strategy under the high-speed developing city's problems on historical heritage protection and the fusion with city. If the tangible cultural heritage is recognized as the urban texture, the intangible cultural heritage should be recognized as the pulse of the city. Only with the pulse beating, the city is able to develop and regeneration. The inherit of intangible cultural heritage emphasize the interact between the urban spaces and the historical culture, to that end, the core culture of a city should be fully realized by the locals and the related laws should be established. Based on that, the improved protection and related strategy should be raised in order to find the balance between the protection of cultural heritage and the urban development, to finally reach the fusion.

6. Conclusion

Although there's arguments and a lot of problems Huis' Street had faced in the early stage of urbanization, it's still a representative example of the fusion of cultural heritage and urban regeneration in China and has its own incomparable advantage and experiences. Based on Xi'an Huis' Street, this paper analyzes the relationship between cultural heritage and urban development, analyzes the current situation of Huis' Street, and points out the existing problems. The pursue of modernization and urbanization make the Huis' Street over-commercialization and lost its characteristics and its own taste as a living area. However, the situations are getting better with the progress in urban planning and further acknowledgment in cultural heritage. After a lot of effort on set things right, the advantage of fusion of cultural heritage and urban development gradually emerge. Through the development of Huis' Street, a conclusion could be raised that even though some mistake will be made, some wrong path will be went, the fusion of cultural heritage and urban development is still an undeniable trend with bright future.

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