

International Symposium

Australia and China Perspectives on Urban Regeneration and Rural Revitalization



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2022

October 13-14

Project Directors: Dr. Raffaele Pernice (UNSW Sydney), Dr. Bing Chen (XJTU), Dr. Luciano Cardellicchio (UNSW Sydney)

Organizers & Sponsors: UNSW Sydney - School of the Built Environment, XJTU - Design School, The National Foundation of Australia-China Relationship (NFACR).

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The symposium is organized as a 2-days international on-line event (webinar) by the School of Built Environment at The University at New South Wales (UNSW Sydney) and the Design School at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTU) in Suzhou, China.

The event is open to scholars, practitioners and academics from Australia, China and overseas. Invited speakers will present a series of the status of art of the urban regeneration and rural revitalization practices and models in Australia and China.

The symposium aims to provide a formal platform where participants can share their research, experience and up-to-date knowledge of urban regeneration and rural revitalization strategies, and where they can critically compare and outline the dynamic tension and multiple design, environmental and socio-economic challenges in Australia and China.

It is expected the symposium will be an occasion for fruitful exchange and effective dialogue on themes related to urban-rural destruction and regeneration techniques, the sustainable reconversion of the natural landscapes, eco-urban design approach that can cope with climate change, and issues related to environmental disruption and urban/rural economic and spatial regeneration.

ARCHITECTURE

SYNOPSIS

Despite several obvious social, political, economic, and cultural differences as national entities, legacy of their own history and cultural background, Australia and China share relevant analogies when it comes to other factors and general trends in terms of urbanization and potentiality for their future development. Both countries have vast lands full of natural resources and are set in the Asia Pacific region and recent decades have seen a clear communal pattern regarding urban growth models and planning strategies, with the state-driven efforts to privilege the expansion of urban centres over the more rural zones.

In terms of regional and urban planning, in Australia most urbanization have been absorbed by the few large metropolises in the state capitals in the East coast mainly set along the axis connecting Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, and Melbourne. In China the central government policies have reiterated the strategic importance of the East seaboard concentrating the economic power and growth engines in the sprawling megacities forming an integrated urban network stretching from Beijing/Tianjin, through Nanjing/Shanghai, and to Shenzhen-Hong Kong conurbations.

A pivotal shift is currently unfolding in both countries, and it focuses on the importance to revert the process of continuous growth of the large cities and move toward a progressive modernization of small cities and rural towns (China) and the regional centres (Australia), as alternative poles of immigration and new cores of economic growth and prosperity for the nation and the people.

In the last few years in Australia this process has been fuelled by an emerging new wave of movement of people driven by the pandemic and supported by ad-hoc national and local development policies. Large numbers of professionals and skilled labourers willing to leave behind the constraints of the urban life have been drawn to regional areas by the benefits of a healthier and more personally stratifying regional lifestyle in smaller towns.

In China, the main task of new-type urbanization has been transferred from 'new town development' to 'urban regeneration' since 2017, when the central government initiated the plan of 'ecological restoration, urban renaissance'. Following the national 'Strategic Plan on Rural Revitalization 2018-2022', the newly established Ministry of Natural Resource intends to facilitate the integrated development of urban and rural areas by considering the ecological capacity of a given area from a more comprehensive perspective.

Among other factors, the outbreak of COVID-19, and subsequent lockdowns and widespread remote working, also forced planners and designers in both Australia and China to rethink everything they do from a broader sense of sustainability and attention to long-term development based among others on environmental considerations and the use of strategies to promote a more effective socio-economic regeneration of the local communities.

EVENT INFO

Organizers and sponsors

UNSW Sydney – School of Built Environment / History and Theory of the Built Environment Research Cluster
XJTLU – Design School

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Morning Session: 10:30 am - 13:30 pm (Sydney local time)

Panel Chairs/Discussants: Raffaele & Luciano

Welcome and introduction

Whither the New Town in Contemporary Australian Planning?

Robert Freestone, Nicola Pullan

UNSW School of Built Environment

In contrast to many nations in the Asian realm, Australia has an ill-developed national urban policy without any transparent statement of a settlement policy. As a result, as the brief for this symposium articulated, 'most urbanization has been absorbed by the few large metropolises in the state capitals on the East coast mainly set along the axis connecting Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, and Melbourne'. This is in stark contrast to countries like China where significant responses have been extended on a mix of urban development strategies in which new planned settlements and city extensions have featured. This paper explores why this is the case, exploring a narrative of spatial planning sitting in-between urban regeneration and rural revitalization.

An important thread in the history of Australian urban planning until the late 20th century was enthusiasm for new towns to either populate regional areas, reduce metropolitan congestion, or both. In the 1970s the push for selective decentralisation culminated in a national growth centres program but the results made negligible impact on the structure or functioning of the Australian urban system. Latterly there is evidence of a Covid-accelerated outmigration for the capital cities to regional centres and national parliamentarians have demonstrated some interest in linking investment in high-speed rail to regional urban development. But the new town rhetoric is muted.

The reasons are sought in a set of interlocking factors including: national geography favouring coastal settlement in the temperate climatic zones, path dependency of inherited settlement patterns and in particular strong suburban living preferences, the failure of the one truly successful new city project – the national capital of Canberra - to sustain its appeal as a beacon of progressive urban development, and a planning history of unsuccessful or unconvincing past experiments and policy initiatives. Are there signs that this might turn around? Or do the words of William Alonso – who advised the Australian Government in the 1970s – still ring true, that new towns are 'almost irrelevant to our present urban problems'?

Sustainable Urban Strategies in China: A Case Study of Urban Redevelopment in Shanghai's Pudong and Taipingqiao Areas

Melis Isil Simsek

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

China was an isolated and closed feudal country for a long time. The 1980s became the years in which China started its international opening-up policy. This move later turned into a massive economic and social change. China's architecture also vigorously opened its arms to the new era. With this came the introduction of innovative architectural theory on a large scale. Famous foreign architects also took part in many projects in China. In the face of numerous conflicts, various architectural concepts, and ideological divisions due to differences of opinion, ideological fluctuations in the architectural environment led to the updating of the concepts in a very short time.

As complex and dynamic systems, urban areas are an outcome of many processes. The purpose of the design process is considered to improve the lives of people. But is this always the case? How does 'urban regeneration' affect the social and built environment? The purpose of this paper is to research in depth if the 'urban regeneration' has helped cities and the people living in them improve their lives or has the regeneration taken over the unique fabric of the urban area?

Since the 1990s, Shanghai has become the playground of spatial strategies and neoliberal policies, under the cap of globalization. Once a large swathes of farmland, Pudong has undergone a drastic change and turned into a modern, international metropolis. Taipingqiao, with a planned urban redevelopment project, tried to conserve the area's unique texture of traditional mid-19th century shikumen ("stone gate") houses on narrow alleys. Using Shanghai's Pudong and Taipingqiao urban redevelopment projects as a case study to look more closely at a dynamic city, this research plans to go into deep investigation of overlooked urban issues.

Key words: transition; urban redevelopment; urban innovation; cultural regeneration; Shanghai

The Evolution of Urbanization and Planning Practice: A Comparative Study between the UK and China

Tianjie Jiang, Bing Chen, Thomas Moore, John Sturzaker

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University & University of Liverpool & University of Hertfordshire

The goals of the National Plan for New-Type Urbanization (2014-2020) in China have been successfully achieved by 2020. This paper aims to provide a vision for urbanization in China in 2021-2035 and to shed insight into the key tasks to be completed in the field of planning practice. Using planning in the UK as a comparator, where urbanization has largely been completed and the challenge nowadays is more about de/reurbanization, this research compares the urbanization situation in China with the similar historic situation in the UK to draw value lessons on the evolution of policies, plans and programmes. Some enlightenment for China's planning in the future are found in this comparative study: from the perspective of local planning, policy-based planning with a more precise division of strategic contents and implementation contents are future development trends; from the perspective of regional planning, overall coordination is essential for spatial layout optimization, sustainable development and urban-rural integration; from the perspective of achieving planning objectives, the mechanism of assessment, monitoring, and post-project evaluation is vital, and the binding force of planning as the national policy and public participation in the planning process are crucial as well. It is expected that some discussions and findings from this research may inform the territorial and spatial planning in China and thereby benefit the urbanization in 2021-2035.

Second-chance cities? Understanding the economic relationship between primary and secondary cities in an Australian urban context

Hyung Min Kim & Anthony Kent

University of Melbourne & RMIT University

The Planning Institute of Australia has recently raised concerns that Australia lacks a national settlement strategy. A critical component of such a strategy would be a deeper understanding of the economic status of second-tier cities and their links to primary (or primate) cities. This chapter draws on and applies to the Australian settlement context the extensive theory and research emerging from China and Europe on polycentric urban regions and the related concepts of 'agglomeration shadow' – where a larger city outcompetes the small adjacent city – and 'borrowed size' – where the smaller city 'borrows' economic activity from elsewhere while avoiding diseconomies of scale. It then reports on the testing and application of these ideas through the spatial analysis of population and jobs. The findings will show the prevalence and trends of the focal sectors in the second-tier cities such as knowledge-intensive manufacturing, knowledge-intensive business service, healthcare, and renewable energy. The research finds that many of these cities are indeed 'second-chance cities' in two senses: they have emerged from a period of industrial decline to partly embrace new technology such as green manufacturing and, particularly in the context of the pandemic, have seen a significant increase in skilled population groups (potentially without job growth). The analysis will also reveal the need to pursue extensive firm level surveys as the next step in the research agenda and the chapter will conclude with a brief exposition of this approach.

Keywords: Second-tier cities; agglomeration shadows; borrowed size; Australian settlement strategy

-----Lunch Break 13:30 pm - 15:00 pm-----

Afternoon Session: 15:00 pm - 17:30 pm (Sydney local time)
Panel Chairs/Discussants Bing & Luciano

Rural revitalization or dystopia? Australia's intensive livestock production and processing landscapes

Joshua Zeunert

UNSW School of Built Environment

For well over half a century, Australia's livestock production environments have transitioned from peri-urban and rural landscapes regularly possessing pleasant countryside associations and scenes of family farms, to dystopic environments of intensive industrial production. Yet at the same time, intensive livestock production and processing sites have offered forms of viability and revitalization for rural regions, in a period otherwise characterized by declining agricultural communities and urbanization. Thus, contemporary intensive livestock operations represent multiple planning, design, environmental and socio-economic challenges in Australia.

Representative of old rural paradigms, and despite having around seventy years to optimize land use zonings, misplaced planning classifications still do not reflect the industrial nature of many livestock production environments, nor the neoliberalization of government and planning. Rather than classify intensive production facilities as agri-industrial zones, planning classifications usually continue to misplace livestock facilities with outdated notions of agriculture, instead of industrialized agribusiness, which leads to regular land use and proximity conflicts. In other words, Australia's planning systems are out of step with well-established intensive agribusiness approaches to livestock production.

Increasing neoliberalization over the past half century has seen shifting focus in rural revitalization strategies from their legacy in government, to that of the deferring to the 'free' market. Largely unencumbered by environmental and social limitations in increasingly distant and invisible landscapes, the corporatized agribusiness market has created dystopic places, with yet unquantified social and environmental costs.

Consequently, despite assisting rural revitalization and providing regional employment, intensive industrial livestock operations are problematic on multiple levels. They reinforce rural and urban social stratifications between places of production and consumption; they present psychologically challenging working environments with largely unacknowledged social costs; they are representative of the dynamic tension between producers and consumers and are flashpoints of concern for animal welfare; while environmental and physical health consequences of such unbalanced landscapes receive little attention or action. This paper unpacks and discusses these considerations, using spatial graphics and recent imagery to assist interpretation of the topic area.

Keywords: Australia; rural; agriculture; livestock; landscape

The Urbanization of Rural China and Regional Australia: Visions, Strategies and Urban Paradigms in the Context of Asia Pacific Region

Dan Gui, Raffaele Pernice

UNSW School of Built Environment

In the first decade of 21st Century urban population has risen to unprecedented levels. In 2011 China has seen for the first time the population living in cities overcoming those living in rural villages. At the same time larger portions of urban

Australians have moved from the crowded and less affordable large cities towards more spacious and livable regional towns.

The growth in number of new rural villages and new towns paired with the necessity to provide their residents with efficient infrastructures, public services and amenities to organize the urban life of their inhabitants has required enormous efforts and more accurate planning strategies and consistent urban forms able to sustain the life of renewed or brand-new cities in rural settings.

China has developed plans for more or less successful model new towns, very often inspired by broad principle of sustainability and eco-compatibility in terms of energy consumption, green spaces provision and building technology; in Australia a traditional trend to foster low density settlements and small sized communities with potential for further expansion has resulted in towns with evident limitations due to poor provision of transport connections with the main regional centres and limited provision of other basic economic and social facilities.

While outlining the major trends of the urban expansion in rural China and regional Australia, the paper intends to critically discuss how political, social and economic agendas have driven the urbanization process in the rural contexts and link these to the urban paradigms (urban forms and regional planning) which have been developed and implemented in the last 30 years.

Key words: Chinese new towns; urban expansion; Australia urbanization; urban paradigms

Country Park and Ecological Restoration in Shanghai's Rural Revitalization

Nannan Dong; Yongnan Wang; Zhiwei Liu

Tongji University

The revitalization of the countryside brings opportunities to enhance the ecological service capacity of countryside space in the metropolitan area. According to the 2035 Urban Master Plan, the country parks could help to combine ecological spaces and productive spaces in the countryside of Shanghai. Based on this, the integrated approach of ecological restoration in rural areas becomes one of the research focuses.

Recently, ecological restoration projects usually pay attention on achieving ecological goals through land-use control. In the implementation phase of each project, the engineering standards play a more important role, but lack of clear understanding of the master plan and the target of ecological restoration. Especially, in villages, an ecological restoration project always involves multiple departments, which makes it difficult to achieve an agreement from planning to designing.

Based on land use types, this study proposes an index system, which helps to evaluate the multiple demands for ecosystem services and engineering effectiveness in ecological restoration projects. This index system matches the supply and demand levels of both ecosystem service and engineering effectiveness. This evaluation system can be a practice and methodological exploration for ecological restoration projects. The tools for analysis, trading off and performance assessment are implemented in the varied scenarios based on the eco-system service, which helps to understand more about green infrastructures in rural areas.

Key words: countryside; ecological restoration; rural revitalization; Shanghai

Culture-led Revitalisation in Chinese Intermediary Cities. Challenges and Opportunities under the Pandemic

Giulio Verdini, Shengxi Xin

University of Westminster & University College London

In China, intermediary cities (here defined as small and medium sized cities, and generally associated with county-level cities) are adopting revitalisation initiatives to promote their cultural assets and boost local development. At the same time, since 2018 the country has launched the National Rural Revitalization strategy to address persisting urban-rural disparities and marginalization, by strengthening the linkages between urban and rural areas. This policy innovation has resulted in a number of promising culture-led strategies for rural regeneration, frequently found in intermediary cities, which have, nevertheless, faced problems of implementation due to their structural weaknesses, a narrow interpretation of development in pure economic terms; and the new challenges imposed by the COVID pandemic.

The aim of this paper is to unveil the institutional and socio-economic constraints of a typical Chinese intermediary city, namely Longchang in Sichuan, in light of the overall problems faced by intermediary cities in general in China. In particular, three examples are used to discuss the challenges and opportunities to apply a culture-led approach towards resilient rural-urban revitalisation. These examples are: the Archway tourism zone of Longchang, located in the inner-city area, and Yunding town, and Yujian town, located in rural areas.

Taken together these cases reveals that limited fiscal autonomy, lack of well-trained officials, and lack of holistic and sustainable urban planning and design have led to economic stagnation, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. In particular, the tourism sector has been affected, and the sudden reduction of revenues have forced local authorities to rethink the existing fragile vision of cultural strategies beyond the sole maximisation of short term economic profits. Moreover, the case shows that the county has performed differently in different areas. When grassroots societal sectors are active, with the presence of engaged local communities and enterprises, there is the potential to stimulate endogenous, diverse and potentially more resilient culture-led rural revitalisation approaches, even in presence of external stresses.

Morning Session: 11:00 am - 13:30 pm (Sydney local time)

Panel Chairs/Discussants: Bing & Raffaele

Impact Factors of Authenticity Experience and Renewal Strategies of Sojourn Space in Historic District Based on Grounded Theory: A case study of Daxinqiao Lane in Suzhou Pingjiang Road

Leilei Sun, Zehua Xu, Liang Zhang

Soochow University & Suzhou Research Institute of Chinese Historical and Cultural Cities

Under the development of heritage tourism in the era of big data, taking sojourn space in historic district as the object, the article explores the impact factors of authenticity experience from tourists' view, which carried out from the perspective of the Constructivism Authenticity Theory, emphasizing a perceived authenticity and integration of subjective and objective aspects. Four main categories, architectural characteristics, commercial activities, traditional culture and environmental atmosphere, have been summarized by analyzing online comments through three-level coding based on the Grounded Theory. On this basis, the research constructed a conceptual model including explicit and implicit elements, as well as presented the renewal strategies for sojourn space in historic district, including reconstruction of space, overlapping of function, inheritance of context and collage of traditional scenarios. Finally, some specific design proposals were put forward, taking Daxinqiao Lane in Suzhou Pingjiang Historic District as an example. The article integrates theoretical approaches and strategies of transformation for historical area, providing new design philosophy for local and sustainable iterative regeneration of built environment in future variability reuse.

Key words: historic district; sojourn space; authenticity experience; renewal strategy; Grounded Theory

Transportation transformation towards urban renaissance: A case study in Hangzhou

Xiaohe Zhang, Xia Hua, Haixiao Pan

Tongji University

Transportation plays a critical role in supporting urban renaissance, instead of small-scale tactical treatments, which requires comprehensive and integrated spatial renewal and functional improvement at multiple levels. This paper shows how the advancement of urban transportation transformation can effectively support the recent urban regeneration project promoted by the city of Hangzhou, who has been eagerly improving its urban performance and quality in the face of the upcoming 2022 Asian Games.

Under the key concepts of "promotion, integration, transformation and inheritance", this paper raised seven issues to be solved in the regeneration project, covering multiple dimensions related to regional transport performance, travel behaviors, local public service, public space, spatial fragmentation by transportation facilities, urban resilience, and cultural landscape. Correspondingly, seven strategies have been proposed, involving a variety of solutions with the advancement of urban transport service at the city activity centers. Specifically, these solutions include transforming transport hubs, upgrading public service and public space, refining the last mile accessibility and land development around transit stations, space sewing, enhancing transport resilience, improving cultural-historical landscape.

Based on the above strategies, the Wulin Road area adjacent to the West Lake in Hangzhou, was proposed as a pilot project in the first round of urban regeneration. The proposal focuses on the improvement of transportation system in the area, which will play as a catalyst, push the revitalization of the whole area, eventually achieve the goal of urban regeneration in the long run with the co-benefits in a vibrant urban district rich in historical, cultural and commercial activities.

Key words: urban renaissance, urban transport, case study, China

Former industrial waterfronts as laboratories for sustainable urban planning: Comparing recent efforts in Shanghai with cases in New York and Rotterdam

Harry den Hartog

Tongji University

The subtitle of Shanghai's latest Master Plan is "Striving for an Excellent Global City". According to this master plan Shanghai wants to compete, and perhaps even surpass other global cities such as New York, London, Paris, Singapore, and Tokyo in terms of economy, image, and quality of life. One of the key projects to realize this goal is the ambitious transformation of no less than 120(!) kilometres of waterfront. Almost half of this extreme large length has already been realized today in a period of less than five years. How did Shanghai manage this, while it took other world ports as New York and Rotterdam more than a decade to realize much shorter tracks? What are the achieved qualities and mutual lessons, regarding quality of public space, ecology, economic and spatial impact, flood defence, and preservation of industrial heritage? The urban pattern and functionalities in these three port city cases (Shanghai - China, Rotterdam - Europe, New York - North America) show many similarities in their physical appearance, but also many differences (water management, governance, governance, historical context, etc.). Are there mutual lessons, and how can we learn from the different approaches in these dissimilar social-cultural and economic contexts?

This paper will evaluate three cases, one in each above-mentioned port cities Shanghai, Rotterdam, and New York, and focus on experimentation and innovation, and sustainable development aspects. It will show how planning ambitions are translated into realities on the ground during the planning and implementation process. This research will especially focus on the different conditions that influence implementation results and tries to extract mutual lessons for these three cases and others.

Study on the Linkage Mechanism of the Integration of Planning, Construction, Management and Service of Indemnificatory Rental Housing in Shanghai

Boshen Wu

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Indemnificatory rental housing is a new type of social housing proposed by China government in 2020. It has become the most important part of China's 14th Five-Year Plan in urban housing construction. It is used to protect the living rights and interests of Chinese young people and grass-roots workers. This is an important measure for China to promote urban development and improve the indemnificatory housing system. Shanghai has always been a pioneer in China's urban development. The construction of indemnificatory rental housing has been the focus of Shanghai's future urban planning. The establishment of a complete management mechanism of indemnificatory rental housing is the need for Shanghai to ensure its urban development. In addition, it can also provide reference for the construction of indemnificatory rental housing in other cities. From the perspective of the whole life cycle, this paper sorts out and analyzes the main problems existing in the planning, construction, management and service of indemnificatory rental housing construction in Shanghai, studies the mature indemnificatory housing management system at home and abroad, learns the management modes and methods of these countries. On the basis of research of the actual situation and operation mechanism of relevant management departments of Shanghai government, we will study the indigenous model of Shanghai's indemnificatory rental housing management system. We hope to explore an integrated linkage mechanism which suitable for Shanghai's indemnificatory rental housing construction, and studies the implementable policy tools of Shanghai's indemnificatory rental housing system from the four aspects of planning, construction, management and service at the level of government management system.

Key words: Indemnificatory Rental Housing, City Planning, Shanghai, Integrated Linkage Mechanism

-----Lunch Break 13:30 pm - 15:00 pm-----

Afternoon Session: 15:00 pm - 18:00 pm (Sydney local time)

Panel Chairs/Discussants: Raffaele, Bing & Luciano

ULTRA SQUARE – Corbusier symbolism in design through the lens of El Lissitzky

Sanaz Hosseinabadi

UNSW School of Built Environment

The spirit of a city is shaped by the form of its buildings. How we experience the milieu has become a significant concern in architectural theory and practice. After the World Wars, during the industrial revolution and the period of modernization in society the field of art and architecture become the prime influential aspect in changing what historically thought to be a norm. The modernist thinkers strive to picture 'universal truth' through their 'ultra spatial creation'. The application and transformation of a primarily element such as pure geometrical forms, specifically pure square will be examined in this paper to demonstrate this revolution in representation. The significant of the two-dimensional square in the work of constructivist thinker, El Lissitzky and the precursory present of the three-dimensional cube in the work of modernist advocate, Le Corbusier elucidate something beyond the rigidity of the rectilinear, 90° angle composition of these structures.

The most influential factors in during 1920 and 1950 were major political and social changes. War, and the industrial revolution, provoked diverse doctrines such as Nihilism and Anomie. During the progression of ideas associated with modernity, emphasis was placed on the belief that mechanisation was the only way to achieve a better life—socially or individually. However the relationship between creativity and necessity neglected by individual desires. To demonstrate this claim, the two main examples that analysed as part of this paper are National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, 1959, by Le Corbusier, and El Lissitzky illustration for "Victory over the Sun" titled Sentry 1923. The underpinning philosophy of Nietzsche in relation to these two examples argument on how architectural form evolved beyond this crisis of modernity. The definition of beauty, meaning and symbolism took a different turn, based on the advancements in technology and science. As a result of these changes, the universe for modern man became increasingly disconnected from what previously believed to be a necessity.

Key words: Nihilism; regeneration; architecture; geometry; symbolism

A review of research on thermal comfort in rural houses in China

Jinhao Zhang, Jun Lu, Wu Deng, Paolo Beccarelli

The University of Nottingham Ningbo China & The University of Nottingham

Scholars have done much research on indoor thermal comfort in recent years. However, due to the uneven economic development between rural and urban areas, the rural residential environment has always lagged behind the urban areas. Research on thermal comfort in rural areas has not received much attention. As a result of economic and quality of life improvements, residents' demand for thermal comfort in their living environment has gradually increased in the rural areas. This paper reviews 91 existing field research papers on thermal comfort in rural dwellings, reviews the research in different climatic zones, and summarises the current status and shortcomings of research to provide helpful information for future research.

Keywords: rural houses; thermal comfort; thermal comfort modelling

Soundscape preferences of different companion types in urban public spaces—the cases in Suzhou, China

Jingwen Cao, Jian Kang

University of Sheffield & University of College London

Urban public spaces gradually emerged alongside China's modernization process and are now becoming rather common. Urban public spaces are designed to encourage gatherings and foster social interactions of different companion groups. Acoustic environment provides the necessary conditions for people's 'listening' and 'speaking', making the soundscape studies important for the design and usage of urban public spaces. In the process of urban regeneration, some of the earlier urban public spaces are facing the demands of renewal and improvement due to their outdated design and aged facilities, in order to suit the new era of urban development. The soundscape of these spaces also face new challenges in this process. This study investigated the companion types, their patterns of use, in relation to the soundscape preferences of two urban public spaces in Suzhou—Guanqian Squares and Central Park Square, using observation and questionnaire methods. It was found that single people tended to stay in the marginal and quiet areas, preferring privacy and peaceful sound types; while accompanied people were distributed evenly in the square and paid more attention to talking and children sounds, preferring safe and social sound types, and this tendency was more significant in the closer companion types. The square dance groups observed in Central Park Square brought with massive noise and interfered with the normal use of the square. This study highlights the importance of designing diverse soundscapes for different companion types in urban public spaces and proposes a new direction for soundscapes studies, and in turn, to urban regeneration.

The Role of Water bodies in the Placemaking of Kunming City, Southwest China

Yun Gao, Adrian Pitts

University of Huddersfield

This study explores the changes in the relationship between the built and natural landscapes in Kunming since it was set-up as a military settlement during the Han dynasty (202 BCE – 220 AD). Over the period since this inception, Kunming has grown to be a large city and provincial capital with an urban area population of about 6 million inhabitants.

Although Kunming is landlocked in the centre of the Province of Yunnan, water has nevertheless played an important role in its development. The evolution of the local landscape has been dominated as much by lakes, canals and rivers (that also had important influence on the urban spaces), as by government buildings, temples, and other large-scale construction activity.

Historical records concerning decisions made on the changes to the water bodies and transformation in the local landscape have been accessed and analysed to establish how these sought to assign meanings to those sites during the sequence of Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (1279AD-1912AD). The records demonstrate that the lakes, rivers and man-made canals transformed the cityscape over a long period of time. Analysis of the records further identifies the interaction between the contrasting powers of nature and urbanism, and the associated transformation of landscape as responses to political change.

This study explains how the cityscape was initially dominated by military concerns and agriculture. In a later stage, the urban spaces had been transformed by bringing Confucianism education to the city and links to important social events. Newly developing commercial activities occurring through the Ming and Qing dynasties also affected the traditional means of water management.

A contemporary questionnaire has been carried out of 150 local residents' opinions about the benefits of living or working near to water. This concludes that water bodies remain of high importance to those residents and also reinforce the needs for health and well-being issues to be considered in urban development.

This study establishes how the traditional meanings of water in the city, as manifested within the particular urban grain of Kunming, still inform contemporary urban practices.

Key words: water; urban development; Kunming; history; resident survey

Wrap up and Conclusive Remarks

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Cao Jingwen graduated from School of Architecture, University of Sheffield. Her major research interests were focused on the perceptual aspect of sounds, soundscape evaluations and socially constructed soundscape. She has published two articles on international journals:

Cao, J., & Kang, J. (2019). Social relationships and patterns of use in urban public spaces in China and the United Kingdom. *Cities*, 93, 188–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2019.05.003>

Cao, J., & Kang, J. (2021). The influence of companion factors on soundscape evaluations in urban public spaces. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 69, 102860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2021.102860>

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Since 2008, he has been based in Shanghai where he has done a lot of research and design, especially on new town developments, on urban-rural transitions, and on waterfronts transformation. In 2010 the results of another research on Chinese new towns were published, *Shanghai New Towns - Searching for community and identity in a sprawling metropolis* (010 Publishers) and awarded with 'Best Dutch Book Design 2010', an award for intercultural exchange by the 'Shanghai Culture Fund'.

Since that moment studio Urban Language continued to involve more and more in international research and design exchanges focused on China's urban and rural development. Since 2012, Harry den Hartog has been a faculty member at Tongji University in Shanghai, College of Architecture and

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