The Perception of Social and Physical Change, Especially Residential Environment, Relating to Urban Renewal—A Case in Suzhou, China

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Introduction

Suzhou, China is an ancient city of over two thousand years. Historically, Suzhou enjoyed high reputations as a land of fish and rice, the home of silk, a city of gardens, and Venice in the East. It has long been one of the most sought after places to live in China. By 2000, the municipality of Suzhou had a population of 5.7 million and covered a metropolitan area of 8,488 square kilometers. With remarkable and unexpected speed, Suzhou evolved during the 1990s from a medium-sized city into a metropolitan area that ranks fifth among all Chinese metros in terms of GDP. The average income of Suzhou residents more than tripled between 1990 and 1996, for example. Even after adjusting for inflation, the income growth rate for the period was still over 33 percent. Indeed, three
years in a row between 1994 and 1996, nearly three million square meters were added each year to the housing stock (Di, 2000). It is fair to characterize the grand change in Suzhou since mid 1990s as nothing but urban renewal.

In addition to its long history and modernization through recent urban renewal, Suzhou is a city with high reputation regarding its cultural element in daily life. Its food, art, and music have long been the envy of residents of other Chinese cities. Many great writers, both ancient and modern, have their roots in Suzhou. Indeed, quite uniquely in China, the city has managed to publish its own literary magazine since 1988, and maintained an online version (since 2001). Edited by a celebrated local writer with national and international fame, Suzhou Magazine enjoys a great reputation among literary readers in China. Its circulation went up from 4,000 in 1988 to nearly 10,000 by 1997 (Suzhou Magazine, 1997). Many columns and articles in the magazine reveal both editor’s and contributors’ perceptions of social and physical change, especially that of the residential environment, relating to both its long history and recent urban renewal.

This paper is a case study, using the web version of Suzhou Magazine since 2001 to report and analyze the perceptions of social and physical change in Suzhou. What the editor of the magazine has envisioned and succeeded to achieve is clearly based on the mental geography of Suzhou, China. Contributors live all over China and even abroad, but Suzhou is definitely their home as they write about it, and such a home could be current, historical, or virtual. Residential environments of Suzhou are often the focus of their writings.
The rest of this paper is structured as followed: the Suzhou metro, the *Suzhou Magazine*, contributors’ perceptions of social and physical changes, residential environment and urban renewal, homes and beyond, and conclusions.

**The Suzhou Metro**

Suzhou is an ancient Chinese city. Situated in the hub of the Yangze River Delta and built as early as 514 B.C. (Di, 2000), the city of Suzhou is famous for its history and rich cultural heritage. The tradition of city planning in Suzhou goes back at least 770 years to the Southern Song Dynasty. Figure 1 shows a city map of Suzhou made in 1229, probably the earliest city map in the world with such a scale of detail. Unlike other ancient cities in China and worldwide, Suzhou is a city that physically sits in the same place today as it did over two thousand years ago (Yi, 2004).
In its current jurisdiction, the municipality of Suzhou consists of six districts of urban areas and six county-level towns with rural areas. The central city occupies merely 392 square kilometers, with a population of 1.1 million at the end of the 1990s. Only about 80 kilometers west of Shanghai, Suzhou is easily accessible by various forms of transportation (see Fig. 2) (Di, 2000).
Like all other Chinese cities, Suzhou has experienced dramatic social, political and economic change during the past 5 to 6 decades. The founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 stabilized the economy and the society for a while, but major policy errors led to a social upheaval in the mid-1960s (the “Cultural Revolution”) with destructive effects throughout the 1970s. Toward the end of the 1970s, the country set out on a course of economic and social reform that has already produced substantial improvement in the quality of life affecting over a billion people.
Suzhou has undergone tremendous changes, as did China as a whole. Since the mid 1990s, it has been fundamentally transformed into a modern metropolis. During this period, the municipal government upgraded its master plan in city planning with the help of internationally celebrated architect, I. M. Pei, a native of Suzhou. The old city districts have been more or less protected while two new industrial districts have been added on both sides, according to the plan that has been appropriately given the name of “One Body, Two Wings.” Also, Peter Rowe, a former Dean of Harvard University Graduate School of Design, brought in students from his class for a design workshop and had them complete their fieldwork in Suzhou. The result of their work is a book filled with practical suggestions to improve Suzhou’s urban design, and the city benefited from such academic work by a well-established academic institution.

In fact, as a place, Suzhou proudly claims many celebrated scholars as its native born or offspring. During the last dynasty in China, emperors nominated 114 scholars as the “No. 1 Scholar of the Year,” and a quarter of them came from Suzhou (Wang and Jiang, 2005). When the Nobel Prize winner of Physics in 1997, Mr. Zhu, came to visit the tombs of his grandparents in Suzhou in 2001, he also visited the tomb of his former professor, Mr. Wu, another scientist in physics with world renown (Sung, 2001). As so many celebrated scholars have roots in Suzhou, it is no wonder that the Suzhou Magazine can be easily filled with fascinating stories about local celebrities, especially scholars.

**The Suzhou Magazine**

As a literary magazine, *Suzhou Magazine* was a latecomer in China. Since China’s reform in the late 1970s, all provinces as well as large metros like Beijing and
Shanghai had published their own literary journals during early 1980s. Most of them were reestablishments of old magazines that had existed before the “Cultural Revolution” and some were new journals responding to great demands at the time. Ironically, opposite to what its name may indicate, the “Cultural Revolution” was actually a period when cultural products were rare and lacked of variety; demand for them mushroomed during the aftermath.

Among all literary journals in China, *Suzhou Magazine* is the only one perhaps that could afford to cover its hometown exclusively. In other literary journals in China, writers all over the country contributed by writing anything they wanted to cover, while in *Suzhou Magazine*, contributors can only write about Suzhou. This exclusiveness is possible because Suzhou has a long history with a splendid subculture of very special food, arts, and music. An old Chinese saying refers living in Suzhou as living in heaven.

First published in 1988, *Suzhou Magazine* enlarged its circulation throughout the 1990s while the nation experienced an economic boom and the sweeping materialism made demands for literary journals shrink. All literary magazines had financial hard times and many stopped publishing. *Suzhou Magazine* has survived largely due to its devotion to cover Suzhou alone. Such a local focus helps attract readers who feel proud about Suzhou and view it as home in mental geography. Local residents may feel at home while reading about their own town, while outsiders may enjoy a glimpse of a culture that has a good reputation. Readership of poems, short stories, and essays in general has been shrinking, but interest in a special locality like Suzhou remains strong. As urban renewal modernizes this ancient city, more people want to hear about its history and learn more about this place.
It is fair to say that *Suzhou Magazine* benefits from the great vision held by its chief editor, Lu Wenfu, a local writer with global fame. Having established himself during the early 1980s as a novelist and short story writer with a unique humorous prose style, Mr. Lu enjoyed popularity both among a large readership and within the small literary circle. His idea of publishing a journal devoted to local interest helped its survival during the low tide of demand for literary works in general.

As summarized by one of its contributors, *Suzhou Magazine* is rooted in Suzhou but benefits from its special characteristic of having varieties in contents, style and coverage (Jing, 2005). Coincidentally, in Chinese language, the word “magazine” literally means a “journal of varieties,” consisting of two Chinese characters “Za” (variety) and “Zhi” (journal). Contributors include all sorts of people, such as someone age102 (Shen, 2005), a Chinese person living in Japan (Xu, 2001), and a French student in China (Meng, 2004).

Each issue of *Suzhou Magazine* has several columns. Although their names change all the time, major columns remain for years. Supported by the city’s long history, each issue of the magazine has several columns devoting to stories about the ancient city, and these columns often appear under slightly different names. Each issue, however, begins with a column called “Today’s Suzhou.” Another column covers local celebrities both ancient and contemporary. One extension or alternative of this column periodically appearing under a different name is devoted to scholars who have or had roots in Suzhou and classics relating to the city. The table of contents also includes a column for products of fine arts, including cover arts in each issue. Another column is devoted to creative writings (poems, essays, and short stories). Yet another one consists of memoirs and
glimpses by old and new residents. One column discusses local literature, theatre, and fine arts, and several columns host essays on old sayings, rumors, anecdotes, and stories about old habits, places, and people in Suzhou in history. Sometimes, an article may appear in a column whereas another column seems to be a better place to host the article. Articles in many columns reveal contributors’ perceptions of social and physical changes in history and renewal. Most articles have accompanying photos or paintings to help with visual impressions (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Selected Photos from *Suzhou Magazine*
Currently, *Suzhou Magazine* has a web version with issues dating back to 2001, serving readers anywhere in the world with internet access. The journal publishes every two months, but there were only three issues in 2002 available online. For 2005, only 3 issues are available so far. Therefore, there are altogether 24 issues available online and this paper surveys them all and uses them as the data source for a case study. Also, not all articles in the magazine are available online and usually only one or two articles from each column are accessible from the web in full text version.

**Contributors’ Perceptions of Social and Physical Changes**

Given the literary nature of the *Suzhou Magazine*, it is no surprise that many contributors wrote about Suzhou in a manner of memoir, recalling their childhood, youth, and adulthood living or traveling in Suzhou, and such writings often carry a nostalgic tone. Because of their age, many authors were writing about times over fifty years ago, for example, a lady over 70 recalling her childhood in Suzhou (Ai, 2005). Such writings generally do not reveal much about authors’ attitudes regarding the changes that occurred during the recent urban renewal. On the other hand, many articles are in a somewhat journalistic style, directly reporting what has happened to a certain location. For example, several articles are about a place called “Shantang,” a main street in Suzhou about 3,500 meters long or of seven Li, a Chinese measure that is half a kilometer.

Two articles are particularly worth mentioning here. The first is one directly discussing the old vs. new “Shantang” regarding the rehab project started on September 30, 2004 (Gu, 2005). It points out that “Shantang” has a history of about 1,200 years. It also describes how this place was already full of commerce and retail over hundreds of
years ago. The official goal of the rehab project is to make the place “a miniature of Old Suzhou and a window of Wu Culture,” a subculture in China based in Suzhou and Hangzhou, two most beautiful ancient cities in China. One particular part of this project is to rehab an old residence (the Hall of Yuhan) owned by a cabinet member in the Ming Dynasty who came from Suzhou. When the project was done, even I. M. Pei was impressed.

To portray the changes after the rehab of “Shantang,” the author told two stories. One is about an old illiterate lady who has been living on “Shantang” Street since the 1940s. Seeing the changes after rehab she couldn’t control her excitement and says: the change is so great that even me as an old resident here cannot recognize the place. To her, the change is all for the better. In old days, residents did not have bathrooms and had to use public restrooms and/or used special wooden barrels for the task and had to clean them in the river along the street. So it is more convenient now and the river is much cleaner. The second story is about an educated man who has been living elsewhere since childhood and felt quite at home when he visited the rehabbed “Shantang” at a moonlit night during the 28th World Heritage Convention held in Suzhou in 2004. He thought he was walking exactly on the same street as he did when he was a child. To him, nothing had been changed, and that was good.

In another article about “Shantang” published six months earlier when the rehab was not quite complete yet, the author has some quite different perceptions of the change brought by the rehab (Yan, 2004). After describing “Shantang” as a wonderful place to live with its traditional mixed use of residences, restaurants, gardens, hotels, and temples, the author contrasted the rehabbed part against the old one in which most residents are
elderly now after younger ones moved out to live in more modernized housing units, and the elderly seem to stay for a hope: someday this place will be rehabbed too. The new “Shantang” is already a cultural “Shantang” where during the daytime it is mainly for tourists who wander around feeling amazed by the beauty of this place while only at night this place still belongs to those who live here with closed windows to block out the noise that interrupts their familiar life style.

The attitude towards change may also create a life style. The author of “Going to Pingjiang Avenue” (Fan, 2004) has lots of memories to cherish although he was not born there. He used to live close by, and he now often goes there for a walk. To him, the street represents the typical old Suzhou. Life there has been quite usual and nothing special to report, until one day he suddenly realized that life around him has changed so much that few places like this remained. To bring back old memories he has to take a long walk and such walks eventually become a deliberate part of his life.

He usually goes there without a particular purpose, and as he passes by here is what he observes: an old man reading newspapers, children doing their homework, a woman carrying a basket full of fresh vegetables asking another woman walking with a child. How was he doing in his last exam? I don’t know, the child replied carelessly, which upset the mother. You only know how to eat but nothing else, she chided while the child stared at some delicious food that a peddler was cooking and selling at the street. That is the typical and common life he has observed. “After all, isn’t history full of such eventless daily lives of common people,” asked the author rhetorically in the end.

Another author has yet a different story to tell (Jing, 2005). Similarly motivated, he once visited where his grandma had used to live when he was a child. Despite all the
recent changes elsewhere in the renewal, the place remains nearly the same as he could recall. For years he hadn’t been to such an old alley, and as he passes by and observes people in the old residences he recognizes a familiar old life style: busy but no rush; tranquil yet not boring. Over a decade ago, as he recalls, no one yet had a PC at home and only a few had TVs. He and his little fellows could only chat in the courtyard as a pastime.

The most striking difference he finds between now and then is the accent of the current residents. They are not speaking Suzhou dialect. After his grandma and uncle had moved elsewhere with modern facilities the couple renting his grandma’s house and most of their neighbors came from far away places. Suddenly he questions the purpose of his trip. He came to search for his childhood dreams but those dreams could only stay in his own memories. What he can really search for is just something that may help carry those memories, such as this small alley and old houses. He was afraid that when the ally and houses were gone he would not be able to remember his childhood anymore. Yet on a second thought he realizes that, even though the physical alley seems the same today, it has already changed from his memory in at least three aspects. First, the alley and old houses in his memory were common and typical but they are rare now, encircled by high-rise buildings and highways. Second, current residents are no longer people who speak Suzhou dialect and enjoy the same culture. Third, although the life style of current residents is not very different from that of over two decades ago, they no long cherish this style but look forward to further change.

After moving into apartments with modern facilities, people sometimes miss things that existed in their old environment. For example, an author expresses his feelings
about the little courtyard he used to have where he chatted with neighbors all the time (Pan, 2001). Citywide, there are also things missing that generate discussion. For example, the author of an article on the main street called “Guanqian” in downtown business district complains about the street after its rehab: you can easily find ink and paper for computers on this street now, but it is not possible anymore to find brush pens and special paper for practicing Chinese calligraphy (Ling, 2003).

With an even sharper tongue, another author has expressed his anger at some attitude that seems vulgar to him (Tao, 2001). In his recent trip to a small town in the suburb, his hosts bombarded him with anecdotes such as which celebrity has recently visited or what movie was actually made here. It is the place--the land and the waters--that attracts him. Any attached tabloid news has really no value to him at all. In the end he wrote: if the bright moon and fresh air have to sell, it is too much materialism; if waters and mountains have feelings they may have to cry.

As important as attitudes toward rehab and heritage protection is what method or methodology to use. In a previously mentioned article about “Shantang” the author reveals that the rehab project holds as its ideal to make the place still look old after rehab (Gu, 2005). This shows that people there not only understand the value of protecting the old city but also set up a standard for measuring success. No wonder that even famous professionals like I. M. Pei are pleased with the result.

In another article we read an interesting story about how people try to reconcile the needs of modernization and heritage protection and conflicts between tourism and environment (Wen, 2001). In a small water town in the suburb, the local government decided to build a water tower for the supply of tap water for local residents, but to
establish a modern looking water tower would destroy the landscape of the town, whose traditional style attracts thousands of tourists. How to reconcile this conflict? Someone came up with the idea to build another tower outside the water tower and make the outside tower look old to match the local landscape architectural style. A new tower with modern function providing tap water for residents and yet with ancient looking architectural style was thus built. As the town has retained its traditional style and attracted a great number of tourists, the water system itself was threatened. The waters running across and surrounding the place became severely polluted and in the end the local government had to spent lots of money to clean up. But people understood that only if they could successfully deal with the water pollution could their town’s tourism remain sustainable.

Residential Environment and Urban Renewal

The rapid urban renewal occurring after the 1990s brought great changes to housing environment in Suzhou. Compared with 1990, for example, new construction tripled in the mid 1990s, and by 1997, 60 percent of households lived in flats complete with kitchens and bathrooms, up from only 46 percent in 1990 (Di, 2000). As mentioned above, many residents in old housing moved to new housing with modern facilities and new residents in old housing also look forward to move up in the future. Even elderly residents remaining in old housing now hope that someday theirs may upgrade too.

Along with rapid economic development, urban renewal in Suzhou has continued since mid 1990s. The Suzhou Magazine has articles covering several major urban renewal projects. One project is the new library with 25,000 square meters of floor space in a new
location, compared with the one in old location with floor space of only 6,400 square meters. Starting its design in 1998 and selecting from 4 design plans, the new library has an architectural style that connects buildings with gardening. The main building has floor space of 15,000 square meters, with green space of 3,000 square meters surrounding it and other buildings landscaped in a traditional Suzhou gardening style (Xu, 2001).

Another big project is the sports center built in 2001, with a sports stadium of 6,000 seats and total space of 42,627 square meters and a sports field with 35,000 seats and total space of 28,548 square meters (Yang and Wang, 2001). The municipal government also spent over two million dollars (18,000,000 Yuan) in 2001 to rehab the Suzhou Park originally built in 1925 and first opened to public in 1927 (Wen and Gao, 2002). In fact, the city already had green space coverage of 25 percent of its land by 1995 and over 30 percent by 1999, compared to only 10 percent in the early 1980s. In 2000 alone, more than 1,120,000 square meters of green space were added (Yi, 2001).

As a literary magazine, *Suzhou Magazine* often has articles covering new urban renewal projects put in historical perspective. The story about the history of the People’s Bridge, for example, is quite interesting. As its name indicates, the bridge across the moat surrounding the city wall was originally built in 1951 after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. In 1977, the bridge was expanded from 42.25 meters long and 6.71 meters wide to 62 meters long and 22.62 meters wide. Between 2002 and 2003, the width was doubled in the renewal project (Shao, 2003).

As more renewal projects were carried on, the planning for urban renewal became of public interest, and the rehabbed old residence of a cabinet member in Ming Dynasty as mentioned above has now become an exhibition center to display urban planning in
Suzhou (Yi, 2004). While I.M. Pei was impressed by the rehab of this old residence, he was even invited to be more involved in another renewal project: to design the new Suzhou Museum. At age 85, he took the challenge and delivered a design with an approval rate of 93 percent in a public vote held for a week among city residents (Zhu and Sheng, 2004).

In a strong contrast to the grand scale of new projects and sophisticated rehab in urban renewal are the worrisome housing conditions of so many residents who still live in old alleys or along the city moat. As the rehab project of the moat began in 2001, it became clear that it would require half a billion dollars (4,000,000,000 Yuan) to complete and over ten thousand households residing along the moat would need to be relocated. The shabby housing conditions were horrible: sometimes three households had to share 20 square meters of floor space, and in another case three doors of three households opened to the same one square meter of space (Ji, 2003). While the author was very impressed by the success in protecting old Suzhou style housing environment, it also hurt when he saw the actual hardship people had to endure in some of these old residences (Bing, 2004). The houses look great from afar and satisfy his fantasy of “villa by water,” but they are really something else when watching close by and observing the true quality of life there. How to improve housing conditions of residents while protecting and retaining the traditional architectural style of Suzhou is really a tough issue.

What seems to be easier than the urban situation is the rural one. In a rural area called West Mountain that now is within the jurisdiction of the municipal government of Suzhou, local farmers built new houses as they became rich. Yet they still kept their old houses and only built new ones next to them. To them, the old ones still have value but
new ones are more suitable to live in. One article portrays the current life style of such a farmer. Inside the new house the farmer now has a functioning toilet yet he still keeps his old wooden barrel for use, although the purpose is completely different now. In his new house he now opens a little restaurant boasting fresh vegetables from the field without pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Therefore he needs the human manure at home as supply of fertilizer. When running out off supply, his solution is to reserve the natural fertilizer for the small amount of vegetables that his own family consumes (Wu, 2005). It is in this kind of a story that we see a pleasant disappearance of the urban dilemma.

**Homes and Beyond**

Residential environment is more than just housing. Neighborhood characteristics are often more important. Alleys and waters are indispensable to the traditional residential environment in Suzhou. Its traditional life style consists of such housing element but also special food, music, and entertainment. The convenience of having all of them together is the pride of living in old Suzhou. When the project started to rehab the main street “Guanqian” in downtown business district, many local residents refused to be relocated and created the saying of “better a bed in Guanqian than an apartment anywhere.” What they cherished is such convenience to enjoy all the elements in the traditional life style.

Tea drinking and teahouse are very important element of Suzhou life, for example. According to the author of one article, tea in Suzhou is much more important than soy sauce and vinegar. Although teahouses are no longer everywhere as it were before the 1960s, each park and garden in Suzhou today still hosts one or two, and as of
2000 it still cost only one fifth of what it cost in Beijing to order a cup of tea in Suzhou (Che, 2002). In rural areas, teahouses are still important social places for the elderly. In a typical teahouse in a small town called “East Mountain” many elderly people have been gathering there for decades, and these common farmers come a long way here to meet and chat and of course drink tea. The owner is a woman over 70 years old. When asked for how long she will keep this teahouse open, she says: forever, as long as I can. Looking around at her customers, she sighed: where can they go if I don’t (Chen, 2001).

Music is another important element in traditional Suzhou life. The special local music “Ping Tan” used to be the major entertainment in Suzhou. Before mid 20th century, it was estimated that at any night between a quarter and a half of city residents were in some theatres listening to such local music. As the city modernizes itself, few young people are still fans of the local music. The retreat of the music tide also reflects the general changes during the past decades and as an author of an article noted, few among her peers growing up during the 80s are fans of the “Ping Tan,” although she often misses it as she now lives in Japan (Xu, 2001).

Food is perhaps even more important in representing traditional Suzhou life style. Even a French student can tell the difference. After he was exposed to some special local dish, he ordered it almost everyday. A few days later, he moved to another apartment far away from the restaurant. Ever since then he has been missing that dish. When he told his friends in Taiwan during his visit, he was brought to a local restaurant that sold the dish, or at least some dish with the same name, but only after a bite he began to miss the real one again (Meng, 2004).
One special treat of delicious food in Suzhou occurs on a boat, but that tradition was hard to rediscover even in late 70s. The real treat of “Chuancai” (dishes on boat) was to get on board of a boat that hosts a banquet made from fishes and shrimps freshly taken from the river or canal. When the author of an article talked to a chef who used to cook such banquets on boats and was trying to reestablish the tradition in late 70s, the chef said it was impossible: How can I find such tasty fish and shrimp? The water is polluted and they all smell gasoline now, the chef complains. By the turn of the recent century some people did bring back such “Chuancai” business as economic growth created demands, but it was mostly restaurants set up in something built on banks in the shape of a boat. The structure was not really a boat and the food was not actually freshly from the water. How delicious such dishes could be, the author wondered (Zhang, 2004).

In any place, particularly in a city like Suzhou, residential environments include elements far beyond housing itself. In old Suzhou, it was perhaps fair to say that a house was not home but the city was. In other places, however, especially in large metropolitans modernized with no special local characteristics, there will be a danger or potential that one’s home or house will function as if it is the whole city and residents will be confined to their own homes for all the entertainment that they used to get from the whole city. The living room with TV and bedroom with internet may replace all the old ways of social gathering. For better or worse (or for real or not), this is a question that is worth answering.

Conclusions
This case study uses the web version of *Suzhou Magazine* as data source to report and analyze people’s perceptions of social and physical changes, especially that of residential environment, relating to rapid urban renewal that occurred since mid 1990s in Suzhou, China. Three aspects stand out to be the most important issues regarding the theme of this conference called “doing, thinking and feeling home: the mental geography of residential environments.” They are: attitudes towards social and physical changes, the relationship between residential environment and urban renewal, and the concept that residential environment actually extends beyond homes.

First, through a survey of representative perceptions of social and physical changes by contributors’ of articles in the journal, it becomes clear that people in Suzhou, both its population and local government, have a fairly sophisticated attitude about the value of protecting the physical heritage and traditional culture in Suzhou. While understanding that change is necessary and inevitable, they also try to cope with change in ways they feel they can control. Such sophistication reveals itself as we see individuals pay more visits to city areas that help bring back their cherished memories or find that renewal projects have actually setup goals to make the place look traditional after rehab.

Second, as urban renewal occurred on a grand scale, we see both kinds of projects: either adding value to the public life such as a new sports center, library, and rehabbed park, or directly affecting housing conditions of city residents by relocation or upgrading existing housing stock. In the process we often see a dilemma between the needs of modernizing housing conditions and the value of heritage protection and the conflicting demands between tourism and environment protection.
Third, concurrent with the theme of this conference about the concept of mental geography, this case study illustrates how residential environments actually include many elements and a real home is thus an extension of a house to a larger part of the city or even the city as a whole. The challenge of preserving residential environment in a city like Suzhou goes beyond housing, and often a tougher issue is how we can preserve the entire entity of local culture or life style.
References


