

REFLECTION

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The graduation topic with the title “Re(generate) locally: Enhancing the livability while maintain the vitality of neighborhood economy in the deprived center-city mixed-use neighborhood” is part of the Urban fabric research group belongs to the Urbanism Department of TU Delft.

Why this topic is valuable and what I want to learn through this research?

Regeneration has been the essential topic in the urban planning field for a long time, particularly in rapid developing city like China. In recent decades, researches and urban developers concentrate on policy or guidelines in city or regional scale, rather than spatial methods in small scale. The policy and guidelines are quite vague and unable to cope with the complexity old neighborhood, results in many misunderstandings when apply those to the locality. Gentrification happens in cities with different levels of development, disadvantaged groups cannot claim their right to the city, and pay more to get access to good public service and facility.

More and more planners have changed their top-down planning methods and learned to improve the living environment from the perspective of people. Shanghai and Shenzhen are relatively prominent cities in terms of neighborhood regeneration. Apart from allowing residents to participate in projects that improve the quality of living space, they have also built a platform for public participation through a series of cultural activities and the power of the media and the Internet. Through all these approaches, they hope the regeneration is a long-term process instead of short and inefficient. In recent years, China is studying regeneration methods in practice, while more power and right to speak are given to the public. This study hopes to build a comprehensive, lasting bottom-up neighborhood regeneration framework by studying typical deprived neighborhood.

What is the limitation of this project?

Livability is the concept that is being used as a as an important criterion for judging city satisfaction. It often involves employment rate and income status. In my project, I did not take direct measures to improve these two aspects. I focused on the improvement of the physical space and the sense of participation and belonging of the residents. My friends often ask me if you don' t increase their income, they still have no money. Even if the

physical environment improves, they are a group of poor people concentrated in the city center and the community is still declining.

Perhaps I can't guarantee that this land and residents can all remain in the future. However, without reconstructing everything, we can use the existing resources in the site and combine the development direction of the city to increase the new development possibilities of the site. The Xipailou neighborhood represents the cultural value of Changsha and the core values of its residence in the urban old city. To improve its living environment, the quality of the street not only allows residents to enjoy it, but also allows other people who come here to have a good space experience. This in turn promotes possible economic growth.

In addition, the use of shared ideas in the project can also appropriately reduce the burden on people's lives. Sharing parking spaces, sharing sports facilities, and entertainment facilities represent the convenience of not having to pay extra money. It is also a measure to increase the affordability.

How does my project contribute to solve the problems?

Public participation

The bottom-up urban renewal strategy must include public participation. There are many ways for the public to participate, hold workshops, open hearings, and let residents choose the right solution. But due to distance and time constraints, I can't finish it all. There are other ways to get residents involved. The first thing is to perceive the public. Through interviews and tracking, maps of their behaviors are distributed to understand how they view the environment they live in, what requirements they have, and their daily behavioral trajectories. Every perception of a public is to involve them in the process of public participation. In the process of generating the strategy, each stakeholder is also considered in the specific project to form an implementable plan.

Taking the transformation groundfloors in the Danwei building as an example, the new company or studio application procedure can be started by the housing corporations. But the neighborhood committee should organize the open hearing to involve residents to participate in selection. Such open hearing and interview indicates the platform that every stakeholders should be involved to improve the quality of living environment. Both new company and old inhabitants can benefit from that.

Interim design strategy

In my interview, I found that the residents were very negative and even repulsive to the government's renovation project (there was a facade reconstruction during the field survey). In their perspective, such a transformation is meaningless. Businessmen also feel that the construction period is too long and delays their own business conditions. In this case, how to create a design that can be detected quickly and delivered to the user becomes a top priority. In this project, experimenting with the design effect of cheap, easy to assemble and dismantle materials is one way. For example, when expanding the width of the sidewalk, use vegetation potted plants, wooden chairs as a partition to test the design effect. If the effect is good, then proceed with the actual construction. If the effect is not good, you can remove it immediately. Interim design strategy enable faster project delivery, and more flexible and responsive design.

Phase of transformation

In actual regeneration projects, the impact of each step on subsequent steps is often not considered before implementation, and the solution is limited to one problem, which often leads to the resolution of one problem and the other one is aggravated. In this project, the links and roles between the steps are emphasized, and the proposed strategy minimizes conflicts between issues. Some places need to make compromises and concessions. I always explore solutions in my analysis and find new points in my exploration process. Analysis and design are integrated with each other. Through design, the problem of the site is further understood. In my project, design and analysis are not a linear relationship but a cyclical process. This is what urban fabric studio has always emphasized.

Share concept

Xipailou neighborhood is a dense area in the city center, different public space users compete for the space. The share concept is one important way to mitigate the conflicts. The share space in the public space provide the opportunity for different people' s social interaction, and more diversity and vitality can be generated.

Flexibility

I learned many successful regeneration cases in the context of China, and learned that they all emphasize the sustainability of the regeneration. This sustainability is the ability to ensure self-regulation and self-repair in the face of future changes (such as functional changes). Take the road design in front of the

wholesale shops at Sanxing Street as an example, while the wholesale market still exists, the road needs a parking area for temporary parking. When the wholesale shops are gradually moved out of the neighborhood, this parking area can be gradually converted into Parklet, or other function that adapts to the new format.

Analytic phase and explorative phase are actually completely interlinked in this project. Instead of analyzing the problems and propose potentials first, I tend to process the information through design process. Design is used in understanding space,, more problems and potentials could be found. From design, I can learn the effects of each actions, and modify the strategy

Does the role of neighborhood change in the whole city?

Xipailou neighborhood was characterized as a transitional area, there are more than five parking lots in the area. And many undefined space are always being occupied by cars. Even the neighborhood constitute the most famous historical street Taiping street, but no label with cultural value can be found on it. Both inhabitants and outsiders expressed negative attitude towards the physical environment and social environment in this area.

The neighborhood in the city center is different from others, it somehow represents the identity of city which is neglected by mulnicipality and inhabitants. By creating pedestrian-friendly street that support diverse and interesting activities, at the same time, ensure the space with clear privacy zoning and flexibility, the livability can be improved. In the future, Xipailou neighborhood represents the core value of living in Changsha.