

Landscape Design of Business Circle Transformation in Old Town

Taking Hanzheng Street of Wuhan as an Example

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Abstract—As China’s economy and society develop rapidly and urbanization process speeds up further, the transformation of old towns is inevitable in urban development. One of the core factors in old town transformation is accurate planning of landscape design, aiming to avoid “sameness” in urban landscape design, so that the transformed landscape can reflect its own characteristics and blend into the overall urban environment, thus to form comprehensive continuation of old town transformation design and street cultural tradition. In this paper, the landscape transformation of current business circle in old town is viewed while examining the history of Hanzheng Street in the old business circle of Wuhan, so as to play a role in urban development.

Keywords—old town; business circle; landscape transformation; Hanzheng Street

I. INTRODUCTION

China’s economy and society develop rapidly, and urbanization process speeds up further, so transformation of the old town is inevitable in urban development. One of the core factors in old town transformation is accurate planning of landscape design, aiming to avoid “sameness” in urban landscape design, so that the transformed landscape can reflect its own characteristics and blend into the overall urban environment, thus to form comprehensive continuation of old town transformation design and street cultural tradition.

II. URBAN RENEWAL TO MEET THE THEME AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTION OF URBAN AREA

The transformation of business circle in Wuhan Hanzheng Street is a typical case of urban street renewal in China in recent years. As one of the “central streets” in Wuhan, its overall reconstruction has begun since 2005. The research and discussion about how to maintain and pass on the historical culture of Hanzheng Street as well as innovate and rebuild it is often discussed extensively in various media of Wuhan, and gradually becomes a key point drawing attention from people from all walks of life. As a result, it is necessary to protect the cultural tradition of Hanzheng Street, and arrange and plan it completely in terms of cultural resources.

We investigate and explore it deeply under the big environment of Wuhan, to promote the culture transmitted by Hanzheng Street to adapt to the current society development, as an indispensable part of the transformation plan. “The intension of a city determines its development opportunities. Therefore, we should ask a question that what kind of city it should be first of all when selecting the landscape transformation project?”¹ Applying these words into street transformation and urban renewal, the landscape construction and design should conform to the functions of the urban area, which determine local landscape design to certain extent.

As a vital part of urban construction, landscape planning has the function of combining time and space. Motivating the landscape functions again and forming in-depth impact with building and streets, may re-plan and reorganize the sprawling urban area, to make it be revitalized.

III. CURRENT SITUATION OF HANZHENG STREET

“Natural heritage and cultural heritage stem from natural endowment and historical accumulation, and they cannot be regained once destroyed. The urban modernization and the inheritance and protection of historical and cultural tradition of a city are not separated from each other, let alone in opposition to each other.”² The inside information of a city is of great importance to continuing the tradition and attracting fresh energy of this city. In the process of historical development, neglecting or abandoning what is in our original possession, or removing the old buildings handed down from ancient times, is of no good to the sustainability of the whole city. Making the damaged buildings and streets be inherited mentally using landscape transformation is of great significance. Landscape conveys the stories of a city, which has not only saved the removed and damaged old buildings, but also made the city dramatic. History and story bring about new experience which is “ancient” and “new”.

¹ Zhao Yanjing. Principles and Examples of Urban Landscape Transformation [J]. Urban Problems, 2000(6):5-7.

² Wen Jiabao. Proper Method for Relationship between Urban Modernization and Historical Heritage Protection[N]. China Cultural Relics News, 2001,08.

north. Hanzheng Street which was at the very center of Hankou, formed a famous historical block during Chenghua Years. (See “Fig. 1”)

A. Geographic Position

Hanzheng Street was reconstructed into Qianjin Road, Sanmin Road, Minquan Road, stretching to Yanhe Avenue in the south, Wusheng Road in the west, Jinghan Avenue in the



Fig. 1. Panoramic Model of Hanzheng Street.

The west section of Hanzheng Street market was mainly occupied by the trading of grain, petroleum, cotton and industry. The middle section was the most prosperous, having large-scale department store, cloth, mountain range, seafood, paper and other small-sized enterprises. In the third year of Tongzhi of Qing Dynasty (1864), Zhong Qianjun,³ the chief of Hanyang, and others built Hankou fort, and opened up eight fort gates along the fort including Yudai, Juren, Youyi, Xunli, Dazhi and Tongji, surrounding by deep trenches outside, connecting to bridges, which was convenient for defense, and it could also control the floods. The Baoshou Shiqiao built in the 14th year of Daoguang of Qing Dynasty still exists in its original place. It is the only historical evidence of Shiqiao Kou (石乔口) instead of Qiaokou (桥口).

³ Zhong Qianjun: In order to guard against the flood, he took the lead in donating salary for fund-raising, and increased the embankments of lake and river by several feet. He built new city wall in Hankou for more than 10 li, renovated Qingchuan Academy which was damaged in wars, and awarded and cultivated students from poor families. The embankment of Hanyang collapsed, and he restored it by the method of Food for Work, helping the victims to resume production and tide over the difficulties. In addition, he advocated building founding hospital and nursing home, to adopt the loneliness.

B. History of Hanzheng Street

TABLE I. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF HANZHENG STREET⁴

Time Period	Development of History and Culture
Chenghua Years	Han River changed its route, and residents gradually lived here. During the early years of Chenghua's reign, Han River changed its route, residents from neighboring villages moved to the banks of Han River in succession. They built houses and set up shops, living together. Population increased gradually, and this region became a place for anchorage of merchant ships and trading. Trading market emerged, and Hankou sprout up.
Jiajing Years	5 Fangs were set for management of merchants and residents living along the banks of Han River, including Juren, Youyi, Xunli, Dazhi, Chongxin.
Sixth Year of Longqing	Hankou Inspection Department was set up to manage rapidly increasing population and increasingly complex businesses in Hanzheng Street Area.
Eighth Year of Chongzhen	Yuangong Dike was built. Hanzheng Street, Huangpi Street and other main streets appeared in the downtown area along the river. Afterwards, river street was changed to central street, which was changed to internal street, Jiajie street, and lane. At the end of Ming Dynasty, there had been tens of thousands of people lived here.
Late Ming Dynasty	Chongxin Fang declined thoroughly due to frequent fires and floods. Residents gradually gathered at the highland along the river of its north bank from the south bank. Juren Fang, Youyi Fang, Xunli Fang and Dazhi Fang gradually became the prosperous downtown streets, and Hanzheng Street basically formed in an early form.
Kangxi Years	Hankou Inspection Department was moved to north bank from south bank, to strengthen the complex business and civil management in Hankou Town. The block formed by Juren Fang, Youyi Fang, Xunli Fang and Dazhi Fang at the north bank became the central street (also official street) of Hankou Town thanks to the residence of Hankou Inspection Department. As of this point, Hankou was specially referred to north bank.
Fifth Year of Yongzheng	Facing the great Hankou market filling with "residents and businessmen", the government set two branches of Hankou Inspection Department, namely Renyi and Lizhi, to carry out zone management of the 15 li -long Hanzheng Street. Traditional Hanzheng Street formed ultimately.
Xianfeng Years	City wall formed, which improved the city's ability of defending floods, provided safety guarantee for the continuous development of traditional city.
1861	Hankou Port opened. The economic center of Hankou also transferred to the Yangtze River thanks to its opening.
1905-1907	Zhanggong Dike was built and the city wall of Hankou was removed. The street pattern of Hankou basically formed.
1979 till now	Reform of the economic system. The Hankou commodity market continued to flourish.

⁴ Wang Zhaolei. Cultural Inheritance and Protection of Historic Districts under Urban Renewal: A Case Study of Hanzheng Street Reconstruction in Wuhan. [J]. Journal of Jiangnan University 2015.8 Vol.32 (04).

As the business center of Wuhan in its early stage, Hanzheng Street forms a highlight of Wuhan development. Numerous business organizations settled along the Hanzheng Street in history. According to Xiakou County Annals during the period of the Republic of China, there are 123 guild halls and associations with clear construction date, and 36 with unknown construction date, which is only second to that of Shanghai. The merchants coming from various regions constructed the guild halls and associations of different style according to building style of their native places to show their strong economic strength. Ye Tiaoyuan described these building landscapes vividly in *Hankou Zhuzhi Ci* that, “the merchants of the town come from various provinces, with guild halls competing and gathering together. White ancient beams decorate the Yangming Court, and green porcelain tiles embellish Wanshou Palace.”⁵ As the famous trading port of modern times, Hankou is always “gathering the merchants with commodities circulating in it”. It is not only a collecting and distributing centre of commodities, but also the place for merchants from various regions to trade and live. There is a poem describing Hankou in those days that “there are tens of millions of households, with more strangers than native people”. This also creates the Wuhan-style culture of “inclusiveness”. Reflecting in the old guild halls of Wuhan, it forms the characteristics of the guild hall having both the traditional architectural techniques of north and south China as well as the western architectural style. (“Table I”)

This section of old block is gradually buried in the rapid development of the city due to its history, and the traditional business and religious history also face obstruction. As a result, the planning of Hanzheng Street should follow the historical development trend. We shall reexamine the cultural context inheritance of Hanzheng Street, evolution of city layout and transfer of functions and sort out the far-reaching turning point of Hanzheng Street in its developmental history. It corresponds to the spatial status and layout of current historical and cultural relics, which has endowed the significance of Hanzheng Street for remodeling the process of Hanzheng Street’s evolution.

Skillful utilization of landscape design will make the buildings and streets which have substantially damaged be inherited spiritually. The landscape also conveys historical spirit for renovating the removed and damaged old buildings, and it also makes the historical background of this region more convincing.

IV. UNIQUE AND ADVANCED TRANSFORMATION OF HANZHENG STREET

The transformation of Hanzheng Street requires its unique identification. The success of Shanghai Pudong lies in the selection of Pudong, an area which can show Shanghai image, to display the image of Shang financial center. It is close to Huangpu River and its economic strength as a municipality directly under the central government makes its

image hard to be “copied” by other cities. This is a successful business transformation. Similarly, the transformation of Hanzheng Street also needs its uniqueness. As a metropolis connecting to nine provinces, Wuhan is flourishing and is performing the urban transformation vigorously. Hanzheng Street will change itself into a unique Hanzheng Street business circle thanks to absorbing the local unique Chu culture and mastering the advantages of convenient transportation.

Hanzheng Street has its own unique history, the charm and aesthetic value of the historical streets lie in the uniqueness, diversity and completeness of its landscape. Nowadays, people have increased their cognition of the division of historical streets, traditional residential forms and lanes. At present, the urban construction is strengthened in Wuhan, which is a historical opportunity, and the basis of Hanzheng Street transformation. The advancement of business circle construction is of vital importance. It is a new trend to highlight the regional characteristics, carry forward the humanistic spirit, protect historical sites and renovate the ecologic environment using new landscape design methods.

The landscape design transformation of central green gallery is most remarkable. The most important public space passing through the core area of central service area — the green axis is taken as a carrier for green gallery design, to inherit Hanzheng Street culture, reproduce the spatial characteristics of Hanzheng Street, and integrate the functions of landscape, service, transportation and municipal administration, create a green axis shaping space quality and displaying ecological features, to ultimately form a city axis blending and jointly promoting ecology, life, business and growth. The 1.7 km-long herringbone ecological axis evolves into a lot of herringbones full of vigor and vitality in the historic Hanzheng Street, symbolizing Wuhan people moving forward constantly (see “Fig. 2”).



Fig. 2. Central Green Gallery.

⁵ Ye Tiaoyuan. Checked and annotated by Xu Mingting and Ma Changsong. *Notes of Hankou Zhuzhi Ci: Volume 1* [M]. Wuhan: Hubei People’s Press, 1985.

V. CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTED TIME AND SPACE OF OLD TOWN BY USING LANDSCAPE

The renovation and upgrading project is being performed in Hanzheng Street, to construct Hanzheng Street international financial service center comprehensively, develop the Hanzheng Street shopping park project, create the 11.6 km-long banks of Han River into “ten scenes of Han River”⁶, and construct the highest river-crossing ferris wheel “Eye of Han River”⁷.

A. *Connecting the Scattered Old Town History by Using Landscape*

Landscape design is one of the essential components for building planning and transformation of towns, blocks and environment, having the function of suturing. Suturing not merely means the substantial renovation of damaged old buildings and streets, what is more important is to restore entire history from spiritual level and psychological aspect. If landscape transformation is utilized appropriately, then it can be connected to the history of buildings and streets deeply. These internal relations are spiritual consolation, and one of the important factors offering to human.

The Hanzheng Street planning makes the scattered old residential areas be removed and relocated entirely, but it can rely on landscape transformation to convey and display history of existing buildings and streets in terms of time and space, so as to motivate it once again spiritually. The removed buildings worthy of commemoration can be preserved on the foundation, with the addition of landscaping or continuous reservation of part of the beautified landscapes. The foundation and overall plane structure of some main buildings of Daming Palace National Heritage Garden in Xi’an is gradually make clear. The heritage of Daming Palace, however, is not repaired or improved, but the only palace foundation is exposed matching with greening landscape, thus to display the untouched heritage to the masses, and complete the requirement of maintaining history and preserving current authenticity without consuming too many human and financial resources.

B. *Enabling the Cultural Landscape to Be of Obvious Guidance via Landscape*

Text messages are readable and play a role of reminder. The stabilized historical time can be inserted in the landscape by landscape suturing through signs, guide post and other language information methods, to reactivate it. For instance, set up signs at the damaged historical buildings and both sides of the streets with significance in Hankou of Wuhan, to express its existence significance with the forms of text and

⁶ Ten scenes of Han River: Center of Yangtze River, Hanzheng Tianjie, Chama Gudao, Gaoshan Qinyun, Chongren Fangli, Yueying Liuzui, Hanyang Made 1898, Shuangzi Yicai, Liushui Renjia, Eye of Han River.

⁷ Eye of Han River: It is located in the upstream of Zhiyin Bridge. It is a super ferris wheel crossing the river, similar to “London Eye” at the Thames of London. Its height is planned to be more than 200 meters, with a construction period of 5 years, and it will become the important landmark in cultural tourism business area of Hanzheng Street. People can get a great view of Han River and Yangtze River on the ferris wheel after completion.

picture. On the other hand, the expressing methods of text and pictures don’t have to be simple, and they can be integrated with other landscapes. For instance, the words can be merged with pavement, or buried underground, covered by glass and draw people’s attention by the internal light. Moreover, the words can interact with landscape through information on the pictures.

Utilization of landscape transformation with suturing function dominated by text will bring the historical stories of damaged buildings and streets back, which is not merely another method for old street transformation and old building maintenance, but it is also ornamental and educational and offering the public amiable sense of belonging.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the process of urban business circle transformation, landscape transformation can connect to the history of buildings and streets deeply in addition to building renovation. The information interaction between landscape and buildings makes the city’s unique styles and features more obvious.

Landscape design plays a role not be neglected in the process of urban business circle transformation. The separated time and space of old town are connected in the transformation process, so as to continue the city’s historical context, highlight characteristics of the city, promote the development of urban spirit and improve the influence of brand of city, playing a role of promotion not to be ignored for urban development.

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