**Research on the Regeneration of Chinese Ancient Towns Based on Theory of the Production of Space**

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**Abstract**

**Chinese ancient towns declined impacted by the urbanization, but they have been protected and developed after regeneration. The research on the protection and development of the three ancient towns as the historical and cultural space and exploration of the ways and means of regeneration is helpful to analyze the internal main factors, so as to provide reference and help for the protection and development of other ancient towns. In the theory of the production of space, the three elements of space can be used to analyze the internal agents of the spatial change, which also are the important theoretical tools to analyze the spatial relationship. In this paper, we will establish a analytical framework to analyze the buildings, public space, social space and action space of 4 regenerated ancient towns and concrete cases with the three elements of space, and research the government’s operation and management and the habitants’ development forms, so as to provide the reference value for the ancient towns and even the protection and development of ancient towns.**

Keywords： Ancient Towns; Research on the Regeneration; urban regeneration

**I. Introduction**

*A. The background and purpose of the research*

Ancient towns are the carriers of local history, regional features and traditional culture, and the social and historical heritage embodied by the building space. While the manpower, funds and resources were flowing into cities, the economy of the ancient towns declined rapidly so that the life of the people in the ancient towns were affected severely duo to the lagging social service. As a country with an ancient civilization, China has many ancient cities and towns with long history. Chinese people have researched ancient towns comprehensively for a long time. Although there is no comprehensive and systematic research on the urban regeneration or no concept of the ‘urban regeneration’, there are still some relevant theoretical researches, but the main content is about ‘rebuilding’, ‘protection’ and ‘inheritance’, and few researchers are involved in the research and analysis of the urban regeneration mode.

The implementation of urban regeneration has made corresponding progress in solving the problems in all levels of the city and has achieved remarkable results in the economic development, improvement of people's livelihood, cultural heritage and environmental protection. Chinese scholars have researched the series of theories from the West deeply and introduced them to China, and have created the theory of urban regeneration with its own features according to cultural environment, economic development, urbanization process and other differences. The production of space is a process of the space to be developed, designed, used and rebuilt, which has accumulated many urban research cases. Similarly, ‘ancient towns" has many problems that can be explained combined with the production of space. Therefore, we will research the construction of the regeneration mode of the ancient towns and cities from the perspective of the ‘production of space’.

The purpose to research the regeneration of ancient towns is to analyze the influence and effect of different regeneration ways of ancient towns, which can be used as reference for the regeneration and protection of other ancient towns. Find out the equilibrium point among Chinese culture, economy and society for the regeneration of ancient towns with the theory of "production of space’ as the analysis tool to show the specific theory for the diversified and sustainable regeneration ways. Moreover, the combination of the traditional culture for the regeneration of ancient towns and the modern life can provide new methods and reference for the protection of traditional culture.

*B. The scope and methods of the research*

In this paper, we will analyze four ancient towns with the three elements of the production of space, which are spatial practice, representations of space and representational space. For the spatial practice, research the regeneration ways of the material buildings and public space of ancient towns. For the representations of space, analyze the functions, influence and effect of the government, the management company and the development company in the regeneration process of ancient towns. For the representational space, analyze the people and culture in the ancient towns and the mutual relations among the aborigines, foreign merchants and tourists.

Firstly, take the literature research method. Sort out some viewpoints and questions related to the regeneration of ancient towns in the academic papers, relevant books and internet resources, and then summarize, research, and analyze these questions so as to form the personal viewpoints finally.

Secondly, take the case research method. Make use of the relations between various types of the production of space in the regeneration process of 3 ancient towns with the theory of production of space to research the operation of the internal mechanism, to find out the decisive factors for the generation of ancient towns, and further to sort out the important conclusions.

Thirdly, take the theoretical analysis method. Analyze the rebuilding ways for the material space and public space in the first element, spatial practice, the participation or functions of the government sectors and the development company in the second element, representations of space, and the behaviors of the habitants, tourists and cultural activities in the space in the third element, representational space.

**II. Theoretical Review**

*A.* *Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space*

*A.a.The concept of the production of space*

The theory of the production of space was proposed by Henri Lefebvre in 20th century, who thought the space was the continuation and external manifestation of time, and it contained the ideologies and material resources of human history and civilization from generation to generation, so the space had both material attribute and spiritual attribute. Henri Lefebvre summarized three elements for the social space, which were the perceived, the conceived and the lived. They are not completely different from each other, and there is a dialectical relationship between them. Only by this dialectical relationship, the subject can be transferred from one level to another and run through the whole living space.[1]

*A.a.a.spatial practice*

The spatial practice mainly means the functional space. Namely, it is the human spatial social practice. Spatial practice is a spatial activity physically, which can ensure the smooth progress of economic production and social production and involves objects and things, and in which, human can move and behave. [2]

*A.a.b.Representation of space*

The representations of space mean any social dominant space, and they also refer to the conceptualized spaces. Scientists, urban planners, technical land dividers, social engineers, science-oriented artists, etc have conceived this urban space, which tends to be a linguistic symbol system.[1]

*A.a.c.Representational spaces*

The representational space is governed and experienced passively. Its subjects are the residents, users, some artists, writers and philosophers in the space. This space is above the physical world and it uses the objects symbolically, which tends to the non-linguistic symbol system.[1]

*B. The theory of urban regeneration*

*B.a.The concept and scope of the urban regeneration*

Urban regeneration refers to the urban reconstruction, reorganization of land use functions and resources and corresponding urban environment renovation and reconstruction when cities are adapting to the new changes in social economy, technological development, the continuity of history and culture and other aspects. Usually, the objects of urban regeneration mainly are the old city zones. To adjust and improve the functions of the old city zone and to promote and even recreate the vitality and environmental quality of the historic city zones are the key points of "urban regeneration". [5]Cities are always faced with the challenge of reservation and elimination, and regeneration and decline. Essentially, a city is a dynamic organism with metabolism. The time gradients are inevitable in the urban changes, but the keys are how to deal with the relationship between "the new" and "the old", and how to grasp the relationship between the inheritance and continuation of urban culture and the development of society and economy, which are the important aspects of "urban regeneration". [6]

The scope of urban regeneration includes the physics, industries, environments, sociality, history, culture, society and other aspects in large cities and local small and medium-sized cities. From the physical perspective, its purposes are to guarantee the urban charm, and take it as an opportunity to induce the systematical hostling of urban centers and planned development in development zones practically. [5]

In the economic aspect, the improvement in physics or environment plays a catalytic role in the high land use rate and the promotion of economic activities, and also plays a positive role in the positive contribution to the economy. [5]

**III. Analysis of the regeneration cases on the space of ancient towns**

*A. The basic standard and outline of the cases selected*

In this paper, we selected 3 ancient towns after regeneration with highest frequency of occurrence, wining awards and most popular in the process of collecting data and consulting books, in which, Dayan Town subordinate to the Old Town of Lijiang（丽江） ranks on the World Cultural Heritage List, Wuzhen Ancient Town was included in the waiting list in 2008, and Qibao Town was remolded at latest, and the main reasons to select it were because its existence time was short and it was located in downtown.

[Table 1] The case outline of the ancient town spaces

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Location/ scale | Preservation type | Analysis scope | Analysis content |
| Wuzhen Ancient Town | Zhejiang Province  712,000km² | Overall utilization after restoration | Material space  Social space  Action space | - The specific ways applied in the regeneration process of the three spaces  - The dialectical relationship between the regeneration and the production of space  - The change of the production of space after regeneration |
| Dayan Town | Yunnan Province  38,000km² | Partial |
| Qibao Town | Shanghai Municipality  213,000km² | Partial |

*B. Wuzhen Ancient Town(乌鎮)*

1. *a.Analysis of the frames of the three elements of Wuzhen Ancient Town*

[Table 2] Case analysis of Wuzhen Ancient Town

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **spatial practice：Building** | | |
| **Type / Picture** | **Concrete analysis** | |
| Restoration | Zhujia Hall（朱家厅）was a rich and influential family’s message, which has been restored. For example, pave the black bricks on the floor to keep the timberwork firm and avoid the fire danger. | |
| 1508073965(1) |
| Transformation | Beizha silk mill was remolded to be an art gallery and its functions was improved: reserve the original buildings and build some new buildings to strengthen the sense of wholeness of all old and new buildings. | |
| 1508073965(3) |
| Facade protection | The facade of waterside pavilions was repaired and reinforced, and the interior was decorated modernly to increase the modern lifestyle for the habitants. | |
| 1508073965(2) |
| Demolishment and redevelopment | For the coming Wuzhen Theatre Festival, Wuzhen Grand Theatre was rebuilt in a new site. The building is located on the side of river to adhere to the water town culture of Wuzhen. | |
| 1508073965(4) |
| **spatial practice：Public space** | | |
| Preservation | | In Xizha（西栅）, 72 bridges and nearly 10000 meters of ancient river channel are preserved and maintained to keep their original state. |
| 1508073966(2) | |
| Recombination Public space | | The Water Theatre was remolded with new mode. Remold the fish pond to be an outdoor water theatre and add some cultural activities and shows of Wuzhen. |
| 1508073966 | |
| Facade protection | | The facade of Zhaoming（昭明）Academy was preserved, and the interior was remolded to be a library to connect with Maodun（矛盾） Memorial Hall, forming a reading space. |
| 1508074276(1) | |
| Demolishment and redevelopment | | Pipelines and roads: bury overhead lines and open pipelines under the ground and design the green slabstones in the form that the pipelines can pass through. |
| 1508073966(1) | |
| **Representation of space** | | |
| Local government | | The government has established a tourism development company and appropriated funds for the development company. The company borrowed money from the bank with the assets as mortgage to obtain the funds for the development of tourism projects in the ancient town. |
| Development and management companies | | The whole ancient town is operated in the form of corporatization and is developed wholly. The main business of Dongzha is tourism, and the main business of Xizha is leisure and vacation. The operation mode is to develop in protection and protect in development. |
| **Representational spaces** | | |
| Inhabitants’ behaviors | | In Dongzha and Xizha, all indigenous inhabitants have moved out, the current inhabitants are the shop operators, including some natives and outsiders, who are governed by the tourism company.  In Nanzha and Beizha, the original life state and way are protected to balance the development of Wuzhen. |
| 1508073966(3) | |
| Tourists’ behaviors | | In the Phase I of remolding, there are some tourist activities for tourists, and in Phase II of remolding, there are some vacation activities for tourists so that tourists can stay and experience the life in Wuzhen in person. |
| 1508073966(4) | |
| Cultural behaviors | | Add the theatre festival to tally with the cultural development direction of Wuzhen. The newly-increased cultural activities have attracted many artists and writers to inject the celebrity culture into the town. |
| 1508074212(1) | |

*A.b.The spatial relationship of Wuzhen after regeneration*

The investigation of the three elements of space is the important basis for different production of spaces. In the project molding process of Phase I (Dongzha), the interior of the town was renewed, and most of aborigines in Wuzhen were replaced by the foreign merchants. The aborigines moved out and the joining of foreign merchants renewed the interior of the town. In the project molding process of Phase II (Xizha), the ancient town produced spaces in large scale. The project development company established by the government unified property rights, planning and operation mode. The regeneration mode dominated by the government is the largest influence on the production of space. Different interventions were taken for different historical buildings through unified planning. This is a productive process of material space in the spatial practice dominated by the strong space in the representations of space. Meanwhile, all goods, catering and entertainment items in the commercial space of the town are controlled through unified operation, so as to avoid the problem that the merchants and habitants control the buildings freely and damage the buildings. This is a productive process of social behavior in the representational space dominated by the strong space in the representations of space.

*C. Dayan Town(大研鎮)*

*C.a.Analysis of the frames of the three elements of Dayan Town*

[Table 3] Case analysis of Dayan Town

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **spatial practice：Building** | |
| **Type / Picture** | **Concrete analysis** |
| Restoration | Fang Guoyu’s （方国瑜）Former Residence is a typical case of recovering the former residences of historians, which has been repaired. |
| 1508074607(1) |
| Renewal | The government has uniformly protected and remolded the residential buildings far away from the center area. |
| 1508074618(1) |
| Facade protection | Dengfengdabao Hostel（德丰大宝客栈） was rebuilt from an old house. The original external style was kept and the internal facilities were configured as a four-star hotel. |
| 1508074634(1) |
| Copy | Mu Fu（木府） Mansion is a rebuilt ancient town museum, which keeps the elegance of the buildings in Central Plains in Ming Dynasty and the simplicity and roughness of the buildings in Central Plains in Tang and Song Dynasties, and is filled with the simplicity and conciseness of the ancient buildings in Lijiang. |
| 1508074664(1) |
| **spatial practice：Public space** | |
| Preservation | More than 70 bridges with rich landscape functions are reserved in the ancient town, and they are the important components of towns, gardens and famous scenic spots. |
| 1508074673(1) |
| Recombination  Public space | In Yunnan Province, it's like spring all the year round, which creates a feature, street scene. The regeneration activates the street space and some other design is added, so that the street space forms are various and changeable. |
| 1508074683(1) |
| Facade protection | The whole facade of the commercial buildings in Sifang Street（四方街） was protected, the interior of the original shops were remolded to modern bars teahouses and other types of commercial spaces. |
| 1508074703(1) |
| Demolishment and redevelopment | The big waterwheel was used for agricultural irrigation widely in Sui and Tang Dynasties. It has existed for more than 1700 years. Display the most ancient irrigation tool in China as a scenic spot. |
| 1508074817 |
| **Representation of space** | |
| Local government | The local government and the old town protection administration have strictly controlled the development and utilization of the old town in the aspects of law, policy, institution and planning, made the Protection Plan for the World Cultural Heritage, Old Town of Lijiang as the technical guidance for the protection of the old town. However, because a large amount of incomes flow into the private enterprises, the government earns little after investing a large number of funds. |
| Development and management companies | Foreign merchants rented houses from the original residents, and conducted independent operation and management after signing and complying with the regulations on the protection of the old town and relevant rules. |
| **Representational spaces** | |
| Inhabitants’ behaviors | The using subjects of the space were changed from the aborigines to the outsiders, which are not governed by the government and are the behaviors in the free economic transactions. |
| 1508074749(1) |
| Tourists’ behaviors | At the beginning, tourists mainly experienced various activities. Tourists are significant greatly to the management direction of the operators, which has been transferred to the targeted souvenirs operation from the initial demands for living consumption. |
| 1508074762(1) |
| Cultural behaviors | Lijiang City where Dayan Town is located was a transfer station on the ancient Silk Road and the Ancient Tea Horse Road since ancient times, and it also is a gathering place for many minorities in China. Its multi-national art and culture are attracting many people to go there. |
| 1508074910(1) |

*C.b.The spatial relationship of Dayan Town after regeneration*

In Dayan Town, merchants take the free competition mode dominated by government. Its production of space can be divided into three types: 1) the production of space dominated by government refers to the process of repairing, rebuilding and copying the historical buildings dominated by government. 2) The production of space for tourism development refers to the productive process of commercial construction and dwelling construction dominated by the development company for making profits. 3) The production of the residents' self-built space means that in order to meet the living requirements of the residents, the government has allocated some land for the residents to build new houses for living because most of their old houses have been rented for commercial use. The ‘representations of space’ and the ‘representational space’ have similar representations of space and representational space. Therefore, they also are the main productive forces of space, and finally they act on the special practice.

*D. Qibao Town（七宝古鎮）*

*D.a.Analysis of the frames of the three elements of Qibao Town*

[Table 4] Case analysis of Qibao Town

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **spatial practice：Building** | | |
| **Type / Picture** | **Concrete analysis** | |
| Restoration | The buildings in the north section of the ancient town are preserved. Up to now, the historical dwelling block, several lanes and alleys and many real traditional folk houses in the town have been kept. | |
| 1508075834(1) |
| Transformation | Qibao Zhou Microscopic Carvings Hall is an exhibition hall remolded with the existing ancient buildings, which was established to display the artworks of the great master of microscopic carvings, a father and his daughter whose surname were Zhou. | |
| 1508075845(1) |
| Copy | Qibao Temple was rebuilt in 2000, which restored the simplicity and solemnity of Han and Tang Dynasties. The tower and the building with Buddhism lection and joss were restored fully in the rebuilding process. | |
| 1508075853(1) |
| Demolishment and redevelopment | In the ancient town, some villas with Chinese style, such as Jiangnanyufu（江南御府）, were built out to increase some living space for the town. Nine different space combinations make each household's environment, neighboring relation and space landscape different. | |
| 1508075871(1) |
| **spatial practice：Public space** | | |
| Preservation | In Qibao Colored Glaze Workshop, some facilities for displaying the artistic research and finished products are set to display the equipment and technology for the complete manufacturing flow of colored glaze. | |
| 1508075880(1) |
| Renewal | The exterior of Qibao Distillery has been preserved, and a new watching link was added inside, so that people have the double experience of tasting handmade grain alcohol and watching brewing process. | |
| 1508075889(1) |
| Copy | The dolmen is a legacy from Northern Song Dynasty. It was destroyed long before, but its replica was built in the former address to mark the place name. | |
| 1508075900(1) |
| Demolishment and redevelopment | A new street, Yuqian Street（御前街） was built in the town to expand the service functions for culture and commerce. The essence and details of ancient buildings in Ming and Qing Dynasties and the artistic conception of the beautiful and intangible water towns in the south of the Yangtze River are restored on the buildings. | |
| 1508075942(1) |
| **Representation of space** | | |
| Local government | The local government dominated the renovation project and established Qibao Town Industrial Development Co., Ltd. to repair and reconstruct the old blocks in the town. Moreover, the government has built a commercial block in the town with residential function, cultural function, commercial function and tourism function. | |
| Development and management companies | Qibao Town Industrial Development Co., Ltd. established by the government is the main developer of the town. In addition, other free companies can bid for projects. | |
| **Representational spaces** | | |
| 1508075956(1)Inhabitantsbehaviors | | In the project of Huaxiamingyuan（华夏茗苑）, 269 households moved back, so the aborigines are the main inhabitants. The first floors of the original dwelling districts in the town were changed to be shops and the second floors are living spaces. |
|  | |
| Tourists’ behaviors | | The ancient town is small and close to the city, so it mainly creates a form of short-term sightseeing and entertainment that can participated in all year round. The main business is to experience culture and food. |
| 1508076001(1) | |
| Cultural behaviors | | The ancient town has restored the indoor amusement park, Big World that was closed before, and introduced the original art group to add more and rich shows for the cultural development of the old street. |
| 1508076073(1) | |

*D.b.The spatial relationship of Qibao Town after regeneration*

Qibao Town is one of the few towns in the urban centers, which was an important factor to mold it to be a historical commercial block. The government dominated the reconstruction and external enterprises can bid for the projects. The projects launched by enterprises are the main producers for the town to increase new material space. The town has built a commercial block in the town with residential function, cultural function, commercial function and tourism function. In the town, the interaction between the residents and the social space at the beginning has turned into commercial interaction between merchants and tourists. The producers of space were changed from the original residents into the government, enterprises and merchants.

**IV. Conclusion & Recommendation**

In this paper, we exposed the evolution of spatial form for the regeneration of ancient towns with the theory of three elements of space, and summarized the analysis of the four ancient towns as follows:

Firstly, in the aspect of spatial practice, the material buildings in the ancient towns shall be remolded variously, because the multifarious material space will bring multiple experience for tourists. The ancient towns shall be divided in different levels and remolded with different materials to avoid the similarity of ancient towns in building types and functions.

Secondly, in the aspect of representations of space, the property rights and operation of ancient towns shall be unified. The unity of property rights can avoid the vicious competition between merchants fundamentally, but it has some shortages at the same time. For example, it needs to be supported by a lot of investment, but most of profits belong to companies. Therefore, it is necessary to form a property right structure of "company + residents", so that residents can get bonus after they hand over the operation rights of the houses. The problems about property rights shall be properly resolved from a long-term perspective with innovative thinking.

Thirdly, form a community structure with resultant development. Avoid the contradiction between the inhabitants and the development company. The development company employs the inhabitants, and then subleases the houses to the inhabitants for operation, to form a cooperative development relationship between the development company and inhabitants. Therefore, both the development company and inhabitants will be affected by the success or failure of the operation of the ancient towns.

Fourthly, respect for local characteristics, and take culture and art as the key points and the source for the development of ancient towns. At the same time to protect the local culture, add the culture and art according with modernization, so that the communication between the people and culture space and between people and buildings in the space will become better.

In the future, if the historical and cultural areas such as ancient towns and ancient cities need to be reconstructed and protected for development, cultural protection and tourism development, the local government and the development company shall support and cooperate strongly, the planners, managers, operators and the mass shall participate in it actively, the relationship between residents and tourists shall be coordinated. It is more needed to activate the local folk culture and protect the historic buildings to improve the influence of space.

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