

URBAN LANDSCAPE STUDIES
EUPHORIGENIC LANDSCAPES

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LAREG



HANGZHOU
30° 15'N 120° 10'E

SIZE	16,847 KM ²
POPULATION	8,700,400
DENSITY	516 / KM ²
ELEVATION	18 M
TIME ZONE	CHINA STANDARD (UTC+8)

XIXI LANDSCAPE, HANGZHOU

Yuanyuan Gu

Saying as “Paradise in Heaven; Suzhou and Hangzhou on earth” is a cultural Chinese sentence without exaggerate descriptions. And a movie called *If You Are The One* [非诚勿扰] attracted considerable public attention of Hangzhou by the end of 2008. , the Xixi Wetland, South Yangtze club, the teahouse exemplified the unique relaxed lifestyle of Hangzhou, landscaped backdrop, simple and elegant, tranquil environment. A boat hanging a lantern rowed slowly upstream, and the soft light reflected calm water. Standing on the head of the boat, the helmsman rowed rhythmically and gently. The actress leaned close to the actor, listened to the water quietly. At that moment, Xixi became the first choice of romantic love among the youth and new presentation of water towns south of the Yangtze River after the public show.

THE MORPHOLOGY LAYER AND EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

There are two major river systems in the south of the Yangtze River, Yangtze River and Qiantang River [钱塘江] which are connected with each other through the Great Canal. There are also rivers and numerous lakes spread all over the

area which can flow to each other by the construction of a large number of water conservancy in the long-term development process. Xixi Wetland locates at the southern wing of the Yangtze River Delta, between south-western hill-valley area and north-eastern stream-plain area of Zhejiang province. Stream Dongshao [东苕溪] as the boundary, the western hilly valley, formed 130 million years ago, are the eastern foot of Tian Mu Mountain [天目山] and ranges of Qianli Hill [千里岗]. The eastern plain formed by the Stream shao [苕溪] distributes at the mouth of the valley. The northeast water network plain, mainly in the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal Basin, has flat land and dense ponds. The southeast beach plain mainly is marine accumulation, alluvial and lacustrine formation of auxiliary conditions, flat terrain with a bit high-pitched and deep soil. Generally, Xixi [west stream 西溪] starts from Town Xianlin [闲林镇], throughout several estuaries, flow to the River Yuhangtang [余杭塘河] which is a branch of Stream Dongshao on the north. Xixi as one of the backbones forms a complex water-net system together with the River Yuhangtang. According to the literature, the first influence of human activities on Xixi Wetland happened around the Eastern Han Dynasty. Mayor of Yu-Hang or-

ganized one hundred thousand labours on water conservancy at 173 A.D... They dredged river, excavated lakes and built dam, reduced the amount of water into the Xixi gradually. Water facilities and land formation began to attract pioneers gathered in Xixi to do agriculture and fisheries activities. After Jin Dynasty, to be accompanied with Buddhism being introduced to China, a large number of Buddhist temples and other religious buildings were site selected here based on the lots of original wetland scenery; but the scale of construction at this time had little visual impact, on the contrary became landscape elements. Southern Song Dynasty establishing the capital in Hangzhou accelerated economic development and population was denser correspondingly. The original streams, lakes and mud areas had extensively converted into the rivers and ports for transportation and ponds for fish-farming. Xixi Wetland formed a “mulberry fish pond” landscape pattern which is the mass of attraction nowadays during this period. From 173 A.D to the late Tang Dynasty, the ancestors dwelled in Xixi Area constantly transformed nature, to create better conditions for agriculture. Firstly, they built the dams to prevent the flood from southwest. Beyond millennium artificial transformation, Xixi Wetland emerges a unique

scaly texture by crisscross river net and dense basins which is totally different from the original morphology. The Song Dynasty government formally establishing Xixi town at 988 AD. Xixi has a variety of landscape forms, the densely populated traditional towns, view-open agricultural landscape, as well as sparsely populated secondary wetland landscape. Meanwhile, the most famous one is abundant resource of waterfront landscape. Almost the whole region was composed by the farmland - fish ponds - pond shore - islet - stream system. And the space structure is well arranged with both winding rustic charm and grand open enlightened.

THE DAILY LIFE LAYER AND THE SOUTH OF YANGTZE RIVER CULTURE IMAGINES

Economic and cultural centre of China shifted to the south of the Yangtze River thoroughly after Tang and Song Dynasty, and ‘Hangzhou - Suzhou’ north-south axis was set eventually. The old saying “the ripe of Suzhou and Hangzhou makes the whole country adequate” witnessed the wealth of this region. After 150 years’ development as the capital of the south China, Hangzhou presented as “the world’s most beautiful and luxurious city” when the famous Italian traveller Marco Polo vis-

ited at Yuan Dynasty.

The south of the Yangtze River stands in the transition from the subtropical to warm temperate zone. Warm and humid climate with four distinct seasons is very suitable for the growth of various crops and human life. In ancient time, “the south of the Yangtze River” means high-developed education and wealthy riverside scenery, a land flowing with milk and honey is the first image in people’s mind. Xixi Wetland Landscape extremely matches Chinese millennium farming cultural heritage which is especially precious in modern society. The cultural landscape like “a small bridge over the flowing stream” and the natural landscape as “breeze and drizzle” breeds the refined scholars’ aesthetic culture. And this view just is the ancient Chinese literati ideal of “harmony of the nature, beauty of the community”. For example, the “water designing” in the Chinese Classical Garden is a simulation of the natural river morphology of the south of the Yangtze River.

As for the boats, the meaning is self-evident for the people living in this area, no matter going out or fishing even transportation. Before the popularization of modern transportation, water transport was not only inexpensive, but also had a larger capacity than land transport. Thus, people would like

to gather to any beneficial port for water transportation and consequently a town was formed. These riverfront towns always show types of strip layout. Due to relatively free river turns, towns usually follow the natural form and are spread on one river side or both sides. The landscape in the whole area demonstrated a harmonious texture between man and nature. In the river-cut south of Yangtze River, many towns and villages were built along the rivers; their patterns depended on the rivers’ direction, various shape and changing-width. Random elements like various bridges and white wall with dark roof tile [建筑风格] creates distinctive landscape and the visual impact. When mentioning the south of the Yangtze River, pictures emerge in my mind are rippling water, variety of bridges, black-awning boat, gentle rain, stone road, drops upstream from the roof down, and a lotus or tea picking girl trailing long plaits walking in the narrow alley with an umbrella in the poem “A Lane in the Rain” by Dai Wangshu [《雨巷》戴望舒]. The tissues mentioned above, some such river, boat, bridge, stone road and lane are the “generator” of daily life.

Different with the western solemn churches, the Chinese religious buildings take a more secular function for communication. Generally temples

were built outside of the city, pilgrims can enjoy the scenery along the way; it is a wonderful thing to enjoy well-cooked vegetarian dishes in the temple garden; shopping fun can also be satisfied due to a large number of traders gathering in front of the temple door. In the absence of Square culture, Temples are particularly important in ancient Chinese society, they provide the city living room for communication instead of square functions. Especially for the city's civilians and bound women, and the temple pilgrimage is the rare opportunity to go out of his / her year . They can get close to nature, and deal with people outside the community. Since the Jin Dynasty, the prevalence of Buddhist architecture in Xixi area, and the subsequent construction of Garden Villas of scholars drew the public outing of Hangzhou and the surrounding cities. Going for a walk together in the country on Tomb-sweeping Day [清明节] in spring and climbing hills on Double Ninth Festival [重阳节] in autumn are typical and important leisure activities for ancient Chinese close to nature. The fun of outdoor party and friends' communication is more interesting than enjoying the landscape. In other words, appreciating fine view or close to nature is more or less a carrier of strengthen the bond of friends and relatives and a place for interpersonal communication.

Europeans like to sit along the square, bath in the sunshine, drink coffee; the very introverted personality of Chinese makes them prefer the indoor leisure, such as sitting near the window in tea houses and enjoy the beautiful scenery or the bustling streets, smell tea perfume. Hear storytelling in restaurant and watch traditional opera in garden are a standing-outside participant mode which are totally different from Europe and America, such as civic participation in the carnival. The close-up shots in "If You Are the One" on Xinyuan teahouse and Pingtan [评弹 storytelling and ballad singing in Suzhou dialect] witnessed that folk arts and tea ceremony had a wide range of mass base , which are the main entertainment form of citizen's street life.

Xixi Wetland was a country park in pre-auto age. For the citizens of that time, around 10km to the city centre means a round trip in one day. It becomes a part of Hangzhou citizen daily life under better transportation. They can experience both farmer or fisherman lifestyle and natural exploration. Chinese traditional festivals like the Dragon Boat Festival [端午节] and Chinese New Year dying away in the city are still particularly ceremonious in Xixi Wetland. Folk customs of local area or Yangtze delta such as kung fu art on the boat [船拳] and blue cloth with design in white

[蓝印花布] technique, boat-wedding, play Shaoxing opera [越剧] recall real Chinese daily life 30 years ago. Some citizens especially those seniors prefer to rent a little wooden boat from the peasant family nearby, and then spend half day on fishing, take a walk around the wandering river, enjoy the trophies as the last program of the happy farming-hour.

Living in the old-fashion wooden structure house, local inhabitants had an intimate neighbourhood but not rich material life ten years ago. That time, families preferred to eat in their courtyard with the doors open, and then moved out bamboo chairs and chatted with each other while enjoying the cool in summer. However, they didn't have any secrets. On the one hand, people used to such open type social communication; on the other hand, due to the building materials and spatial distribution, home affairs, for example couple quarrel, were broadcasted easily. Homesickness and old memory are indeed precious nowadays, living with sewer and privacy may be more attractive.

THE GLOBAL LAYER AND THE QUICK SETUP SYSTEMS UNDER POLITICAL POWER

Before the large-scale development, Xixi area presented a progressive water system structure over than other re-

gions, the land is only a supporting role [与其他地方不同, 此地水多土少] in this system. The protogenesis such as River Yuhangtang and Stream Dongshao composed the backbone network; the water conservancy rivers like River Yanshan [沿山河] River Wuchang [五常港] etc. and some big lakes constitute the subordinate system; next is the mulberry-fish pond system. The boat was the main traffic tool in former Xixi, life and production was greatly dependent on water transport. The Lucky Dam and Green Dam as well as towns and houses were just to fill up the remaining of the water system. This system is closely related with the residents' everyday life and transit into the mediating level passage in the years gone by. The modern system in Xixi is in the initial construction phase. There are only several complete highways as follows: Road Wenyi [文一西路], east-west Avenue [东西大道] and regional highway 015, national highway 104, other hard surface is not yet into the system, while a railway across the area.

The main industry doing terrible harm to the environment of Xixi Wetland was pig-raising that is 7 times discharge capacity as much as human beings before renovation project. Local inhabitants kept on filling and occupying water column to build more housing. With the rapid development of industrialization

since late 80's, vast industrial sewage discharged into Xixi Wetland without any treatment due to the absence of cesspipe, so did living waste and sewage. Xixi area came into an important part of main city in Hangzhou Urban Master Planning in 2001, urban facilities began to planning and construction on Jan 2004. First-phase project of Xixi Wetland Park opened in 2005; in the meantime, the exploitation of real estate around Xixi Wetland Park moved into mass construction and marketing period. Xixi turned into a complex sub-centre, which integrated residence, business, administration, research and vacation with the opening of west part of the park in 2009. From the brief "development" history above, it speaks volumes for the powerful political force of local government.

The strategy of local administration is that utilize the ecology dominance to enhance the urbanization and industrial restructuring, optimize resource allocation, produce the radiation effect to the whole area development by industrial concentration. Undoubtedly, the government concentrates political power and financial resources in a very short-term. Traffic system is in the stage of constant improvement; educational, medical and recreation blocks are under construction or been established, they are Zhejiang University campus

which has all kinds of public cultural facilities, a 3600-bed hospital which will be the biggest one in the province, a 98.9 km² high-tech park composing innovation and industrialization of research findings, a new shopping centre and multi-consume lever hotels. All these new urban systems will both benefit the citizens and authority tremendously. The future structure of the Xixi will present the New York Central Park mode with Wetland Park in the centre and the real estate as well as services industry around.

On the positive perspective, no one can pull off a government-engineered protection action plan. The authority leaded pig-raising transformation into tourism industrial, laid the pipeline, encouraged migration to relieve the population pressure, and speeded up water quality improvement simultaneously. Housing price keeps running under high price level demonstrated the efficient work by the political force in different ways. However, it moves into a new paradox that graceful landscape attracts investment and construction yet artificial buildings stain even destroy landscape quality. Scenery of waterside villages, the literati tradition of Southern Yangtze Delta and the beautiful story about an emperor share Xixi scenery with his people [西溪且留下] are as a business "selling points" for

real estate commercial speculation. The purchasers admire excellent views and splendid culture tradition; simultaneously, they act an unconscious assistant of destroyer in the process of demolishing old dwellings and filling in rivers for more density buildings. “The Xixi daily life” is the emperor’s new clothes, to obscure the reality of row upon row of tall buildings in the name of enjoying the high-quality air and environment .

In the era of wrestling between economic development and environmental protection, it might be a smart city management strategy in rapid urbanization China, “fanfare” to protect a wetland Park less than 1 / 10 of the whole area in exchange for a higher price of selling the surrounding land. Although the Xixi Wetland Park is no longer the villages’ home but a static and charge park, the development model kept at least part of wetland resources and continued folk culture which is better than those land disappeared in the cranes and dust [解释].

From the perspective of life quality, the conflict between urban population growth and limited land resources, to some extent, forces the administration departments or developer to satisfy fundamental needs first, and then pursue quality. Only when the economy develops to a certain level, people would start to care about things other

than food and clothing, such as the pursuit of life quality, environment protection, local traditions and culture continuance, and so on. Liang Congjie [梁从诫] also said that ugly modern buildings could be better than those quaint old houses from the point of view of meeting the needs of life. If it cannot satisfy the residents’ pursuit of modern life, if modern living facilities, traffic conditions are conflict with former patterns, it is impossible to keep at last.

THE MEDIATING LAYER AND THE FABRIC OF PRODUCING URBAN LANDSCAPE

As the irresistible pitch of urbanization in China today, Hangzhou always keeps up sprawling, and breaks the boundary of its rural area Xixi.

There were filled with rice field, tea gardens and fish ponds, several villages distributing sporadically. Gradually, urban landscape, wide ablaze with lights and concrete forest, is instead of agriculture imagines; smoke wreathing over the cottage from the kitchen chimney can’t be seen any more. Large scale reinforced concrete buildings replace former exquisite wooded houses. The constructions grow higher and higher, from two-storey to dozens of meters, truncated roof also becomes the main trend. Machine-made modern architecture supplants the ancient houses of

civilian homes with white walls, black roof-tiles in three or five years. Xixi is at a rapid development status with demolition, construction plant and dust everywhere; besides, Xixi presents a high-mixed texture which exist both tradition and modern, cottage and tall storey housing, village and factory, static reservation and under construction buildings. A large number of new residents immigrate into Xixi, 5-10 times density of the natives; the indigenous inhabitants, along with their lifestyle, customs and traditions emigrated or replaced by new immigrants.

The manifestation mode of traditional settlement is courtyards on both sides of the street organized by family and kinship ties as a rule [解释]. In recent years Real estate development enlarge the courtyard that originally belonged to the family level into great community which can accommodate a variety of classes and groups due to severe enlarged scale. The concept of equality and freedom in modern society reflected in the physical space is the unity of architectural style and form; it is a very homogeneous state. Small zones split relationship between urban spaces, and in the closed zones are lack of effective ties and necessary public space. The efficient transportation, which meets the requirements of modern society, and the modern community planning the-

ory gradually, move residents' life and activity centre from the street outside the community to the inside. The walls surrounding cut the link of the street and isolated cell, street, the traditional urban public communication space is slowly losing its relevance remaining traffic function.

In the context of rapid social transformation, architects often determine many people's living conditions. First of all, they finish the foundation, and then plan and design; this top-down approach is bound to be mechanical and rational. Maybe someone tries to find back the characteristics of waterfront dwellings and return to some old texture, however, only to enlarge the scale of garden is far from enough in modern residential area. Traditional garden design around Yangtze Delta is for private gardens, landscape architects are very good at showing their talents good in the confusion square. Moreover, the traditional form of living culture incompatible implants living style of modern architecture.

Dominated by political forces of new town construction can but build skeleton - the system level, and developers fill and improve the system, following suit, while the texture of daily life needs time and space of slow growth. With the continuation or conversion of the indigenous residents living habits,

some of the old fabric will restore in the new physical space. With the new residents begin to accommodate to each other and adapt to new environment, new neighbourhood might be mature and stable, immigrations may use the public space provided by architects, or give up using such space instead of developing new space supporting their own life. In many new towns developed more than 10 years, you can find that the fabric growing process can also the conversion process that the system layer led by political power to the middle layer of daily life. For instance, the new footpath along both sides of River Wuchang and River Chaotianmo [朝天莫港], deep into Xixi Wetland. A marina has been set to take boat to the park even to the Giant Canal like former time. These facilities can't have close ties with the inhabitants' daily life immediately. Accompanying the residents settling here, once the pace of life back on track, such space will be bound to the container of everyday life, complete the transformation from system level to the texture layer.

After a hundred years of development, Europe and the United States have entered a relatively stable period of urbanization process; the main stream transferred to Asia and Latin America. The pace of urbanization in developing countries seems more intense, usually

they completed in a few decades away for hundreds of years compared to Europe and the United States. In this process, the rapid urbanization means bulldozed of everything of villages accumulated of thousands years, instead exotic matter called the "urban". The subject of the city, civic society usually lags behind the physical space on urbanization. They change the mode of life and thinking to follow the pace of urbanization actively or passively. That is, when the old fabric was erased, the new system can be set up in the short term, while the new texture takes much longer time and grow slowly to fill and complete the system.

Suffered from hundred years of poverty and invasions, now China do not have enough time and patience to wait for a bottom-up urbanization; only drastic reforms and developments make the nation back to the ranks of power. "Modernism" Planning Theory inherited from the European is undoubtedly the most efficient method in the stage of rapid development. The city model that Le Corbusier pinned his praise of the Mechanical Age and the illusion of a better future is become the universal reality in China. The city is been a formal organized together as the mechanical parts. In the initial stage, people work under a well-functioning system. But when society developed to a certain

degree, people would pursue personality development definitely, they also require the city develops various types of space to meet the needs of different groups. Thus, intermediate level will regenerate along with the fabric recovery.

CONCLUSION

“No style” modernism has prevalence in China more than half century. It did not leave much building to stir emotions and memories; the city lost the capacity of cultivating and expressing nature, history and cultures.

As architects, planners and landscape architects, we can focus on the texture of the local traditional structures; try to recover it not only in Xixi but also in other areas or upgrade the indigenous fabric. We can still create new landscape to suit modern society, and strive to fill a lot of blank space left by the System. Besides, we can also continuously adjust the not perfect existing structure function to adapt to the requirements of life.

However, when we use the western theory to analyze China’s urban landscape, there is always lack of acclimatization. Westerners spend more leisure time on outdoor activities, so they demand high quality on the landscape. “Resident time-use survey” showed that the Chinese people’s leisure time was more for interpersonal, compared with Euro-

pean and American countries. “Watching TV, Internet, dining together, sleeping, playing mah-jong [麻将], banquets are the most frequent things beyond 8 work hours; and those most popular leisure activities in western countries such as sunbathing and sports are not so welcomed among Chinese people.” Of course, with the progress of living standards, people will increase recreational demands; but the rigid application of western experience and model is not suitable for China’s social development.