

# **ICOA751: HERITAGE SHARING IN THE COMMUNITIES OF HISTORIC WATERFRONT TOWNS IN THE SOUTH OF YANGTZE RIVER OF CHINA: A WAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS ON PADDY FIELD**

## **Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management**

**Session 1:** Sustainable Development and Community Engagement

**Location:** Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 13, 2017, 11:30 – 11:45

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**Abstract:** By examining how local communities share heritage in historic waterfront towns in south China, we try to explore a way to facilitate the sustainable development of these ancient towns, which are characteristic of human-water interaction. As one of the most important stakeholders, local communities in these historic waterfront towns participate in heritage management by sharing heritage protection facilities and by engaging in preservation activities with the public and the tourists.

The way of life is an integral component to the value of historic towns' heritage and buildings. The sharing of heritage in the communities, therefore, aims to manage the inevitable changes in the development of historic towns intended not only for professionals, but also for local management bodies. We suggest that stakeholders should be aware of and adapt the inevitability of change in urban development. They should take it into consideration during decision-making process, for the sustainable development of the historic towns.

**Key words:** *Historical Waterfront Towns in the South of China, community, shared heritage*

## General Introduction

Historic Waterfront Towns in south the Yangtze River of China and its surrounding landscape display a very harmonious interplay.

There is a wide distribution of water bodies and networks formed by a large number of lakes and rivers in the low-lying plain areas of eastern Taihu in the lower reach of Yangtze River. After a long period of human reclamation in Song and Yuan Dynasties and before, the densely concentrated water network regions were gradually transformed into habitable water-land mixed areas.

From Ming Dynasty to the Republican period, a great number of towns and settlement clusters emerged and flourished in these water-land mixed areas formed by rivers and paddy fields served to link urban and rural areas commercially. In addition, the representative handicraft industry such as silk was also developed. Since then, Historical Waterfront Towns in the South of China were formed characterized by unique planning layout and production and living features.

This paper selects ten ancient towns typical of historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River as the objects of study and management, including Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Luzhi and Lili. By taking advantage of and transforming the natural environment of lake-type low-lying wetlands, these ancient towns followed the dense network of rivers and waterways in the regions of Taihu, to build commercial towns, settlement clusters and a typical planning layout and architectural form with geographical characteristics of waterfront towns. Along with the local traditional life and business activities, these towns became the model of lake-type wetland town clusters around the world from Ming Dynasty to the Republican period.



*Fig.1– Sketch map of the locations of the ten historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River.*

*Fig.2 – Human-water settlement cluster in Zhouzhuang ancient town.*

## Thematic study: Human-water Interaction Settlement

The historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River created an outstanding representation of the continuous interaction between human and nature in the lake-type wetland environment. People in the south of Yangtze River adapted and transformed local lake-type wetland environment into large-scale river networks as one unique approach of intensive land utilization in such environment. They also built a great number of densely populated towns and settlement clusters based on these artificial river networks.

In these towns, the form of river networks affects the development orientation of ancient towns, and determines the direction and layout of streets and lanes. These towns are embraced by water and lanes, and the buildings are characterized by commercial shops below and in front, and residential space above and at the back, while the streets and street bridges are connected with each other by rivers densely distributed among them. These characteristics reflect the water-loving settlement pattern of these ancient towns, and a typical waterfront town architectural style evolved.

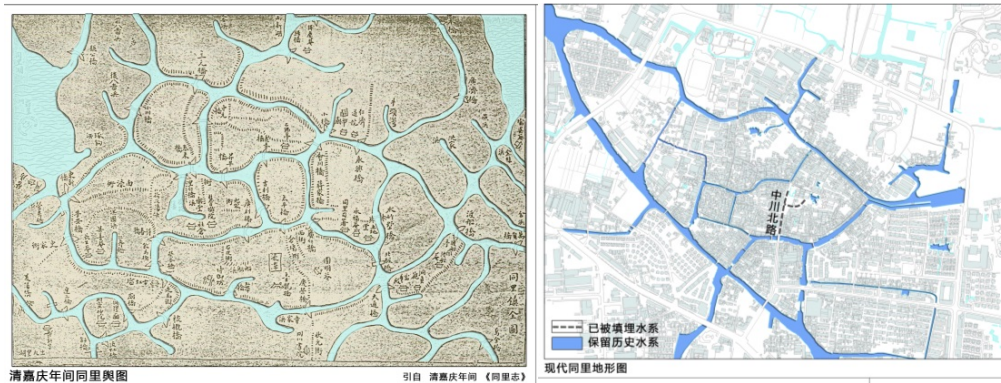


Fig.3/4 – Historical map of Tongli ancient town Map of today's Tongli ancient town - paddy fields in Tongli ancient town

## Protection and Management:

In terms of survey on the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River, we investigated not only the physical environment of these ten ancient towns, but also the cognitive situation of different age groups and different social classes in these communities, and relevant business conditions.

We also established an integrated information database of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River based on the focus of survey. On the basis of GIS system, the database was used to construct the basic information framework for all water systems, streets and buildings in these ten ancient towns, including heritage period, scale, state of conservation, state of uses, form and material. In terms of more important and complex elements among them, a more comprehensive and detailed database was established.

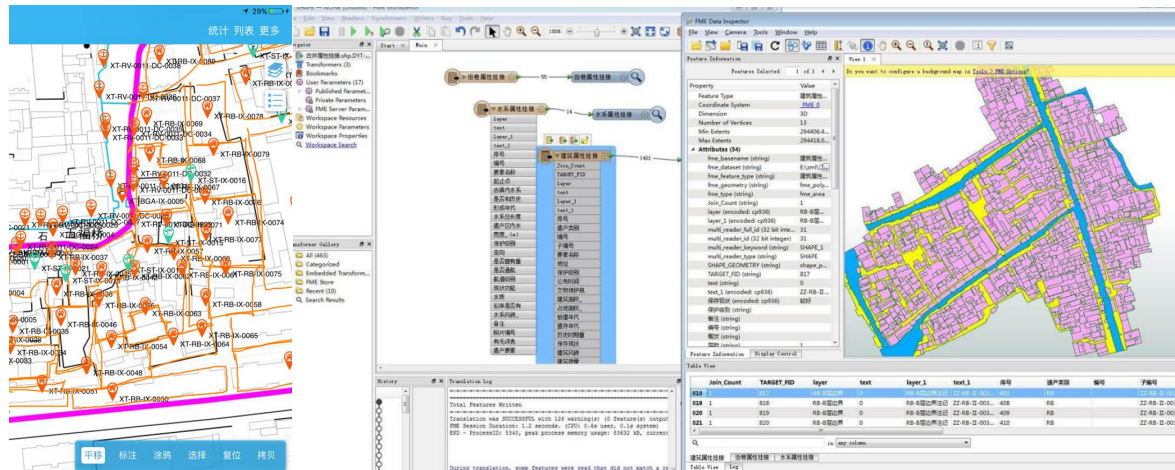


Fig.5– Application of information collection system

Fig.6– Database of heritage in the Zhouzhuang ancient town



The principles and measures for the protection and development of ancient town heritages in the management plans are important basis of the major heritage sharing measures in the communities of ancient towns. The major measures for management and promotion of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River in the management planning include overall protection, historical environmental protection and control, legal systems and coordination mechanisms, improvement of infrastructure system, display and interpretation of cultural values, guidance to cultural industry and the regulation of community residents in ancient towns.



Fig. 7– Protection and management plans for heritage in the Tongli ancient town

### Sharing idea: Home of the natural life

One of the most important identity symbols of the Historic Waterfront Towns in the south of Yangtze River of China seems to be a safe and ideal place for natural life. It contains not only the spatial aspects of the context between the town and its environment but also aspects of the rhythm of the natural life which being the most valuable.

The heritage sharing of the historic towns means not only the physical environment and its surroundings but also its philosophy meanings. Sharing the physical environment includes the water system and elements of traditional architecture in south China featured by the white walls and dark roofs will arouse the spontaneous feeling of being home. While sharing the facilities in the historic town can accommodate the native citizens and visitors safe and intimate settlements.

### Sharing bodies

The sharing bodies of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River mainly include heritage users, heritage protectors and governments of ancient towns. These three sharing bodies are closely related with one another in the protection and development of ancient town heritage. Since their demands are different from one another, each of them need to compromise in the heritage sharing of these ancient towns before reaching balance.

**Heritage users:** The heritage users include community residents, guests and visitors to these ancient towns;

**Heritage protectors:** They are responsible for proposing restrictive requirements on heritage protection;

**Government:** They are responsible for formulating guidance policies for protection of ancient town heritages.

### Sharing implementation

Sharing the “language” of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River in China

《Culture is a common social experience maintained by relying on symbolic systems and individual memories.》<sup>1</sup>The individual and social experiences in the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River are significantly synchronous in space and time. Whether for any family or at any times, people in these towns have no difficulty in communicating with each other in time and space, who are typical face-to-face groups. Therefore, the culture borne by these historic waterfront towns also has a characteristic of intimacy, which forms the unique language of these towns. Therefore, the heritage sharing of these ancient towns is to share the unique “language” of ancient towns and the “discourse” expressed via “language”.

**Waterfront sharing:** Starting with “river system” as the line

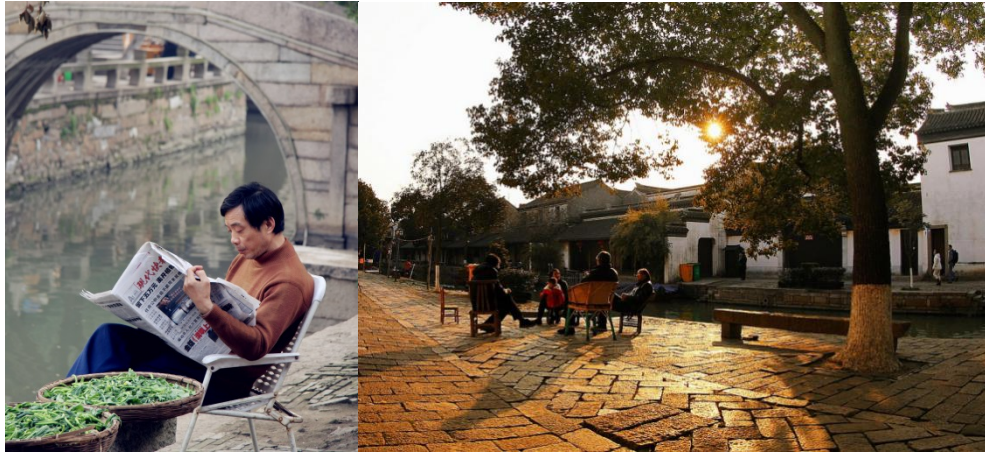
The historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River have a distinctly hierarchical river network. During the development and transformation of the dense river system and network of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River, a network-type river system was evolved, where the major river channels affect the direction of settlements, streets and buildings, which are the major routes of river transport, the source of domestic water in the ancient towns and transport routes. The following basic principles should be followed in order to realize the shoreline sharing of river systems and river ways in the historic waterfront towns:

**Continuity of river shorelines:** The continuity of the river shorelines in the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River helps to guarantee the transport function of the river ways in these ancient towns, and is the most important formal feature of the historic waterfront towns. It is the basic line for heritage sharing and the foundation of provision for sharing experience in these towns.



*Fig.8– Floating market in Wuzhen ancient town*

**Public space of river shorelines:** The basic strategies for the heritage sharing in these historic waterfront towns include increasing public and open space of river shorelines and enhancing exchange opportunities for all kinds of people through leisure and recreation space of the shorelines.



*Fig.9– Reading and taking a rest along the river ports in the Tongli ancient town*



*Fig.10– Qingfeng Bridge, water and people in the Jinxi ancient town*

**Control of the occupation of river shorelines:** Since the occupation of river shorelines by the modern business such as catering, commerce and trade, and the interruption of their continuity will adversely affect the ancient town sharing experience.

House Sharing - Strengthening ancient town sharing experience with “celebrities” as nodes

The row upon row of courtyards in the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River are not only the most important identity for the residents in these towns, but also a reflection of the spatial social organizational structure in the ancient towns..

**Paying attention to celebrities in ancient towns:** Since sorting out the relationship of “celebrities” in each town and its influence will help to better narrate the heritage sharing stories with celebrities as nodes, it is quite essential to research and disseminate the historic celebrities in these towns.





Fig.11– Hand drawing and pictures of LiliAncient Town

**Utilization of courtyards of ancient towns:** Taking advantage of courtyards in the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River is the most important and direct approach for the sharing of physical space in these towns. The sharing and utilization of courtyards in ancient towns should not be detached from the influence of celebrities and events on the historical development of the communities in these ancient towns.



Fig.12– Pictures of original community cultural centers and libraries used by the Blossom Hill Inn in Tongliu Ancient Town.



Fig.13– Shen Mansion in Zhouzhuang Ancient Town

**Facilities sharing - Control of facilities sharing on a "small-and-micro" scale**

The historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River were built on paddy fields through the intensive use of land. Due to scarcity of land, river shorelines are prime locations, and the streets, ancient bridges, wharves, arcade, and roofed streets are all small-scale and multifunctional living environment elements. They not only bear their own life and transport functions, but also become the spatial nodes or symbols in the streets, thus forming the spatial rhythm and rhyme of the ancient towns. Therefore, such

pleasing scale and compound functions should be taken as the facilities sharing features of the ancient town in order to enhance the facilities in these towns to adapt to contemporary life.

**Increasing community facilities:** Sharing of small-scale heritage facilities also include provision of convenient services for community life. The community facilities include community health stations, convenient service stations, community commercial facilities, community bookstores, barber shops, etc.



*Fig.14– Recreational place in the community of the Zhenze Ancient Town*

*Fig.15– Family room for sewing Luzhi Clothing in the Luzhi Ancient Town*

**Attaching importance to the logo system:** The design of ubiquitous small logos is also the key to the facilities sharing in these ancient towns. The symbols of these logos are not only important to foreign tourists, but also help the communities in these historic waterfront towns to better understand their own values for daily use.

**Job opportunity:** Zhenze Ancient Town utilized its handicraft silk and silk display as not only the motivation for promotion of community industries in the town, but also an entry point for close integration with the life of this town.

Life sharing - realization of life sharing in the ancient towns by means of “infiltration”

The key to realization of the community life sharing in ancient towns is the policy orientation and life experience behind the physical environment sharing. The heritage sharing in these ancient towns not only enables local government to attach importance to consultation and adoption of residents’ opinions, but also provide channels for residents to voice their own opinions for reference during policy formulation.

Through interviews with residents and opinion polls with other stakeholders, both the residents and visitors hope to improve their living environment and keep living memories through sharing and protection of ancient town. The life and heritage sharing needs to be guaranteed by a series of government policies:

**Housing subsidy:** Zhouzhuang, Lili and Tongli Ancient Towns enacted their own subsidy policies for repair and relocation of various houses.

**Industrial guidance:** Tongli and Lili Ancient Town governments provided for detailed regulations for increasing preferential policies for local residents in the control and guidance policies for standardization of the commercial operation and industry development in these towns.

**Religious and cultural events:** The International Drama Festival of the historic waterfront towns in the south of China held in Wuzhen Ancient Town attracted a large number of drama performers at home and abroad, adding new cultural content for the ancient town.





Fig.16– Picture of Wuzhen Drama Festival

**Training cooperation:** The ancient town communities are closely connected with heritage protection through a series of training cooperation activities.

**Survey and interview:** Various types of interviews not only provide community residents channels of expression, but also build channels for mutual understanding among residents, merchants and visitors to enhance their relationship.



Fig.17– Picture of interviews with residents in the community of the Zhouzhuang Ancient Town

The heritage sharing in the communities of ancient towns will eventually be reflected in all aspects of the community life with the purpose of integration of heritages and life, and overall sharing of heritages and life.

### **Sustainable development**

The community residents of the historic waterfront towns in the south of Yangtze River prefer water-loving living environment, harmonious neighborhood relationship and rich community activities, as well as feelings and memories of old houses. Therefore, it is possible to achieve sustainable development in these historic waterfront towns through heritage sharing, improvement of landscape environments and enhancement of living conditions of old house while reducing influence from transport to ancient towns and balancing tourism resources to find out a meeting point between community life of ancient towns and modern social life.

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# **ICOA751: LE PARTAGE DU PATRIMOINE DANS LES COMMUNAUTÉS DES VILLES CÔTIÈRES DU SUD DE LA CHINE: UNE VOIE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE D'ÉTABLISSEMENTS HUMAINS DANS DES POLDERS**

**Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant  
Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine**

**Session 1:** Développement durable et engagement communautaire

**Lieu:** Hall Gulmohur, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 13 Décembre, 2017, 11:30 – 11:45

**Auteur: Jing Wang**

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**Résumé:** En examinant comment les communautés locales partagent la notion de patrimoine dans les villes côtières du sud de la Chine, nous essaierons d'explorer une voie vers le développement durable de ces villes anciennes, qui sont caractéristiques de l'interaction homme/eau. En tant que l'un des plus importants acteurs, les communautés locales de ces villes côtières historiques participent à la mise valeur de leur patrimoine en partageant leurs services de protection du patrimoine et en s'engageant dans des activités de préservation avec le grand public et les touristes.

Le mode de vie est un élément constitutif de la valeur du patrimoine urbain et architectural de ces cités anciennes. Le partage de la notion de patrimoine auprès des populations, par conséquent, a pour but de gérer les inévitables changements dans le développement des villes historiques, non seulement à l'attention des professionnels mais aussi des administrations locales. Nous suggérons que tous les acteurs soient sensibilisés au patrimoine et adaptent l'inévitabilité du changement dans le développement urbain. Ainsi auraient-ils l'obligation d'en tenir compte dans leurs processus de décision concernant le développement durable des villes historiques.

**Mots-Clés:** *Villes côtières historiques du sud de la Chine, communautés, patrimoine partagé*