

Multidisciplinary approach for a new vision of urban requalification. Multi-scale strategies of social innovation, economic improvement and environmental sustainability practices.

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Abstract

This work is an operative best practice of new methodological approach that connects three disciplines - Planning, Design and Environmental Technological Design – in a holistic project.

A multidisciplinary approach is necessary to understand the complexity of urban phenomena meeting social, economic and environmental needs. It is very important boosting virtuous mechanisms for urban regeneration spreading innovation, guiding and shaping spontaneous social-change initiatives, starting from local traditions.

The work team was involved in an international workshop, called “Urban Village and Renovation Design”, took between Rome and Shanghai, within May and November 2016, in collaboration with the School of Design and Arts, East China Normal University of Shanghai.

Our research team composed by planners, architects and designers has drawn up a methodology in order to apply it in a small rural village requalification project in China. The town, named XibinZhen (Fujian Region) is undergoing in an economic and social contraction process which is bringing it to an incessant depopulation. We recognize landscape aspects, in our case the Youxi River, like a key resources to improve the urban area and the identity related with the context.

The methodology is composed in this way: 1) research and analyses in order to know places and ongoing multiscale phenomena; 2) collection of international best practices and references applicable in the specific case study; 3) brainstorming in which different disciplinary figures, local stakeholders and citizens are involved; 4) design strategies considering different stakeholders needs and different cultural approach or points of view; 5) starting from those strategies, definition of specific goals for a design concept and a sub sequential project propose.

Our proposal is composed by multi-scale strategies of social innovation, economic improvement, environmental sustainable practices, through a new setting of spaces and uses. Our new vision of Xibin Town runs around three key words for development: “new”, that is to have a “*for change*” approach; “river”, that is to recognize what we may call “*genius loci*”; “town”, that is to recognize the urban character of Xibin and its role in a broader context.

The three themes on which we set up the project strategy are:

- ENVIRONMENT: two linear promenades (the Urban Promenade and the Green Promenade), of new public space for the town with different characters related to the different nature of the waterfronts, north and south. The implementation of landscape qualities (industries on the facing coasts)

- URBAN LIFE: two axes: the Urban Axis that consolidates and upgrades the vital core of the collective life, organizing places and activities from the city gate by the Boulevard to the Market Street, to administration and public services (the Civic Street and the Civic Center); the Heritage Path that works between tradition and innovation, organizing step by step from culture to nature (traditional ateliers street, green street, educational theme park)

- Functional to these themes is the MOBILITY SYSTEM, re-organized fundamentally in an Urban Ring that distributes the main traffic.

The final output is a masterplan which collects and coordinates all the specific project actions redefining spaces, the use of them and architecture, starting from a reinterpretation of traditional technology and local material.

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