The innovation of the project is its critical, yet responsive position relative to the issue of aging cities in China. The scheme strategically demonstrates how new urban spaces can be integrated within the texture of traditional neighborhoods without wholesale demolition or replacement, thus raising awareness of the importance of sustainability. Also convincing is the emphasis on inclusive engagement with local residents in order to gain insight into the reality of extended families. With acute attention given to cultural as well as contextual factors, the project provides heightened standards of social and physical space. Ecologically, the project offers important lessons in energy conservation by suggesting an adaptive revitalization of existing conditions, the use of local materials, and cost-effective detailing. By proposing to reduce the consumption of material resources and pursue the regenerative capacities of design, the project provides sound evidence of how to achieve an economic balance.

Additionally, the scheme has extended relevance in showing how heritage can be conceived as an aesthetic asset in the development of a contemporary expression for urban environments.

Relevance to target issues (by author)

Quantum change and transferability

The goal of this design is to create new type of water front space for the locals, which contains both historical information and vernacular landscapes. By considering the direction, location and density of the roads, ponds and rivers, the topography of the site is maintained. By restoration of the Clan Lai’s famous houses and modification of the well-known 2e Street, the landmarks of the town are well preserved. New spaces are designed within the traditional texture. So a concordant relationship has been setup between the old and new lots of old towns of China are facing now the problems of losing their traditional characters and identities in the course of urbanization. This design can be used as a reference for its transferability in the sustainable renewal of traditional towns.

Ethical standards and social equity

Through investigation and analysis of the occupation and age of local residents, the living status of them and other social vulnerable groups are specially concerned in the design. New spaces and facilities are set up to meet the need of the modern life style of locals, which can’t be satisfied by the traditional space. Regeneration of spaces is the main standpoint and strategy of this design.

Ecological quality and energy conservation

The adaptive regeneration design was carried on under the restrictive conditions of geography and culture. Local construction materials and tectonic details are applied to the restoration and modification of historic buildings. Environmental, climatic and humanistic factors are well considered to reduce the consumption of local resources in the regeneration design.

Economic performance and compatibility

Regarding culture and economics as two reciprocal factors, the historic spaces have been made full use in the functional and scene design. Not only the excellent traditional residential buildings are well preserved, many buildings built in last 40 years whose structures are still in quite good situation are transformed and reused for their former functions or else. For example, the cinema of Changhe which was built in 1970’s, is rehabilitated by rearrangement of the plan and renovation of the facade.

In order to reduce the additional expenditure of the locals and to make an economic balance, a method of plot ratio transfer is put in practice. Different plot ratio and height limit is used in the conservation area and coordination area.

Contextual response and aesthetic impact

The cultural meaning of the settlement is turned up while the historical heritages of culture is preserved, restored and reused to present the aesthetic aspect of historical settlement and resources of humanities in the regeneration design.

Project description by author

As an old town well known for thousands of years, Changhe is located in Binjiang district of Hangzhou along the south shore of Qiantang River, where there are still many special environmental and cultural heritages remained after being damaged several times in history especially in the period of Cultural Revolution in 60’s of last century and the course of urbanization in the last 20 years. The current status of the town is running down. The historic buildings and the living facilities are dilapidated while the natural environment is destroyed a lot. More and more young people leave the town to make a better living in big cities and the average age of the population has raised quite a lot. In a word, the basic conditions of the town to maintain a sustainable development have been severely impaired.

To launch into a great planning strategy for the city, Hangzhou enforces its developing zone across the Qiantang River. Changhe has been now a part of the city of Hangzhou. The development of the town has been integrated into the development strategy of Hangzhou. Under this background, Changhe faces the serious challenge and competition of both the conservation of heritage and regeneration of the environment.

After a long term of investigation of the site, analysis of historical documents, survey of old streets and buildings and etc., the regeneration design focused on following factors:

1)Chorography, which is the historical and humanistic factor of the site including the pedigrees of the clans, activities and conceptions of local people and etc.
2)Topography, which is the physical factor of the site including the roads, rivers, ponds and etc.
3)Landmarks, which include traditional residential buildings built before 1949, late past buildings of the last fifty years and new buildings.

Basing on the studies of above, we try to reach following objectives:

1)To continue the historic topography, to maintain the land context and to preserve landmarks from ancient to late past in the historic areas of the town.
2)To make the old spaces suitable for the requirements of the contemporary life of the people who live there.
3)To rescue the existing spaces which provide both old features and modern spaces.

According to the distribution of the historic buildings, the site is separated into two parts in which different design methods and plot ratio control are applied in the regeneration design.

In the conservation area, the main design methods are to pull down the illegal buildings, to repair the dislipated historic buildings and to restore the famous house of the clan settlements.

In the coordination area, the main design methods are to set up modern spaces conced with the local features to meet the needs of the daily life of the local people.