



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO

Honors thesis

COURSE OF ARCHITECTURE
FOR SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Abstract

**Inhabited walls for Suzhou:
an alternative approach for preserving
Changmen community**

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by

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July 2018

My experience in China is related to a workshop I attended in Suzhou at XJTU university, near Shanghai. The main topic of the workshop organized by Pierre-Alain Croset was the urban regeneration of an ancient district, Changmen district, in the historical center of Suzhou.

The workshop was really stimulating because of the conditions of project site, different approaches (in the workshop were involved six schools of architecture: XJTU, University of Liverpool, TU Graz, Roma La Sapienza, ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine and Politecnico di Torino) and the different culture and needs students had to relate with.

It is important to underline that the whole district of Changmen in meant to be changed by Suzhou municipality.

In particular, one of the site turned to be really interesting for its inner potential and attracted my attention; slightly outside the walls of Suzhou historical center and facing a waterfront, it was already under construction.

Back in Italy, I started doing some researches about Changmen and I discovered that the site was meant to be transformed in a sort of touristic attraction for the rich middle class.

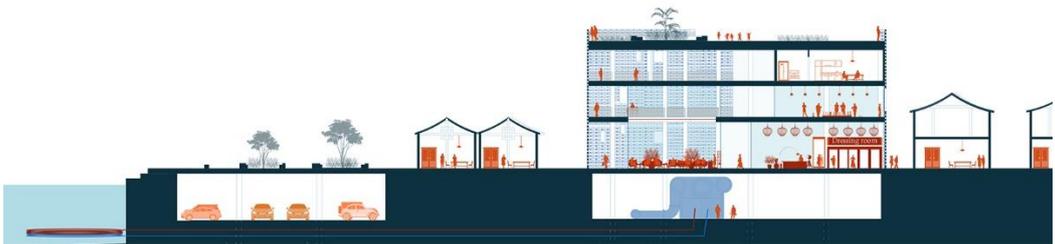
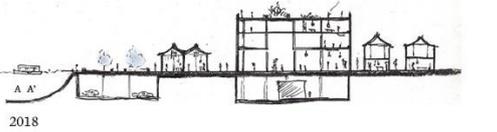
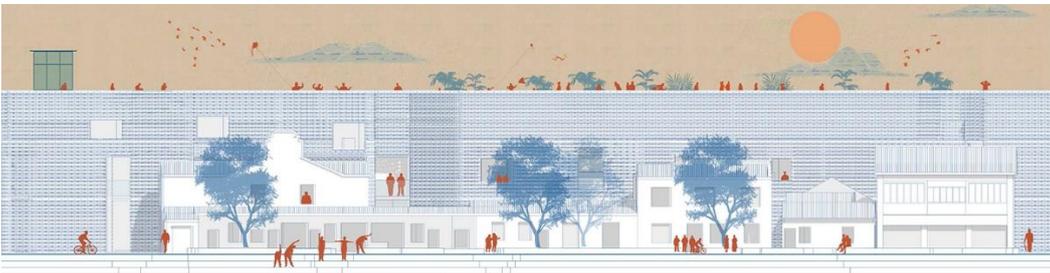
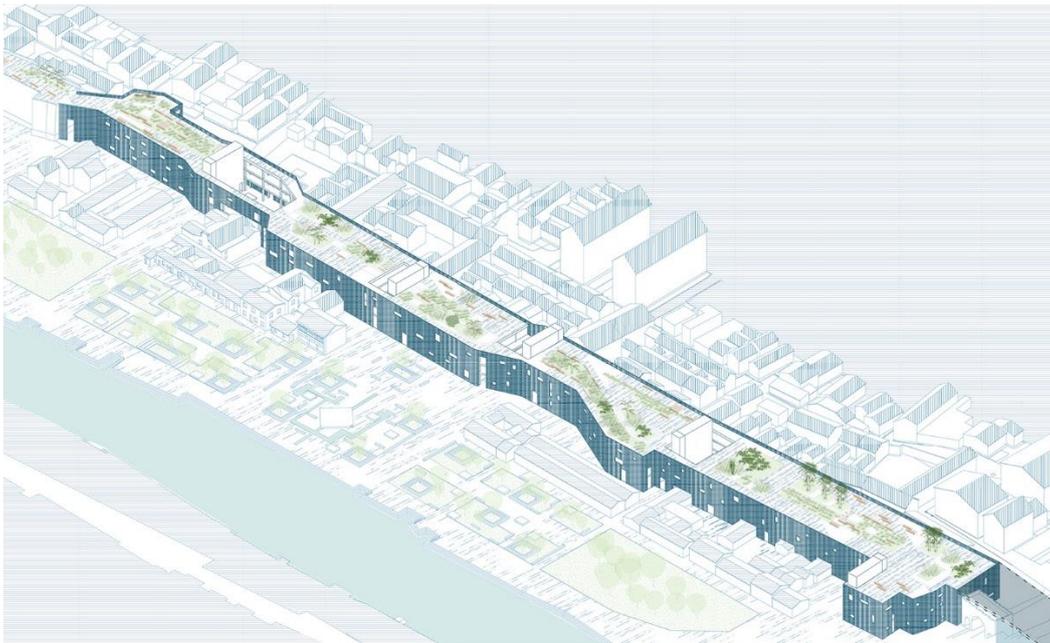
Suzhou municipality wanted to restore the image of the site and recreate the ancient commercial area of the historical city which was there by relocating the community living in that part of the city.

The project was intended to become only a commercial area.

In addition, in order to recreate the ancient image of Suzhou commercial area, municipality has adopted the "Suzhou style" for the new constructions, creating a fake image of the area. The debate on preservation is growing in importance in China as the Chinese government included it in the 13th five-years plan for economic and social development of the People's Republic of China.

However, it has a long tradition and both Chinese and Western architects are involved: in my researches, the approaches of authors like Liang Sichen (considered the father of architectural history in China), Yinon Xu and the American sinologist Frederick Mote were fundamental.

The aims of this thesis are questioning Chinese developers' approach in the preservation of Chinese historical city center and the creation of a programmatic approach based on a strategy of memory: the ruined walls of the area will be restored in order to create a new infrastructure able to answer to both commercial and community needs.



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