

I Introduction

“I think that harmony with history and tradition is important for people’s lives. I want to give an example. On television, we often see a scene in which someone lost his memory. As a result, circumstances are getting more and more terrible. His entire life is turned upside down.

If we look at Chinese cities, we see that almost all our cities equally lost their memories. This is a terrible phenomenon. And this is why we talk about history and tradition; they are absolutely essential for our daily lives.”¹

- Wang Shu 王澐

This impression on the situation of contemporary urban centers in China was formulated by renowned Chinese architect Wang Shu 王澐 in an interview in the documentary *China’s exploding cities* from August 2015. The increasing disappearance of traditional built heritage in Chinese cities as described by Wang is a result of the rapid urbanization processes China has been undergoing since the Reform and Opening-Up (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) in 1978. On the one hand, state restructuring and fiscal decentralization transferred the responsibility to raise funding for urban development from the Central Government to local governments. Thereby, local governments were empowered to regulate and promote urban development by mobilizing resources and attracting investment.² On the other hand, the introduction of market-oriented reforms, particularly land and housing reform, fostered the development of a real estate market and provided local governments with a new source for income generation.³

The reforms were initiated as a reaction to economic stagnation and widespread dilapidation of built structures in urban areas, making regeneration a major task of municipal governments. Under designations such as “transformation of unsafe buildings” (*weifang gaizao* 危房改造) in Beijing or “clearance of shanties”

1 Author’s translation. Source: Trabitusch, Michael (producer); Floquet, Claire; Hissen, Jörg-Daniel (directors, 2015): *Chinas explodierende Städte*, min. 34.

2 He, Shenjing; Wu, Fulong (2009): “China’s Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism: Perspectives from Urban Redevelopment”, p. 286.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 288–290.

(*penghu qingli* 棚户清理) in Shanghai, municipal governments launched redevelopment projects to improve living conditions in the 1970s and 1980s, but these initiatives remained at a low level due to financial deficiencies.⁴

From the 1990s, governments in great Chinese cities, striving for economic growth, started to involve the private sector and foreign investment into large-scale redevelopment of urban areas. As a result, traditional residential areas have often become targets for such redevelopment projects as they are greatly affected by overcrowding and deterioration. The demolition of traditional housing structures and their replacement with high-rise apartment blocks, as well as iconic buildings, generates new challenges for Chinese cities such as how to overcome the detachedness of new-built structures from each other and their environment.⁵ The loss of historic urban fabric has further led to the emergence of a monotonous appearance of Chinese cities, as described above, which seriously threatens the disappearance of local traditions and related customs.

Simultaneously, rapid urbanization processes and increasing pressures for economic growth have raised a growing awareness of cultural heritage and set a stronger focus on preservation.⁶ The first Chinese conservation movement started in the 1930s but ended due to the Second Sino-Japanese (1937–1945) and Civil Wars (1945–1949). At the beginning of the 1960s, the State Council primarily promulgated a list of significant cultural heritage, so-called “cultural relics” (*wenwu* 文物), and issued regulations for their protection and management. Although a decisive step, the establishment of a national conservation system in China was then, again, interrupted by the Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming* 文化大革命, 1966–1976), which caused the destruction of a great amount of historic built heritage.

In the last 30 years, China has greatly developed its heritage conservation system as reflected in the number of regulations and documents drafted at national and regional levels. At the beginning of the 1980s, the State Council further began promulgating selected cities with great historical and cultural values for protection, known as “Historically and Culturally Famous Cities” (*lishi wenhua mingcheng* 历史文化名城). Since then, this inventory has steadily been expanded to currently 132 cities.⁷ Initiated as a branding designation with a single requirement for muni-

4 He, Shenjing; Wu, Fulong (2005): “Property-led Redevelopment in Post-Reform China: A Case Study of Xintiandi Redevelopment Project in Shanghai”, pp. 3–4.

5 Van Oers, Ron; Pereira Roders, Ana (2013): “Road map for application of the HUL approach in China”, p. 6.

6 Berliner, Nancy (2005): “Sheltering the Past: The Preservation of China’s Old Dwellings”, p. 205.

7 Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development 住房和城乡建设部; State Administration of Cultural Heritage 国家文物局 (October 9, 2017): *Zhufang chengxiang*

cipal governments to draft conservation plans for the respective cities,⁸ this study argues that the concept of Historically and Culturally Famous Cities has gradually been developed into an established conservation system for urban heritage.

By ratification of the World Heritage Convention in 1985, China became part of the international conservation community. At the time, advisory bodies of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) such as the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) prepared the adoption of a “global strategy” for a balanced and representative World Heritage List. The need for such a strategy resulted from a high overrepresentation of European heritage in terms of historic towns and religious monuments as well as “elitist” architecture in contrast to the underrepresentation of “living cultures” found by ICOMOS.⁹ Australian Heritage and Museum Studies scholar Laurajane Smith sees the causes for this development in the dominance of what she has termed the “Authorized Heritage Discourse” (AHD), which excludes oppositional understandings of heritage.¹⁰ In this discourse, which is rooted in 19th century Western European conservation debates, the value of material culture is regarded as inherent rather than associative.¹¹ Consequently, heritage is advocated to be passed on unaltered to future generations.

In 1994, the World Heritage Committee adopted its Global Strategy, which aimed to expand the definition of World Heritage and include States Parties as well as currently underrepresented heritage categories. With the objective to counteract the existing imbalance of inscriptions on the World Heritage List, inscription criteria such as the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) were adapted, with Mem-

jianshebu, Guojia wenwu ju guanyu kaizhan Guojia lishi wenhua mingcheng he Zhongguo lishi wenhua mingzhen mingcun baohu gongzuo pinggu jiancha de tongzhi 住房和城乡建设部国家文物局关于开展国家历史文化名城和中国历史文化名镇名村保护工作评估检查的通知 [Circular of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage on Carrying out Evaluation and Inspections of the Conservation Work in National Historically and Culturally Famous Cities and National Historically and Culturally Famous Towns and Villages], Online.

8 Abramson, Daniel Benjamin (2014): “Conservation on the Edge: Periurban Settlement Heritage in China”, p. 119.

9 Albert, Marie-Theres; Ringbeck, Birgitta (2015): *40 Jahre Welterbekonvention: Zur Popularisierung eines Schutzkonzepts für Kultur- und Naturgüter*, p. 86.

10 Smith, Laurajane (2012): *All Heritage is Intangible: Critical Heritage Studies and Museums*, p. 12.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

ber States obliged to prepare tentative lists and new heritage categories introduced.¹² One of these categories was cultural landscape, which is neither a mere cultural nor natural heritage category, but a harmonious composition of natural landscape formation and man-made elements. This introduction of new categories also provided new opportunities for China to nominate sites such as the West Lake Cultural Landscape of Hangzhou 杭州西湖 (inscribed in 2011) or the Hani Rice Terraces 哈尼梯田 (inscribed in 2013).

National and international documents such as the *Burra Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* from 1999 (first adopted in 1979) and the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), which stressed the importance of social and cultural values, further triggered a paradigm shift from tangible to intangible heritage. Thereby, the concept of cultural heritage was expanded from monumental and “elitist” to include non-exceptional heritage such as vernacular architecture.¹³ In China, traditional heritage concepts as found by Guo are *guwu* 古物 (ancient objects, translation of the English-language term “antiquities” and borrowed from Japanese usage¹⁴), *shiji* 史迹 (historic sites), *guji* 古迹 (ancient sites), *mingsheng* 名胜 (famous sights), *wenwu* 文物 (cultural relics) and *guobao* 国宝 (national treasures).¹⁵ The focus on individual objects and sites as reflected in these concepts underwent a similar shift towards a broader understanding of heritage which Bi et al. regard as “cross-cultural negotiation” towards a stronger intangible dimension.¹⁶

China’s participation in international conservation requires an engagement with international conservation principles and standards of good practice. The Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze 中国文物古迹保护准则, hereafter China Principles), which were adopted in 2000, represent the first Chinese contribution to international conservation theory and a set of professional heritage guidelines for Chinese heritage conservation approved by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. While they emphasize the significance and preservation of material fabric,¹⁷ the China Principles also

12 Albert, Marie-Theres; Ringbeck, Birgitta (2015): *40 Jahre Welterbekonvention: Zur Popularisierung eines Schutzkonzepts für Kultur- und Naturgüter*, p. 75.

13 Falser, Michael (2011): “Von der Venice Charter 1964 zum Nara Document on Authenticity 1994 — 30 Jahre Authentizität im Namen des kulturellen Erbes der Welt”, p. 6.

14 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 206.

15 Lai, Guolong (2016): “The emergence of ‘cultural heritage’ in modern China: a historical and legal perspective”, p. 50.

16 Bi, Lingling; Vanneste, Dominique; van der Borg, Jan (2016): “Cultural Heritage Development in China: A Contextualized Trajectory or a Global-Local Nexus”, p. 193.

17 Agnew, Neville et. al. (2004): “The begetting of charters: genesis of the China Principles”, p. 44.

reveal points of friction with earlier international charters. These “Chinese characteristics” become most apparent in the strict requirement of conformity with heritage legislation and the dominance of economic interests reflected in more flexibility concerning interventions such as relocation and reconstruction.¹⁸

Although the preservation of material culture is prioritized in Chinese heritage legislation and guidelines with the above-mentioned restrictions, in China, as in Asian countries in general, “universal” heritage values with a focus on inherent values as assumed by the AHD have led to conflicts with local interests and local conservation practices. Primarily, such conflicts are related to differences in architecture and construction materials. In contrast to architectural sites in Western countries, which are mainly built of stone, traditional buildings in China have a timber framework. Aggravated by natural and climatic conditions, timber structures decay more easily and require treatment, which, as a consequence, fostered practices of replacing old materials with new ones.¹⁹

Moreover, reconstruction and restoration are widespread measures adopted in Chinese conservation practice. Ruan explains the prevalence of such measures with, among others, traditional aesthetics (see chapter 3.2.3).²⁰ Historically, these interventions were carried out for temples and public buildings, which Shepherd relates to Buddhism, and rulers prioritizing renovation, expansion or even replacement over material preservation.²¹ A third aspect as argued in this study is the high amount of intangible heritage associated with Chinese tangible sites. Their associated values derive from attributes other than material substance and the preservation of their cultural significance is not restricted to unaltered material heritage.

The role of cultural heritage is becoming more and more important for Chinese politics as well as economic development. On the one hand, China has employed the promotion of cultural heritage as a strategy for cultural soft power.²² On the other hand, municipal governments increasingly turn to culture and heritage as drivers for urban regeneration projects. Given the above-illustrated modernization and urbanization pressures as well as contradictions in international conservation principles and practice versus local interests, integrating both conservation with

18 Qian, Fengqi (2007): “China’s Burra Charter: The Formation and Implementation of the China Principles”, p. 263.

19 Ibid., p. 257.

20 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Yan, Daning 晏大宁 (1998): “Jiaqiang baohu yishi, jinkuai yu guoji jiegui” 加强保护意识, 尽快与国际接轨 [Strengthen the awareness for conservation, quickly catch up with the world], p. 26.

21 Shepherd, Robert (2014): “China: Cultural Heritage Preservation and World Heritage”, p. 1410.

22 Blumenfield, Tami; Silverman, Helaine (2013): “Cultural Heritage Politics in China: An Introduction”, p. 6.

development and international principles with local practice is a major challenge China is presently facing.

This study intends to trace three fundamental issues related to this challenge. As mentioned above, vernacular architecture especially, which has not been officially listed, often fell victim to past development in Chinese urban areas. Following the attempt to maintain the “memories” of Chinese cities as expressed in the introductory remark, one important question is: how far can the HCF City concept contribute to the preservation of traditional architecture and its cultural significance in developing Chinese cities or, in a broader sense, enable an integration of conservation and development?

Given the strong spiritual dimension in China’s traditional understanding of heritage and the predominantly “Western” conservation philosophy that served as a basis for the development of “universal” heritage values, another question is how such “universal” values as defined by the international conservation community are negotiated with interests and conservation practices at the local level. Therefore, three case studies were conducted on the Pingjiang Historic Block in Suzhou, Tongli Ancient Water Town and Shanghai Tianzifang between 2015 and 2018.

On an international level, UNESCO developed the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) management approach for an integrated conservation and sustainable development of cities. This approach regards urban centers from the landscape perspective and as part of an historical continuum. Such an approach is particularly interesting for countries with rapid development where urban heritage can easily be seen as an obstacle rather than a benefit. A final and framing question to this study therefore is, what implications can the investigated case studies provide for the applicability of UNESCO’s HUL management approach in China?

The distinctive character of this study lies in three main aspects. Firstly, it develops a China-centered approach and draws on Chinese professional conservation guidelines and policy documents to determine cultural significance and evaluation criteria, instead of taking “Western” conservation standards as a basis. Secondly, the study provides a comparative analysis of cultural heritage conservation in Chinese areas with different scales of urbanity (mega-city, metropolis, town). Finally, it does not remain limited to representative sites, but draws on a comprehensive survey of all registered and plan-protected built structures, including vernacular architecture, small monuments and their environment.

1.1 Literature Review

The establishment of architectural history in China, as well as the formation of the related 1930 **Chinese conservation movement**, have been the subject of a considerable number of studies. Before professional Chinese research on traditional architecture was established, a few foreign architectural and art historians conducted systematic research in China, among them the Japanese Sekino Tadashi 関野貞 (1868–1935) and Itō Chūta 伊東忠太 (1867–1954), the Finnish-born Swede Osvald Sirén (1879–1966) and the German Ernst Boerschmann (1873–1949), whose complete work has recently been revealed by Kögel²³. Yang and Ming²⁴, Rowe and Kuan²⁵ as well as Steinhardt²⁶ highlighted the important role of first-generation Chinese architects such as Liang Sicheng 梁思成 (1901–1972), Liu Dunzhen 刘敦桢 (1896–1968) and Yang Tingbao 杨廷宝 (1901–1982) and their training in Western countries and Japan for a stronger focus on architecture and its preservation.

Zhu²⁷ marks the rediscovery of the Song dynasty building manual *yingzao fashi* 营造法式 by Zhu Qiqian 朱启钤 (1872–1964) and the foundation of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture (Zhongguo yingzao xueshe 中国营造学社) in 1929 as the beginning of intensive research into the history of building methods. Following Li²⁸ and Steinhardt²⁹, the investigation of this building manual and traditional architecture in the 1930s was strongly motivated by nationalist interests, which gave built heritage a political dimension.

Returning from their studies abroad, first-generation Chinese architects primarily introduced theoretical conservation principles to China. Lai et al.³⁰ have shown that conservation practice as advocated by Liang Sicheng at the time laid the basis for the establishment of a national conservation system. The development

23 Kögel, Eduard (2015): *The Grand Documentation: Ernst Boerschmann and Chinese Religious Architecture (1906–1931)*.

24 Yang, Yongsheng 杨永生; Ming, Liansheng 明连生 (1998): *Jianzhu sijie 建筑四杰 [Four Outstanding Figures in Architecture]*.

25 Rowe, Peter; Kuan, Seng (2002): *Architectural Encounters with Essence and Form in Modern China*.

26 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (2014): “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century”, pp. 38–60.

27 Zhu, Guangya (2012): “China’s architectural heritage conservation movement”, p. II.

28 Li, Shiqiao (2003): “Reconstituting Chinese Building Tradition: The Yingzao fashi in the Early Twentieth Century”, pp. 470–489.

29 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (2004): “The Tang Architectural Icon and the Politics of Chinese Architectural History”, pp. 228–254.

30 Lai, Guolong; Demas, Martha; Agnew, Neville (2004): “Valuing the Past in China: The Seminal Influence of Liang Sicheng on Heritage Conservation”, pp. 82–89.

of heritage conservation in China has been traced by Lü and Fu, who divide the historical process into different stages. Lü³¹ equally acknowledges that conservation theory began with the foundation of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture followed by influences from the Soviet Union in the 1950s, which triggered restoration practices. He further highlights the interruption of conservation development in China by the Cultural Revolution. Following his analysis, the period since the 1980s is characterized by, on the one hand, the protection of historic cities and on the other hand, the inclusion of China into the international conservation community.

Fu³² divides heritage conservation in China into three stages. In the first period from 1950–1980, conservation is focused on individual sites and restoration to a complete “original state”. In the second period, from 1980–2002, individual sites are expanded by historic areas and the relation of conservation and development becomes more important. In the final stage from 2002, conservation moves towards an integrated approach with the inclusion of a number of new categories, such as rural heritage, industrial heritage, cultural landscapes and cultural routes.

As mentioned above, the introduction of new heritage categories emerged as a reaction to unfulfilled objectives of the Global Strategy. Albert and Ringbeck³³ have portrayed the development of the World Heritage Convention since its ratification in 1972 and illustrated the **paradigm shift from tangible to intangible heritage**. The understanding of heritage, not in terms of material form but as an experience and a social and cultural performance, has been suggested by Smith, who sees heritage as “something vital and alive”.³⁴

A similar shift from tangible to intangible heritage has occurred in China, in relation to its participation in heritage conservation on an international level.³⁵ Bi et al.³⁶ have examined this development from an evolutionary perspective as reflected in the conceptual shift from “cultural relics” (*wenwu* 文物) to “cultural

31 Lü, Zhou 吕舟 (2008): “Zhongguo wenhua yichan baohu san shi nian” 中国文化遗产保护三十年 [30 years of cultural heritage conservation in China], pp. 1–5.

32 Fu, Wenjun 付文军 (2010): “Yichan leixing, baohu linian he guanli jizhi” 遗产类型, 保护理念和管理机制 [Heritage categories, conservation principles and management system], p. 27.

33 Albert, Marie-Theres; Ringbeck, Birgitta (2015): *40 Jahre Welterbekonvention: Zur Popularisierung eines Schutzkonzepts für Kultur- und Naturgüter*, chap. 6.

34 Smith, Laurajane (2012): *All Heritage is Intangible: Critical Heritage Studies and Museums*, p. 23.

35 Yan, Haiming (2018): *World Heritage Craze in China: Universal Discourse, National Culture and Local Memory*, chap. 1.

36 Bi, Lingling; Vanneste, Dominique; van der Borg, Jan (2016): “Cultural Heritage Development in China: A Contextualized Trajectory or a Global-Local Nexus”, pp. 191–207.

heritage” (*wenhua yichan* 文化遗产). Lai³⁷ further investigated the emergence of the “cultural heritage” concept from a historical and legal perspective. He found that during the early Republic, state legislation and administrative orders were used to transform cultural property from imperial and private collections into state-owned cultural heritage, and that this state monopoly is currently transformed into a multiple-channeled project at local, national and international levels.³⁸

Research on **urban conservation in China** is still relatively limited. The eponymous study by Whitehand and Gu³⁹ is one of the few that provides an historical overview of the development and current practice of Chinese urban conservation. Moreover, there are studies related to urban heritage conservation with a focus on urban regeneration and economic development in great Chinese cities. For example, Balderstone et al.⁴⁰ have found that built heritage in Shanghai is primarily regarded as having economic value, attracting investment and tourism as a symbol for an international and modern metropolis. Another approach may stem from a basic understanding of Chinese cities such as the elementary works of Hassenpflug⁴¹, Peisert⁴² as well as Kögel⁴³ on Chinese Urbanism and Cai’s dissertation⁴⁴ on urban renewal strategies. Changes and continuities in Chinese city development have further been investigated by Kaltenbrunner⁴⁵. The present study can contribute to a thorough understanding of Chinese urban development by setting the focus directly on urban conservation, tracing its establishment from the initiative to preserve the historic city of Beijing to the nomination of cities worth protecting on different administrative levels (see chapter 2).

37 Lai, Guolong (2016): “The emergence of ‘cultural heritage’ in modern China: a historical and legal perspective”.

38 Ibid., p. 79.

39 Whitehand, J.W.R.; Gu, Kai (2007): “Urban Conservation in China: Historical development, current practice and morphological approach”, pp. 643–670.

40 Balderstone, Susan; Qian, Fengqi; Zhang, Bing (2002): “Shanghai Reincarnated”, pp. 21–34.

41 Hassenpflug, Dieter (2010): *Der urbane Code Chinas*.

42 Peisert, Christoph (1996): *Peking und die “nationale Form”*: die repräsentative Stadtgestalt im neuen China als Zugang zu klassischen Raumkonzepten.

43 Kögel, Eduard (ed., 2000): *Die chinesische Stadt: zwischen Tradition und Moderne*.

44 Cai, Lin (2011): *Strategien der Stadterneuerung in China am Fallbeispiel Yangzhou*.

45 Kaltenbrunner, Robert (2008): “Die Köpfe des Drachen: Kontinuität und Wandel in der Stadt- und Raumentwicklung der VR China”, pp. 471–483.

Besides, Chinese conservation is often approached as part of greater studies on **conservation in Asia** or general practices in Chinese conservation.⁴⁶ In *The Chinese Attitude towards the Past*, Ryckmans⁴⁷ discussed the paradox of China's spiritual continuity in contrast to a material absence of the past, as in the form of ancient monuments. Another important aspect is the handling of "foreign" heritage on Chinese ground which has been intensively studied by Müller⁴⁸ from the perspective of dissonant heritage, especially in relation to foreigners' cemeteries and graves. Stubbs and Thomson⁴⁹ have highlighted China's tradition to record restoration activities and equally pointed to a focus on the continuation of meaning in Eastern countries in contrast to a "protection and codification of objective reality" in the West.

Cody and Fong⁵⁰ call for more holistic approaches in Asian conservation that on the one hand, recognize traditional craftsmanship and indigenous conservation practices but, on the other hand, also note the preservation and maintenance of material evidence. Other aspects discussed in the literature are increasing cultural heritage tourism and the branding of space for political and economic purposes. Many of these studies focus on minority areas, such as Su⁵¹ and Kendall⁵² who examined the notions of cultural identity and authenticity in Lijiang, Yunnan Province and Kaili, Guizhou Province. Zhou has shown how Tengchong, Yunnan Province has been rebranded by local authorities to connect China with Southeast Asia and India and promote future development.⁵³

46 See for example: Taylor, Ken (2012): "Heritage Challenges in Asian urban cultural landscape settings", pp. 266–277. Stubbs, John H.; Thomson, Robert G. (2017): *Architectural Conservation in Asia: National experiences and practice*.

47 Ryckmans, Pierre (1986): *The Chinese Attitude towards the Past: The 47th George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology*, p. 2.

48 Müller, Gotelind (2018): *Between History, Heritage, and Foreign Relations: Extant Westerners' Cemeteries in Guangzhou and Shanghai*. Müller, Gotelind (2018): *Challenging Dead: A Look into Foreigners' Cemeteries in Macau, Hong Kong, and Taiwan*. Müller, Gotelind (2019): *Ambivalent Remains: China and the Russian Cemeteries in Harbin, Dalian and Lüshun*.

49 Stubbs, John H.; Thomson, Robert G. (2017): *Architectural Conservation in Asia: National experiences and practice*, p. 71.

50 Cody, Jeffrey W.; Fong, Kecia L. (2012): "Beyond band-aids: the need for specialized materials conservation expertise in Asia", p. 108.

51 Su, Xiaobo (2013): "Tourism, Migration and the Politics of Built Heritage in Lijiang, China", pp. 101–114.

52 Kendall, Paul (2017): "The Location of Cultural Authenticity: Identifying the Real and the Fake in Urban Guizhou", pp. 93–109.

53 Zhou, Yongming (2013): "Branding Tengchong: Globalization, Road Building, and Spatial Reconfigurations in Yunnan, Southwest China", pp. 247–259.

Historically and Culturally Famous Cities have primarily been regarded as a form of designation for places exceeding the scope of individual building structures.⁵⁴ The emergence of Historically and Culturally Famous Cities and the development of their concept has been worked out in a number of Chinese-language articles.⁵⁵ Moreover, Qiu⁵⁶ primarily provided an overview of the formation of Historically and Culturally Famous Cities into a comprehensive mechanism that exceeds its administrative dimension. This process included the establishment of an assessment system, a legal framework, as well as a comprehensive set of planning and management regulations. The present study investigates the formation of China's HCF City conservation system in the context of international heritage conservation and how its implementation at the local level enables the integration of conservation and development.

Preceding research on the first case study comprises works on the city of Suzhou as well as the **Pingjiang Historic Block**. In his well-known essay "A Millennium of Chinese Urban History" based on a 1972 lecture, Mote⁵⁷ discussed the presence of Suzhou's past and found that its real past was "a past of the mind". Following his observations, physical structures of the city are of secondary importance and matter less than the idea related to these structures, which may be captured in a poem. Functioning as "impermanent superstructure", he argues, the replacement or restoration of historic monuments was not perceived as a violation of history.

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- 54 See for example: Whitehand, J.W.R.; Gu, Kai (2006): "Research on Chinese urban form: retrospect and prospect", p. 348. Abramson, Daniel Benjamin (2014): "Conservation on the Edge: Periurban Settlement Heritage in China", p. 119. Cody, Jeffrey W. (2005): "Historical and Cultural Cities", p. 251.
- 55 See for example: Wang, Jinghui 王景慧 (1994): "Zhongguo lishi wenhua mingcheng de baohu gainian" 中国历史文化名城的保护概念 [The Conservation Concept of Chinese Historically and Culturally Famous Cities], pp. 12–17. Dong, Jianhong 董鉴泓 (1991): "Cong mingcheng leixing tan Shanghai lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu" 从名城类型谈上海历史文化名城保护 [Discussion Proceeding from Famous City Categories to the Conservation of Shanghai Historically and Culturally Famous City], pp. 17–18. Luo, Zhewen 罗哲文 (2002): "Lishi wenhua mingcheng shi jianshe you Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi de qiangda zhizhu" 历史文化名城是建设有中国特色社会主义的强大支柱 [The Historically and Culturally Famous Cities are a strong pillar to build up socialism with Chinese characteristics], pp. 67–81.
- 56 Qiu, Baoxing 仇保兴 (2014): *Feng yu ru pan — lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu 30 nian* 风雨如磐——历史文化名城保护 30 年 ["Tumultuous wind and heavy rain" — 30 Years of Conservation in Historically and Culturally Famous Cities].
- 57 Mote, F.W. (1973): "A Millennium of Chinese Urban History: Form, Time and Space Concepts in Soochow", p. 51.

Two greater studies on the urban development of Suzhou have been done by Xu and Carroll. Xu⁵⁸ has traced the formation of Chinese urban centers by example of pre-modern Suzhou with a focus on building characteristics and urban transformations. Key topics he has addressed are the spatial organization of the city with its Song-period canal network, city walls and gates with their symbolic meaning as well as the role of *fengshui*⁵⁹ principles.

Carroll⁶⁰ focused on the reconstruction of Suzhou in the late Qing dynasty and the Republican period. Thereby, he revealed how the city as such and single components including streets, historic monuments or temples gained new significance and were claimed by different actors in a greater pursuit of modernity. He found that, as a matter of contest between national, local and self-interests, the definition of historic sites (*guji* 古迹) and Chinese culture was employed to foster local economic growth and national integrity.

The conservation of the Pingjiang Historic Block and its central axis Pingjiang Road was documented by Ruan,⁶¹ who led a major conservation project there from 2002 to 2004 and drafted its conservation plan. He was interviewed for this study in May 2016 (see appendix A.2) and his conservation project was included in a monography on the protection of historical buildings and the environment in ancient towns of Jiangnan. Therein, his team presents an evaluation of the block and its greatest problems before conservation, as well as conservation planning and its implementation. In particular, they provide examples on different conservation schemes applied in the project, such as improvement, restoration and reconstruction.

58 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*.

59 Fengshui 风水, literally “wind and water” and often translated as “geomancy”, is a theory based on the concept of “cosmic breath” (*qi* 气) which addresses the relationship of dwellings as well as graves to their environment and the entire universe. Thereby, proper siting of built structures is believed to enhance wealth and well-being of inhabitants and their descendants whereas ill siting can have evil effects. Source: Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, pp. 200–201.

60 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 244.

61 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu, The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护.

Xia and Ma⁶² discussed the importance of maintaining urban culture as part of Pingjiang Historic Block's conservation. They see local culture as the "soul of the block", which must be maintained in addition to the spatial pattern, architectural style and historic sites. Moreover, they highlight the importance of innovation rooted in traditional culture. Ruan and Liu⁶³ further stressed sustainable development and community participation as decisive factors for the block's conservation.

In a recent study on heritage-led urban regeneration in China, Xie and Heath⁶⁴ examined the conservation of the Pingjiang Historic Block as one of several cases. They see strengths of the conservation project in the different forms of adaptive reuse and the maintenance of the block's residential function but criticize that the physical fabric does not adequately reflect the block's underlying social values as sustained in daily practice. While their work has a strong focus on selected buildings, this study aims to provide a comprehensive investigation of the block's entire built heritage, including residential structures and environmental elements such as historic trees, which are equally considered for an HCF City.

The secondary literature on conservation and development in **Tongli** is still very limited. Local researcher Wang Jiadong 王稼冬 has discussed a number of topics related to cultural heritage in Tongli from the middle of the 1960s to the 1990s. These topics include the Jiuli Lake Neolithic Site in Tongli, an investigation of Tuisi Garden and the story of a claimed local legend called the Pearl Pagoda. His work was compiled and published in 2001.⁶⁵

In 1983, well-known Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong 费孝通 investigated the role and condition of small towns in Wujiang county together with a research team. In the course of this field study, he classified five types of towns to identify their specific characteristics and features in which Tongli was chosen as a representative example of a "consumer type town".⁶⁶ Zhu, who focused on Tongli and conducted a preliminary study on its development, found that major challenges for the town's

62 Xia, Xiaoming; Ma, Yan (2009): "Suzhou Pingjiang jiequ baohu zhong wenhua baohu de sikao" 苏州平江街区保护中文化保护的思考 [Reflections on cultural conservation regarding the conservation of Suzhou Pingjiang Block], pp. 22–25.

63 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Liu, Hao 刘浩 (1999): "Suzhou Pingjiang lishi jiequ baohu gui-hua de zhanlüe sixiang ji lilun tansuo" 苏州平江历史街区保护规划的战略思想及理论探索 [An Exploration of the Strategic Thinking and Theory of Preservation Planning for Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block], pp. 47–53.

64 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, pp. 80–120.

65 Wang, Jiadong 王稼冬 (1966): "Tongli Jiulihu xinshiqi shidai yizhi de kaozheng" 同里九里湖新石器时代遗址的考证 [Research on Jiuli Lake Neolithic Site in Tongli], in: Yan, Pinhua 严品华 (ed., 2001): *Tongli gutu wenhua zashuo* 同里故土文化杂说 [Miscellaneous writings on the culture of my hometown, Tongli].

66 Fei, Xiaotong 费孝通 (1985): "Xiao chengzhen, da wenti" 小城镇·大问题 [Small Towns, Great Significance], p. 23.

economic development are the establishment of industry, business and service trades as well as the improvement of living conditions and transportation while simultaneously preserving its traditional architecture and overall appearance.⁶⁷

Bellocq⁶⁸ has traced the question of how memories are passed on in Tongli with the promotion of cultural heritage as part of tourism development. The study is based on interviews with different resident age groups as well as on-site investigation. How legends and customs are used to support the official version of local history is also analyzed. Bellocq found that the official version as promoted by the local government is exclusive and more easily accepted by younger generations. Older generations are more skeptical towards this official narrative according to which popular legends and customs originate from Tongli and instead relate their emergence to the development of tourism.

As part of a series on six water towns (*Jiangnan guzhen* 江南古镇), Ruan, who has conducted research on these towns since the 1980s, wrote a volume about Tongli.⁶⁹ Therein, he addresses the characteristics and conditions of gardens, residences and other components of Tongli's built environment such as bridges. Moreover, he discusses the conservation and "recreation" of the Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site as well as the general conservation of the town in the last chapter. In addition to these historical and architectural studies, the present research primarily provides a comprehensive investigation of all officially protected heritage structures and historical buildings in Tongli, with a focus on their conservation, management and usage.

The development of **Tianzifang** in Shanghai has primarily been researched from an urban regeneration and sociological perspective. In the course of a Fudan University project on value assessment of cultural heritage led by Du Xiaofan 杜晓帆, professor at the Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology, the cultural significance of Tianzifang was considered from the perspective of different disciplines.⁷⁰ Moreover, as part of the resulting publication, Shi⁷¹ provided an overview on Tianzifang's historical development.

67 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): "A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town", pp. 328–341.

68 Bellocq, Maylis; Hall, Jonathan (transl., 2006): "The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province".

69 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里 [Tongli].

70 Du, Xiaofan 杜晓帆 (ed., 2015): "Wenhua yichan jiazhi de panduan yu bianxi — yi Shanghai Tianzifang wei li" 文化遗产价值的判断与辨析——以上海田子坊为例 [Evaluating the Significance of Cultural Heritage — Shanghai's Tianzifang as Case Study], pp. 20–27.

71 Shi, Ding 石鼎 (2015): "Tianzifang de lishi yange" 田子坊的历史沿革 [Historical Development of Tianzifang], in: Du, Xiaofan 杜晓帆 (ed.): "Wenhua yichan jiazhi de

The case of Tianzifang has mostly been researched as an urban regeneration project such as by Yung et al. and Yao et al. who focus on the aspect of sustainable development. The study of Yung et al.⁷² is based on interviews as well as questionnaires and judges the case of Tianzifang as a successful community-initiated rehabilitation project. Yao et al.⁷³ equally stress Tianzifang's development as a "bottom-up" approach and focus on aspects such as the "revival" of local culture as well as the problem of commodification. Another problem for Tianzifang's regeneration as discussed by scholars is the complex situation of property rights.⁷⁴

Fudan University sociology professor Yu Hai has observed and studied the development of Tianzifang since its very beginning. He further conducted a wide range of interviews with the different stakeholders involved in Tianzifang's regeneration process. His studies include discussions of Tianzifang emerging as an alternative urban development model⁷⁵ as well as the significance of social naming

panduan yu bianxi — yi Shanghai Tianzifang wei li” 文化遗产价值的判断与辨析——以上海田子坊为例 [Evaluating the Significance of Cultural Heritage — Shanghai's Tianzifang as Case Study], p. 21.

- 72 Yung, Esther H.K.; Chan, Edwin H.W.; Xu, Ying (2014): “Sustainable Development and the Rehabilitation of a Historic Urban District — Social Sustainability in the Case of Tianzifang in Shanghai”, pp. 95–112.
- 73 Yao, Zigang 姚子刚; Pang, Yan 庞艳; Wang, Jieqiong 汪洁琼 (2012): ““Haipai wenhua” de fuxing yu lishi jiejū de zaisheng — yi Shanghai Tianzifang wei li” “海派文化”的复兴与历史街区的再生 —— 以上海田子坊为例 [The Revival of “Haipai culture” and regeneration of historic blocks — by example of Shanghai Tianzifang], pp. 139–144.
- 74 See for example: Huang, Ye 黄晔; Qi, Guangping 戚广平 (2015): “Tianzifang lishi jiejū baohu yu zai liyong shijian zhong shang ju hunhe maodun de caichanquan wenti” 田子坊历史街区保护与再利用实践中商居混合矛盾的财产权问题 [The Problem of Property Rights in the Conflict of Commercial and Residential Mixture in the Conservation and Reusing Practice of Tianzifang Historical District], pp. 66–72. Peng, Jianhang 彭健航; Hu, Xiaoming 胡晓鸣 (2014): “Jiyu chanquan shijiao dui zi xia er shang chengshi gengxin moshi de fansi — yi Shanghai Tianzifang wei li” 基于产权视角对自下而上城市更新模式的反思 —— 以上海田子坊为例 [Reflections on the Bottom-up City Renewal Model from the Perspective of Property Rights — By Example of Shanghai Tianzifang], pp. 117–119.
- 75 Yu, Hai 于海 (2009): “Tianzifang shiyan: Chaoyue quanqiu — difang er yuan duili de chengshi gengxin moshi” 田子坊实验：超越全球——地方二元对立的城市更新模式 [The Tianzifang experiment — A city renewal model going beyond the global-local duality], pp. 26–31.

for its promotion, both as a brand and legitimate development model.⁷⁶ Yu et al.⁷⁷ further traced its transformation from a collective illegal operation to a collective economic development based on “communal entrepreneurship” in contrast to the widespread approach of a coalition between the government and the private sector, a so-called “entrepreneurial governance”.

Recently, renowned American sociology professor Sharon Zukin, together with Philip Kasinitz and Chen Xiangming, undertook a research project on urban transformations in six global cities by example of local shopping streets of which Tianzifang was examined for the city of Shanghai. In the course of this project, it was found that globalization has been a decisive factor in establishing Tianzifang as a special shopping and tourist destination.⁷⁸ Zhong,⁷⁹ in her doctoral dissertation, further examined the formation of Tianzifang from the perspective of the actors who shaped its spatial development. Zhu⁸⁰ also published a volume on the development of Tianzifang and its role for urban renewal in China.

Another domain in how Tianzifang plays an important role is the field of creative industry development. Here, Tianzifang is often drawn on as an exemplary case for creative industries in Shanghai.⁸¹ O’connor and Gu⁸² further see the case as one of the few successful ‘organically’ developed clusters. Proceeding from creative districts as they originally emerged in the Western context, Chen⁸³ examines adaptations of creative industries in China, equally focusing on Tianzifang.

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- 76 Yu, Hai 于海; Zou, Huahua 邹华华 (2015): “San zhong shehui mingming yiyi xia de chengshi neicheng fuxing — yi Shanghai Tianzifang de chanye kongjian pinpai dan-sheng wei li” 三重社会命名意义下的城市内城复兴——以上海田子坊的产业空间品牌诞生为例 [Inner City Revival under the triple social significance of naming — by example of Shanghai Tianzifang’s emergence as brand for industrial space], pp. 61–66.
- 77 Yu, Hai 于海; Zhong, Xiaohua 钟晓华; Chen, Xiangming 陈向明: “Jiucheng gengxin zhong jiyu shequ mailuo de jiti chuangye — yi Shanghai Tianzifang shangjie wei li” 旧城更新中基于社区脉络的集体创业——以上海田子坊商街为例 [Communal Entrepreneurship in Old Neighborhood Renewal — Case Study of Shanghai Tianzifang Shopping District], pp. 60–82.
- 78 Yu, Hai; Chen, Xiangming; Zhong, Xiaohua (2016): “Commercial Development from Below: The Resilience of Local Shops in Shanghai”, in: Zukin, Sharon; Kasinitz, Philip; Chen, Xiangming (ed.): *Global Cities, Local Streets*, pp. 59–89.
- 79 Zhong, Xiaohua 钟晓华 (2016): Tianzifang shi ruhe keneng de — xingdongzhe de kongjian shijian shijiao 田子坊是如何可能的 —— 行动者的空间实践视角 [How Tianzifang became possible — a perspective of actors’ spatial practice].
- 80 Zhu, Ronglin 朱荣林 (2008): *Jiedu Tianzifang* 解读田子坊 [A Reading of Tianzifang].
- 81 See for example: He, Jinliao (2013): *Creative Industry Districts in Shanghai: An analysis of dynamics, networks and implications*. Keane, Michael (2007): *Created in China: The Great New Leap Forward*, p. 107.
- 82 Gu, Xin; O’Connor, Justin (2014): “Creative industry clusters in Shanghai: a success story?”, p. 7.
- 83 Chen, Yu-Tsu (2015): *Tianzifang: A Case Study of a Creative District in Shanghai*.

Although its profound cultural meaning forms the basis for Tianzifang's success as a creative district, most studies concentrate on its (material) transformation. While in both aspects urban regeneration and creative industry development are considered, the present study adopts a conservation perspective and investigates the influence of cultural tradition on Tianzifang's conservation and development.

The Principles of the **HUL (Historic Urban Landscape) management approach** as adopted by UNESCO have been laid out in two groundbreaking works by Bandarin and van Oers: *The Historic Urban Landscape* and *Reconnecting the City*.⁸⁴ Further research has been conducted on the concept of the historic urban landscape⁸⁵ as well as the comparison of heritage policies and management practices of such landscapes on multiple levels of governance.⁸⁶ The first sample of case studies on the implementation of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape was published in the 2016 HUL Guidebook.⁸⁷ Subsequently, a broad collection of experiences with the implementation of the approach was compiled in the very recent volume *Reshaping Urban Conservation*,⁸⁸ which draws on case studies in 28 cities around the world.

Furthermore, there are a number of pioneering studies on the application of HUL in China. Van Oers and Pereira Roders have developed a roadmap for this purpose, which highlights China's distinct context of rapid, large-scale urbanization and points to terminological obstacles.⁸⁹ As one of the pilot projects for the implementation of the 'Shanghai Agenda for HUL in China' (2015) the rural village of Shuang Wan Cun, Wujiang District, Suzhou, adopted an alternative development strategy and tested civic engagement tools under the guidance of the

84 Bandarin, Francesco; van Oers, Ron (2012): *The Historic Urban Landscape: Managing heritage in an urban century*. Bandarin, Francesco; van Oers, Ron (ed., 2015): *Reconnecting the City: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*.

85 Sonkoly, Gábor (2018): *Historical Urban Landscape*.

86 Veldpaus, Loes (2015): *Historic urban landscapes: framing the integration of urban and heritage planning in multilevel governance*.

87 World Heritage Training and Research Institute for the Asia and the Pacific Region, City of Ballarat (Australia), Tongji University (China), Federation University Australia (2016): *The HUL Guidebook: Managing Heritage in Dynamic and Constantly Changing Urban Environments; a Practical Guide to UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*.

88 Pereira Roders, Ana; Bandarin, Francesco (eds., 2019): *Reshaping Urban Conservation: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action*.

89 Van Oers, Ron; Pereira Roders, Ana (2013): "Road map for application of the HUL approach in China".

Research Institute of Urbanization at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University.⁹⁰ Another pilot project in Shanghai's Hongkou District has been the subject of a summer fieldwork in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation Program.⁹¹ The implementation of HUL in this project has been evaluated by González Martínez, who identified critical issues such as political reluctance and high economic expectations.⁹² The present study attempts to build on these results and reveal further China-specific aspects that need to be considered for the application of HUL.

1.2 Methodology

The study approaches the development of urban conservation in China and the formation of the HCF City conservation system from a theoretical and practical perspective. The theoretical part (chapter 2) provides an overview of Chinese urban conservation in general, traces the formation of the HCF City concept and analyzes the basic structure and development of the HCF City into an established conservation system. In accordance with the subsequent case studies (empirical part), major foci are set on assessment, conservation measures and management.

Therefore, the study draws on primary material from Chinese conservation and planning authorities, legal bodies as well as professional conservation guidelines. Following the requirement for listed HCF Cities to draft conservation plans, the initial HCF City concept was shaped by planning regulations such as the "Drafting Requirements for Conservation Plans of Historically and Culturally Famous Cities" (Lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua bianzhi yaoqiu 历史文化名城保护规划编制要求) from 1994 and the later more specified "Historically and Culturally Famous Cities Conservation Planning Regulations" (Lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua guifan 历史文化名城保护规划规范, hereafter Planning Regulations) from 2005.

90 Verdini, Giulio; Huang, Feiran (2019): "Enhancing Rural-Urban Linkages Through the Historic Urban Landscape Approach: The Case of Shuang Wan Cun in the Jiangsu Province".

91 "Lilong Study, Hongkou Creek: Shanghai, China" (June 2014), University of Pennsylvania, WHITRAP Shanghai, Online.

92 González Martínez, Plácido (2018): "The Social Value of Urban Heritage: The Limits to the Implementation of the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation in Shanghai".

Binding requirements concerning the above-mentioned investigated aspects of HCF Cities were primarily defined by the State Council in 2008. These “Conservation Regulations for Historically and Culturally Famous Cities, Towns and Villages” (Lishi wenhua mingcheng mingzhen mingcun baohu tiaoli 历史文化名城名镇名村保护条例) therefore are an important source to understanding HCF Cities, not only as a concept, but embedded in a legal framework. Another fundamental legal document is the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics” (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenwu baohu fa* 中华人民共和国文物保护法, hereafter Cultural Relics Protection Law), which was primarily issued in 1982 and revised several times. It regulates the handling of officially protected heritage sites (*wenwu baohu danwei* 文物保护单位), which constitute an important part of the HCF City.

With the adoption of the China Principles in 2000, China became the first Asian country to issue a set of professional conservation guidelines. In contrast to other supranational heritage charters such as the Burra Charter of Australia, which was drafted as the guiding standard, the China Principles needed to be authorized by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and determine that all people who work in heritage conservation “are bound by the Principles in matters of professional practice and ethics”.⁹³ Equal to the Cultural Relics Protection Law, the China Principles mainly refer to the conservation of sites.

In order to contextualize the different assessment criteria, conservation and management measures applied in HCF Cities, these aspects are compared to relevant international documents. Among others, the comparison draws on the Venice Charter (1964) and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (first adopted in 1978, hereafter Operational Guidelines), which emerged as a consensus on “universal” conservation principles held by the international community. The theoretical analysis both analyzes strengths and weaknesses of the HCF City concept for the conservation of traditional architecture and reveals areas of conflict between “universal” heritage values and local practice.

The empirical part then investigates three pioneering cases of conservation in urban residential areas and their inclusion into the HCF City conservation system. These cases are Suzhou Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block 苏州平江历史文化街区 (short: Pingjiang Historic Block), Tongli Ancient Water Town 同里水乡古镇 and Shanghai Tianzifang Protected Scenic Block 上海田子坊风貌保护街区. The study draws on these three cases because they are early examples of best practice and represent three different approaches.

93 China ICOMOS (Chinese-language document); Agnew, Neville; Demas, Martha (English-language translation ed., 2004): *Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze* 中国文物古迹保护准则, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, p. 70.

Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block is located in a **major city** that has been laid out according to traditional planning principles and follows a **government-led approach**. Suzhou was selected for the first batch of HCF Cities promulgated by the State Council in 1982. Four years later, the Pingjiang Historic Block was designated as a protected area in the city's master plan. From 2002 to 2004, a conservation project was carried out, which was directed at its central axis: Pingjiang Road 平江路. This project gained international recognition and was awarded the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2005.⁹⁴

In contrast, Shanghai Tianzifang is equally part of a **mega-city** but one of the few examples for a **bottom-up approach** in China. Initially destined for old city renewal, a group of conservation advocates envisioned the development of the block into a crafts street and prevented its demolition. They mobilized the local community to rent out their houses to artists for their studios as well as restaurant and shop owners, which ultimately led to the preservation and revitalization of the block. Moreover, Tianzifang is one of Shanghai's first creative industry parks and perceived as "genuine" due to the maintenance of its residential function.

Finally, Tongli is an ancient water **town** where the urban structure is much more flexible and conservation, again, is **government-led** but includes **international cooperation**. Tongli was officially listed as a protected heritage of Jiangsu 江苏 Province in 1982 and selected for the first batch of Historically and Culturally Famous Towns in 2003. In its exploration of a suitable conservation model, the town engages in international exchanges such as with the Research Observatory of Architecture in Contemporary China for a French-Chinese exchange or the bilateral Project with Priverno, Italy on the employment of HUL. Tongli equally was awarded with the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation (2003) as well as the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment (2012).⁹⁵

All three cases are formerly residential areas with housing as their prominent feature. Moreover, the three cities represent three different sizes of Chinese urban centers. While Tongli has the administrative status of a town (*zhen* 镇), Suzhou is a metropolis (*shi* 市) and Shanghai a mega-city under direct administration of the Central Government (*zhixia shi* 直辖市). These differences in scale evoke different kinds of development pressures, which conservationists need to solve in order to be effective.

94 "Project Profile: 2005 Honourable Mention, Pingjiang Historic Block", UNESCO Office in Bangkok, Online.

95 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 35–36.

Due to their common location in the Jiangnan region and their shared characteristics in terms of housing, traditions and culture, all three cases have similar pre-conditions which makes them suitable for a comparative analysis. The term “Jiangnan” 江南 literally means “south of the river” whereby it refers to the Yangzi River (see fig. 1-1). As a natural border in the north, the Yangzi River became eponymous for this region with “flat land, a mild but humid climate, great diversity of [local products], convenient transportation and shared cultural origin”.⁹⁶

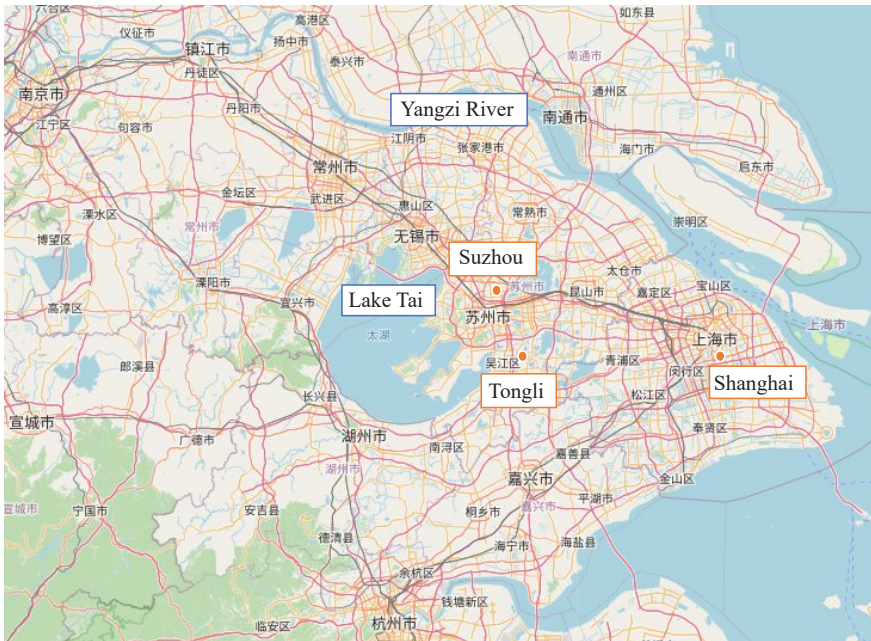


Figure 1-1. Location of Case Studies in the Jiangnan Region.

Source: map adapted from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. Lettering supplemented by the author.

Following Ruan et al., the boundaries of this region designated as “Jiangnan” vary due to perspective and historical period. From a cultural perspective, “Jiangnan” refers to a kind of “water town culture” with the culture of Lake Tai region at its heart. Traditionally, the definition was limited to the “Six Jiangnan Prefectures”

96 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, pp. 5–6.

(Jiangnan liu fu 江南六府 = Suzhou, Changzhou, Huzhou, Hangzhou, Songjiang, Jiaxing). Today, the term usually covers the south of Jiangsu and the north of Zhejiang province.⁹⁷

The empirical analysis of each case study proceeds in two steps. At first, elements that constitute the **cultural significance** of heritage in each case are investigated. Hereby, instead of taking evaluation criteria from “Western” conservation standards as a basis to determine cultural significance, the analysis draws on criteria defined in Chinese professional conservation guidelines and policy documents. In the second step, this China-centered approach allows the study to countercheck how efficient China’s self-imposed guidelines are for the conservation of its cultural heritage. Therefore, the **conservation and management** of these significant elements, tangible as well as intangible, is analyzed with a focus on four aspects: the **local conservation system**, the **conservation plan**, **conservation and improvement measures** as well as **function and usage** (see fig. 1-2).



Figure 1-2. Theoretical Framework.

Source: author’s draft.

97 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, pp. 5–6.

As illustrated in figure 1-2, evaluation criteria for cultural significance are defined for the three conceptual tiers of the HCF City, the **city/town**, the **historic and cultural block** and **individual heritage sites** (see chapter 2.4). The Pingjiang Historic Block is an urban block inside the greater city of Suzhou, therefore the analysis of its cultural significance comprises only two tiers: the historic and cultural block and individual sites located inside the block. In contrast, Tongli encompasses all three tiers: the HCF Town, the historic and cultural block and individual sites. Tianzifang is an urban block but does not feature officially listed sites. Consequently, the analysis of its cultural significance covers only one tier, the historic and cultural block.

For the **first tier**, the relevant evaluation criteria comprise the city or town's *natural setting*, its *urban structure* and *traditional townscape* as well as its overall *tangible and intangible heritage*. Significant elements for the **second tier** of the historic and cultural block as found in relevant planning regulations are *structural elements* (streets, waterways), *environmental elements* and *historical buildings*. The **third tier** covers *individual heritage sites*. In contrast to its beginnings when conservation of cultural heritage was centered on aesthetic and historical considerations, present-day conservation theory follows a values-based approach.⁹⁸ The cultural significance of heritage derives from a diverse range of values society attributes to it at a certain period of time, such as historical and artistic but also other values.⁹⁹ These values may be in conflict with one another and change with time progression.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, they may differ in cultural context. While some cultures attribute great value to physical remains or tangible heritage, in others, intangible aspects such as spiritual or place value that are not related to physical fabric may form an integral part of a property's significance.¹⁰¹

Such a values-based approach has also been adopted in the Chinese conservation system. Until now, the Cultural Relics Protection Law solely includes the historical, artistic and scientific values of cultural heritage. Furthermore, these three values are decisive for the listing level of officially protected sites.¹⁰² While the three values are not defined in the Cultural Relics Protection Law, precise criteria are given in the commentary on the China Principles from 2004 (see appendix A.1).

98 Orbaşlı, Aylin (2008): *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, pp. 28, 38.

99 Ibid., p. 40.

100 Feilden, Bernard M.; Jokilehto, Jukka (1998): *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites*, p. 18.

101 Orbaşlı, Aylin (2008): *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, pp. 34–35.

102 Standing Committee of the Twelfth National People's Congress 第十二届全国人民代表大会常务委员会 (April 24, 2015): *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenwu baohu fa* 中华人民共和国文物保护法, art. 3.

Simultaneously, it is stated that “the fundamental significance of a heritage site resides in its inherent values” and that these “inherent values are a site’s historical, artistic and scientific values”.¹⁰³

The **historical value** of a site is based on six criteria: important reasons for its construction, significant events or important figures active at the site, the illustration of the material production, lifestyle, traditions etc. of a historical period, the capability to prove or supplement recorded facts, rarity and representativeness of a site and the exposition of a site’s stages of transformation.¹⁰⁴

Artistic value derives from architectural arts, landscape arts, associated sculptural and decorative arts, immovable sculptural artistic works and the creative process.¹⁰⁵ While the former four criteria are related to tangible heritage, the creative process is aimed at the preservation of knowledge underlying the creation of built heritage as well as the use of traditional building techniques.

The **scientific value** of heritage sites concerns the history of scientific and technological development and includes plan and design, scientific/technological achievement in the form of construction, materials and techniques, and facilities or places where either scientific/technological projects were carried out or scientific/technological information is recorded.¹⁰⁶ The attribute “scientific” expresses that the respective heritage is significant for the augmentation of scientific insights. While not all criteria for each value have to be met, cultural significance is higher the more criteria a site fulfills.

The revised China Principles from 2015 further primarily recognize two additional values as equally decisive for the significance of heritage; these are social and cultural values. **Social value** is defined as deriving from memory, emotion and educational benefits, which may generate a “continuation of intangible associations” and social cohesion.¹⁰⁷ The **cultural value** of heritage encompasses diversity in terms of ethnic, regional or religious culture, the continuation of tradition as well as intangible heritage.¹⁰⁸

103 China ICOMOS (Chinese-language document); Agnew, Neville; Demas, Martha (English-language translation ed., 2004): *Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze* 中国文物古迹保护准则, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, p. 71.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., p. 72.

106 Ibid.

107 China ICOMOS (Chinese-language document); Agnew, Neville; Demas, Martha (English-language translation ed., 2015): *Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze* (2015 nian xiuding) 中国文物古迹保护准则 (2015年修订), *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (Revised 2015), p. 61.

108 Ibid.

The framework for the analysis of cultural significance on the third tier therefore is based on the China Principles and has been expanded with two aspects by the author, which have been found to be relevant in the investigated cases. A criterion for the artistic value of sites that has been added is whether the site comprises a garden or garden-related elements. And for cultural value, it has been considered whether sites or single buildings that are part of a site have a hall name (*tanghao* 堂号). While the cultural significance of individual sites is analyzed exemplarily for representative sites in the respective case studies, comprehensive tables of all listed sites in the Pingjiang Historic Block and Tongli have been attached. These tables illustrate the overall framework for the analysis of the individual sites' cultural significance in visual form (see appendix A.9–A.11).

The three case studies investigated in this project draw on a wide range of sources. Primarily, information on historic mansions and individual sites, as well as environmental elements in the blocks such as historic wells and ceremonial gateways, has been recorded in local gazetteers. Important primary sources for this project further are the recent conservation plans of each case. As the framework of the HCF City is primarily rooted in conservation planning, the documents can inform on every project's general approach, main targets for protection and underlying conservation principles. Then, the author has conducted several on-site investigations in all three residential areas between 2015 and 2018. In the course of these on-site observations, further material such as tourism maps and photographic material was gathered.

Moreover, interviews were conducted to complement information on conservation measures, management practices, non-exceptional housing and different forms of adaptive reuse. These interviews include expert interviews with Chinese architecture and conservation researchers as well as local government officials involved in the respective projects. In order to show different perspectives, further interview partners also include homeowners and local residents. All in all, almost 20 interviews could be realized, of which 14 have been included in this study and are listed in the appendix under A.2. While arranged interviews with conservation experts and government officials had a length of between one and three hours, spontaneous interviews with homeowners and local residents were shorter, about 30 minutes. They were recorded in the cases where the interviewee agreed. The interviews were carried out face-to-face and solely involved the author and the interviewee. Generally, the interviews began with individually prepared qualitative questions and interviewees were given the possibility to add information on aspects they considered relevant for this research after these questions had been discussed.

For the evaluation of two World Heritage Sites in Suzhou (the Couple's Garden Retreat) and Tongli (the Retreat and Reflection Garden), the study includes information from the UNESCO-Archives in Paris. During the course of a research trip in March 2018, the author investigated the nomination documents for the inclusion of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou on the World Heritage List in 1996 and their extension in 1999. The nomination documents inform on the cultural significance of these sites as evaluated by the Ministry of Construction and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, which prepared the documents.¹⁰⁹

UNESCO's HUL management approach is equally built on an international document, the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*, which was adopted by UNESCO in November 2011. Moreover, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP, 亚太地区世界遗产培训与研究中心) in Shanghai launched a pilot program for implementing the *HUL Recommendation* in 2012. The author's participation in WHITRAP's third Asia-Pacific Region Training on HUL (Shanghai, 14–17 December 2015) enabled insight into the management approach itself as well as initiatives in China. The training provided a deeper understanding of the approach, which is a premise for the final evaluation of its applicability in China based on implications from the three case studies.

109 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, UNESCO Archives, nomination file CLT/WHC/NOM/ 1997 422. Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1999): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, UNESCO Archives, nomination file CLT/WHC/NOM/ 1997 422.