

Rurban Landscape as a Context of Structures

Theory and Tools for Conservation, Revitalization and Design Enhancement of Layered Morphology in Fenghuang Historic Town

Laura Anna Pezzetti

ABC Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering,

Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy

laura.pezzetti@polimi.it

Abstract: Chinese rural towns have already undergone radical transformations that have deeply altered their built and rural landscape, with significant losses in terms of both cultural and built heritage, population and land-use, knowledge and traditions. After the self-rurbanization of their fringe and the de-culturalized infills into heritage textures, the designation as ‘Famous Historic and Cultural Towns and Villages’, seems to add paradoxically another major threat. As the case study of Fenghuang (Shaanxi) shows, this new label attracts standardized touristic-commercial development projects, which erase a deep morphological order of the whole settlement and the authentic character of rural landscape.

The protection measures developed in current Preservation and Tourism Plans introduced no substantial change, in that the former reduces the living town to a scenography for the simulacrum of pastoral life, while the latter foresees the consume of all surrounding crops for the construction of a ‘cultural’ *scenic area*. Moreover, ‘Environmental Control Plans’ do not relate as a system the conservation-revitalization of heritage properties with the appropriate design enhancement of their morphology and landscapes, which are integral part of their authenticity.

This lack of systemic vision highlights the understanding of urban form as the major crucial issues that lies at the base of any further action and the need of a theoretical and operative shift from ‘setting’ to ‘context’.

Fenghuang research provides the evidence and the tools to re-discuss a strategy based on the role of the built manifestation of collective memory in its physical, historical, morphological reality and in its immaterial meanings; the diachronic character of authenticity which implies the study of the real type into the context and the notion of *aura*, i.e. of time as material itself and the dialectic relationship with an *appropriate authenticity of new*; the founding and indissoluble relationship that heritage establishes with its typomorphological order and its natural or manmade landscape.

Those rural towns cannot just survive. They need to reopen the dialectic between permanence and modification through appropriate revitalization and *slow tourism* models. Understanding the systemic complexity of *rurban* landscape as a *context of structures*, the research provides both theory and tools integrating Italian *urban studies*, conservation and Fengshui to read, conserve and design rural-urban landscape through joint strategies of re-signification, re-structuring and re-morphologisation, which are environmentally, economically and culturally sustainable.

Keywords: Famous Historic Town and Villages, context, typomorphology and topography, historic urban-rural landscape

1. The paradox of the designation to ‘Famous Historical and Cultural Town’ as a threat. The current scenario

Chinese rural towns and villages have already undergone radical transformations that have deeply altered their built and rural landscape, with significant losses in terms of both cultural and built heritage, population and land-use, knowledge and traditions.

Although China’s fast development has been recently turning towards villages and towns of the countryside, until the 5th batch in December 2018¹ only 4,153 rural villages (now 6,799) were included in the ‘Traditional Chinese Villages’ protection system (TCV) in mainland China, accounting for 0.74% (now 1,22%) of the total number of administrative villages nationwide (LI 2018). Since 2003, only 252 old towns have been listed in the category of ‘China Famous Historical and Cultural Towns’ (CFHCT), i.e. the 0.16% of the total number of administrative towns in China.

Nonetheless, even in those towns that have become ‘cultural relics’ protection units’, protection still faces manifold challenges in the context of rapid urbanization since most of CHCFT are regional administrative centres. In the last decade every Provincial Government, under the guidance of the 11th Five-Year Plan and the National Urban System Planning Outline (2005-2020), have developed masterplan converting to urban residential area all farming areas around historical cores.

In the case study of Fenghuang Town (Zhashui, Shaanxi), with the promulgation of the ‘Outline of Speeding up the Development of County-Level Urbanization in Shaanxi Province’ (2009)² a new process of development has already started spreading disorderly and creating a real peri-urban fringe.

In 2009, the People’s Government of the Town formulated a new Master Plan (MP, 2009-2020) that has turned 294 hectares of land, including the Old Town, from rural land to urban construction residential land.

Fenghuang first was listed in the Provincial-level protected sites (2004) and then in the Fifth batch of CFHCT (2010) which from 2003 onwards has been including in the heritage protection system also those pre-Qing traditional villages and towns that have been acknowledged for their historical, artistic or cultural value, their commemorative revolutionary significance or clear settlement character and traditional costumes³.

Since the label of ‘Famous Historical Cultural Cities’ was extended to towns and villages⁴, after the rough and de-culturalised self-built infills into heritage textures (from the ’80s and still ongoing) and the rurbanisation of the fringes (after 2000), the designation as a ‘CFHCTV’ seems to add paradoxically another major threat. Entire settlements have been turned into paid tourist museums, frozen apart from real life that has been moved to their urban expansions. The loss of functionality is severely challenging the issue of authenticity as it promotes a simulacrum of intangible cultural context.

The new label of Fenghuang as a ‘CFHCTV’ is already attracting standardised touristic-commercial development projects, which erase the deep structural and morphological order of the whole settlement (that has proved to be resilient even to self-built constructions), and the authentic character of rural and mountain landscape.

This is possible because Protection Plans are also planned by zoning and focus only on ‘key protection units’ in

view of their touristic attraction, erasing in turn every sign of the passage of time to satisfy the expectation of a symbolic authenticity based on the prevailing value of the style.

Fenghuang Historic Town should not be limited to its Old Street because, from its foundation, its urban form has reflected the interaction between geographic elements, architecture, the settlement structure and the rural landscape. This meaningful urban-rural whole is the very text to be understood, preserved and coherently enhanced for the future.



Fig.1: Fenghuang 'Famous Historical and Cultural Town', drone survey made in May 2018 during the 4^o Heritage-led Design Workshop in between Politecnico di Milano (director L.A. Pezzetti) and XAUAT.

Myth, geographical factors and Fengshui intertwined in decreeing the appropriateness of Fenghuang site, southward of the Qinling Mountains. Built '*between mountains and water*', at the confluence of three rivers of the San Cha Mouth, Fenghuang was at the same time paradigm of Fengshui principles and a thriving regional inland port, since Tang period (Wang 2008).

By 624, the strengthening of the equal-field system encouraged the agricultural development and the first of a series of waves of migration from the south (Hubei and Hunan) destined to continue even in Qing dynasty when after a new war (1675) the village was rebuilt. Based on historical records, nonetheless, what is called Fenghuang 'ancient town' is actually coinciding with its rebirth at the beginning of the 1800 when, at the height of its splendor, some 100 houses were built and a trail will connect it to Xi'an and to the water road of Jia- Jin Qian River (Zhang 2004), and even later additions.

The origin of Fenghuang settlement formal structure relies on three main interconnected factors that the research has unveiled for the first time.

- The first relates to the settlement matrix established by an original interaction between geography of the

valley, form of the settlement and architecture, which moreover was influenced by the role of the commercial hub, the agricultural structure and Fengshui principles. The historic-structural reading has revealed a latent structure that support Fengshui principles with an extrinsic and fully expressed spatial form.

- The second is the relationship between the *typological invariant* constituted by the unique *zhai yuan* grafting Chu and Wu elements onto the Guanzhong layout – thus giving a formal representation to the cultural features of portuality and migrations – and the settlement’s linear structure, giving shape to a peculiar morphotype.
- The third pertains to the triple settlement relationship between type, morphology and rural field structure. Those three major aspects of the urban-rural phenomena have been clarified both as a crucial reading key to define the object, the contents and the principles of conservation, modification, and design enhancement, and in their potential for an integrated approach to the historic town as a meaningful whole organism, i.e. for a heritage-led appropriate revitalization and development.

Yet, they have been never investigated in previous literature and Plans nor in the rationale of Fenghuang Heritage Conservation Plans (HCP, 2012; 2013) and Tourism Development Plan (TDP, 2013).

The MP prior to the designation decreed the commercial exploitation of the Old Street along with the erasure of every topographical and morphological sign within the areas that now constitute the HCP’s ‘*construction control zone*’ and ‘*environmental coordination zone*’. It foresaw the residential development of all the agricultural fields, which should constitute instead an integral part of Fenghuang historic landscape (Council of Europe 2000). Although the ‘*Regulation on the Protection of CFHCC/T/V*’ (2008)⁵ states that the County level should have compiled a specific “Protection Plan for CFHCC/T/V” within one year after the nomination, before 2012 Fenghuang did not even possess a generic one. Still now, the requirement has not been fulfilled and thus the legal value of protection has become ineffective. Many demolitions of earthen traditional houses and many inappropriate constructions have been already carried out.

According to art.21 of the ‘*Regulation*’ and art. 13 of the ‘*Requirements*’⁶, the protection should have expanded to the entire Old Town as a whole, including the related natural landscape and surrounding environment, and maintained the traditional pattern, historical features, and spatial scale.

Similarly to MP and to the 2004 Provincial level site⁷, the first version of the HCP (2012) only protects the Old Street’s residential courtyard buildings (if not just the facades), likewise destined to tourism commercial functions, and merely introduces a *buffer zone* corresponding to the surrounding town built before 2000. The second version of the HCP (2013) distinguishes between old buildings to be ‘protected’ (partly rebuilt after a fire in 1913) and traditional earthen buildings. The latter, built just some decades later between the ‘30s and the Cultural Revolution, are authentic in their physical substance. Yet, they were excluded from protection and associated to an undifferentiated *construction control zone*, which is actually already compromised by multistory generic buildings. Zoning deals only with possible demolitions, reconstructions and stylistic camouflage.

This gap reflects the statute of CFHCT where the notion of heritage is still limited to the *problem of the ‘original style’* of major architectures – that in villages and towns is inflected in a vernacular key – and to the restoration of its *image* which, in the renderings of the CTP (2012) and ‘Tourism Development Master Plan’ (TDP 2013), is

turned into a postcard for tourist consumption, i.e. a “picklock” for a disproportionate real estate development. The protection measures developed in current HCP and the TDP introduced no substantial change from previous MP in that the former reduces the living town to a scenography for the simulacrum of pastoral life, while the latter still foresees the consume of all surrounding crops for the construction of a ‘cultural’ *scenic area* in replacement of the residential function.

Outside the ‘red line’, development and enhancement are based on the *tabula rasa* of all rural landscape patterns and terraced cemetery-with-fields, replaced by a standardised incongruent development.

Since value assessment is generic and no study has been conducted on urban form and landscape structure, heritage properties are disjoined from their own morphology and landscapes character, which are instead the integral part of their authenticity. In turn, the TDP’s composition of the new development layout is crude, the solids huge and unrelated to the existing urban-rural structure and geography. The manmade rural landscape is turned to a *generic fringe*, introducing patterns, plazas, amphitheatres and other incongruous elements out of context. Both zoning and structural axis are an abstraction superimposed on the physical reality, being unrelated to any survey, reading of settlement form and structure.

On both theoretical and knowledge level, the missing link between the Old Core and the natural environment as it has been considered by the ‘*Regulation*’ and the ‘*Requirements*’ is the entire historicized town and its interdependent rural landscape.

The study on its urban-rural form becomes urgent and crucial, and includes its overall structure, typomorphological features of the entire historicized town and the manmade urban-rural landscape.

Moreover, being at the encounter between built, rural and natural landscape, a multiscale framework and a systemic approach are necessary to understand the relationships among the different components and the specific nature of Fenghuang historic context.



Fig.2: Division of conservation areas and planning of landscape structure in the Heritage Conservation Planning (HCP).

2. Understanding the settlement’s form and structure. Context vs Setting

Present methods of assessment have proved to be insufficient to decode, along with style and vernacular traditions, the *settlements facts (fatti insediativi)* and their underlying *formal structure*, which are crucial to shift from the building scale to the urban scale providing a scientific and cultural foundation for a *knowledge project*.

The research has explored the integration of theoretical and methodological tools developed from the Italian tradition of *urban studies* and conservation to read and explain the typomorphological structure of a Chinese historic small town in view of conserving, enhancing and developing the material and cultural authenticity of its meaningful historic layering.

The methodological reference adopted in this research finds its cultural roots in the tradition of urban studies accumulated between Milan and Venice⁸ where two components have always been intertwined: the relationship between architecture and the city and that between design, history, and tradition. Italian urban studies began precisely in reaction to the ban on architecture in historic centres and the fragmentation of the plans with which ‘approximate’ interventions were made on cities, due to the division of tasks among separated ‘disciplinary sectors’, forcing each into narrow limits (Rossi 1967).

The form of places almost never completely loses the memory of itself, yet this has happened in many Chinese cities under the pressure of uncontrolled rapid urbanization. Unlike cities, villages and small towns retain types, landforms and *writings of the ground* – whether evident or hidden under the latest development and self-construction – whose anamnesis and interrelationship would permit to understand their *genetic matrix* and co-evolutionary character as well as to address the actions of protection, modification or development in relation to the specific physiology of the context.

Villages are not just repositories of vernacular styles and traditions but preserve the authentic forms Chinese settlement. The crucial question, laying at the basis for any appropriate relationship between conservation, enhancement of existing structures and coevolutionary redevelopment of urban-rural *organisms*, is a deep understanding of the settlement’s physical dimension, i.e. the irreproducible and autograph manifestation of a cultural construction along succeeding cycles of civilization.

From the issue of ‘*preesistenza ambientale*’ (*environmental pre-existences*) that gave theoretical dignity to the dialogue between design and history (Rogers 1958) and the attention for the physical dimension of settlements within the unity of architecture and urbanism (Samonà 1975) on the one hand, to the analytical study on urban fabric in relationship to building typologies (Muratori 1959) on the other hand, the basis for the *urban science* and urban significance of architecture were jointly established.

The notion of ‘setting’ contained in the ‘*Principles*’, together with the mere reference to ‘natural landscape and surrounding environment’ in the ‘*Regulation*’ are too a vague reference, lacking the appropriate knowledge tools which have a long tradition in *urban studies*. Almost 70 years of researches have demonstrated that ‘setting’ does not relate to the immediate surroundings as a background for heritage artefacts, nor to the visible dimension of landscape only. Nor even it is ever confined to a privileged historical moment in the life of constructions, sacrificing all other historical layering for a stylistic and cultural value in itself.

Limiting conservation to the ‘red line’ of the Old Street’s *zhai yuan* ‘protection unit’ (but mainly to the shop buildings or, in reality, their canonical reconstruction) in order to sterilize it ‘surgically’ and simplifying its layered setting between a ‘*buffer zone*’ a posteriori and an ‘*environmental coordination zone*’ (where anything can be designed as long as it is harmonised with ‘original style’), produces a simplification that is a forerunner of the destruction of the historic environment and landscape.

Conservation, planning and architectures alone, if separated from the understanding of the structural matrix of the settlement, the morphological structure and the relationship *forma urbis-form agris*, could never redeem the loss of sense in urban form and rural landscape that we are used to experience in Chinese settlements.

The first theoretical and operative shift, therefore, is to redefine what we mean by ‘setting’ and ‘assessment’ that is closely linked to what is meant for the object of research, preservation, revitalisation.

Distinguishing from the indefiniteness of ‘setting’, the structural and historical notion of context enables to penetrate the deep structure of the settlement, where place is not simply what is physically visible *hic et nunc*, but is also the result of a dense texture of signs, relationships, fractures and oppositions that are forms, ideas, memories and absences, those decoding takes place first of all (but not only) within the layered text that is the site.

This legacy constitutes the reference framework for the dialectical relationship between the old and the new, i.e. between what is *pre-existent* and design.

The place-as-a-context therefore is also an absence and a possible text that, similarly to a *palimpsest* (Lavedan 1926; Geddes 1915; Corboz 2001) contains several traces and different signs, including the future ones.

Absences, in fact, are never entirely disappearances, as they almost always leave traces in the deep memory of places. Moreover, as Eisenman (1983) has noticed, in the case of an *absent form* what matters is precisely the structure that underlies it and makes it possible. This concept proved to be effective in Chinese context where latency, disappearance and intangibility too often open the path to demolitions, substitution or simulacra.

The reading of a context is not a neutral operation, since objects conform to our knowledge, as Kant understood⁹.

The context therefore includes the notions of architecture, town, territory and landscape, enabling the reading of places in their interrelated structural, cultural and historical dimension.

Therefore, if the concept of *palimpsest* allows us to read topography as a continuous recording of signs, what our knowledge is made of becomes a crucial issue.

3. The ‘*mise en forme*’ of the context

Surveying, reading and decoding, as *urban studies* have demonstrated, are essential basis to interconnect appropriate strategies and actions for preservation, re-qualification, modifications, innovations and management of heritage and historic contexts.

From the European Landscape Convention onwards (ELC, 2000), the notion of landscape, introduced in Italian *urban studies* since the '60s (Rossi 1964; Samonà 1975), has been receiving considerable attention from citizens, associations, planners. More recently, with the ‘*Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*’ (HUL 2011) it has been introduced also in conservation practices, although mostly limited to planning and management.

Nonetheless, through an integrated approach the historical parts of the territory that have assumed value for contemporary society are finally considered historically as well (Bandarin 2018), as it has always been in the Italian tradition of *urban studies* which, since the '60s, opposed to the ‘historical centre’ the idea of the ‘historic city’, and to suburbia the notion of ‘historical periphery’, ‘hinterland’ and ‘territory’ (Canella 1977-85; Gregotti 1966; Secchi 1965)¹⁰.

It is from Samonà’s research around the mid ‘60s that the subject of ‘urbanized countryside’ referring to the role

of small towns within agricultural territories emerged, drawing attention to the values of landscape and its history. Inaugurating the subject of landscape, Samonà suggested to read buildings ensembles as a single house, since from the compositional operation of the project, i.e. ‘putting together different things’ (from Latin *cum-ponere*), ‘that one architecture we want to derive is landscape’ (Samonà 1975).

In the same years, the geographer Sereni’s seminal text (1961) also led to considered rural landscape ‘as a *form*’ consciously and systematically impressed by man onto the natural landscape for his agricultural activities, which required to be analysed and understood in its multidisciplinary components. The ‘*Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage*’ (ICOMOS 2017) has ratified that also rural landscape are therefore not just a setting but heritage themselves.

Yet, unlike the ELC’s assertion, not everything is landscape. Landscape is a protean and still largely indeterminate concept (Zagari 2006)¹¹ that has come to extend to everything that exists, with the risk to dissolve all its components in the undetermined concepts of ‘environment’ and ‘place’.

Referring at the same time to a system of voids (from German languages *land-shape*) and of relationships between built-up villages (from Latin *pagus*), the *diffused historical landscape* unlike the monumental or intentionally designed ones exists as a result of a long cultural construction that we recognize a posteriori – and on the basis of our own cultural awareness – as a text, when is characterised by consistency of signs, iconic nature or typicality.

Its comprehension cannot be limited to visual survey or to what can be perceived by senses, as it originates from the deep structure of the settlement and from co-evolutionary processes of civilization in the relationship with the natural and geographical elements.

It requires to be investigated in its structural relationships by recognising its structuring matrix, substructures and units in which can be subdivided, and by relating its different scales and operative analysis to ongoing dynamics. Rural landscapes are one of the substructures of a context, being defined by an ‘agrarian structure’ that is ‘the ensemble of durable and deep bonding between man and ground’ (Lebeau 1986).

Fig.3: Fenghuang’s fringe and fields’ structure view in 2010; drone survey made in May 2018 (Politecnico di Milano - XAUAT Heritage-led Design Workshop).

When Rossi and Aymonino inaugurated the study of the city as an *urban phenomenon* (Aymonino 1970), the



concept of ‘urban landscape’ was present in its derivation from French geographers like Chabot (1948;1964),

enabling penetrating the city *from the inside*: ‘the urban landscape is the normal field of investigation of our study; so to speak, it is the empirical ground on which we are working’ (Rossi 1964).

Being at the encounter between collective and individual *facts*, human settlement and natural environment, cities and by extension towns and villages are built cultural phenomena that need to be understood in the *long-term* of civilization (Braudel 1985)¹², starting from the *real facts* of which they are made of and through the techniques with which the phenomenon reveals itself, among which is architecture, i.e. the *built spatial unit*.

Landscape, therefore, is a context containing other contexts (Carandini 2017) that should be read and understood through appropriate theoretical and operational tools, beyond mere visible aspects or transient values that are often influenced by the market of culture industry tending to impose homogenized cultural products (Horkheimer-Adorno 1944; Choay 1995).

Landscape, therefore, is made of structures, which do not require separate instrumentality but rather multi-disciplinarity to include the different systems it is composed of (architectural-territorial, hydro-geographical, socio-ethnological, legal- economical etc. etc.) in a broad cognitive framework.

For architectural research, tools are firstly related to historic-structural investigation and typomorphological analysis, which dig into the depth of historic layering and manmade signs to read the indissoluble complementarity of architecture and territory.

By reading landscape as a context, we can recognize its settlement matrix, its historical-cultural meanings and a series of aesthetic-formal qualities. The latter are often achieved *a posteriori*, when a series of functional but necessary elements acquire over time a layered and organic evolution, resulting in a coherent text. This text is what we need to investigate as a palimpsest, i.e. in its diachronic construction and in its synchronic reading.

Landscape then appears as a ‘*mise en forme*’ (Corboz 2001)¹³ of a context, within which there are architecture, i.e. the unit of measure of the *mise en forme* of human activities; morphology, i.e. the urban-historical *mise en forme*; and territory, which is its historical-geographical *mise en forme*.

This systemic nature of landscape can be therefore defined and investigated from both theoretic and operational level as a *context of structures*, which allows to penetrate in-depth the settlement matrix and the multiplicity of sub-structures that connect the *pagus* to its *land*.

4. Methodology as a description language: stratigraphic readings and interpretative mapping

The way we look at this cultural construction is not a neutral data accumulation or values assessment, fatally transients. The modes of description are in themselves the method. The decision of what and how to conserve is based on a *knowledge project* and on the procedures to decode sites.

In the preliminary investigation phase (*indagine istruttoria*), the study has been based on the comparison between documentary research and accurate fieldwork survey of both buildings and urban-rural morphology in their physical layering, typological identification and morphological aggregation including the patterns of the fields. Analyzing the old-timey pictures and aerial views, it is possible to recognize the urban structure before the settlement’s first expansion in the ‘70, being basically still stuck on 1800s arrangement of the Street with few

and recognizable additions.

The attempt to reconstruct the historical reality of Fenghuang from *urban facts* and reliable documentary sources has revealed the problematic nature of the fracture between material and cultural authenticity when it comes to define in practice what and how to conserve.

For the specific characters of Chinese 'disembodied' relationship with the past, history and construction (Pezzetti 2018; Pezzetti 2019), even the finding of few available documents always leaves us on the threshold of uncertainty and approximation about historical dating. On the other hand, substitutions, disappearances and uncontrolled demolishing are continuously taking place under the pressure of self-constructions and development.

It has been considered crucial therefore to start this research by marking the point zero of the town's status quo in May 2018, through extensive documentary collection of sources and specific infographic elaborations based on fieldwork evidences, urban typomorphological and topographical analysis. This will enable retaining from now on the memory of *built facts* (Rossi 1978), helping detailed archival records of future restorations or transformations and hopefully a new awareness of the irreproducibility of authenticity.

Reading is aimed at providing the knowledge framework for decoding and recoding again Fenghuang structure and urban form.

The analytical moment makes use of both diachronic and synchronic¹⁴ infographic reconstructions to provide a *stratigraphic reading* that is necessary to detect and order the strata of the spatial palimpsest as well as their associated characters and meanings (cultural and natural, tangible and intangible, historical and emotional, documentary and aesthetic).

The story of the layers can be reconstructed studying their form (structure, types, morphology, and topography), their overlapping, division and succession. This frame of *stratigraphic reading* reads the historic town and its overall settlement as a unique and complex palimpsest to discriminate characters, coherences and antinomies and trace back the different phases and ideas overwritten on the ground.

The interaction between surveying and cartographic mapping is the first level of understanding and decoding the *settlement rule*, since it returns the ubiquity of the *vertical gaze* able to probe the stratigraphic depths of history, recording its signs in their interconnections. The gaze on landscape instead consists of fragments and framings that are perceived from place to place and only one at a time (Corboz 2001). These readings are not equivalent but must be always integrated.

In the branch of the *urban studies* defined as 'typological critique' (Tafuri 1868), reading is always correlated to the acknowledgement of the settlement phenomena as a *mise en forme* through *architectural* or *territorial figures* and 'space-places' in their positional relationships.

To fit the Chinese context it is therefore necessary to develop a concept of morphology correlated to its geographical origins, evoking both the topological dimension (from Greek *tópos*, place, and *logos*, study) and the topographical one (from Greek *graphein*, write) of architecture, as defined by the settlement act itself. The concept of *layered morphology* here elaborated aims at holding together the reading of *built facts* in their structural, typological and morphological relationship with the *topographical writing* of the ground by manmade activities.

While archeologists' dig to distinguish stratigraphic sections, architects finally have to work overlapping layers, ages, and architectures. Synchronic readings and *interpretative maps* are also needed to understand the 'field of

relationships' established in the present by diachronic urban, topographical, natural, infrastructural elements. At the building scale, the current literature on villages show instead the indifference for the reality and diachronic authenticity of edifices, as well as the conceptual interchangeability of the real type with the *a priori* type (*archetype*).

Restoration is understood as reinstating a conventional image of the 'original style' thus confusing the *archetype* (or model), which is a formal structure, with the *real type* which is instead a unique irreplaceable building. This approach erases the *aura* of the only artistic, historical and material autograph authenticity that embodies the passing of time, related memories and cultural legacies.

Regarding material authenticity, substitutions become approximate even in presence of consistent documentation and materials (e.g. n.307 house's *ma tou qiang*).

Yet, we cannot restore an image but only the matter. The vernacular type can be reconstructed as a project, establishing a complex dynamic operation between the old and the new. Whether stylistic or typological reconstruction, critical interpretation or preservation of the lacuna, any addition is always a choice of architecture. As such, it is bound to *case-by-case* circumstances, urban and architectural significance, rather than dogmas and transient values.

On the other hand, against the dramatic loss of the entire urban heritage and the new threats looming over towns and villages and in the light of the potential demonstrated by this research, the riding of an ambiguous relativism in matter of material authenticity, triggered by the 'Nara Document' (ICOMOS 1994) and brought to extreme consequences by the *laissez faire* of the 'Burra Charter', results in an irresponsible position.

Between the restrictiveness of conservationist approach, which bans the new for an impossible immutability of historic setting (Portoghesi 1980; Canella 1990; Carbonara 2011; Ramo 2012) and that of the so called non-Western approaches – sacrificing material authenticity and assuming that 'all heritage is intangible' (Smith 2006; Tweed and Sutherland 2007)¹⁵–, the alternative is to go back to the reality of architecture and *settlement facts*, which are based on significance and on 'the universal and eternal meaning of certain forms' (Perret 1937).

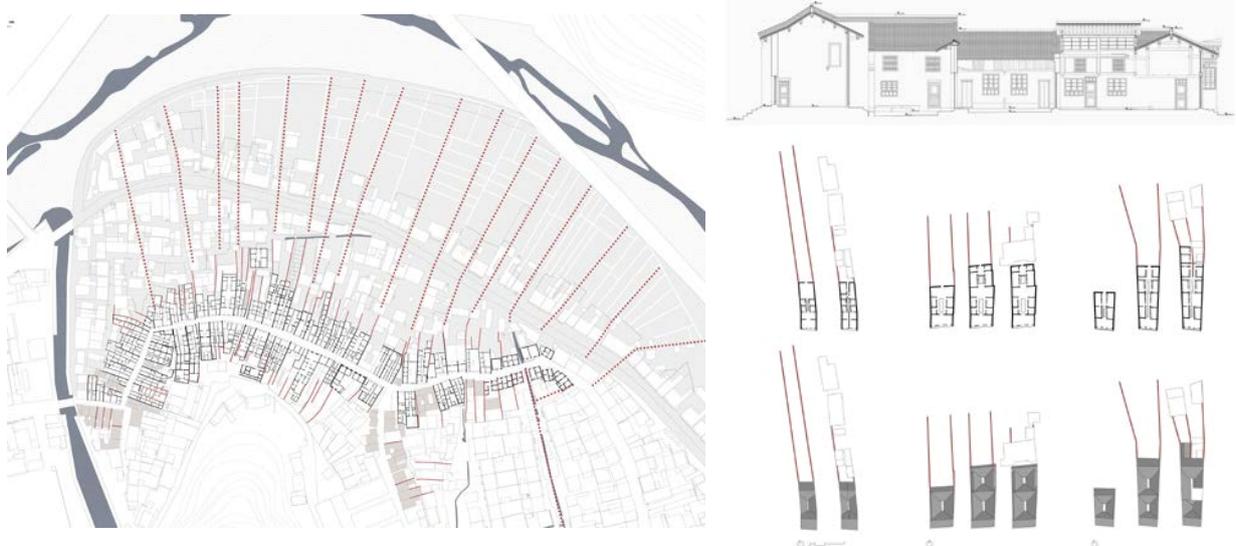


Fig.4: Synchronic morphological map with overlapped the wall-field system revealing the latent structure; geometric survey of Dang Courtyard House; survey and diachronic typological evolution of three courtyard *zhai yuan* houses.

Within a story that is permanent evolution, architecture and settlements represent the manifestation of the conscious use of life, the becoming of a civilization in a completely extrinsic, expressed, and accomplished mode.

Through synchronic reading, the real type is distinguished from the model and its variations are identified in its 'practical application, i.e. in the building fabric' (Muratori 1959).

Moreover, as the type constitutes the *invariant* of morphology (Canella 1968), it makes readable in the historical process the qualities emerging from the relationship between form of architectures and form of the town.

Synchronic readings therefore investigate the entire historical landscape, distinguishing among different *morphological semantic units* that *historic section* have helped to identify, assessing components that establish consistency or fracture, potential system of connections, public space and buildings.

5. Decoding the latent structure and its layered morphotypes: the complex unity of architecture, morphology and landscape

The identity of places is an ongoing construction and is entrusted to the ability of the present to recognize structures, select character, and become construction again.

To define what meaning we need to conserve and how to solve the relationship between the old and new, i.e. between history and design, it is necessary to read Fenghuang palimpsest of signs, traces, memories and overwriting, where a variety of parts are waiting to be acknowledged in their distinct authenticity, character and potential of use and meaning.

The fabric, being a *palimpsest* of architectural information to be deciphered, turned out to be also the keeper of the settlement matrix, which is still readable in the topographical traces.

This latent structure can be revealed only through the joint survey of all the buildings in the Old Street, the typomorphological mapping, the topographic comparisons between the fragments of the crops' walls and the positions of the traditional and modern buildings and between the old-timey pictures and the agricultural parcels.

The synchronic infographic mapping have clarified that the correspondence between building parcel and building type generated an original radial strip structure converging on the top of the upland on the Yipang Mountain where the ancestors recognized in the village form the deployed wings of the Phoenix in flight.

The structure used to stretch from the courtyards to the backyards and vegetable gardens, continuing as far as the fields until the (now destroyed) riverbank wall where it finally opened like a fan and reverberated in an ideal triangulation with the mountains' peaks.

By comparing the latent structure to the historical process of Fenghuang '*mise en forme*', the synchronic readings includes the identification of architectural and ground *figures* as well as the different settlement layout that have been superimposed to the original radial structure without however totally erasing it.

The identification of morphotypes derived from the historical process identifies different landscape units according not to visual uniformity but to their constitutive rules and character as *semantic units*. A Conservation Plan should be based on these units since they reformulate the 'object' of conservation, being far more complex and differentiated than the three generic protection and control units. The recognition of the units' differentiated character permits the precise assessment of all material traces of memory and history, which is the basis for an

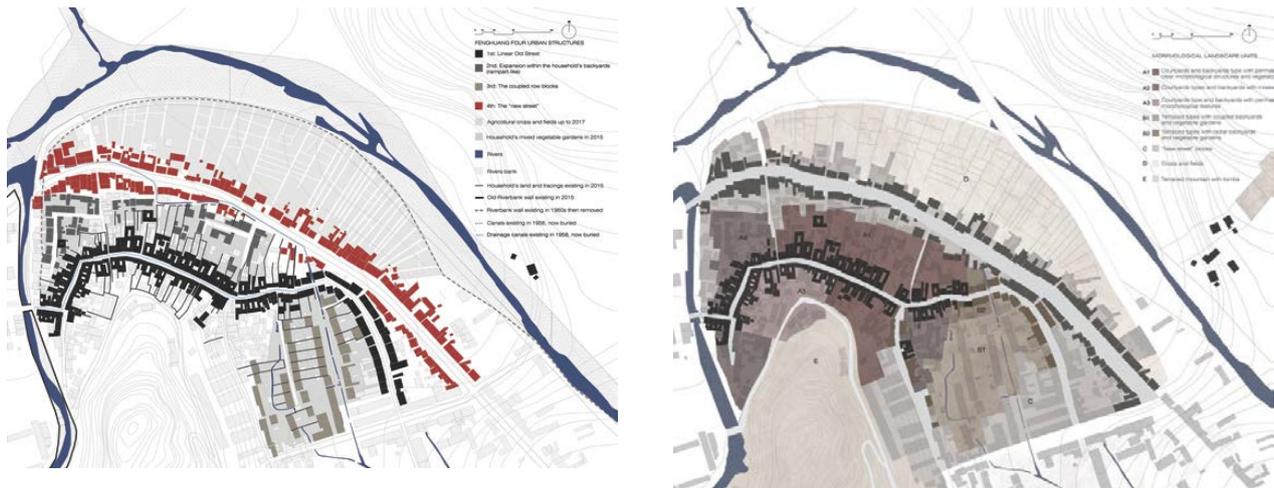


Fig.5: Synchronic map evidencing the different settlement structures; Map of morphological and landscape units of sense.

effective preservation while at the same time, envisions the rules for their enhancement through calibrated grafting and appropriate urban-rural development strategies.

The diachronic readings through *historic sections (soglie storiche)* examines *urban facts* according to their temporal development, exploring the relationship between permanencies and discontinuities, thus privileging the moments of breach between historical cycles. *Historic sections* have underlined the subsequent and different The structure used to define the whole settlement, stating from the plot of the *zhai yuan* narrow house, stretching from the courtyards to the backyards vegetable gardens, continuing as a fields *strigatio*¹⁶ as far as the Sancha He riverbank wall (recently destroyed), where it finally opened like a fan and reverberated in an ideal triangulation with the top of the mountains.

6. The latent form and the writing of the ground. The *limitatio* of the fields as a rural heritage structure

Fenghuang town has proved to be the text of a story of which it retains the structure, expressed by signs, traces and footprints.

It is no coincidence that the first essays of urban analysis by Rossi (1970) started from the Veneto's *centuriatio*, since its tracks represent the oldest constitutive forms of Italian cities and countryside. From this remote start, the first elements of formal analysis initiated, similarly to the studies of linguistics applied to persistence and roots. The continuity of Fenghuang formal structure, that has been resilient even after the violent transformations that have taken place since the end of the '80s, can be sought in its deep historic layers.

The agricultural organization of Fenghuang, originating from the land division of the *equal-field* system, presents a *strigatio* and *scamnatio*¹⁷ that were still clearly legible until 2015 and even better in old-timey images and ortophoto (1958-1966). From the denser texture belonging to the households' backyards and vegetable gardens, the *strigatio* extended to the looser texture of the arable fields.

As the physical structure reflects social and productive organizations, with the consolidation of rural homesteads

owned by the Collective, the radial walls-system was only partially dismantled while remaining perfectly readable in the tracks on the ground. The Dang Courtyard that we chose as one of the pilot-projects is still identical to the image of 1958. Dang and Meng Houses are the only two *zhai yuan* who kept the full integrity of their original land-strip. When China began the rural economic reform in the early '80s, these walls were rebuilt also prolonging outdoor the longitudinal division that in the meanwhile took place within the buildings, as they were turned into multifamily residences.

The city and the ground constitute the *locus* where both the culture and the economic structure of a given society is physically materialized, making legible the causes of architectural phenomena.

In addition to the binary relationships between the local variant of *zhai yuan* type and the settlement's morphology, and between the village form and the geomorphological features selected by Fengshui, a triple relationship emerges between the type, the form of the ground and the rural agricultural landscape.

The *resistant structure* thus takes its form from this original and triple relationship between settlement building type, urban morphology and rural *strigatio*, hatching unexplored but urgent potential for the Chinese context.

The latent structure is the primary settlement matrix establishing a relationship between geomorphological elements, that ancient civilizations were able to read, and the settlement layout imprinted by human activity.

The significance of the radial *territorial figure*, carved in the fields' subdivision, in the land ownership, and in farming and building patterns becomes a *writing of the ground*, i.e. visible as a landscape.

Its significance is not minor to that of the built heritage constituted by the *wings* of the Phoenix. They were born and has lived in a reciprocal relationship, in which the meaning of Fenghuang urban-rural form is safe kept.

The system of physical signs – fabrics, urban paths and walls; levees, ditches, rows of trees and farmland; roads and bridges – in its relationship with the historicised settlement system constitutes the *writing of the ground*.

The fact that rural villages are the *locus* where the *permanence* of Chinese settlement forms are readable, and not just that of vernacular traditions and *xiangchou*, is perceivable. Nonetheless so far no rigorous studies based on typomorphological analyses of specific settlements have been conducted nor have defined an analytical method to explain both general methodological criteria and the typicality of the *locus solus*¹⁸.

Relating to the geography of the place as a dominating character, due to the close relationships established by type, urban form and structural-geographical features, the research has demonstrated the instrumentation to give a describable and physical 'body' to Fengshui principles, within the rapport urban-rural form and land form.

This connection between urban studies and Fengshui is crucial to raise a different approach to planning, urban design and architecture.

Surprisingly, those *lines of force* connecting the town to the fields are traceable also in the position of later traditional buildings as well as in most of the rough self-built constructions, and even in the majority of the out-of-scale buildings that after 2000 formed the landscape barrier of the new commercial street.

By adhering to the rural structure of the later land use systems, even apparent disordered buildings turned out to follow the tracing of the resilient structure of the Phoenix.

So, taking apart visual appearances, the latent structure offers a constitutive logic to make sense of the whole urban form and therefore the reading key to regenerate and recover as an overall system also the traditional

buildings built before and during the Cultural Revolution, and even most of the recent constructions.

This underlying structure allows for re-structuring Fenghuang *latent form* enabling and integrated and organic strategy: maximising conservation, reconnecting separated urban-rural parts, integrating new grafting for the revitalisation and sustainable enhancement of the urban-rural landscape.

To define the strategy of the regenerative structure, the vision must necessarily extend beyond the 'red line' of the Old Street, including the backyards, the historicised town and the agricultural landscape.

The sense of history is that of the *locus* where meaning was built through its *mise en forme* and where jointly with culture the economic structure of society is physically materialized, making the causes of the architectural and urban phenomena readable.

Therefore, making a tabula rasa of the traditional buildings and even of all crude constructions built after the '80s would be a mistake. The former are authentic. The latter, although devoid of architectural and spiritual values, represent the reality of the recent political, social, economic and cultural history of China.

To continue removing history is not culturally nor environmentally sustainable. It is cheaper and more challenging to envision a strategy based on appropriate modification, recycling and layering of the already-written palimpsest.

7. Re-signification, re-structuring and re-morphologisation. The role of design-led revitalisation

The re-signification project assumes the present town as a fragmentary text in which the project prefigures new insertions and overwriting according to the structural laws that have been recognised, similarly when words reintegrate an incomplete palimpsest.

Theoretical and historical issues includes the maximisation of material permanencies within the dialectic relationship between the old and the new, in every scale of the integrated project.

The unity of research, *urban project* and *urban architecture* is a *proactive knowledge* that reopens questions of meaning, recognising in the existing town its latent structures, potential *units of sense* and ground *figures* while prefiguring new ones (*prototypes*) and enhancing the urban-rural structure *lines of force*.

Since the whole existence of built structures is considered as the object of conservation, we need to explore a discourse that retains material diachronic authenticity while considering the works of the present historically as well. To protect and to design are not necessarily a contradiction but a dialectic.

The main conceptual tools belonging to urban-territorial studies that are useful for a structural reading of landscape are *structures*, *invariants*, *lines of forces*, *archetypes*, *morphotypes*, *morphological units*, *figures* and *landscape sections*. These tools permit to control the *appropriateness* of both existing and new components in relation to *morphological units*.

In our conservation plan, therefore, there is no generic concentric zoning (protection unit, construction control zone and development zone). Moreover, we do not limit protection to the buildings of the Old Street because of their 'ancient' foundation. We recognize, instead, diverse *morphologic semantic units* to be explored along the radial structure and in the dialectics between preservation and modification, which is necessary especially within the so-

called 'construction control zone'. The complexity, presence of vegetable gardens, walls, and traditional buildings of the *zhai yuan* backyards are strategic for reading the urban structure. Indeed, they constitute the true asset to reestablish clear morphological relationships and a revitalization strategy within a spontaneous and varied urban fabric. The potential of the back yards as well as the need for calibrated grafting emerges as the key to ensure to *zhai yuan* the continuity of residential use. Avoiding 'cutting' other estranged plazas and disproportioned new streets but activating instead the existing *lines of force* and 'exploration paths' within the radial fabric, the courtyard

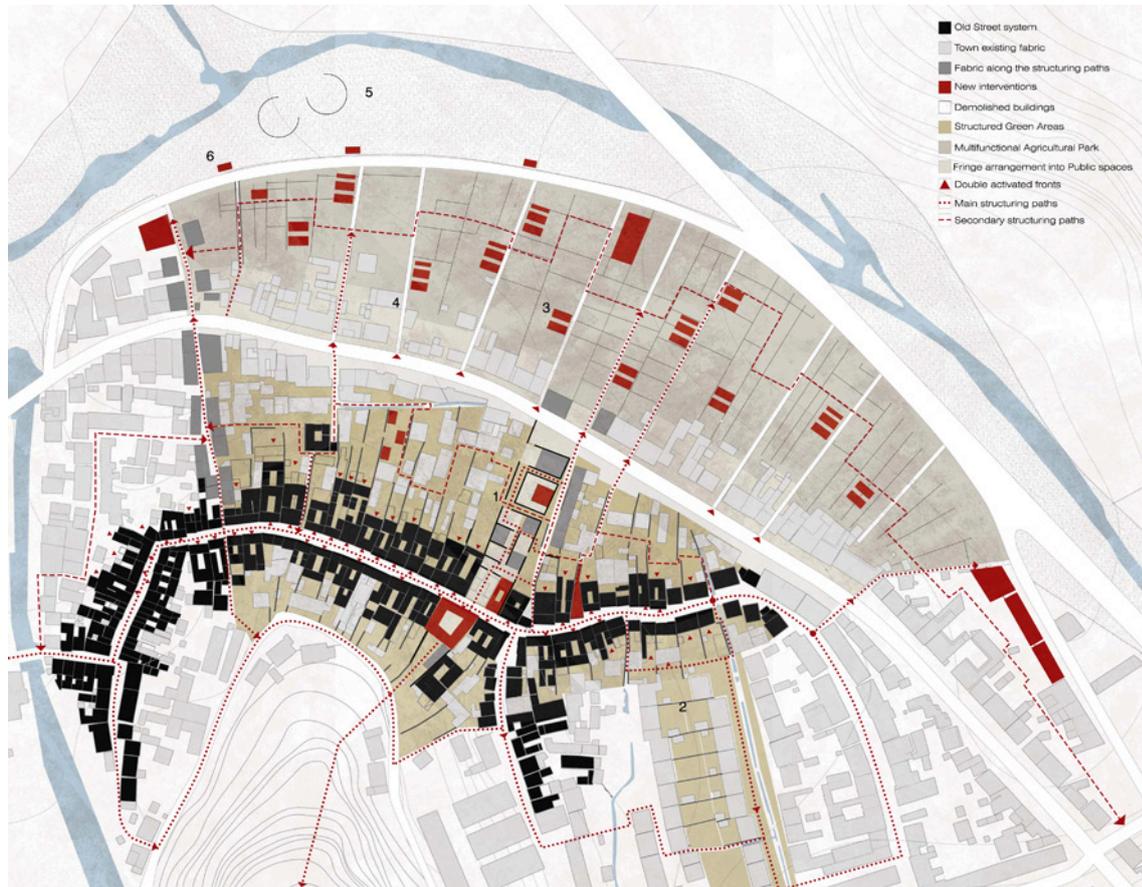


Fig.6: Strategic urban plan with figurate rules for the recovery of urban form, structure, construction/reconstruction, connections and revitalization.

houses together with the new grafting and in synergy with the Old Street, may double the active fronts to help generating new economic activities and a mixed residential-hospitality use throughout the year.

Therefore, 'recoding' implies a unitary strategy of re-signification, re-structuring and re-morphologisation in the framework of an interscalar urban-rural *plan-project*, together with a set of heritage-led design actions integrating conservation with compatible reuse, design enhancement and modification strategies.

Some paradigmatic pilot-projects related to precise morphological 'strips' and units have been also identified with their related design themes: conservation-graft-mending; lacuna and rewriting; infill and transformation of inappropriate buildings; new prototypes joint with rural landscape recovery as an Multifunctional Agricultural Park.

Architecture is not a separate object but plays the role of the artefact through which the town and landscape are jointly built. They are based on constant and permanent principles rather than mere style, transient values or consumption images.

8. Conclusion

Paradoxically, the authentic character of Fenghuang is today under the threat of its status as CFHCT that was meant instead for preservation. The indissoluble nature of the founding relationships that heritage establishes with its typomorphological order and its natural or manmade landscape is severely threatened.

To prevent the transformation of Fenghuang in the umpteenth themed-set village for the *xiangchou* where tourists pay the ticket to enter while local people play a phony pastoral idyll, it is essential to re-connect the whole town as an entirety, preserve wherever possible the residential use and the mix of rural, commercial-production functions of interest to the Community.

At the same time it is necessary to promote a form of development consistent with an idea of *slow tourism fruition*, avoiding the total consume of agricultural land and the plundering of the Community's true resources, which are irreproducible and authentic.

Current development and revitalization projects not only are illiterate in the urban composition or cosmetic like a caricature or a movie set, but mostly they are deceptive without innocence as they mask their consequences behind the unrealistic special effects of the renderings. Those standardized tourist facilities, which are incompatible with the character of villages and towns as well as with their surrounding natural or rural landscape, will disappoint soon the new growing expectations of quality, authenticity, culture and beauty.

Even the prospect of a future corrective by means of demolitions and rebuilding is not viable nowadays, both for the extent of the phenomenon and because the modern materials could no longer "return to Earth".

Unused and unusable, the remnants of overestimated quantity of low-quality buildings would remain instead on the field, leaving local communities to face the total loss of available land and a devastated natural and cultural landscape.

Fenghuang research provides the evidence and the tools to re-discuss a possible strategy based on the role of the built manifestation of collective memory, in its physical, historical, morphological reality and in its immaterial meaning, founded on re-signification, re-structuring and re-morphologisation joint strategies, which are environmentally, economically and culturally sustainable.

The development of the theory and method for a knowledge project based on *urban studies* and the integration of an *urban plan-project* with conservation and landscape tools, enables reading the *long-term* co-evolutionary development as well as the phenomena of obsolescence and decay, the cycles of growth and decline, bridging all manifold components into the possibility of an extraordinary accomplishment.

The material with which architects build is time. The diachronic character of authenticity implies the notion of *aura* (Benjamin 1935) for the old and of *appropriate authenticity* for the new (Pezzetti 2017).

The recycle of the poor-quality generic fabric is crucial, since to continue removing history is not culturally nor environmentally sustainable. A strategy of modification of what is '*already done*' is more sustainable and

challenging, while enriching the layering of the already-written palimpsest.

Urban analysis has disclosed the physiological structure with which the quality of changes should be measured, yet it should not be confused with a mechanistic 'processualism' since architecture is not made of processes but is in the processes, being space, materials and ideas.

To overcome the zoning vision of 'buffer zones', which anachronistically still tends to sterilise the supposed purity of historic centres as opposed to an impure modernity seen as negative, is a crucial theoretical battle which has started after the Second World War right with the Italian *urban studies*, when the issue of the *historic city* – rather than the historic center – was raised, along with the conservation of its significance *as palimpsest* rather than through the selection of arbitrary values, which are fatally transient.

Rural towns cannot just survive. They need to reopen the dialectic between permanence and transformation through forms of site-specific appropriate revitalization and alternative tourism models.

Only in the complex relationship between history and memory, context and design, it is possible to disentangle the impasse of the changing values and the layering of forms, meanings and uses.

The discovery of a *resilient structure*, that takes form from the original and threefold rapport among settlement type, urban - rural morphology and topography, opens readings and potential that are unexplored but urgent for the Chinese context.

References

- Aymonino, Carlo. 1970. 'Lo studio dei fenomeni urbani' in Idem, ed. *La città di Padova. Saggio di analisi urbana*. Rome: Officina.
- Bandarin, Francesco. 2018. 'Le città storiche in Italia: l'indagine ANCSA/CRESME', *Ananke* 84, 18-126.
- Beaujeu-Garnier J. 1964. *Traité de géographie urbaine*. Paris: A. Colin.
- Benjamin, Walter. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935). London: Penguin Great Ideas.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1985. *La Méditerranée. L'espace et l'histoire*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Bruun, Olen. 2011. *Fengshui in China: Geomantic Divination between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion*. Copenhagen: Nias.
- Canella G., Coppa M., Gregotti et al. 1968. *Teoria della progettazione architettonica*. Bari: Dedalo.
- Canella, Guido. 1968. 'Un ruolo per l'architettura', in Canella G., Coppa M., Gregotti, V., Rossi A., Samonà A., Scimeni G. 1968. *Teoria della progettazione architettonica*. Bari: Dedalo.
- Canella, G. 1990. 'Oltre la legittima conservazione'. *Zodiac* 3.
- Carandini, Andrea. 2017. *La forza del contesto*. Rome: Laterza.
- Carbonara, G. 2011. *Architettura d'oggi e restauro. Un confronto antico-nuovo*. Turin: Utet.
- Chabot, Georges. 1948. *Les villes. Aperçu de géographie humaine*. Paris: A. Colin.
- Choay, Françoise. 2001. *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (1992). Tran. En. Laurel M. O' Connell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Compilation Committee of Zhen'an County. 1995. *Zhen'an County Local Gazetteer*. Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing Press. Zhèn ānxiàn zhì biānzhuān wěiyuánhùi. 1995. *Zhèn ānxiàn zhì. Xī'ān: Shǎnxī rénmin chūbǎn She*.
- Compilation Committee of Zhashui County Local Gazetteer. 1998. *Zhashui County Local Gazetteer*. Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing Press. Zhà shuǐ xiànzhi biānzhuān wěiyuánhùi. 1998. *Zhà shuǐ xiànzhi. Xī'ān: Shǎnxī rénmin chūbǎn shè*.
- Corboz, André. 1985. 'Il territorio come palinsesto', *Casabella* n.516.
- Corboz, André. 2001. 'Le territoire comme palimpseste', in *Le territoire comme palimpseste, et autres essais*. Paris: Editions de l'Imprimeur.
- Council of Europe. 2000. *European Landscape Convention*. Florence. Accessed October 2018. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680080621>.
- Eisenman, Peter. 1983. 'The City of Artificial Excavation'. *Architectural Design* n.1-2.
- Geddes, Patrick. 1915. *Cities in Evolution*. London: Williams.
- Gregotti, Vittorio. 1966. *Il territorio dell'architettura*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W. 2007 (1944). *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Cultural Memory in the Present*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- ICOMOS. 1994. *The Nara Document on Authenticity*. Accessed June 2018. www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf.
- ICOMOS Australia. 1999. *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance*. Revised in 2013. Australia: ICOMOS Incorporated.
- ICOMOS. 2005. *Threats to World Heritage Sites 1994–2004: An Analysis*. Paris. Accessed October 2018. http://www.icomos.org/world_heritage/Analysis%20of%20Threats%201994-2004%20final.
- ICOMOS-IFLA. 2017. Principles concerning rural landscapes as heritage. Accessed September 2018. https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/General_Assemblies/19th_Delhi_2017/Working_Documents-First_Batch-August_2017/GA2017_6-3-1_RuralLandscapesPrinciples_EN_final20170730.pdf
- Lavedan, Pierre. 1926. *Qu'est-ce que l'urbanisme? Introduction à l'histoire de l'urbanisme*. Paris.
- Lebeau, René. 1986. *Les grands types de structures agraires dans le monde* (1969). Paris: Masson.
- Li, Lin Tu. 1969. *Zhen'an County Local Gazetteer*. (1908 Repr.). Taiwan: Cheng wen Press Co. Li, Lintú. 1969. *Zhèn ānxiàn xiāngtú zhì*. (1908). Chéngwén chūbǎn shè yǒuxiàn gōngsī.
- March, Andrew. L. 1968. 'An Appreciation of Chinese Geomancy'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 7.
- Ministry of Construction and State Administration of Cultural Heritage. 2003. *Selection Measures of China Famous Historical and Cultural Town and Villages*.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of People's Republic of China (MOHURD), National Cultural Heritage Administration, 2012. *Requirements of Historically and Culturally Famous City, Towns and Villages Conservation Plan*.
- Muratori, Saverio. 1959. *Studi per un'operante storia urbana di Venezia*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato.

- Nie, Tao. 1969. *Zhen'an County Local Gazetteer*. (1753 Repr.), Taiwan: Cheng wen Press Co. Niè Tao. 1969. *Zhèn ānxiàn zhì*. (1753). Taiwan: Chéngwén chūbǎn shè yǒuxiàn gōngsī.
- People's Government of Fenghuang Town, Zhejiang Yuanjian Tourism Planning and Design Institute. 2012. *The Heritage Conservation Planning of Fenghuang Ancient Town*. (HCP 2012).
- People's Government of Fenghuang Town, Center for urban construction and regional planning of Northwestern University. 2013. *The Heritage Conservation Planning of Fenghuang Street and Dwellings*. (HCP 2013).
- People's Government of Fenghuang Town, Zhejiang Yuanjian Tourism Planning and Design Institute. 2013. *Zhashui County Fenghuang Old Town Tourism Development Master Plan*. (TDP).
- Provincial Government Office. 2003. No. 38: *Notice of the Shaanxi Provincial People's Government on the announcement of the fourth batch of Shaanxi Provincial Officially Protected Site*.
- Office of Publicity, Education, Culture and Health. s.d. *Guide of Fenghuang Town*, Fenghuang Town.
- Petzet, Michael. 2009. *International Principles of Preservation*. Berlin: Hendrik Bäfler verlag.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2017. 'The Old and the New. Design s to Enhance Cesano Maderno Old Town through a Regenerative Structure'. *BUILT HERITAGE*, vol.4: 52-70.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2018. 'Liu Kecheng. Designing within Historical Layering in China'. In Pezzetti, Laura A. and Li, Xiao, *Liu Kecheng. Going through Historical Space*. Shanghai: ZhongGuo JjianZhu Gong Ye Chu Ban She, 7-28.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2018. 'Una struttura rigenerativa per Fenghuang "Historical and Cultural Famous Town". Conservazione, riscrittura e paesaggio storico'. *Ananke* 85: 92-97.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. and Kun Li. 2018. 'Exploring a Regenerative Structure Integrating Conservation, Remodelling, and Development for Fenghuang Historic Rurban Landscape'. *Urbanistica Informazioni*, special issue: 68-79.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2019. *Layered Morphologies and Latent Structures: Urban Study and Integrated Tools for Fenghuang Historic Rurban Town and Landscape*, forthcoming.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2019. 'Reconstruction Narratives: Historical Space, Memory and Nostalgia: Three Modes between Protection and Design in Chinese Built Heritage Practices'. In *Reconstructing the Old City of Aleppo*, forthcoming.
- Pezzetti, Laura A. 2019. 'Layered Morphologies and Topographical Structures in Historic Rurban Landscape. Integrating Typo-Morphological, Topographical and Landscape tools with Feng Shui'. *Urban Morphology*, forthcoming.
- Perret, Auguste. 1937. 'Les systèmes et les matériaux de construction', in *Congrès 1937*, n. 2, II: 429-431.
- Portoghesi, Paolo. 1980. 'La fine del proibizionismo'. In *La presenza del passato. Prima mostra internazionale di Architettura*. Venice: La Biennale di Venezia.
- Ramo, Beatriz. 2012. 'Proposte per un manifesto non troppo paradossale'. *Casabella*, 812, April: 56-73
- Rossi, Aldo. 1964. 'Considerazioni sulla morfologia urbana e la tipologia edilizia' in AA.VV., *Aspetti e problemi della tipologia edilizia. Documenti del corso di caratteri distributivi degli edifici*, a.a. 1963-64. Venice: Cluva.
- Rossi, Aldo. 1967. 'La torre di Babele', 'Introduction' to L. Quaroni, *La torre di Babele*. Padova: Marsilio.
- Rossi, Aldo. 1970. *Caratteri urbani delle città venete*, in C. Aymonino, ed., *La città di Padova. Saggio di Analisi urbana*. Rome: Officina.
- Rossi, Aldo. 1987. *L'architettura della città (1978)*. Milan: Clup.

- Rogers, Ernesto N. 1966. 'Il problema di costruire nelle preesistenze ambientali' (1958). Footnote in *Esperienza dell'architettura* Torino: Einaudi, 311.
- Samonà, Giuseppe. 1975. *L'unità architettura urbanistica: scritti e progetti 1929-1973*, P. Lovero ed. Milano: F. Angeli.
- Samonà, Giuseppe. 1975. 'Lo studio dell'architettura', in *L'unità architettura urbanistica: scritti e progetti 1929-1973*, P. Lovero ed. Milan: F. Angeli.
- Secchi, Bernardo. 1965. *Analisi delle strutture territoriali*, Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Shaanxi Institute of Urban & Rural Planning and Design. People's Government of Jinshan County. 2009. *Zhashui County Fenghuang Town Master Plan (2009-2020)*. (MP).
- Guido Canella, Mario Coppa, Vittorio Gregotti, Aldo Rossi, Alberto Samona', Gabriele Scimeni, Luciano Semerani, Manfredo Tafuri. 1968. *Teoria della progettazione architettonica*. Bari: Dedalo.
- Sereni, Emilio. 2011. *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano* (1961). Rome-Bari: Laterza, 21.
- Shaanxi Provincial People's Government. 2009. *Document No. 21 of 2009*.
- Smith, Laurajane. 2006. *The Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- State Council. 2017. *Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (2008), revised edition.
- Tafuri, Manfredo. 1968. *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*. Bari: Laterza, 190.
- Teng, Zhong Huang. 1983. Revised 'Zhenan County Local Gazetteer'. (1926 Repr.). Zhen'an: Zhen'an County Archive.
- Téng Zhòng Huáng. 1983. Chóngxiū zhèn ānxiàn zhì. (1926). Zhèn ān: Zhèn ānxiàn dǎng'àn guǎn.
- Tweed, Christopher, and Margaret Sutherland. 2007. 'Built cultural heritage and sustainable urban development'. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 83 1: 62-9.
- UNESCO, and ICOMOS. 2010. *A New International Instrument: the proposed by UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). Preliminary Report. Comments by ICOMOS 24 December 2010*. Accessed September 2017. www.icomos.org/ICOMOS_HUL_Comments24Dec2010.doc.
- UNESCO. 2011. *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*. Accessed June 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-638-98.pdf>.
- Wang Zhi An. Fenghuang Town Regional Culture Series Compilation Committee. 2008. *Collected Documents on Local Culture of Fenghuang Town*.
- Wang, ShuSheng, XiaoLong Li and ShaoFei Yan. 2016. 'Research on the design method of China's traditional urban planning based on large-scale landscape environment'. *Science China Press*, 61 (33): 3564-3571.
- Wang Yue, Jian Liu and Haotian Xue et al. 2018. 'Rural Plan Implementation Based on Land Property Rights Innovation: A Case Study of Qinggangshu Village in Chengdu'. *China City Planning Review* Vol. 27, No.4: 34-41.
- Wu, Wei Xu. 2006. *Zhen'an County Local Gazetteer*. (1726 Repr.). Beijing: Beijing Library Press. Wǔ Wéixù (qīng). 2006. *Zhèn ānxiàn zhì*. (1726). Běijīng shì: Běijīng túshū guǎn chūbǎn shè.
- Zagari, Franco. 2006. *Questo è paesaggio. 48 definizioni*. Rome: Mancosu.
- Zhang, Ping and Fan Fan Yang. 2009. 'Road Traffic Construction and Business Road Expansion in Xi'an and Surrounding Areas in Ming and Qing Dynasties'. *Tangdu Academic Journal* 25, n.3:63-70.

Zhao, Ting Rui. 2006. *Shaanxi Provincial Local Gazetteer*. Xi'an: Sanqin Press. Zhào, Tíngruì. 2006. *Shǎnxī tōng zhì*. Xī'ān: Sān qín chūbǎn shè.

Zhashui Urban Construction Bureau. 2013. *Zhashui County Fenghuang Town Regulatory Detailed Plan*. (DP).

Zhashui County Tourism Development Bureau, Zhejiang Yuanjian Tourism Planning and Design Institute. 2012.

Construction Planning of Culture Tourism Ancient Town of Fenghuang. (CTP).

notes

1 In 10 December 2018 the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of People's Republic of China (MOHURD) announced the fifth batch for TCV, adding another 2,646 villages.

2 Cfr. Shaanxi Provincial People's Government. 2009. *Document No. 21 of 2009*.

3 Cfr. Ministry of Construction and State Administration of Cultural Heritage. 2003. *Selection Measures of China Famous Historical and Cultural Town and Villages*.

4 In October 2003, the Ministry of Construction and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage announced the first batch of twenty-two 'China Famous Historical and Cultural Towns and Villages'.

5 State Council. 2017. *Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (2008). Revised edition.

6 Cfr. *Regulations*, cit. and also MOHURD, and National Cultural Heritage Administration, 2012. *Requirements of and Culturally Famous City, Towns and Villages Conservation Plan*, art.13.

7 Provincial Government Office. 2003. *No. 38: Notice of the Shaanxi Provincial People's Government on the announcement of the fourth batch of Shaanxi Provincial Officially Protected Site*.

8 I am referring to those experiences developed in Italy between theory and praxis that assumed the city in the process of elaboration of architecture through the analysis of formal matrixes and the understanding of the physiological meaning of the 'urban phenomenon', see e.g. (Muratori 1959; Canella G., Coppa M., Gregotti V. et al. 1968).

9 Cfr. Kant, Immanuel. 1781. *Critique of Pure Reason*, where the philosopher examines whether, how, and to what extent human reason is capable of a priori knowledge.

10 Cfr. Guido Canella, who directed the journal of Architecture and Urbanism *Hinterland* (1977-85), under titled *Design and Context of Architecture for the management of intervention on the territory*; see also Gregotti (1966); Secchi (1965).

11 Cfr. Zagari (2006) for the impossibility of a definition of 'landscape' and its infinite possibility of description.

12 One of the three categories of the historical time as defined by Fernand Braudel: the long-term (*longue durée*), the medium-term (*conjoncture*), and the short-term (*événement*) (Braudel 1985).

13 For an early concept of '*mise en forme*' which in French means the result of arranging meanings, properties and components into forms see Corboz (2001) who relates it to Italian Tuscany landscape, and recently it has been used for territory.

14 Cfr. the study of Ferdinand de Saussure on linguistic structuralism.

15 With particular reference to Australian papers and the doctrinal document 'ICOMOS Australia 1999 Burra Charter', revised in 2013, and the call of October 2009 for a general discussion on "tolerance for change". Michael Petzet (2009),

facing the growing phenomena of ignoring the traditions embodied in the principles of conservation, tries to distinguish Nara's cultural relativism from the severe consequences it brought about internationally, namely with the 'Burra Charter' and the call of October 2009 for a general discussion on 'tolerance for change'.

16 Term to define the rural land division in ancient Roman *centuriation*.

17 These *limites* (subdivisions) in parallel strips were antecedent to *centuriation*.

18 The author is publishing an extensive research on Fenghuang in the book: Laura A. Pezzetti, *Layered Morphologies and Latent Structures: Urban Study and Integrated Tools for Fenghuang Historic Rurban Town and Landscape*.