An Application of the “Urban Artifact” Theory in Chinese Cities, Analysis of Xiamen, China

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Abstract. Nowadays, the quality of urban life in huge cities in China is an important issue. The modern cities have sorts of problems such as the loss of impression, the lack of daily life’s touch. But there has not been an effective construction way to change these kinds of feeling problems. This thesis attempts to turn Rossi’s urban thought into an effective value and analysis it by dividing it to two different city situations and applying it to two different kinds of “urban artifacts” to estimate a way focus on the city’s memory creation.

Introduction

Background and Purpose of This Study

With urbanization process in China, cities have been expanded with the rapidly increasing of inhabitants. The continuing growing of inhabitants toward the city increased the construction of new buildings creates no feelings and memories. Most of the modern architecture theories are focusing on the function which both depends on the building and also on the city. In China, such theories focus on the function were introduced to guide the architecture design which cause the loss of impression and the lack of daily life’s touch. To solve today’s urban problems, the architect need to build the urban buildings in a way including both concerns the function and also the feelings and memories people create. The author intend to theoretically introduce a method to create feelings and memories in an architecture work depending on a urban and city’s view which depend on Aldo Rossi’s urban artificial theory.

The Contents and Method of Study

This thesis suggests an urban memory creation theory, which is depend on different cities and different urban areas and tries to verify it by applying it to cases of actual cities.

Firstly, the Urban Artifact thought of Aldo Rossi will be introduced to tell the origin of this theory. Secondly, Rossi's thought will be be divided into different kinds of regions, and two extreme urban areas will be introduced that which already have a formed memory and which has no memory. Finally, through the analysis of a real city (Xiamen) using the contextual operation theory, the authors will explain the theory with a real city.
The Urban Memory Theory Based on Aldo Rossi’s Thoughts

Aldo Rossi’s Urban Artifact

In “The Architecture of the City”, Aldo Rossi linked the constructions of the cities to ‘urban Artifact[1]’ which is not only about the building itself but also the building’s complex relationships with the city. Cities should be understood texturally which means city is not only a physical thing but also a good example of urban view in terms of contextualize.

The city is depending on different buildings and architecture creatures. These kinds of buildings may cause greater impact of the city and influence the city’s future development. About these kinds of building, “Where does the individuality of such a building begin and on what does it depend? Clearly it depends more on its form than on it material, even if the latter plays a substantial role; but it also depends on being a complicated entity which has developed in both space and time.[2]”, The role it played in the city and the way it create people’s feeling is most important.

The Memory Based Elements of City

Functions create the city but memories define the city.

“In particular, one is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these functions are entirely independent of the form. At the same time, it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live in it and experience it, and in turn it structures the city [3]”. Aldo Rossi linked the city to memories and feelings. Depend on these, the city can grows by itself and acquires awareness and memory.

Urban artifacts are basic elements to consisting cities. To create a city divided into different urban areas with different memories, single building is more depend on the textures of a city than its own form and functions[4].

The Urban Artifact Theory at Present

To Create Memory in Different Urban Areas

In Europe, The circumstance which Aldo Rossi is familiar to, usually full of historic artifacts[5], which is totally different from the circumstances in China. In most of the Chinese city, small cities and urban areas in large cities can be cut into three categories: historic blocks; normal blocks and newly built area, which can be matched one-to-one to the region can create abundant of memory, normal memory and no memory. So the new built event in different areas should also be changed.

To create memory in the city, Different methods should be adopted in the construction in different area. For cities and regions that have inherent memory, new architecture works should respond to the memory already exist. For the new built area, architecture works should create new memories in case to solve lack of daily life’s touched. For the area between both these two situations, things should be depend on the details of things such as color and block which can create memory.

Two of the extreme situations will be introduced to explain how memory created in different areas.

The History Area

The building established on the history area means a place full of marks in the life of past, which means the area is surrounding by urban memory[6]. Just like the Opera house designed by Aldo Rossi located in Venice. Venice has a clear architectural style
features and a high density of buildings with history, which means the island itself, can create colorful memory. Rossi use the same material and form as the surrounding buildings denoting the opera house is part of the surroundings.

The kind of building which is built on the history area should create memories consistent with the original environment, so the building can be part of the city memory which means the city has an overall impression of area.

**The Newly Built Area**

Unlike the history area, buildings in the newly built area have no memories to integrate into. In order to make the block generate memory, it has to create the memory by itself. La Villette block is located in the 19th arrondissement of Paris. It is a part of Paris, but it’s only on the edge of the city and had no monument and history buildings in 1988. It looks like a huge blue column. It is out of the block and may create vivid memories.

The formation of urban artifacts which should be built in these kind of area should use be strong elements with bright color, strong and eye-catching architecture form which can make people bring visual impact and impression, have strong memory.

![Figure 1. Opera house in Venice.](image1) ![Figure 2. The new post office in La Villette block.](image2)

So, the form of buildings should be changed depending on different area corresponding to the change of memories link with the history of the area. The construction region should be analyzed and sorted.

**Xiamen Analyzed By the Urban Artifact Theory**

By studying two areas of Xiamen using urban artifact theory in this chapter, it can be confirmed how the memory been created in these areas. The focus will be on areas which show the extremely characteristics of the city in history area and newly built area.

**Architectural Creations in the History Area: Xiamen University Area**

Xiamen University in the Siming area is a good example of successful working for the history area. Since urban texture is already formed properly, the area can create special memory which is special in the city’s impression. It means the newly built urban artifact itself should use the kind of materials from the original surrounding buildings, and forms similar to the surroundings also. Create memories consistent with the original environment.

Take centre of science and art as example, it is a huge building volume with traditional stone walls deals with the textures of traditional visual centre of the district. The architect uses the local stone and the red tile which built locally and creates the traditional form with slope roof and western façade. The work can create memories consistent with the original environment to be part of the city memories.
Such kind of ways can be found in areas where successful cases are applied to solve historic area’s problems: materials and construction ways borrowing from previous urban structures or areas may create memories correspond to the region’s exist memory.

**Architectural Creations in the Newly Built Area: Gaoqi Area In Huli**

Gaoqi area was settled as newly built residences for migrant workers which flooding into Xiamen, as a result of the rapid development of the city. In this area, texture has not been formed; they do not have a history already exist because of the newly built buildings in a short period. This area can only serve as functionally as instruments for the needs of daily life, but it can’t offer impression and daily life’s touch.

Under these conditions, newly built works should use be strong elements with bright color, strong and eye-catching architecture form which can make people bring visual impact to create strong memory.

Take the creative office centre in Huli area as an example. It is a building clusters deal with the newly built surroundings just built for sale in very shout times. The architect use special geometry forms and bright colors, the work itself can create strong memory.

![Figure 1. Centre of science and art in Xiamen University.](image1)

![Figure 2.3. Creative office centre in Huli area.](image2)

By studying two areas of Xiamen using urban artifact theory in this chapter, it can be confirmed that different kinds of architecture works should be built on different areas. The form is depending on the way how the memory been created in these areas in the previous city areas.

**Conclusion**

This thesis tried to find a useful way from the view point of Aldo Rossi’s urban artifacts theory to link the newly built building to the history and region itself. For this, the theory based on memory is divided into two different city situations, and applying it to two different kinds of “urban artifacts” built by Aldo Rossi. Than the method of construction were found and then applied to the city of Xiamen.
The urban artifact theory suggests the way of memory and feeling built between the city and the newly built structures. Depend on this, the kind of building which is built on the history area should create memories consistent with the original environment. It means the urban artifact itself should use the kind of materials from the original surrounding buildings, and forms similar to the surroundings also. The formation of urban artifacts built in the newly built area should use strong elements with bright color, strong and eye-catching architecture form which can make people bring visual impact and impression, to create strong memory.

The form of buildings should be changed depending on different area corresponding to the change of memories link with the history of the area. The construction region should be analyzed and sorted.

**Literature References**


**References**


