

# Advocacy Work on Conservation and Tourism Development in the Old City of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China

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## 1. Introduction

Since 1992, the authors Tan Ying, as a PhD candidate and lecturer at Qinghua University, and Johan Nilsson, as a visiting scholar from Sweden and PhD candidate at Qinghua University, have personally been involved in some ten different planning projects regarding inner city renewal in the capital Beijing and in the coastal port Quanzhou. In the latter, faculty and students from Qinghua University School of Architecture have been continuously working on planning and conservation since 1993. During these years, we have experienced the problems in planning for historic conservation, as well as witnessed the efforts made to improve the situation.

The question catching our attention at an early stage was how to preserve historic neighbourhoods while allowing improvements and modernisation of living conditions. Later it brought us to the field of tourism development and a more fundamental issue: how China is requiring a new planning process when facing an array of new urban actors.

In this paper we like to explain the changing planning situation in both China in general and Quanzhou in particular, and report our ongoing research project on tourism development, environment upgrading and historic conservation.

## 2. Challenges to city planning in China

Before examining the case of Quanzhou, it can be of interest to review the current planning situation in China.

In post-1949 China, city planning practices and regulations have developed mainly *in* and *for* big cities, and under a planned economic system based on the Soviet Union model. Resources were tightly held by the central government, and a plan was to help decision makers when allocating resources and controlling undesired development. Sometimes, city plans were left as colourful drawings to be hung on the wall due to lack of economic means.

Now, along with economic development and reform, decentralisation of actors and resources has become an important socio-economic feature that needs to be considered and researched.

## **Dilemmas for the present planning process**

A typical planning process began, and still begins, when the planner receives a planning commission from the local government. Necessary surveys of the existing situation, basically physical, are usually conducted to start the work. Later he discusses with the local government leaders, planning bureau, and maybe historians about the existing problems and goals for the physical environment and technical infrastructure. After that it is the planner's job to propose a solution; to draw a blueprint of the future. Therefore, city planning generally prescribes physical solutions to problems, and describes a future, ideal result of development. Some fundamental problems with this model of city planning are:

1. Planners tend to believe what they think is good is also good for all other people. Interests of different individuals and special groups are often overridden by interests of experts and politicians.
2. Planning work is focused on the result rather than the process. There are lots of research work on what is an ideal picture but less on how to achieve it and almost nothing on what happens in the mean time. Implementation of the plan is dependent on the government's, sometimes arbitrary, orders and decisions.
3. Only a very small group of people, typically experts and government leaders, can give their opinions on planning proposals. But their knowledge about the process of the real world is usually very limited.

In 1984, when the Chinese State Council issued the 'City Planning Ordinance', all municipal and county governments were required to develop master plans to guide their physical development in accordance with existing local economic planning. But planning guidelines, regulations and practices were modelled on large cities like Beijing and rather unfit for other situations. During the rapid development of the 1980's and 90's, city planning has become even more ineffectual as these examples show:

(1) Developers grab farm land to build housing without adequate services; (2) workunits (factories and institutions) fill up their compounds with office buildings for rent disregarding needs for parking and open space; (3) foreign and domestic investors competing for a central location neglect the interest of local residents and needs for public amenities; (4) informal settlements for the floating (migrant) population like the 'Zhejiang village' in Beijing.

Development projects initiated by these non-governmental sectors are often seen as threats to the urban environment, and 'evil forces' that need to be regulated. It also happens that the city government itself violates the local plans. Planners have become isolated and helpless in holding on to their dreams.

Similarities can be found in the particular field of preservation planning. The plans look good but consideration for implementation is lacking, thus turning 'preservation' into a vague slogan when market driven developments have other, more short term goals for their mind.

## **Work with different sectors**

How to escape this dead-end? If we look upon the economic base for city planning, it is obvious that today we are facing a society with many more decentralised resources. All the unplanned construction practices mentioned above are strong evidence of emerging new actors sharing a growing wealth and influence. These can be briefly summed up into the following categories:

Local governments at different levels; City planning authorities and professionals; Workunits at different levels; Non-government enterprises; Domestic private investors; Foreign investors; Non-governmental interest groups; Individual citizens and their relatives abroad; Different kinds of floating population

Understanding that they are all important actors in shaping the urban space just as in economic development, city planners must respect their interests and their needs to be able to canalise all this strength into a joint effort for a better future. And first of all, planners must investigate these different sectors in a specific community and include them in the discussion during the planning process. The case of historic preservation in Quanzhou well illustrates this need and we believe this is just one example among many other situations in Chinese cities.

### **3. Challenges in the historic city of Quanzhou**

Quanzhou in Fujian Province, with 600,000 inhabitants (whereof 180,000 in the 7 sqkm historic core and a total of 6 million in the whole municipality), is in many aspects a typical example of a Chinese medium sized city: During the 1980's and 90's, market forces and economic growth have both fostered and financed a modernisation program, caused a rapid suburbanisation, and an influx of floating population.

Quanzhou also has its own unique history and social background which makes the conflicts between historic conservation and city redevelopment articulate and sometimes sharp.

#### **A historic port city**

Quanzhou is by no means the oldest, most famous or site for the most influential events in Chinese history. Still the sum of all aspects makes the city different from all others.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, Quanzhou was the largest port in the world after Alexandria and the starting point for the 'Maritime Silk Road'. The resident population of Arab, Indian, Vietnamese, Jews, Koreans and other foreign merchants, envoys, travellers and missionaries could be counted by the tens of thousands<sup>2</sup>, almost comparable with the number residing in Beijing today. When trade and general economy declined in later dynasties, the area saw a large outmigration. Today, Quanzhou is considered the ancestral origin of the largest number of people of Fujianese descent outside Fujian, especially in Taiwan.

The prosperous economic and cultural development of old times have strongly influenced economy, architecture and other aspects in society throughout history. Later the three waves of returning Overseas Chinese during the 1920's and 30's following the fall of the Qing Dynasty, in the 1950's after New China was founded, and in the past twenty years of reform, played an important role in the economic and cultural development of the city. Equally important are perhaps the network of continuous strong ties with relatives abroad that did *not* return but still influence economic and social life with donations, investments and connections. Quanzhou was, and is, maybe one of the most "open" and "open-minded" cities in China.

#### **Historic continuity and development**

This openness has resulted in a multi-cultural and multi-religious city. There are numerous large and small Buddhist and Daoist temples, Muslim mosques and holy tombs, several Catholic and Protestant churches including Adventists, the only remaining temple of Manichaeism, and an amazing variety of temples of folk beliefs including the largest and most influential Sea Goddess (Tianhou) temple.

High class traditional arts and folk arts are still an active part of society. Every evening there are outdoor performances of the ancient musical style *nan yin*, the local puppet theatre is attracting world-wide attention and stone carving is a major industry. During holidays, various forms of local opera is performed on outdoor stages across the city. Art and folk festivals like the Lantern Festival are attracting large crowds of participants and spectators of all ages.

The past and present physical environment with its various architectural styles also bears witness of Quanzhou's openness to the world – colours and expressions are unusually rich with inspiration from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, India and the Western world. Because of its well kept historic environment and culture, Quanzhou was included in the first batch of officially designated 'famous historic and cultural cities' (*lishi wenhua mingcheng*) in China. Why was the city so well preserved all into the 1980's? There are several reasons behind this and the urbanisation process in general: (1) A relative lack of state investment in the region during the period of the centralised economy, due to what was seen as Quanzhou's vulnerable position directly across the straits from Taiwan; (2) a high degree of private control of property in the city reassured at least basic maintenance; and (3) almost all houses and property of good quality are belonging or related to Overseas Chinese, thus respected by the local government who almost always tried to avoid offending these connections who meant so much for the city.<sup>3</sup>

But the situation in the old city started to change fundamentally during the period of fast and accelerating development after 1980.

### **Redevelopment challenges**

In spite of early and foresighted planning for conserving the old city as a whole, the general housing condition was deteriorating since there were no clear laws or policies for preservation and maintenance. At the same time, the residents' aspirations for improving their own housing condition have lead to self building on a small but wide-spread scale. The new, often very large houses up to five storeys tall, are built on the site of the owners' former one storey courtyard house.

The other force which has turned out to be disruptive to Quanzhou's historic core is large scale redevelopment initiated by the local government and carried out by various developers. Heavy investment into construction combined with a general fast economic development in the province have provided necessary fuel. Several large scale comprehensive renewal projects and road widenings have been carried out,. Many unique buildings and historic environments have been lost in this modernisation process. More over, under this kind of circumstances, those families wanting to preserve their vernacular dwellings are worried and lacking information about plans for their own neighbourhood, thus allowing existing old buildings deteriorate even faster due to the lack of maintenance and renovation.

Both kinds of construction and the lack of maintenance are quickly damaging the historic core and the results are similar to many other rapidly developing cities in China. The historic parts of Quanzhou has seen its fair share of road widenings, hotel and office towers, and insensitive demolition and refurbishment of vernacular dwellings. The traditional urban fabric and architecture are rapidly diminishing.

## **4. Changing attitudes in Quanzhou**

Not that Quanzhou is less aware of its architectural legacy than other cities, rather the opposite. At the moment, it is no question about that many recent structures and urban environments in the redeveloped parts of Quanzhou's historic core are of an unusual high aesthetic and architectural quality. The use of traditional materials, motifs and patterns in new houses have been widely accepted and appreciated. Local people from municipal leaders to residents are very proud of their 1300 year old city with its abundance of heritage sites and rich culture. But what to preserve – and how – have been difficult question to reach agreements about.

By 1996, the tremendous economic boom of the late eighties and early nineties cooled down, relatively speaking. The 1997 financial crisis in Asia further slowed down the speed of urban redevelopment. Parallel to these economic events of world-wide significance, the

past six years have seen several important local events that gradually changed direction and opinions on urban renewal in Quanzhou.

It is now an opportunity to reconsider earlier decisions, allow more time for new or revised plans and involve more actors in the process. A chance to be heard for a number of local residents and scholars who are grieving the demolition of historic buildings and neighbourhoods.

### **1994 – Professionals against large scale redevelopment**

Academic research on historic preservation in Quanzhou started already in the early 1980's. Important concepts for preservation were formulated by scholars from Tianjin University among others. But the historic neighbourhoods defined for preservation were nevertheless suffering from ignorance, uncontrolled building and demolition. There was also the constant threat of large scale redevelopment, like for the area around the Kaiyuan temple.

In 1994, Prof. Lu Junhua and Prof. Sun Fengqi from Qinghua University, Prof. Michael Leaf from University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver, graduate students from both schools and Johan Nilsson from Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, started to oppose large scale redevelopment and widening of streets in the historic core when working for the Quanzhou planning bureau on the Xi Jie (West Street) project. It was intended as a redevelopment plan with the common presumptions – street widening and clearing of all existing structures. But since Xi Jie is running right between the Kaiyuan temple, one of the national level heritage sites in the old city, and the Jiuguanyi neighbourhood, one of three historic neighbourhoods earmarked for preservation in the master plan, we took us the right to propose alternative schemes for both this particular project and for the general road system in the historic core.

Johan Nilsson continued with an alternative proposal as a design project for his Master degree, keeping close contact with the Qinghua team. At the same time, the appearance of the city changed so much through other renewal projects that the local government was uncertain if the comprehensive redevelopment approach was the right way to go.

In 1995 and 1996, municipal leadership and planning authorities took part in a series of international seminars and study trips together with scholars from Chinese, French and Norwegian universities. This further enhanced the appreciation for local specificity and brought an international perspective to the question of urban redevelopment and preservation.

The shift towards preservation came in 1996 during the second round of revising the design proposals. After many presentations to the government and discussions among the local authorities themselves, the project was laid on ice. A preservation strategy was allowed to mature.

### **1995 – Tourism is taken into consideration in the new Master Plan**

In 1995, the Quanzhou government for the first time defined the city as a 'tourism city' in it's Master Plan. What they want to develop is a tourism industry based on the existing cultural heritage scattered all over the municipality.

A more detailed tourism plan is at the moment in the final stage of revision by the local tourism bureau and planning institute. Although the new plan spends only a couple of pages about the historic core and only has very vague visions how to preserve and utilise the heritage in there, it is worth noticing how historic sites are considered as tourism resources and a vital part of the modern city.

Another measure signalling new attitudes towards preservation was how Quanzhou's planners ceased using the term "old (i.e. obsolete) city redevelopment" (*jiucheng gaizao*)

and instead spoke of "old (i.e. historic) city preservation and construction" (*gucheng baohu jianshe*).<sup>4</sup> The Old City Redevelopment Headquarters changed its name accordingly.

### **1997 – New planning ideas for a historic neighbourhood supported by the Ministry of Construction**

A significant and positive step taken by the city authorities was to make clear that the remaining historic neighbourhoods can not be included in large scale renewal projects. Instead upgrading must be based on a small scale, house by house rehabilitation supported and guided by new planning processes and ideas.

In 1997, the Qinghua group lead by Prof. Lu Junhua helped the city in gaining financial support from the 'Historic city preservation fund' from the Ministry of Construction of China, for a pilot project on rehabilitation of the Jiuguanyi neighbourhood in the Xi Jie area. Detailed surveys and interviews were carried out to clearly define the preservation area, categorise all existing buildings and work out guidelines for each category. By these measures, a household-based renovation process is facilitated.

### **1998 – Support for preservation from central government leaders**

When a national tourism fair was held in Quanzhou in December 1998, it called more attention to the city's heritage sites and townscape. Buildings along Zhongshan Lu, the two kilometre historic arcaded shopping street dating from the 1920's and 30's, was restored for this event. The result was widely appreciated by the public, municipal leaders and professionals alike.

In conjunction with the tourism fair, Li Ruihuan, chairman of China Political Consultant Committee, visited Quanzhou. After seeing the restored Zhongshan Lu he uttered a comment that this "face-cleaning" (facade renovation) and use of materials with local character were successful. After seeing the widened and completely redeveloped Dong Jie (East Street) he fell no comment at all. The next point on the itinerary was a visit to the Kaiyuan temple and afterwards, when stepping out on the frankly said rather dilapidated and messy Xi Jie, all local leaders were waiting in anticipation on his comment. Of course he praised the temple and its significance as a national treasure and finally made a short statement on how "the environment around the temple should be a transition between new and old and build up expectations for the visitor". Xi Jie was saved! Recently a decision was made not to widen the street and to initiate a renovation program. Preparatory design and survey work is now in progress.

### **1999 – Continuing academic attention**

Foreign and domestic interest in Quanzhou have not only influenced some physical aspects of the city environment, but more important, improved the local people's understanding of their own city and heritage. The cosmopolitan atmosphere in Quanzhou derived from earlier activities also provides good opportunities for further research aiming at new strategies for conserving and developing the old city.

In 1999, Prof. Michael Leaf together with post-doctoral fellow Daniel B Abramson from UBC came with a group of graduate students from Qinghua, UBC and McGill in Montreal to carry out field research on current processes at work in shaping the city and to identify typologies of development.

Later the same year, a community participatory planning project was initiated. It is jointly undertaken by Qinghua University School of Architecture, University of British Columbia Centre for Human Settlements and Quanzhou Municipal Planning Bureau, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The experimental area chosen is Qinglong Xiang, a residential street in the southern part of Quanzhou's historic core. The street is included in a preservation district since 1983 and is a good example showing the need for new planning procedures

to solve the conflicts between modernisation and historic conservation. The research project is considered to be the first participatory community planning project ever done in China in a mature urban environment.

In the mean time, a comprehensive tourism–preservation research project covering the whole old city of Quanzhou has been undertaken by the authors. This is a planning strategy consciously incorporating historic preservation and cultural tourism. Heritage is not only considered as a resource for tourism, but also a resource for education and cultural life for the local neighbourhood. An emphasis is placed on resolving the conflict between conservation and improvement of housing conditions, and the possible conflict between tourism development and the local neighbourhood. The research aims at a sustainable development of cultural heritage in the old city that pays good attention to the need of the community.

## **5. Tourism and preservation research in Quanzhou**

Tourism development is likely to play an important role in the search for a general strategy to preserve and develop the historic core of Quanzhou. The reason lies in two facts. First, Quanzhou sees a huge number of Overseas Chinese tourists coming to visit relatives and friends every year. Second, the Master Plan already prescribes tourism as a key industry in the Old City. There is a great opportunity to develop tourism based on historic preservation instead of building something new, while at the same time support historic preservation. What Zhang Guangrui wrote made an important point for tourism development in China:

*"China can best triumph over competing destinations in international tourism by giving full play to its comparative advantage of cultural and historical resources, instead of by competing with them in beach resorts, amusement parks, or other costly projects."*<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning of 1998, a research project on 'Historic Preservation Combined with Tourism in the Old City of Quanzhou' started. Sponsored by the Quanzhou municipal government, the project is jointly undertaken by researchers in the Quanzhou Planning Bureau and the authors that are researchers at Qinghua University School of Architecture.

### **Mutual support between tourism development and preservation**

The lack of interest in historic conservation is often based in the belief that it is too expensive and hindering general economic development. But it has been proved that renovation of old buildings can often retain the costs and even gain profits from tourism development. This is not only true for famous monuments but also works for historic districts and towns presenting an integrated vernacular townscape, monuments or not.

The well preserved town Zhouzhuang between Shanghai and Suzhou has a population of 3000 and a tourism income of 280 million Yuan RMB (approx. 35 million USD) in 1997.<sup>6</sup> A figure that caused considerable interest in Quanzhou. Lijiang in Yunnan province can show similar results with more than 1 billion Yuan RMB in tourist spending in 1998.<sup>7</sup> And for foresighted preservation planning, the ancient town Tunxi near Huangshan mountains in Anhui Province is one early and successful example worth studying. Here the strong will of Qinghua University's Prof. Zhu Zixuan eventually made preservation promote the whole city and its tourism industry.<sup>8</sup>

Around the world there are more examples of cities letting their tourism development help their conservation efforts and vice versa. One example is how the old city centre of Havana has become one of the major assets in Cuba's fast growing tourism industry and of great significance for municipal and national economy. *"Seeing planning for historic preservation in Cuba as related to planning for tourism in Cuba in general is a necessity if either is to prosper in an increasingly competitive tourist market"*<sup>9</sup>

The scopes of tourism development in a historic city centre are significant compared to many alternatives:

(1) Heritage tourism capitalises upon the already existing resources of the historic city. (2) Tourism use of infrastructure and services of the city will incur only marginal costs to existing facilities. (3) A small investment (relative to what is required in other economic sectors) will create employment in urban areas with few other alternatives.<sup>10</sup>

*"Tourism in its various forms has played, and continues to exercise, a critical role in the development of such [historical] resources, while conversely that historical resources form an equally critical part of a growing tourism industry and the symbiosis of the two has become a major activity of cities and a major force in the design and structure of the modern city"*<sup>11</sup>

Tourism is a resource just waiting to be utilised in Quanzhou. The tourism industry in China and the world is prosperous and fast growing, and Quanzhou already sees a great number of tourists each year. Often quoted but unverified statistics talk about figures higher than both Xi'an and Guilin. An estimated 90% of the tourists are Overseas Chinese coming back home to visit relatives and friends, thus leaving only marginal effects in the local tourism economy. The remaining 10% are mainly traditional group tourists who seldom stay overnight due to good road links. (The number of hotel stays dropped by half in 1994 when the new highway between Xiamen and Quanzhou was finished.) The number of western tourists are extremely few. Thus a tourism strategy for Quanzhou must first concentrate on two things: how to make group tourists stay longer and how to mobilise the large number Overseas Chinese as 'tourism resource consumers'.

### **Organise the resources in the historic core of Quanzhou**

As described above, the uniqueness of Quanzhou is in its rich and colourful culture and townscape as a whole. Yet historic preservation in practice has basically been limited to listed monuments only, and numerous valuable vernacular residences and other historic structures have been lost in the urban redevelopment process. For many visitors and the local young generation of today, the city's history is mainly something dusty, abstract and fragmented.

Field work and a following analysis illustrated the existing situation of maintenance, usage and accessibility of all historic sites and other containers of historic cultural expressions like traditional arts and crafts. The situation faced is how the overall rich history and tradition as an integrated whole has been broken down into small pieces with many details, context and connections lost. Many small historic sites and the remaining vernacular dwellings, although densely located in the old city, are difficult to access and generally lack maintenance. Interviews with tourists suggested called for attention to the physical environment and accessibility for tourists within the old city.

Considering the above conditions, the concept of heritage trails can be a method suitable for Quanzhou. They have been used extensively in many European and North American towns in many different ways as a mean to introduce and interpret local history. In Asia trails have recently been introduced as a tool for local tourism development and preservation as well.<sup>12</sup>

A preliminary proposal on historic preservation combined with tourism development in Quanzhou includes 'heritage areas' and 'heritage trails'.

(1) A *heritage area* is a district within the old city containing a collection of close by historic sites highlighting a theme. Grouping nearby sites and cultural activities together will increase the attractiveness as a whole, compared to looking at them individually. The historic core of Quanzhou is seven square kilometres and a designation of six heritage areas divide the city into tourist districts of a size more suitable for walking, resource management, and joint marketing and information.

(2) *Historic-cultural trails* is a system of walking routes through the old city. These walking routes are designed in two ways: linking sites within a heritage area; and linking up the less famous sites of interest between the most popular historic attractions across the old city. In both cases vernacular houses and smaller historic sites are allowed to contribute to the overall tourism environment. Their importance as part of the historic city can be interpreted, understood and appreciated by tourists and locals alike. Improving accessibility of heritage resources can encourage suitable uses of old buildings and relics. Possible uses of the existing buildings along the route include open houses, museums, shops and workshops of traditional crafts, youth hostels and family hotels. And realising these trails will require improvements of the physical environment, public space and amenities – which will be a direct benefit to the neighbourhoods as well. Facades, walls, planting, pavement, signs, resting places and other street furniture are included in the environment upgrading proposal for the suggested pilot trail as part of the research.

Both the concepts of areas and trails are to integrate as many as possible of the formerly ignored heritage resources into the 'tourism product mix'. The richer the experience, the longer a tourist is likely to stay to further deepen the appreciation of the city.

### **Advocate and educate – an exhibition of let-know**

A comprehensive strategy for historic preservation and tourism development in the old city involves many different interests, and can not succeed without the support and joint effort from different sectors of society. But the attitudes, knowledge and views on historic preservation varies significantly in most cities and so also in Quanzhou. A common belief is that redevelopment is an inevitable road towards modernisation. Some people consider preservation of one storey housing in the city centre not to be technically practical or economically feasible. Others think that too much of the city already has been redeveloped to leave room for talks about 'preserving the historic core as a whole'. Then it is important to remember the words of Prof. Wu Liangyong at Qinghua University: "*It is never too late*".

To explain, support and advocate historic preservation<sup>13</sup> to people at different positions, there needs to be a whole range of arrangements through media, meetings and exhibitions.

An important event was the *Retrospective Exhibit on Preservation and Construction in the Old City of Quanzhou*, held throughout March 1999 by the Urban and Rural Planning Bureau of the City of Quanzhou together with Qinghua University. The exhibition emphasised not only the value of officially-listed historic sites, but also the overall vernacular townscape. It also explained and introduced intentions and changing ideas behind recent redevelopment projects and proposals. The exhibition was intended to be a first step in establishing a common base for what is worth preserving and take care of in the vernacular environment. What is the most proper way for Quanzhou?

The exhibit is considered to be significant in China as a joint effort between municipal authorities, domestic and foreign scholars, and local private professionals to raise public awareness of both the value and difficulty of preserving an historic and culturally characteristic urban environment.<sup>14</sup>

## **6. Continue with caution**

Positive response was received from the exhibition in 1999 and several within the planning bureau and government wanted to 'get things going' as soon as possible by developing walking trails and other tourism-oriented activities.

A pilot project will be necessary, but to avoid negative impacts on the environment or residents, or to start anything that cannot be continued later, any step must be within a general strategy for the whole historic core. Furthermore, we believe it is necessary to involve and coordinate different interest groups at an early stage and thus get a still better understanding of the resources and actors.

## Call for coordination

Necessary work related to preservation and tourism development can primarily be divided into the following categories: (1) information and education; (2) technical work and support for preservation; (3) tourism programming and management; (4) financing.

It is obvious that there are numerous aspects and actors involved which require cooperation between different government agencies, and between the government and community. Not only must a joint effort be done by coordinating various resources, but interests and opinions of different groups must also be understood and taken into consideration. This is important both for avoiding mistakes in decision-making, creating better cooperative relationships and gaining public and professional support for the whole program.

In a society not yet accustomed to public participation in planning, it is extra important for the planner to be involved in the whole process, understand and explain different views, visualise proposals for better understanding and avoiding misunderstandings at an early stage. Especially since investment into construction has become more and more decentralised. Apart from the direct investment from the city government and real estate developers, there are donations and investment into temples, public facilities and infrastructure from Overseas Chinese; investment into housing construction from local residents, their overseas relatives and newcomers from other cities and the countryside.

In Quanzhou, several of these forces are now trying to form a new planning practice for preservation: (1) Individuals with interest in the history of their own family, house and neighbourhood; (2) NGO's researching history and advocating preservation; (3) the planning bureau's and vice mayor Zhou Kunmin's initiative to promote preservation; (4) scholars and professionals from outside.

Then we have the owners of vernacular houses who generally can be divided into three groups: (1) those who consider an old house backward and inconvenient; (2) those who are more or less indifferent to what kind of house it is as long as it is their own; and (3), people that are strongly against demolition of traditional houses. These people, which are quite a few, are proud of their own houses and are willing to maintain and restore them.

At a first look, the present situation does not look encouraging as there are not enough involvement of residents or enterprises in the planning process – both the public and professionals think 'planning is for planners only'. The city is almost completely lacking trade organisations or business associations. There is also very little cooperation between government offices such as heritage management authorities, public works, tourism and planning bureaux.

There are however many individuals, business people, scholars and officials that share similar views on preservation issues and want to work for a common goal. What has been lacking is a common forum, and furthermore, a mechanism for participation in the planning and implementation process.

The idea of setting up a *'Preservation and development association for historic heritage in the old city of Quanzhou'* has been proposed to the city government and got a preliminary approval. Its tasks will be to collect funds and coordinate practical work. There are no earlier experiences in China, and in order to try out ways of organising and running this kind of association the Ford Foundation supports the Qinglong Xiang project mentioned above.

## 7. Conclusion

Planning for conservation in China has evolved significantly the past twenty years while at the same time becoming more complex. Development today is based on decentralised resources instead of relying solely on government investment and initiatives. Cooperation and communication are important concepts in planning, implementation and management.

New planning processes need to be developed to involve different sectors of society, with the local community being the most important among them.

In general, any effective conservation strategy would have to gain the residents' approval, and, more importantly, would need to be implemented primarily by them.<sup>15</sup> To achieve this goal, advocacy work is as important as physical planning and design. To enhance awareness and encourage civic pride in local history and character, and to show economic potential and benefits of heritage development may be the most efficient measures for a sustainable conservation strategy. From our and other's projects we have seen that persistent and continuous advocacy for conservation can bear fruit in the long run. We planners must be fully involved in the actual process to understand the situation, and as Patrick Geddes put it some 85 years ago, have a holistic view.<sup>16</sup>

## Notes and references

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Nilsson is a PhD candidate at Qinghua University School of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design. The field of research is heritage development in Chinese cities using Quanzhou as a case study. He got his Master degree at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden, on "Quanzhou: City renewal and preservation" in 1995. Tan Ying got her PhD degree at Qinghua University School of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design on "Redevelopment practices on housing area renewal in the Old City of Beijing: A study from the residents' perspective" in 1997. She is now working as a lecturer at the same school. They can be both be reached using email: johan\_tanying@hotmail.com.

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<sup>7</sup> McKhann, Charles (1999) "The good, the bad, and the ugly: Some preliminary observations on tourism development in Lijiang". Paper presented at the International conference on anthropology, Chinese society and tourism. Kunming 1999.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Zhu Zixuan (1989) "An exploratory study of the preservation and renovations of old town", *China City Planning Review*, vol 5, no 4, pp38-55.

<sup>9</sup> Marcuse, Peter (1998) "Historic preservation, cultural tourism and planning", keynote paper at *Shelter and revitalisation of old and historic urban centres* international conference, Havana, Cuba, March 28-April 4, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Ashworth & Tunbridge (1990) "The tourist-historic city". London; Belhaven., p260

<sup>11</sup> Ashworth & Tunbridge (1990) "The tourist-historic city". London; Belhaven.

<sup>12</sup> Hardman et al (1994) A proposal for the development of a cultural heritage and tourism strategy for the NWFP, Pakistan. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.

<sup>13</sup> To read a discourse on what is preservation, which of course can be discussed endlessly, please see for instance Larkham, Peter J (1996) "Conservation and the city". London; Routledge. For an introduction to heritage, see Francois LeBlanc, ICOMOS (1993) "Is everything heritage?" <http://www.icomos.org/~fleblanc/>

<sup>14</sup> Abramson, Daniel B (1999) "Architectural transformation of Quanzhou old city", *Asia & West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation – AWPNUC Newsletter*", vol 5, no 4, pp1-4.

<sup>15</sup> Abramson, Leaf & Tan (1999)

<sup>16</sup> Geddes, Patrick (1915) "Cities in evolution". London; Williams and Norgate.