

Linear Marketplaces upon Fixation Line of Shanghai. A Case Study of Hongzhu Market

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I mercati lineari sulla fixation line di Shanghai, il caso studio di Hongzhu Market

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Abstract

The research focuses on the interplay between urban form of fixation line and architectural practices of linear marketplaces of Shanghai. With the study of the urban transformation of the plot of Hongzhu Market, a curved linear marketplace that is over 300 meters long, the mechanisms of how the linear marketplaces are generated and how they behave in the urban context are clarified. Furthermore, five design reflections are derived from the cases of the linear marketplaces.

Introduzione

Nell'ultimo secolo, il processo di sviluppo ed espansione della città di Shanghai è stato fortemente influenzato dalla presenza di diverse fringe belts: alcune naturali, come quella del fiume Huhang, e altre artificiali come quelle della ferrovia Huning a Nord, della ferrovia Huhang (anello interno) ad ovest e (anello esterno) a sud. La demolizione della belt occidentale durante gli anni '90 ha eliminato una delle più forti barriere all'espansione urbana, pur lasciando delle tracce. Lungo o sopra la fixation line è stata costruita una serie di edifici 'unici', tra cui emergono alcuni destinati a funzioni commerciali, che supportano la vita quotidiana di milioni di residenze con i loro spazi profondi e le loro complicate reti. Lo studio di questi mercati, prendendo Hongzhu Market come esempio, permette di interpretare i meccanismi di trasformazione della fixation line di Shanghai, leggendone le potenzialità in una prospettiva architettonica.

A partire dal 2016, l'amministrazione di Shanghai ha dato avvio a numerosi progetti per promuovere la graduale rigenerazione, ed eventuale demolizione, di una serie di spazi urbani marginali, di cui fanno parte la maggior parte degli spazi commerciali sorti sulle fixation lines. Uno studio di queste forme peculiari dello spazio urbano è dunque necessario, sia per la comprensione delle trasformazioni del passato che per aprire a prospettive future.

Esperienza di ricerca: percorsi nascosti in loco

Prima di intraprendere uno studio di questi mercati lineari, è necessario chiarire alcuni im-

Introduction

The development of Shanghai is strongly influenced by several fringe belts in the last century. There are natural belts such as Huangpu River, and artificial belts such as Huning Railway to the north, Huhang Railway (inner ring) to the west and Huhang Railway (outer ring) to the south. The demolition of the west belt in 1990s removed one of the strongest barriers of the urban development, with clear traces left behind.

A series of unique buildings have then been built along or upon the line, among which, some marketplaces are the most prominent ones, supporting the daily lives of millions of residences with their deep spaces and complicated networks. Hence, the study of these market places, taking the Hongzhu Market for example, helps to reveal the mechanisms of the transformation of the fixation line of this city, in the perspective of architecture.

Since 2016, the Shanghai government initiated several projects to gradually propel the regeneration of series of leftover urban spaces, including the majority of these marketplaces, which could eventually lead to their demolition. Therefore, the studies to these unique forms of urban space is necessary both in retrospect and prospective dimensions.

Research background: hidden paths on site

Before taking a study of these linear marketplaces, some important background of the city of Shanghai should be clarified: in current downtown areas of Shanghai, majority of the plots are enclosed by continuous walls, with very limited gates (usually with two entrances for the vehicles and one or two more for the pedestrians) to the main street, many of which are strictly controlled and supervised. For this reason, certain elements of a plot become essential when taking a research of the site. For instance, the internal paths of the plot contribute as hidden paths that cut through large street blocks. These hidden paths, sometimes not even noticed yet by the modern navigation system in our smartphones, secretly help to build up the internal structure of the city. However, it would be difficult to portrait such paths because once walks through a gate, one enjoys great freedom to wander around the free-standing buildings. The structure within each residential plot is rather ambiguous, hence the only thing that is clear about a plot, is its walls and gates, besides that, no matter how physically one building is adjacent to the main street, it should still be considered as hidden deep inside the plot.

From this point of view, the layout of the enclosing walls of each plot is at least of the same importance, if not more important than the building patterns on site. Most of the time, the wall works as a dominating element of structure in the plot. The combination of wall and building help to define solid boundaries of the site. Sometimes, when a building becomes part of the wall, it starts to inherit some of their very interesting characters, such as creating differences on both sides and building connections with penetrating gates.

Only when we fully notice the relationship between buildings, walls and gates,