

Networking Approach for Historic Urban Landscape: Case Study of the Porcelain Capital of China

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Abstract : This article presents a “networking approach” as an alternative to the “layering model” in the issue of the historic urban landscape [HUL], based on research conducted in the historic city of Jingdezhen, the center of the porcelain industry in China. This study points out that the existing HUL concept, which can be traced back to the fundamental conceptual divisions set forth by western science, tends to analyze the various elements of urban heritage (composed of hybrid natural-cultural elements) by layers and ignore the nuanced connections and interweaving structure of various elements. Instead, the networking analysis approach can respond to the challenges of complex heritage networks and to the difficulties that are often faced when modern schemes of looking and thinking of landscape in the Eurocentric heritage model encounters local knowledge of Chinese settlement. The fieldwork in this paper examines the local language regarding place names and everyday uses of urban spaces, thereby highlighting heritage systems grounded in local life and indigenous knowledge. In the context of Chinese “Fengshui”, this paper demonstrates the local knowledge of nature and local intelligence of settlement location and design. This paper suggests that industrial elements (kilns, molding rooms, piers, etc.) and spiritual elements (temples for ceramic saints or water gods) are located in their intimate natural networks. Furthermore, the functional, spiritual, and natural elements are perceived as a whole and evolve as an interactive system. This paper proposes a local and cognitive approach in heritage, which was initially developed in European Landscape Convention and historic landscape characterization projects, and yet seeks a more tentative and nuanced model based on urban ethnography in a Chinese city.

Keywords : Chinese city, historic urban landscape, heritage conservation, network

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