Listing Buildings of Modern Heritage in Changsha, China

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Abstract. Buildings of Modern heritage are a very crucial category of heritage to preserve in Changsha, a historical city of which the majority of built heritage has been destroyed. Listing Historic Buildings has been adopted as the main way for their conservation. For that purpose, 4 lists in the scope of modern buildings have been announced by municipal offices so far to replenish the coverage of the national-wide system for protection. By analysing the background, the employed criteria, the responsible authorities and the protection measures, the advantages and the obstacles to overcome for the listing system in practice could become clearer. In a recent survey of historic buildings in Changsha to be listed, 266 buildings have been screened to enter the candidate database, according to certain criteria that allows expansion of the choices. A research has been conducted to understand the layout, the features and the current conditions of these buildings. One of the major discoveries is that a large number of collective housing built in the 1950s and 1960s possess good qualities in architectural design, crafts and construction, and better still, mostly stand adjacently in walled neighbourhoods. Such results shall be helpful to define the goals for the upcoming lists of Historic Buildings in Changsha, and in combination with the study to previous lists, they could be meaningful to understand the prospect of Modern heritage conservation in Changsha.

1. Introduction
Modern heritage is gaining attentions in China, along with contemporary urban redevelopment projects have been launched in recent years. This paper intends to expand such attentions to buildings of Modern heritage in Changsha, and implementing their protection through the current administrative systems.

By reviewing the modern history of Changsha briefly, we could see the extra importance of buildings of Modern heritage to this city. The protection starts with listing, and to understand the measures for their protection, it is needed to inspect the listing systems that could be helpful.

1.1. Changsha as a historic city
The city of Changsha has a long history that could be traced to 22 centuries ago, and the same location that has not changed all these years. From 1904 to the 1930s, Changsha opened its ports to foreign trades, and many buildings of mixed styles have been erected, including Modern ones. The urban heritage that should have been accumulated into a rich amount was destroyed heavily by the Wenxi fire in 1938. Two thirds of the buildings in the city were burnt down at that time, a study shows [1]. Then the reconstruction and the Modern movement started and continued at a steady pace until the 1980s, when the speedy urbanization started to dominate in the booming economy. Not only many buildings with outstanding qualities from modern times have been demolished in the early stage
(Figure 1), the national slum project launched in 2008 also have over 20,000,000 square meters of residence, which mostly locate in the city center, demolished over these years.

![Figure 1. Some Modern buildings in Changsha that have been demolished in urbanization since 1980s](image)

Such history has decided that buildings from modern times occupy a large part of urban heritage and somehow in a way a collective monument to that commemorative turning point, the Wenxi Fire, but many of them and a large amount of the environment they rooted in have been gone.

1.2. Listing institutions related to Modern heritage in China

Currently in China, in the legal system, the buildings of Modern heritage do not possess exclusive listing institutions. The major systems of cultural heritage in China are the Cultural Relics and the Famous Cities of Historical and Cultural Value, which could be abbreviated as Historic Cities, and the protection of the buildings of Modern heritage overlaps with the Cultural Relics and the Historic Building embedded in the protection system of Historic Cities.

The Article 2 of *Law on Protection of Cultural Relics* included important modern and contemporary ‘typical buildings that are related to major historical events, revolutionary movements or famous personalities and that are highly memorable or are of great significance for education or for the preservation of historical data’ into the scope of Cultural Relics under protection [2]. Such definition emphasizes the historic value of historic buildings over other indexes, so many Modern buildings excel in other values like architectural qualities could not receive protection from this dominating system in China.

In this case, the system of Historic Buildings assigns more considerations to the buildings of Modern heritage. It is stated in Article 8 of *Regulations on Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* that, ‘to apply to nominate a Famous City of Historical and Cultural Values, the applicant shall submit other materials and a list of Historic Buildings about the nominated city’[3]. Based on such lists, the municipal governments shall put up protection signs for Historic Buildings, keep archives of the buildings, and have a protection program formulated and approved for the Historic Buildings when certain activities are carried out. This is the draft idea of listing Historic Buildings in national legal files of China. Years before this national regulation came into force, such protection measures have already been adopted by a number of Historic Cities, including Changsha.

In Changsha’s practice, in the beginning, the influences by the paradigm of Cultural Relics were obvious that the list Historic Buildings from Modern times are categorizing sites of heritage by construction year, later the list has been renamed as Historic Buildings according to requirements by superior government, and also show a tendency of matching with international categorizations like industrial heritage.

It could be meaningful to review the lists of historic buildings in Changsha and their output, to understand better the protection of buildings of Modern heritage relying on them.

2. Four lists of historic buildings and Modern heritage
There have been four lists of historic buildings announced by the municipal government of Changsha so far (Table 1). Three of them belong to the system of Historic Buildings as relations require, and the list of Major Historic Residences for protection, or say, Historic Residences, was a local attempt by municipal offices for a city center protection planning.

By examining the Modern buildings or the buildings with modernity among the listed sites, how the buildings of Modern heritage in Changsha were listed for protection could be pictured. Usually being listed as Historic Buildings is the start of bringing publicity to the building’s heritage values and preserving it from being demolishment. Many of them were listed as Cultural Relic sites years later, when their conservation could possess better resources like funding.

| Table 1. Four lists of historic buildings announced in Changsha |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  |
| 1st list of Historic Buildings from Modern times | List of Major Historic Residences for protection | 2nd list of Historic Buildings from Modern times | 3rd list of Historic Buildings |
| Number of sites | 35 | 23 | 21 | 23 |
| Number of Modern Buildings | 2 | 1 | 5 | 7 |
| Number of building with modernity | 12 | 10 | 8 | 12 |
| Announcement Year | 2002 | 2005 | 2009 | 2017 |
| Measures for protection | · Putting on protection signs | · Intensive restorations in one years | · Putting on protection signs | · Signing protection agreement with property owners |
|                                                                  |

*a Determined by the design mentality of the architect.  
b Determined by formal language employed.

2.1. 1st list of Historic Buildings from Modern times in Changsha

Changsha has been entitled as one of the Historic Cities as early as 1982, but the attempt to conserve Historic Buildings started in 1998. In July of that year, a group joint by some personnel from the Changsha Committee of Development, the Changsha Bureau of Culture and Hunan University carried out the first survey into historic buildings from modern times in Changsha. They focused on looking for unprotected buildings with considerable historical, artistic and scientific values, whose year of construction is between 1860 and 1966, and finally 29 sites have been targeted. In September 2002, plus 6 more, 35 sites in total have been confirmed and announced by the municipal government as the 1st list of Historic Buildings from Modern times in Changsha.

In that list, the architectural styles vary from traditional Chinese, to original Gothic and adaptive architecture designed by Henry K. Murphy, since the collision of western and local cultures is the major feature of modern times in China. By the definition of Modern architecture, only 2 of them could fit into that category (Figure 2), but many of the rest show the trace of being associated with modernity, like those were supposedly effected by the Soviet architecture.
Figure 2. Modern buildings in the 1st of Historic Buildings from Modern times in Changsha

2.2. The list of major historical residences for protection in Changsha

In 2003, as part of the overall planning for Changsha city, the protection plan for the inner city was redrafted. Planners have realized that the redevelopment has greatly violated the historic urban landscape, and the stereotyped 3-layer protection plan, that consists of Historic City, Historic Neighbourhoods and sites of Cultural Relic and Historic Buildings, is not effective enough to conserve the urban features. Hence Historical Landscape Area was added to the pyramid system of the protection plan, while listed Historic Alleys and Historic Residences were implanted to objectify this abstract target for protection [4].

![Diagram of protection plan for Changsha]

Figure 3. Structure of the protection plan for Changsha

It has never been mentioned but such reflections and amendments were somehow accordant to the theory of urban built heritage by Gustavo Giovannoni [5]. Obviously, the aforementioned new layers were the output of taking minor architecture into consideration to protect the ambient for Changsha. It is interesting that a list of historical residences was set newly aside the one of historic buildings and there could be two reasons. Firstly, unlike the historic buildings were selected all over the city, for the purpose of protecting historical landscape area which covers mainly the city center, those historical residences inside that filed were picked. Secondly, the historic buildings were considered as a supplement to the cultural relic sites for the overall system, with lower requirements for protection, but still part of the major architecture, while the historic residences were supposed to compose the minor architecture (Figure 3). However, the motivations did not belittle how much this list signify to the
Modern heritage in Changsha, which included a Modern building with outstanding values, the later dismantled Suzhou Hall (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Suzhou Hall

Afterwards, the protection plan for Historic Alleys and Historic Residences was made in 2004, and in 2005 the list of Historic Residences for protection was officially announced. Even though conservative projects have been promoted actively and mostly carried out in the following years for these two lists of heritage, the deficiency of judicial guarantee resulted in the whole program coming to suspension immediately after a change of personnel in the mayor’s office in 2007, not to mention two listed residences have been dismantled.

2.3. 2nd list of Historic Buildings from Modern times in Changsha) and 3rd list of Historic Buildings in Changsha

With the Changsha Committee of Development, which was renamed the Changsha Committee of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in charge, listing historic buildings kept going on. In 2009, the 2nd list of Historic Buildings from Modern times in Changsha was announced, and 21 sites were listed. Half of them are Modern buildings (Figure 5) including the ones inside the campus of Hunan University that have been announced as Cultural Relic sites at national level years later.

Figure 5. Two Modern buildings in the 2nd list of Historic Buildings

In 2013, Hunan University worked with the Changsha Committee of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in survey for the 3rd list of Historic Buildings in Changsha. After an investigation of 2 years, 24 sites were selected and reported to the municipal government for approval, which took another 2 years. Finally, 23 sites were confirmed to be listed in 2017. This most recent list addressed more importance to the industrial heritage (Figure 6) from modern times and historic buildings in new urban district of Changsha.
The years that lists await to be officially announced by the municipal government, were spent in coordination between offices. Common situations are, when a candidate of Historic Building was proposed, the pre-defined usage of the land which the building locates in was incompatible with its conservation, or for a site of industrial heritage, the area and specific buildings to be protected usually drew heated discussions from different voices like consultants and administrations. The municipal government has become more cautious in listing historic buildings, and it has to have affections from the fact that lot of public opinions especially critics arose after 2 sites from the 1st list and 1 site from the 2nd list have been removed or dismantled. This way the uncertainty of the sites could be actually conserved has become the main obstacle for listing Historic Buildings in Changsha.

3. A Recent survey and the disparity of power and responsibility
In 2017, a survey for more candidates of historic buildings has been commissioned by the Changsha Bureau of Urban Planning to Hunan University.

In the first round of screening, 266 buildings have been selected to investigate. From the result of the investigation, it seems that except 60 newly found traditional Chinese buildings, the majority of them are buildings or structures of Modern heritage, and over 75% of them were constructed in 1950s and 1960s. After further evaluations, 25 sites among them were suggested to list in the mid-term report (Figure 7). One of the major discoveries is that a large number of collective housing built in the 1950s and 1960s possess good qualities in architectural design, crafts and construction, and better still, mostly stand adjacently in walled neighbourhoods.

Unfortunately, during the survey, at least 10 of those buildings have been demolished because of redevelopment. The Bureau of Urban Planning could not have it stopped because there was not enough time to revise the urban planning for the plots, and meanwhile the buildings could not be listed right away, for the administrative procedures, and more importantly listing Historic Buildings is one of
many function of the Committee of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, which did not participate in this survey at all. It is a typical case of disparity of power and responsibility, that has been regarded as a key factor of the problems in the administration of cultural heritage in China [6]. Listing Historic Buildings and protecting buildings of Modern heritage would encounter more difficulties if this condition does not change.

4. Conclusions
It does not require much argumentation to assert that Modern heritage plays a key role in the protection of historic city of Changsha. Since there is no exclusive institution for conserving Modern heritage yet or in any time soon given that it only just started in China, listing historic buildings has been the only measures that contributed to that matter so far, and would have to be in the coming years still as we expect. Hence, how to implement listing historic buildings better would be the crucial issue for the purpose of conserving buildings of Modern heritage. Three aspects could be proposed for the future work.

Firstly, the parity of power and responsibilities. This is not only a problem for managing Historic Buildings in Changsha, but a common one in cultural heritage systems nationally [6]. Without this fundamental condition in administration, no protection of any categories of cultural heritage could be guaranteed.

Secondly, more communications about values in Modern heritage should be made, especially to the public. As the cause of cultural heritage is gaining more sociality, a better understanding by the public could always benefit the protection. For example, it could help to stress the Modern heritage in the propagandas for listing historic buildings.

Third, list more collective housing neighbourhoods. Since many modern buildings have been demolished because they have become an ‘island’ in the city, which means the layout of them are not concentrated. By listing more Modern neighbourhoods, they could maintain more heritage values, and it is also helpful to conserve the ambient for urban heritage.

As more research activities took place, like the establishment of DOCOMOMO China in 2012, more efforts have been devoted to protect Modern heritage in China. For example, two lists of Architectural Heritage in 20th Century in China was announced by the China Cultural Relics Academy and Architectural Society of China in 2016 and 2017. Even though such listings of Modern heritage were more of academic activities, Changsha has no reason to sit out this movement. For a historic city like Changsha, with rich history but limited immovable heritage to demonstrate, Modern buildings possess more significance than being one category of cultural heritage, somehow a chance to compensate this city suffered too much from wars and unwise development.

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