The Productive Space of Hanzhengjie
- A Case Study on the Clothing Workshops

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Abstract
There are lots of private workshops in Hanzhengjie district in the city of Wuhan. The productive line here is naturally divided into different parts according to different procedures, which is separate from each other in the space. This paper focuses on the space of clothing workshop, which is the typical case. Then it minutely studies the existing environment as well as the correlation factor after getting plenty of details from a long-term filed investigation. Furthermore it analyzes the mutual influences and the complicated relationships among the productive space (of clothing workshop), commercial and dwelling spaces. Finally it summarizes the characteristics of the productive space in HanZhengJie, and objectively argues that the production in Hanzhengjie is a special characteristic to be preserved at some extent.

Keywords: productive space; workshop; produce and market all by oneself; productive lines; Hanzhengjie characteristic

1. Introduction
Hanzhengjie Area, with a long history more than 500 years, is located in the city of Wuhan. It is at the merge of Yangtze River and HanShui River, as shown in Fig.1. With the convenience of the water carriage, it functions as the important commercial center of Wuhan and the largest wholesale market of small commodities in Central China. The sales volume and the circulation of the currency founds are too tremendous for people to believe. Soon it gains the honor as “the Number One Street in the World” (Liu Fudao, 2001).

From the very beginning, residents here could produce and market all by themselves. That is to say, the goods are totally produced and sold in Hanzhengjie area. It is so easy but pretty efficient.

This custom could date from the Ming dynasty (about 1528) (Xu Zhi, 2003). It was the time of traditional handcraft. At that time, there were so many lanes full of various individual workshops. Interestingly, the lanes were named after the products, such as the Comb Street, the Cotton Printed Street and so on. In 1848, the modern industry emerged in Hanzhengjie. Then the 1978 opening up and reform in China was a wise and encouraging policy for its growth. From then on, the private owned workshops became legal and formal. However, only the clothing workshops still keep flourishing currently while others have died out ruthlessly in the keen trade competitions. So we take the clothing workshop as the study case.

2. Typical Clothing Production in Hanzhengjie
In Hanzhengjie, the typical clothing production in workshops is quite different from modern factories'. The productive line is divided into several parts naturally according to different procedures. Each procedure has its own workshop and gathers in different area. That is to say, a workshop always does the similar work efficiently for a long run.

The reasons for the specialization in production and...
sale are as follow:

To begin with, it has close relationship with the geographical features of Hanzhengjie. There was a great deal of old lanes and alleys for a long time. They were so narrow and the indoor spaces were small, so that the production in small workshops was feasible.

Secondly, Hanzhenjie is the earliest commercial center of WuHan. And the land-use fee is too expensive to afford. Therefore to rent a relatively small room as the workshop space became reasonable and effectible.

Thirdly, specialization in production of small workshop is important to the whole procedure. It could cut down the capital cost. And it is also easy to change the style and type of the product. To market goods locally is beneficial to economize on manpower and material resources (Zhu Wenrao, 1997).

Totally speaking, the productive pattern is determined by various factors, such as the space, the history, the feature of the clothing production, and so on. At the same time, it produces an effect on the space and form of Hanzhengjie.

3. The Distribution of Clothing Workshops in Hanzhengjie

Historically, the production in Hanzhengjie concentrated near the Yangtze River and HanShui River. Nowadays, on account of the contraction of water carriage, the clothing production is enlarged in the scale and is infiltrated into the narrow lanes which centralize in the area of old buildings (Fig.2.).

It is the spontaneous settlement area as shown in Fig.3. The majority of the buildings here are built by the residents themselves without official planning. So the density is unbelievable high. Correspondingly, the productive space here is pretty complicated, with the following characteristics:

Firstly, the productive space (of clothing workshop), commercial space and dwelling space are highly mixed spontaneously in the urban space (Fig.4.). The mix up is social and physical. Generally speaking, the commercial space and the productive space are always along the main lanes, because there is more open and convenient for people to arrive. On the contrary, the dwelling space is private, which often occupies the quiet place inside the lanes. Of course, there is no...
single space without a jumble, which can be seen as a calculated use of the space (William Rowe, 2001).

Secondly, different workshop relatively concentrates at different area. As shown in Fig.5., the whole production takes the stitching workshops in Baoqing area as the center, and other kinds of workshops are around them in the space.

Thirdly, life and business are vertically segmented in accordance with different functions in Hanzhengjie. As a matter of fact, the small machinery workshops which need smaller space are almost upstairs, and the first floor is often used for storefront shops or large machinery workshops.

Together, the distribution of the productive space in the city is a comprehensive subject for us to study. It shows close relationships with traffic, housing, and so on. In other word, it is influenced by the society directly or indirectly, resulting in the physical nature of the Hanzhengjie spaces.

4. The Interior Space of Different Workshop

The figures from No. 6 to No.11 show the real views of the six different workshops. It is obvious that the quality of the workshops’ space is quite low: the workshops are generally small, basically with no ventilation and lighting; Most of them are alterations...
or additions to the houses by residents here; the shape and the size of the houses are various, without a unified direction.

Furthermore, the use of indoor space differs from each other according to different procedure. As shown in Fig.9., the printing workshop with little machines needs smaller space, so that there would be more spare room for everyday life. Oppositely, the shrinking workshop in Fig.11. requires much larger space to accommodate big special machine. So there is little room for everyday activities.

At the same time, the function is highly mixed and the space is compressed. For example, it seems that the house is a single working room without kitchen.

Fig.9. The Condition of Printing Workshop

Fig.10. The Condition of Stitching Workshop

Fig.11. The Condition of Shrinking Workshop
and bedroom. But all the needs of everyday life could be self-solved well: cooking beside the front door, sleeping on the mezzanine floor. It is incredible and rather efficient.

In a word, we could say that the six workshops separately present the mixing condition of the workroom, the living room, and some other spaces. Furthermore, this proves that the land of Hanzhengjie is expensive as gold and the space is unbelievably compressed.

5. The Study on a Special Case

As is shown in Fig.12, the weaving plant named ErSe, which was built in 1910s'. It has been a flourishing sight till 1980s'.

5.1 Background

ErSe weaving plant was the factory of some capitalists, which went bankrupt in 1990s. In about 1996, ErSe weaving plant was changed into clothing workshops. There are more than 100 clothing workshops currently. And the character of the space has changed at a large extent.

5.2 Statuses

1) Management: There were 1300 workers originally, but now only 150 people who act securities. Their salaries are from the rent of the clothing workshops.

2) Facilities: 2 plants, 1 administration building, and 1 employee dormitory.

3) Space: The original plant is converted from single-storey to five-storey building to increase the capacity. As a result, the original factory and the management building are divided into lots of small clothing workshops (Fig.13.).

4) Function: To tell the truth, it seems little terrible inside (Fig.14.), while people's activities are various and vivid, such as eating aside the door, chatting, sleeping in the corridor, and so on. And some facilities and interesting spaces came into being, such as snack bar, canteens, workers' dormitories, and etc (Fig.15.).

It can be said that, ErSe weaving factory is the representative of the state-owned enterprises during the transformation of Hanzhengjie, Because ErSe weaving
factory had been successfully changed into hundreds of clothing workshops.

6. Conclusion

From above, we could tell that changes in the social space caused the reconstruction of material spaces of Hanzhengjie. Under different social background, production changes accordingly and these changes display in the space (Henry Lefebvre, 1991). Moreover, production is also closely linked with urban space at a large extent. The unique interaction between them is sustainable, which cause the space mixed and compressed. The mix among the productive space, commercial space and living space is valuable, which gradually formed the space pattern of Hanzhengjie. Furthermore, the productive space of the clothing workshops in Hanzhengjie exists in an informal mode, which is private, and even illegal (Ananya and Nezar, 2003). However, it is pretty feasible and efficient, not only cutting down the start-up capital, but also solving the problem of land shortage. So it is a perfect complement to the formal production space of the modern large factory. Conclusively it can be said that the productive space of small clothing workshops in Hanzhengjie are irreplaceable and it is the inherent characteristic to be preserved.

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References


Endnotes

1 The investigation on HanZhengjie started at September 2004. From then on, we have engaged ourselves in the continuous study and we have gotten so many first-hand materials. Luckily, we got the support by the National Natural Science Support Fund (Contract No. 50778076) of China in 2007. The investigation on productive space began from May 2006.
3 The Fig.2. was made by Ma Zhenhua in September 2006. The original map is from Wuhan Archives Museum.
4 The original map is from Wuhan Archives Museum.
5 The Fig.4. was made by Ma Zhenhua in November 2006. The original map is from Wuhan Archives Museum.
6 The Fig.5. was made by Ma Zhenhua in June 2006. The original map is from Wuhan Archives Museum.
7 The picture was taken by Qian Yani in June 2006.
8 The Fig.7. was made by Qian Yani in September 2006.
9 The Fig.8. was made by Qian Yani in November 2006.
10 The Fig.9. was made by Qian Yani in November 2006.
11 The Fig.10. was made by Ma Zhenhua in April 2007.
12 The Fig.11. was made by Ma Zhenhua in April 2007.
13 The pictures were taken by Ma Zhenhua in September 2007.
14 The Fig.13. was made by Ma Zhenhua in October 2007.
15 The pictures were taken by Ma Zhenhua in May 2007.
16 The pictures were taken by Qian Yani in May 2007.