

# Living Heritage Protection in China Urban Renewal Planning: A Case Study of Quanzhou West Street

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## 1 ABSTRACT

Living Heritage which is delivering the city's character gene, also plays an important role in maintaining the vitality of the city. However, in the old towns of china, Living Heritage is always associated with aging population, bad infrastructure, complicity of property ownership and poor residents. The urban renewal planning in most cases of China was material-based planning, which focus on increasing the quality of infrastructure and local wealth. Living Heritage hasn't received enough attention in the process and it was gradually dying. As a result, renewed cities always have an obvious reduction of vitality, personality and humane.

The complicated situation in Quanzhou West Street is a microcosm of the old towns in China. A sociological research has already been conducted to evaluate the situation of Living Heritage there both qualitatively and quantitatively. With reference to several related cases, we offered a set of innovative strategy combinations to keep Living Heritage living in urban renewal.

## 2 LIVING HERITAGE: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN CHINA

### 2.1 Definition of Living Heritage

Living Heritage hasn't got a clear definition in academic circles. In some article, it means a heritage site which was still in use and maintaining its initial function.<sup>1</sup> It's the opposite of the heritage sites which was dead or becoming an empty shell. But we consider Living Heritage a much more integrated concept. It is the embodiment of a variety of traditional culture in modern life, including both tangible and intangible culture heritage. And in most cases, the way of its existence is the intangible cultural heritage.

Early in the heritage protection area, people only pay attention to material heritage. In 1982, the initial concept of Living Heritage firstly appeared in the international charter.<sup>2</sup> Then in the declaration of San Antonio (1996)<sup>3</sup>, heritage is divided into static heritage and Living Heritage, which definitely called attentions to the heritage that still in use and maintaining its initial function.

By far, the concept of heritage conservation has been greatly expanded. Living Heritage and its similar concept like cultural heritage, intangible heritage often appears in modern heritage conservation concepts. However, Living Heritage still hasn't got a clear definition in academic circles. A well-known concept called 'intangible cultural heritage' is a typical Living Heritage, but they have differences.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), the "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.<sup>4</sup> In short, intangible cultural heritage is in the form of projects, while Living Heritage is in the form of cultures.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Miura, Keiko: Conservation of a "living heritage site" – a contradiction in terms? A case study of Angkor world heritage site in: Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites, Vol. 7 Issue 1, pp. 3-18, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Historic Gardens(The Florence charter 1981), adopted by ICOMOS in December 1982, cited from [http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/gardens\\_e.pdf](http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/gardens_e.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Inter-American Symposium. The Declaration of San Antonio, adopted at the Inter-American Symposium on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage, March 27 - 30 1996, hold by The ICOMOS National Committees of the Americas

<sup>4</sup> Cited from [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=17716&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

In addition, Living Heritage is a much broader concept. It not only cares about the intangible cultural heritage with outstanding value, but also cares about the traditional culture, the traditional life style, the conventional wisdom which still alive in our lives.

## 2.2 Living Heritage conservation in China

As mentioned above, Living Heritage includes both tangible and intangible culture heritage. In China, The protection of cultural heritage is a very fashionable concept now. However in most cases it only refers to the tangible culture heritage and the intangible cultural heritage as projects.

The conservation of intangible cultural heritage began very early in China. In 2001, Kunqu was included in the “representative list of oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity”. From then on, there are 37 projects included in that list in total. Now China has built up a three-tiered conservation system, from national level to city level, to protect intangible cultural heritage. In 2011, the Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection was put into effect.

Under the advocacy of the central authority, and government at all levels, the value of intangible cultural heritage was widely accepted by people. However, other intangible living heritages which haven't got enough good luck to be included in the three-tiered protection list was in danger.

Living Heritage often exist in symbiosis with the old town, delivering the city's character gene. It also plays an important role in maintaining the vitality of the city. However, in the old towns of china, Living Heritage is always associated with aging population, bad infrastructure, complicity of property ownership and poor residents.

## 2.3 Living Heritage Conservation in China urban renewal planning

Similar with the world, city planning in China has also born out of architecture. So city planning early in China was totally material-base planning which focus on buildings and municipal infrastructure. Now most of the new city plan are still material- base plan and that is enough in a way. However when things goes to urban renewal planning, there is not so simple.

Most Chinese old cities have a long history. All kinds of heritage could be seen here and there, some of which are still living. An urban renewal plan often has to be a conservation plan first to conserve heritages. In the world, approaches to heritage conservation have gone through three stages.<sup>5</sup> They are material-based approach, values-base approach and Living Heritage approach. Now urban renewal plan in China always contains a conservation plan using values-base approach. Under a value assessment, tangible and intangible cultural heritage which form the values are both involved in the conservation plan. However, they are extremely unequal. The intangible cultural heritage is the tangible heritage's supplement. The approach to conserve intangible heritage is material-based, focusing on conserving the place where intangible cultural heritage taken place. And in most cases, intangible heritage only means the projectized intangible cultural heritage, not all living heritages.

In short, China urban renewal planning in a whole is still a material-base plan. Intangible Living Heritage hasn't received enough attention in the process and it was gradually dying. As a result, renewed cities always have an obvious reduction of vitality, personality and humane.

## 3 QUANZHOU WEST STREET: CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBLEMS

### 3.1 A brief introduction on Quanzhou West Street

Quanzhou is one of the starting points of ancient maritime Silk Road. The old town's history can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. However along with the development of modern city, the traditional landscape of the old city was almost disappeared. Now it's West Street area has become the only place where we could appreciate the city's traditional landscape.

West Street is the local culture core zone of the old town. A magnificent temple called Kaiyuan Temple is located in the middle of west street. Along the street is bustling with commercial shops, some of those are traditional clinics, snack shops, and shops selling goods for religious activities.

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<sup>5</sup> Ioannis Poullos , (2014), "Discussing strategy in heritage conservation", Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, Vol. 4 Iss 1 pp. 16 - 34

Beautiful buildings are also a major feature of the West Street. Most of the buildings along the street are two layers stone houses, dotting with some beautiful western style buildings with a history of nearly one hundred years.



Fig. 1: A glimpse of Quanzhou West Street. The left photo was taken by Qilin Wu; the right photo was taken by Ning Jia

### 3.2 Living Heritage in West Street: a brief impression

The most notable feature of West Street is its Living Heritage. Due to a large number of aboriginal life, West Street has retained a large number of living heritages. Simply walking around the street, you will feel a strong traditional cultural atmosphere. What's more, West Street is the living space of 10 intangible cultural heritage.



Fig. 2: Living Heritage in West Street. Photo in the middle was taken by Ning Jia; the other two were downloaded from internet.

Many famous people were born at West Street, as well as many overseas Chinese. Although no longer lived in the street, they still care about their hometown. They donated a large amount of money to repair the family ancestral temple, participated in the annual worship activities, becoming a powerful force in the continuation of living culture of the West Street.



Fig. 3: Bad infrastructure and chaotic traffic in West Street. Photos were taken by Ning Jia.

On the other hand, West Street is one of the poorest communities in Quanzhou. Aging population, bad infrastructure, complicity of property ownership seriously hindered the development of community. Young people are gradually moved away from the street, Living Heritage be threatened.

How many living heritages are there in the street? How about their current situation? A sociological research has conducted to evaluate the situation of Living Heritage there both qualitatively and quantitatively.

### **3.3 Sociological research Part 1: participant observation and interview survey<sup>6</sup>**

We conducted a participant observation and an interview survey to feel living heritages in West Street qualitatively.

In interview survey, we talked with different identities people such as indigenous people, cultural workers, monks, shops owners and so on, feeling the history, customs and even personal emotion of West Street. 30 households were chosen to conduct in-depth interviews for our further study.

In participant observation, we follow the aboriginal rhythm of life, participate the daily life in different times in a day, closely observe the aboriginal life, such as drinking tea, doing morning exercises, enjoying Nanyin, strolling through the market etc.

As a conclusion, we summarize twelve most prominent living heritages in the West Street.

#### **3.3.1 Family Culture Heritage**

Quanzhou is the core area of Minnan, which including southern Fujian and Taiwan. People in Quanzhou give great importance to the family. The living room is often dedicated to ancestral shrine. people worship their ancestors on traditional festivals. There are several ancestral halls on the street, where large family held grand sacrifice activities.

#### **3.3.2 Religious Culture Heritage**

There is a Buddhist temple, a Christ Church and many local belief temples in West Street. All the temples are still in use. Especially in the Kaiyuan Temple festivals, people from whole Quanzhou area will come to the West Street to participate in worship activities.

#### **3.3.3 Pujing Culture Heritage**

The West Street area was divided into a number of communities before, which were called Pujing system. Every community has a Pujing temple. The Pujing temples were once community centers. Now gods in Pujing temples were still community faith for the people.

#### **3.3.4 Funeral Culture Heritage**

Minnan people also give great importance to the funeral culture. The funeral is often held on the streets. The deceased relatives and friends composited a large funeral procession, even causing traffic jams.

#### **3.3.5 Opera Culture Heritage**

Previously, drama and ritual activities are inseparable. In front of the temple there was often a stage, where people dedicated drama to the god in traditional festivals. Nanyin, Liyuan Opera, Gaojia drama and Puppet show were the most popular dramas. Communities often have regular activities of dramatic interest group.

#### **3.3.6 Food Culture Heritage**

There are many traditional snack shop in West Street, some of which are famous throughout the country. Moist cake skin is a very popular special snack. A famous Food documentary also reported it. A lot of snacks on the street are also dedicated to the gods. But people could eat after the ceremony, which is thought to be lucky.

#### **3.3.7 Dress Culture Heritage**

On the street, women wearing flowers could often be seen. These women are residents from a village called Xunpu which is a fishing village. Their clothing is very unique. West Street residents' daily consumption of seafood are by their supplies. At the same time, their beautiful costumes are a decoration of the West Street.

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<sup>6</sup> The social survey that was conducted in the research of the West Street was under the instruction of "Social Research Methods", Fang Yuan, (2014), Peking University Press.

### 3.3.8 Handicraft Culture Heritage

Some west street people are very skilled craftsmen. Even after retirement, many old people like making some handicrafts at home. Some are family inherited craft, even on the list of local intangible cultural heritage.

### 3.3.9 Wu Culture Heritage

Overseas Chinese have left people with the impression of martial arts master. Wu culture at West Street was used to be very active. As old people recalled once there were many martial art classrooms on the street. Many people liked to practice martial arts to keep their healthies.

### 3.3.10 Medical Culture Heritage

As Buddhism has the merciful doctrine, on the street espacially around the Kaiyuan temple there were many Chinese medicine clinics. Some medicinal herbs in the clinics have a long history, some even have myths and legends. However most of these traditional diagnosis has been mergers into the modern hospital.

### 3.3.11 The overseas Chinese Culture Heritage

Many people in the West Street have a history of overseas life, especilly the old people. This is also the reason why there are many western style buildings and a church on the street. But most of the western architecture's situation is very bad, for a lot of the owners of these western architectures had died. Their offspring also moved out long ago, leaving only the buildings on the street.

### 3.3.12 Architectural Culture Heritage

Buildings in West Street are very special. Their construction is very different from the modern buildings. Worse is there are rare old residents can recall the traditional method for building houses. It will be very troublesome when the old houses needed of repair. Unfortunately they really need now.

## 3.4 Sociological research Part 2: questionnaire investigation

On the basis of participant observation and interview survey, we designed the questionnaire to grasp the current situation of quantization. For there were about 2300 households in West Street, we made a total of 260 questionnaires, recovering 224 valid questionnaires.

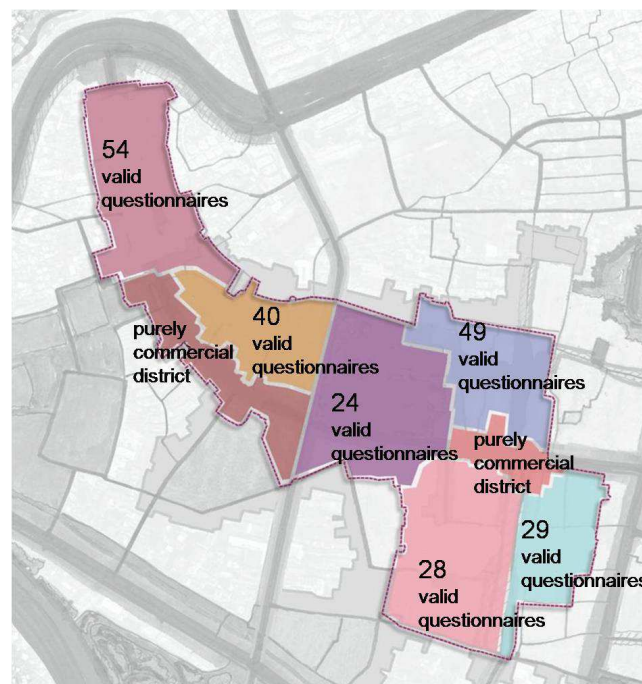


Fig. 3: Sampling distribution of the questionnaire survey in West Street

We used random sampling method. It is worth mentioning that in order to ensure uniform sampling, we divided the research area into eight smaller areas according to their slightly different characteristics. Among

them, 2 areas are purely commercial district so that removed from our survey. In other 6 smaller areas, we extracted sample in the same proportion (10 %).

The statistical results of the questionnaire is not optimistic. Data shows that though Living Heritage in the West Street had a deep inside, they are rapidly disappearing in recent years. According to the result of the investigation observation, depth interviews and the questionnaire investigation, among the twelve living culture mentioned above, there are two on the verge of extinction(The overseas Chinese Culture/Wu Culture), seven Moderately active(Pujing Culture/Opera Culture/Food Culture/Dress Culture/Handicraft Culture/Medical Culture/Architectural Culture), only three still in the active state(Family Culture/Religious Culture/ Funeral Culture).

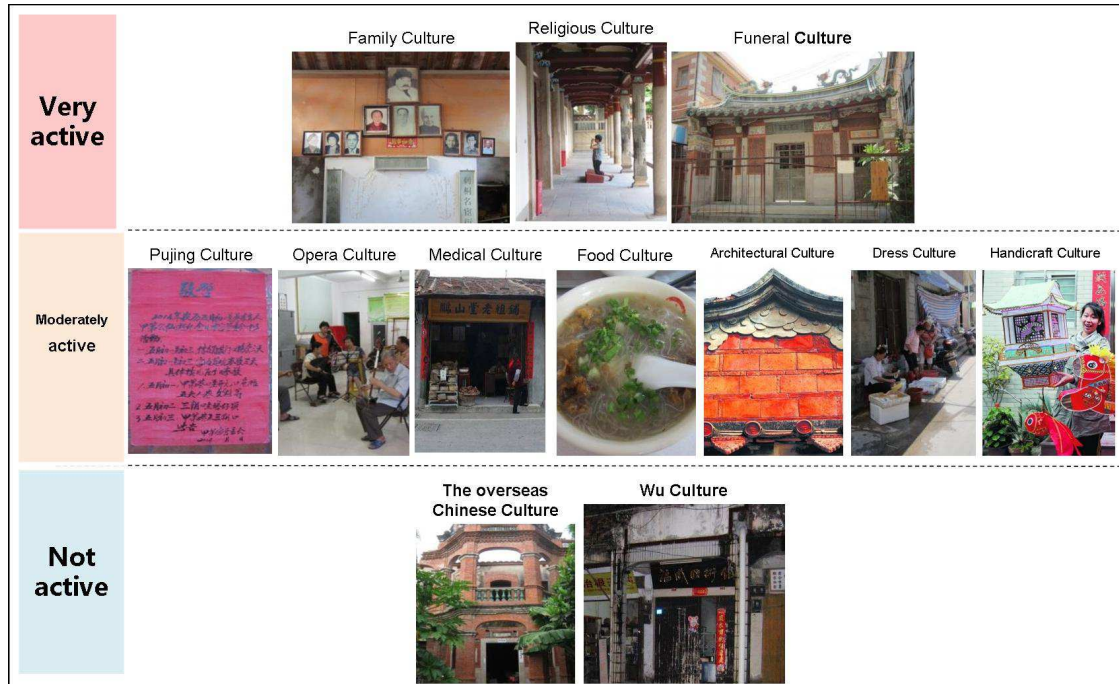


Fig. 4: Three categories according to their present situation. All the photos except the “Handicraft Culture” one(which was downloaded from the internet) were taken by Wen Luo and Ning Jia during the survey.

Although we divided living heritages into three categories and some of those we called “very active”, they are all in not optimistic situation in fact. For example, every family in Minnan before gave great importance to ancestor worship. But in our investigation, only 20.77% families still held the traditional ritual activities in their living rooms. However, the Family Culture Heritage is more active than the heritages those in the moderately active category and the not active category.

The lack of activity space and the loss of aboriginals are both important factors restricting the living state of cultural heritage. But in our observation, modernization is the most tricky factor threatening the Living Heritage. More than one of the respondents told us that there were no televisions before so local opera was the main recreational activities. Our survey also shows that jogging and public square dancing become the main leisure activity instead of traditional cultural activities such as Nanquan. Young people lost their interests in traditional culture, some of them even couldn’t come into contact with traditional culture.

#### 4 “4P” STRATEGY: KEEP LIVING HERITAGE LIVING IN URBAN RENEWAL

##### 4.1 Living Heritage conservation: A group of composite strategies

According to our practical experience and case study, Living Heritage conservation needs a group of composite strategies, which we called the 4P Strategy.

###### 4.1.1 People

The generation and continuation of Living Heritage are closely related with aboriginal life. Indigenous people is the soul of West Street. But because of the population growth and bad infrastructure, lots of indigenous people choose to move away from the West Street.

We propose to improve the infrastructure of West Street, meeting the requirements of modern life in the premise of not affecting the block style.

#### 4.1.2 Place

Place is the material basis for Living Heritage's continuation. The disappearance of Living Heritage is often accompanied by the disappearance of specific place. For example, there were stages in front of the temples in West Street, where local opera was always performed. But with the development of the city, the stages were removed. People no longer have the place to perform and watch local opera, making the opera culture gradually disappear.

We propose to restore some of the traditional cultural space in the West Street, arrange some public activity space for Living Heritage, and establish several community history museums to remember the history of West Street.

#### 4.1.3 Policy

In China, government has strong power. The policy has a significant effect on the future of a block. The urban renewal planning in most cases of China was material-based planning, without suggestions of management policy.

We propose to give a series of policy support to the conservation and development of Living Heritage in West Street. For example, give a rent relief and a tax relief to time-honored shops.

#### 4.1.4 Presentation

Beijing Dashilan project is a good example of presentation. Through Beijing International Design Week which was held once a year, Dashilan community not only gained popularity at home and abroad, but also harvest the aboriginal self-confidence and sense of pride. The Beijing International Design Week which invited Chinese and foreign designers using the old house to do all kinds of design and display refreshed people's impression to the community. Designers' work in Dashilan told people that it was a filthy cell before but that's may only because people didn't really understand it. After the ingenious transformation of designers, the old houses has become much more convenient while keeping the poetic flavour of environment. Residents refound that their community is full of charm and potential. So they are more willing to study and inherit Living Heritage from their ancestors to keep their own characteristics.

We propose to host a series of demonstration activities and some game activities to mobilize the enthusiasm of the residents on studying and inheriting Living Heritage.

### **4.2 How to use the 4P Strategy: a specific example in Quanzhou West Street**

In the Quanzhou West Street case, we conducted a participatory observation and in-depth interview to figure out how many living heritages there are in the street. And then, a questionnaire investigation was also conducted to evaluate their situation. After the social survey, we summarized twelve living heritages in West Street, and put them into three categories according to the current situation.

Every category of living heritage has different situation, so our 4P Strategy should also be flexible used according to the actual conditions.

For the very active living heritages, the most important thing is keeping the aboriginals. Quanzhou is the core area of Minnan, which including southern Fujian and Taiwan. In Minnan area, Family Culture, Religious Culture and Funeral Culture have very strong vitality. But they are privacies. So what we could do is listening to the needs of aboriginals, helping them improving the living conditions. Guarantee a certain number of indigenous people living in the neighborhood, you can ensure that the active degree of these three living heritages. In addition, make sure there are enough places for Living Heritage is also very important.

For the moderately active living heritages, Place and Policy are both key elements. In the social survey, we found that many previous activity places were disappeared in the process of modernization. To make matters worse, Nanyin, one of the most excellent Minnan drama, once encountered policy prohibited. People still have passions to inherit those living heritages if conditions completed.

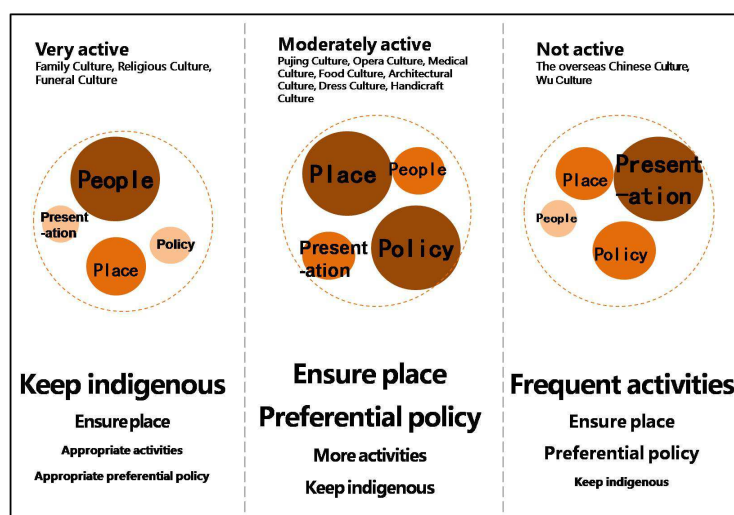


Fig. 5: Flexible 4P Strategy

Living heritages those not active are in a difficult situation. Though the development of the street and the overseas Chinese struggle are inseparable, there is no one can tell the history clearly and completely. Most overseas Chinese once promoted the modernization of West Street have already passed away or settled overseas, leaving a lot of magnificent Western architectures and their offspring who hardly remember the overseas struggle history of their ancestors on the street. The situation of Wu Culture is also bad. With the close of the last classroom for the martial arts, Wu Culture almost disappeared in West Street. So the Presentation of those living heritages is the most important. For example, we could collect the stories and articles on overseas Chinese to establish a regional museum, telling people the history of those beautiful building owners.

Specifically, according to the 4P Strategy we should do things below in West Street:

#### 4.2.1 People

The main method to keep the aboriginals is improving the infrastructure which is a forte in most planning of the old city renewal in China. So here we do not discuss.

#### 4.2.2 Place

- Reserve the existing space of Living Heritage, make sure the continuation of its function.
- Establish several community museums such as The Overseas Chinese Culture community museum, Pujing Culture community museum, and West Street Folk Culture community museum, exhibiting the history and traditional culture of the West Street.
- Establish community activity room for some of the living heritages such as Nanyin\ Nanquan.
- Restore the ancient stages for local opera.
- Set aside a portion of space to the West Street old shop in the street reconstruction project.

#### 4.2.3 Policy

- Give West Street old shops preferential policies or financial support, to ensure the stable operation.
- Give the old shops those have moved away from West Street rent concessions and policy support to attract them back.
- Encourage the industrialization development of the traditional handicraft, especially give the handicraft Intangible Cultural Heritage inheritance money and policy support.
- Give a certain policy support to the companies those with regional characteristics, attract settled.

#### 4.2.4 Presentation

- Conduct further anthropology, folklore, sociology survey to the living heritages, establish archives, and record them with oral history and documentary.



- (b) Organize the “East Asian Culture” exhibition once a year.
- (c) Hold traditional folk festivals activities such as the Lantern Culture Festival, Mid Autumn Culture Festival to attract overseas and show the traditional culture of West Street.
- (d) Organize theme activities such as medicine culture exhibition, characteristics of Taiwanese diet culture exhibition, Nanquan Wushu culture exhibition and so on.
- (e) Regularly invite the puppet troupe, Gaojia troupe and other teams to perform in West Street, displaying the traditional artistic charm and creating a cultural atmosphere.
- (f) Regularly organize citywide Nanyin, drama, Nanquan match, award winners, improve the enthusiasm of residents participation
- (g) Carry out extracurricular activities of Nanyin, Nanquan in primary and secondary schools.
- (h) Encourage other small-scale activities with the theme of Minnan culture.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Quanzhou West Street is a microcosm of the old towns in China. In this article, we summarized the experience from the experiment we conducted in Quanzhou West Street to conserve the living heritages. A sociological research was necessary as a basis, and we introduce a innovative strategy call 4P Strategy to protect the living heritages and solve the problems in China urban renewal practice. To protect the Living Heritage is a complex and meticulous work, we hope that the article can inspire.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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