REGULATION OF URBAN CHARACTER:
STYLE, COLOUR AND HISTORIC
CHARACTER IN A MODERN CHINESE
CITY - THE CASE OF HARBIN

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By

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Architectural Style Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABE</td>
<td>Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CER</td>
<td>Chinese Eastern Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Colour Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Construction Detailed Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCLG</td>
<td>Department of Communities and Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCP</td>
<td>Detailed Construction Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDCP</td>
<td>Detailed Development Control Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPZ</td>
<td>Duany Plater-Zyberk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td>English Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>National Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>The Homes and Communities Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIT</td>
<td>Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLC</td>
<td>Historic Landscape Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDFs</td>
<td>Local Development Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LURP</td>
<td>Law of the People's Republic of China on Urban and Rural Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoHURD</td>
<td>Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People's Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP</td>
<td>Purple Line Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPG</td>
<td>Planning Policy Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Regulatory Detailed Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Residential Two-Family Dwelling Districts</td>
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<td>SAC</td>
<td>Standardization Administration of China</td>
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<td>Stratford-on-Avon District Design Guide</td>
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<td>SDPs</td>
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<td>Sites and Monuments Record</td>
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<td>Traditional Neighbourhood Developments</td>
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<td>Urban Archaeological Database</td>
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<td>UDA</td>
<td>Urban Design Associates</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAPC</td>
<td>Western Australian Planning Commission</td>
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Abbreviations of cited research interviews are listed in Table 4-2.
ABSTRACT

Regulation of Urban Character: Style, Colour and Historic Character in A Modern Chinese City - The Case Of Harbin

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China’s rapid economic development and accelerated process of urbanisation has involved erosion of local distinctiveness during the last twenty years. This loss of character is widely regretted. With intensified inter-city competition there is a growing recognition among planning stakeholders and the general public that a stronger framework of urban conservation will be required in future. The dissertation offers a diagnosis of the methods for coping with urban character in modern Chinese cities and recommends how the contribution of conservation to regeneration may be enhanced.

The study is framed within a discussion of the concept of urban character, and a comparative review of international practice within the field. The Chinese legal and policy context is then introduced. A review of current policy issues identifies four aspects for investigation: first, the issue of how urban character is defined and understood; second, the regulatory techniques employed in local planning; third, the issue of the hierarchy of design guidance at different scales; and fourth, the adequacy or otherwise of the basic legal framework for planning, historical conservation and design control.

Investigation of these questions was pursued through an in-depth case-study of a single city. The chosen location is Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province in Northeast China. The Manchurian capital has a strong physical character and distinctiveness both because of its sub-Arctic location, and because of its historic legacies from Jewish, Russian and Japanese architecture. Detailed investigation of the regulatory process on a site-by-site basis shows the permissive approach to modern high-volume development. Policies for protection of urban character are not entirely absent. But the study shows their ineffectiveness, because of confusion over characterisation principles, absence of an evidence base, weakness of implementation, and inconsistency in execution.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of urban character protection in the light of the Harbin case-study, drawing several recommendations for improvement, including the use of Local Identification Reports; provision of supplementary design guidance; and the introduction of site-specific design briefs.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or other university or other institution of learning

Zhenbo Yu
September 2013

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A special mention deserves my family for their persistent encouragement and support. Thank you for your support in my life.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Since the Reform and Opening-Up Policy in 1978, the annual rate of gross domestic product increase in China has remained at 10%. With the rapid economic development and increasingly accelerated process of urbanisation, modernization and internationalization have become major goals of Chinese urban construction; however, from the aspect of urban character and local identity, the negative impacts of such rapid urban development in China have increasingly emerged during the last twenty years, which has attracted much academic attention. Deci Zou (1996), an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, mentioned his concern at the disappearance of local identity during urbanisation; following that, Ganzhi Zhou (2002), an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasized the threat to their historical character from rapid urban construction in modern Chinese cities. Due to the double threat to both existing buildings and historic cultures, Hanxiong Lin, a former Minister of the Ministry of Construction of China, has concluded that the majority of Chinese cities present a similar urban character and coined the phrase ‘thousands of cities in one face’.

This erosion of urban character in modern Chinese cities causes both stakeholders and citizens increasingly to draw attention to those aspects where a connection between urban images and economic benefits are involved. An academic consensus about the value of urban character has been established based on three aspects. The progress of urban development is literally a progress to absorb resources, which means that the local character that leads to popularity could attract more investment, and become the driving force of economic evolution; furthermore, as a physical carrier of culture, urban character is the direct reflection of local culture, and the development and maintenance of urban character is the precondition for its improvement; meanwhile, the sense of belonging is one of the most emotional
requirements for a human being, whilst to identify with the character of his/her surroundings is the most important approach to achieve such a sense of belonging. Therefore, the importance of urban character is that it does not merely provide visual pleasure but is also relevant towards emotional feeling, whilst the loss of urban character does not merely represent the influences of economic development but also threatens the variety of human culture. With this recognition, Chinese theoretical research about the urban character experienced a period of substantial growth and transformation beginning with academic concerns about the erosion of the urban image in modern Chinese cities since the 1990s (Zou, 1996), and became transformed into an exploration of theories of urban character (Li, 2000; Jiang, 2005), furthermore, recent research has widely examined the application in actual projects (Wang, 2008). This research represents the current Chinese theoretical context. During this period, scholars have also paid attention to the sustainable regeneration of specific urban environments, e.g. open space areas (Liu, 2005; Du, 2007), commercial areas (Fang, 2003) and traditional civilian houses (Wang, 2006).

The Chinese government has also attempted approaches during the last ten years to combine theoretical knowledge and empirical practice to create new developments. The methodologies of governmental researchers concern target projects based on finished design schemes to explore rational approaches for specific tasks (see Du, 2007; Wang, 2006; Xu and Tao, 2012). During this process, ‘regional design’ and ‘multiculturalism’ are emphasized as the main starting points (Wu, 2005). Meanwhile, many municipal and local governments have enhanced planning policies by supplementary ordinances for urban character protection since the beginning of the 21st century. Nationwide ordinances about the preservation of history have over many years established regulations such as Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages in 2008, and mandated the inclusion of issues about urban character in Urban Master Plans by the Urban and Rural Planning Law of the People's Republic of China. For specific contents, Chinese policies explore various aspects of urban issues to create specialized action plans, for instance the Green Space Plan, the Historical Preservation Plan and the Spatial Planning and Water System plan in the majority of Chinese cities. Meanwhile, Chinese cities established their local ordinances basing on their local features, for instance, the Waterfront Sustainable Plan (2010), urban revitalization in historical
area (2001), and research about the continuity of the street-side interface (2009) in Shanghai; the Commercial Space Plan in Zhengzhou (2003); the plan for the renewal of dwelling characteristics in Wuhan (2005); the Residential Character Plan in Ningbo (2006), the Colour Plan in Yuhuan (2007); landscape protection and regeneration in Kunshan (2009); the Natural Feature Plan in Suzhou (You, 2010); the Urban Redevelopment Mode Plan in Guangzhou (2010) and the Cultural and Spatial Plan in Xi’an (2010).

Nevertheless, although China has accumulated abundant research publications during the last decade, systematic discussions about urban character planning are still inadequate. Such inadequacies occur as there is no in-depth theoretical understanding of urban character, whilst the actual planning and policies are separated from academic theories. From the aspect of theoretical analysis, the academic mask of local character has not been stripped down to expose its nature. What is the basic essence of local character? What is the mechanism to express local character using planning tools? These two questions are not answered by any researcher concerned with Chinese current planning. Without these answers, the connections among urban character issues would not be established and current research therefore merely limited to individual aspects, in other words, there has been no analysis of the whole planning situation from the general theories down to planning documents and schemes. From the aspect of applicability, no obvious existing research is pointed to examine how to apply character theories to actual projects through planning tools. Due to the absence of knowledge about local character, primary principles and conceptions are frequently misunderstood by project consultants and administrators leading to wasteful political projects and inappropriate development orientations. Meanwhile, due to the absence of any connection between theories (of character and identity) and actual spatial items, the coverage of current urban character schemes would have to be re-evaluated. From the aspect of control and regulation, current planning policies about local character are widely criticized (Feng, 2005; Zhang, 2007). To explain such criticism, the users (including government officials and planners) and observers (scholars and citizens) are literally dissatisfied with the outcomes of existing policies. Furthermore, if one digs a little deeper, such criticism is due to the failure to acknowledge issues of local character and an inaccurate understanding about how to improve and create the local identity. This situation
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arises for various reasons which are the main research targets of this dissertation. Due to the absence of these three aspects, the features of urban character will be the basis for discussion, following these theoretical analyses, a combination of theories and existing planning systems would provide a reliable and applicable framework to improve planning policies about urban character in modern Chinese cities.

This dissertation discusses the context, implementation and possible prospects for Chinese regulations about urban character from both theoretical and empirical aspects, and particularly by exploring links between regulations and their implementation. The contents of planning ordinances in contemporary China emphasise the rules and evaluations of their outcomes as two main aspects to be explored; whilst for the potential motivation of exceptions during the implementation process, reasons hidden in the internal planning system and external factors are expected to be pointed out by this research. Considering that the aim of this research is to diagnose existing physical-based planning regulations, research targets therefore focus on the spatial urban factors; meanwhile, since existing Chinese local planning policies merely define urban character issues from three main aspects: architectural style, urban colour and historic conservation, this dissertation mainly emphasizes these three aspects to produce reliable comparisons between rules and outcomes. Nevertheless, this research is not limited by these three specific planning aspects. Beyond that, the entire Chinese planning system is widely discussed with the theoretical framework and international practices about urban character also introduced as empirical evidence. In this way, the conclusions which are provided by the end of this research could therefore be widely applicable to other urban character issues in China, whilst the recommendations would be applicable for the entire Chinese planning system as well. According to these conclusions, possible approaches for Chinese planning to strengthen urban character could be more adaptive to coordinate with the contemporary social structure, to address the increasing chaos about the local identity in planning and, most importantly, to contribute to a better living environment for the public.

Since urban character heavily relies on local history and experiences, therefore the past, present, and future are the most crucial factors to be considered for choosing research cases. For historic reasons, Harbin, which was planned and built by colonists, presents a strong colonial character and distinctiveness; meanwhile, as a
modern city that experienced rapid Chinese urbanisation, planning policies about urban character have been in operation for some years during the rapid urbanisation process; last but not least, no previous in-depth study of the planning process for Harbin has taken place. Thus, Harbin is selected as the case study for this research.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research is to diagnose the implementation of planning regulations concerning urban character in modern Chinese cities. The focus will be on how the current planning regulations control the development of urban character within the urban regeneration process and what the main deficiencies are in the current Chinese context which obstructs their satisfactory implementation. In order to achieve this overall aim, the research addresses five main objectives:

Objective One: to review theoretical urban character and international practice in character analysis from the aspect of planning regulations.

Objective Two: to review existing Chinese planning policy for urban character.

Objective Three: to evaluate actual effects of the current Chinese planning system.

Objective Four: to diagnose potential deficiencies of contents and mechanisms in the current Chinese planning system.

Objective Five: to synthesize the findings and to provide applicable suggestions for improvement to address urban character issues.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis comprises nine chapters of which this, Introduction, is the first.

Chapter Two, Sense of Place, Characterisation and Design, outlines the conceptual framework for analysing the features of urban character. It deals first with definitions and clarifies what is understood by the term ‘character’ so far as this research is concerned. The discussion then focuses on the transformation of concepts about local sense, genius loci, and urban character over the past century. Based on the theoretical consensus about urban character, Chapter Two outlines the broad considerations about the authenticity and designability of character through which it is hoped a theoretical framework to evaluate current urban planning and to explore
Chapter Three, *Regulations and International Practices*, focuses on the transformation of planning conceptions and methods from overall comprehensive guidelines to detailed implementation of urban coding through the introductions of the most effective global urban coding for urban character. Chapter Three highlights the components and operational mechanisms of such regulations, meanwhile, as a summary of the review, broad discussions about the lessons and experiences of these practices are provided as a conceptual framework for the subsequent analysis in the Chinese planning context.

Chapter Four, *Research Method and Case Study Selection*, describes the methods used for collecting and analysing the data in the empirical stages of this research. The chapter takes into account the aims and objectives of the research as well as the key issues highlighted in Chapter Three. It initially sets out the framework for the empirical study, highlighting the composite elements of the research, and discusses it in terms of the detailed methods of analysis used.

Chapter Five, *Policy Context – National and Local*, explores the Chinese planning context about urban character regulations. To start with a brief review of the evaluation in the Chinese planning context, this chapter displays the hierarchy of the Chinese planning system, as well as its entire operational mechanism. In this way, Chapter Five presents a comprehensive background to the Chinese regulations about urban character, and provides the starting point to build up a critical and detailed analysis of the implementations of urban character regulations in northern Chinese cities.

Chapter Six, *Harbin - Introduction and Case Study*, introduces the initial background of the selected case – Harbin. From its geographical circumstances, historical evolution, as well as the existing physical features, this chapter displays all relevant urban issues linked to urban character to provide a comprehensive understanding of the selected city and the selected urban sample areas in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven, *Analysis of Sample Areas in Harbin*, introduces the ten sites of implementation which show in greater depth how the regulations in Chapter Five for urban character are being realised. The chapter focuses on the implementation of
each individual regulation and describes the evolution of each selected site from initial visioning to formal guidance and building codes. Via the comparisons between proposed rules and actual outcomes after implementation, the gaps between rules and outcomes are presented and lead to basic evidence for the analysis of implementations in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight, *Analysis of the Implementation Process*, focusing on the implementation of visions outlined in Chapter Seven, systemically explores the similarities and differences of approach between Chinese planning introduced in Chapter Five and international best practice in Chapter Three. It provides the primary focus for the research and the principal test-bed to consider the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and practical barriers to delivering good practice. All ten samples are analysed together in order to compare and contrast the detailed approaches to the urban character.

Finally, Chapter Nine, *Discussion and Recommendations*, presents the overall discussion of the Chinese current planning context in term of urban character, and provides rational recommendations based on the natural features of local character in Chapter Two and relevant lessons in Chapter Three. Meanwhile, this chapter sets out the approach taken by the research and how this has contributed to the understanding of the regulations for urban character. Limitations of the research are also highlighted.
CHAPTER TWO

SENSE OF PLACE, CHARACTER AND DESIGN
CHAPTER 2 SENSE OF PLACE, CHARACTER AND DESIGN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature revealing the features of character. These features are based on both theoretical explanations, including philosophical and geographical issues, and practical features, including attitudes towards character when changes and planning occur.

To research urban character is difficult because of its intangible nature. As a cross-disciplinary research topic, besides physical urban planning and architecture, urban character also involves psychology, geography, sociology, etc. therefore the understandings about character, normally concerned with a sense of place, become blurred for theorists and are defined in different ways. Hence, it is constructive to introduce the theoretical framework as the beginning stage of this research, which could be generated from the question ‘what is a sound understanding of local character’. An understanding of the theoretical features of character from the aspect of planning intervention has been disputed by theorists. In this cross-disciplinary theoretical system, this research explores these concepts further, building upon a broad inter-disciplinary literature and with particular reference to the ideas of geography and planning theorists. Such an exploration of the planning features of character could be generated from the question ‘how could character be changed by planning activities?’

2.2 WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Character is a blurred concept due to its intangible nature. Theorists used to explain it as ‘the extent of being distinct from other places’ (Lynch, 1960), or ‘something being created in the course of time’ (Jackson, 1994), or ‘a form of
Awareness and a product of the lived-world experience’ (Relph, 1976). To analyse the character as an integrated concept is difficult, this research therefore splits the ‘character’ into three layers: roots, essence, and expression. The literature reviews in this section start with the conceptual understanding of the ‘roots of character’, which act as a foundation to identify what ‘character’ is. Based on such a foundation, the reviews will be processed from two layers of understandings about character: what is the ‘essence of character’ and how does character ‘express itself’.

2.2.1 Roots of Character

Many theorists have discussed the meaning of ‘character’: some implicitly, others explicitly, using terms such as ‘spirit of place’ or genius loci (see, for example, Cullen, 1961; Conzen, 1966, 1975; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Sharp, 1969). Therefore, in the initial research, genius loci became the main expression to represent character. Following genius loci, ‘sense of place’ becomes a more universal terminology for researchers. Jackson (1994, p. 3) described this as “an awkward and ambiguous translation of the Latin term ‘genius loci’” Based on a similar conception, ‘feel’ and ‘atmosphere’ emerged within the realm of urban planning to express a simplified meaning of ‘character’.

For its specific conception, the genius loci was described as: “representing the sense people have of a place, understood as the sum of all physical as well as symbolic values in nature and the human environment” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.16). Through his works, Norberg-Schulz resorts to phenomenological implications to explain the relationship of a human being and ‘place’. He celebrates the very individuality and uniqueness of every place via the conceptualization of ‘genius loci’, emphasizes the importance of the ontological place and portrays the meaning of human existence that is necessarily integrated with places. To distinguish himself from Norberg-Schulz, Heidegger (1997) insists on the terminology of ‘being’ and ‘dwelling’: “to dwell means to belong to a given space,” and claims that “when we identify with a place, we dedicate ourselves to a way of being in the world” (Norberg-Schulz, 1985, p. 12). For the dwelling, Norberg-Schulz differently defines ‘dwell’ as “to dwell implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment” (Norberg-Schulz, 1985, p. 13); whilst the Heideggerian, David Harvey, explains Heidegger’s ‘dwell’ as “dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things” (Harvey, 1993,
Obvious differences between Norberg-Schulz and Heidegger are that Norberg-Schulz’s ‘dwelling’ is to take the initiative in connecting towards environment, whilst Heidegger’s is to passively receive the reflection from environment and such reflection is expected to be filtered by personal and social factors. Due to such an attitude towards place, any reflection, technically this reflection, is the subjective character of this place within Heidegger’s ideology and becomes acceptable; therefore any changes to the objective environment would not affect these ‘subjective’ reflections.

Although the role of initiative and passiveness are distinct between Norberg-Schulz and Heidegger, the connection between human being and environment is, however, the same and such connection must be refined by personal and social factors. Other scholars, for instance Yi-Fu Tuan, argue that “a large body of experiential data is consigned to oblivion because we cannot fit data to concepts that are taken over uncritically from the physical sciences” (Tuan, 1977, p. 201), which indicates that a place cannot be simply treated as an objective or tangible configuration; in other words, that the reflection from a place is never only a matter of things identified by geographical elements and sensual perception. The study of place is a process to understand its “thingness” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.5) and “empathetic insideness” (Relph, 1976, pp.54-55). More importantly, the identity of places – which relies on ‘reflection’ – lies in what one experiences and believes about these places. As Lukermann asserts, “knowledge of place is a simple fact of experience” (Lukermann, 1964, p.168), and such facts about a place should be called ‘reflection’. Instead of abstracting the character of place to a natural, experiential, innate and immanent vision, some theorists also argue that places are a social issue which means the concept and form of the place are modified by the human activity. For such ‘social’ and ‘human’ factors, Doreen Massey (1992) expresses her concerns that the power of social practices might be overlooked. For more details about such concerns, see the elaborations in sections 2.2.3 and 2.3.

To sum up, the roots of character are constructed on the connection between human beings and environment. Such a connection could be treated as two processes: subjective recognition and passive reflection (see Figure 2-1). Social issues (as well as personal factors) are a medium to transfer the recognition and to filter the reflections.
2.2.2 Essences of Character

In Dovey’s work *What is Urban Character? The Case of Camberwell* (2009), a question – what is character – was proposed at the very beginning of the report. Although character is often described as ‘atmosphere’ or ‘ambience’ or ‘feeling’ that is seen to be manifest in both the physical and social environments, Dovey insists that “Character is rarely described in terms of one of these categories alone but slips between them with the idea of 'feel' or 'atmosphere' acting as intermediary” (Dovey *et al.*, 2009, p.5). Such an elusive definition could be generated into three separate sections of character based on the analysis about the roots of character in section 2.2.1: human being, tangible configuration and the connections between them (Figure 2-1). Since this dissertation is mainly based on research into urban planning, therefore the human being section (which is mainly based on psychological and social issues) is excluded from these discussions. The essence of character would be extracted and purified from the ‘connection’ and ‘tangible configuration’ sections respectively.

![Figure 2-1: Sections of character](source: The Author)

2.2.2.1 Connection

As with phenomenological philosophy, character should be treated as stemming from experience and changes ‘essence’ to the meaning of ‘our dwelling’. From this point of view, the character is involved in a ‘connection’. The essence of this connection is ‘experience’. Dovey summarizes the connection as a ‘slippage’ which is “seen as an objective property of the environment (the ‘feel’) that evokes an affective or emotive response (a ‘feeling’) linked to a socially shared experience of place” (Dovey *et al.*, 2009, p.5); meanwhile Lukermann also points out that “‘knowledge’ of place is a simple fact of experience” (Lukermann, 1964, p.168), and this sentence is explained as “what we call facts about a place are what we see, observe, contemplate and experience” (Jackson, 1994, p.49). Harvey points out that “experience is so authentic as to tempt us permanently to regard it as all there is and
so ground our sense of being” (Harvey, 1993, p.13). To be specific, the emphasis of experience is the ‘past’ and it should involve both individual and uniform cultural group issues. Carmona (2006) believes that it is most clearly seen in discussions of ‘the past’ and conservation, more specifically, Lowenthal (1961) suggests that ‘the past’ points to cultural groups who share values and personal experiences. Conzen states: “culture- and history-conditioned character which commonly reflects not only the work and aspirations of the society at present in occupancy but also that of its precursors in the area” (Conzen, 1966, pp.56–57). Experience is thus closely linked with the history of cultural groups.

Besides supporting ‘group’, Norberg-Schulz also insists that “personal experience as an objective truth should be accessible to everybody (within the group)” (Norberg-Schulz, 1985, p.9). Jakle (1987) agrees with Norberg-Schulz and emphasizes the importance of individual experiences, because there is an ‘innate conflict between verbal and visual thinking’ – the best person to experience local character is not the resident but the tourist who “involves the deliberate searching out of place experience” (Jakle, 1987, p. 8). Such points of view were summarized by Jiven and Larkham (2003) as a conflict with the views of those who see the experience and perception of character as a facet of long-term familiarity with place.

To achieve a dialectical relationship with group and individual experiences, Gillian Rose insists: “although senses of place may be very personal, they are not entirely the result of one individual’s feelings and meanings; rather, such feelings and meanings are shaped in larger part by the social, cultural and economic circumstances in which individuals find themselves” (Rose, 2001, p.89). As a fusion of group and individual experiences, Walter (1988) treats space as simply an empty container which bears the feelings, images and thoughts of those who live, work or otherwise deal with that space, whilst he implicitly uses the concept of genius loci in a study of the ‘expressive intelligibility’ of places: a quality that can only be perceived holistically through the senses, memory, intellect and imagination. As alluded to here, ‘holistically’ clearly indicates that the experiences of both individual and group are respected by Walter; meanwhile, his theory widely conforms to Tuan’s recognition of ‘space’ (1977).

Based on the discussion about ‘connection’ in section 2.2.1, experiences exert both promotional effects and filtering effects during the process of recognizing
environment. These experiences, on the one hand, come from the sediment of history and the ‘past’ of the cultural group, on the other hand they could also be interpreted through individual personal factors.

2.2.2.2 Tangible configuration

Physical environment is normally defined as space or place by geography. Comparatively, place is a portion of geographical space, which is defined as ‘territories of meaning’ (Jensen, 1999, p. 224); whilst space is organized into places thought of as bounded settings in which social relations and identity are constituted. In this research, ‘tangible configuration’ is neither ‘place’ since social relations are not constructed with human beings, nor absolute space which involves all geographical elements. Tangible configuration is the outcome after accessible research targets are abstracted by scholars from elusive classifications of geographical elements.

According to phenomenological analysis, Norberg-Schulz suggests that “phenomenological philosophy is the answer to overcoming the insufficiency of the scientific approach in a quantitative or material term” (Norberg-Schulz, 1985, p. 11). Heidegger (1997) also suggests turning to phenomenology to answer the questions of the complex relation between person and world. Followers of Heidegger believe phenomenology allows the “thingness” of things to be presented and understood without any reduction. The ontological contents are therefore expected to be reduced into an objective aspect amenable to scientific analysis, whilst what cannot be captured or described are consequently denied.

Following phenomenological and ontological theories, townscape was defined by Gordon Cullen as ‘the art of relationship’ and it was important “to take all the elements that go to create the environment: buildings, trees, nature, water, traffic, advertisements and so on, and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released” (Cullen, 1961, p.9). Obviously, based on Cullen’s point of view, the concept of ‘elements’ emphasizes the ‘visual and external appearance’. Thus, Richards (1994) defined these appearances as the ‘street scene’ and ‘façadism’ which emphasize the urban spatial factors and conform to contemporary concepts of urban planning. Although Cullen’s ‘elements’ are supported by Jiven and Larkham (2003) who believe them to contain ‘experience’ issues, Gosling and Maitland (1984) criticize them as ‘elusive qualities’ from the psychological aspect, and point out that
such ‘elusive qualities’ should involve the emotional experience of, and reaction to, places. However, from a personal point of view, this criticism (as well as other criticisms from emotional aspects) is not tenable, especially when Cullen’s elements were embodied into ‘tangible configuration’ (Figure 2-1), whilst Gosling and Maitland’s emotional experience was included in the ‘connection-social influence section’.

Cullen’s elements are not the only standard – he technically does not provide a precise category of geographical elements - however, this concept reminds followers to be aware of the character from the phenomenological angle; meanwhile, these elements must present in an ‘intensity’ pattern which is a complex social and formal mix pattern to compose character. Dovey explain it as “an ‘intensive multiplicity’ – more like a soup than a salad in the sense that the flavour is found more in the interaction of ingredients than in fragmented parts” (Dovey et al., 2009, p.5).

To sum up, the essences of character are mainly presented in two issues: the experiences during connecting processes, and selected elements of tangible configuration to allow the “thingness” of things to be understood.

2.2.3 Expression of Character

Expression of character is a process for a human being to understand the surrounding character. Connection mediates between the human being and tangible configuration and is the main field for character to be expressed. In the analysis in section 2.2.1 and the end of section 2.2.2.1, distinct attitudes towards ‘connect’ (Norberg-Schulz’s recognition and Heidegger’s passively receiving the reflection) lead to a distinct understanding about the expression of character, such distinctions consequently lead to disparate attitudes for changing and improving character via planning activities. However, from Heidegger’s ontology to Massey’s epistemology, current debates are concerned with “which process (recognition process or reflection process) occupies a larger proportion during the connection”, in other words, is it recognition or reflection that dominates the feeling of character.

In the analysis in section 2.2.2.1, if the character relies on experience, then does that mean that the character is determined by social issues? If the answer is yes, then to what extent would the natural feature influence the expression of character? And does that mean that different objective environments (different natural features)
within a similar social background would present similar expressions of character? All these questions could form part of the dispute about one question: “is the expression of character natural or social?” This question is vital for changing character through the use of planning tools.

For some theorists, ‘place’ is not determined by social issues. They insist that from the aspect of ontological essence, place is not determined by socio-political issues – it is an individual existence beyond the society. Norberg-Schulz explains this ‘individual existence’ as that “the socio-economic conditions are like a picture-frame; they offer a certain ‘space’ for life to take place, but do not determine its existential meanings” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.6). Similarly, Heidegger (1997) also treats the character as a natural phenomenon rather than a product of a set of social practices. It is the insufficiency of phenomenological empiricism to assume that one can escape the social discourses and practices, and see the place directly through experience. Overemphasis on experiencing is also criticised by Harvey, it “totally rejects any sense of moral responsibility beyond the world of immediate sensuous and contemplative experience” (Harvey, 1993, p.13). Doreen Massey (1993) also insists that experience to some degree overlooks the power of social practices. As alluded to here, to treat the expression of character as a natural phenomenon or to simply rely on social experience to filter this ‘natural expression’ is the main debating point.

Some theorists insist both character and the expression of character are products of the society. The legitimacy of the ontological way of perceiving is disputed by Judith Butler who argues that “performativity” against naturalness attempts to denaturalise any ontological scheme by which identity is defined. Massey indicates “the identities of places are a product of social actions and of the ways in which people construct their own representations of particular places” (Massey and Jess, 1995, p.134). Therefore, to provide a concrete definition of character – space, the relationship between society and space could be generated as that spatiality and sociality are inextricably intertwined; space is socially-constructed as the social is spatially-constructed.

Since changing and reinforcement of character by using the planning tool is a social intervention, therefore, if Heidegger was right, then the character could not be changed by social planning activities. To discuss this concern, the ‘connection’ section is split as a dual directional process – recognition and reflection, which
includes one way from human being towards tangible configuration as an observation process by human beings to recognize the environment based on their experiences – thereby creating ‘character’ - and the other way from tangible configuration backwards towards the human being as a descriptive process when features of the environment reflect and are filtered by experiences – the feeling of character (Figure 2-1). Although the theorists argued the social and ontological features of character, however, for the ‘dual directional’ process, no specific discussion has occurred about which one of these two directions would be influenced more dramatically by social actions. This question technically could be asked from the aspect of planning activities: “recognition and reflection, which one could be more dramatically interrupted by social action?” For the issue of ‘recognition’, in Heideggerian and Norberg-Schulz’s ideology, the ‘recognition’ process would not be affected by social factors because the picture-frame objectively exists; whilst for Massey, such a picture-frame could be changed via social issues such as planning activity. For the issue of ‘reflection’, theorists agree that reflection is dominated by social factors.

To answer the question above ‘is the expression of character natural or social?’, the expression of character could be summarised as a social outcome, although ‘tangible configuration’ ontologically exists to some degree. Following this answer, as a social action, urban planning would affect both the ‘recognition’ process via recognising (conservation) and prospecting (development) and the ‘reflection’ process by regulating users’ behaviours. Thus, a realistic question is ‘which aspect should be emphasized’ and if the answer was they are equally important, some current planning policies then need to be revised since the majority of planning policies merely emphasise the ‘recognition’ whilst ignoring ‘reflection’.

2.3 COULD CHARACTER BE CHANGED?

To answer the question raised at the start of this chapter, ‘how could character be created by planning activities?’, the specific natures of character should be cited as the basis when urban planning engages to change local character. As discussed above, social influences during the connecting process heavily rely on individual and group experience, therefore, whether or not these experiences could be changed by planning, and the degree to which planning interventions could change character are two crucial questions when seeking to understand the relationship between character
and planning. These two questions are discussed as the ‘designability’ of character. Following the ‘designability’, the extent to which human beings could accept these interventions is discussed as their ‘acceptability’.

2.3.1 Designability

Changing character, via the analysis of character components (Figure 2-1), technically relies in the process of ‘recognition’. Such recognition, on the one hand, involves the observation of all existing ‘tangible configurations’ whilst on the other hand involves the future prospects of ‘tangible configuration’. These prospects could be defined as ‘planning’, whilst the process of design is heavily affected by subjective ‘social influences’. Therefore the outcome of conceptualising a place is affected by our mediated subjectivity (Massey and Jess, 1995).

From this point of view, changing character should start with the consideration of subjectivity. Although it is important for such subjectivity to consider character, it is difficult to calculate it within planning theories, therefore the solutions have to refer back to the essence of character in section 2.2.2. Based on the concept of phenomenological elements (Norberg-Schulz, 1985), indubitable physical attributes are conferred upon the character (Walter, 1988), which is also referred to by Hayden (1995) to define the local character based on historic buildings. Meanwhile, to refer to the other essence of character - ‘experiences’ - Conzen (1966) also closely connects culture- and history-conditioned character to historical buildings and other aspects of the historical personality of a city. Hence, a brief conclusion about the designability of character could be summarized as: the changing of ‘character’ should start by respecting the initial local personality and remaining true to it. In this part, the word ‘personality’ involves both ‘tangible configuration’ - ‘refined elements’ - and ‘subjectivity of social influence’ - ‘experience’. This ‘personality’ could be traced back to 1946 in Thomas Sharp’s texts about the character of the places in Exeter: “The planner’s first approach to his task is to sum up the personality of the city which has been put under his care. A city has the same right as a human patient to be regarded as an individual requiring personal attention rather than abstract advice. …The good plan is that which will fulfil the struggle of the place to be itself, which satisfies what a long time ago used to be called the Genius of the Place.” (Sharp, 1946, p. 11)
Since subjectivity has been clarified as personality, thus whether or not local personality could be changed or created is open to question. The answer from Conzen should be ‘yes’. In Conzon’s ideology, personality equals experience of the past, and the past of towns could be represented via cyclic building development (Conzen, 1966). He regarded this cyclic transition of urban forms as a ‘palimpsest’ and a layering where subsequent layers do not erase all traces of their predecessors. When form after form is added to the surface of the earth, the whole cultural landscape should be seen as an ‘objectivation of the spirit’ of a society (Conzen, 1966). Conzen used such ‘objectivation of spirit’ to characterize geographical variations in the composition of a town plan, building pattern and land and building utilization. Based on Conzen’s viewpoint, Gunila Jiven and Peter J. Larkham (2003) point out that communities change, values and aspirations change, and individuals, whether by ageing or by moving, can be expected to change: “This was seen as a natural part of the process of urban transformation – Genius loci is amended as the physical townscape is transformed” (Jiven and Larkham, 2003, p. 72). In this way, many theorists embody the subjectivity into objective spatial factors. Even from the aspect of geography, such ‘objectivation of the spirit’ is also supported by Tuan’s view of (urban) space. Kropf (1996) directly confirms the ‘changeability’ of character by saying that: “This underlines the need to put any account of physical characteristics within the context of other aspects such as activities and intentions in order to move towards a better account of character” (Kropf, 1996, p. 247). Whilst for the ‘past’ of experience, which is hardly to be changed, Cromley (1987) insists that changing should not be obstructed by history: “The historic areas could be changed and the local character is designable for a specific purpose … Preservation of history is not aimed at telling dynamic stories, instead is aimed at establishing a static Past When Things Were Nicer” (Cromley, 1987, p. 32).

With the confirmation of the changeability of subjectivity, designability of character is confirmed. However, there is no consensus on how to create character. Despite the textual sympathy for character in Sharp’s terminology, it is difficult to interpret precisely what he meant or how this influenced his design for ‘character’ (Jiven and Larkham, 2003). With the interpretation of Sharp’s many-layered plans it is also argued that “there are contradictions between his (Sharp’s) words, which are generally sensitive to history and context, and the images contained in the plan
Due to such uncertainty and difficulties in embodying the ‘words’ into ‘planning’, some scholars chose to avoid providing deeper explanations of the concept. Neither Norberg-Schulz nor Conzen were willing to suggest the form of physical design that an understanding of character might imply.

Via the analysis about designability of character, planning activities are regarded as owning the capability of creating character, and local personality must be respected during the process of creation. However, such creating is mainly emphasised in the ‘recognition’ process; whilst ‘reflection’, based on the terminology ‘static’ from Cromley (1987), is ignored by theorists.

### 2.3.2 Acceptability

Thus, in this section, the process of ‘reflection’ in ‘connection’ should also be elaborated as an aspect of planning. To change local character, the character should be both changed rationally and accepted easily. In this section, considerations of acceptability should involve both the individual and experience. However, since individual experience involves more psychological issues than the physical planning context, and giving due weight to Massey’s argument that: “Perceptions of a given place may appear differently through different experiences and observations by different people having different cultural backgrounds, traditions, or social milieus” (Massey, 1995), the analysis in this section therefore mainly concentrates on the group experience.

During the process of changing character, ‘tangible configurations’ are changed into new configurations. The rationale for these changes is the precondition of acceptability. To guarantee the rationality, changing character should be concerned with maintaining continuity within the time dimension.

Today, when research has uncovered historical details of a ‘fake’, some items are now re-valued as key examples of craftsmanship and revival styles. It was held that, as Gunila Jiven and Peter J. Larkham (2003) explained, irrespective of the date of its constituent parts, the vehicle itself had always retained a coherent and distinct identity. Indeed, there are many cases of car restorations where a vehicle, accepted as authentic, has been constructed from various parts. This viewpoint resembles a
model for the philosophers’ ‘Ship of Theseus’. Both of these two issues are based on the consideration of the ‘time dimension’.

Debates over the changing of character never stop. To come back to Conzen’s palimpsest in section 2.3.1 above, public reactions to new structures are often negative even when the designer’s rationale is made explicit for continuity within the time dimension. Thus, Coleman (2002) concludes that these viewpoints might suggest interventions involving changing character, such as façadism, are widely seen as anathema to the conservationist. Meanwhile, a doubt has to be raised as to whether or not those new created characters strengthen the cultural historical value of the place since it is difficult to explore so close to their date of construction.

Following the principle of ‘continuity on the time dimension’, restoration of historic fabrics (for example after war or natural disaster) and design guidelines for the insertion of new buildings that will be sympathetic to their characterful neighbours are not contradictory. The restoration of historic features is one approach to fill in the blank resulting from demolition (in war or natural disaster), whilst the sympathetic insertion is another approach to link the historic context and modern patterns, both of them are engaging to maintain the ‘continuity’ on the time dimension. Comparatively, over-personalized linkage is not appropriate.

Based on discussions about acceptability, the continuity on the time dimension is the determining factor for acceptability during the process of changing urban character. Meanwhile, considering the theories about the designability of character in section 2.3.1, such ‘continuity on the time dimension’ technically provides an evaluation criterion and basic strategy for changing character.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In this literature review, to explore the theoretical framework surrounding character, literal features and designing features of character are also discussed respectively. This leads to two questions: ‘what is a sound understanding of local

1 The paradox is most notably recorded by Plutarch in the Life of Theseus from the late 1st century. Plutarch asked whether a ship which was restored by replacing all its wooden parts remained the same ship. The paradox had been discussed by more ancient philosophers such as Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato prior to Plutarch's writings and, more recently, by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. This problem is “a model for the philosophers”; some say “it remained the same; some saying it did not remain the same”.
character’ and ‘how could character be changed by planning activities?’” Technically, the first question in section 2.2 merely provides theoretical explanations about character; whilst the second question in section 2.3 provides practical explanations about character from the aspect of urban planning. The concern about ‘character’, in my research, should involve four aspects of feature.

At the beginning of this review chapter, a series of closely-related concepts about genius loci, sense of place, and identity were represented to answer the question ‘what is a sound understanding of local character?’ To construct an analytical framework, the analysis was split into three levels: what are the roots of character, what are the essences of character and how can character express itself? Character is analysed as involving three main components (Figure 2-1): ‘human being’, phenomenological and ontological ‘tangible configuration’, and the ‘connection’ between the previous two components. As a conclusion of these reviews, character reveals its first two theoretical features: first of all, Conzen and Norburg-Schulz point out that character is linked with the ‘past’ which is represented as the history of cultural groups and individual experiences (see section 2.2.2.1); secondly, Cullen and Dovey point out that character is not just about buildings, it is about all the elements that make up an environment, whilst such elements include both physical issues and social and cultural issues (see section 2.2.2.2). Beyond the theoretical level, to answer the question ‘how could character be changed by planning activities’ on a practical level, discussion emphasised the ‘connection’ section, whilst such dual direction connections are analysed from the point of view of designability and acceptability, respectively. In this part, as the following third feature of character, Conzens and Larkham insist that character is neither static nor fixed, communities change, and the genius loci changes too (see section 2.3.1). Meanwhile, as the fourth feature of character, the vintage motor vehicles and the ‘ship of Theseus’ indicate that ‘things’ can change yet stay themselves, thus a place could modernize and change with the times without losing its local personality and distinctiveness (see section 2.3.2).

To sum up, the natural features of character should be understood as being composed of all the physical, social, and psychological elements, which is dominated by ‘past’; however, since character is not static and character changes yet remains itself, planning therefore can change or even create new character, if the previous
four features were fully respected.

In the next chapter, based on understandings of character, empirical planning theories for urban character will be reviewed from the standpoints of both the westernized world and Chinese local development.
Sense of place, character and design
CHAPTER THREE

REGULATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES
CHAPTER 3 REGULATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the above literature review, the local character could be created through appropriate design and planning, which raises the question of how to apply character theories to actual projects through planning. To answer it, this chapter reviews planning practices and toolkits internationally and seeks approaches to embed character theories into plan making, design policy and guideline formulation and development control in planning systems at various stages of development.

By a review of global regulations and practices (especially the Anglo-American planning contexts), this chapter seeks typical practical planning patterns to be used as a benchmark to access Chinese planning policies, and formulate a conceptual framework for the analysis of Chinese regulations about urban character. Finally, through the analysis of international practices, lessons and experiences recommendations for Chinese planning are suggested.

3.2 GLOBAL PLANNING FOR URBAN CHARACTER

Increasing pressures for urban regeneration globally leads to infill development and intensification in many counties, which lead to a local area losing its special character or distinctiveness. Related to the global movement for protecting places with heritage significance, concerns have arisen about the loss of personality and distinctiveness in many places as an effect of cultural globalisation. Hence, local character has become an outstanding issue during the last several decades in urban planning and design for both historic and newly-created places (Cossons, 2000; Ouf, 2001). Since the 1970s, urban designers and planners have accordingly become more focused on issues of character, meanwhile the worldwide research into urban
character will inevitably impact on the range of social, cultural, ecological, physical and economic factors that make a place. The way that character is regulated varies from place to place, with some planning systems making more overt references to it than others.

From Western Europe to North America, from Britain to Australia, global research and planning basically share similar concepts about urban character. In the UK, urban character has become an important issue in planning policy as a background study area for informing the Core Strategies within Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) (e.g. Chapter 8, 9 and 12 in Sheffield Development Framework, 2009; Section 9 and 14 in Local Development Scheme in Newcastle, 2005) and Supplementary Planning Documents (e.g. Character Statements in Newcastle, 2004; Plymouth Design Guide in Plymouth, 2005). In North America, local character is a prominent term in the Canadian planning system. For example, since its adoption in 1995, Vancouver's strategic policy - the Vancouver City Plan - has focused on the creation of a city of distinct neighbourhoods, each with its own identity and neighbourhood character (Punter, 2003; City of Vancouver, 2010). In Australia, local character has become a key term in the planning system. Since 2001, it has been the mandatory starting point for assessing all permit applications for residential development in established urban areas in each state (WAPC Western Australia Planning Commission, 2000). In its formal use in the planning system, it refers to the qualities that make one neighbourhood distinct from another, and encompasses a range of physical components of the urban environment thereby giving every urban place a neighbourhood character. Since the mid-1990s, local governments have begun to develop policies to regulate character and the majority of the local governments now possess some form of locally-based neighbourhood character policy. These characters are regulated through a variety of planning instruments within ResCode, the statutory code for residential development. The Neighbourhood Character Overlay is the most stringent regulatory device and works in a similar way to a heritage control.

Following these similar planning principles about urban character, current international regulations aim to develop schemes based on various local backgrounds to provide consistent and structured analysis of what gives a place its unique identity and a statement of its character and value. A universal starting stage of character
planning is to consider the spaces and patterns of the town as a whole, and identify individual areas with distinctive character within it (e.g. *Plymouth Characterisation Study*, 2005). Following this, the city or town is normally broken down into distinct landscape character types. Within these landscape types, the city can be broken down into neighbourhoods based on local associations. To obtain an understanding of relationships between settlement patterns and developments in human activity each neighbourhood can be analysed against features such as its historic influences, settlement typology, topography, land use, scale and density and architecture, all of which combine to make a place which is distinct from the surrounding areas (e.g. *Leazes Conservation Area Character Statement* - Supplementary Planning Guidance in Newcastle, 2000). For each neighbourhood area, place-specific design guidance has recently been developed to explore how traditional cultural beliefs, societal structures and traditional measurements shaped local environments. These explorations have been mapped and interpreted to produce a broad quality assessment of local character. In section 3.3, these global practices will be elaborated by analysing their attitudes, principles, contents and operation mechanisms.

### 3.3 CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

The review in Chapter Two reveals the dimensions of character, this section shows how these dimensions can be systematized and codified for planning purposes by actual international practices. The review is grouped under five headings: attitudes towards past and future, basic principles and guidance, character mapping, urban coding, and components and regulating elements. These five headings compose an integrated planning progress. Each heading is discussed separately with examples of practice and the identification of common problems and solutions. Particular attention is paid to the generation of their experiences, and the need to construct place-responsive design principles and forms.

#### 3.3.1 Attitudes towards Conservation, Regeneration and New Development

Regulations about character have already been broadly reviewed in previous sections; this section therefore focuses on various applications that lead to different urban patterns. Cities are experiencing dramatic urbanism and regeneration processes, therefore one city normally involves three distinct patterns: historical conservation districts, regeneration districts and new developing districts. Attitudes of regulations
Regulations and international practices towards these three patterns are various.

As reviewed in Chapter 2.2.2, historic character provides strategic reference to inform current planning and design. It is essential, when historic values have been identified, to realise appropriate guidelines to protect and conserve them, and urban regulations must play a key role in supervising the application of the guidelines. In British historical conservation practices, values of heritage should be evaluated before developing activities to draw more attention to preservation. English Heritage’s current work on urban characterisation, however, has its roots in the urban archaeological strategies programme launched in 1992 as part of English Heritage’s response to Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 16, *Archaeology and Planning* (1990). It was clear from the outset that in historic towns and cities, with their combination of important archaeological remains and continuing development pressure, PPG 16 would pose a particular challenge for planning authorities and developers. More recently, the urban programme has been modified in the light of approaches developed in English Heritage’s Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) programme initiated a few years later.

Based on considerations about conservation, many practices established local reports about historic character. Literally, Conzen in 1981 has already highly recommended such methods and encourages them to be used widely for exploring the historic values of heritages and historic marks in planning. In the UK, such reports are widely confirmed as *Character Statement* in conservation areas. For instance, in the Bafford Conservation Area, Character Statement – Key issues and Actions are published by Cheltenhan Borough Council in 2009 as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). In this document, 16 character appraisals and management plans have been adopted as SPDs for nineteen conservation districts respectively (Bafford Conservation Area Character Appraisals & Management Plan, 2009). Similar statements also emerge in Huntingdonshire, Brighton, Newcastle, etc. These statements set out the historic development of each of the areas, and define elements of their character or appearance that make them special today. As well as highlighting the features that make a positive contribution to the conservation areas, the statements indicate where harm has occurred in the past. They provide a context for the planning policies contained in the local plan, and help secure developments that pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or
Urban regeneration always takes place within an inherited urban environment. Therefore, historic characteristics were emphasized as a core issue during the regeneration process by British PPG, as well as policies in other westernized countries. Area-based characterisation is simply a straightforward commonsense starting point for using the historic environment constructively as the raw material during the regeneration process for designing and making a new place (The Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage, 2009). This is why the approach summarised in this guide is designed to be used at the earliest stage of the regeneration planning process – Masterplanning. Thus the value of regeneration by helping key decisionmakers contributes to see how they can capitalise on the inherited environment by understanding both its positive and negative aspects (English Heritage, 2009). CABE (2000) defines the primary objective of Towards Better Practice as being related to character, which is defined as a ‘place with its own identity’. Detailed principles point out that: “To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture” is required (CABE, 2000). Hence, as the starting point of the regeneration, an assessment about character and identity should be processed following four stages: surrounding historic development, character mapping, an assessment of the significance of these areas, plus recommendations on integrating the significant historic assets within a programme of regeneration. For instance, the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project (National Museums Liverpool and the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, 2011) which covers the five local authorities (Merseyside area, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral) sets out the character types and character areas urban regenerations via types statistics and to fix the broad type of various land-uses.

Similar to urban regeneration areas, the basis of the guidance for new development is that it should share similarities which contribute to the character of the settlement in which it is located in. Subsequently, British PPG emphasised that such ‘shared character’ does not merely focus on the adjacent neighbourhood but also the overall local townscape. This character includes, for instance, the local pattern of streets, open spaces, historic architectural styles and materials, etc. Considered within the urban realm, new development should maintain and extend the
landscape and open space network of an existing settlement to create appropriate new features. View sights along streets are particularly important in the integration of the landscape and open space network, and the features of these ‘extensions’ should be visually appropriate.

3.3.2 Principles and Guidance

As basic principles for creating character, international practices emphasise the ‘personalities’ (see Chapter 2.3.1) of a city and necessarily of historical character as initial considerations during the planning process. Moreover, these city-wide principles are expected to permeate into neighbourhood-scale guidance. Consensus about such principles are widely referred to by British government agencies (The Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage, 2009) from city-wide Masterplanning. Meanwhile, complementary methods and approaches are introduced by international practices, which are named as one part of SPDs in the UK.

3.3.2.1 Principles

For the personality of city, the Plymouth plan emphasizes the investigation of the geology and topography as the first stage of characterizing local personality (Plymouth City Council, 2005); whilst Camberwell is also reviewed as a basic reference for current characterizing activities about the reinforcement of local character (Dovey et al., 2009). These practices emphasize that analysis of the local background should involve geographical circumstances, the historic evolution of urban typomorphology and experiences in the culture group, which conform to Thomas Sharp’s (1946) tasks which emphasize the initial personality of the city (see Chapter 2.3.1). Following Sharp’s idea, in Guiding Principles for Characterisation Analysis of British Historic Landscape Character (HLC) (2002-2003), its principle is systemized by English Heritage as in Table 3-1. These principles concern the mapping of the historical influences in the current townscape being comprehensive not selective, viewing areas rather than individual sites, a concern with the commonplace and the local distinctions and identifying the time-depth dimension. Although this idea emerged 70 years ago and dramatic urbanism was experienced during the post-war period, it is still reserved and followed by a majority of current character planning practices.
• Present not past: it is the present-day space that is the main object of study as history not geography: the most important characteristic of space is its time-depth; change and earlier place exist in the present place.

• Place not sites: evidence-based characterisation research and understanding are concerned with area not point data.

• All aspects of the place are treated as part of local character, not just ‘special’ ones.

• Semi-natural and living features are as much a part of space character as archaeological features; human space – bio-diversity is a cultural phenomenon.

• Characterisation of a place is a matter of interpretation not record, perception not facts; understand ‘place’ as an idea, not purely as an objective thing.

• People's views: it is important to consider collective and public perceptions of place alongside more expert views.

• Urban sites are and always have been dynamic: management of change, not preservation is the aim.

• The process of characterisation should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used.

• Characterisation analysis maps and text should be easy to understand, jargon free and easily accessible to users.

• Characterisation analysis results should be integrated into other environmental and planning management records.

Source: English Heritage (2003)

3.3.2.2 Guidance

To permeate each level of the planning system, initial principles start by reviewing practices for a city-wide comprehensive master plan. The Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage (2009), in their work *Capitalising on the Inherited Landscape - An Introduction to Historic Characterisation for Masterplanning*, emphasize that regeneration should consider characterisation since the stages in the comprehensive master plan include: to create a vision for development that defines a strong, legible, local identity; connect the inherited character of a site to its surrounding area, integrating new places with their older neighbours; design a versatile, viable, flexible, future-proofed, adaptable, compatible, socially- and environmentally-sustainable place where people want to live, enjoy, entertain and work which provides a context for more detailed analysis and consideration. In *The Masterplan and Town Code for Coed Darcy* (Coed Darcy Council, 2008), character is deliberately designed on a city-wide level in order to provide a practical framework for detailed neighbourhood-scale coding briefs. The same situation also happens in the urban design project in the Thames Gateway.
Regulations and international practices

(Thurrock Council, 2005) where guidance represents the location of existing urban factors in as much detail as possible; watercourses, vegetation, streets, plot patterns, buildings and landmarks are all incorporated as parts of the overall considerations, hence the comprehensive master plan and principles could provide a more reliable and applicable comprehensive arrangement, which increases the possibility of ‘permeation’. Following these, all neighbourhood-scale policies are expected to implement initial principles through local-level action.

Concerning the necessary features of local character, County Council Hampshire, City Council Portsmouth and City Council Southampton (2010) point out that to ensure the reinforcement of character, local planning policies must pay particular attention to respecting the following issues: the scenic quality, sense of remoteness and historic landscapes; the sense of place, including the local character of buildings and settlements along with the setting of settlements. The Central Bedfordshire Council (2010) also underlines that considerations about character should begin with city-wide policies and then extend throughout the entire planning system. Meanwhile, documents such as PPG 1 (Revised), PPG3 and CABE also mention the importance of character and provide general guidance about its conservation and reinforcement.

Taken the methods and approaches in England as instance, The Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage (2009) summarised Complementary approaches about urban character in the UK in Table 3-2. These methods are widely applied as SPDs in the LDFs. Via these parallel guidance, principles of urban character are guaranteed to permeate each level in the planning system.

Table 3-2: Complementary approaches about urban character in England

- Heritage Works
- The Lincoln Townscape Assessment method
- Conservation area appraisals
- Historic area assessments
- ATLAS Toolkit (particularly in the stage for evidence base)
- CABE’s Guidance on Masterplanning and Urban Design
- CABE Building for Life
- PlaceCheck
- Enquiry by Design

Source: The Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage (2009)

3.3.3 Character Mapping, Zoning, and Statements

Mapping of the characteristics distinguished within the design area is widely employed by the majority of international practices to define site-specific guidance.
The characteristics within the realm of a design project are defined by a sketch, whilst the catalogue of statements can be processed based on this mapping definition. As Dovey argues: “We will first sketch the urban morphology and context before proceeding” (Dovey et al., 2009, pp 4). Where there are a number of periods of historical development, the character of individual areas may differ. Contrasts between the appearance of areas and the combination of buildings of various ages, materials and styles may contribute to its special character. Areas which either contribute little, or are even detrimental to the character of the history, are included within the boundary of zones because of their potential for enhancement. It is important that the benefits of potential enhancement are balanced against the possibility that the inclusion of such areas may be perceived as devaluing the status of the urban area as a whole. Based on these considerations, as John Punter comments (2007), of all the instruments of planning, zoning in segregating settlements and protecting the living environments of the richness of character are well known, especially in the USA. And zoning is frequently antithetical to positive planning in its tendency to freeze the physical character of large tracts of the built up area (Duany and Talen, 2002).

In England, a character statement of an conservation area, which is already produced and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, is based on such a mapping mechanism to split urban character into individual areas. One issue should be specified as that such character mapping is not merely applied to split an integrated planning realm, but also be applied to defined conservation areas from surrounding normal zones. Through such a character map, the city is zoned into distinctive character types, and these various types can be further split into neighbourhoods based on local associations (Plymouth City Council, 2005) (see Figure 3-1). Furthermore, general statements of local character are provided for each individual district. If necessary, each of the character areas can be further divided into sub-areas to account for more local distinctions (e.g. Newcastle City Council, 2005a). For the coverage of each zone, the scale should be adjusted to conform to specific intentions.

In the Bafford Conservation Area Character Statement (Cheltenham Borough Council, 2006), character areas are clarified by character mapping (see Figure 3-2), and the Conservation Areas Advisory Panel (CAAP) considers issues relating to all
the town’s conservation areas and provides comment and advice to the Council on these matters.

![Figure 3-1 Map of character areas in Plymouth](image)

*Figure 3-1 Map of character areas in Plymouth
Source: Plymouth City Council (2005)*

![Figure 3-2: Bafford Conservation Area](image)

*Figure 3-2: Bafford Conservation Area
Source: Cheltenham Borough Council (2006)*

Within this area, the policies in the Cheltenham Local Plan apply equally here as in any other part of the Borough. These additional considerations are applicable only within the Bafford Conservation Area. The additional considerations are listed in Table 3-3.
The treatment of the watercourses

The brooks are an essential part of this conservation area and their wild banks are central to its individual character. The Council will seek to preserve the character of the brooks by resisting proposals which will impinge on the natural environment which has grown up here. When resources permit it will publish guidance on habitat management relevant to this area.

Open spaces

The lack of density here is in stark contrast to that in the surrounding estates, though even that is low by current standards. The open areas which remain are vital to the character of the conservation area and to the setting of the buildings within it. The Council will resist new development within this area where it would have an adverse effect on the character, especially the brooks, trees and the setting of existing buildings.

Trees

The management of trees in the area has been noted as being of local concern. With designation trees are protected so proposed works must be notified to the Council. The Council will seek to retain existing trees where they remain healthy. Where felling is unavoidable, replacement planting will be required to maintain the character of the area as one of a wooded and undeveloped enclave.

Source: Cheltenham Borough Council (2009)

In Newcastle, the projects Jesmond Dene Conservation Area Character Statement (2005a) and South of Central Station Character Statement (2005b) clarify conservation area boundary on their character maps, and establish evaluation criteria about Buildings and Development Sites and Streetscape as Table 3-4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buildings and Development Sites</th>
<th>Streetscape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Existence/proximity to listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, protected trees and features of interest</td>
<td>• Historical street pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grouping cohesiveness, linkage/relationships to other buildings</td>
<td>• Effect of proportion, alignment and topography on enclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Period, style, materials, colour, detail, proportions, status</td>
<td>• Street furniture, signs and features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uniqueness, distinctiveness, consistency, inventiveness</td>
<td>• Landscaping and surfacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local, regional or national importance</td>
<td>• Shopfronts and commercial treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Completeness, condition, construction</td>
<td>• Period, style, materials, colour, detail, proportion, status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Archaeological and industrial archaeological importance</td>
<td>• Relationship to urban grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Orientation, access, form, height, plot shape</td>
<td>• Cohesiveness and relationship to adjacent buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship to topography and urban grain</td>
<td>• Local, regional or national significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Density/proximity to other buildings</td>
<td>• Completeness, condition, construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historical or planning precedents</td>
<td>• Cultural, historical or “folklore/popular” associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity for creative contemporary solutions</td>
<td>• Archaeological and industrial archaeological importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Threat from unsympathetic development</td>
<td>• Visual and physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traffic and access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Effects of differing lighting conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Newcastle City Council (2005a and 2005b)
Such character mapping, in the case of Bath (Figure 3-3), does not merely define areas, but also includes buildings. Character mapping and statement project in Bath followed the compilation of an Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) for Bath and a draft Urban Archaeological Assessment (Bath and North East Somerset Council, 2004), was undertaken as part of a wider Bath Urban Archaeological Strategy project and the characterisation model was based on two concepts: archaeological potential and the distribution of monument groups. A series of top-level character zones has been defined, beneath which more detailed deposit modelling was slotted. Each zone (and building) is mapped and stated in the authority’s Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Each included the following elements: (a) boundary description; (b) character description; (c) assessment of threats; (d) assessment of opportunities; (e) research potential.

Meanwhile, taking Jesmond Dene Conservation Area as instance, planning realm is split into five sub areas (Figure 3-4). For each individual sub area, local character is summarised as four issues: (a) Special Characteristics; (b) Against the Grain; (c) Key Issues; (d) Enhancement Opportunities. Detailed statements of each issues are various based on specific environmental factors.

Figure 3-3: Map of Bath centre showing SMR and UAD entries
Source: Bath and North East Somerset Council (2004)
Figure 3-4: Jesmond Dene Conservation Area boundary with sub areas
Source: Newcastle City Council (2005a)
In the Gloucester regeneration project, the city’s broad historical development and the legacies of each period of its past were identified by character mapping from aspects of positive/negative influences (Thomas, 2004). Most influences have been positive whilst some have been negative, such as the post-war redevelopment that interrupted the Saxon street grid and isolated the 11th-century Norman castle. Via such character mapping, how new developments can harness the positive aspects of the city’s historic character and put right those things which contribute to its current state of decline are suggested. What is clear, above all, is the depth of Gloucester’s past and its influence on the city’s form today.

![Figure 3-5: Identified areas of historic character and assets in Gloucester](image)


Based on these practices, urban character planning in England considers the overall urban/district scale and long standing legally-required Conservation Area Character Statements for the specific designation of special heritage protection areas. There is, however, a third stage, in that all planning applications in such conservation areas have to include a 'Heritage Statement' showing the impact of the proposed development on the wider conservation area context. Thus, the detailed site level is covered in UK planning legislation, which completes a three-scale hierarchy of planning control and intervention.

Besides England, the zoning mechanism is particularly useful for managing conversion and effecting intensification in North America. Many cities have become very design-aware, and zoning systems are used to ensure the maintenance of local architectural and urban design traditions (e.g. San Francisco: Wakeford, 1990). These have spread from historic suburbs to many single family areas to maximise their zoning entitlements and thereby combat eroding neighbourhood character. Incentive zoning is now well understood following experience in cities such as New York (Whyte, 1988) and Seattle (Cullingworth & Caves, 2003, pp. 115–116), but
both Vancouver (Canada) (see more details about coding in Chapter 3.3.4 and Figure 3-7) and Portland have developed incentive zoning as a way of encouraging commercial and residential developers and householders to follow design guidelines (Punter, 2003, p. 370).

### 3.3.4 Urban Coding Systems

To achieve an improvement of regulations for urban character, urban coding has been chosen globally as one practical approach throughout the USA, and more recently in Australia and the UK where they are being adapted to more discretionary planning systems (WAPC, 2000; DCLG, 2006). The application of the coding concept can be traced back to the latter half of the twentieth century, and it has been applied in Asia to create individual buildings following urban-scale considerations (e.g. Lyons, 1976; Richardson, 1981). This has been defined as a system to specify the attributes of urban components or building components to influence the character or function of the whole urban development. Arguably, this gets to the essence of what the coding is about. Namely, that specification of the whole is codified into the parts; or, the parts are specified but the whole is indeterminate or emergent. Since 2003, CABE has recommended that urban coding be analysed for its potential use and applications in England. It is defined as ‘a form of detailed guidance’ and the design coding represents ‘a form of regulation distinct from other traditions of town planning’ (CABE, 2003). Meanwhile, such coding is explained by M. Carmona as: “a system that specifies the attributes of urban components or building components to influence the character or function of the whole urban development” (Carmona, 2006, p. 247).

With their emphasis on the relationship of individual components, these ‘patterns’ were described as ‘code’ by Andres Duany (2000), and applied as laws in India and Spanish America (Morris, 1994). In Europe, the coding concept has also been presented through the conceptual frameworks of Muratori and Caniggia in Italy and the Versailles School in France (Moudon, 1994; Kropf, 1996). In America, concept of overlay zoning is basic to the USA zoning system, and the American ‘east coast’ approach - originally associated with an ‘architectonic’ approach, i.e. that of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) - and the ‘west coast’ approach of Peter Calthorpe and others, have been codified in a ‘model zoning ordinance’ known as the SmartCode (Duany and Talen, 2002).
As the overlay zoning in Seattle City, there are various overlay and special review districts which impose additional standards. Therefore, the overlay zone is widely applied to promote the conservation and enhancement of character of urban areas with specific architectural and cultural value. Another good case is Portland. Beyond providing the highest level of protection to the most important resources and functional values (e.g. historic or heritage areas), by creating design districts and applying design guidelines to each district, the overlay zone improves development, preserves existing housing and encourages new development. These developments are ensured to be compatible with and supportive of the positive qualities at the neighbourhood level. Meanwhile, the overlay zone requires buffering zones when the base zone standards do not provide adequate separation, which could reduce the contradiction between different land-uses.

Taking the entire urban system as one unit, with a rural-to-urban transect framework, the SmartCode envisions built environments on a spectrum from least intensively urban to most intensively urban (Punter, 2007). There are six zones in the SmartCode (Figure 3-6) to define the planning realm. Each zone is an immersive environment, where the design elements are coordinated and harmonized according to local context. The major advantage of transect zones is that they encompass an area and its surrounding blocks. Thereby it highlights diversity of built environments and local context. Therefore network connectivity within neighbourhoods is established (Punter, 2007). Transect planning creates integrated and harmonious environments based on the arrangement of all the context to support local character, which is crucial to local neighbourhood character.

![Figure 3-6: Transect Zones in SmartCode](source: SmartCode Version 9.2, Table 14, ‘SmartCode Summary’)
(represents the “Miami of the 21st Century”) is intended to encourage the evolution of settlement character based on the organizational principles of the transect. They range in function and density from low-density, primarily residential areas to high density mixed-use areas, across the transect, with zones identified as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, CS, CI, CI-HD, D1, D2 and D3 and all R, L, O and T6 subcategories (Table 3-5). To guarantee each area becoming a unique, vibrant place to live, learn, work and play, six elements serve as the lynchpins in the development of the blueprint of Miami: Zoning (Miami 21 Zoning Code), Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Parks and Open Spaces, Arts and Culture, and Transportation. Detailed proposals about each zone are also provided by schematic diagrams or qualitative descriptions. Furthermore, in the Miami City Code Chapter 23 (City of Miami, 2012b), historic preservation is highlighted as one part of Miami City Code in the Sec. 23-4 as Table 3-6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transect Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td><strong>The Natural Zone</strong> consists of lands approximating a wilderness condition, permanently set aside for conservation in an essentially natural state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td><strong>The Rural Zone</strong> consists of lands in a non-cultivated state or sparsely settled. These include woodland, grassland, and agricultural land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td><strong>The Sub-Urban Zone</strong> consists of low-density areas, primarily comprised of single-family and two-family residential units with relatively deep setbacks. Streetscapes are wide, with or without sidewalks. Blocks may be large and the roads may be of irregular geometry to accommodate natural and historic conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td><strong>The General Urban Zone</strong> consists of mixed-use but primarily residential urban fabric with a range of building types including rowhouses, small apartment buildings, and bungalow courts. Setbacks are short with an urban streetscape of wide sidewalks and trees in planters. Thoroughfares typically define medium-sized blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td><strong>The Urban Center Zone</strong> consists of higher density mixed-use building types that accommodate retail and office uses, rowhouses and apartments. A network of small blocks has thoroughfares with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting, and buildings set close to the frontages with frequent doors and windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td><strong>The Urban Core Zone</strong> consists of the highest density and greatest variety of uses, including civic buildings of regional importance. A network of small blocks has thoroughfares with wide sidewalks, with steady tree planting and buildings set close to the frontages with frequent doors and windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td><strong>The Civic Zone</strong> consists of public use space and facilities that may contrast in use to their surroundings while reflecting adjacent setbacks and landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td><strong>The District Zone</strong> consists of the least regulated building and accommodates commercial and industrial uses of a scale and with a streetscape that facilitate vertical access.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: City of Miami (2012a)*
Table 3-6: Designation of historic sites in Miami City Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for designation</th>
<th>Procedures for designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past;</td>
<td>(1) Proposals and preliminary evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Are the site of a historic event with significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation;</td>
<td>• Notification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community;</td>
<td>• Interim protection measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Portray the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive architectural styles;</td>
<td>• Designation report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;</td>
<td>• Boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Are an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder;</td>
<td>• Interiors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Contain elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment; or</td>
<td>• The owner of property or his designated agent or attorney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.</td>
<td>• An advertisement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the practice of Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 1997), taking one of a multiplicity of residential zonings supported by bespoke design guidelines, residential Two-Family Dwelling Districts (RT) provide conversion of houses into two self-contained units, if the proposal retains the character of the area. The guidelines offer a choice of means by which compatibility might be achieved in the interests of simplicity and flexibility (Figure 3-7). Another practice is from The City of Toronto Streetscape Manual (City of Toronto, 1997). This manual systematized the design of streets, developing a consistency and simplicity of paving, lighting, landscaping and furnishing that is unobtrusive and uncluttered. Emerging from an excellent appraisal of extant urban form and structure, it developed both generic (hierarchical) street types but also individual responses to distinctive localities by varying some of the standard components.
Figure 3-7: Bespoke design guidelines for Residential Two-Family Dwelling Districts
Source: City of Vancouver (1997)
Although the advantages of urban coding have been confirmed to address current planning problems and widely cited in global practice, Rouse (2003) reminds us that coding cannot be seen as a panacea, but instead as part of a package of tools and approaches. Following the comments about the integration of ‘package’, a code can be used in conjunction with a system of ‘planning’ of larger-scale patterns of blocks or zones, or small-scale land uses. Technically, an urban coding system follows the boundary of planning precinct, whilst it comprehensively integrates major urban issues at a detailed implementation level. Therefore, coding might be applied loosely in practice to mean any form of design guidance, but, in principle, it should be possible to attempt something more specific. Based on this, Dutton (2000) insists that urban coding is a consideration based at the urban level and it involves...
much more detailed information than normal urban planning regulations: “the code, even in its architectural details, was primarily in support of an urban vision” (Dutton, 2000, p. 117). In other words, there is a dimension of scale here: the ‘intervention’ is architectural, but the ‘intention’ is urban. Hence, codes do not stipulate an entire ‘designed’ project, rather, they fix certain infrastructural aspects of the city and govern the parameters of others.

3.3.5 Components and Regulating Elements

Following Cullen’s concept of ‘elements’ (see Chapter 2.2.2.2), this section summarizes a list of character components for planning, which are defined as a ‘selection of variety’ to be observable and readily taken as considerations in The Stratford-on-Avon District Design Guide (SDDG) (The Stratford upon Avon District Council, 2000). Coherently, this ‘variety’ could be recognized as the embodiment of Cullen’s ‘elements’ and confirmed as one of the essences of character mentioned in Chapter 2.2.2.

Each reviewed practice has its own organization of varieties which are generally presented as catalogues. By comparing them, especially the ones focusing on similar scale, there are many common points. In the UK, for instance, the Urban Villages Forum (Aldous, 1992) clarifies four distinct types of code: infrastructure code, urban form code, architecture code and public spaces code. In the US, Duany and Talen (2002) confirm specific sets of standards for DPZ’s transect code as: building disposition (lot size, frontage, setback requirements for each eco-zone), building configuration (frontage type - e.g. porch, stoop, or gallery - building height), building function (uses for each transect zone), and parking, architecture, landscape and signage. Meanwhile, the UDA Pattern Book (UDA, 2004) involves three main components: community patterns, architectural patterns (history and character, massing and composition, massing and eave details, windows and doors, porches, materials, colours and possibilities) and landscape patterns. In Western Australia, Liveable Neighbourhoods (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2000) includes the regulation of six key features: community design, movement network, lot layout, public parkland, urban water management and utilities.

As a consideration about characterisation for the entire city, the comprehensive plan and relative city-wide policies focus on the formation of qualitative regulations.
On the city-wide level, the *Sub-Regional Growth Strategy* (Whangarei District Council, 2010) summarizes the factors including: historic and cultural heritage, natural heritage and landscape, land uses, gathering places and focal points, views and gateways, and the built environment. The Massachusetts Council defines the factors as: the location and quality of buildings, streetscapes, public facilities and pedestrian infrastructure. In a more comprehensive way, it lists all varieties from both physical and psychological/emotional varieties in Table 3-7:

### Table 3-7: Regulating varieties about character in Massachusetts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varieties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural features</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topography and vegetation (landscapes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land use patterns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks, reserves, open spaces and rural landscapes. Land use patterns can evoke powerful images and a sense of identity for areas, particularly where these land uses have a strong history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The built landscape</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and character of neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Views and gateways</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points of entry, scenic roads and particular points of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History and heritage features</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites of remembrance, nostalgia, historic significance or similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gathering places and focal points</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of congregation or community focus (including schools, beaches etc.) that provide a visual reference point to a place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Massachusetts Council (2009)*

To guarantee the applicability of characterizing regulations, neighbourhood-scale factors are emphasized by the majority of reviewed practices. For instance, the Stratford upon Avon District Council (2000) suggests: “to use settlements as a resource” and mapping local character into the scale of settlement. Such ‘resource’ conforms to the basic operational scale of coding; therefore, the SDDG is a typical urban code, and the factors from this urban coding are highlighted in Table 3-8. As a design code, the *Design Code in Upton* provides similar factors of urban character: Street Types, Block Principles, Boundary Treatments, Building Types and Uses, Building Heights, Parks and Open Spaces, Building Materials and Details. More than that, SmartCode in America, according to planner Paul Crawford, requires preparatory steps including: Street types (by setback, walkway, roadway, and landscape), Block types (shape, size, alleys), Building types (footprint, profile, street front, vehicle and pedestrian access, service areas), Open space (front, back and side yards, squares and parks, undeveloped parcels with urban zoning), Parking pattern and location (parallel, diagonal, lots) and Natural features (creeks, significant trees,
views, hills, etc.). Collectively, Matthew Carmona summarises the elements of typical coding into five aspects: land use, streets, blocks, plots and buildings. These elements are generated from the character planning practices in Table 3-9.

### Table 3-8: Coding varieties about urban character in SDDG

- **Settlements**
  - Design and landscape,
  - The settlement as a whole in the landscape,
  - The internal arrangement of settlements,
  - Movement and street patterns,
  - Landscape and open space as a network.

- **Streets**
  - Variation of character and position,
  - The extent of the street,
  - The parts and arrangement of a street,
  - Visual integration within streets.

- **Plots**
  - Plot series,
  - Corner plots,
  - Building position,
  - Density,
  - Gardens and boundary features,
  - Parking.

- **Buildings**
  - Variation and position,
  - Form, components and innovation,
  - Extensions,
  - Non-residential buildings.

- **Details and materials**
  - Shop fronts and signage,
  - Planting specification,
  - Sources of local stone.

Source: Stratford upon Avon District Council (2000)
Table 3-9 Covering sets of issue for coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land uses</th>
<th>Layout of public space.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential, commercial and mixed land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parks and open spaces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Streets</th>
<th>Street types and dimensions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location of car parking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street furniture, planters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type and placement of trees, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Street block pattern.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plot aggregation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plots</th>
<th>Position of buildings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary treatments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buildings</th>
<th>Building type.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building massing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Height of buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size and shape of windows, doors, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Details of eaves/overhangs, gutters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Matthew Carmona et al. (2003)

3.4 LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES

3.4.1 Planning Contexts

The character planning in the practices reviewed presents various regulating contexts for each individual aspect. By a global review of these practices, lessons about planning contexts are summarised for the improvement of the Chinese planning context. Character planning starts with the consideration of the differences between regulatory and discretionary planning systems. As in Booth’s (1996) theory, when land-use planning emerges, two different types of planning system emerged reflecting different legal and administrative systems. These two types are the discretionary system and regulatory system, whilst in the matter of design the distinctions between the regulatory and discretionary systems have become blurred (Punter, 2007).

The discretionary system that is associated with Britain and Ireland is quite pragmatic. Based on case law, it does not spell out the full basis of decision making
in advance for decisions which are highly reliant on location. Whilst planning decisions have to be plan-based, they are always susceptible to other material considerations. Such systems are noted for their flexibility, their lack of certainty, and the trust they place in professional planners and the politicians who take the decisions and utilize this discretion (Punter, 2007). Within this system, in the UK, the planning process is identified by a ‘hierarchy’ of design policy, which starts with primary legislation and central government advice, through the strategy to district level policy and, ultimately, to site-specific guidance (Punter and Carmona, 1997). These might be differentiated by the interlinked issues of scale, statutory basis and professional scope. Punter (1999) has placed this planning in relation to other urban planning and design documents, in a spectrum from comprehensive/city-wide to site-specific/topic-specific scope, which could be generated as: “City-wide design strategies, Public realm strategies, City centre design strategies, Quarter plans, Neighbourhood regeneration strategies, Master plans, Design codes, Streetscape manuals, Signage manuals, Lighting/banner strategies and Design briefs”. This guidance hierarchy from the planners is complemented by a similar hierarchy of legal heritage protection, ranging from national law on heritage protection, to the special protections and procedural rules of conservation areas and the declaration of listed buildings, followed at the site level by the requirement of planning permission applicants to provide heritage statements showing the relationship of their proposal to the wider heritage objectives of the protected area.

Within such a planning hierarchy, international practices feature towards the smaller scale, less formal and more design-oriented end of the hierarchy. This does not preclude the possibility that planning could in future have a wider scope, such as a more formal legal basis, or apply to wider areas. Carmona (2001) presents a four-level policy hierarchy (Figure 3-9), comprising national/regional policies, authority-wide policies, area-wide policies (action plans) and site-specific policies (i.e. development briefs). Urban character regulations would typically relate most closely to the last two levels. From 2011, the regional level in England has disappeared.
The regulatory system that is associated with most of Western Europe and North America is based on administrative law and a written constitution. Such a system delivers clear development rights and limits; meanwhile, control of development is “based on a complete statement of what is permissible made in advance” (Booth 2009, p. 86) and the dimensional controls are spelt out in plan or zoning regulations. This creates a high level of certainty for all parties (Punter, 2007).

Within this planning context, for the relationship of design character to zoning in the US, Kelbaugh points out that: “Design guidelines represent a typological
approach to regulation that is fundamentally different from functional zoning” (Kelbaugh, 1997, p. 120). A more specific explanation for this difference comes from Murrain who describes the typical relationship of zoning codes to masterplanning as: “The masterplan or framework is the vision. It should be accompanied by a design rationale that explains ‘why’, followed by a code that gives instruction to the appropriate degree of precision and that is operational” (Murrain, 2002, p. 138). Following such coding instructions for zoning, Duany and Talen (2002) take SmartCode as an example to explain how the American urban coding integrates procedures from the preparation of plans directly into the code and uses these procedures as its main organising structure. They suggest: “They are not plans in the sense of long-range, comprehensive plans that are often vaguely defined and difficult to translate into code. The plans that make up the SmartCode are specific guiding principles of good urban form that are used to provide a framework for transect zones” (Duany and Talen, 2002, p. 87). Kropf (1996) also analyses the distinction between typomorphological planning approaches and zoning and claims that the two may complement each other. For him, zoning is the application of regulations to particular areas, whilst the problem of conventional zoning is not so much with the use of zones for a purpose, but with the limitations imposed by their ordinances. Kropf's observation, of the application of regulations to particular areas, of course equates with the typical US practice of using floating zone mechanisms for design control or heritage conservation and protection of special designated areas of the America city.

In France, planning is based on both zoning and typology. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the precise precedence of different kinds of plan, code and law. One such example is where graphic representation is subordinate to written description, and that diagrams can only be regarded as ‘clarifying illustrations’ rather than part of the regulations themselves. Kropf concludes his analysis by suggesting that a typological approach to zoning could be transferable to planning systems based on zoning. However, he also insists that: “Within a discretionary system, the approach is not directly applicable but some of the general principles might prove fruitful in some contexts” (Kropf, 1996, p. 736). Meanwhile, within such a mixed context, typomorphology-based guidelines are not limited to areas that are judged worthy of conservation, but can be applied to more recent developments such as
peripheral extensions to towns (Samuels and Pattacini, 1997, p. 90).

In Germany, the policy hierarchy bears a considerable resemblance to that now operating in the UK (see Figure 3-10), whilst the final tier (the Bebauungsplan) amounts to a legally binding land-use plan with the status of local law for areas where major change is proposed: new development or redevelopment. The level of detail varies depending on the sensitivity of the site in question, but the plan is binding on landowners, so development must follow its designation. Typically, the Bebauungsplan sets out the detailed intentions for sites, laying down strict guidance on the permitted uses, density, layout, service provisions, types of development and specific criteria including height, colour, roof pitch and so forth. The plan, produced by the planning authority, effectively amounts to a regulating plan and codes, whilst proposals that are consistent with the Bebauungsplan are permissible. As such, the Bebauungsplan closely resembles what in England now have formal status as area action plans. Moreover, in the case of a significant but unforeseen departure, a new Bebauungsplan would be prepared or the existing plan altered first, in the case of minor departures, negotiation is the norm (Llewelyn-Davies, 2005). Therefore, the system even allows for the discretion that is typical in the UK.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Government</th>
<th>Planning Tier</th>
<th>Planning Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bund</strong> (Federation)</td>
<td>Raumentwicklung (Planning at federal level)</td>
<td>[provides framework legislation only]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Länder</strong> (States)</td>
<td>Landesplanung (State planning)</td>
<td>Raumordnungsplan (state development plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regionalplanung (Regional planning)</td>
<td>Regionalplan (regional plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kommunen</strong> (Local authority districts)</td>
<td>Bauleitplanung (Local planning)</td>
<td>Flächennutzungsplan (Comprehensive local land use plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bebauungsplan (Local land use and design plan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3-10: Policy hierarchy in Germany
Source: Llewelyn-Davies, 2005
3.4.2 Urban Coding System

Based on the conception of urban coding, an ideal model process should be established as a ‘mediating document’ for urban design; meanwhile those ideas of urban coding should be applied to the entire urban development.

For the explanation about coding contents in section 3.3.4, Murrain and Bolgar (2004) note that: “Urban coding is a mediating document. It gives a vision, a language and a set of instructions for how a town, village or neighbourhood should be designed and built” (Murrain and Bolgar, 2004, p.27). Matthew Carmona (2003) defines such a ‘mediating document’ as one where the urban codes are not conventional ‘words-and-numbers codes’, instead, they graphically and pictorially illustrate the key principles. During this ‘mediating document’ the parameters and requirements of this set are likely to be stricter and more exact and, where possible, compliance is likely to form part of the legal arrangements governing what and how development occurs in the area governed; whilst the coverage of coding should specify the attributes of urban components (buildings, streets, parks, etc.) to influence the character or function of the resulting urban development (quarter, district, neighbourhood, settlement).

To consider the relationship between coding and normal planning toolkits, coding could be seen as more than just another tool in the planning toolkit. M. Carmona (2006) explains that in an ‘entire urban development’ the coding can be used more than simply supporting master planning, it also has a more comprehensive role to imply the need for a further evolution. Marshall (2005) extends the effects of an urban coding system to cover not only architecture and urban design but in revising guidelines on road layout. etc. (Marshall, 2005). Andrés Duany summarises the contents and role of contemporary coding in the urban planning system: “These codes involve a matched set of documents - the Regulating Plan, Urban Standards, Thoroughfare Standards, Architectural Standards and Landscape Standards. When conceived in support of the transect these provide harmonious environments for each zone of the development.” (Duany, 2003, p. 96) As alluded to here, a relatively recent development in urban coding in America is the concept of the ‘transect’, a kind of ‘regulatory code’ developed by DPZ (Duany and Talen, 2002). The definitive feature of a transect is the relation of coded character to the position in a hypothetical transect through an archetypal settlement (Carmona et al., 2006). The planning
context in the UK allows design codes to be used as part of the formal regulatory process alongside other forms of detailed design guidance. Duany (2000) notes that the use of coding in the UK has been very much the exception rather than the rule. However, the early experiments with coding were largely driven by landowners (public or private) seeking better-quality outcomes, often quite independent of the statutory regulatory processes. This experience echoes that typically found in the US context. Carmona (2006) concludes that the design coding in the US has largely operated outside of formal zoning processes, and instead has largely been a landowner-inspired tool to deliver a coherent vision across large sites.

Meanwhile, the concept of ‘transect zones’ provided by urban coding allows the incorporation of local or regional typologies and morphologies. Each category within the transect/ density gradient (exurbia, outer suburbia, mature suburb, sub-centre, inner city etc) is expressed as a desired urban character with particular three dimensional attributes as opposed to an abstract land use and density allocation (Duany, 2002). This approach express a continuous gradient that defines the transition from one character area to other character forms, and it is much more prescriptive about urban planning about local character, and potentially much more socially and functionally inclusive than standard zoning.

3.4.3 Components of Urban Character

Following the analysis of the essence of character in section 2.2.2, refined elements of tangible configuration are a basic factor to be considered for character planning. Through reviewing the components of international practices, since their planning elements are general sharing common contents (section 3.3.5), these common varieties are therefore hypothesised as refined elements of a tangible configuration analysed during this research (see Table 3-10).

As illustrated in the section on ‘Background’ we can emphasise the policies and principles which have already been discussed in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. Further, the ‘Regulations’ section is the main research target for both the analysis of planning and the evaluation of implementations in the following chapters. In this section, lessons about the understandings of these varieties are necessarily brief in order to generate as analytical framework for the subsequent research.

In settlement-wide planning, planning should be concerned with
Regulations and international practices

typomorphology, landscape and street networks. Typomorphology is composed of
the typology and morphology of urban texture. Landscape character comprises
landmarks, monuments, spatial linkages between landmarks, skyline etc. Street
network represents the layout of streets including their hierarchy and the geometrical
shape of the layout. In the streetscape, variations and street frontages are two main
issues to be considered for urban character. Variations along the street include: the
location of any open spaces and squares along a street, junctions with other streets,
the geometric shape and the scale.

Table 3-10: Regulating elements about urban character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies and principles</th>
<th>Regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Background.</td>
<td>• Settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural environment,</td>
<td>Typomorphology,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic development,</td>
<td>Landscape,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy context.</td>
<td>Street network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Streets.</td>
<td>• Streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>Variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street frontages.</td>
<td>Street frontages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plots.</td>
<td>• Plots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot series position,</td>
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<td>Shape and size,</td>
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<td>Building position,</td>
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<td>Density,</td>
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<td>Boundary features.</td>
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<td>Variation,</td>
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<td>Architectural form,</td>
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<td>Extensions,</td>
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<td>• Details.</td>
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<td>Degree of elaboration,</td>
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<td>Decorative forms,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colour and Material,</td>
<td>Colour and Material,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction.</td>
<td>Construction.</td>
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Source: The Author

Street frontages involve activity frontage, façades, walls and hedges. The land-
use along a street dominates the character of the street frontage due to the close
relationship between land-use and activity frontage. In plot scope, planning varieties
comprehensively range from the large-scope series of plots to architectural-scope
building positions. More specifically, the position of a plot points to the location of
each individual plot. In urban planning, they normally follow the Property Line;
shape and size depend on the geometric shape and scale of each plot; corner
emphasizes the shape, size and height of the buildings located on the street corner,
meanwhile the access and main facades of these buildings represent the character of
the corner; building position includes the degree of set-back of buildings (Building
Line) and orientation (parallel or perpendicular); density mainly points to height and
is represented by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or plot ratio; boundary features include
set-back of all types of boundaries, pattern (wall, fence, etc.) and the degree of
openness (opened, semi-opened, closed). In building scope, planning varieties
include variation, architectural form, extension of buildings and non-residential
buildings. Variation includes the degree of distinctiveness in terms of dimensions,
type and size, building styles, height and stories of buildings, etc.; architectural form
involves both architectural style of individual building and the overall appearance of
groups of buildings; extension of buildings points to new additional constructions
besides existing buildings to create more building areas and functions; non-
residential buildings are separated from other normal residential buildings for one
specific element, because the commercial and official buildings represent more
obvious identities than residential ones. In detail scope, local characters which are
represented on a detailed level include degree of elaboration, decorative forms,
colour and material and construction. Degree of elaboration points to the degree of
designing and decoration; decorative forms include many architectural elements,
such as façades, roofs, gables, chimneys, etc.; colour and material are represented as
architectural colour and the material of façades; construction points to external
decorative constructions.

3.4.4 Contents of Regulation

The degree of variation and coherence, prescription and certainty in the contents
of regulations are reviewed based on both theoretical suggestions and actual practices.
The character of neighbouring properties or a specific locality may often be more
important than the character bestowed by a particular architectural style. For balance
between coherence and variation, on the one hand, urban coding invariably limits the
degree of freedom for individual designers to the benefit of the whole, since the
whole will be more harmonious or coherent; on the other hand, although the degree
of variation is controlled, the regulations envision and supply the theme and the
individual designers provide the variations.

In international practice, although there might be just one planning guidance, it
is likely to be used by a number of designers to generate alternative interpretations
Regulations and international practices

and thereby variety (Carmona, 2006). Within such circumstances, the parts may be distinct and variations emerge. Hence, Carmona (2006) provides a suggestion that for a small site, it is quite appropriate to have a single architectural style throughout; but for larger developments, greater variety is required to avoid monotony, whatever the quality or style of the individual building designs. Such comments about limitation of size are echoed by Xiang Liu’s point of view that “Regeneration and development of urban character should be limited within an appropriate scale. Merely emphasizing the character within a small site would lead to chaos, whilst merely emphasizing the one within a large site would lead to monotony” (Liu, 2006, p. 122).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3-11 Pros and cons from recent UK literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential strengths/opportunities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied but harmonious (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic, joined-up neighbourhoods (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence without conformity (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local distinctiveness and design harmony (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive development (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of design across the whole development (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developers agree detailed design codes with local authorities up-front, avoiding wrangles over detail later on. (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and consistent design approach (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed up the planning process (f); speed (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community codes allow everyone to know where they stand from the start (k)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids adversarial approach (k)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids waste of time and money (k)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong part of the planning toolkit (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with the community (o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible, tangible (at design stage) (h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictability (h)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Gardiner (2003).
b Sutherland (2004).
c Alex Ely of CABE, cited in Gardiner (2003).
d Punter (1999).
f Evans (2003a).
h Southworth (2003).
l CABE (2003).
m Andy Topley, in New Urban Futures (2004).

Source: M. Carmona et al. (2006)
Matthew Carmona (2006), who based his research on recent UK literature, suggests that prescriptive specification may be seen by some as an unwelcome constraint (Table 3-11). However, he also insists that “A recognised benefit of prescription is that at least a certain specifiable quality of outcome should prevail (i.e. make it from the design intention to construction). An identified potential problem with more loosely defined planning guidance, for example, is that under pressure from developers, interpretation is liable to be too flexible with poorer quality results (Carmona, 2006, p. 237). This is a rational explanation of inappropriate interventions by developers, which, due to pressure, are increasingly obvious within the current rapid urbanizing process.

Meanwhile, considering issues of consistency of quality, the aggregate product is also made to cross a whole development. In a residential development, for example, ‘good architectural design’, scaled up sufficiently might equate to poor urban design (Marshall, 2003). This point of view is explained as: a single architect-designed house might be considered good quality, stylish and interesting; but if multiplied 1000 times it might become monotonous sprawl (Carmona, 2006). To such phenomena, Southworth (2003) insists that it is arguably no more so than the danger of a developer importing standard house types across a site. For this point of view, components and contents of regulations should deliver diversity with coherence, or variety with uniformity, which would be a key principle for character-planning to overcome the extremes of ‘blandness’ found in much volume housing development or the potential for ‘chaos’ associated with ‘unplanned’ development.

In some of the reviewed practices, the charge of over-prescription was often levelled at the process rather than the product. Furthermore, the level of prescription in some cases goes further than this and limits the choices of the end user. For example, DPZ’s Avalon Code (2002) has the instruction ‘Wood fences shall be painted white’. This could be seen as a constraint on the natural control an owner would normally expect to exercise over their property. At this level, design codes, in conjunction with covenants, have been associated with the forms of privately managed developments found in the US (Marshall, 2000; Garreau, 1992). These ‘community’ regulations include specification of both the form and use of dwellings - as Garreau (1992) complains “Right down to regulations affecting the colour of a person’s living room curtains, stacking of firewood, growing of lawns, and even the
size of pets” (Garreau, 1992, p. 189). Extending to the macro scale, one such possible constraint found in the literature was fitting design coding to a preconceived vision of an overall urban pattern, such as a transect (Duany and Talen, 2002). A potential problem of tangling up the idea of coding with the idea of the transect is that it takes what could be a flexible ‘kits of parts’ and tries to fit it to a preconceived vision of an overall urban pattern. From this point of view, Southworth (2003) suggests that: “A code could (and arguably should) be tailor-made to each site, not simply one design practice applying a predetermined kit of parts to each and every new site” (Southworth, 2003, p. 215).

3.5 CONCLUSION

To answer the question at the beginning of this chapter ‘how to apply character theories to actual projects through planning tools’, the review of international practices has explored approaches and mechanisms to address urban character issues within the circumstances of modern urbanism. Although chosen practices involve both ‘regulatory’ and ‘discretionary’ planning systems, they still share common points about changing local character.

From the aspect of the planning system, at the starting stage, attitudes and principles of the practices reviewed for distinct urban areas emphasise the importance of the local personalities. Meanwhile, new design patterns are encouraged in new developing areas. Through a well-arranged planning hierarchy, such principles are expected to permeate each level of construction, especially in a ‘regulatory’ system. Following the characterizing of global methodologies, large-scale areas should be split into small neighbourhood-wide sites, and character mapping is applied as the main approach to splitting; hence, each site could be defined and directed by site-specific guidance, which is constructive to secure distinctness at the large scale and consensus at the small scale, especially in a ‘discretionary’ system. Urban coding systems, which could be processed alongside other planning, have been confirmed as an effective approach to address urban character issues and are applicable to many practices. From the aspect of regulating contents, Cullen’s elements are embodied into specific varieties of controlling, which are generated as 19 varieties in section 3.4.3. For these varieties, planning guidance should provide the appropriate degree of prescription to guarantee both distinctness and consensus, whilst pros and cons should be considered when applying distinct
attitudes towards prescriptions.

Through a summary of international regulations, their consensuses and successful experience provide lessons for the analysis of Chinese planning policy in Chapter Five and the discussions in Chapters Eight and Nine.
Regulations and international practices
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDY SELECTION
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHOD AND CASE STUDY SELECTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the dissertation’s main research questions and research strategies. First of all, the research aims and objectives are elaborated and the general principles and proposed targets of each objective are displayed. Following the itemisation of the four research strategies, the research and data collection strategies and conceptual framework for the analysis of character regulation are set out.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.2.1 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to diagnose the implementation of planning regulations for urban characterisation in modern Chinese cities. In order to achieve this overall aim, there are five research objectives, each of which has to be addressed by a number of more detailed research questions.

Objective One: to review theoretical urban character and international practice in character analysis from the aspect of planning regulations.

First of all, this objective requires a broad literature review of theories about the nature of urban character, especially it involves literature reviews on the global regulation context for all forms of institutional designing frameworks and regulations from international practices. The reviews focus on the following research questions:

- What is local character and what are the design regulations about urban character?
- Which approaches have been chosen and applied by international practices to address urban character issues?
Research method and case study selection

- What are the advantages and experiences of these practices and how could they potentially be introduced into the Chinese context?

The review in Chapter Two has theoretically examined the question ‘what is character?’ Meanwhile, the planning approaches and experiences of international practices have been analysed in Chapter Three. Further combinations of their application in China will be discussed in Chapter Five and again in Chapter Nine.

**Objective Two:** to review existing Chinese planning policy for urban character.

This objective requires a broad literature review on the planning policy context in modern China. The review focuses on the following research questions:

- What are the main regulating components and hierarchy of China’s current planning system?
- What are the mechanisms of process and delivery?
- What are the main problems for urban character planning in contemporary China?

The key understanding of China’s planning context will be elaborated in Chapter Five, and the underlying factors will be tested and analysed through the case study in Chapters Seven and Eight.

**Objective Three:** to evaluate actual effects of China’s current planning system.

This objective requires a site-specific review of planning policies in modern Chinese cities with fieldwork being required to evaluate the outcomes of these site-specific projects. Comparisons of architectural style, urban colour, and historic character are found in most relevant issues affecting local character. The research questions include:

- What are the principles and guidance for urban character in Chinese urban character planning and what are the actual outcomes of the development projects affected by these regulations?
- What are the differences between initial visioning and final actual effects?

Through a review of Chinese planning contexts in Chapter Five and the introduction to Harbin’s local background in Chapter Six, the comparison with rules and outcomes will be made in Chapter Seven.

**Objective Four:** to diagnose potential deficiencies of contents and mechanisms
in China’s current planning system.

Based on the understanding of the Chinese planning context and gaps between visioning and final outcomes, citing experiences from international practice, this objective aims to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of existing Chinese planning policies from the perspective of urban character issues. The research issues to be addressed are:

- What are the key strategies, and the influence of current Chinese regulations on urban character development?
- Referring to theoretical experiences and international practices, what the advantages and shortcomings are in the current planning context?

The analysis is presented in Chapter Eight.

**Objective Five:** to synthesize the findings and to provide applicable suggestions for improvement to address urban character issues.

Through an analysis of the implementation of the Chinese planning system, this objective should be completed by an assessment of the extent to which character theories and international experiences could be introduced into China’s regulatory system to improve current policies.

The research questions include:

- What are the reasons behind the loss of urban character in modern China?
- Which recommendations can be made to improve urban character development in China?
- What are the limitations of this research to further the planning research agenda?

The suggestions and conclusion are reported in Chapter Nine.

4.2.2 Conceptual Framework

According to the aim of this research, there are three main domains that need to be covered: ‘theoretical support and referential experiences’, ‘Chinese regulations and their implementations’ and ‘diagnosis and prescription’. For the first domain, a review of basic theories of local character provides a theoretical framework for the entire research. A worldwide investigation of practices involving urban character
planning begins with questions about what planning toolkits are appropriate and how they work. For the Chinese policy, explanations about China’s current planning mechanisms and procedures bring research into the discussion of case-based implementation. In comparison with proposed guidelines and outcomes, the actual outcomes of developing projects reflect the degree of planning implemented in modern Chinese cities. Furthermore, an analysis of these implementations within the previous basic theoretical framework would recognise Chinese planning regulations on a deeper level. For the last domain, based on the effects of Chinese regulations, a summary of the influences of current Chinese regulations reveals their inadequacies and deficiencies during the regulatory process. By consulting the experiences of international best practices, some suggestions to perfect China’s urban character regulatory system will be provided and their applicability carefully considered.
Table 4-1: Research Framework

Objective 1
Theories and experiences

- Theories of urban character
- International Best Practices
- Advantages and experiences of IBPs

Objective 2
Chinese planning regulations

Components and Hierarchy
Process and Delivery
Current Problems

Objective 3
Evaluation

Proposal → Actual Effects → Evaluation

Objective 4
Diagnosis

Current strategies and influences

Objective 5
Suggestions

Recommendations for improvements

Source: The Author
4.3 RESEARCH STRATEGIES

This research strategy is mainly qualitative with documentary analysis and case-based interviews as the main data collection methods. Generally, there are six sources of evidence in case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2003). Since this research aims to explore the development issues, governance and planning mechanisms; the use of archival documents and interviews is therefore appropriate.

Documentary analysis provides general understandings about research targets - urban character and necessary backgrounds of policy - which affect the development and enforcement of urban characterisation. A case study approach is used to identify current planning effects in China. Sample sites are selected based on the need for a comprehensive presentation of the various urban characteristics and historical periods. Documentary analysis and in-depth interviews are carried out to collect data in the case study areas which are then manually processed to analyse guidance for these areas.

4.3.1 Documentary Analysis

Various kinds of documents were used to build an overview of this complex, cross-disciplinary issue, with a great deal of information targeted in topics. As the research target is to diagnose the implementation of planning regulations, more specifically, the diagnosis is constructed in a comparative framework; therefore, international planning experiences should be introduced as the parameters to measure existing Chinese regulations. The literature review starts with theoretical discussions about the understanding of character from theorists and designers (see Chapter Two) to construct a conceptual framework to philosophize the diagnosis for Chinese urban characterisation, meanwhile, the main components of the analysis focus on global planning experiences (see Chapter Three) and the existing Chinese policy on urban character (see Chapter Five).

Naturally, theoretical literature contributed to this research to identify definitions and improvement of theories. There are plenty of research archives on local sense and character, from which an understanding about what character is, was drawn (see Chapter 2.2). Meanwhile, a documentary analysis of changing character provides an
answer to ‘how to create character’ (see Chapter 2.3). The analysis of these documents helps to understand the changes of theories, current issues and the future trends in creating character. Thus, by identifying the main contradictions between the planning activities and the nature of character, a conceptual framework for planning policies was constructed.

Meanwhile, documents about planning policies and practices were collected in a search for global experiences. Worldwide, approved planning documents are widely used as a conceptual framework to analyse existing planning contexts concerning urban character to provide evidence for the recommendations at the end of this research. The study of contemporary planning issues based on technical regulations provides a picture of ongoing practical planning pursuits, such as the ‘place-based approach’ and ‘site-specific coding’ which are the real-world context for successful urban character development. Documentary analysis of technical regulations, see Chapter Three, produced a review of international practices. This global regulation review includes two types of analysis: the contemporary planning context – to elaborate the basic urban planning theories and concepts, as well as the relationships between various theoretical explanations about characterisation; and selected international practices to provide a worldwide reference-based discussion about the conceptual frameworks, components and mechanisms of this urban coding. The discussion of these planning contexts provided a framework for the analysis of the Chinese context in Chapter Eight, and the lessons and experiences are used as evidence for the recommendations for China’s planning system in Chapter Nine.

To diagnose Chinese regulations, the current Chinese policy context is also reviewed. These documents were collected whilst researching Chinese urban character regulations (see Chapter Five) and in illustrating the effects of each specific regulation (see Chapter Seven). They outline current Chinese urban regeneration, spatial planning and historic conservation issues thereby providing a framework for the analysis of implementations and recommendations. This analysis includes two issues: the background of China’s planning context, components and mechanism – to present the general principles, hierarchy and basic working mechanism of China’s planning system; and how elements of the system affect Harbin, which involved previous and current plans, local government reports and statistical data.

The theoretical documents and international policies were mostly sourced from
the library of the University of Manchester. In addition, some of the government reports and policy documents were downloaded from governmental websites or official websites of particular institutes. Local statements and statistical documents about the Chinese context were obtained via the libraries of the University of Manchester and Harbin Municipal Archives in China. Some of the government reports and policy documents on Chinese plans were from Chinese governmental websites while others were collected from the government departments directly during the fieldwork.

4.3.2 Case Studies

The use of a specific research strategy normally depends on three conditions: the type of research question, the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events and the focus on contemporary or historical phenomena (Yin, 2003). Thus, the case-study approach attempts to capture the reality of a particular environment at a point in time.

4.3.2.1 Selection of the case study city

To select a city for a case study in this research required the following features: a modern Chinese city which experienced rapid Chinese urbanism; a historical city which witnessed historical evolution; a large city with comprehensive urban issues about character and a city representative of the entire Chinese policy context. Harbin, which fulfils all these four requirements, was selected as the case study city.

Harbin experienced several historical periods since 1898: colonization, industrial development, the Great Cultural Revolution, the Reform and Opening-Up Policy, as well as the current rapid urbanism. Therefore, Harbin encapsulates the changes that have created modern China and can represent all these historic periods, including modern features. Meanwhile, as a city constructed by Russian colonists and administered by the Japanese, Harbin presents more colonial patterns than any other Chinese city. From this point of view, compared with other cities, Harbin offers a significant opportunity to research a city’s historical character in the context of preservation and regeneration. For the third standard, as the provincial capital of Heilongjiang Province, Harbin is one of the biggest northern Chinese cities, with a population of over five millions and fifty thousand km$^2$ in area. Thus, the comprehensiveness of the urban issues could be guaranteed. Finally, the Chinese
policy context is a nationwide system, which leads to uniform planning mechanisms and similar regulations in the majority of Chinese cities. Therefore, by choosing one Chinese city as the case study, the entire Chinese planning system could be analysed. Based on these reasons, Harbin is chosen as the case study for the research, and the detailed local background will be elaborated in Chapter Six.

4.3.2.2 Selection of urban sites

Within Harbin, ten sites were selected to analyse urban character during the modern development process. Compared with single-case, multiple-case studies are more convincing since from Herriott and Firestone’s point of view: “Multiple-case studies are more robust and more compelling in evidence” (Herriott and Firestone, 1983, p. 112). Considering the varieties of modern urban spatial circumstances, it is also considered appropriate to use a multiple rather than a single case study approach. Therefore, ten diverse urban sites were selected as ten samples to illustrate actual effects of urban character regulations. These samples present ten diverse urban typology and morphology patterns, diverse construction dates with diverse historical backgrounds, architectural styles and patterns, etc. Meanwhile, each sample represents one or more species of urban development pattern, therefore, these ten representatives were designed to explicitly cover all the main urban character issues within the urban realm specific to Harbin but applicable to other Chinese cities.

To achieve the proposed effects, the principles for the selection of urban sites should be considered in terms of both their scale and their location.

First of all, scales and boundaries should be clarified appropriately in order to keep the sample research focused and manageable. Samples were chosen at the settlement and plot scale, which means samples involve several blocks, streets, and some possible open space depending on the specific situation. English Heritage (2009) emphasize that a single plot is the basic unit during the urban development process. and it enables the research to use the scale theory not only to detect urban form within particular cities, but also to explore a system of plots of different scales. If the scale is too large, a sample would entail considerable extra work and time; if the scale is too small, an area might restrict the range of insights gained or may prevent them from being adequately expressed. Sometimes topography or patterns of landownership have exerted more decisive influences on the boundaries of selected samples than any other administrative boundaries.
Meanwhile, the location of the selected samples should present the effects of guidelines within one type of regulation from two aspects: to present distinct effects of the same guidelines within one type of regulation – various historical backgrounds and constructing periods would lead to such distinctiveness; and to present distinct effects of various guidelines within one type of regulation – since Chinese regulations are based on the zoning concept, therefore, the regulations provide different guidance in separated zoning control areas. Thus, the location of a sample would be selected under five headings:

- Rarity. Does it exemplify a pattern or type seldom or never encountered elsewhere? It is often assumed that rarity is synonymous with historical importance and therefore high value, but it is important not to exaggerate rarity by magnifying differences and downplaying common characteristics.

- Representativeness. Is its character or type representative of important historical or architectural trends? Representativeness may be contrasted with rarity.

- Aesthetic appeal. Does it evoke positive feelings of worth by virtue of the quality (whether designed or artless) of its architecture or layout, the harmony or diversity of its forms and materials, or through its attractive physical condition?

- Integrity. Does it retain a sense of completeness and coherence? In an historic landscape with a high degree of integrity the functional and hierarchical relationships between different elements of the landscape remain intelligible and nuanced, greatly enhancing its evidential value and often its aesthetic appeal.

- Associations. Is it associated with important historic events or people? Can those associations be verified? If they cannot, they may still be of some significance: many places and buildings are valued for associations which are traditional rather than historically proven.

To sum up, the locations of selected samples should be arranged based on the following principles:

- Distinct construction periods
Chapter IV

- Multi-layer stacked regulation
- Representative spatial pattern
- Representative development pattern

These considerations for selecting samples, technically, guarantee that they provide all necessary evidence for research, which will be the basic data for the discussion in Chapter Eight about the implementation of Chinese policy.

4.3.3 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are used as the main method to capture first-hand data by having direct conversations with related actors. Interviews were used for exploring problems, capturing requirements and also learning from feedback. By contacting practitioners, it was expected that multi-perspective opinions about their understanding and expectations of urban character planning would be acquired. It was aimed at capturing the unique understandings of the actors that developed from their experiences.

In this research, the interview is a method of recognising relative policies and facts which are difficult to observe, whilst it is also a supporting approach to understand backgrounds of selected urban areas from the aspects of history and society. Semi-structured interviews were designed for this research, in order to ensure free-flowing information exchanges while still remaining focused on the topic. Through these interviews, by the understandings from different perspectives, this research managed to explore the effects of regulations and the reasons behind those illegal implementations in the case study areas.

The targeted interviewees are the key players and stakeholders in the urban development and regeneration process. Hence, the interviewees were selected from four sectors: planning and architecture academics, local government, design institutes and real estate development companies (see Table 4.2).

A total of 35 interviewees were interviewed face to face. The snowball method was used to select the necessary interviewees in particular fields (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) and appropriate introductions by existing interviewees were necessary. Contacts were made by telephone before interviews with a brief introduction to the research background, intentions and expectations. Major questions were designed based on the qualitative type as ‘how/why’, which is
believed to be commonly adopted in planning research (Herriott and Firestone, 1983); meanwhile, some quantitative questions were asked to evaluate and understand the implementations of urban regulations.

Questions listed in this part are not exactly the words which would be spoken. All typical data that needed to be collected are listed below:

- **Historical potential issues**
  
  Interview aspect – what are the main historical influences that lie behind existing environmental elements and which of these influences could extend in future and which would not be suitable and would disappear in future?

  For all interviewees, especially scholars, the archaeological potential of an area could be introduced more comprehensively and systematically than general historical documents without specifically designed questions. Therefore, with observable elements (shown in printed photos), interviewees could explain more clues about the local historical character behind these issues.

- **When and why?**
  
  Interview aspect – Historical background to the formation of existing environments.

  Each individual research area could be categorized into a specific period which possibly was not recorded accurately by local documents. However, some interviewees had possibly experienced those historical periods and could remember and collect more information on those periods unconsciously thereby providing more data than expected for that period.

- **Crucial periods**
  
  Interview aspect – which historic periods were crucial for the progress of local evolution?

  These historical points could be connected and analysed in groups or individually to fix the principle stages of constructing the whole urban context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IA01</td>
<td>Head of Expert Advisory Consulting Committee of the People’s Government of Harbin Municipality</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA02</td>
<td>Professor of Urban Planning, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA03</td>
<td>Professor of Urban Planning, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IA04</td>
<td>Professor of Urban Planning, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA05</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA06</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>IA07</td>
<td>Professor of Urban Design, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>Professor of Architecture, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IA11</td>
<td>Lecturer in Architecture, Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILG01</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Harbin Planning Bureau</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILG02</td>
<td>Chief of Planning Authorization Section, Harbin Planning Bureau</td>
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<td>ILG05</td>
<td>Consultation Assistants of Harbin Town Planning Board</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILG06</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Harbin Construction Bureau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILG07</td>
<td>Director of Daoli Precinct, Harbin Municipal Bureau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI01</td>
<td>Leader of Second Section, the Urban Planning and Design Institute of HIT</td>
<td>Design Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI02</td>
<td>Leader of Section Five, the Urban Planning and Design Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI03</td>
<td>Planner in the Urban Planning and Design Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI04</td>
<td>Planner in the Urban Planning and Design Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI05</td>
<td>Senior Planner in the Heilongjiang Urban Planning and Design Institute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI06</td>
<td>Leader of the Urban Design and Research Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI07</td>
<td>Senior Designer in the Urban Design and Research Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI08</td>
<td>Leader of the Architectural Design Studio, Architectural Design and Research Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI09</td>
<td>Senior Architect in the Architectural Design and Research Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI10</td>
<td>Senior Architect in the Architectural Design and Research Institute of HIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDI11</td>
<td>Architect in the China Architecture Design and Research Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC01</td>
<td>Project Manager, Harbin ZHONGTIE Development Company</td>
<td>Development Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC02</td>
<td>Project Manager, Walton Design Consulting Engineering Co. Ltd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC03</td>
<td>Consultation Assistants in Harbin Subsidiary, DJST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC04</td>
<td>Project Manager, Harbin GAOSHENG Co. Ltd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC05</td>
<td>Consultation Assistants in Harbin Subsidiary, Shanghai SHIYE Co. Ltd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC06</td>
<td>Project Manager, XINYANG Real Estate Investment Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** The Author
• Reasons behind the evolutions
  Interview aspect – what were the driving forces for environmental change from the historical issues?

  Although it cannot be simply answered by one or two answers, however, for interviewees, they could provide their own opinion, even presumptions, based on their professional knowledge and experience. These opinions could be analysed in groups to obtain a universal view.

• Organized or financed?
  Interview aspect – who is behind the forming and development of the district?

  Beside historical influences, human activities (government and planners) and financial considerations are two aspects to determine the final outcome: the existing environment. These two forces could be the driving force or the obstacle, therefore it is necessary to understand their working mechanisms.

• Typical unit changes
  Interview aspect – what are the differences between previous units and existing ones?

  The changes of units are presented as outcomes of external powers exerted on these units, and these powers would continue into the future. Obviously, these external powers were mainly pointed to policy and the design of areas, however, from the interview, an answer about why external powers changed the units in a particular way could be obtained. If this direction is inevitable, future design codes and guidelines would have to consider accommodating these powers.

• Did development conform to initial intentions?
  Interview aspect – what were the reasons if developments were not in accordance with intentions?

  This is an extension of the previous interview question: if the initial powers point to one direction, what is the reason for changing this direction. The answer to this question is an extension of the previous answer as well, since this changing force exerted on external powers would also influence further guidelines.

• Reasons for the evolution
  Interview aspect – what caused the evolution?
To find out the reasons for the last issue and engage to find out subjects about these changes. Comparing these subjects and initial powers could identify the chief subjects to forming and changing existing local layouts and other relative characters.

- Pattern changes
  Interview aspect – what are the main changes to patterns?

As material to support the research observations, the interview could find out what the patterns used to be, and ask the interviewees to categorise changed patterns into logical catalogues. Because the catalogues of pattern are not only based on physical visual aspects, they could also categorise the reasons for their formation, historical varieties, etc.

- When, how, and why?
  Interview aspect – when, how and why do pattern changes occur?

In fact, these three aspects are three categorising principles of the last issue for helping analyse the patterns of the built environment. Meanwhile, these three answers could also be compared with changes to other environmental issues.

- Explanations for the existing variety.
  Interview aspect – what are the explanations for the observed variety?

What catalogues of variety exist and what do they represent? By the catalogues provided (at least some clues), they could be connected to pattern catalogues and allow analysis of the relationship between what exists and patterns, variety and changes. In this way, the characterisation of the research evidence can present a logical catalogue based on the existing patterns. Variety could be beneficial for the local community and social lives, whilst some variety would interfere with the formation of local character.

A question list was composed with general issues and emailed to interviewees before the interviews, whilst the question list was adjusted to fit the particular knowledge background of the interviewees. Most of the government officials were very cautious about what they were willing to talk about, since they did not want to take unnecessary responsibility and potentially get into trouble. Therefore, they were disposed to be non-committal. In general, the interviews were carried out smoothly. All the interviews were taped and noted with the permission of the interviewees. Also, the use of data from the interviews in this research received permission from
the interviewees. After the fieldwork, the data was transcribed and manually analysed.

4.3.4 Observations

The methodology for fieldwork observation and data collection was either direct-observation and/or indirect-observation. Observation in this research mainly involved five approaches; whilst the outcomes of observation were refined as qualitative descriptions and schematic diagrams. The five approaches to observation were: photography – recording observation outcomes by camera; comparing observation – focusing on observing specific aspects and comparing this aspect in various samples or periods; abstract observation – opposite to photography, abstract observation focuses on necessary points of observing targets which were recorded by schematic diagrams; analysing historical materials – analysing historical photos and planning maps of various historical periods; indirect conversations – talking with local users and related people, noting down their observations of previous situations in writing in order to represent the initial scene and features). For researching the site-based evidence, these approaches of observation were comprehensively applied during the fieldwork. One of these five approaches was chosen for each observation target.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to diagnose the implementation of regulations from the point of view of urban character. Based on this aim, the research methodology was to choose one Chinese city as an empirical case to compare the regulations and actual effects. Therefore, four main research strategies were chosen: Documentary analysis provides theoretical concepts and planning contexts for discussion, and could be applied to achieve objectives 1 and 2. The case study could illustrate the actual effects of Chinese regulations and be applied to achieve objectives 2 and 3. In-depth interviews are used when seeking explanations about the actual implementation of regulation with feedback from stakeholders. It helps to achieve objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5. The participatory observations could provide the first-hand evidence to evaluate the implementations and is applied when researching objectives 3 and 4 (Table 4.3).
Table 4-3: Methodology Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim: to diagnose the implementation of planning regulations for urban characterisation in modern Chinese cities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To review theoretical urban character and international best practice in character analysis from the aspect of planning regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2, Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Documentary Analysis**

A study of local-character-related academic publications, theoretical literature, planning regulations and experiences, and existing Chinese planning regulations and related planning theory.

**Case studies:**

Selecting Harbin as the case study area to explain Chinese planning guidance; selecting ten urban sites as samples to demonstrate the implementations of regulations.

**In-depth interviews**

Interviewing stakeholders, and all relevant participants within selected case study areas. Conversations were aimed at exploring questions in Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5.

**Observation:**

To observe regulating effects from collective aspects to develop schematic illustrations for actual implementations of urban regeneration, to understand and demonstrate the viewpoints of different participants and develop proposals through physical evidence-based diagrams. Mapping, observation, photography and other field survey techniques are widely employed.

**Source:** The Author
CHAPTER FIVE

POLICY CONTEXT – NATIONAL AND LOCAL
CHAPTER 5  POLICY CONTEXT - NATIONAL AND LOCAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the analysis of international practices and experiences about urban character planning in Chapter Three, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the Chinese policy context to provide an analytical framework for investigation in Chapter Seven and discussions in Chapter Eight.

The urban character is a continuous process of evolution; therefore, this chapter starts with an analysis of the continuous influences of historical regulations in China. Via a wide literature review of the current Chinese policies, this chapter illustrates the administrative and planning context in China’s current planning system, and elaborates the planning policies that are closely relevant to development implementation of urban character. By the end of this chapter, the research displays the main concerns currently affecting urban character planning in China.

5.2 EVOLUTION OF CHINESE PLANNING CONTEXT

During the last one hundred years, Chinese cities underwent dramatic transformations as a consequence of systemic changes. Urban character is a continuous progress echoing with such transformations, which reflects the society, politics and economy of the time. Therefore, to understand the evolution of Chinese planning provides a deeper insight into the evolution of the Chinese urban character. The discussion will mark the development of Chinese planning subjectively with some crucial milestones to identify how Chinese urban planning has evolved alongside the transitional socio-economic context.
5.2.1 Before 1949: Chinese Cultures and European Theories

Although the existence of modern planning theories in China remains unclear, valuable conceptions of the planning of physical construction layouts - *Zhouli Kaogong Ji* - have existed since 900 BC (Dong, 2004). They contain a complete description of planning, the spatial relationship between a royal city, an inner city and an outer city, and the relationship between the various functional sectors. The entire urban layout of Beijing is a perfect example of this thinking. Meanwhile, these conceptions affect the urban typomorphology in major Chinese cities, which could obviously be observed within their central historical areas. Another famous planning concept from ancient China is ‘*The geomantic doctrine*’. The literal meaning of a ‘geomantic omen’ actually refers to the relative position of the human in the environment. The initial purpose to establish the geomantic omen is to guarantee that appropriate construction methodologies will be orally transmitted generation-by-generation precisely and without misunderstanding (Hu, 2009). It was broadly intended to achieve a harmonious relationship between people and nature, which is defined by Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) as one of the most influential factors in creating a local sense and local character. However, influences from geomantic omens rarely affect modern planning in contemporary society.

Coming back to recent society, colonial cultures exerted strong influences in China and provided prototypes for further urban character development during the 1920s. There was a famous municipal reform movement in China - European utopian planning theory (Burtenshaw, 1985) – which, along with some thoughts from the ‘City Beautiful Movement’, became the theoretical foundations and references during this period. These are two major reasons for the influences from those ‘western styles’ during this period. Firstly, after the end of feudalism and the Qing dynasty, the capital was provided with a new institutional framework in 1910, which allowed extensive improvements in spatial planning, which were very necessary as the rapid growth of industry in big cities (Tan, 2005; Zhang, 2006), like Shanghai, required the experiences of colonists to deal with industrial spatial development (Saarinen, 1942). A second reason comes from the planning schemes which were made by colonists in those parts of the colonial territories in which they had an interest in, e.g. Qingdao and Manchuria (Guo, 2004). The planning and construction made in this period focused on physical design and the ‘elegance’ of the urban...
environment, which is featured by meticulously designed buildings located and positioned in a highly ordered way (Gamsa, 2010). Also prototypes of street system with small-secondary and high-density routes have been retained to this today (Shi, 1985). These features have also provided a prototype for later planning work, and had an impact on Chinese engineers and designers to the present day.

5.2.2 1949–1980s: Socialism in Functional and Physical Planning

In the first few years after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, urban planning was very much in line with social and economic desires. Due to the serious destruction caused by the Second World War and the Chinese Civil War, planning during this period was driven by the demand for industrial development within a planned economy. Under this centrally planned economy, the first five-year plan (1953–1958) for the national economy and social development was promulgated in China. Urban planning was regarded as a fulfilment and reflection of this five-year economic planning process, whose main task was to guide or ‘plan’ the national and regional economy (Yuan and Liu, 2009). The socialists considered the city to be a place for economic production and industrial development, Chinese planning in this period was accordingly characterized by analysis of how the urban economy works and how to exhibit grand-scale social order through block and building design (Xie and Costa, 1993). Urban planning was therefore perceived as a tool for carrying out socialist development and for translating the goal of economic targets into urban space (Zhao, 1984). To a large extent, planning for residential units, roads and green space were affiliated with industrial allocation in this era (Huang, 2006), and almost the only issue of importance in these planning schemes was the building of basic urban facilities such as factories, residential houses and transportation lines to support rapid economic growth (Zhang, 2011). Thus, planning activity in this period was very functional and technical, and the urban character presented industrial patterns.

Meanwhile, as a new socialist country, planning experts were invited from the Soviet Union to help to deliver planning theories and experiences of planning practices from a socialist context (Xie and Costa, 1991). These experts were professionals in economic geography and emphasized economic considerations during the planning process. This enhanced the economic characteristic of Chinese planning in the 1950s.
From the aspect of spatial features, Chinese planning emphasised on symbolic formalization, including the favouring of formalistic street patterns and grand designs for public buildings and monuments built around huge public squares (Schinz, 1989). This was regarded as demonstrating the purity and majesty of socialism (Fisher, 1962). Within this ideology, cities were rapidly constructed or created, such as rectangular city layouts, chess-board street systems, enclosed yard-style construction units and standardized buildings, all of which were regarded by Yichun Xie and Frank J. Costa (1993) as common urban character in the newly built-up areas throughout China in that period.

From the late 1950s to the late 1970s, Chinese planning declined due to the domestic socioeconomic turbulence and became a vacuum period. In this period of upheaval and suffering, city growth declined and urban planning ceased, or even regressed (Akira, 1978). Planners, like many other intellectuals, were sent to the countryside or were forcibly transferred to do other manual work, and many planning documents and much information was discarded or lost (Zhang, 2011). This period, therefore, can be regarded as a vacuum period for China’s urban planning (Li and Yang, 2005). Industrial and residential spaces were allocated without any guidance or rationale (Akira, 1978), and many existing areas having historical character (both colonial and Chinese traditional ones) were demolished. In general, the turbulence during this period not only negatively influenced urban character development but also seriously damaged the evolution of China’s urban planning.

5.2.3 1980s–2000: Technical Planning

With the reform and opening-up since 1978, China’s government adjusted central tasks according to market economy developments (Wu and Zhang, 2007), and planning objectives have been strongly economically oriented against a GDP priority background following Deng Xiaoping’s remark ‘Development is the first principle’. With the development of large-scale urban development programmes and re-emergence of property rights and land reforms in the late 1980s it led to an increased interest in developing urban space, which in turn increased the need to establish planning controls suitable for achieving economic development in a market economy (Yeh et al, 2011). The importance of spatial planning was again recognized, and
planning research has boomed since the early 1980s (Peng, 1994). Technical planning concepts of the city and ideas such as rational analysis\(^1\), structural control, and systemic strategy were greatly admired, thus the city was treated as a predictable linear system, and a series of models should be built to conduct systematic analysis and control (Taylor, 1999). The shift towards growth-oriented development and decentralized administration meant that the devolution has led to Chinese municipalities becoming increasingly important in urban development and construction.

During this period, the enactment of a series of city planning laws and regulations emerged, beginning in the 1980s, such as the *Urban Planning Regulation* (1984), the *Urban Planning Law* (1989), and the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Urban and Rural Planning* (LURP)\(^2\)(2008). In addition to policies, it was broadly accepted that ‘planning is an approach that would yield the best results’ (Faludi, 1973) during this period, and European and American planning experience also was followed, ranging from planning methods such as zoning, spatial regulation, green-space protection and land use classification to planning cases (Liu, 1994). From this period onwards, planning content, procedures, and approaches were expressed by planning laws, ordinances and rules. Consequently, most cities in China during this period prepared their spatial plans and had them enacted through the people’s congress (Liu, 2009). In addition, a top-down and economically oriented Comprehensive Planning System was formed during this period which targeted the spatial demand associated with economic development at various scales (Liu, 2009).

To protect historical features, in the 1980s, the National People’s Congress enacted the *Law of the Peoples Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics* (1982), and revised it again in 1991. Meanwhile the *List of National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities* (1982) was promulgated by the State Council to list protected historical cities in China for the protection of their historic character.

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\(^1\) The word “rational” reflects long-held views on the sporadic nature of market-oriented development and a need to pursue ordered and coordinated growth. This presumes that the development of a city in terms of its functional specialization and size can and should be controlled in order to shape a “rational” urban system nationwide (Yeh et al, 2011)

\(^2\) The *Law of the People's Republic of China on Urban and Rural Planning* is widely translated as *Urban and Rural Planning Act of the People's Republic of China* or *Urban and Rural Planning Act* by western scholars.
Following these two policies, local People’s Congresses started to promulgate their local regulations and rules to protect local historic areas. However, during this period, the planning policies about urban character remained at the protection level, and these local regulations were not widely incorporated in any urban comprehensive plan.

5.2.4 After 2000: Rapid Economic Growth and Complications

Chinese planning has gradually evolved since 2000, since China’s urbanization and industrialization are increasingly unprecedented in terms of scale and complexity (Wu and Rosenbaum, 2008); Chinese planning during this period has been therefore characterized by an equally unprecedented dynamic and uncertain planning environment. More specific issues were involved in spatial planning on account of greater social demands. Initially, various planning ordinances emerged in ‘blueprint’ oriented Chinese urban planning (Li, 2003) for certain specific goals, and aimed to be coordinated with spatial planning (Cai et al, 2009). Among these ordinances, the planning policies about urban character also evolved. The *Law of the Peoples Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics* (1982) was revised again in 2002 to adapt to new planning circumstance; the *Regulation for the Implementation of the Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China* (2003) was promulgated by the State Council in 2003 to improve the strength of protection; and the *Provisions for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (2009) was promulgated by State Council in 2009 as well. Meanwhile local regulations and plans have been promulgated by local government, e.g. the *Conservation Plan of Historic Cities in Tongli, Jiangsu* (2000), the *Conservation Plan of Historic Cities in Shaoxing* (2001), the *Conservation Regulation of Historic Character in Gulangyu* (2001), and the *Protection, Remediation, and Development Plan of Dashilan Area* (2002), etc. During this process, the relevant Comprehensive Plan and the Detailed Plan widely referred to these protection policies.

Meanwhile, due to increasing number of specific aims (including the urban character issues) that were engaging to be coordinated with spatial planning, contradictions were inevitable. This situation is actually due to the benefits of competition across horizontal departments (Yeh et al, 2011), and the conflicting interests of developers and investors (Liu, 2006). This situation, from the aspect of the planning process, also appeared as an ex-post regulation (Wu, 2009). Under this
situation, many scholars argued to accelerate a more communicative planning framework (Wei, 2005) for public participation. However, such supervision from the public is encouraging formalism.

5.3 CURRENT CHINESE PLANNING AND FRAMEWORKS

Through the analysis of the evolution of Chinese planning, the current background and relevant potential driving forces for the planning context are presented. This section discusses the current planning system and political frameworks in China.

5.3.1 The Government System

Unlike many other countries in the world, the urban planning in China is not just local affairs, but a matter shared by the central and local governments. China’s government system is based on a single party government system in which planning is embedded. Such ‘single party government’ is literally defined as ‘multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China’ (Chen, 2009), and the People’s Congress is an organizational form for state power and is the nation’s fundamental political system. As Lawrence and Martin report (2013), the Chinese Communist Party dominates state and society in China (see Figure 5-1), and the Party entrusts implementation of policies and administration to the institution of the State, headed by the State Council and including the State’s ministries and commissions and layers of People’s Governments below the national level (Lawrence and Martin, 2013). The People’s Government is the administrative organ of the People’s Congress, and is responsible to both the People’s Congress and its Standing Committee on the same level, and to the organs of state administration on the next highest level, and is ultimately subordinate to the State Council (Chen, 2008). State administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs are created by, responsible to and supervised by the People’s Congresses (Chen, 2008). Meanwhile the top State officials on every level of administration usually concurrently hold senior Party posts, to ensure Party control (Lawrence and Martin, 2013). For the administrative context, China’s government system includes the central administrative organs, the State Council, under the system of the National People's Congress. The central administrative organs provide leadership over local administrative organs on various levels. Whilst, from aspect of the government,
planning is regarded not only as a kind of intervention in social development but also a major task delivered by higher level government (Huang et al, 2008), which is in charge of the evaluation, promotion and appointment of officials from lower-level government.

Figure 5-1: China’s Leading Political Institutions
Source: Congressional Research Service research (2013)

Since 1997, in China, the most acknowledged administrative system for government (besides national level) is a four-level framework involving provincial, prefectural, county and township levels (see Table 5-1). All levels of government below the centre are organized with local party organizations and local government paralleling one another, and the Local People’s Congresses are the local organs of state power and own the authority to elect members of the People’s Government (Wu and Su, 2008). Meanwhile the local People’s Congresses have the power to adopt local regulations and those above on the county level, and the local People’s Congresses, can monitor any performance of a local People’s Government, including urban planning.
Table 5-1: The Administrative Structure of China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Provinces, Autonomous regions, Municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefectural</td>
<td>Prefectures, Autonomous prefectures, Sub-provincial autonomous prefectures, Prefecture-level cities, Sub-provincial cities, Sub-provincial districts, Leagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Counties, Autonomous counties, County-level cities, Sub-country-level cities, City districts, Banners, Autonomous banners, Forestry areas, Special districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Townships, Ethnic townships, Towns, District, Sub-districts, Township, Ethnic sumus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In addition, there are the two Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao that will retain their existing political and economic system for up to 50 years.


5.3.2 Urban Planning System

With the introduction of the new LURP in 2008, it provided the present fundamental framework for Chinese urban planning system. The term ‘urban and rural planning’ as mentioned in this Law includes Urban System Plan, City Plan, Town Plan, Township Planning and Village Planning. Urban System Plan includes National Urban System Plan and Provincial Urban System Plan. City or Town plan includes Comprehensive Plan and Detailed Plan. Detailed Plan includes Regulatory Detailed Plan (RDP) and Construction Detailed Plan (CDP) (see Figure 5-2). In this dissertation, the planning policies mean the ones which are closely relevant to implementing urban character development, and researching targets therefore are mainly concentrated on sections in red colour (see Figure 5-2).

Within the China’s urban planning system, it includes statutory planning and non-statutory planning. The statutory planning includes, Urban System Plan,
Comprehensive Plan, and Detailed Plan (see Figure 5-2). Among them, according to its geographical area, the Urban System Plan is divided into National Urban System Plan, Provincial Urban System Plan, and Municipal Urban System Plan, of which the first two are independent statutory plans, while the last is a part of the Urban Comprehensive Plan. Detailed Plan is divided into RDP and CDP, of which the former one is the fundamental basis for planning administration (Huang et al, 2008), and it is therefore required to cover all planning areas. Non-statutory planning, e.g. planning rules and urban design, is an important supplement to the statutory planning system. More detailed explanations are provided in Chapter 5.3.2.2.

Figure 5-2: Planning System in China
Source: UN-HABITAT (2011)

5.3.2.1 Urban planning administrative system

In accordance with the principle of one level of government with one level authority and in accordance with the authority under the law, the planning compilation system in China is corresponding to the government administrative system (Tang, 2009). The compilation of National Urban System Plan is within the power of the Central People’s Government; the Provincial Urban System Plan is within the power of provinces and autonomous regions respectively; Urban Comprehensive Plan is briefly within the power of city governments, and towns (townships) plan is within the power of town (township) governments (Zhou and Qi, 2009). More specific explanations are provided in following paragraphs. Echoing to such compilation system, urban planning administrative authorities exist on the
differing levels of government.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD) is the urban planning administrative authority at the national level. On the provincial (autonomous region and municipality) level, the urban planning administrative authority is normally the provincial Construction Department or the Housing and Urban-Rural Development Department. On the city level, there is generally Urban Planning Bureau or similar competent department of urban and rural planning; on the county (district) level, generally there is also a dedicated planning administrative agency. The main duties of an urban planning administrative authority include formulating the urban planning policies applicable in the administrative area, organizing the compilation and approval of urban plans according to law, issuing the urban planning administrative permit and approval, and supervising the urban planning administrative policies of lower levels of governments. In the following paragraphs, China’s planning system on different levels is explained, based on the statements of new LURP (2008).

The competent department of the urban and rural planning under the State Council, together with other relevant departments under the State Council, organize the establishment of the National Urban System Plan, to guide the establishment of Provincial Urban System Plan and Comprehensive Plans of cities.

The National Urban System Plan is submitted by the competent department of urban and rural planning under the State Council, and waits for examination and approval of the State Council. The establishment of the Provincial Urban System Planning should be organized by its People’s Government of a province or autonomous region, and be deliberated by the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress on the same level. The People’s Government shall consider deliberation opinions of the Standing Committee on the same level before the Provincial Urban System Plan is submitted to the State Council for examination and approval.

The Comprehensive Plan of a city, where the provincial or autonomous region People’s Government is located or which is specified by the State Council, shall be submitted to the State Council for examination and approval after it is examined and approved by the local People’s Government. The Comprehensive Plan of any other city shall be submitted to its provincial People’s Government or autonomous region People’s Government for examination and approval. The Comprehensive Plan of a
town established by the local People’s Government, after the deliberation opinions of the deputies has been deliberated by the people’s Government on the same level, shall be submitted to the People’s Government on the next higher level for examination and approval.

The RDP can be established by the competent department of planning of local People’s Government according to the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, and this RDP should be submitted to the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress on the same level, and follow the archival purpose of the People’s Government on the next higher level (Huang et al, 2008). To modify a RDP, the organ establishing it shall demonstrate the necessity of the modification, take counsel with the interested persons within the planning area, and submit a special report to the organ for examining and approving, and set about to prepare the modification plan after obtaining the consent. If the modification involves the mandatory content of the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan must be modified first. The CDP could be formulated for important urban or town areas by the competent planning department under the local People’s Government. A CDP shall be in conformity with the local RDP.

5.3.2.2 Planning legislation system

The planning legislation system in China could be generalized as three issues (Yang, 2010): enabling statutes, corresponding regulations, and planning related laws and regulations (see Table 5-2). The Enabling Statutes mainly point to the LURP (2008), which is promulgated and enacted by the National People’s Congress. The Corresponding Regulations include some provisions, department rules, and technical regulations and regulatory documents. The planning related laws and regulations include state laws, such as Land Administration Law, and administrative regulations, such as Regulations of Scenic and Historic Interest Areas etc. (see Table 5-2). These planning laws and regulations correspond with the planning administrative system (Chen, 2008).

Within the corresponding regulations, Provisions are promulgated by the State Council representing the central government. The Departmental Rules are promulgated by the urban planning administrative department of the State Council. The Technical Regulations, i.e. national technical standards, are promulgated by the central government, including comprehensive standards, general standards and
special standards, etc., of which, some are compulsory and some are recommendatory. Regulatory documents, i.e. the provisions regarding urban planning, are promulgated by the central government and its departments.

Table 5-2: Planning legislation system in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabling Statutes</th>
<th>National People’s Congress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding Regulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provisions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provisions for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages (2009), etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department Rules</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rules for Planning Administration of Leasing and Transfer of State-owned Urban Land Use Rights (1992)</td>
<td>The Urban Planning Administrative Department Of The State Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Measures for the Administration of Qualification of Urban Planning Compiling Units (2001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rules for Compilation of Urban Planning (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rules for Administration of Yellow Lines in Cities (2006)</td>
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<td>• Rules for Compilation and Approval of Provincial Urban System Planning (2010), etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Regulations</strong> (the national technical standards)</td>
<td>The Central Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Standard of Basic Terms in Urban Planning</td>
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<td>• Standards for Urban Land Classification and Planning of Construction Lands</td>
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<td>• Code of Urban Residential Area Planning and Design</td>
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<td>• Code of Urban Road and Traffic Planning and Design</td>
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<td>• Code for Comprehensive Planning of Urban Infrastructures, etc.</td>
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<td><strong>Regulatory Documents</strong> (the provisions regarding urban planning)</td>
<td>The Central Government and its departments</td>
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<td>• Circular of the Administrative Office of the State Council Regarding Reinforcing and Improving the Urban and Rural Planning</td>
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<td>• Circular of the State Council Regarding Reinforcing the Supervision and Administration over Urban and Rural Planning, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planning Related Laws and Regulations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Laws</strong></td>
<td>The Central Government</td>
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<td>• Land Administration Law</td>
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<td>• Environment Protection Law and Real Estate Administration Law, etc</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Regulations</strong></td>
<td>The Central/ Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regulations of Urban Forestation, Regulations of Scenic and Historic Interest Areas</td>
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<td>• Regulations of Basic Cropland Protection, etc.</td>
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Source: the Author

For the planning related laws and regulations, they set out the guidelines and procedures which must be complied with in urban planning, whilst they also set out the relationship between other statutory planning and urban planning. Local People’s Governments may formulate these local laws, regulations and administrative rules
within the scope of legislative power in accordance with the state laws and regulations.

5.3.3 **Planning Policies about Urban Character**

For the research aim and objectives, the most closely relevant planning components in Figure 5-2 are the Comprehensive Plan and the RDP. In addition, Planning Related Laws and Regulations in the Table 5-2 also exert influences on urban local character, especially the local ones, which are elaborated in Chapter Six based on specific urban context. Urban System Plan (in Figure 5-2) and Enabling Statutes (in Table 5-2) are too general to be analysed at the urban spatial character level, therefore contents of these documents will not be deliberated in following chapters. The Corresponding Regulations (in Table 5-2) will be mentioned with the analysis about the Comprehensive Plan and the RDP based on specific urban context in Chapter Six.

5.3.3.1 **Comprehensive planning**

The planning period of China’s Comprehensive Plan is usually 20 years and it should consider long-term development strategies. From the aspect of the contents, a Comprehensive Plan should involve two main issues of delivery – guidance (text) and zoning maps (atlas) (Saich, 2001). More specifically, Article 17 of LURP (2008) clarifies:

- the overall arrangement for the development of the city or town,
- functional zones,
- land use layout,
- comprehensive traffic system,
- regions prohibited,
- restricted from or appropriate for construction,
- various kinds of special planning, etc.”

Mandatory contents of the Comprehensive Plan include: coverage of the planning area, scale of the land used for the construction of the planning area, land used for infrastructure and public service facilities, water system, basic agriculture, and land used for forestation, environmental protection, protection of natural and historical cultural heritages, and disaster prevention and alleviation, etc.

For the regulations of urban character, to compare to the components of urban
character in Chapter 3.4.3, a Comprehensive Plan of city affects two issues of urban character: to protect historical cultural heritages and to define urban morphology. For the former one, the contribution of the Comprehensive Plan towards urban character is indisputable. By establishing protection zones (purple line area) and clarifying relevant arrangement, e.g. high strength development are normally forbidden in historical area, and historic features are protected and respected during a regeneration process. For the later one, by overall arrangement of street network and land-use, urban texture and morphology are fixed at the Comprehensive Plan level. It therefore becomes a crucial factor that determines the morphology of an entire city.

Besides these two issues, as growth strategies, a Comprehensive Plan also provides political targets in order to seek an ideal blueprint future (Li, 2003). The visioning of overall urban character is one of these targets (Liu, 2006), which are normally summarised as key words or one sentence. Based on such overall character targets, constructions of local character, especially the spatial features at neighbourhood level, are designed to follow these overall targets accordingly. The influences of these issues will be discussed in the following Chapter 5.4.1.

5.3.3.2 Detailed planning

Chinese detailed planning involves two components: the RDP and the CDP. The RDP is prepared for urban planning areas where future development projects are uncertain, while the CDP is prepared for areas that are facing immediate construction (Chen, 2009). Since a Comprehensive Plan does not specify the detailed arrangement at the land parcel level, a RDP therefore becomes a de facto tier of planning between the Comprehensive Plan and the CDP (Yeh et al, 1998), and it becomes the most direct legal evidence for administrations and the implementation of urban planning (Huang et al, 2008). Specific features of a RDP include quantified control indices, supplementary regulations, geo-referenced location, design guidance and approval of design sketches (Xu, 1993). Meanwhile, the purpose of a RDP can be summarised as:

- to delineate the boundaries of various land uses within the planning district in detail, or the areas to which the classified land-uses are applicable;
- to suggest control indices, such as the building height, building density, plot ratio, etc.;
- to stipulate the types of buildings that can, cannot and can only under some conditions, be constructed within each land use;
- to indicate the entrances to transportation lines and the setback from the street;
to design sub-roads, cross-sections, coordinates of the control points and the elevations;

• to decide on the location of pipelines and serving radius and the boundary of engineering facilities;

• to prepare the implementation regulations on the respective land use and building management.

The zoning concept is referenced by the RDP (Xu et al, 2011).

As C. Cindy Fan (2006) summarised, based on China’s zoning mechanism, zoning maps of the RDP separate urban territory into parcels based on various planning intentions. Guidelines then authorize specific development principles to build these urban zones. As a planning level below the Comprehensive Plan, guidelines developed and clarified by the RDP literally follow the principles of the Comprehensive Plan for each plot, and relevant technical regulations and regulatory documents are incorporated to conform with the requirements set at the zoning level.

The CDP is prepared for immediate construction by providing the detailed arrangement of each building using both two-dimensional maps and three-dimensional computer-generated imagery, in order to illustrate a perspective of the design site (Zhang, 2012). From this point of view, the CDP is the most practical level in the planning system, which is confirmed by local government as its blueprint for local development (Tang, 2009) and for further detailed architectural schemes. The contents of the CDP might be various due to differently designed sites. They could be generally summarized as:

• analysis of building conditions and study of technical and economic feasibility;
• layout of buildings and green space, landscape design, general layout drawing;
• transportation and road design;
• green space system design;
• engineering and pipeline design;
• 3-D design;
• estimates of engineering works, demolition works, total cost and cost benefit analysis.

From the aspect of implementation, the CDP is very effective in China’s development, but the research of the CDP does not reveal the relationship between Chinese planning regulations and urban character. The effectiveness of the CDP is due to two reasons. The first reason is that municipal government processes the CDP
in specific areas for immediate construction, and this process normally cooperates with architectural design activities at the same time, thus the outcome of construction basically conforms with the arrangement of the CDP. The second reason is that due to the ex-post planning (see Chapter 5.4.2.3), the CDP can be modified when actual architectural design cannot fulfil the CDP guidance, until they achieve consensus (Wu, 2009). Based on these two reasons, although the CDP dramatically determines urban local character at the neighbourhood level, to evaluate its implementation can not truly reveal the situation of Chinese planning. In addition, the CDP is varied in different design sites, and it is not applied in all urban zones. Based on these reasons, the CDP is not an individual regulating unit to be researched in this dissertation.

5.3.3.3 Planning related laws and regulations

At the national level, related laws and regulations about urban character, in chronological order, mainly include: the Law of the Peoples Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics (1982) (revised in 1991 and 2002), the List of National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities (1982), the Urban Housing Demolition Management Ordinance (2001), the Regulation for the Implementation of the Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (2003), the Urban Purple Line Management Ordinance (2004), the Provisions for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages (2009), etc.. These laws and regulations emphasise the clarification of historical areas, and provide general guidance for protection. Meanwhile, local People’s Congresses started to promulgate their local regulations and rules to protect local historic areas after the 1990s. Local conservation plans, as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.4, are promulgated by local government to link with the local Comprehensive Plan, and direct the establishment of the Detailed Plan.

In the next chapter, such regulations are introduced based on the Harbin local context.

5.4 MAIN CONCERNS ABOUT EXISTING CHINESE POLICIES

Based on the analysis of the Chinese policy context, there are some concerns over the understanding of urban character and the defects in the current Chinese planning system. These issues are based on the reviews about planning contexts,
whilst the final conclusions about these concerns will be answered after case-based evaluations in Chapter Eight.

5.4.1 Misunderstandings about Urban Character

Natural features of urban character and the enhancement of urban identity may have been misunderstood by the government during China’s current urbanism process. Such misunderstandings have two aspects: a unified aesthetic and unrealistic ambitions.

5.4.1.1 The aesthetic mainstream of character

From the literature review in Chapter Two, ‘character’ could not be defined by a ‘top-down’ mechanism. However, the aesthetic mainstream of urban character in one city is normally determined by government officials and other stakeholders. Due to the Chinese top-down government system (see Chapter 5.3.1) and the political status of decision makers, such aesthetics is normally embedded at the Comprehensive Plan level, and percolate down to detailed the neighbourhood level and even the architectural level, via the urban top-down planning process.

In the early 1980s, architectural Modernism influenced Chinese civic buildings. The obvious architectural patterns of that period were glass curtain walls and exactly squared architectural patterns. In the late 1990s, developers began to pursue a European style. From the view point of developers and normal citizens, the European style represents historic culture and elegance. Therefore, developers and local government follow the economic benefits to establish abundant urban character principles based on the European style, which as a mainstream of urban character, swept Chinese cities, no matter whether or not these cities had experienced any colonial culture (Ruan, 2003). Some successful projects which imitated European style became the driving force for other developers and local governmental officials.

In the Comprehensive Plan, the highest planning document at the city level, a majority of Chinese cities proposed their own overall principles about urban character to direct subsequent detailed planning. Unified urban styles are normally summarised into one sentence or key words, and are pointed out in the Comprehensive Plan and other official government statements. However, via the literature review in Chapter 2.3.2, the ‘acceptability’ of such a pointed mainstream should be of concern. For current Chinese developments, from the aspect of the
regeneration of historic buildings, there is still no clear boundary between ‘rough imitations’ and ‘rational regeneration’.

5.4.1.2 Ambitions and political targets

For the Chinese government, planning is regarded not only as a kind of intervention in social development but also as ‘a political task’ delivered by higher level government (Huang et al, 2008) that offers not only short-term benefits but also unrealistic ambitions.

One of the most prevalent approaches to achieve these political tasks is competing to build ‘mega’ projects branded by the top international architects and planners (Yeh et al, 2011). Based on such tasks, municipal governments engage to plan and literally develop cities according to unrealistic targets. On the comprehensive plan level, 183 Chinese cities announced a definition of their urban target as becoming a ‘modern international metropolis’. However, ironically, the urban target of Beijing is merely to become a ‘modern international city’ (Zhou, 2011). On an architectural level, municipal governments and local developers engage to put their projects on various ranking lists as political achievements. Such political targets lead not only to increasingly high buildings on the architectural level, but also to newly emerging and expanding urban areas on the urban level. Two outcomes of such development are mentioned by Anthony G.O. Yeh (2011): On the one hand, such ‘mega’ developments present the opportunity for Chinese cities to stimulate business and attract investment whilst, on the other hand, some aspects of the bureaucratic/entrepreneurial approach to city development can undermine other important roles of local governments in city planning. Such an approach not only diverts scarce public-sector resources away from the basic services upon which the urban disadvantaged groups depend, but also creates places lacking social meaning and functionality.

Doubtless, these concerns would dramatically influence the development of urban character. These phenomena are involved in the case study samples in Chapter Seven and are elaborated in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.
5.4.2 Deficiencies in Chinese Planning Contexts

5.4.2.1 Simplified ‘physical design’

In China, planning methodologies and theories have been dominated by ‘physical design’ since the early 1980s (Liu, 2006), therefore, the social and psychological aspects of urban historical features have been ignored during recent decades. Within the current Chinese planning system, planners still emphasize the overall structure of urban functional layouts and the purification of individual functional zones, they chase a ‘rational’ urban spatial structure and integrated visual orders (Ding, 2009). Such methodologies of China’s planning framework are centred around:

- The Chinese planning system is a ‘top-down’ pattern, and government political targets dominate the developing principles.
- The planning target is the simple and ideal final state, whilst the approaches during the development process are not involved in the consideration of issues in the planning documents.
- The pattern of planning methodologies is a unified design and the unified construction of physical spatial patterns. Meanwhile, planners engage to control the further social and economic developments using such physical approaches.
- The main method of current Chinese planning is to demolish and to rebuild the areas entirely instead of gradual regeneration. Meanwhile, the overall structures of function and purification of each functional zone are emphasized.
- Planning periods are long and the planning scale is large.

Using such a ‘simplified’ methodological framework, normal Chinese planning tends to apply limited planning approaches, such as to define the layout of functions, the pattern of the street network, overall land-use, FAR and density, to control and to address urban issues, such as urban function, spatial structures, densities and overall morphologies. This ‘simplified’ framework, to some extent, control the overall combination of urban character and natural background; however, it is ineffective when applied as legalized guidelines to control urban character (Liu, 2006). Therefore, current planning methodologies could not exert their deserved effects on a
detailed, site-specific level (Ding, 2009).

Whether or not the current Chinese planning system was as weak as academic scholars believed, cannot be confirmed the before detailed evaluations are processed in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight, and relevant answers are presented in Chapter Eight and the research findings section in Chapter Nine.

5.4.2.2 Potential risks of zoning methods for conservation

Considering the natural defects of the zoning mechanism, there are potential risks in distinguishing conservation areas from other urban areas for specific protection and regeneration. Since the historic central urban areas are normally selected as individual control areas for conservation, therefore, the development in such sensitive areas needs to be thoughtfully considered. Xiang Liu (2006) took Hancheng as a negative instance to explain the potential risk in Chinese historical preservation: urban administrative offices, cultural centres and commercial shopping malls were removed from the historic downtown area to a newly-developed district to protect the historic features in the old town. Hence, with the development of service facilities in the new town, citizens preferred to relocate there to secure shorter distances to work and more convenient infrastructures. Consequently, the old town started to decay gradually. Whether or not the preservation of historic areas is as stated by Xiang Liu will be concluded after detailed evaluation in Chapter Seven.

5.4.2.3 Ex-post regulation

Ex-post planning is a universal method in the current Chinese planning system. The ex-post regulation involves two issues: an ex-post RDP and an ex-post CDP (Wu, 2009).

The RDP in Chinese planning is separated into three formatting stages in the Jianyun Zhou context: stage one – formulation of guidance, stage two – zoning maps and quantitative requirements and stage three – urban perspective morphology (Zhou, 2007). Besides the basic regulatory guidance, an ex-post regulatory plan mainly points to the switch between stages two and three. A general design scheme is designed based on general local guidance but without precise quantitative indicators. When the government authorised these conceptual schemes, quantitative indicators would be fixed based on conceptual schemes. From this point of view, although quantitative requirements are mandatory, they do not exert sufficient effects on urban
development. Technically, the ones which exert directional effects are the recommended guidance instead of compulsory quantitative indicators. An example of the ex-post procedures of a regulatory plan is illustrated in Figure 5-3. The same as the regulatory plan, a majority of CDP are composed of individual architectural schemes (Zhang, 2012).

An anonymous local governmental official confirms this ‘hidden rule’ in the current Chinese planning context:

“The majority of the RDP and the CDP in Harbin are ex-post plans, because the government needs to get a precise prospect about what the scheme would be before the project starts” ILG04.

To analyse the advantages and disadvantages of such ex-post regulations, some scholars are concerned that such regulations might be too subjective:

“Government and developers control the outcomes of a conceptual scheme cooperatively. Thus, without the limitation of legalized regulations, the final outcomes of these projects would be subjectively determined for personal benefit” IA05.

A local official explained this doubt as:

“Without ex-posted regulations, government would lose control of urban development, and final outcomes would be possibly entirely different from the initial intentions of upper planning” ILG06.

“Even though the design scheme is processed under the supervision of legalized acts, there are still risks to adopting profitable design schemes for personal benefit, and that would sacrifice more public benefit under some circumstances” IG07.

A planner for a local Design Institute presented his experience as:

“Indeed, sometimes, developers require us to raise the FAR to maximum within a predetermined range, and to ignore it if this high-rise building would destroy the harmonious urban character of entire blocks” IDI07.

Technically, such arguments need to be tested and analysed by actual evidence. More detailed illustration is presented in Chapter Seven. Whether or not such RDP and CDP are entirely transformed from ‘process’ to ‘product’ cannot be concluded until the evaluations of actual implementations are finished in Chapter Eight.
Figure 5-3: Procedures from conceptions to Regulatory Plan
Source: The Author
5.4.3 Discrete Hierarchy and Isolated Guidelines

The hierarchy within the planning system is classified according to separate levels (see Figure 5-2). Meanwhile, since each component in the Chinese planning context is limited at specific administrative levels (see Table 5-1), therefore there are risks to the discreteness among these hierarchies and the isolation of their guidelines. From the actual operational aspect, due to the top-down nature of Chinese planning, Chinese planning regulations on upper levels provide comprehensive political tasks and principles for detailed planning at the lower levels, and the main planning works accumulate to become detailed plans at the neighbourhood level. Urban system planning provides the main principles and guidelines to each city, whilst the comprehensive planning intensifies them to a limited extent. As Anthony Gar Yeh (1998) mentioned: “the master plan (comprehensive plan) is too general to indicate whether planning permission should be granted … without specifying the detailed land uses at the land parcel level … the categories (of land use) are too general and areas planned with the same type of land use are too large to be followed in the preparation of a detailed plan” (Yeh, et al, 1998, pp 195). Therefore, a gap emerges between comprehensive planning and detailed planning. Such a gap can lead to random, local, site-specific development, or to an inability to evaluate for supervision.

Isolated principles are due to the emphasis on ‘overall’ coverage, and ignore the relationship between proposed intentions and actual interventions. In the current Chinese policy context, regulations at different levels are established by different design institutes, and administrated by government, which parallels the Chinese administrative hierarchy, as mentioned in section 5.3.2.1. To guarantee the applicability and adaptability of guidelines, those on the upper levels must leave enough flexibility to lower levels. This ‘flexibility’ has been utilized as a pretence for decision-makers to escape from formulating precise guidelines. Therefore, Chinese planning regulations are inclined to provide ambiguous guidelines. Due to the ambiguity of guidelines, named ‘overall coverage’ becomes formalism. This concern will be verified by an actual evaluation of implementation cases in Chapter Eight.

5.4.4 Incomplete Planning System

Within the current Chinese policy context, Chenguang Pei and Huayan Wei
argue that merely the Comprehensive Plan and the RDP could exert actual regulatory effects for urban character on physical spatial issues. However, the problem is that both of them emphasize 2-dimensional mapping instead of 3-dimensional urban coding (Wu and Rosenbaum, 2008). Meanwhile, from the aspect of guidance, neither the Comprehensive Plan nor the RDP provide precise guidelines because this design guidance cannot act as a substitute for the lack of design skills in planning authorities specifically and urban design awareness amongst built-environment professionals generally (Carmona, 2001).

More than that, as illustrated in Figure 5-2, the CDP is technically the lowest level of planning tool within the planning system, which connects the planning realm and the architectural design realm. As given in the listed contents of the CDP in section 5.3.3.2, considerations about spatial elements and architectural characteristics currently comprise the main contents of a CDP, which lead the CDP to present more architectural characteristics than planning. Thus, the CDP is almost equivalent to the layout design (Yeh et al, 1998). From this point of view, the Chinese ‘planning’ system at this detailed level is likely intruded by the ‘architectural’ system. This encroachment leads to an absence of ‘planning’ features at the CDP level, which might lead to a gap that isolates the continuity of design procedures from the higher comprehensive level down to the detailed architectural schemes. Thus, the effectiveness and precision of initial planning proposals cannot be guaranteed.

These three reasons lead to the potential ineffectiveness of current Chinese policy concerning implementation issues. About whether or not this incomplete system obstructs planning activities, and if it exerts actual negative influences during the urban regeneration process, they are hypothesises based on literal analysis. These concerns need to be tested by evidence-based investigations in Chapter Seven. Meanwhile whether or not the urban design and urban coding systems could be treated as appropriate measures to address current problems, will be discussed in Chapter Nine, based on evaluations of policy implementations.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The evolution of the Chinese planning context continually exerted influences on both the prototype of Chinese urban character and the framework of the current planning system. By the introduction of such influences, the background to the
policy context in modern China is displayed. Through the analysis of the Chinese government system and planning system, the policy context of urban planning is illustrated as completely conforming to a top-down process involving a hierarchy of administrative levels.

Based on these introductions about the Chinese policy context, some concerns are raised before case-study testing. For the content of planning, Chinese researchers reveal considerable misunderstandings about character; meanwhile current physical design conception and zoning methods involve potential risks about the effectiveness of control. For the planning structure, the absence of site-wide planning leads to a discrete hierarchy, and the current legalized planning system is incomplete. These concerns are provided based on the reviews; whether or not they are actually an obstacle to the implementation of planning is considered in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

Following this discussion about China’s planning framework, the next chapter will provide an introduction to Harbin through an introduction to its local features. The specific content of planning regulations will also be presented.
CHAPTER SIX

HARBIN INTRODUCTION AND CASE STUDIES
CHAPTER 6  HARBIN

INTRODUCTION AND CASE STUDIES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The city of Harbin, now the capital of China’s northernmost province, was chosen for this research as a representative of modern Chinese cities. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.2, Harbin displays the majority of internal geographical factors found in other Chinese cities, meanwhile affluent external influences by colonial powers provide rich evidence about the preservation of historical features. Hence, in this chapter, as a case study for the entire research, the background to the internal and external influences are firstly elaborated due to its close relationships with urban character; meanwhile, the outcomes of such influences are illustrated from the urban scale down to site scale based on the summarized regulating elements first given in Chapter 3.4.3 for a comprehensive understanding of Harbin. Based on this understanding about local identities, the contents and operational mechanisms of local ordinances are discussed in terms of their purposes, basic principles and empirical affects.

6.2 BACKGROUNDS OF HARBIN

In Chapter 4.3.2.1, the selected city was required to be: a modern city, a historical city, a comprehensive city and a representative city. The geographical background indicates that Harbin is a comprehensive and representative case for this research, whilst the evolutions of planning policy show its generous historical evolutions and its representativeness as a modern Chinese city.
6.2.1 Geographical Backgrounds

As the provincial capital of Heilongjiang Province, Harbin is one of the political, economic and cultural centres of modern China. Harbin has a total land area of 53,068 km²; by the end of 2007, the total population on the household register was 9,874,000 covering 48 nationalities and the population of ethnic minorities was 660,000. Hence Harbin is a comprehensive city covering a considerable area and involving complicated urban issues.

Meanwhile, Harbin represents a typical geographical urban pattern and administration hierarchy. As a typical plain city, the main terrain of the city is generally flat and low-lying, with an average elevation of around 150 metres (490 ft.). Therefore, the townscape in Harbin is presented as a flat pattern without hills or other topographical fluctuations. As a sub-provincial city Harbin has direct jurisdiction over 8 districts, 3 county-level cities and 7 counties. For this research, the target emphasizes the urban downtown area which mainly involves four districts: Daoli, Daowai, Nangang and Xiangfang (Figure 6-1).

![Figure 6-1: Harbin downtown area](Source: Google Earth (2010))

Furthermore, Harbin’s specific climate reinforces its distinctive local character. The four distinct seasons comprise a long and cold winter and hot summer with rapid
temperature fluctuations. Due to the grim environment in winter, compared to the other three seasons, the urban character is heavily determined by cold weather and gives an obvious local identity.

6.2.2 Policy Evolutions

During the process of constructing urban character, external factors inevitably affect the local character. Such external factors include economic communications, religious dissemination, immigrants, the colonial cultures and construction activities. Within these factors, for Harbin, the most influential ones are the colonial cultures and construction activities by colonists.

*The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin* by Soren Clausen and Stig Thogerse (1995) divided Harbin’s historical development progress into four periods: “Pre-1898; the era of Russian influence from 1898 to 1932; the period of the Japanese occupation from 1932 to 1945 and the period of communist rule from 1945 up to 1989”. This has been followed by the current development period, post the opening up of China initially under Deng Xiaoping (from 1978). Thus, the most significant historic external influences come from three aspects: Russian intervention, Japanese intervention and the interventions by the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Meanwhile, Simon Karlinsky (1989) argues that: “Harbin was not primarily a city of refuge … it is true that the Russian-speaking population, which included large contingents of Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, Georgians, rose to some 127,000 after the October Revolution. This figure includes only those who stayed.” (Simon Karlinsky, 1989, p. 20). From this point of view, Karlinsky (1989) points out a mistake made by Jan Paul Hinrichs’ *The Memoirs of the Harbin poet Valerii Pereleshin*: “Harbin did not look like ‘any provincial Siberian city’ since many buildings, blocks, boulevards and parks were planned well by Russian architects and also by German, Swiss, Italian and town planners from other countries” (Karlinsky, 1989, p. 21). This point of view by Soren Clausen and Stig Thogerse (1995) verified that the Russian and Japanese interventions should also be supplemented by other parallel colonial cultures such as German, Italian, Jewish, etc. although their influences are not as obvious as the Russian and Japanese.

6.2.2.1 Russian intervention

The modern city of Harbin originated in 1898 from a small village, with the
construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) by Russia. Clausen and Thogersen (1995) divide the Russian colonial era into three sections: ‘Direct Russian rule, 1898-1907’, ‘Open city, Russian domination, 1907-1917’, and ‘Whites and Warlords, 1917-1932’. This division is defined due to events which weakened the Russian grip on the CER.

The study of its history should employ a comparative perspective. Brought into being by tsarist Russia in 1898 as the headquarters of the Chinese Eastern Railway, from the viewpoint of decision-making, it is apparent that the Russians dominated the original planning in Harbin from urban contexts to architectural style and decorations which become the prototype for following urban evolutions. As Qinghua Guo (2004) states: “Harbin was a ‘Russian city’ planned by the Russians and representing an earlier colonialist intervention”.

Harbin was built with a preconceived goal as a transit depot of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Therefore, the functions and land-use of the entire city were laid out based on the services and administration of the CER. Such intentions determined the overall urban morphology. The urban planning started with the CER station, which was the main purpose for Russian colonists to build Harbin and dominated the layout of the central urban district. More details follow in Section 6.3.1.

### 6.2.2.2 Japanese intervention

Manzhouguo (old spelling, Manchukuo) was a puppet state created by the Japanese colonists in Manchuria, North-east China. With the establishment of Manchukuo, Japan took over Harbin from Russia in 1932. Since then, Harbin was designed as one of the most crucial metropolises in Manchuria and was planned and built soon after the Japanese occupied it (Carter, 2002). This period ended with the fall of the Japanese Empire in 1945.

Unlike the Russian overall urban planning concept, Japanese intervention emphasized the reinforcement of existing urban constructed areas. The central area, the railway station area, the embassy areas and several commercial avenues (the Central Avenue, Jingyu Streets, etc.) were constructed more decently and delicately, whilst the overall urban territory did not spread as proposed by Russian planning schemes. From this point of view, technically, Japanese intervention should leave more architectural marks in Harbin, however, the actual situation is opposite: Russian intervention built up the majority of key buildings in urban central areas,
whilst Japanese intervention could merely maintain Russian style appearances and restore the external environment. Therefore, in the central areas Japanese intervention did not leave obvious marks in Harbin. Although Japanese dominated occupied Harbin for more than ten years, their influence was not much more obvious than other colonial cultures. In fact, due to the ineradicable Russian features in Harbin, the Japanese government chose Changchun as the capital of Manchuria (Guo, 2004).

6.2.2.3 Other colonial cultures

Following the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), several nationals from 33 countries including the United States, Germany and France moved to Harbin. Sixteen countries established consulates and set up hundreds of industrial institutes, commercial stores and banks in Harbin. Harbin had established its status as the centre of north-eastern China and as an international metropolis in this era. The Jewish community was formed by Russian Jews and included a group of German Jews, who fled Nazi Germany in the late 1930s. During this period, Harbin once housed one of the largest Jewish communities in the far-east area. It reached its peak in the mid 1920s when 20,000 European Jews lived in this city. Although the émigré population was not large and of short duration, these colonial cultures still exerted considerable influences on Harbin’s local character.

6.2.2.4 Planning of People’s Republic of China

Based on the historical change in Chinese policy from 1949 to the present, especially since the Reform and Opening-Up Policy in 1978, the era after the establishment of the PRC should be separated into two sections: pre-1978 and post-1978.

After 1949, Harbin was rapidly planned and translated from a political centre in north-eastern China into one of the most important industrial cities in China. During this period, Harbin was designated as one of the national project ‘key cities’, to which 156 national industrial programmes were assigned‘(Zhang, 2011). Thus, the urban function of Harbin was transformed from being a comprehensive city into an industrial city. Meanwhile, as in other Chinese cities, spatial planning practices boomed in Harbin during this decade, characterized by their industrial and residential functional characteristics. From 1958 to 1978, as introduced in Chapter 5.2, Harbin
experienced tortuous development processes including the ‘Great Leap Forward’\(^1\) and ‘the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’. During this period, the entire city was designated as a socialist industrial machine, whilst commercial facilities were removed; industrial and residential space was arranged without any guidance or rationale, which can be obviously revealed from the layout of existing industrial areas in Xiangfang District. Meanwhile, numerous historic buildings and features, including St Nicholas’ Church located on the central axis opposite the railway station, were destroyed by ruffians.

Since the Chinese reform and open-door policy in 1978, great changes have taken place in Harbin. With the large-scale urban development programmes, the importance of planning started to be appreciated. Based on the lessons from westernized countries, planning conceptions such as zoning, spatial regulation, green-space protection and land-use classification were applied to planning cases in Harbin and compose a modern prototype of the current planning system in Harbin. Meanwhile, as in other Chinese cities, Harbin laid down the top-down and economy-oriented comprehensive plan system and had them enacted through the local People’s Congress. As mentioned in Chapter 5.2.3, the entire planning targeted the spatial demand associated with economic development, and this highly economy-oriented mechanism became more dominant during the process of addressing urban issues. In this way, the economic influences permeate into the urban regeneration process and affect urban character dramatically.

6.3 URBAN CHARACTER IN HARBIN

Based on the previous analysis about regulating elements in Table 3-10, the urban character in Harbin is given here based on five main levels: settlements, streets, plots, buildings and details. These introductions, supplemented by samples in Chapter Seven, provide actual evidence for the discussion in Chapter Eight to reveal the implementations of character regulations in Harbin.

\(^1\) The Great Leap Forward of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was an economic and social campaign of the Communist Party of China (CPC), reflected in planning decisions from 1958 to 1961, which aimed to use China's vast population to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society through the process of rapid industrialization and collectivization.
6.3.1 Settlements

Considering the settlements from a city-wide aspect, the typomorphology of the whole of Harbin city should be introduced as background. Due to the original function of Harbin - service for the CER - the most important and decisive elements of the urban structure were the new railway station connected by major roads to the Consulate District and two main streets to connect to existing wharfs (Central Avenue and Jingyu Street). The Songhua River on the north side provided a convenient ferry for this new city (Figure 6-2).

Figure 6-2: Historic urban structure
Source: Harbin Comprehensive Plan in 1910 by Russian planners

The initial version of the Russian plan for the layout of Harbin was characterized by geometrical forms. This geometrical approach to planning was clearly represented in the comprehensive plan of Harbin’s New South-east Area in 1920 by Russian planners (Figure 6-3). The entire original urban central area was separated into three districts by CER: the Consulate District became Nangang District, the blocks along Central Avenue became Daoli District and the blocks along Jingyu Street to the east of the CER became Daowai District. The Consulate District, as the prototype of Nangang District, was crowded by the consulates of Russia, Japan, Germany, etc. It also involved the headquarters of the Russian army, the police station, the broadcasting station, the central bank and metropolitan governmental buildings, as well as residential buildings for officials and their families. The Central Avenue area, as the prototype of Daoli District, was filled with shops and restaurants due to the burgeoning wealth from the colony.
Harbin introduction and case studies

Figure 6-3: Masterplanning of Harbin 1920
Source: Harbin Municipal Archives
Figure 6-4: Evolutions of Harbin’s urban central area
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
John Wesley Coulter (1932) described this district as being formed by commercial houses and offices of trading companies, railway shops, factories and mercantile organizations. Meanwhile, the buildings and churches in this district were famous for their lavish architectural styles and graceful decorations, which represent a high level of architectural design and construction in that period. Distinguished from more salubrious environment in Daoli and Nangang, the Jingyu Street area in Daowai District was filled with the poor. With the development of Harbin, the population of Chinese labours and their families had increased dramatically since the 1910s, and these poor Chinese labours congregated in the Daowai District. Due to the large amount of pollution in the Jingyu Street area, the living area per capita was unimaginably low; however, the architectural style and decorations of these buildings still remained on a considerably high level as the Chinese Baroque style (see Chapter 6.3.4) thanks to the integrated arrangement of architectural style by Russian planners and cooperation from Chinese local artisans. These three settlements compose the prototype of the current urban central area, whilst their morphology remains to the present (Figure 6-4).

6.3.2 Streets

As illustrations in the previous section show, Harbin is a planned city with its geometrical street network (Lahusen, 1998). During the process of planning, Russian and Japanese schemes considered the Chinese north-south axis and grid pattern as crucial complements to arranging the street patterns – this is the reason why historical areas did not show as obvious geometrical features in the proposed master plan in the New South-east Area (Figure 6-3). The Chinese grid geometric feature was overlaid on the westernized plan: the radial avenue network and the grid road network superimposed onto each other. The Chinese grid system may be seen to be commanding the westernized geometry in one place. Conversely, it can be recognized as being complementary if the grid system is seen from another viewpoint. The Chinese style symbolized a cosmic order that cannot be put neatly within the boundaries of time as represented by Chang’an (present, Xi’an) and Beijing. Due to the L-shaped railway (CER) through the urban centre and the utilization of the irregular riverside, the geometric superimposition disintegrates the urban grid in Harbin, without strict north-south or west-east streets.

As the original historical pattern in Harbin, the street network was composed by
one central main road and auxiliary vertical branches, as illustrated by Jingyu Street and Central Avenue (Figure 6-5). All branches along the main road separate the continuity of façades into small sections. In this way, the blocks represent as a rectangular shape with two long sides and two comparatively short sides. For a single block, the long sides are 4 to 5 times as long as the short sides, which seldom occurs in other modern plots. This pattern has two advantages. For the main road, along Central Avenue and Jingyu St, the distances between two crossings are around 100 m, which is much shorter than the average of around 300 m. In Harbin’s central area, more crossings bring greater access for pedestrians and increase commercial opportunities; meanwhile, more crossings signify more architectural corners, and such corners of colonial buildings occupy a crucial status in the overall architectural style, therefore the architectural character would enhance local identity. For the branches along the main road, continuous façades express stronger architectural identity – especially when viewed from afar from the main road. Therefore, from these two points of view, the characteristics of the historic street network and architectural style enhance each other mutually.

![Figure 6-5: Typical historic pattern of street network in Harbin](image)

Source: The Author

With the development of modern traffic and increasing requirements for convenient access, historical rectangular blocks are replaced by current square-shaped blocks. As illustrated in Figure 6-6, two satellite maps are at the same scale, the left one is historical Jingyu Street with its branch roads, whilst the right one is of recent residential blocks in Daoli District. The streets become wider and straighter,
and, as an inevitable outcome, the historical features of the street network disappear.

Figure 6-6: Evolution of the street network in Harbin  
Source: The Author

Such evolution comes from two main reasons: demolition and street upgrading. Since the early 1980s, numerous historical residential blocks have been demolished due to the poor quality of buildings and low density, and uniform 6 or 7-story buildings are arranged as replacement. In this way, the original alleys disappear; along with demolition, the necessary alleys of these areas are upgraded to become wider and straighter.

6.3.3 Plots

The plots in Harbin experienced dramatic evolutions during the last century, which can be categorized into three stages: historical transformation, modernism and large scale regeneration. These three patterns are illustrated in Figure 6-7 at the same scale.

Figure 6-7: Evolutions of plot patterns in Harbin  
Source: The Author

For the historical transformation plots (Fig. 6.7 left), the buildings stand along streets and create interior courtyards. Historically, this layout is a transformation from traditional Chinese Siheyuan. Unlike traditional Chinese buildings, historical plots in Harbin are normally composed of two- or three-story buildings; to address the issue of vertical traffic, outdoor stairs and external corridors were constructed in the internal courtyard. As mentioned in Section 6.3.2, the shape of these blocks is normally rectangular and has been separated into a comparative square shape and
accessed by alleys (Figure 6-8).

Figure 6-8: Plots in historical blocks
Source: The Author

A uniform pattern dominates the majority of modern plots in Harbin. Patterns of previous alleys are replaced by uniform, square, internal, open spaces, the façades facing to the streets and internal yards are indistinct. the range of intervals between buildings is fixed as 6 to 7 metres due to the requirement of Code of Design on Building Fire Protection and Prevention (2006) (GB50016). Meanwhile, the GB50016 also clarifies that access for fire engines must be arranged no more than every 160 m. along the street, in this way, the most common pattern of modernism plots is a 160 m. square shape. For the large-scale regeneration plots, the majority are composed of high-rise buildings and they have become one of most significant urban identities in China due to their large scale in area and considerable height. With the development of building techniques, high-rise buildings all over the world appear to be very similar; meanwhile, the podiums along the streets are recently discarded for more open space and replaced by metal fences.

6.3.4 Buildings

Since Harbin was a boomtown in the early 20th century (Paine, 2003), these buildings were built in a certain period and provide an opportunity to present a harmonious urban character of a specific historical era. After that, as with the planning system, buildings in this city also witnessed the disorder and chaos in the industrial periods from 1966 to 1976, and then experienced a dramatic evolution since the 1990s.

6.3.4.1 Historical features

Harbin was a ‘modern’ metropolis in the Far East area during its colonial era and used to be known as the Oriental St. Petersburg (Lahusen, 1998), which is due to its westernized architectural style. During the colonial era, modernization and development meant wholesale westernization. This was a common fact at that time in
many Chinese cities occupied by colonial powers. Under these powers, characteristics for buildings were established under an overall consideration within the entire urban area, which show a European influence. In this way, the buildings in Harbin represent obvious European features and colonial characteristics. Such features and characteristics, during the colonial era, were expressed by outstanding architectural styles such as Western Baroque, Classicalism, Renaissance, Art Nouveau, Eclecticism, Judaic style and Russian wooden structure, etc. Meanwhile, the Chinese traditional style and Japanese modernism were superimposed on new buildings since the 1930s with the decline of Russian power in Manchuria.

In Daoli and Nangang District, the Westernized building produced an overall image of Harbin local architecture combined with stylistic variants. The architectural unity of the state buildings was further emphasized by materials, colours and ornamental elements. Meanwhile, the majority of historic buildings had domes which belong to Russian or Byzantine culture – towering domes, onion-shape domes and the tent-top shape dominate the skyline which make up the unique urban character in these historic areas (Figure 6-9). The shape of windows was designed as a vertical rectangular pattern to adapt to the local climate as introduced in Section 6.2.1.

In Daowai District, the architectural tactic was to relate the Chinese to the Western by superimposing Chinese culture as iconographic ornaments on Western buildings (Wan, 2011); in this way, Chinese Baroque was created as a unique architectural style in Manchuria by cooperation between western designers and Chinese artisans.

Many examples of Baroque architecture can be found in Europe and in Latin America, however, the Chinese Baroque is a unique architectural style in China. It is composed by a western facade and Chinese traditional ornament. In its conception, Chinese Baroque emphasizes mixed culture, light-shadow (chiaroscuro) and solid-void; the elements of Chinese Baroque emphasize pilasters, parapets, balconies and entrances; as with the western buildings in Daoli and Nangang Districts, the Chinese Baroque façade emphasizes the horizontal and vertical divisions. The horizontal direction is divided into three sections – the ground floor, first floor, cornice and parapet. The vertical direction can also be divided based on pilasters and windows (Figure 6-10). Chinese Baroque deals with particular emphasis on the main entrance, located at the corner of the building. The main entrance is normally located in the
corner of the street and a balcony on the first floor overhangs the entrance as a cantilever with a curved shape and delicate parapets; the windows of the first floor are vertically aligned with those on the ground floor, whilst the shape of the window-column is semi-circular with grooves on the pillars. Such Chinese Baroque is a distinct local product with great symbolic value. As noted by Ning Wan (2011): “Although these Chinese Baroque buildings are architecturally similar to the western buildings, however, they were ideologically very different.” (Wan, 2011, p. 14).

Professor Songfu Liu, as one of the most influential scholars of Chinese Baroque in China, explains such difference from two aspects: “Chinese architectural corbel arch, steps and railings fusing with pillars of Western architecture but the ornamental pattern is Chinese. Besides this aspect, structurally, behind its western façade, Chinese Baroque owns traditional Chinese internal courtyards: buildings encircle the courtyard with one or two gates through the doorway as entrances” (Liu, 2005, p. 75).

To analyse historical features as prototypes, current architectural design explores applicable approaches seeking for influences. Current universal methods are based on the research about multi-story buildings which make up a large percentage of urban buildings. Take one building on the Central Avenue, for instance (Figure 6-11), the facade of this two-storey building could be dismembered into two categories - vertical constructions and horizontal constructions, plus the mixed constructions (windows). The categories have already been clarified by local stakeholders as:

“These vertical and horizontal dimensions could be perceived by pedestrians and compose an impressive architectural characteristic within the Central Avenue district” (IG06).

Based on such comments, the considerations of these vertical and horizontal elements have already gained enough attention from designers and architects, and have already been widely cited during current urban regeneration projects.
Figure 6-9: Samples of dome and façade in Daoli District
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2005a)

Figure 6-10: Patterns of Chinese Baroque façades
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2005a)
A summary from interviewees and various cartographic sources agree a consensus that three main patterns of manipulation are generated from, and illustrated in, Figure 6-12. These three approaches - painted colour, ornamental constructions and regenerations - are applied to manipulate the building façade on multi-story buildings. Relevant approaches for high-rise buildings have not formed a consensus yet; however, the basic conception has already been transformed to high-rise buildings and such a transformation will be discussed in the following section.

### 6.3.4.2 Modern features

As the great majority of urban buildings, multi-story residential buildings have boomed since the 1990s and dominated the modern architectural features in Harbin; beside them, high-rise buildings, although fewer, express a strong mixed-style as the stakeholders’ aesthetics have evolved since the 2000s.
Multi-story buildings represent uniform modern features. Average heights of these buildings are chiefly limited to no more than 24 m. or seven stories, which is due to the architectural codes: *Code for Design of Civil Buildings* (GB50352-2005) and *Code of Design on Building Fire Protection and Prevention* (GB50016-2006). Meanwhile, as the limitation on the depth of normal residential buildings (short side of the building) is no more than 12 m., therefore the plan of buildings is fixed as a rectangle with a 12 m. short side, and the shapes are normally arranged as an ‘I’ or an ‘L’ shape (Figure 6-13). These quantitative indicators are established and legalized by the State Government as national standards, whilst the real-estate developers are happy to employ a uniform digital model with a uniform modulus to produce buildings as merchandise instead of a craft. Just as Carmona’s conclusion: “Very few large housing estates built over the past 20 years have been designed by architects at all. Most have used the standard designs of the volume housebuilders, laid out to standard layouts of highway authorities” (Carmona, 2003, p. 109).
High-rise buildings, especially public buildings, present two main elements as: technology and history. Since the attention from all aspects of society, these landmarks have to consider their surrounding features deliberately, especially the ornamentation on their façades. The evaluation of such considerations before the establishment of the Architectural Style Plan (ASP) and Purple Line Plan (PLP) was not satisfactory since previous regulations merely emphasized the height and FAR with no specific standards for architectural styles and colour. A focus on technology dominates the design of modern high-rise buildings. With the development of the market-based economy, stakeholders have come to realize the importance of aesthetics and the value of history with the result that many modern buildings imitate historical symbols as part of their construction level and detailing e.g. ornamental domes and archaized balustrades. Some samples are provided in Figure 6-14 and more detailed descriptions are elaborated in Chapter Seven.

6.3.5 Details

As mentioned in Section 6.3.4, architectural details on historic buildings are well preserved and maintained, whilst the ones on modern buildings present obvious imitative features.

The overall architectural structure and details of historic buildings are well protected. As illustrated in Figure 6-9 and Figure 6-10, distinguishing from other Chinese modern cities, Harbin retains abundant historical architectural symbols, which provide generous references for current architects. During the past century, although historic buildings have experienced several periods of maintenance, the
structure of the details remained as in the original pattern, even the colour and material were rarely changed. With the launch of the Colour Plan, the material and colour used in the maintenance of these historic buildings are chosen more delicately, and the current appearance of historic details is cited as a reference by new design projects.

From the aspect of modern buildings, before the 2000s, historical symbols did not exert notable influences on the modern buildings; after the 2000s, especially in recent years, new buildings pay increasing attention to imitating historical symbols and features. Meanwhile, local developers fully support these imitations due to the economic benefit they bring. For these new buildings, symbols of historical parapets are simplified into modern patterns and applied as ornaments on top floors (or attics) and gabled roofs are revived on modern high-rise buildings; the modern balustrades on balconies are designed as columns to imitate the historical pattern. For the existing buildings, some refurbishments to the façade are required by government to create a ‘harmonious’ environment: ornamental structures are added on the façades including hipped gambrel roofs, eaves, parapets, pilasters, window frames, etc., even the entire façade of some landmark buildings are redecorated in the European style (Figure 6-14). Through such refurbishment, the remaining original structure of buildings and adding ornamental details on façades and roofs, Harbin’s modern buildings are experiencing a new wave of ‘facelifts’.

For such refurbishment, although the ornamental style is mainly based on European and Russian style, a building-specific architectural scheme is produced to guarantee that the ornamental façade conforms to the existing architectural structure (dimension of windows, pattern of roof, height and scale of podium, etc.). An architect who was in charge of Galaxy Tower on Zhongshan Road confirmed that:

“There was no precise standard or guideline to refurbish these high-rise buildings along the Zhongshan Road, but via serious fieldwork of our targeted buildings, we chose the pattern most appropriate to each building” (IDI 09).
6.4 REGULATIONS ABOUT URBAN CHARACTER IN HARBIN

China has a national integrated planning system. All provinces and cities share the same planning context; therefore, planning regulations in each modern city in China are nearly identical. However, the contents of planning documents in each province or city show slight variations, especially on the local detailed ordinances. Through an analysis of regulations in Harbin, the regulations about urban character
and their implementations in Chinese cities can be understood. This analysis can be supported by actual projects as evidence to present a detailed discussion of specific urban character issues.

Following the discussion in Chapter 5.3.3, the practical regulations about urban character can be identified as: (a) Comprehensive Plan – Harbin Comprehensive Plan (HCP); (b) Detailed Plan – composed by the Regulatory Detailed Plan (RDP) and the Construction Detailed Plan (CDP); (c) planning regulations about urban character – the Architectural Style Plan (ASP), the Colour Plan (CP) and the Purple Line Plan (PLP). Since the RDP is applied to cover the entire urban realm in Harbin, whilst the CDP is merely applied in limited areas and the contents of CDP are various, it will be therefore analysed based on the areas where it is applied in Chapter Seven.

6.4.1 Comprehensive Plan and Regulations at City-wide Level

In 2003, the Harbin Comprehensive Plan for 2004 to 2020 (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2003) was formulated. As with other modern Chinese cities, the HCP involves two main issues of delivery – guidance (text) and zoning maps (atlas). In the HCP (2004-2020) (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2004), contents involve: the extent of the planning area; the scale of the land-use for construction; the land-use for infrastructure and public service facilities; the municipal facilities system; the area for agriculture, the area for forest, environmental protection, protection of natural and historical cultural heritage and disaster prevention and alleviation.

From aspects of urban character, issues about environmental protection and protection of natural and historical cultural heritage are summarised by the HCP as a comprehensive, sixteen-character principle in Chinese:

“Bing Qing Xue Yun, Ou Lu Feng Qing, Yu Ding Xiang Ying, Bei Guo Bing Cheng.”

In English, it is:

“Ice and snow, European style, elm and clove, northern city”

These sixteen characters are expected to involve all issues about urban characteristics from four aspects: natural background, architectural style, plants and social culture. This general principle is clarified as five spatial issues which are defined as the main targets during the urban regeneration process:
“Urban character planning in Harbin involves five issues: urban landmark buildings, urban spatial structures, townscape in the waterfront district, urban squares and urban architectural colour.”

Chapter 16, Article 86, HCP

Literally, besides these contents, there is no relevant statement about urban character regulation in the HCP. However, from the discussion about the components of urban character in Chapter 3.4.3, urban morphology is mainly planned by the urban Comprehensive Plan (see Figure 6-15). As with other historic cities in China, urban morphology and the street network in urban central areas, which are crucial elements for urban character, are laid out by the Comprehensive Plan. However, the extent to which such arrangements would influence local character will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Other planning regulations about urban character at the city-wide level in Harbin involve the ASP and CP, and they technically provide guidelines at both the comprehensive and local detailed levels. In Figure 6-18 and Figure 6-21, the zoning maps of either the ASP or the CP cover the main part of the urban central areas, which illustrates that either the ASP or the CP is considering the urban issue on an overall comprehensive level.

The general principles of either the ASP or the CP are involved in the HCP. Although such embodiments are not obvious, the arrangement of block patterns and land-use in specific areas by the HCP expresses similar ideas as the ASP and CP. Meanwhile, such embodiments would be transmitted from the upper Comprehensive Plan, down to the planning at the neighbourhood level. These influences will be revealed in Chapter Seven. However, one significant point is that such involvement of the ASP and CP is not guaranteed by any legislation, since they are not statutory regulations. Furthermore, the ASP and CP are also cited by site-specific guidelines at the Detailed Plan level, which will be elaborated in the following section.

The Ordinance of Protected buildings and Blocks in Harbin (2006d) is another city-wide ordinance for the protection of historic buildings and blocks in Harbin. This ordinance clarifies 64 first-class protective sites, 92 second-class protective sites, and 86 third-class protective sites. These protective sites are reserved by the HCP avoiding demolition during the urban regeneration process and its principles are directly transmitted down to the regulatory plan as well. This ordinance is involved
as one part of a compulsory urban four-line system\(^1\) in the Comprehensive Plan, and it specifies 14 historic culture areas and 6 historic townscape areas. These areas are all defined in purple colour on both the HCP and RDP maps. Therefore, at the neighbourhood level, this ordinance is transformed to a Purple Line Plan (PLP).

\[\text{Figure 6-15: Harbin Comprehensive Plan}\]
\[\text{Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2004)}\]

\(^1\) Four-line System includes: red line for buildings and streets, purple line for protection areas, green line for vegetation, blue line for water.
6.4.2 Regulatory Detailed Plan

Since 2004, the RDP in Harbin has been established (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2004) to cover the entire urban central area (Figure 6-16), and for each individual RDP plot, one specific reference number is matched. The content of the RDP in Harbin is nearly the same as for other cities. It involves two issues: guidelines and zoning maps.

For the guidelines, *Ordinances and Standards for Regulatory Plan Formulation in Harbin* (2001) clarified that the regulating elements could be categorized into two aspects:

Compulsory elements: land-use, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), construction acreage, construction density, height, green area ratio, infrastructure, permitted entrances and exits for vehicles, capacity of parking and underground development.

Optional elements: population, architectural morphology, building volumes, architectural style, colour and other spatial features.

(The compulsory elements could be adjusted based on specific situations.)

Chapter 3.1

The most crucial components of the RDP guidelines are legalized quantitative parameters - FAR, construction acreage, height limitation, green area ratio, etc. - which are relevant to urban character to some extent. The other component of the RDP is the zoning map (Figure 6-17). Various land-use areas are clarified in various colours, whilst the boundaries are located as legalized limitations of construction acreage. Contents of the RDP presented on maps are:

Boundaries of functional zones, location of infrastructure, road red-line, property line, parking space, etc.

Chapter 3.2
Figure 6-16: Regulatory Plan in Harbin
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2004)
About the guideline of urban character, the *Ordinances and Standards for Regulatory Plan Formulation in Harbin* (2001) mentions relevant ones such as:

Spatial Control – Structure of local spatial character: the planning of local spatial structure and local character should be explained in this section.

Chapter 3.1.2.6

This means the regulation about spatial structure and local character should be displayed as one of the individual sections in the RDP. However, the issues of local character which should be achieved by the regulation and to what extent are not clarified. Meanwhile, as shown, the hierarchy of this section is the fourth level; the content of this section therefore occupies a comparatively small proportion of the entire RDP document.

To sum up, the regulatory plan does not classify architectural style and other urban character issues as compulsory guidance. Without legalized compulsory guidelines, major detailed planning ordinances and schemes would merely stay on the optional level. Whether such optional local ordinances can create satisfactory actual outcomes will be tested and discussed in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

**6.4.3 Architectural Style Plan**

In 2006, the Architectural Style Plan in Harbin (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2006a) was formulated. Before the ASP, there was no specific concept of a historic ‘zone’ but only of individual historic ‘buildings’.
“Harbin owns abundant historic buildings in the urban central area, however, these historic buildings are merely protected as individual units rather than as comprehensive conservation areas, therefore the new buildings around these historic buildings did not harmonize with the historic atmosphere.” (IA 03)

Figure 6-18: Architectural Style Plan in Harbin
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2006a)

The emergence of the ASP in 2006 helped to remind planners and architects to consider the comprehensive environment in historic conservation areas as an integrated unit. Due to this initial intent, the content of the Conservation Zone occupies a comparatively large proportion in the entire ASP, whilst the guidelines in the Conservation Zone are more precise than other planning zones. Meanwhile, guidance for the ASP defines that the Harbin architectural principles should: protect
Harbin’s architectural styles, research and explore their historical and cultural connotations and establish them as the source of architectural style for the future. The foundation of the ASP in Harbin is based on the Harbin Comprehensive Plan and relevant guidelines in *Ordinance of Protected buildings and Blocks in Harbin*, as well as other relevant technical planning standards. General planning principles of ASP involve four issues:

1. By protecting original architectural characteristics and relevant research, ASP engages to guarantee the original architectural characteristic becoming the sources of a new architectural style in Harbin.

2. By separating the urban central area into four main planning zones (Conservation Zone, Control Zone, Coordination Zone and Development Zone), ASP engages to present various gradations of architectural style.

3. By establishing corresponding guidelines for each planning zone, ASP engages to enforce the applicability of architectural regeneration.

4. By the application of features of New Eclecticism and modern constructing techniques, ASP engages to provide appropriate freedom to create a modern architectural style in Harbin.

Chapter 02, Article 02

Based on this basic principle, ASP classifies urban construction areas into four pattern zones, in this way, on the one hand to conserve historic features and architectural style whilst on the other hand to encourage the regeneration and development of a new architectural style conforming to the contemporary requirements of society. ASP defines four architectural style planning zones within urban Harbin based on the locations of historic buildings and sites (Figure 6-19).
Figure 6-19: Maps of Harbin historical development and architectural style zoning
Source: The Author
As mentioned in Section 6.3.2, historic architectural style is concentrated within urban central areas, specifically including the Central Avenue area in Daoli District, the Jingyu Street area in Daowai District and the railway station area in Nangang District. In the ASP, these areas, as well as a small group of other historic areas, are defined as Conservation Zones (deep red in Figure 6-20). These historic conservation areas are the roots of protection for architectural style, whilst these conservation areas are normally surrounded by control zones for a smooth transition from historic features to modern features. Meanwhile, one of significant issues to be aware of is that the ASP zoning map in the Harbin downtown area was separated into four
individual systems with each of them conforming to their administrative local government – the government of Daoli District is in charge of supervising the first part ‘Daoli District’ in Figure 6-20, etc.. The reasons for this phenomenon could be cited from the discussion about the relationship between the Chinese planning hierarchy and the Chinese administrative hierarchy in Chapter 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. To such relationships, for example the ASP, the integrated planning and administrative system could guarantee a most effective system for control and supervision.

For each of the planning zones, the ASP clarifies various guidelines to direct the regeneration of local architectural style.

The Conservation Zone:

- New construction or building is forbidden within the Conservation Zone, original trees must be protected and reserved, and the maintenance of original buildings must be guaranteed to avoid any destruction of their original architectural appearance.
- Existing buildings which destroy the overall architectural style in the Conservation Zone must be demolished in the near future.
- For the original sites of demolished buildings, these vacated areas should be designated as a green space in order to reduce the density and to create a comfortable environment within the Conservation Zone.
- For behaviour of local residents, any destructive human behaviour must be stopped immediately.

Chapter 04, Article 02

The Relevant Zone is not involved in the four main planning zones of the ASP due to their specific ownership – all Relevant Zones have specific institutes e.g. educational institutes and these areas are not covered by the urban planning system:

- Environmental regenerations in a Relevant Zone should be evaluated on both short-term and long-term considerations.

Chapter 04, Article 03

The Control Zone:

- New buildings in the Control Zone must be evaluated before they are constructed to avoid any negative influence on the original architectural style in the Conservation Zone; these evaluations should emphasize both short-term and long-term considerations.
- The green area ratio in the Control Zone should be increased in order to reduce building density and to provide a buffer zone between the Conservation Zone and the Coordination Zone.
• Guidance of controlling can be adjusted by local situations basing on specific status or due to specific reasons.

Chapter 04, Article 04

The Co-ordination Zone:

• To strictly control the architectural style and height.
• Demolition and building regeneration are the main works in this zone
• To regenerate rationally and maintain the original urban textures.
• For a specific status of architectural style, the guidelines can be revised specifically.

Chapter 04, Article 05

The Development Zone:

• To integrate the architectural style based on a macro consideration over the entire urban area.
• Architectural styles should be developed in a modern architectural pattern to present contemporary techniques and aesthetics.
• To predict the developing trend of architectural style and to provide a source for the future.

Chapter 04, Article 05

There are some concerns from experts. As explained about the contents in Chapter 5.4.3, the ASP mapped the boundaries of distinctive zones. However, this does not provide precise guidance and practical methodologies; meanwhile, as for the majority of Chinese ordinances, the operational mechanism of the ASP is based on the zoning mechanism, this might lead to potential shortages of zoning as considered in Chapter 5.3.3. If these shortages emerge in the implementary process of the ASP and if a harmonious urban character would be damaged by the boundaries between two zones being questioned, then concerns would arise as illustrated in Chapter Seven by samples and elaborated in Chapter Eight. Meanwhile, although the ASP provides comparatively precise guidelines, the governmental officials may still not be satisfied with their precision:

“For each planning zone in the ASP, building volume, colour and material, and decorative patterns should be clarified precisely. Otherwise, we could merely evaluate a design scheme subjectively based on personal judgements” ILG02.

For such subjectively personal judgements of governmental officials, a professor
mercilessly points out that these subjective evaluations are the origin of corruption:

“Some officials attempt to use subjective judgements to disguise the intents of benefitting themselves or a small group of stakeholders” IA 06.

From these two points of view, both officials and scholars are not satisfied with imprecise local guidelines at the implementation level, just as noted by Jian Guo (2007): “How to evaluate the precision and how to regulate precisely? Such questions are not clarified in any Chinese planning documents” (Guo, 2007, p.45).

6.4.4 Colour Plan

Urban colour, is one the most crucial factors of the urban visual character which reflects one aspect of the overall urban appearance (Guo, 2007). Considering the complexity of colour, such urban colour is not a simple super-imposition of individual architectural colours, the concept emphasizes that the integrated urban colour appearance should be capable of being perceived by any observer. Meanwhile, Hongyu Guo (2010) also insists that it is not enough to merely discuss colour by itself, but to make the urban space significant and attractive by emphasizing dynamics and features of the city. Such recognitions about urban colour make it essential that the outcomes of urban colour research must provide flexible regulations for specific urban spaces, instead of emphasizing specific sites at the local level. Since 2000, many cities in China have created urban colour plans, mostly affected by Japanese planning based on the theory of Lenclos’ ‘geography of colour’. In 2000, Beijing clarified the basic urban colour in Beijing as ‘Compound Grey’ (Guo, 2013). Meanwhile, this ordinance lists a series of sensitive zones within the urban realm and provides site-specific guidelines for the architectural colour in these sensitive zones. This regulating mechanism was followed by Shanghai, Hangzhou and Dalian, as well as Harbin, in the following few years.

The Colour Plan in Harbin (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2004) emerged in 2004 and engaged to create a harmonious urban environmental colour via investigations about existing colours and providing a referable ‘palette’\(^1\). As the original purpose of such a plan, all proposed colours to be applied onto actual objects must be chosen from this palette. By reducing the saturation of new buildings,

\(^1\) The terminology of ‘palette’ was firstly mentioned by Songtao Wu in Chinese and Russian Learning Forum on Urban Design and Architectural Features in Harbin (2005)
enriching the monotonous colour of the original residential and industrial blocks and repainting faded facades, whilst also considering geographic factors, history and modern technique, the CP can be treated, to some extent, as a sustainable regulation.

From the aspect of content, urban colour involves several issues: geographic factors and climate, history and culture, materials and techniques, etc. For Harbin, the starting point to consider the CP is the ‘Winter City’. Due to the climate in Harbin, the green period of vegetation is shorter than in other cities and the colours of façades become the main colours of the city during winter. Meanwhile, considering the low temperature during this comparatively long period, warm-toned façades were determined as the main colour in Harbin. Following that, in the winter (and short spring and autumn seasons) the urban colour is comparatively monotonous due to the absence of plants; based on such considerations, the urban colour in Harbin is established as ‘dominant colour + auxiliary colour’. Scholars agreed to enrich the winter urban colour using this mixed ‘dominant-auxiliary palette’ system. In another aspect, the dominant colour is defined as ‘beige’ to guarantee that the entire urban colour would be harmonious and avoid clashes.

Secondly, historical factors are widely employed in the choice of ‘colour’. As the primary principle of the CP, ‘reveal – inherit – develop’, is the basic intention of this plan. In Harbin, the historical conservation areas are the key districts to implement the CP, therefore the choice of colour is mainly based on existing historic buildings in these areas. Via the methodologies of photography and comparisons, the CP collected architectural colour from over 80% of Harbin’s historic buildings and applied these colours as basic data to determine ‘beige’ as the dominant colour; meanwhile defined tones of low saturation such as ‘light pink’ ‘orange’ ‘light green’ ‘light grey’ were to be the auxiliary colours. Through this work, the palette would inherit the historic features of colour and implement them in new development projects. Meanwhile, to reinforce Harbin’s historic inheritance, the CP also collected tones of high saturation such as ‘brick red’ from a church, a ‘golden tone’ from roofs, ‘dark green’ from architraves, etc. to become the ‘ornamental colour’ as a supplementary part of the palette.

Thirdly, due to the development of new construction and decorative materials, the architectural colours have more options than ever before. The CP encourages the applications of new techniques and materials to represent contemporary features,
especially in macro-control zones. However, in and surrounding the conservation zones, the CP suggested that the colour of new materials should be chosen to conform to the surrounding urban colours based on the suggested palette.

Considering the research target, the CP categorizes urban elements into two main aspects: buildings and environments. For the buildings, based on Harbin’s existing land-use and architectural functions, the CP lists six main functional categories of building which have already been illustrated in Figure 6-24. Meanwhile, besides protective buildings, other buildings have already been allowed flexibility to revise the colour tones to some degree. For the environment, the CP clarifies nine key-control blocks which include twelve zones for detailed planning. Within the urban central area, there are eight key-control blocks: the Central Avenue area, Daowai Jingyu Street area, Huanyuan Street area, Ashihe Street area, Hongjun Street area, Yama area, Museum Square area and the Confucian Temple area. These areas are all historic blocks. Meanwhile, the CP also clarifies fifteen streets as key-control streets in Harbin, which include: Youyi Street, Dazhi Street, Heping Street, Hongqi Street, Hongjun-Zhongshan Street, Hexing Street, Guogeli Street, Changjiang Street, Suanhua Street, Jingyu Street, Jingyang Street, the fourteenth Daowai Street, the twelveth Daowai Street, Airport Street and Kangan Street. These streets are all crucial landscape avenues in Harbin.

Considering control zones, the CP does not cover the entire urban central area. Based on the zoning mechanism, the CP selects some sensitive development areas, amounting to 27km² in total and occupying 8% of the entire urban area in Harbin, and categorises them as either Key-control Areas or Macro-control Areas. Key-control Areas are separated into two levels: Conservation Zones and Circumjacent Zones. Meanwhile, fifteen roads and traffic junctions are also involved in the Colour Plan of Harbin (Figure 6-21). There are two issues of which we need to be aware: the first one is that involving roads in a zoning-based CP presents an attempt to avoid the shortages of the zoning mechanism in urban character planning (see Chapter 5.3.3); the second one is that Conversation Zones in the CP are nearly the same as the ones in the ASP, which indicates that the value of historic areas are appreciated from all aspects of these local Chinese planning documents.
As a planning ordinance, the CP has its specific approaches to control urban colour. These methods are processed based on three issues: spatial configuration, zoning mechanism and a palette system.

For the spatial configuration, the CP specifies the main methodology to define
spatial colour in Key-control Areas as ‘X+ white’. Songtao Wu, director of Harbin colour planning, explains this ‘X+ white’ as: “‘X’ is the local dominant colour¹ which is mainly referred to as decorative Rococo colour in Harbin, whilst ‘white’ is the auxiliary colour applied on the decorative parapets and cornices”. Such ‘dominant colour + auxiliary colour’ was explained by Shuxin Yan and Zheng Zheng: “‘Dominant hue’ points to the colour of the main architectural façades and roofs; ‘auxiliary hue’ points to windows, parapets, cornices, as well as decorative constructions; environmental hue points to the colour of pavements, streets and plants” (see Figure 6-22) (Yan and Zheng, 2003, p.36). To this classification, Shuxin Yan and Zheng Zheng explain that: “the colour of [an] individual building is equal to the dominant hue; the colour of building groups is equal to the auxiliary hue; the colour of public corridor and the colour of the external environment are equal to the environmental hue” (Yan and Zheng, 2003, p. 37).

Based on this classification, the Colour Plan in Harbin emphasizes physical spatial elements from four aspects: the colour of an individual building, the colour of building groups, the colour of public corridors and the colour of the public external environment (Wu, 2006, p.61).

Based on China’s zoning mechanism, within Key-control Areas, four approaches

¹ *Chinese and Russian Learning Forum on Urban Design and Architectural Features in Harbin* (2005) defined that the dominant architectural colour over entire Harbin is ‘beige’.
are applied to establish local urban colour guidelines (Figure 6-23):

- **Central Colour Ring**: square is the centre and the dominant colour in central areas is a warm tone, whilst the colour turns to a cool tone with the increasing distances from the central area, which forms a ring-shaped pattern.

- **Regional Colour Control**: except for the Centre Colour Ring areas, circumjacent areas are separated into individual zones and the saturation of dominant colour in each zone is arranged from high to low.

- **Linear Radiation**: to fix the dominant colour of the main building on one road, and to turn down the saturation of other buildings on both sides of the main building along the road.

- **Background Colour**: to clarify a special functional external colour and adjust the dominant architectural colour to harmonize with this functional colour as well as other surrounding environmental colours.

![Image of Colour Guidelines](image)

**Figure 6-23: Four approaches in Key-control Areas**

*Source: The Author*

As the core part of the CP palette system is established based on an investigation of dominant buildings, especially the historic buildings. Through a statistical analysis, the CP provides a ‘palette’ to planners and architects as a reference (see Figure 6-24). However, whether this recommended palette system is worthy to direct an actual design project could be a reason. A common concern is that, technically, this plan is quite difficult to apply as a mandatory guidance in the urban regeneration process for
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two reasons raised by Aiping Guo (2007): on the one hand, original existing colours collected from the actual environment are mainly based on photography, which carries a high risk of inaccuracy; on the other hand, colours from the ‘recommended palette’ would be inaccurate when they are painted on the façades; moreover, they would fade as time passed. Therefore, the Colour Plan would become inaccurate and even misleading as to the actual urban colour of the environment (Chen and Deng, 2011). Thus, Aiping Guo (2013) argues that the authority should leave more creative space to the designers to adjust colour within various circumstances.

Figure 6-24 Recommended Palette
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2004b)
To sum up, considering the complexity of colour in an urban space, spatial configuration is the core of the CP. Meanwhile it is highly recommended by scholars to integrate the design with the site-based urban environment. Since the chromatic environment cannot be carefully calculated but requires a detailed survey and analysis in a real project, it is therefore very important to grasp the yardstick of the colour plan on the levels of the comprehensive plan, regulatory plan and site plan, and to leave more creative possibilities to the designers. As a new, emerging, planning aid, a Colour Plan has many advantages. Firstly, it is a specific plan about one individual urban spatial issue – colour, which would remind planners and government officials about urban environmental colour before they make any decision; secondly, although the detailed methodology to apply an urban colour plan into an actual project needs to be discussed in the future, it is a constructive attempt to support specific planning for individual urban issues.

6.4.5 Purple Line Plan

Initially, the PLP was established in Harbin in 2006 to protect and conserve historic urban sites. There are 245 protected buildings existing in Harbin, and the purpose of the Purple Line Plan (2006b) is to clarify the protective realms and regeneration guidelines for these protected buildings. From the aspect of regulating scale, compared with the ASP and CP, the PLP areas are the smallest, which emphasizes historical conservational sites instead of other urban regeneration districts. From this point of view, the overall area of the PLP conforms closely to the Conservation Zone in the ASP. Meanwhile the PLP at the neighbourhood level enhances the protection of historic buildings and provides a buffer zone (Control Zone) for a smooth connection between historical sites within the universal urban context, meanwhile this ‘smooth connection’ is guaranteed by ASP on the city-wide level.
A Purple Line Plan provides four basic principles:

- **Integration**: via the protection of both historic buildings and the environment around them, the PLP engages to maintain the integrated historic areas, their original historic features and characteristics.

- **Variation**: based on the considerations about various architectural patterns, original features and environmental factors, the PLP identifies two types of planning zoning – Core Zone and Control Zone – to protect historic areas.

- **Rationality**: the protected areas should be rational and appropriate. The protective proportion should be large enough to protect the entire historic area effectively; however, it cannot be too large so that it obstructs rational urban regeneration on surrounding plots.

- **Operability**: for the building regeneration and new construction in Core Zones and Control Zones, the PLP should provide precise and detailed guidelines to guarantee the maintenance and regulation of historic buildings.

Based on the zoning mechanism, the PLP identifies 14 historic cultural areas and 6 historic townscape areas in Harbin. For each of them, the PLP provides detailed guidelines about the height of buildings, décor colours, architectural styles, etc. From the aspect of content, there are overlaps between the PLP, CP and ASP; however, the area of a PLP is much smaller that of the CP and ASP, which merely cover the most sensitive historic areas in Harbin. From the aspect of boundary, as
seen in Figure 6-25, the purple lines are arranged based on the location of specific buildings instead of coinciding with the central axis of streets, and such a pattern could be regarded as echoing the principle of ‘Rationality’.

For contents, a PLP clarifies general guidelines of both the Core Zone and the Control Zone:

- **Core Zone**
  
  Article 01: Any new building is forbidden. If subsidiary facilities of protected buildings have to be constructed, the protective guidelines must be applied strictly.

  Article 02: Three basic parameters for stakeholders to renovate original protected buildings are the original dimensions, original height and the original pattern of façades.

  Article 03: The pattern of historic façades and original trees must be protected. Architectural colour and style should conform to the originals.

  Article 04: To demolish the inharmonious newly-built constructions.

  Article 05: To retain the original spatial layout.

- **Control Zone:**

  Article 06: Historic buildings should be protected and renovated appropriately; the colour and style of new buildings should coordinate with the original buildings.

  Article 07: To limit the constructions of new buildings strictly. The height, style, volume and colour need to harmonize with the features of integrated areas.

  Article 08: Within 50m. from the boundary of the Core Zone, the height of new buildings in the Control Zone should not exceed the maximum height of historic buildings in the Core Zone.

  Article 09: Only low-density developments are allowed in the Control Zone.

  Article 10: Architectural style must harmonize with surrounding historic features.

  Article 11: The basic guidelines of development can be revised to some extent; however, the whole environment must be kept harmonious.

Since the 1990s, new buildings surrounding historic ones used to be designed with modern features and the historic characteristics ignored. The PLP therefore established buffer areas (Control Zones) surrounding the original protected buildings
which were defined in the previous version of *Ordinance of Protected Buildings and Blocks in Harbin* (see Chapter 5.4.1) to avoid such neglect. From the aspect of implementation, stakeholders are generally satisfied with its effect for two main reasons:

“The influential realm of the PLP is small and it [is] therefore easily controlled; meanwhile, due to the crucial value of protected buildings, the RDP legalizes relevant guidelines to protect these buildings and circumjacent ones” (ILG 07).

Besides the effects on new buildings in Control Zones, as introduced in Section 6.3.4, the majority of buildings in urban key areas are experiencing a new wave of refurbishments, especially those in Control Zones. By adding ornamental structure to the façade, the government aims to enhance the historical and cultural identity of the Control Zone; most importantly, these ornamental structures are selected based on specific local features instead of uniform European and Russian style; for instance, the ornamental structures round the Confucian Temple are designed according to a Chinese traditional pattern to decorate the gables and eaves. More detailed regulations are elaborated as site-specific guidelines, and will be introduced in Chapter Seven for specific sample sites.

### 6.5 CASE STUDIES ABOUT HARBIN URBAN CHARACTER

Based on the above analysis of the urban character of Harbin and combined with discussions about China’s planning context in Chapter Five, in this section, cases selected for study will be illustrated. The criteria for selecting cases should involve two aspects: various historical periods and development marks, and the various overlays of the regulations.

From the aspect of history, maps depicting distinct construction periods in Harbin are illustrated in Figure 6-26. These six schematic historical maps were drawn based on six master plan maps from various historical periods, which indicate the evolution of urban construction. New urban areas emerged part by part during the historical process. Cases are selected from these distinct periods in order to demonstrate historical development periods and urban regeneration patterns.

From the aspect of regulation layers, cases are selected from both regulated and unregulated areas. Comparison between the outcomes of regulations in both areas will reveal the implementations of regulation, and will be described in Chapter Seven.
Meanwhile, for the regulated areas, since the locations are arranged within various zoning control areas (four levels of control in the ASP, three levels of the CP, and two zoned as a PLP), the effects on different levels of control within one of the regulation types (e.g. four different levels of control in the ASP) can be illustrated using the comparison.

Literally, for each historical period, cases should be selected from both regulated and unregulated areas and from each level of control within one type of regulation respectively. However, based on such mathematic permutations and combinations, the possible number of cases would be more than one hundred. In this research, due to the limitation of human resource and time, ten sample areas are selected based on the major criteria mentioned above, which involve all historical and political issues (see Table 6.1).
Harbin introduction and case studies

Figure 6-26 Illustration of Urban Development and Location of Samples
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007a)
Figure 6-27 Illustrations of Character Regulations in Harbin
Source: The Author
Table 6-1: Selected cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical periods</th>
<th>Architectural Style Plan</th>
<th>Colour Plan</th>
<th>Purple Line Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Historical periods
1: 1903-1917
2: 1917-1930
3: 1930-1946
4: 1946-1956
5: 1956-2004
E/P: entirely regenerated after emergence/ partly reserved

Architectural Style Plan
1: Conservation Zone
2: Control Zone
3: Coordination Zone
4: Development Zone

Colour Plan
1: Conservation Zone
2: Circumjacent Zone
3: Macro-control Zone

Purple Line Plan
1: Core Zone
2: Control Zone

Source: The Author

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

Harbin is a typical modern city in China with a colonial history that left significant marks on its current urban character. In the historical central area, especially on Central Avenue and Jingyu Street, the street network and buildings have remained as one hundred years ago. However, with the extension of urban development, a majority of urban areas are occupied by multi-story residential buildings with a uniform pattern of layout that emerged and regenerated from the 1950s to the 1980s. Rapid urbanism generated large-scale residential communities surrounding the central urban areas, and these large-scale projects, as in other Chinese cities, began increasingly to intrude into the urban central areas during the
last decade. With the development of techniques and materials since the 1990s, especially the application of insulated glazing, traditional architectural styles were challenged. With more attention being paid to aspects of aesthetics and culture, new under-construction buildings started to express historical symbols via modern approaches whilst constructed landmark buildings were refurnished by adding new external details on the façades and roofs.

Following the introduction to Harbin’s urban character, this section also explained local regulations about urban character combined with Harbin’s local background. These regulations emphasized aspects of architectural style, urban colour and historical conservation, which conform to existing regulations about character in Harbin. Meanwhile, these backgrounds to the ordinances are supplementary explanations of their operational mechanisms and contents previously set out in Chapter 5.3. From a consideration of the main influential aspects of these regulations, based on the summarized 19 varieties in Chapter 3.4.3 (see Table 3-10), the regulating realm of four main implementary regulations is categorized in Table 6.2. To test the implementation of these regulations in Chapter Eight, this catalogue will be referred to and each vertical list discussed as an integrated unit\(^1\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulatory Plan</th>
<th>Architectural Style Plan</th>
<th>Colour Plan</th>
<th>Purple Line Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typomorphology</td>
<td>Typomorphology</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
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<td>Street network</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>Street frontages</td>
<td>Street frontages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plot series position</td>
<td>Variation (Streets)</td>
<td>Variation (Buildings)</td>
<td>Shape and size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shape and size</td>
<td>Street frontages</td>
<td>Colours and materials</td>
<td>Corner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building position</td>
<td>Shape and size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>Corner</td>
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<td>Corner</td>
<td>Boundary features</td>
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<td>Boundary features</td>
<td>Variation (Buildings)</td>
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<td>Architectural Forms</td>
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<td>Extensions</td>
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<td>Non-residential buildings</td>
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<td>Degree of elaboration</td>
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<td>Architectural Forms</td>
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<td>Colours and materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Construction</td>
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**Source:** The Author

Since these regulations might overlap their coverage in some aspects, therefore, in order to discuss fully the implementation of the individual regulations concerning

\(^1\) Some varieties might be categorized into more than one regulation since some varieties are defined and influenced by more than one regulation.
urban character, this research generated a catalogue (Table 6.3) to point out the varieties which are regulated by individual rules and, alternatively, regulations which dominate the outcomes of urban character varieties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulatory Plan</th>
<th>Architectural Style Plan</th>
<th>Colour Plan</th>
<th>Purple Line Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street network</td>
<td>Street frontages</td>
<td>Colours and materials</td>
<td>Decorational Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot series position</td>
<td>Boundary features</td>
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<td>Extensions</td>
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<td>Building position</td>
<td>Degree of elaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>Construction</td>
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</table>

**Source: The Author**

The next chapter will come to the comparisons between regulations of urban character and their actual implementation within ten selected urban sites in Harbin. Through such empirical comparisons, successful connections and gaps between rules and outcomes will be revealed as evidence in Chapter Eight to discuss the operation and implementation of planning regulations in the modern Chinese city.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE AREAS IN HARBIN
CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE AREAS IN HARBIN

7.1 INTRODUCTION

To follow the introductions about Harbin’s urban character and regulations, in this chapter, implementations of regulations in ten selected urban sites are elaborated to provide evidence for this research. These ten sites are located in diverse historical backgrounds and they are constructed and controlled by diverse regulations. By analysis of the local characteristics of these ten districts, processes involved in their formation and development can be clearly identified.

Using the logic of ‘background – regulating – analysis’, each sample is discussed based on four aspects: local context, historical evolution, local regulations and implementation. To compare the actual effects to the principles and contents of regulations within each sample and to consider their original historical evolutions, the evidence about which guidance of the regulations exerted effects and which ones did not will be generated as conclusions at the end of each sample-based analysis. Thus, a discussion about the effectiveness of China’s current planning system for local character can then proceed in Chapter Eight.
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

Figure 7-1: Location of Sample A
Source: Google Earth (2011)

Figure 7-2: Location of Sample A and its historical morphology
Source: Based on various cartographic sources

Figure 7-3: Illustration of Street Network
Source: The Author
7.2 SAMPLE A

7.2.1 Local Context

The site of Sample A is located in the Central Avenue historical area (see Figure 7-1) which was one of the original parts of Harbin in 1898 and has experienced several urban regenerations during the last twenty years. During these regenerations, the historic features have been preserved and regenerated well. As the representative of a Harbin historic area, Sample A represents obvious historic features including the morphology of plots and styles of architecture. In this site, the Regulatory Detailed Plan (RDP), architectural style plan, colour plan, and Purple Line all exert their influence, thus the actual outcomes of urban regeneration are the overlap of these regulations.

Many original buildings have existed in this area since one hundred years ago, and during the last century, this area witnessed six versions of the town plan and several processes of regeneration planning, with the inhabitants transformed from its initial builder (Russian) to its ruler (Japanese) and to its current user (Chinese). However, all historical plans for this sample were nearly the same – from the layout of the block to the land-use. As illustrated in Figure 7-2, the left picture is cited from the Town Plan in 1903, whilst the right one is of the current blocks and streets (in 2010); no obvious change happened during the last century from the aspect of street network and plots. Meanwhile as introduced in Chapter 6.3.2, such a typomorphology of street network (Figure 7-3) is one of the historical patterns in Harbin that has been preserved. These rectangular block patterns are a common type in original Harbin (in modern cities, the most common shape is square instead of rectangular). The advantages of this pattern have been mentioned in Chapter 6.3.2. Given the weather situation in Harbin, the rooms which are facing south are the most comfortable, whilst the ones facing west and east are chilly in the winter. Therefore, this block pattern could guarantee that more rooms face south. The same pattern appears in Sample G (another historic district) as well.

From the aspect of historical development, Sample A can be separated into five parts: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (see Figure 7-1). Each part represents various features. Part 1 and Part 3 are historic buildings which are located along the Central Avenue and transformed into retail stores; Parts 2 and 4 are newly constructed buildings from the
1980s and the façades were redecorated in the Chinese Baroque style in 2007 and 2010 respectively. Part 5 is a modern high-rise hotel with shopping mall from the ground floor to the sixth floor. To analyse the height of these buildings, although this sample was initially occupied by low-density historic buildings, some plots have already been regenerated into a high-density modern building. As an illustration of the existing height in Sample A (see Figure 7-4), the height of buildings declines with the reducing distance from the Central Avenue, in this way, from the view line on the avenue, the height of the modern buildings does not exert negative influences on the historic skyline. Meanwhile, more than the height of buildings, the reuse of these historic buildings in Part 1 and Part 3 required extra space on the upper floors, which were also set back from the street façade in order to reduce the apparent height of the buildings (Figure 7-5).

As introduced in Chapter 6.3.4, the historic architectural style in Harbin is mainly composed by Western Baroque, Classicalism, Renaissance, Art Nouveau, Eclecticism, etc. The same as other historic buildings along the Central Avenue, buildings in Part 1 and Part 3 still maintain the historic Eclecticism features, and they have been preserved well during the last one hundred years. Whilst Part 2 and Part 4 have undergone refurbishments during the last twenty years, the modern structure of these buildings was overlaid by historical symbols. These buildings in Parts 2 and 4 are initially designed as normal residential buildings in the 1980s with square shaped windows and uniform height on each floor and whose façades and parapets have been refurbished to imitate their adjacent historic buildings. Since the structure of the buildings have not changed, therefore the original square-shaped windows are covered on its left and right side by fake walls to reduce their horizontal dimension, meanwhile an ornamental window lintel on the top and windowsill on the bottom are added to imitate the historical vertical pattern. An ornamental cornice is added on the façade between the ground floor and the first floor (its location is higher than the actual structure between the ground floor and the first floor) to raise the visual height of the ground floor, which conforms to the proportion of the historical buildings. Ornamental eaves and parapets are constructed as well. In detail, the colour and materials of these refurbished façades harmonize with surrounding historical features (see Figure 7-6). Part 5 is a new modern building with 33 stories and the façade and materials represent typical modern features. From the aspect of architectural style, Parts 1 to 4 present a comparative harmonious ambience, whilst Part 5 shows the
opposite character.

Figure 7-4: Illustration of Height
Source: The Author

Figure 7-5: New constructions on the upper floor were set back from the façade
Source: The Author

Figure 7-6: Refurbished façades of Part 4
Source: Harbin Municipal Planning Bureau
7.2.2 Regulations

In the Harbin Comprehensive Plan (2003), the Central Avenue area is mentioned as:

“The Central Avenues and Jingyu Street should preserve historical characters and be planned on overall considerations of entire areas to promote an urban image” Chapter 3, Article 24.

The RDP, as illustrated in Figure 7-7, defines major plots in Sample A as having a commercial function - C 21 (red colour) due to the commercial benefit of this location and a small proportion with a residential function - R 211 (yellow colour). Meanwhile, due to the long history of this area, the quantitative limitations about FAR, height and density are not provided in Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Table 7.1). In fact, all the ground floors of the buildings in Sample A are designed as retail stores, restaurants or other commercial functions. R 21 buildings are designated as a mixed-use (see Figure 7-6). Therefore, from this point of view, the definition of land-use in the RDP is based on the dominant function, whilst mixed uses are permitted. From the aspect of quantitative indicators, the RDP merely provided relevant indicators for Part 5 area in 2005 (the last version of the RDP for this area), before the construction of the Mykal Tower in 2006; whilst the other parts of Sample A are regulated based on their existing situations – change of height or density is forbidden in Parts 1 to 4.

Table 7-1: Regulatory detailed indicators of Sample A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot Serial Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional code</td>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>R 21+C 21</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>C21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (hectare)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor area ratio (FAR)</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limitation (m)</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance and Exit</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>————</td>
<td>South, North</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2005)

---

1 C21 and R21 represent the planning function of plots – C21 represents a commercial zone and R21 represents a Class 2 residential zone (compared with Class 1 residential zone – low density buildings with a fully-equipped service facility).
Figure 7-7: Regulations of Sample A
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The architectural style plan (ASP) defines Sample A as a Conservation Zone. Based on the introduction in Chapter 6.4.1, relevant guidelines for the Sample A site are as follows:

- New building is forbidden within the Sample A area.
- Original trees must be protected.
- Maintenance of buildings must conform to their original architectural styles.
- The buildings which disturb the architectural style of the Conservation Zone must be demolished on a schedule.
- The new spaces which are due to the demolition of original buildings should be transformed into green space for lower density and more open activity spaces created in historical areas.
- For local residents, any behaviour which would lead to a disturbance of the historical architectural style must be stopped sternly.

For these guidelines, the ASP merely provides general principles to avoid the disturbances of modern urban regeneration to historical architectural styles. However, besides the preservation of historic buildings, there are also many regenerated buildings in the Sample A area (e.g. Parts 2, 4 and 5), whilst neither a precise guideline for constructive suggestions nor schematic illustrations for the regeneration are provided by the ASP.

The Colour Plan (CP) defines Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Sample A as a Conservation Zone, whilst Part 5 is excluded from the CP zone. Based on the ordinance of the CP, architectural colour of Parts 1 to 4 should be designated as “beige + white” and the material of façades should be covered by lime. Technically, since the CP is formulated based on Harbin’s historical urban colour – the architectural colour of protected buildings, and whilst a majority of Sample A area consists of these protected buildings, therefore the appointed colours in the CP are partly formulated as the existing colour in this area. In other words, Sample A is a “model” of the Colour Plan.

The Purple Line Plan (PLP) defines Parts 1, 3, 4 and the majority of Part 2 as the Core Zone, and one residential building in Part 2 as the Control Zone; the same as the CP, Part 5 is excluded from the PLP zone (see Figure 7-7). Based on the PLP, the
Core Zone and Control Zone in Sample A are summarized as:

- **Core Zone**

  Any new building is forbidden. If the subsidiary facilities of protected buildings have to be constructed, they must be limited to their original area and height. The pattern of the historic façade must be protected. Original trees must be protected.

- **Control Zone**

  Inharmonious buildings should be demolished or refurbished.

  The height, scale and pattern of the façade should respect the historic features.

  Within 50 m. from the boundary of the Core Zone, the height of new buildings must not exceed the height of the historic buildings.

### 7.2.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The height of Parts 1, 3 and 4 is 20 metres and morphology represents the same historical pattern as one century ago, whilst the maximum height of Part 2 is 70 metres (22 storeys) and the height of Part 5 is around 110 metres (33 storeys). In general, the height of Sample A presents a trend that the part which is nearest to Central Avenue is low and close to “human scale”, whilst the part which is far away from Central Avenue is high (Figure 7-4). This increasing density conforms to the sequence of development.

For the architectural style, besides the existing historic buildings, as newly constructed building, the architectural style of Part 5 is influenced by the architectural style of Parts 1 to 4. From the aspect of the façade, it presents many similarities and symbols which are the same as other historic buildings within Sample A. The shape of windows is rectangular and every three horizontal windows compose a vertical group to imitate the vertical pattern of many local historic façades (as introduced in 6.3.4); the façades of the podium emphasize the vertical dimension as well. Although the scale and volume is distinct from historical buildings in Parts 2 and 4, considering the sight line along the street, Part 5 extends the identifiable spatial features of Parts 1 to 4.

Architectural colour and materials in Part 1 and podiums in Part 3 are harmonious since the original façades of the protected buildings are well maintained to achieve their original appearance; whilst in Parts 2 and 4, repeated redecorations
have been processed aiming to refurbish these regenerated buildings into harmonious appearances with historic features. The materials of the façade in Parts 1, 3 and 4, as well as the podiums in Part 2, are brick and lime mortar on the surface, and the dominant hue is beige and light grey; meanwhile, cornices and the frames of windows are painted white (see the sample building in Figure 7-6). Unexpectedly, although Part 5 is a modern high-rise building newly constructed in 2006 and the material of the façade is polished marble, its external colour was chosen as beige instead of the universal white colour on modern buildings.

From the aspect of historic conservation, Parts 1, 3 and 4 represent obvious historical character in their architectural style and pattern of façade. However, the main part of the high-rise residential building in Part 2 is typical modern style, although its podium has been refurbished with historical features. For Part 5, its colour pays considerable respect to its surrounding historical features, nevertheless its volume and scale is distinct from the historical environment.

7.2.4 Implementation

Due to the previous versions of conservation rules and the detailed considerations during the last decades, the historical character of Parts 1 to 4 was preserved well. Part 5, as a new urban regeneration project, also represents the considerable respect paid to the historical features.

For the RDP, as illustrated in Figure 7-7, the application of the RDP is based on original blocks without integrating, therefore the original pattern of blocks is retained and urban texture is still maintained by small-scale parcels. From the aspect of morphology, the buildings along Central Avenue that still keep their original heights and volumes remain the same as one hundred years ago. Although new buildings emerged and regenerated during the last century and the height of new buildings rose, all raised parts stand back from Central Avenue (as illustrated in Figure 7-4 and Figure 7-5), therefore the original street space is not broken by the higher roof or increasing height. Due to such staged increase in height, the street space still maintains its original spatial interface and ambience.

However, it has to be mentioned that all this conservation of historical character is not due to the RDP, the CP or the PLP, because the time when these buildings emerged was much earlier than the establishment of current regulations, all outcomes
have come from previous individual interactions. A governmental official explained this phenomenon:

“The Central Avenue Area is a core district for Harbin, therefore all regeneration activities are considered delicately by participants even if there is no overall regulation to direct the regeneration” (ILG 05).

This is a good reason to explain the high-rise building in Part 2 which emerged in the 1990s. Although the height of Part 4 is obviously higher than the average height of this historic area and since its location is far away from Central Avenue and the height would not cause a dramatic interruption for the avenue, designers raised the maximum height of this project in the 1990s. Such phenomena also happened in other parallel plots which were regenerated in the same period (see Figure 7-8).

Distinct from existing buildings in Part 2, the high-rise building in Part 5 is challenged by scholars due to its considerable height. Although the height of Part 5, in the RDP (see Table 7.1), reaches the maximum height of civil architecture\(^1\), which obviously disturbs the height of the entire area, however, it could not be confirmed as a violation of the RDP. The only issue that should be debated is the implication of the figure “120 metres”. The same phenomenon also exists in the Sample B area. For such projects, the scholar defines them as “legal but irrational” (IA 08).

For the architectural style plan, architectural style in Parts 1 to 4 completely conforms to the basic principle of the ASP: “the style of new-eclecticism is a main developing direction of architectural style in historical areas”. This is no surprise because the root of this principle is based on existing style in most crucial historical areas in Harbin (the Central Avenue and the Jingyu Street). Referring to the illustration in Figure 7-6, refurbished architectural style represents extremely satisfactory outcomes for scholars and officials. However, such refurbishment projects are headed by architects without precise coding guidelines, therefore such regeneration is extremely reliant on the personal ability of individual architects and risks of indeterminate randomness exist. Part 5, although it represents sufficient respect for historical features, is, however, one parcel in the Conservation Zone of the ASP, especially as a building (in 2006) after the establishment of the ASP (2005). It obviously violates all ASP guidelines. The reasons, the official from the Planning

\(^1\) Maximum height of civil architecture is limited to 120 metres by GB50016.
Authorization Section of Harbin Municipal Planning Bureau explained, were:

“The ASP clarified that the guidelines could be revised based on necessary reasons with the authorization of the Local Planning Bureau. For the authorization of this project, we consider more aspects instead of merely the character issues” (ILG 04).

An academic researcher points out that:

“More aspects mainly points to the economic benefit due to the value of this location” (IA 06).

The colour and material completely conform to the guidelines for the colour plan, whilst the reason is the same as for the ASP: the existing urban colour along Central Avenue is the evidence used to create the guidelines for historic buildings. However, unexpectedly, out of the CP area, Part 5 also chose the same dominant hue as regulated by the CP to compose a more harmonious local environment.

For the Purple Line Plan, the maintenance and regeneration of buildings in the Core Zone completely conforms to the guidelines of the PLP; whilst in the Control Zone, the high-rise buildings in Part 2 appear to violate the guideline: “within 50 m. from the boundary of the Core Zone, the height of new buildings shall not exceed the height of historic buildings.” However, this building was erected in the 1990s, before the establishment of the PLP (2006). Technically, due to the existing high-rise building in Part 2, the Core Zone has to make a concession when drawing the boundaries, this is confirmed by a participant in the establishment of the local PLP: “Existing high-rise buildings are excluded from the Core Zone of the PLP due to their modern pattern, although those parcels were initially defined as being within the core area” (ILG 05).
Figure 7-8: Regulations and Conservation in Sample A
Source: The Author
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

From the analysis of Sample A, although some redevelopments happened before the establishment of the relevant regulations, the outcomes have been comparatively satisfactory and the overall implementation of the regulations is satisfactory as well. One reason is that the Central Avenue area is treated as an official representation of urban character, therefore many regulations and guidelines are formulated based on the existing characteristics of this district, and therefore the conformity of outcomes and guidelines could be guaranteed.

However, three issues of regulations should be mentioned. For the ASP and the CP, the new building in Part 5 violates some ASP guidelines whilst over-fulfilling the CP requirements. This is a universal phenomenon which could be compared to a double-edged sword: on the one hand, higher density and FAR of projects in valuable sites lead to economic benefit for developers and government which even transcends the violation of regulations; on the other hand, the ornamental façades and other external features of these buildings very carefully consider the surrounding character, even exceeding the regulations in some cases. For the PLP, as well as other regulations in other samples, the zone might be adapted based on the concession for the existing environment. For the regeneration of buildings, due to the variety of professional skills of designers, indeterminate randomness is unavoidable. Compared to the projects in the Central Avenue area, such risk would be more obvious in other less crucial areas.
7.3 SAMPLE B

7.3.1 Local Context

Sample B is located on the southern bank of the Songhua River. As its location is in the central part of the south bank, the appearance of this sample would influence the entire townscape and skyline of Harbin’s waterfront district. The Songhua River defines the western boundary of Sample B whilst the Youyi Road defines its eastern boundary; to the east of this area, there are tracts of residential blocks which were constructed since the 1920s and regenerated in the 1990s. To the south of Sample B, there are several high-rise buildings which used to be the main features dominating the skyline in the waterfront district; and to the north of this area, there is public green space (Figure 7-9).

Since its location is close to the Songhua River (around 100 metres), therefore this district used to be reserved as a green area for access to the view of the Songhua River by previous comprehensive plans. Therefore, the development of this area was forbidden until the latest version of the Harbin Comprehensive Plan in 2003. In this way, neither the Sample B nor surrounding plots involve any historic building.

Since 2006, Sample B has witnessed a high density urban regeneration project. Currently the Sample B area comprises two multi-storey buildings and four skyscrapers, including two 42-storey buildings and two 39-storey buildings respectively, whilst the average height of these four buildings is around 150m. (Figure 7-10).
Figure 7-9: Location of Sample B
Source: Google Earth (2011)

Figure 7-10: CGI of Sample B
Source: Harbin Municipal Planning Bureau (2010)
7.3.2 Regulations

Figure 7-11: Regulations of Sample B
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
In the last version of the Harbin Comprehensive Plan (2003), the development principle of Harbin clarified that: “The height of buildings locating in the waterfront district must be controlled strictly” (Chapter 3, article 24). However, distinct from previous versions, the current Comprehensive Plan (2004) transformed the land-use of Sample B from a Reserved Zone to a Residential Zone, and this has already been embodied in the RDP (see Figure 7-11: Regulations of Sample B).

The RDP of this area, following the Comprehensive Plan, defines its land-use as R 21, however, more detailed quantitative indicators of the RDP remain unpublished and the government refused to provide them during the interview. From other related documents, some quantitative indicators were found as follows, however, the most sensitive indicator – height – could not be found from any official document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function code</th>
<th>R 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Use Function</td>
<td>Class 2 Residential Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (hectare)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor area ratio (FAR)</td>
<td>6.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
<td>35.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Harbin Municipal Statistic Bureau (2009)**

The architectural style plan defines Sample B as a Development Zone (see Figure 7-11), therefore the guidelines for this area can be cited from the ASP as:

- The architectural style in Sample B should be considered as one part of an integrated urban style.
- Based on the cultures and historical factors in the Sample B area, the building style should choose a modern pattern as the dominant style.
- As a crucial area in Harbin, the architectural style should predict the future of development and be cited as a model by other Development Zones.

From this point of view, the buildings which are located within Sample B are not restricted by specific architectural styles, whilst new attempts and predictions are
encouraged. Therefore, in this area, the architectural styles are encouraged to present modern techniques and materials which are in keeping with the current era.

The colour plan defines Sample B as the Circumjacent Zone which, as in the Conservation Zone, is involved in a Key Control Zone as well. Meanwhile, since Youyi Road is one of the fifteen Key Control Streets in Harbin Colour plan, therefore the colour of this sample site is controlled by the CP using the Linear Radiation Approach (see Chapter 5.4.4). The main building on this road is the Shangri-la Hotel (outside Sample B) and its dominant colour is beige, therefore the proposed colour of the Sample B area is fixed as light beige + white.

A Purple Line Plan does not cover this area.

7.3.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The local government refused to provide a RDP, however, via the statistic from the Harbin Municipal Statistical Bureau, the FAR of this area is as high as 6.97. Although this height could not be seen as illegal due to the absence of data from legal acts, debates have never stopped since the first cornerstone was laid. The Head of the Municipal Consulting Committee verified that the Deputy Director of Harbin Planning Bureau used to concede on informal occasions that the height of Sample B was not rational, but that it does not violate any planning act:

“The initial planning proposal of this area (Sample B) in the Comprehensive Plan forbids high density; however, the current design scheme was authorised after relevant acts (the RDP) were revised” (IA 01).

The Director of the Harbin Planning Bureau also confirmed the legal status of Sample B:

“The rationality of such height should be judged from many other aspects and requirements of society; anyway, the procedures of authorization completely conform to existing planning acts” (ILG 01).

About the revision of the previous RDP to increase the density and height, the Director refused to answer.

The architectural style of Sample B is represented as modern style, whilst considerable historical symbols are cited and emerged on the external façade. Although the construction of the entire building is the same as other modern high-
rise buildings – interior height on each floor is no more than 2.9 metres, etc., however, the façade of the buildings present obvious vertical and horizontal factors to imitate Harbin’s historical style (see 6.3.4). From the aspect of features on the external façade, these buildings do not apply too much construction, except several horizontal ornamental cornices every eight to twelve stories. Technically, through a specific design plan for each apartment (as samples in Figure 7-12), bay windows and the irregular shape of each apartment provide plentiful diversification on the façade, especially the pilaster patterned balconies which are due to the hemicycles. Meanwhile, this pattern of façade became a universal style in many new high-rise buildings around 2007 and reappears in the following samples.

![Figure 7-12: Pattern of apartments and façade in Sample B](image)

Source: Based on various cartographic sources

The CP defines the dominant colour of Sample B as light beige, which is the actual situation.

The Purple Line Plan does not exert any effects in this area.

### 7.3.4 Implementation

From the aspect of the regulations and limitations of the RDP, the development of Sample B does not violate any issues; however, the content of the RDP is heavily challenged by scholars.

There is no relevant ordinance about height in the waterfront area in Harbin, however, via a wider review from the Guangzhou Comprehensive Plan (2005): “the height of buildings located within 100 metres from the embankment should not exceed 24 metres; whilst the height of buildings which are located from 100 metres to 200 metres from the embankment should not exceed 42 metres.” Based on this, this project obviously opposes such planning methodology to protect the view of the river source. For the irrationality of its height, one planner explained that:
“When a proposed project violates existing ordinances and acts, a revision of these regulations might be processed in Harbin. The probability of revision is determined by the value of the project” (IA 07).

In general, the RDP is an act and already has full control over the development; however, this control is coming from the revisions of the relevant article. From this point of view, the legalized RDP could still be treated as a puppet when facing a huge economic challenge. The fact has certified this economic benefit – the price of these high-rise apartments is the highest one in Harbin.

The ASP encourages new modern styles in this area, and the design schemes indeed represent new styles with considerable respect for historical symbols. Although whether or not such a new style could be counted as one to guide the direction of further development has not reached a consensus. Such an attempt indeed influenced the design concepts of other new buildings since 2007. From this point of view, the ASP is complied with completely, and such new styles leave obvious marks during the historical progress of urban evolution.

The CP fixed the dominant colour of this site, which has already been complied with. A Purple Line Plan is absent in this area.
7.4 SAMPLE C

7.4.1 Local Context

Sample C is a modern residential community located within the centre of the Daoli District. Due to the history of the Daoli District, which was planned as the main residential district of Harbin in 1903, Sample C is encircled by large areas of multiple-story residential building with a historical street network. Until an urban regeneration in 2004, the main function of Sample C was as a warehouse and administration office for a branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Today, this historical warehouse has been replaced by modern high density residential buildings and a big shopping mall, leaving one preserved water tower and fragments of the historical railway as a memorial. Since the entire Sample C area was reserved as a closed warehouse zone until 2004, the urban texture of surrounding areas isolated this plot. Today, a new morphology has been established distinguishing it from the surrounding ones (Figure 7-13).

In this way, Sample C became a brand new urban area with high density and a unique layout of plots. The overall structure of these plots represents as an annulus; however, the buildings are still forced to face to the south instead of the central point of the entire area (see the 2010 variant in Figure 7-13). The forms of buildings are various due to the diversity of land-use and functions: for a commercial function, the height is around 50 metres; for cultural functions and entertainment, the height is around 20 metres; for the residential functions, the height is around 100 metres. To analyse the layout of land-use, cultural facilities and entertainment are located within the centre of Sample C, which is encircled by commercial zones, meanwhile in the outer areas, the whole of Sample C is surrounded by high-rise residential buildings. Following this pattern, the entire morphology of Sample C represents a basin, with lower-height buildings in the central area and high buildings on the edge. An outcome of this pattern is that the edge of this area becomes an incompatible enclosure to isolate connections with the surrounding existing urban texture due to the dramatic disparity between heights and scale.
Figure 7-13: Evolution of Sample C
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
7.4.2 Regulations

![Regulations of Sample C](image)

**Figure 7-14: Regulations of Sample C**
Source: Based on various cartographic sources

The RDP of Sample C defines the main function of plots as a residential function and a commercial function. From current documents, there are three versions of the RDP - the 2006 version, 2009 version and 2011 version - unfortunately the initial RDP (2004) is missing. However, since the integrated site was developed in four stages (2004, 2006, 2009, 2011), therefore the absent 2004 version would not dramatically affect the comparison between regulations and final effects.

As a newly constructed planning project, the RDP in Sample C represents the obvious Chinese modern pattern: the main street network is created within the entire design realm, which ignores the surrounding original patterns of the street network. This is the root of the disappearance of historical street features in most Chinese cities. Following the Comprehensive Plan, the RDP fixed two main roads as a cross pattern, four sections are isolated from each other as well as from the surrounding
historical blocks, this new project is just a wound in the urban texture (see the satellite map in 2011, Figure 7-15). The three RDP versions (2006, 2009, and 2011) could not break this isolation from the urban texture, although technically this was impossible once the main structure had been laid out in 2004; indeed, the only revisions happened on the issues of land-use. From this point of view, the current RDP system, especially for the large scale development projects, murdered the original urban character at the level of the street network and plot.

Meanwhile, as with other RDPs, Sample C has also been regulated by quantitative indicators, see Table 7.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function code</th>
<th>C 2</th>
<th>C 3</th>
<th>R 2</th>
<th>C 2/ R 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use Function</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commercial Zone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural and Entertainment Zone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Residential Zone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixed-use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor area ratio (FAR)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
<td>&lt; 50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&lt;15</td>
<td>&lt;40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance and Exit</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Area (square metre)</td>
<td>968,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Building Area (square metre)</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Residential Land (square metre)</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Office Land (square metre)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper ground Business Services (square metre)</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground Business Services (square metre)</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2009)*
The ASP defines Sample C as a Development Zone. As with Sample B, the architectural style is not restricted by a specific pattern and new attempts and predictions are encouraged. In these districts, based on the principles of a Development Zone, the buildings are regulated by the ASP to respect the surrounding original residential blocks in Daoli District. Meanwhile the application of new techniques and materials to this site is proposed during the surrounding regeneration.
Chapter VII

The CP defines Sample C as a Macro-control Zone\(^1\). Urban colours in the Macro-control Zone are not provided by the CP, therefore the architects and the developers can dominate the decisions based on their personal experiences.

Sample C is not involved in a Purple Line Plan.

7.4.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The entire Sample C area represents a uniform and harmonious character from street to architectural style and detailed decorations on façades, thanks to the integrated plan of the entire area. However, this character is dramatically diverse compared to the surrounding urban features.

From the aspect of the RDP, although detailed statistics are hard to process due to its large scale, however, via the observations during the fieldwork, it could be generally concluded as that all development issues comply with the quantitative indicators of the RDP.

![Pattern of apartments and façade in Sample C](image)

*Figure 7-16: Pattern of apartments and façade in Sample C

Source: Based on various cartographic sources

The architectural style in Sample C is the modern style. However, distinguishing from the modern style in Sample B, the façades in this area are designed as a flat pattern instead of being highly textured to present diversity. As with other typical modern buildings, the windows and balconies occupy a larger proportion of the façades than in Harbin’s historical architectural patterns, meanwhile the windows are designed as square-shaped and the balcony is rectangular on the plan instead of a curved shape. Such features could be seen as differing from the flat façade of normal multiple-story blocks on surrounding plots.

The CP (2004) had not been applied as an ordinance before the first-stage

\(^1\) The Macro-control Zone is composed by several large newly developed residential communities in Harbin.
constructions of Sample C in 2004, therefore brick-red was chosen as the dominant colour for the façade; since the second-stage construction in 2006, as well as the third and fourth stages, beige and light grey were chosen as the dominant colour of façades. From this point of view, although there is no specific guideline about colour being provided in Sample C, the development of urban colour in this area still obeys the CP guidelines. Meanwhile, as in Part 5 in Sample A, polished marble is chosen as the main material of the façades, which conforms to current aesthetic trends.

### 7.4.4 Implementation

Although the RDP dominates the development of Sample C, and new harmonious features replace initial character within the entire planning area, however, such new and self governed character, due to the large scale planning pattern, destroys the overall urban texture (see figure ground in Figure 7-14). From this point of view, although the current RDP system is an effective and powerful approach to direct the development of large scale projects and creates new character, however, due to the natural defect of ‘zoning’ concept which draws a clear line between inside plots and outside plots, it is not an appropriate planning tool to connect characters within different planning precincts. Meanwhile, the Sample C area is outside of the urban historical areas, therefore regulations about historical features and character are basically absent or considerably general (see Figure 7-14). Without relevant guidance as evidence to direct the construction of character, the RDP, as one individual regulation, is quite limited for rationally directing evolution of local character.

For the ASP, although the principles and general guidelines of a Development Zone are the same as those in Sample B, the outcomes are different. Considering the close distance between Sample B and Sample C, such variation might lead to chaos in an Urban Development Zone. The same as the refurbishments of regeneration building, the definition of new architectural styles in a Development Zone has a high risk of being random. Meanwhile, given the comment from Marshall (2003): “good architectural design might equate to poor urban design when it is scaled up sufficiently”, the uniform architectural style on such a large scale as Sample C might equate to monotony no matter whether this style is good or not.

A CP does not cover Sample C, however, the development still conforms to the overall urban dominant colour. It should not be considered as a coincidence, but a
radiant impact. One participant in the development of Sample C confirmed this impact:

“The local colour should conform to overall urban features and the main stream of overall regenerations” (IDC 04).

7.5 SAMPLE D

7.5.1 Local Context

Sample D is located on the edge of the historical Consulate Zone and across one of the primary bridges (Anfa Bridge) in Nangang District; additionally it is a crucial junction on Dazhi Street which is treated as the main traffic trunk road in the district.

Sample D is located in one of the earliest zones in Harbin which can be traced back to the end of the 19th Century. The initial concepts of planning are based on Howard’s Garden City. Due to this conception, the pattern of plots in Sample D represents an irregular curved shape which complies with the curved shape of the railway to the west, and plots are split into four sub-plots by in sequent streets which emerge from the traffic junction: Plots 1 and 2 are involved in historical protection zones whilst Plots 3 and 4 are normal development plots whose character might be influenced by the historical features (Figure 7-18). Due to this special street network pattern, the original urban texture of this district was protected as the Protection Zone of the Middle East Railway in 2005 (Figure 7-18). Since some plots are involved in the protection zone, the local character and regulations of each plot may vary.
Figure 7-17: Historical maps of Sample D
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau

Figure 7-18: Local context of Sample D
Source: Google Earth (2011)
This sample used to involve many historic buildings, however, only a few of them survived and have been protected. In Parts A and E, there are two historic buildings – these two buildings were built around one hundred years ago in the architectural style of eclecticism which is the same as the historic ones in Sample A. Currently, according to the list of high buildings in Table 7-4, there are two outstanding high-rise buildings, in Parts B and H respectively, that dominate the overall local character in Sample D. However, these two modern buildings present distinct characteristics due to the 10-year interval between their construction (see Figure 7-20).

![Figure 7-19: Classified buildings in Sample D](image)

**Source:** The Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>Height (metre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part A</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part B</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part C</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part D</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part E</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part F</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part G</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part H</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7-4: Statistical average height of buildings in Sample D*

*Source: The Author*

Part B is a high-rise office building without balconies or other ornamental constructions on the façades. Flat roof, flat façades and continuous horizontal windows (without pilasters or walls between them) represent the typical modernist style of that period in the 1990s. Ten years later, in 2009, the façades of Part H present a more ornamental outward texture, which resembles the buildings in Sample
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

B, composed by outward bay windows and curved-shape balconies. In this way, the façade of this new building provides more external details and a sense of respect towards historical features (Figure 7-20).

![Figure 7-20: Architectural structures of Part B and Part H in Sample D](source: The Author)

The main urban colour of the sample is white and beige, except for Part H. The external colour of Part H is light brick-red, which is particularly obvious when compared to surrounding buildings. The façades within Sample D mainly choose lime mortar as the dominant material, which is in keeping with the historical features of the surrounding district.

### 7.5.2 Regulations

Based on the plots in Figure 7-18, the RDP defines these four plots as in Table 7.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot code</th>
<th>Land Use Function</th>
<th>1 Commercial Zone</th>
<th>2 Residential Zone</th>
<th>3 Mixed-use</th>
<th>4 Residential Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Floor area ratio (FAR)</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrance and Exit</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2009)*

Meanwhile, for Parts A and E Figure 7-19, the RDP mentioned that the historic buildings in Sample D area must be protected, any demolition is forbidden. However, the methods for regeneration and maintenance are not provided.
Figure 7-21: Regulations of Sample D
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The ASP defines Sample D as a Control Zone. The relevant guidelines for this area are:

The ratio of green space should be increased in order to provide a buffer zone for the connection between new architectural styles and historic ones; in order to harmonize with the architectural styles in the Conservation Zone, and to restrict the interruptions of the architectural context in the conservation zone, any new buildings or projects are forbidden in Sample D; due to the diversity of the existing status guidelines in the ASP, Sample D could be revised by local government.

Although a CP does not cover Sample D, this sample area is one part of Dazhi Street (one of the fifteen key control streets in the CP). In this way, this sample is still under the control of a CP. Based on the radiation colour methods on these Key Control Street, the main building of the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) is defined as one of the main buildings along Dazhi Street. However, ironically, the HIT building suddenly changed its dominant colour from the original beige into brick-red in 2008, and in the following year a new project Buynow Tall in Part H consecutively painted its façade brick-red as well.

A Purple Line Plan defines Plot 1 of Sample D as the Control Zone and the relevant guidelines are: only low-intensity developments are allowed within Plot 1, and these developments must harmonize with surrounding historic features; the limitations of development could be revised to some extent with authority from local government, however, the entire local character must be kept in harmony. Meanwhile, although this sample is one part of The Protection Zone of the Middle East Railway as well, there is no specific document or guidelines provided by such protection, and one government official explained that:

“The Protection Zone of the Middle East Railway is merely a name to remind the designers; no specific document was established for control or regulating” (ILG 05).

7.5.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The RDP fully controlled the development of Sample D. No quantitative requirements are violated based on the statistics obtained during the fieldwork.

For the ASP and Purple Line Plan, although they principally forbid new construction in this area, Part H was still built in 2009 after the establishment of the ASP and the PLP. More ironically, as an act, the RDP violates the guidelines of both
the ASP and the PLP. Besides the RDP, the Harbin Municipal Planning Bureau is arranging a new detailed plan for the regeneration of Plot 1 (see Figure 7-22), which includes the demolition of historic buildings in this area.

![New Green Space]

**Figure 7-22: Detailed Plan of Urban Regeneration in Sample D**  
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2011)

However, such a violation should not be regarded as the invalidity of the ASP and the PLP in Sample D due to the concessions in their guidelines: ‘guidelines could be revised to some extent with authority from local government’. From this point of view, both the ASP and the PLP provide plenty of freedom for local government to make the decisions in order to guarantee the most rational planning. However, the outcomes must be evaluated delicately.
For the CP, based on the implementation of guidelines, Sample D does not violate any regulating principles; however, the brick-red colour of Part H becomes a debating point for experts.

7.5.4 Implementation

The RDP still dominates all development issues within its coverage.

The implementation of the ASP can be revealed based on the comparison between high-rise buildings in 1998 and 2009 respectively (Figure 7-20). The design concepts of Part H and Part B present the evolution of Harbin’s high-rise buildings. To compare these two styles, the main differences between them can be revealed via the patterns of windows and balconies. Although there is no specific decoration on either façade, the shape of windows and balconies of Part H enrich the architectural characteristics and, most importantly, as discussed in Chapter 7.3.3, these characteristics are cited as Harbin original features as a transformation of the pilaster and cornices which define the vertical and horizontal dimensions.

The only exception to the CP was Part H being painted brick-red. The main building on the opposite side of Dazhi Street was repainted in this brick-red colour in 2008, therefore based on the Radiation Colour Method of the CP, this brick-red would not be confirmed as a violation; conversely to some extent, such instance could be cited to verify the effectiveness of the CP.

The only question is whether such brick-red is rational. In the Chinese planning system, an Educational Zone is excluded from both the Comprehensive Plan and the RDP; in other words, the colour of the main building of HIT is not controlled by the planning bureau, and the university owns the full power to control the development within the boundary of the Educational Zone. From this point of view, probably there should be two issues: to exclude educational buildings from the definition of ‘main buildings’ in the CP along the street; alternatively, to involve the Educational Zone within the municipal planning system.

For the Purple Line Plan, also relevant to the ASP, the degree of freedom to be provided should be clarified precisely. The concession about revision used to be applied to guarantee the rationality and applicability of these regulations; however, it should not be utilized to create a gap between regulations and implementation.

Meanwhile, based on the contents of the ASP and the PLP, the coverage of their
respective Control Zones is considerable, especially for the ASP, whilst the regulating guidelines are comparatively strict; such a large area and strict contents can lead to a high risk of contradiction and, furthermore, to the invalidity of the contents.
7.6 SAMPLE E

7.6.1 Local Context

Sample E is located within a district which emerged since the 1920s and now has already regenerated into residential districts. This site involves two main blocks: Part 1 – Sijishangdong (SJSD) residential community (2010) and Part 2 – the original industrial block and labourer’s dormitory since the 1950s (see Figure 7-23). The land-use of Part 1 and a majority of Part 2 is residential; meanwhile a commercial zone and a medical zone form a small proportion of Part 2.

The overall morphology of Sample E can be simply defined into two parts (see Figure 7-24). Part 1 used to be the site of the Harbin Flax Factory, which was one of the biggest Flax factories of China in the 1950s; therefore the buildings and architectural styles of this site used to be representative of Harbin industrial blocks. However, the regeneration development in this block since 2010 and the entire historical features have been replaced by modern features. For the current Part 1, the entire block is occupied by high-rise buildings and forms a large scale residential community which does not harmonize with surrounding original features. Since the coefficient of sunshine interval is 1.8 in Harbin\(^1\), higher buildings therefore mean larger distances between them; from this point of view, the high density development of residential communities lead to a larger urban scale (see the lower diagram in Figure 7-24). Therefore, as in another large scale development project in Sample C, the overall urban texture is interrupted.

Part 2 is a residential block which, since the 1950s, used to serve as a dormitory area for workers at the Harbin Flax Factory. Today, some residents are still living there and a majority of the original buildings and overall layout of this block still remain. The colour of Part 1 is brick-red, which is the same as Part H in Sample D, and the material is polished marble; the dominant colour combination of Part 2 is beige and white and the material on the façades is lime mortar.

\(^1\) The distance between two buildings/ the height of south building $\geq 1.8$
Figure 7-23: Local context of Sample E
Source: The Author

Figure 7-24: Morphology of Sample E
Source: The Author
The architectural form of the current Part 1 is defined by developers as neoclassicism. Technically, it is nearly the same as Part H of Sample D and Sample B: decorations on the façades are represented via the plan of the room and bay windows instead of ornamental constructions on the façades. The form of Part 2 has remained as the original typical residential pattern during Harbin’s industrial period. Due to increased needs for living space since the 1950s, the development of residential buildings focused on quantitative instead of qualitative considerations, the external appearances of buildings therefore was rarely decorated, and even the balcony became a luxury facility. In this way, such buildings differ from Harbin’s original westernized ones. The shape of the window – as in a typical westernized style – is a vertical rectangle to admit more sunshine in the winter (see the explanations in Chapter 6.3.4). Since the balcony is rare on these façades, therefore the whole building presents an extremely flat pattern without outward constructions on the façades, also the roof is flat without an ornamental parapet; from this point of view, the entire building is represented as a box. The average height of these residential buildings is around 20 metres (the original ones were 3-storey in the 1950s, and the upper three storeys added to become 6-stories in the 1980s).

The RDP of this area mainly focuses on the control of new development, Project – SJSD, therefore the quantitative indicators merely define the requirements of Part 1 (Serial Number B4-01); for Part 2 (A2), land-use planning and area are provided for further regeneration, but had not been applied yet by the end of 2011 (Table 7.6).

### Table 7.6: Control index of Sample E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot serial number</th>
<th>A2-09</th>
<th>A2-10</th>
<th>A2-11</th>
<th>A2-34</th>
<th>A2-35</th>
<th>A2-36</th>
<th>A2-37</th>
<th>B4-01</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Function code</td>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>C 51</td>
<td>C 11</td>
<td>C 65</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>S 31</td>
<td>R 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area (hectare)</td>
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<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>21.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007c)

The architectural style plan defines Part 1 as a Control Zone whilst Part 2 is a Conservation Zone.
7.6.2 Regulations

Figure 7-25: Regulations of Sample E
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
Part 1, as a Control Zone based on the ASP guidelines, any new construction or project is forbidden in the Part 1 area; meanwhile, new space which comes from the demolished buildings should be transformed into green areas. However, as an additional comment, the ASP also permits a revision of these two guidelines through authority from the local planning bureau due to specific reasons. For Part 2, as a Conservation Zone, the ASP clarifies the following guidelines for the development of this area: new building is forbidden within Part 2; original trees must be protected; maintenance of buildings must conform to their original architectural styles; the buildings which disturb the architectural style of the Conservation Zone must be demolished in a scheduled plan; the new space which comes from the demolition of original buildings should be transformed into green space for lower density and more open activity spaces in historical areas; for local residents, any behaviour which would lead to the disturbance of the historical architectural style must be stopped sternly.

Figure 7-26: Regulatory Detailed Plan Map of Sample E
Source: Harbin Municipal Planning Bureau (2007c)
The Colour Plan defines Part 2 as part of the Macro-control Zone, whilst Part 1 has no CP. For this Macro-control Zone, the CP clarifies that the urban colour of this area should remain its original historical pattern. For the refurbishment and repainting of normal buildings, the dominant colour should be beige + white; whilst for a specific brick wall of industrial buildings, the colour and materials should remain as their original pattern.

The Purple Line Plan separates the Part 2 area into two categories: the central area of Part 2 is the Core Zone whilst the external surrounding areas are a Control Zone. For the Core Zone: any new construction of buildings is forbidden; historic buildings should be renovated well and the original trees must be protected. For the Control Zone: historic buildings should be protected and renovated as well, and the colour, scale, height and style of new buildings should be in keeping with original features.

7.6.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The RDP of this area fully controlled the developments in the Part 1 area and regeneration in Part 2. From the aspect of boundary and quantitative limitations no violation was revealed during the fieldwork.

For the ASP, the Part 1 project obviously violated the first two guidelines in the Control Zone. First of all, such new buildings are forbidden by ASP in this control area; secondly, based on the description of urban texture and morphology in Chapter 7.6.1, the new project in Part 2 interrupted the urban texture of the entire original district with uniform, high-density and monotonous architectural forms (see the illustration about local morphology in Figure 7-24). However, for the same reasons as in Sample D, additional comments in the ASP permit revisions of the control guidelines, therefore this project becomes another instance of ‘legal but irrational’. Contrarily, Part 2 is generally regenerated following the guidelines for preservation in a Conservation Zone.

The CP is processed well in the Sample E area. For its controlled area, Part 2, the colour of roof and façade are protected as their original pattern, and new renovated ones are painted the proposed beige colour.

The Purple Line Plan satisfactorily protected historical features in the Part 2 area.
The implementation of the RDP to control the main aspects of Sample E, appears to contradict the basic principles of an ASP. Such contradiction between regulations reflects the same reason as the one in Sample B: in order to guarantee the flexibility and applicability of the zoning-based ASP, revisions are permitted and utilized by developers when seeking economic benefits. Therefore, such flexibility can be confirmed as one of the probable reasons leading to the gap between regulations and outcomes; meanwhile, reversions (or possibly ignorance of existing planning principles) are protected by the ex-post\(^1\) RDP.

Notably, such a protection pattern of the RDP, as in Sample C, is one of the typical planning phenomena in China today – for more economic benefits, the developer regenerates a proposed low-density area into a high-density one to earn more building area and such behaviours are protected by the government. Without considering the possible reasons, such phenomena are widely believed to be true.

For Part 1, since it is not affected by a CP, its colour is the choice of developers and architects. Actually, the colour of Part 1 is painted brick-red which is extremely similar to Part H in Sample D. Such similarity should not be seen as a coincidence, as the reason from one of the architects of SJSD (Part 2) notes:

“Large-scale, high-density buildings might prefer deep external colour to reduce the visual volume of these buildings, considering the chilly climate in Harbin, a deep warm-toned colour should be an appropriate choice” (IDI 07).

Following this reasoning, considering that they were built at nearly the same time - Part 1 of Sample E in 2010 while Part H of Sample D was finished by 2009 - there is a speculation that the government defines this brick-red as the main colour of new buildings within the Harbin area, however, no official document has yet been found to verify this speculation. However, there is a strong possibility that brick-red will be the dominant colour of high-rise buildings in Harbin in the future.

Based on the current situation, the Part 2 area complies with all regulations to conserve the local character; however, since the urban redevelopments of this area have not been processed in the last 20 years, and the redevelopment of Part 1

\(^1\) Cite to Chapter 5.5.2
finished in 2010, compared to Part 1, the further developments within Part 2 therefore cannot be guaranteed to comply completely with the existing regulations – especially the areas within the Control Zone of the PLP due to the high value of this district.
7.7 SAMPLE F

7.7.1 Local Context

The Sample F is located on the Xuefu Road and it is defined as one part of the University Town\(^1\). From the aspect of the location, this sample locates within the edge of the downtown area, and within an edge area of a planning precinct. Controls over power and implementation within these areas are usually weak. Although from the aspect of ownership, Sample F belongs to the University of Heilongjiang and the land-use is therefore defined as an Educational Zone by the RDP; the site can, however, be categorized into three parts based on the actual function: Part 1 is a commercial function, Part 2 is an industrial function and Part 3 is a residential function (Figure 7-27).

![Image of Sample F's local context](image)

**Figure 7-27: Local context of Sample F**  
*Source: Google Earth (2011)*

This site is not a historical area in Harbin, and it emerged with the establishment of the University of Heilongjiang in the 1950s. By now, all existing buildings and streets have been regenerated with the rapid urban development in this district since

\(^1\) One district locates within the city and it normally involves several universities and related service facilities, therefore the whole district can meet the daily requirements of college students and works as an individual town. It can also be named ‘Campus Town’.
the 1990s. Part 1 was built in 2003 and presents considerable architectural symbols about the local features in Harbin on the orientation façade, with an average height around 80 m. The majority of the existing buildings in Part 2 were built in the 1990s when overall planning principles emphasized quantity instead of quality, especially for the industrial projects, with an average height around 30 m. Part 3 was built in 2006 and the details of façades and roof within this part present a clearer pattern, imitative of the European style, with an average height around 20 m.

From the aspect of morphology, the density of Sample F presents a trend that Part 1>Part 2>Part 3. Since Xuefu Street locates on the west of sample F and the traffic stream guarantees the opportunity of business, therefore, Part 1 is constructed as a high-density business zone including retail stores and hotels with continuous activity façades; whilst the south part of Sample F (Part 3) is far away from the main traffic and the stream of pedestrians, therefore it is designed as a medium density residential zone. For Part 3, all residential buildings are designed according to a linear array pattern with a southern orientation and no building has a west-east orientation. Open green spaces are laid out in the centre of each housing cluster which is the same pattern as the majority of residential plots in Harbin (see Chapter 6.3.3).

The colour of the entire area is beige and light grey, whilst the materials of the majority of the façades in this sample are a covering of artificial ceramic tiles.
7.7.2 Regulations

Figure 7-28: Regulations of Sample F
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
For the RDP, although this site involves neither a research institution nor educational facilities, however, Sample F, as well as its surrounding blocks, is still categorized as an educational zone since this district is owned by Heilongjiang University. From this point of view, the RDP does not define one plot according to its practical function but its ownership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function code</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Land Use Function</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (hectare)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007c)

The ASP defines Sample F as the Co-ordination Zone in the ASP: as an extension part of the Control Zone, Urban green space in Sample F should be increased to provide more flexibility for the extension and connection between historical features in the Control Zone and the new style Development Zone. In order to harmonize with the architectural styles in the Control Zone, the new regeneration project should be limited to medium density, and the architectural style of new buildings should respect the historical features in such a Co-ordination Zone. For diversity of existing status in each district, guidelines should be revised by the local planning bureau based on rational reasons.

The CP defines Sample F as the Circumjacent Zone and suggests that the urban colour should be beige or light grey. Distinguishing from the Conservation Zone, suggestions in the Circumjacent Zone are more flexible and optional. However, as one part of College Town along the Xuefu Road, the CP emphasises that the overall colour in the College Town area should be harmonious.

No Purple Line Plan covers this site.

### 7.7.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

Since the ownership of Sample F rests with the University of Heilongjiang, and relevant planning guidelines have no overall authority to control the development of such C65 zones, the RDP can, therefore, merely limit the area, density and height of these zones. From the point of view of local character, such control is not enough to affect detailed features of the local character. From the aspect of plot pattern in Part 3,
the building layout is designed by the architects instead of directions from planning. Although the RDP left enough flexibility in the C65, the plot pattern is still typical of those in other urban areas. From this point of view, this plot design model has already become a preferred option for the majority of architects.

For the ASP, only Part 3 was regenerated after the establishment of the ASP. The regeneration project in Part 3 raises the local density from demolished flat cottages to multiple-story modern buildings. Although this raised density is still limited and acceptable, it still, however, violates the principle of the Co-ordination Zone. Besides the density, newly constructed buildings in Part 3 show considerable respect for, and imitations of, historical western architectural symbols (Figure 7-29). From the aspect of the roof, ornamental attics and the horizontal separation between the ground and the first floor, these new buildings show an abundance of Harbin’s historical features (see Chapter 6.3.4).

![Figure 7-29: Façades of Part 3 in Sample F](Source: Developer of Part 3 - XINYANG Real Estate Investment Company (2011))

Following the guidelines of the colour plan, as illustrated in Part 3 in Figure 7-29, all Parts 1, 2, and 3 are painted beige, plus ornamental white.

### 7.7.4 Implementation

The definition of land-use in the RDP is coming from the overall arrangement of the Harbin Comprehensive Plan, which is based on economic and administrative issues. Therefore, for convenience, the definition of land-use is mapped based on the ownership of both economic transactions and administration. For such reasons, the RDP could not fully control the arrangement of actual land-use within C65. Although the necessary quantitative limitation exists in Sample F, however, detailed regeneration could be autonomously induced by the university. This gap between the authorization systems has already been mentioned in Section 7.6.4 based on the
instance of the repainted colour of HIT.

For the ASP, although it does not regulate any detailed requirements for this site, Part 3 still presents many European ornamental features, which comply with the overall principles of the proposed architectural style within the whole urban area. However, for the raised density, as for previous samples, the ASP guidelines have already permitted revisions to guarantee their rationality, therefore such raised density, although violating the general principle of the Co-ordination Zone, cannot be confirmed as evidence for the invalidation of the ASP in Sample F.

For the CP, the actual colour completely conforms to the guidelines of the CP; whilst for the materials, due to the absence of guidelines, the options are wider than normal in a Circumjacent Zone. Actually, the materials of the majority of façades in this sample are artificial ceramic tiles, which are cheaper than the polished marble (as Part 5 in Sample A, Sample C and Part H in Sample E) but present nearly the same appearance. In this way, for the new buildings which are limited by budget, the ceramic tile is a good option to fulfil a normal aesthetic requirement. Such distinctive materials represent nearly the same architectural features for large-scale projects when viewed from afar.
7.8 SAMPLE G

7.8.1 Local Context

The sample G is located within the Daowai historic district which is one of the three original historic districts of Harbin. To compare with the other two historic districts, Daowai district preserved the traditional residential features. This sample is composed by two blocks which are defined by Jingyu Street, Nanxun Street, South-Second Street, and South-Fourth Street (Figure 7-30).

Sample G emerged in the 1900s and was used as a residential district for Chinese labour. During the last century, this district did not experience obvious urban regenerations until 2007; therefore, the integrated urban context was not interrupted and these features currently have already been considered by stakeholders and government officials as the resources and roots of architectural style for the future. During the urban regeneration activities since 2007, historic texture and the architectural patterns have been completely protected and preserved, and from the judgement of the finished parts of this regeneration project, this development maximises the conservation of its original features.

As in the introduction to Harbin in Chapter 6.3.2, Jingyu Street, as one of the
original commercial streets of Harbin, involves abundant physical historic buildings and psychological cultures. All roads located along it separate Jingyu Street into small sections whilst these roads extend without separation. For the single block in Sample G long sides are generally 4 to 5 times as long as the short sides, which is seldom found in other Harbin districts (Figure 7-31).

For each block, the buildings shape an enclosing boundary and form an interior courtyard. Historically, this layout is transmuted from Chinese Si Hey Yuan, whilst from the aspect of effectiveness; vertical traffic (stairs) and horizontal traffic (outside corridors) are allowed within the interior space of blocks, which guarantees the continuity and uniformity of frontage façades. For each building, all the rooms on the ground floor open to the street for business purposes, although the usage of the ground floor is residential. Most of the architecture within Sample G has two or three stories and represents the typical traditional Chinese Baroque Style in which façades are separated by stories. For Chinese Baroque, architectural façades would be decorated with separate patterns – ground floor (including entrance), first floor, upper floors, penthouse and roof. These sections are transformed to modern patterns by recent architects and have become a part of mainstream modality, especially for high-rise residential buildings in Harbin (see the illustrations of refurbishment in Chapter 6.3.5).

The dominant colour of the original Sample G is beige and light grey, with some ornamental white colour. Since the regeneration in 2007, and since the majority of the façades in Sample G are extremely long, the colour of selected façades is therefore painted as light orange or light grey to avoid a monotonous ambience. Meanwhile the material of the buildings still retains the original pattern lime mortar.
7.8.2 Regulations

Figure 7-32: Regulations of Sample G
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The RDP, based on the overall definition of the Harbin Comprehensive Plan, defines the entire Sample G as having a commercial function. The relative quantitative requirements of this sample are not available currently. However, for detailed regeneration of this area, local government established one supplementary site-based coding for land-use thereby facilitating the detailed regeneration of each individual building in Sample G as in Figure 7.33 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>Commercial function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 25</td>
<td>Hotel industry function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 34</td>
<td>Exhibition function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR 2</td>
<td>Second class commercial-residential function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 41</td>
<td>Fourth class residential function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 1</td>
<td>First class of industrial function</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7-33: Land-use Coding for Sample G**
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007b)

The ASP defines Sample G as a Conservation Zone and guidelines forbid any new building; original trees must be preserved; the maintenance and refurbishment of buildings cannot destroy their original architectural features; the existing buildings which destroy the architectural style of Sample G must be demolished and new spaces which come from original demolished buildings should be transformed into a green space.

The CP defines Sample G as a Conservation Zone and its proposed dominant colour is beige; meanwhile, since light grey occupies a considerable proportion of the
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

original historical colour, it is therefore also recommended by the CP in this area.

The PLP defines Sample G as a Core Zone and its guidelines are: new building is forbidden; the maintenance and restoration of protected buildings must preserve their original façade and spatial features.

Technically, besides these four regulations, the urban regeneration in Sample G is also regulated by one site-specific coding - *Urban Regeneration Project of Harbin Chinese-Baroque District (2007)* - and total investment in this project is around 24 million GBP. Such site-specific coding provides a detailed regeneration scheme for each individual building from their architectural structures to detailed ornamental constructions of façades and materials (Figure 7-34).

![Figure 7-34: Proposed Façades of Sample G](Image)

Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007b)

Meanwhile, this project also explored a new concept of regeneration for historic buildings in Harbin – preserve the external façades and reconstruct the internal structure. The external façades are preserved as an ornamental construction, whilst the original wooden supporting systems are replaced by reinforced concrete. In this
way, the original historical character is totally conserved whilst the new internal supporting system could guarantee the security and durability.

Figure 7-35: Regeneration of historic façades in Sample G
Source: The Author (2010)

7.8.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The RDP, especially the supplementary site-based coding of land-use, is fully applied through a survey during the fieldwork. Meanwhile, since all regenerated buildings are based on original façades and patterns, no violation emerges.

The ASP, the CP and the PLP engage to preserve local original features, which are all completely complied with by the actual development.

Meanwhile, since the existing site-based coding Urban Regeneration Project of Harbin Chinese-Baroque District (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2007) which summarized all the relevant requirements of this area provided detailed schematic diagrams via computer generation images, the outcomes of this coding therefore completely conform to all guidelines of the regulations (including the RDP, the ASP, the CP and the PLP). Besides relevant guidelines for street boundaries and land-use (which are linked with the RDP), this regulation clarifies the treatments on each build. Taking the block as unit, this regulation illustrated removal parts and replacement parts respectively, which followed operation procedures.

Taking the western plot in Sample G as an example (see Figure 7-36), removal stage and replacement stage are listed in upper line and lower line respectively. At the removal stage, historic buildings are highlighted for protection (yellow), dilapidated buildings with pool quality and performance are demolished (green), valuable façades are reserved whilst interior constructions are removed (orange) (see Figure 7-35). At the replacement stage, historic buildings and other normal buildings are repaired (yellow), new constructions and materials are added behind reserved façades (red), buildings with poor quality are fixed or rebuilt (purple), new buildings are designed to replace demolished buildings (blue).
Figure 7-36: Regeneration of the Western Plot in Sample G
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2010)

Figure 7-37: One sample of regeneration of façade
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007b)
These approaches to regeneration used to be applied in the Central Avenue areas, however for these projects, implementation merely involves clusters of buildings at the architectural level. As a planning activity to cover one urban area, the regeneration regulation in Daowai Chinese-Baroque district is the first attempt for Harbin municipal government.

7.8.4 Implementation

Sample G area is the only site in Harbin which is regulated by site-based coding to direct the regeneration; meanwhile all relevant regulations are embodied in this coding which guarantees the execution of these guidelines. More than that, this coding also provides a detailed regeneration approach for each construction of some valuable buildings to guarantee the final effects of regeneration. From the aspect of the ASP – new space made available by the demolition of original buildings should be transformed into green space – Sample G is the only sample to have achieved this target in all our ten samples. From this point of view, the effectiveness of integrated coding should not be ignored.

However, for such regeneration, due to the limitation of techniques and less corrosion by rain and wind, these brand new façades and details present few original characteristics, and their ‘acceptability’ (see Chapter 2.3.2) is challenged by experts. Meanwhile, since the majority of original residential buildings are classified as commercial functions after regeneration, which leads to a decline in the local resident population, the original ambience of a living and friendly open-market is replaced by tourists with strange faces and monotonous commercial activities. Without familiar circumstances, local residents have no reason to stay in a place lacking a complete infrastructure, and therefore prefer to relocate their lives to other, better-serviced districts. This is a verification of the concerns in Chapter 5.4.2.2. From this point of view, such regeneration makes up a new face but deprives the soul.

This phenomenon is not unusual, the juxtaposition of heritage and commercialisation in conservation is a common global issue. Following experiences in other countries, e.g. Singapore, conservation and appropriate regeneration of heritage would promote local economic, whilst the economies power of commercialisation could furnish one powerful impulse for conservation. The crucial point is how to keep the balance. Neither tourists nor local residents would accept artificiality and dressed up heritage. More detailed analysis about this phenomenon
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin will be provided in discussions about misunderstanding about character in China in Chapter 9.2.1.

Within the regeneration project in Sample G area exist some questions which are due to the contents of design and the lack of forethought in planning; however, from the aspect of implementation of planning regulation, the effectiveness and operational mechanism of such an attempt at site-specific coding must be confirmed and should be encouraged.
7.9 SAMPLE H

7.9.1 Local Context

Sample H is located in the east of Harbin’s downtown area and borders the historic Jile Temple. Sample H was not developed as a part of the original Harbin, since the first version of a master plan in 1903 did not include the area. Sample H emerged after 1930, and became one of the main residential districts from 1946 to 1956; after that, some plots were regenerated as high-rise buildings around 2000. A historic block located within this district is the Jile Temple, which is the largest Buddhist temple in Heilongjiang Province. It was established in 1923 and the building area is 2.34 hectares. All buildings are constructed in the Chinese traditional pattern with walls of antique cyan brick. This Temple has a style typical of an ancient Chinese architectural complex.

![Figure 7-38: Local context of Sample H](Image)

Source: Google Earth (2011)

From the aspect of evolution, buildings in Sample H could be naturally categorized into two plots: Plot A and Plot B (Figure 7-39). Plot A, which was regenerated around 2000, is a high-density residential plot with higher buildings and less open space, while Plot B is a historical plot with buildings preserved in their original pattern for the last sixty years. As illustrated in Figure 7-39, Plot A is
composed in fifty-fifty proportion of high-rise and multi-story buildings. Meanwhile, due to the respect towards the historic Jile Temple, the nearby buildings are designed as lower-height, multi-story buildings whilst the ones facing towards the main street are designed to be higher. Plot B is mainly occupied by multi-story buildings, especially the ones whose main façades are facing towards the historic site.

From the aspect of morphology and function, Sample H can be separated into Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (see the right diagram in Figure 7-40): Areas 1, 3 and 4 are a residential zone, whilst the Areas 2 and 5 are a commercial zone:

Area 1 is composed of 8-story residential buildings built in the 1990s. They are the highest multi-storey residential buildings of that period. A lift would be required if the buildings were higher than eight stories, and other relative facility costs would rise dramatically, therefore most developers preferred the 8-story pattern during the 1990s. Meanwhile, its style was typically modern for that period with a flat roof and no ornamental constructions on the façade. However, it was refurbished in 2008 using Chinese traditional symbols. Area 2 is occupied by mixed-use high-rise buildings with commercial stores from the ground floor to the third floor. From the aspect of architectural style, these buildings are typical modern ones with Piaoban (an ornamental construction on the roof which is shaped as a slab). These buildings were designed in 2007, and since their location is not in the Harbin traditional historical district, the building patterns are not, therefore, restricted by historical patterns.

Piaoban: this construction became a prevalent approach for many architects in China after the late 1990s to handle the top of high-rise buildings. The advantages are, on the one hand, their large scale guarantees their visibility for pedestrians on the ground, on the other hand, a uniform Piaoban could guarantee that a group of buildings would present a uniform style, meanwhile, the shape of this board has the characteristics of a wave, which was celebrated by the public and experts from an aesthetic viewpoint from the 1990s. However, since 2005, when Harbin’s government defined European style as an urban basic style, the use of Piaoban began to decrease gradually.
Figure 7-39: Illustration about plots and buildings in Sample H
Source: The Author
Area 3 is a historical area which emerged from the 1940s to the 1950s and was redeveloped in the 1970s. From the aspect of architectural style, simplified Russian symbols are obvious: the façades of these buildings are covered by simplified ornamental pilasters between the windows due to Russian influences after the establishment of the PRC.

Area 4 involves two modern high-rise buildings from 2000 and 2007 respectively. From the aspect of styles, the former one (2000) is a typical residential building with regular square windows and flat balconies, whilst the later (2007) was designed with curved bay windows and semi-circular balconies, which is similar to Sample B and Part H in Sample D.

Area 5 used to be a deserted building and has been regenerated as an Islamic restaurant in 2010. Due to its proposed function, the façade is therefore decorated in an Islamic style with white walls and golden eaves. Meanwhile, a golden dome has been added on the top of this building.

![Figure 7-40: Illustration about plots and buildings in Sample H](source: The Author)

The dominant colour of this sample is white, whilst the ornamental colours are various including beige, deep cyan, deep blue, golden and red. Meanwhile, the materials are various as well, including the original lime mortar and modern ceramic tiles and artificial plastic materials.
7.9.2 Regulations

Figure 7-41: Regulations of Sample H
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

In the latest version of the Harbin Regulatory Detailed Plan (2007), A3-01 B1-01 and B1-02 were classified as ‘to retain their current status zone’, whilst A3-02 was classified as a ‘regeneration zone’ (Figure 7-42). Therefore, in the RDP, only A3-02 is regulated by quantitative indicators (Table 7-8).

![Zoning Map of Regulatory Detailed Plan in Sample H](source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007))

**Table 7-8: Regulatory detailed indicators of Sample H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot serial number</th>
<th>A3-01</th>
<th>A3-02</th>
<th>B1-01</th>
<th>B1-02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function code</td>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>C 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use Function</td>
<td>Commercial Zone</td>
<td>Class 2 Residential Zone</td>
<td>Class 2 Residential Zone</td>
<td>Commercial Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (hectare)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of green (%)</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site coverage (%)</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limit (m)</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance and Exit</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>East, West, North</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007)*

The ASP defines Sample H as the Control Zone and it is adjacent to the Conservation Zone of the Jile Temple. According to the ASP guidelines: urban green space should be increased in order to provide a buffer zone between the Conservation...
Zone and other urban areas; any new construction or project is forbidden within the Sample H area; for rational reasons, the ASP guidelines could be revised by the local planning bureau.

The CP defines this sample as a Circumjacent Zone. The CP clarifies that the dominant colour within this area, due to various local colours existing, should be defined as light beige and white; meanwhile the deep grey and historical cyan can be arranged in appropriate proportions.

The PLP defines Area 1 in Sample H (see Figure 7-40) as the Control Zone: historic features should permeate this area; the colour, scale, height and style of any new buildings should be in keeping with surrounding historical features.

7.9.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The RDP clarifies the regulatory indicators of the A3-02 area which have not been implemented yet; therefore the effects of the RDP could not be tested yet. However, to analyse the regulated FAR - 3.5 and site coverage - no more than 35%, literarily, high-intensity development has already been permitted by the RDP based on the following three pieces of evidence:

As the Rule about the calculation of the Floor Area Ratio (Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, 2006c), FAR 3.5 has been catalogued for use in high-rise buildings:

“In the RDP, the FAR of a residential plot can be catalogued as: …. FAR of 19-storey residential building and above is 2.5-4.5…..” (Rule about the calculation of Floor Area Ratio, Article 14, 2006c).

Meanwhile, the number 3.5 (FAR) is the maximum figure in the Harbin downtown area:

“For an individual reconstruction project within the old downtown area, the FAR of high-rise residential buildings cannot be more than 3.5.” (The Harbin Interim ordinance of building floor area ratio and relative issues, Article 3, 2008)

Besides these, the height of 120 metres is the maximum height limitation for normal residential building in Harbin (GB 50016).

From this point of view, high-density development proposals have been legalized by the RDP although some historic buildings exist in this zone (A3-02) (see the left diagram in Figure 7-40).
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

The ASP clarifies that new buildings are forbidden in the Sample H area; however, based on the discussion about RDP, new regeneration in A3-02 would obviously violate these guidelines. However, as an empirical prospect, the architectural style of a proposed high-rise building would present considerable historical symbols on their façades, which are the same as the ones in Sample B or Part H in Sample D. For Area 2, which was regenerated after the establishment of ASP, it violates the guidelines about the ‘prohibition of new buildings’; meanwhile as the ASP Control Zone, Area 2 does not present obvious historical features.

Thus, from the aspect of effects, it could be concluded that the CP generally controlled the development in Sample H, especially in Areas 1 and 2 (see Figure 7-40). The project in Area 1 used to be designed as a white façade and painted with lime mortar. It was refurbished in 2008 using light grey on the main façades and ornamental cyan on the parapet and balcony. Meanwhile artificial ceramic tiles were chosen as materials on the façades to imitate the features of historical brick (Figure 7-43). Comparatively, the colour of Area 2, which was designed in 2007, chose white as its dominant colour and light blue as the ornamental colour which complied with the CP guidelines.

The Purple Line Plan defines the Area 1 zone of Sample H (Figure 7-40) as a Control Zone; however, through the comparison between Area 2 (in Figure 7-40) and B1-01, 02 (Figure 7-42), one part of the Area 2 is transferred into B1-01 by the RDP. Via such a ‘transformation’, technically, the regeneration in Area 2 is processed as two sections belonging to separate RDP precincts (B1-01 and B1-02). Although the entire Area 2 was constructed as high-rise plots in 2007, which is later than Area 1, the transferred section is designed completely to conform to the original height and volume of Area 1 – the same height, light grey colour and façade pattern. Contrarily, the B1-01 zone is totally modern 22-story buildings. From this point of view, in Sample H, the Purple Line Plan compels the RDP to make a concession. Meanwhile, from Figure 7-43, the new refurbished façades and podiums of Area 1 represent an obvious imitation of Chinese traditional architectural features, due to the close proximity of the Chinese Jile Temple.
7.9.4 Implementation

From the aspect of the RDP in A3-02, although the historical buildings are not clearly proposed for demolition, and may yet be preserved, considering the permitted FAR, such a possibility is considered small. Therefore, as a conclusion, the current RDP cannot guarantee the preservation of historical buildings by overall quantitative indicators. As an appropriate option, the RDP should define historic buildings and areas as one individual zone and provide relevant limitations about regeneration, which is the same method as the ‘transformation’ between B1-01 and B1-02.

For the ASP, the guidelines can be concluded to be ineffective in controlling Sample H, and the most obvious violation comes from the emergence of new buildings in the forbidden Control Zone. Although the ASP permitted necessary revision, however, in the Sample H area, such a pretence could not be approved by the scholars:

“High density modern development is not suitable in this area due to its locations (close to the Jile Temple and Confucian Temple)” (IA 06).

For the CP, basically all development and preservation of existing buildings conforms to the CP guidelines. Especially for Area 1, considering the surrounding historical colours, the CP permits Chinese traditional deep cyan as one of the optional ornamental colours, which achieved satisfactory outcomes.

The Purple Line Plan in this sample area represents a strong power to compel the
RDP to make a concession for B1-01 and B1-02. Meanwhile strong Chinese traditional features are represented by the refurbishment of façades in Area 1, which is the unique Chinese style refurbishment in Harbin, especially after the overall urban style was launched as European and Russian Style in 2005.

From this point of view, the permission to use Chinese deep cyan and the imitation of Chinese style (instead of the overall European style) in the PLP proves that these two regulations still allow some site-specific characteristics, although they are zone-based regulations.

Although the PLP and the CP exerted outstanding influences to preserve local historical features, from the aspect of outcome, the refurbishment pattern of façades in Area 1 (see Figure 7-43) has been debated by scholars and designers:

“Such imitation is formalism. The mechanical imitation is not an appropriate approach to preserve historic character” (IA 08).

Whilst the architect who was in charge of this refurbishment explains that:

“Currently, based on existing architectural structures of multiple-story and without demolition, such refurbishment is the most effective and rational approach” (IDC 06).

From this point of view, the operational mechanism of the PLP should be approved; however, its contents are still a matter of controversy.
7.10 SAMPLE I

7.10.1 Local Context

Sample I is located in the central zone of the Nangang District. The sample involves four blocks located around the Hongbo Roundabout. The Hongbo Roundabout which emerged in the same period of Harbin is connected to the Railway Station by Hongjun Street which is one of the busiest main roads in Harbin. From the aspect of location, since the Hongbo Roundabout is exactly located on the axis of the Railway Station, this area became the Gateway to Harbin a hundred years ago. Therefore such a sample area has outstanding historic worth, and all versions of historical master plans preserved its local character.

The four blocks of this area were designed to create an open space in the centre for the roundabout, and this pattern still remains. Meanwhile, five historic protected buildings are preserved (as illustrated in Figure 7-44, Nos. 1 to 5), and one obsolete building (No. 6) which was built in the 1980s and has already been proposed for demolition.

Distinguishing with other historic samples, since the emergence of these buildings in the 1900s, they have become the landmark buildings of those periods due to their crucial location (Figure 7-45). Therefore, these buildings have drawn more public attention and their protection has been generally satisfactory.
Figure 7-45: Historical map of Sample I area
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (1920)

Figure 7-46: Two examples of historic buildings in Sample I
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2010)
that, the urban regeneration around this site presented enough respect for both the colour and architectural style of the historic features. Historic buildings No. 1 (Heilongjiang Provincial Museum) and No. 2 (International Hotel) are the representatives of those historic architectural features within this sample (Figure 7-46). From the illustrations of these two façades, the horizontal dimension (ground floor) and vertical dimension (the upper floors) are obviously represented. They have been cited as evidence for the refurbishment of modern buildings (see Chapter 6.3.4 and 6.3.5).

Currently, the overall morphology of this site presents as a pattern of a basin: the central area is open space with green spaces, whilst the outward zones are low height protected buildings, by the edge of the Sample I, the height rises dramatically. There are two high-rise buildings – Sinoway Hotel and Dianli Hall (No. 6) – located in the northern corner of this area, and the heights of these buildings are 147 metres and 80 metres respectively. Besides these two modern buildings, the average height of the rest of the Sample is around 25 metres.

Colour and material features of Sample I are preserved in their original patterns. The overall current urban colour of this area is beige and white, with red roofs and a few deep green ornamental structures on the façade. The materials of the historic buildings within this sample are also still preserved in their original patterns – lime was plastered on the brick-wooden structure. For the modern high-rise buildings (Sinoway Hotel and Dianli Hall), the main material of the façade is polished marble.
7.10.2 Regulations

Figure 7-47: Regulations of Sample I
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The RDP categorized this area into several land-uses. Four Green Space Zones (G1 - green colour) are defined in the Sample I area. The Heilongjiang Provincial Museum is clarified as a Heritage Zone (C7 - deep purple colour). Due to the commercial function of the entire Hongbo Roundabout District, the remaining parts of Sample I are defined as commercial zones (C21 – red colour). However, since there is no development project proposed in the forthcoming years, the RDP provides no quantitative indicators.

The ASP defines the entire Sample I as a Conservation Zone. Following the guidelines for Conservation Zones in ASP, Sample I is regulated by forbidding new building, protecting original trees and requiring the maintenance of buildings to conform to their original architectural styles. Moreover, buildings which disturb the architectural style of the Conservation Zone must be scheduled for demolition and any new spaces that result should be transformed into green space for lower density and more open activity spaces in historical areas. Any behaviour by local residents which might cause the disturbance to historical architectural styles must be stopped sternly.

The CP defines Sample I as a Macro-control Zone. Comparing with the historical statue of this site, the definition of hierarchy in the CP is comparatively low (merely Macro-control Zone). Urban colours in the Macro-control Zone are not provided by the CP, therefore the architects and the developers could dominate the decisions based on their personal preferences.

The PLP defines Sample I as a Core Zone. As the Core Zone, Sample I is regulated as follows: Dianli Hall (No. 6 in Figure 7-44) should be demolished and transformed into green space; any new building is forbidden within a 250-metre radius circle centred on the roundabout, (Figure 7-48); the maintenance of buildings should retain their original features.
7.10.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

For the RDP, regeneration within this district mainly focuses on the transformation of land-use – original residential functions being transformed into commercial functions, etc., however the external features and architectural patterns are preserved. The prohibitions in the ASP and the PLP guidelines which forbid any new constructions within Sample I have not been tested since the establishment of the ASP and the PLP, meanwhile the No.6 building was demolished in the summer of 2012. One can therefore conclude that the ASP and the PLP can fully control the urban regeneration of Sample I. Meanwhile, although the CP merely defines this site as a Macro-control Zone, the refurbishment of Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 are basically based on the overall urban colour of Harbin – beige and white, whilst the materials chosen for refurbishment are based on their original patterns as well. From these points of view, the local historical character is satisfactorily preserved by the regulations.

7.10.4 Implementation

Since these landmark buildings are from the original period of Harbin, the design concepts of these façades and roofs have presented the main resources for Harbin’s local architectural style – in other words, the historic architectural character of Sample I represents the conclusion and refinement of the colonial period and has been cited as a prototype to influence the further design of Harbin’s local buildings. Based on this reason, the architectural style in this sample area, as with Sample A along the Central Avenue, had already been spontaneously preserved for nearly a century before the launch of the ASP. From this point of view, the supervision and
attention from all sections of society are as equally effective as regulations for conservation and protection.

For such a crucial historical area, the CP merely defines it as a Macro-control Zone; based on this phenomenon, a government official explains:

“This site is the gateway to Harbin and is one of the most flourishing districts within the urban downtown area; therefore the urban colour is mainly composed by environmental colour instead of architectural colour. From this point of view, the regulations about urban colour should encourage the creating of a new colour style and present an appearance of the current period.” (ILG 04).

Meanwhile, although current developments do not violate any existing regulations within this district, however, some potential modification schemes are discussed for construction. As illustrated in Figure 7-49, three skyscrapers are proposed for the western side of Sample I, which would dramatically change the skyline and the entire local character of Sample I. Since the new project is out of the Core Zone of PLP, literally it could therefore not be denied by the current the PLP. Based on such concerns, as one of the most core zones of Harbin, the PLP zone, as well as other relative regulations, should be expanded to cover a larger area around the Hongbo-Roundabout District.
7.11 SAMPLE J

7.11.1 Local Context

Sample J is located in the new development district. In contrast to the historical districts, this new development district emerged since the 1990s and the architectural pattern is more modern than any other district. This sample is located in an adjacent plot which connects the Harbin International Conference Centre and the Heilongjiang Provincial Library. One urban main road (Changjiang Road) defines its southern boundary.

The main current land-use and function of Sample J is residential, therefore the overall morphology of Sample J is composed by high-rise buildings. Meanwhile, due to the height and the necessary interval to allow access to sunshine, the distances between the southern and northern buildings are therefore greater than in other urban areas and represent a sparse urban texture. Based on the various morphology of the buildings, Sample J is categorized into two parts (see Figure 7-50), the average height of Part A is around 100 metres and the main height of Part B is around 60 metres (Figure 7-51). Since it is a new district with no more than twenty years history, there is no historic plan in this sample. However, due to the common consensus from government officials since the 1990s – the overall urban style in Harbin is determined as the European and Russian style, therefore the high-rise buildings in this area, the same as Sample B and Part H in Sample G, imitated the European architectural symbols and attempted to transform them into modern architectural symbols which could be applied on high-rise façades.

This colour of this area represents modern features as with other high-rise buildings all over the world, the windows and glass dominate the majority of the façades. For the walls, the architects choose light colours to represent a more modern style within Part A, such as white and light grey plus the ornamental colour blue; the dominant colour of Part B is brick-red with the ornamental colour white. The general materials of buildings are polished marble and artificial ceramic tiles.
Figure 7-50: Local context of Sample J
Source: Google Earth (2011)

Figure 7-51: Morphology of Sample J
Source: The Author
7.11.2 Regulations

Figure 7-52: Regulations of Sample J
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The RDP of Sample J defines this whole block into four zones, and for each of them, regulatory indicators are provided as in Table 7.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot serial number</th>
<th>Function code</th>
<th>Area (hectare)</th>
<th>FAR</th>
<th>Ratio of green (%)</th>
<th>Site coverage (%)</th>
<th>Height limit (m)</th>
<th>Parking space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1-04</td>
<td>C 21</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1-05</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1-06</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1-07</td>
<td>R 21</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007)

Two issues of the guideline are: the property line in the south-east corner of Sample J should step back to allow more open space; the height of the buildings located on the east side of the block should be limited to a low height in order to strengthen the status of the International Conference Centre within the entire district.

No ASP covers this area.

The CP defines Sample I as a Circumjacent Zone, and the guidelines are: as projects in a new development district, the urban colour of Sample I should represent modern features and explore rational directions for the future.

No Purple Line Plan covers this area.

7.11.3 Local Character and Effects of Regulations

The RDP dramatically influenced the overall morphology of Sample J. The height and volume of each building in Sample J is controlled by the RDP, whilst through observation in fieldwork, all regulatory indicators are complied with.

For the CP, although it does not provide specific guidelines for the choice of colour, however, the Part 1 area still retains beige and white as dominant colours as when they were designed in the early 2000s. For Part 2, brick-red was chosen as the dominant colour. Although such chaos in urban colour could not be confirmed as a violation of the CP, such chaos is, however, literally the outcome of those imprecise guidelines.

7.11.4 Implementation

Part A was constructed around 2000, and Part B was constructed around 2007. Although this sample is not within the regulatory power of an ASP, however, all
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin

buildings present the same respects towards the European features which are the same as Samples B and E.

The dominant colour of Part B is brick-red and the ornamental colour is white. The brick-red colour used to be quite rare for high-rise residential buildings before 2008. However, two samples (Sample D, 2009 and Sample E, 2010) chose brick-red as their dominant colour, meanwhile, the CP defined all Samples D, E and J as: to predict the developing direction of urban colour for the future. Therefore, the colour of brick-red is probably one of the developing directions of urban colour for governmental officials and planners.

From another point of view, although the circumjacent zone defines that the colours which are applied within this sample should be arranged as Radiation Colour – fixing the colour of main buildings, then lightening the colour radially, and considering this to be an integrated district, the Harbin International Conference Centre should be the main building. However, the colours of buildings are not arranged in a clear radial pattern – Part A is white or light grey and the decorational colour is blue whilst Part B is brick-red and decorational colour is white. Although from the general direction, these colours do not violate the main urban dominant colour (light beige and yellow), the arrangement of urban colour within this sample does not represent a clear comprehensive conception but a collection of random colours chosen by the architects.
7.12 CONCLUSIONS

These ten selected urban areas basically represent the overall urban regeneration situation under the influence of current regulations. From the aspect of history, these ten samples represent the colonial period, the industrial period after the establishment of the PRC, rapid urban regeneration projects since the late 1990s and new developments in the 21st century. From the aspect of location, from the central historical area to new development districts, ten samples represent the various urban patterns of these areas. From the aspect of regulation, the zone of influence of each character regulation is involved, whilst some districts that have little control are also included for comparison. From the aspect of function, residential areas, commercial areas, industrial areas and educational areas are all considered.

Although this chapter focuses on a sample-based analysis of regulation, some conclusions about implementation can still be summarised. For the RDP, all the developments within the ten sample areas comply, as legally required, with its guidance. However, the rationality of some contents in the RDP is doubted by some experts. For the Architectural Style Plan, buildings within the preservation areas are generally regenerated following the principles of the ASP. Moreover, modern buildings, especially high-rise buildings, still pay considerable respect to historical features, which is not required by the ASP. However, concern about the economic benefit of the guidelines that forbid high-density development e.g. “forbidding any new construction in a Control Zone”, may render them completely ineffective. For the Colour Plan, this plan is generally conformed to on a satisfactory level. However, within specific circumstances, the weakness of its mechanism leads to unexpected outcomes which interrupt the local character. For the Purple Line Plan, the realms of regulations which are defined by the legalized Comprehensive Plan strongly guarantee the influences of the PLP, meanwhile such clear boundaries lead to dramatically different urban characters across boundaries and to some extent split the connections and transition of local character.

In the following Chapter Eight, the discussion will transform from this sample-based analysis to a regulation-based discussion. By citing the actual implementation of each regulation in the sample areas, an analysis of the implementation will reveal the advantages and shortcomings of current Chinese planning.
Analysis of sample areas in Harbin
CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES
CHAPTER 8 ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the two main objectives in Chapter 4.2.1 will be discussed based on the sample-based evidence in Chapter Seven. The aim is to evaluate the actual effects of the current Chinese planning system and to diagnose the potential deficiencies in its contents and mechanisms. To achieve these two objectives, evaluations of the implementation of the RDP, Architectural Style Plan, Colour Plan and Purple Line Plan will be processed as the first section in this chapter. Meanwhile, besides these four regulations, overall discussions about regulations on the urban-scale level and site-specific level will be arranged to complete the evaluation of the urban planning system in China. Based on these evaluations, both advantages and shortcomings of Chinese regulations will be subdivided to reveal their details. The advantages might be learned as lessons by other counties who are facing similar urban questions about local character. Meanwhile, the subdivided shortcomings would be the hint for the next chapter to present necessary suggestions to improve the regulation of Chinese local character planning.

8.2 EVALUATIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATIONS

8.2.1 Regulations at the City-Wide Level

At the city-wide level, as introduced in Chapter 5.3.3, the Comprehensive Plan and other city-wide regulations are authorized by the municipal government. Via the integrated arrangement of urban configurations, the planning on the city-wide level clarifies the overall principles about urban character and macro urban grain.
8.2.1.1 Overall principles about urban character

Overall principles around urban character, such as “Ice and snow, European style, elm and clove, northern city” in Harbin, have been established by the majority of Chinese cities as initial principles to direct urban development (see Chapter 5.4.1.1). However, academic scholars have argued that these principles show negative impact in Harbin:

“The overall urban character should not be appointed as one uniform pattern … besides the European style, Japanese and Chinese traditional patterns have also left their marks in the history of Harbin” (IA 01).

Meanwhile, based on the review of the literature on the essence of character in Chapter 2.2.2 and planning experiences in western countries, e.g. the Character Statement in England, a conclusion can be made: a single overall character principle for the entire city cannot appropriately represent the actual local personality (see Chapter 2.3.1) within each urban district.

Furthermore, such an overall character principle might lead to risks for the evolution of urban history. As outlined in Chapter Seven, the majority of recent regeneration projects in Harbin, and especially those on the periphery of the historic city centre, are designed to represent westernized architectural features which correspond with the principles in the Harbin Comprehensive Plan. This can be interpreted as a sort of imitation, and such imitation ignores the variety of features resulting from sequential regenerative periods. From this point of view, it can be said that the officially appointed overall urban character has strangled the natural growth of local character.

Another finding is that this trend of imitating does not decline with increasing distance from the historical central area. As observed in Chapter Seven, the locations of Sample E and F are in considerable distance from the historic central area (especially Sample F, see Figure 6-26) and the regeneration projects in Sample B, D, E and F all partly imitate European styles. An explanation can be found in the analysis of the scope of regulation. In Harbin, as in other Chinese cities, the scope of overall urban character principles involves both historic areas and peripheral areas. In those peripheral areas, the control of relevant regulations about character weakens and leaves more flexibility to designers and developers. Meanwhile, designers usually seek personal features (sometimes called innovations) in their design.
schemes. Thus, the city-wide European Style becomes a reliable reference when seeking to construct buildings with an unusual character which distinguishes them from their neighbours. Such innovation normally leads to economic benefits, which appropriately answers the question why the façade of all high-rise buildings in the ten sample areas outside the Conservation Zone of Architectural Style Plan (ASP) present considerable historical western features.

Chapter Seven shows that although planning regulations about urban character encourage innovation on the peripheries of the historic urban centre, the encouraged innovation respects surrounding local features. The Architectural Style Plan (ASP) and the Colour Plan (CP) clarify the Development Zone and Macro-control Zone respectively to encourage the introduction of new urban features in those new development areas. However, the analysis in Chapter Seven suggests that all new projects in such innovative zones consider western architectural symbols to be the main ornamental patterns for their façades and roofs, although the majority of them are not located in areas with abundant historical background, e.g. Sample B and Sample C. From this point of view, these innovations are not sympathetic to local existing features. These innovations are dominated by imitation, which limits the application of new techniques and modern patterns and strangles the natural development of urban character from the past to the future.

More than just displaying acquiescent attitudes towards these imitations, the local government engages to extend the influence of European Style in Harbin; the local government organized the refurbishment projects along Zhongshan Road (see Chapter 6.3.5) which are encroaching and gradually obliterating recent architectural features in Harbin.

To sum up, the overall principle of urban character cannot represent the local features of each urban district. When regeneration projects (especially the ones on the periphery of the historic city centre) propose to cite, following the principles of overall character, the disadvantages overweight the advantages in the long-term. Therefore, although overall principles may help to avoid unpredictable varieties which, in turn, may lead to chaos of urban character, the concept about the overall principles could be utilized in other ways. To split the urban realm into sections and to provide local overall arrangements of urban character can effectively include specific local features into the regeneration, and this could guarantee the natural
development (or evolution) of urban character. Based on the planning proposal for the overall area and on specific local personality, a local statement report about existing character would be an effective supplementation for further innovation and decision-making. More detailed suggestions are provided in Chapter 9.3.1.

8.2.1.2 The increasing scale of development

As mentioned in Chapter 5.3.3.1, the Comprehensive Plan clarifies the general land-use and the street network for the entire city, upon which the overall urban grain is determined. Based on given urban texture, the Regulatory Detailed Plan (RDP) and the Construction Detailed Plan (CDP) regulate the development within their precincts. With the growing size of the city, the Comprehensive Plan cannot provide detailed development proposals at the neighbourhood level; thus, as a connection section between the Comprehensive Plan and the CDP, the precinct of the RDP increases accordingly. Since the RDP is the basis for the government to transact the right to the use of the land\(^1\), the scale of development increases.

![Figure 8-1: Evolution of Urban Textures](source)

**Source:** Based on various cartographic sources

As the illustration of increasing scale of development in Figure 8-1 shows, current planning leads to larger development projects. This dramatically changes urban character by affecting the street network, patterns of streets and detailed plot issues. The three figures to the right are at the same scale. From Site A to Site C, the

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\(^1\) This English translation is derived from the "Laws and Regulations of the People's Republic of China Governing Foreign-Related Matters" (1991.7) which is compiled by the Bureau of Legislative Affairs of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and is published by the China Legal System Publishing House.
urban texture change dramatically. The figure ground of Site A presents a typical historical urban texture which emerged since 1898. The area between A and C is a typical development pattern of residential blocks from the 1980s to the 1990s, which dominates the majority of current residential blocks in Harbin. Site C, a new residential community, is a regeneration project started in 2004 (Sample C area in Chapter 7.4), and presents a new pattern of figure ground – high density leading to sparse urban grain (see illustrations in Figure 7-24). Meanwhile, in Figure 8-2, the procedures of urban regeneration are illustrated by mutative colours – colour would be the same when the projects are constructed at the same time. According to the schematic diagrams in Figure 8-2, Site A experienced various periods of regeneration since the 1910s. During Harbin’s original period (Site A in Figure 8-2), the development unit included street-front buildings and the low-rise housing behind them; therefore, street-front buildings were dissimilar due to distinct developers. Site A-C is a transitional area between A and C, which represents a development pattern from the 1980s (Figure 8-2). In that period, the government assigned development area based on the middle axis of roads; therefore one development unit was normally composed of several blocks. The entire Site C was nearly constructed in the same period by one developer.

Figure 8-2: Architectural Figure ground about regeneration procedures
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
The Sample A in Chapter Seven is one part of the Site A area and the Sample C basically equals to the Site C area. Due to the increasing scale of development, neither the RDP nor the ASP nor other regulations about urban character could guarantee their effectiveness in terms of preserving original character and to avoid monotony.

For such a current development phenomenon, a project manager from Sample C from the local development institute explained that:

“For a large project, (such as Sample C), the developer would be in charge of the investments for basic service facilities as well as the responsibilities of maintenance…. These investments would be compensated as favourable development policies by governments, such as to permit higher FAR… In this way, both the government and the developer would gain in a win-win situation” (IDC 01).

From this point of view, such city-wide behaviour could regenerate urban zones more economically; however, from the aspect of urban texture, the development project would be designed and constructed as one individual entity and ignore its surrounding features (see the Sample C and Sample E in Chapter Seven). From the developer’s point of view, a project manager from XINYANG Real Estate Investment Company states the potential reasons for such ignorance:

“For due to the unsatisfactory architectural quality and environment in surrounding plots, new projects would not completely accommodate new developments towards original architectural patterns in surrounding blocks; especially within the residential zones which emerged since the 1980s…” (IDC 06).

The architect who was in charge of Sample E defended himself when asked during the interviews if his project ignored surrounding contexts:

“No regulation provides precise codes or standards to evaluate if building designs have already considered their surrounding sites; therefore I cannot stand with the viewpoint that ‘new development projects disregard the original surrounding environment’. Technically, the majority of design schemes did not break any issues or existing regulations, and the schemes are basically processed according to the direction principles” (IDI 11).

Based on the theoretical analysis in Chapter Two, such an integrated replacement of urban texture is equal to rebuilding ‘The Ship of Theseus’ and cutting off its connection with surrounding history. In this way, the regenerated area would dramatically reduce the degree of ‘acceptability’ no matter how well the replacement copied historical features (see Chapter 2.3.2).
This question of the relationship between new developments and their neighbours is global. The supervision by governments and other relevant advisory panels should exert fundamental affects, as do urban design advisory panels in Taiwan, New Zealand, England, etc. However, the actual situation in Harbin is that supervisory institutes cannot effectively judge new characters without clear evidence to be followed. As a consultation assistant at the Harbin Planning Supervisory Section (as part of the Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau) complains:

“We (the Harbin Planning Supervisory Section) do not have enough evidence to evaluate the character of regeneration projects … the disapproval will not happen when the development fulfils mandatory requirements in existing local detailed plans” (ILG 03 and ILG 04).

Besides the administrative system, cure for the contradictions between new projects and neighbours which emerge from an increasing scale of development might be found in planning itself. Based on the review of experiences in Chapter Three, the appropriate scopes of character mapping (see Chapter 3.3.3) can cover both development sites – some considerably large – and their neighbouring areas, thus new projects can correspond with the surrounding environment. Character mapping could split one large district into small sub-units in order to avert the monotonous character throughout the entire regeneration project. The mechanisms of zoning also support such a ‘combining and splitting’ concept. One important point is that the rationality of this concept heavily relies on the understanding of initial local ‘personality’.

Therefore, it can be concluded that current regulations for the evaluation and direction of new large-scale projects would not be effective before a correction of the current large-scale mechanism. If such large-scale development was inevitable for a developing country, e.g. China, then it is a necessary aim to avert the tearing of urban character into pieces. Two approaches should be mentioned as: to provide evidence e.g. delicate character mapping and appropriate character zoning arrangements; and to emphasise public participation and supervision by local advisory panels.

8.2.2 Regulatory Detailed Plan and Its Effects

According to the introduction in Chapter 6.4.2, the Regulatory Detailed Plan (RDP) involves two issues of planning: the zoning map and indicators. The zoning map defines the boundary of plots and overall layout of the street network, whilst the
Analysis of implementation processes

qualitative and quantitative indicators control the development within each plot. In this section, the evaluation of the RDP is processed from these two aspects.

8.2.2.1 Zoning map

The zoning map of the RDP completely controls the street network and urban texture. As the RDP clarifies property lines along the axis of a street to define the territory of each planning precinct, the boundaries of the planning plots of the RDP are therefore nearly based on the proposed street network. In the ten selected sample areas in Chapter Seven, although Sample C dramatically interrupts the original urban texture, the analysis of the RDP zoning maps in this area (Figure 7-15) shows that the interruption could be a direct effect of the RDP. Meanwhile, comparing the zoning map of Samples C and G, the RDP could be recognized as the only regulation to destroy or preserve the local street network. Due to this crucial role of the RDP in controlling the street network, the positions of plot series and the shape of plot are therefore also controlled by the RDP.

Meanwhile, the RDP zoning map also controls the pattern of the architectural layout of the corner. Contemporary corners of one plot are defined by two lines: the boundary line of the road and the property line (Figure 8-3). The boundary line of roads in a corner is defined by the Code for planning design of transport on urban roads (GB 50220-95) as a curved shape to guarantee a smooth turning radius for vehicles, while the property line designs the corner as triangular, historical curved or a step-back shape for a specific purpose (Figure 8-3). For Part H in Sample D, there is a preserved open space in the corner for a public space, whilst the corners along Jingyu Street in Sample G are arranged in a triangular shape. The survey of the ten sample areas shows that such control satisfactorily keeps the balance between original local features and convenience of use.

Figure 8-3 Patterns of corner in the Regulatory Detailed Plan
Source: Based on various cartographic sources
However, from the aspect of urban character, the RDP zoning map scarcely exerts any influence on the building position issues. The zoning map merely defines the boundaries of the maximum area of development instead of the positions of the buildings and open spaces, therefore the RDP could not extend its influence to actual positions of buildings. New high-rise buildings and a comprehensive civic complex emerged during the last twenty years, some previous plots are therefore occupied by individual buildings, in this way, considering the necessary interval between buildings for sunlight and traffic, the plots still border on each other no matter if or how the building is detached. The overall evolutions of this issue are generally illustrated in Figure 8-4. As in the introduction to Chapter 6, the original buildings within a historical area are adjacent to the property lines along streets (e. g. Sample G); whilst with the increasing height, buildings stand back from the proposed RDP property lines and leave frontal open spaces for the public or further potential uses.

With the increasing scale of RDP, its planning influence would involve more than one building and the overall layout of buildings within these plots is no longer controlled by the RDP zoning map. From this point of view, due to the increasing scale of development, the effectiveness of the RDP subsequently declines.

![Figure 8-4 Position of buildings and the property line](image)

Source: The Author

**8.2.2.2 Qualitative and quantitative indicators**

As a planning act, the most crucial part of the RDP is its qualitative and quantitative indicators. Based on the introductions to the RDP in Chapters Five and Six, the main issues of these indicators include land-use, density and area, height limitation, etc.

The land-use influences the variations along streets and the boundary features. The RDP emphasizes simplified functions instead of mixed land-use within each plot.
in China, thereby making it difficult for the RDP to represent mixed land-use situations. As illustrated in Figure 8-5, the land-use of each plot is basically arranged as one single function. Based on such evidence, although the commercial functions normally emerge on the lower floors in modern residential buildings (e.g. Samples C and H) (see Figure 8-6), mixed-use could be seen as a spontaneous phenomenon by developers instead of as a top-down arrangement by planners. High-rise and multi-storey buildings automatically provide more opportunities to combine multiple functions into one individual block, even within one building. Therefore, for the majority of urban streets, the variations along the street and boundary features are not developed following the intention of planners, so, technically, as the only regulation which is legalized to determine land-use, the RDP does not attempt to address mixed-use along a street.

![Figure 8-5 Regulatory Detailed Plan of Nangang District and Daowai District](image)

**Source:** Harbin municipal Planning Bureau

Based on the ignorance of mixed land-use, the boundary features in Harbin represent three main patterns: continuous façade (commercial buildings), detached façade (normally on the west or east side of normal residential buildings) and semi-detached façade (commercial-residential function) (see Figure 8-7). Such ignorance is one of the most fundamental reasons for the chaotic street townscapes in Harbin, as well as in other Chinese cities.
As an exception, the RDP in Sample G clarified detailed mixed land-use, which is confirmed by scholars as an effective way to guarantee the variation along streets:

“Such a mixed pattern of functions could guarantee more variation within these blocks” (IA 07).

However, besides the Sample G area, the remaining sample areas do not experience such detailed arrangements, including the historic Sample A area. From this point of view, although these two character factors should be technically guaranteed by the RDP, within the majority of urban areas, the RDP could still be regarded as giving up opportunities to control and leaving these opportunities to architects.
The use of density and height to analyse urban character should be considered as an overall morphology issue instead of as site-specific regulatory indicators. In contemporary Harbin, the density is closely connected with economic benefit for all stakeholders. Such economic benefit would even motivate the revision of the Architectural Style Plan and be legalized by the RDP (Sample B). Due to the RDP’s legal role, FAR and height are not violated by any projects in the ten sample areas in Chapter Seven; however, the rationality of these indicators is challenged based on their effect on the planning mechanism. Although such indicators and development projects (Part 5 in Sample A and Sample B) are legal, from the aspect of contents, they can be seen as irrational (See Chapter 7.3.3). From this point of view, this legalized RDP should be supervised and evaluated by other legal documents, meanwhile, such an evaluation should cite relevant form-based evidence instead of literal principles. Although the zoning map could not provide detailed control of the position of each building (Chapter 8.2.2.1), quantitative indicators such as FAR, Site Coverage and Limitation of Height, could generally control the morphology of the targeted planning district. Meanwhile, for each plot, the height and density are technically arranged based on overall considerations of surrounding plots (see Figure 8-8). Through such general principles, the height of each plot would generally be coordinated with those of its neighbours to create a harmonious overall environment and the local urban skyline could be designed and fully controlled by the RDP.

Figure 8-8 Principles about the limitation of height in Harbin
Source: Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau (2007c)

To sum up, as a planning act, all contents of the RDP fully control development issues; however, from the aspect of urban character, there are still three main problems for the act: increasing the scale of development reduces the effects of the RDP to control the development of local character. The two-dimensional zoning map
and indicators could not precisely direct the constructions to represent proposed
targets and the contents of the current RDP are not comprehensive enough for it to
fulfil its role as the only planning act to operate at the zoning level.

8.2.3 Architectural Style Plan and Its Effects

The Architectural Style Plan subdivides the urban downtown territory into four
categorized precincts and engages to preserve the historic architectural style and
local character in a Conservation Zone. Meanwhile, to encourage new development
patterns to become a seed for the future in a Development Zone. Moreover, the ASP
provides two levels of buffer zone – Control Zone and Coordination Zone – to
guarantee a smooth transition between historical character and modern character.
Due to the variations of purpose in each individual zone, the approaches and effects
are subsequently various.

8.2.3.1 The Conservation Zone

As the core zone of the Architectural Style Plan, the Conservation Zone has
comparatively strict guidelines to preserve the historical features on both the
architectural and detailed levels. Moreover, it also provides guidelines to preserve the
green and external spaces within this zone. From the aspect of urban character issues,
its overall effects are generally satisfactory.

On the block level, the ASP proposes to preserve historical urban texture based
on a series of bans on new buildings and constructions. Based on such guidelines,
from the aspect of effect, the shape and size of plots in the Conservation Zone are
retained as their original patterns during the last one hundred years (see Samples A
and G). Meanwhile, the morphology of buildings within these blocks is regenerated
fully conforming to their original appearance even if the internal structures have been
completely replaced (Sample G). In Harbin’s historical areas, architectural features
emphasize the buildings that are located on corners as one of the most crucial
features of the urban character; hence, they are involved in considerations of ASP.
However, guidelines about the corner are not clarified as schematic diagrams to
direct the regenerations. For comparison between such guidelines and the actual
outcomes of regeneration in the Conservation Zone, historical patterns are
summarized by the author in Figure 8-9, using comparisons between actual projects
and these schematic patterns. Although the guideline is not illustrated as schematic
code, the effects are still satisfactory with all regenerations in the Conservation Zone fully conforming to one of these patterns.

![Figure 8-9 Patterns of corner building in the historical areas](image)

Source: The Author

For the regeneration and preservation of ornamental forms in a Conservation Zone, the ASP mainly provides general principles to suggest all regenerations should conform to surrounding historical features whilst no precise coding or guidelines could be cited by architects. However, the outcomes are satisfactory through the comparisons between the original façades and actual regeneration projects in historical Sample A and area G. From this point of view, abundant referable symbols could spontaneously improve such citing activities.

Besides the building itself, external constructions which provide more architectural features are generally forbidden unless the functions are necessary and volumes do not interrupt local features. New constructions on the upper floor in Sample A area are a successful project (see Figure 7-5), which reveals that such limitations are satisfactorily processed and outcomes have been cited as prototypes for the urban regeneration projects in other areas.

### 8.2.3.2 The Control Zone

As a buffer zone for the historical areas, the Control Zone emphasizes that the height, volume and density of its zone should harmonize with adjacent Conservation Zones. Therefore, new buildings and constructions are suggested to be forbidden and the green space should increase to provide more open space for its buffer function. Meanwhile, it also permits revisions about these optional forbidden guidelines to guarantee the applicability and rationality of the ASP.

Through the survey in Chapter Seven, there are three sample areas covered by the Control Zone. Whilst all three sites exist the ASP violations to guidelines. New buildings are planned and legalized by the RDP in all of the three Control Zones after the establishment of the ASP. Coincidentally, all these new projects are high-density, high-rise buildings. To some extent, such a coincidence should be seen as inevitable.
Due to the economic benefit of high-density projects, optional forbidden guidelines are normally ignored by both developers and governmental officials; therefore, in the Control Zone, the optional guidelines might exert effects until faced with economic issues.

Conversely, architectural styles in the Control Zone pay considerable respect towards historical features. To compare the new buildings, especially the high-rise buildings, in the Control Zone to the ones in the Coordination Zone and Development Zones, historical architectural symbols are more plentiful. Moreover, for the refurbishment of Zhongshan Road, as illustrated in Figure 6-14, the façades are fully refurbished without changing the original architectural structure. All these projects reveal that the stakeholders could follow the guidelines of the ASP to extend the historical architectural features and to emphasize urban character if there is no contradiction between economic benefit and the guidelines.

To deeply analyze how these factors affect the façades, developers emphasize building form as one of the most crucial factors in attracting clients. Thus, although the ASP guidelines in the Control Zone are vague to direct actual projects, the developers spontaneously invest in these external decorations to create more selling points in the real estate market, even foreign design institutes are invited to take part in the design projects (SJSD in Sample E). Therefore, the actual outcomes for architectural forms and styles exceed the general requirements of the existing guidelines.

From this point of view, the compliments and violations of guidelines are all due to the seeking of economic benefit. Based on such motivation, although the guidelines on ‘degree of elaboration’ ‘decorational forms’ ‘construction’ etc. are absent, the finial outcomes – although they could not be named as outcomes of regulation – are still satisfactory for local governmental officials. Indeed the refurbishment project along the Zhongshan Road won an award from the Provincial People’s Congress in 2010.

8.2.3.3 The Coordination Zone

Basically, the principles and approaches of the guidelines in the Coordination Zone are nearly the same as the ones in the Control Zone, whilst the only distinction is due to the difference in their ownership: the Control Zone, as well as other zones, belongs to the local government; whilst the Coordination Zone belongs to individual
organizations (e.g. university, factory, military, etc.). As introduced in Chapter 6.4, regulations for such individual plots are not fully applied due to the distinct authorities, however, for the ASP, such interruption is not obvious.

The survey of sample area F revealed that the ornamental style of new buildings exhibits many historical features, whilst the overall architectural pattern and layout of blocks are still designed based on the modern pattern. These phenomena basically conform to the ASP guidelines for this Coordination Zone.

### 8.2.3.4 The Development Zone

The principle of a Development Zone is to encourage the creation of new patterns and styles for a city. However, these new features are not obvious in the survey in Samples B and C; however, they generally fulfil the purpose of the ASP in this zone.

Since no specific guidelines limit the architectural styles in these Development Zones, modern patterns are therefore expected to occupy these areas. However, as the description in Chapter 7.3.3 and 7.4.3 shows, the new architectural styles are considerably influenced by their surrounding plots. For Sample B, due to its close proximity to Central Avenue, its ornamental façade obviously presents historical westernized features; whilst for Sample C, its flat patterns on the façade and roof also conform to the surrounding residential blocks which have emerged since the 1980s. From this point of view, the buildings in the Development Zone tend towards a combination of general local features and modern styles. Such a conclusion could be certainly confirmed by an analysis of the location of the Development Zone on the Harbin municipal map. The Development Zone is mainly concentrated on the urban territory which was constructed before the 1990s, in other words, the modernist New Development District of Harbin (Sample J) is not covered by the ASP for this Development Zone. From this point of view, the ASP technically aims to encourage a new pattern to combine the new buildings with original local features and to explore a more architectural approach to finish the urban regeneration within these areas (instead of a completely new construction area) which began more than twenty years ago.

### 8.2.4 The Colour Plan and Its Effects

The Colour Plan clarifies three categories of planning precinct and covers fifty
key control roads. Within these areas, the overall urban colour of Harbin is defined as beige or a similar warm-tone colour. The majority of buildings within this CP area are designed or refurbished using warm-tone colours with high-lightness and low-saturation, with an ornamental white colour on balconies and eaves.

Within the survey of ten sample areas, some exceptions exist. In Part H of Sample D, Part 1 of Sample E and Part 2 of Sample J, the brick-red colour is applied as the dominant colour of the buildings. Among these buildings, only Part 2 of Sample J is covered by the CP but it was constructed before the establishment of the CP, therefore they could not be considered as a CP violation. Meanwhile, distinguishing from the appointed beige, the dominant colour of Area 1 in Sample H is painted a cyan colour. However, such exceptions have already been permitted by the local CP guidelines as respecting a local Chinese traditional colour. In general, the CP controls the architectural colour within its area.

Meanwhile, the overall principles and operational mechanisms of the Colour Plan are still challenged. For the overall principles, scholars are concerned about whether the uniform beige colour is an appropriate choice for Harbin. From the aspect of urban history, beige was the dominant colour during the colonial era; however, Chinese traditional grey and cyan were also widely used in those periods. Moreover, brick used to be a universal material during the industrial period from the 1950s to the 1980s; considering this progression in the evolution of urban colour in Harbin, beige should not be the only option for modern Harbin to represent a harmonious urban character. From the aspect of actual implementation, fortunately, the dominant colour of projects is not limited to a uniform pattern of beige + white, slight changes are arranged by architects based on various surrounding environments. On the one hand, such variation could be recognized as flexible adjustments by architects; on the other hand, it could also be cited as a consequence of the inapplicability of the Colour Plan. The CP’s operational mechanism basically provides several hues as options based on various functions of buildings. However, such CYMK hues are hard to choose precisely during the process of actual construction, chromatic aberration is inevitable and the changes of sunlight and angle should be considered as well. In this way, the architects prefer to empirically choose the colour of buildings. Meanwhile, for the same reason, the four approaches proposed to plan the overall urban colour system (see Figure 6-22) could not be fully
applied to arrange that the saturation of architectural colour increases or reduces sequentially in linear space or annular space.

### 8.2.5 Purple Line Plan and Its Effects

The Purple Line Plan is an updated version of the *Ordinance of protected buildings and blocks in Harbin* which used to be involved as one part of the Harbin Comprehensive Plan; while the PLP precinct is currently mapped on the zoning map of the Comprehensive Plan in a purple colour to clarify the boundaries of each precinct. Thus the effects of the PLP are generally satisfactory due to the legalized boundaries of these protected areas.

Unlike the RDP, the PLP’s role as a regulation for preservation, encourages mixed-activity street-frontages and subdivides a functional zone into distinct land-uses (the RDP in Sample G is influenced by such principles, see Figure 7-33). Similarly, the variation of land-use leads to the variation of function and architectural pattern. As with the encouragement to mixed land-use along streets to contribute to the variety within blocks, the mixed function and building pattern within the building scale could lead to the reinforcement of local identity, especially in the buffer Control Zone. In this way, the issues of street frontage, shape and size and boundary in Chapter 3.4.3 categorized the influential varieties of regulations that are directly regulated within the PLP precincts. Meanwhile, there is a specific issue about local character: extensions. The terminology of ‘extensions’ points to additional parts of buildings which mainly emerge when the main part of a building has already been constructed and which are used as supplementary facilities. Such extension is a crucial factor for regeneration within protected areas. For the PLP, new constructions in historical areas are usually forbidden, however, for specific reasons, extensions are permitted and basically arranged rationally by the designers (see Figure 7-5).

Besides these architectural issues, the PLP also aims to preserve the details of the local character. Decorations, colours and materials are all proposed to retain their original patterns. As in Sample I, each individual building within this area is preserved with its original colours and materials although the Colour Plan does not cover this area. Meanwhile, as in Sample H, the PLP takes precedence over the CP and, as a consequence, the colour and materials in the Control Zone are refurbished in a Chinese traditional blue-cyan pattern instead of the beige colour proposed by the CP.
As a regulation about character, the PLP completely preserved the original character in its precinct. However, to some extent, such preservation could lead to the precinct becoming one isolated area within the urban realm. From the aspect of urban character, this regulation merely emphasizes the conservation of historical areas. Whilst such conservation generally involved all issues of local character from the preservation of an entire street network and block patterns to individual buildings and ornamental details, the preservation of a PLP precinct therefore could be seen as a complete preservation isolated from the influences of surrounding plots. However, due to the isolation of the PLP, the preservation in its precinct and the urban regeneration surrounding it lead to an increasingly obvious gap between these adjacent areas. Such a phenomenon could be seen in the urban regeneration in Sample H. To compare the urban regeneration in the Control Zone (Area 1) and urban regeneration outside the PLP precinct (e.g. Area 2), original patterns of blocks in Area 1 are completely preserved, whilst the ones in the adjacent Area 2 have been demolished and replaced by high-rise buildings. Moreover, preserved patterns in Area 1 experienced one wave of refurbishment on the façades and roofs to imitate a Chinese traditional pattern in order to respect the Core Zone, such adverse regeneration increases the contradistinction between the PLP precinct of Area 1 and surrounding plots (Area 2).

Based on the operational mechanism of the PLP, the zoning boundary of the Core Zone and Control Zone are laid out based on the buildings instead of streets, therefore the planning targets are more concentrated on buildings instead of blocks. However, as illustrated in Figure 7-8 in Sample A, the Core Zone of the PLP makes a concession to existing high-rise building in the north for more convenient and precise regulation. Such a concession, in the short term could guarantee the effectiveness of guidelines, nevertheless, in the long term, it might destroy the integrity of the local character within the entire district. Therefore, including both short-term and long-term versions might be more appropriate to guarantee the conservation of historical character on an overall urban level.

The Purple Line Plan, is generally similar to the Conservation Zone of the Architectural Style Plan, however to horizontally compare the PLP with the RDP, the ASP and the CP, the most distinct aspects are: from the aspect of precinct, the PLP is much smaller than the ASP, technically the PLP is smaller than the Conservation
Zone of the ASP although their locations are nearly the same. From the aspect of implementation, the PLP is more powerful than the ASP and the CP, and even influenced the RDP in Sample G. From the aspect of contents, due to the specification of the PLP target (protected buildings and areas), and although the PLP does not clarify precise indicators (as in the RDP), the historical character is still fully preserved and irrational regenerations strictly prevented. Two main reasons could explain this implementation of the PLP: the comparatively smaller area of influence would guarantee the precision of the guidelines and the intensity of execution, whilst the legalized boundary of the PLP could avert the interruption of regenerations in adjacent plots.

8.2.6 Conclusion

The approach to urban character planning in Harbin is rule based, and the preceding analysis reveals that regulations to control or produce urban character are of varied kinds. However, based on the lessons reviewed in Chapter Two and Three, such regulations are rarely enough to produce effective conservation results – conservation is more than rules, it is an attitude adopted by both communities, planners and developers, which involves the whole ambience of a place. In other words: to effectively conserve a place, or indeed to develop new character for a place, much more is needed than the application of rules. Rules are required to help implement a policy. However, it is not appropriate to copy western European architectural styles in Harbin, no matter what the local circumstance. Before more general rules and regulations are promulgated and implemented, a more detailed analysis of local character should be undertaken. In this way, the ASP, CP and PLP can provide more reliable evidence for both conservation and innovation. Furthermore, character zoning should choose the appropriate scope to guarantee that new projects can correspond with the surrounding environment and to avert the appearance of monotonous character throughout the entire regeneration project.

8.3 ADVANTAGES OF REGULATIONS AND LESSONS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

Following the analysis of each individual regulation for urban character in Harbin, the advantages involve four main aspects which could prove generally instructive. Overall integrated considerations about urban character could provide
frameworks for subsequent planning guidance to clarify their aims within the entire planning system; action plans for specific intentions are the embodiments of integrated considerations concerning specific issues; zoning the character helps to subdivide the urban districts into distinct planning units based on their local features and to propose appropriate guidance for specific targets, moreover, the connections between zones could guarantee smooth transitions of local character; finally, the integration of relevant regulations could simplify the guideline-overload found in many urban issues, whilst somewhat looser regulation would reinforce the authority of specific regulations to concentrate on addressing planning issues.

8.3.1 Integrated Consideration

Integrated considerations within the entire urban realm are proposed by municipal governments to provide frameworks for each detailed guidance and to clarify what the strict and/or flexible ‘kit of plans’ could be and tries to fit it to a preconceived vision of urban pattern. As introduced in Chapter 5.3.2, the planning hierarchy in China fully supervises the overall development of a city following appointed principles. Meanwhile, these integrated considerations could guarantee that the local character in each urban district is regenerated in cooperation with others in order to compose a harmonious environment.

First of all, the integrated considerations clarify the aims and overall objectives for each detailed guidance. One of the overall integrated considerations in Harbin is provided by the Harbin Comprehensive Plan (2003) as the 16-character principle: “Bing Qing Xue Yun, Ou Lu Feng Qing, Yu Ding Xiang Ying, Bei Guo Bing Cheng.”. In English, it is: “Ice and snow, European style, elm and clove, northern city”. On the overall urban level, such principles clarify that the main direction of urban development should consider three main urban issues: the natural features and plants would be the most significant factors for Harbin’s urban character. Meanwhile, the historical European style should be treated as a prototype to be cited by modern developments. Furthermore, the constructions and regenerations of the city should represent the typical patterns of a modern city both in its macro-layout and micro-architectural details.

Meanwhile, the integrated considerations arrange planning precincts in a clear hierarchy. Historically, based on the sequence of progress, urban territory is generally subdivided into historical areas, regeneration areas and new development areas etc.,
although the boundaries of these areas are blurred for various regulations. However, the general locations and principles are nearly the same; therefore the Conservation Zone in the ASP and Core Zone in the PLP almost overlay each other. Considering the overall townscape, landmark areas and main traffic junction areas generally have official and public agreement, therefore the investment and regenerations in such areas are acceptable to both officials and the public; a direct reflection is that the key-control road in the Colour Plan is based on such a consensus about core roads in Harbin.

Following an overall consideration about the status of each urban area, all subsequent planning guidelines for specific areas would subconsciously consider the orientation of their precincts within the entire urban realm, in this way, the risk of contradiction caused by different understandings could be reduced dramatically and an overall framework for cooperation among various planning regulations established. Meanwhile, besides the highlighted urban central areas, such integrated considerations could also provide frameworks for regulations in the less sensitive areas (e.g. outskirt or junction zones between central areas and new development areas). In this way, such an overall framework about the direction of development would guarantee the harmony of both regulations and their effects.

8.3.2 Applicable Action Plans

In the Chinese planning system, action plans are widely applied for specific intentions. For the urban character issues, in Harbin, the Architectural Style Plan is a specific action plan for the conservation of historical areas and clarifications concerning architectural styles in regeneration areas; the Colour Plan concentrates on the issues of environmental colours and the materials of buildings; whilst the Purple Line Plan aims to define the boundary of protected historical areas and to preserve original local character within these historical sites. The emergence of these action plans is, on the one hand, due to the imperfectness of the current Chinese planning system and, on the other hand, the specific intentions of government and planners. In the current Chinese planning system, the main planning acts are based on two-dimensional zoning maps, therefore, for specific urban issues, such acts could not completely control the design process. To be more specific, for the preservation of architectural style in historical areas, an Architectural Style action plan and Purple Line Plan are employed to provide principles and advice for the regeneration of
block patterns, façades, ornamental constructions, etc., moreover, other action plans are widely applied for other urban issues. For instance, outdoor advertising action plans are employed by many cities to control and unify the patterns of outdoor signs and symbols in commercial districts; tourism action plans are applied to clarify most crucial landscape districts within one city and provide necessary analysis about the lines of sight in order to provide advice on the urban townscape for other regulations. From this point of view, beyond the zoning-based and site-specific considerations, an action plan is a constructive approach for planners and officials to integrate different principles into one specific intention.

From the aspect of effects, for the urban character issues in Harbin, the Architectural Style Plan clarified four categories of urban zone to provide distinct principles, which, on the one hand, preserve historical architectural features and, on the other, encourage innovations in regeneration areas; the Colour Plan is a typical action plan to arrange the planning of environmental and architectural colour on an overall urban level instead of for individual planning plots, which is not easily represented by a zoning-based RDP or other regulations; for the preservation of protected buildings and their surrounding environment, the Purple Line Plan provides clear boundaries for these protected areas and subdivides them into Core Zones surrounded by Control Zones as a buffer, which completely rescues historical areas from the effects of the regeneration of their surrounding plots (even leading to isolation to some extent). From this point of view, the effects of these specific action plans could not be replaced by normal planning acts due to their pertinence to targets and concepts.

In general, to address specific urban problems, especially in cities whose territories are comparatively large, targeted action plans could be effective options to achieve specific planning purposes. Although all action plans are currently not covered by legislation in China, these optional action plans at least remind designers to consider the issues which they raise; for instance, although architects could not completely design the colour of façades based on the hues provided by the CP (see Chapter 8.2.4), they would still consider overall principles and surrounding features from the aspect of colour, instead of personal whims.

8.3.3 Zoning the Character

It is impossible and unnecessary to preserve the urban character of a modern city
or create one based on a uniform pattern; therefore, based on various existing local identities, the entire urban territory could be subdivided into distinct zones for separate regeneration guidelines. Following the integrated considerations of the entire city, urban character could be zoned based on the consensuses of specific areas to provide a framework for subsequent planning. Meanwhile, due to the distinct local characters and planning guidance, various buffer zones could provide smooth transitions from one pattern of features to another in order to guarantee a harmonious urban environment.

The Architectural Style Plan generally covers the entire urban downtown area, and has been subdivided into four levels of planning. The boundaries and locations of these zones are generally based on various local historical backgrounds and the regeneration purposes of government. Therefore, the slight changes between two adjacent zones could increase the opportunities for smooth transitions from one pattern of architectural style into another, whilst guidelines for each zone basically conform to the local original background and development-orientation respectively. The Colour Plan is based on the historical and development roles of each urban area. It selects fourteen zones and fifteen key streets as control targets, although these precincts are not adjacent to each other. However, four approaches (see Chapter 5.4.4) could still guarantee that the proposed colour in its precincts will be transformed smoothly into the surrounding areas, in order to strengthen urban colour in proposed zones whilst retaining the harmonious features on the boundary areas. Meanwhile, the target of a Purple Line Plan is the historical areas; therefore its zoning area mainly concentrates on the protected buildings and their surrounding buildings. However, the PLP still subdivides its precinct into two levels to establish a buffer zone. Following this analysis, urban character could be regulated using subdivided zonings and individual guidelines to guarantee the variations of local character. Meanwhile, layered zones could reduce the risk of local features becoming isolated.

8.3.4 Integration and Detachment

As the most importantly legalized regulation on the detailed level, the majority of guidance is integrated into, and implemented by, the RDP. This procedure releases planners and architects from dealing with cumbersome planning documents, and provides a more convenient criterion for governmental officials to evaluate the planning scheme. However, for specific planning purposes, integrated regulations
could not cover all issues arising in urban development and the limitations of a zoning-based RDP lead to the ineffective control of detailed construction, therefore individual action guidelines may be needed for site-specific issues.

As discussed in Chapter 8.3.1, integrated considerations of urban character (as well as other urban issues) could guarantee the integration of diverse regulations to propose similar targets and avoid contradictions. To analyse the RDP and the Architectural Style Plan, for the Conservation Zone which is clarified by the ASP, the RDP also defines preserved plots for which no regeneration indicator is provided for demolition or reconstruction. Meanwhile, general height limitations which are regulated by the RDP are also considerably in line with the ASP guidelines, especially in historical areas. Similarly, for these protected historical areas, the ASP guidelines and the PLP both emphasize the prohibition of any new construction, whilst the local colour should also be retained as original patterns or repainted a beige colour, as mentioned by the Colour Plan. Therefore, the integration of regulations is not merely represented in the format but is also represented in the contents and basic principles. Of course, they could also be integrated in the format, such as the Urban Regeneration Project of Harbin’s Chinese-Baroque District (2007b). In Sample G, the general principles of the ASP, the CP and the PLP are integrated and supported by the RDP.

For the most crucial areas (or in other words sensitive areas), the regulations represent a certain degree of detachment. Such detachment is pointing to various emphases instead of contradictions. For instance, in Sample D and area I, the ASP and the PLP emphasize the historical status of this area, whilst the CP excludes this site from its main precincts to leave more flexibility for the choice of colour in order to encourage innovations. From this point of view, to detach distinct issues about local character within specific areas could clarify the emphasis of regeneration principles, which might be further reinforced by either urban scale or site-specific action plans.

Both integration and detachment are based on integrated considerations of the overall urban realm in Chapter 8.2.1, whilst they could both help to decipher the overall principles in specific areas. Based on the framework of integrated considerations, regulations in the core area (urban central area), intermediate area (regeneration area) and peripheral extensions (recent development area) would
present a distinct pattern of overlaid guidelines which represent the different strength of control whereby the urban character is represented as a pattern in which the central areas are strongly controlled by overlaid regulations which heavily conform to each other, whilst the strength generally declines with the increasing distance from centre and detached guidelines start to emphasize specific regeneration issues. This pattern resembles the extension of urban character in modern cities, thus Rhees and Tortenson (2001) insist that the advantage of this hierarchy is that it incorporates prior planning work and is highly responsive to site conditions (see Chapter 3.4.1).

8.4 SHORTCOMINGS OF CURRENT CHINESE REGULATIONS

8.4.1 Confusion over Characterisation Principles

The basic theory of improving and enhancing character is based on the respect for local original ‘personalities’ (Chapter 2.3.1) and to guarantee their acceptability (Chapter 2.3.2). The local personalities of character within one city could not be confirmed as one uniform pattern due to the large scale and comprehensiveness of modern cities. However, for current Chinese planning, an overall urban character is normally given to the entire city. In the case of Harbin, the orientation of urban regeneration character was defined as European Style in 2005, which has already been castigated as an arbitrary decision by some scholars.

However, such uniform orientation of urban character has already been widely employed as a universal approach in the majority of Chinese cities. For such uniform principles of urban character, since they are mainly based on the considerations of historical features, therefore the negative effects are not obvious in historical areas. However, for peripheral areas, such a uniform style would interrupt the ordinary regeneration process of the city (see the Chapter 8.2.1). Those increasingly rampant imitations of historical features, either conscious or unconscious, would confuse the direction of historical evolution.

The original purpose of the uniform orientation of urban character is to reduce the chaos in urban character; however, in practice, this risk is somewhat increased.

8.4.2 Absence of an Evidence Base

To compare Chinese regulation in Chapter 5.3.2 with components of
international practices in Chapter 3.3.5, considerations about local character and proposed development should widely cite from the wide range of local features. However, coverage of such considerations, as discussed in Chapter 8.2, is extremely limited in China to direct the decision-making for the planning and processing of design schemes.

Due to this absence, several problems emerged during the process of regeneration. For the historical area, see Figure 6-12, although architectural features are basically recognized from the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the façades and patterns of decorations, on the street patterns and blocks level, historical features are not recognized as an element of local character during the regeneration process, therefore the unique historical street network features are generally replaced by uniform block patterns (see Chapter 6.3.2). For regeneration areas in Chinese cities, since normal residential buildings in these areas do not present a strong character and the design quality is comparatively low, new buildings therefore prefer to ignore original features and attempt to create their own patterns.

The survey of sample areas in Harbin, for instance, shows that new buildings (especially high-rise buildings) have two main options: conform to the overall urban character – European Style (Sample B, Part H in Sample D, Sample E, Part 3 in Sample F), or compromise modernism to local architectural features (Sample C). Obviously neither of them could be confirmed as the most rational approach. As discussed in Chapter 8.4.1, adopting European features as the main reference should not be applied throughout the entire city. For Sample B, since it is close to the Central Avenue blocks, it could therefore present comparative historical architectural patterns on the façades; whilst for Sample E and Part 3 in Sample F, they are far away from historical areas and their surrounding environment has no historical features, therefore such imitations are not an appropriate option for them. Meanwhile, since the absence of evidential references of local features in Sample C, the architectural pattern could not be fully confirmed as rationally respecting surrounding local plots, moreover, the urban texture is completely destroyed by the Sample C project.

In general, without evidential, site-specific analysis of the local character, many new buildings are confused when choosing their architectural patterns, and the innovation of architectural style, which is encouraged by the Architectural Style Plan,
is transmuted into imitation. Furthermore, due to the large scale of development, the overall local urban morphology is interrupted.

8.4.3 Weakness of Implementation

The implementation sections of Chinese policy are comparatively weak on the district and neighbourhood levels, since most policies are concentrated on theoretical and political aspects. By the introduction to the planning system in Chapter Five, national regulations emphasize the general principles and the procedures of comprehensive planning and detailed planning; coming down to the urban level in the case of Harbin. The Harbin Comprehensive Plan are generally embodied as the RDP to provide indicators and zoning maps for each subunit, whilst the ASP and the CP provide guidelines (some of which are combined into the RDP) to propose final performance of outcomes (see the Chapter 6.4.3 and 6.4.4). From this point of view, the ASP and the CP present considerable features of ‘performance-based planning’. During the survey of ten samples, the most effective implementations arise from the quantitative indicators of the RDP, whilst the remaining guidelines generally play an optional role.

The different status of statutory plans and non-statutory regulations present distinct effects. The majority of Chinese history conservation plans present such performance-based planning features. However, these regulations usually provide a considerable flexibility, whilst statutory plans tend to clarify a certainty of requirements (especially the RDP). In this way, when statutory plans are engaging to cooperate with performance-based planning, performance-based planning tends to be located at secondary status. Thus, the implementation of heritage planning and conservation cannot be fully guaranteed, especially when contradictions emerge. Via the survey of ten samples, the most effective regulation is the RDP, which completely controls the developments without any violations; whilst the other regulations all experience violations to some extent, with the Purple Line Plan being better than the ASP and the CP, and this is heavily due to the legalized boundary in the Comprehensive Plan (See Chapter 8.2.5). From this point of view, the absence of a detailed planning act is one of the obstacles to the control and implementation of the current planning system.
In summary, the detailed section between general conceptual planning and implementation is a particularly weak section in the current Chinese planning system. The absence of precise guidelines and the controversial concessions lead to ineffectiveness in specific situations.

8.4.4 Unevenness in Execution

The Chinese planning system and operational mechanism, as introduced in Chapter Five, are based on a top-down pattern organized and supervised by the government. Thus, the intensity of regulations down to each individual plot is inevitably represented as a pattern of unevenness due to variations in execution intensity.

As in the analysis in Chapter 8.2.2, the precinct of the RDP has already covered the entire urban downtown area with each subunit representing an equal intensity of control. However, the ASP and the CP still merely emphasize their core control areas (see Chapter 8.2.3 and 8.2.4). From the aspect of controlling, to compare the ASP guidelines for each zone, the control intensity varies, the is the same for the CP. From the aspect of location, the urban central areas are regulated by overlapping guidelines from the RDP, the ASP, the CP and the PLP, whilst in the peripheral extensions (newly developed areas), the amount of guidance is much lower (e.g. see Sample J in Chapter 7.11).

On the one hand, this is due to the concentration of integrated considerations (Chapter 8.3.1) in sensitive areas; on the other hand, it was the distinct intention of the government that central areas should be preserved whilst peripheral extensions should be encouraged to innovate. For the actual situation in Harbin, the peripheral areas are normally unregulated except for the RDP. Technically, principles for innovation in peripheral areas are only loosely applied but, for contents, the RDP guidelines and directions remain clearly in place.

8.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the implementation and effects of regulations are analysed based on the case studies in Chapter Seven. Their effects and weaknesses are also classified based on their influence on elements of local character. Hence, the advantages and shortcomings of the entire Chinese policy context were diagnosed by this examination of actual projects in the ten sample areas. This diagnosis reveals four
main advantages which other cities who are attempting to address urban character issues might find helpful. In addition, four main shortcomings are also pointed out.

Echoing the main concerns about existing Chinese policies in Chapter 5.4, the shortcomings of the current regulations are, on the one hand, due to the weaknesses of the planning contents set out in Chapter Five but, on the other hand, come from other social and economic influences. Meanwhile, advantages in Chapter 8.3 indict the concerned issues in Chapter 5.4 did not exert completely negative influence for character planning.

The next chapter summarizes the advantages and shortcomings of the current Chinese planning system, draws conclusions and makes suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
CHAPTER 9  DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to diagnose the implementation of planning regulations for urban character in modern Chinese cities. A series of questions was therefore provided in Chapter 4.2.1 to guide the research. These questions provide a way to explore the key issues of Chinese regulations and all questions have been answered by the end of each relevant chapter. This chapter is divided into two parts and links back to the methodology framework of this research. The discussions of the findings are, based on the answers in each chapter, engaging to reveal internal problems about the ineffective aspects of Chinese local urban character regulations despite the elaborate planning apparatus in modern China. Following the problems revealed, recommendations are provided to improve Chinese planning regulations for maintaining the character of modern Chinese cities.

9.2 KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section, does not propose to repeat the answers to the questions already given in each chapter, instead, it aims to integrate and reorganize those findings to reveal the reasons behind the traumatic loss of urban character in modern China, which is the main aim of this research.

Considering the obstacles in Chinese local urban character planning, the rational understandings of ‘character’ should be emphasized and the policy context should also be complemented by citing international experiences. The elaborate Chinese planning apparatus examined in Chapter 8.3 may also provide lessons for others.
Discussion and recommendations

9.2.1 Misunderstanding about Character in Modern China

In Chapter Two, the question ‘what is character’ revealed a theoretical understanding of the ‘roots’, ‘essences’ and ‘expression’ of character, whilst the question ‘could character be changed’ provided a practical understanding of planning principles to reinforce local character. Within this theoretical framework, to compare the global experiences reviewed in Chapter Three and actual Chinese planning principles, one finding is revealed as that Chinese scholars and governmental officials display considerable confusion about the natural features of character. Such misunderstandings can be summarised from two aspects. The importance of history is overemphasized whilst other social concerns are basically ignored. This lopsided emphasis leads to inappropriate attitudes toward showing respect for the character of Chinese cities. Furthermore, the social features of character are not fully respected by planners and stakeholders.

9.2.1.1 Overemphasis on history

The overemphasis on history in Chinese planning can be revealed from three aspects. The promulgated planning regulations regarding character mainly emphasise the protection of historic features. Secondly, the majority of character regulating policies clarify detailed guidance for historic central areas whilst ignoring the periphery of the historic areas. Thirdly, current Chinese academic publications highlight the role of history as the only issue when talking about character.

As highlighted in the introduction to Chinese planning evolution (see Chapter 5.2.3 and 5.2.4), legalised policies about urban character emerged in the 1980s, and the majority of local character planning emerged after 2000. However, the key words in planning are ‘protection’ and ‘historic’, which are easily recognised in the titles of these policies (see Chapter 5.2.4). From the aspect of content, these regulations and other relevant planning, e.g. the Architectural Style Plan (ASP) in Harbin (see Chapter 6.4.3), emphasise urban historic areas as their main regulating target, whilst the peripheries are generally addressed in loose guidelines. Even urban regulating guidance is absent in some new development areas. With regards to academic research history is widely recognised as the ‘source’ and ‘unique root of character’ (Li, 2006; Wang, 1999; Li and Wu, 2010), and historical features are equated with the entire urban character (Liu, 2011). Although some scholars do not treat the history as the only basis of urban character, and put it at an equal status to cultural
features and geographical features (Cheng, 2006; Zhang, 2006), with regards to spatial planning, history is still treated as the only evidence of spatial issues for Cheng and Zhang.

Citing back to Chapter 2.2, this overemphasis on history is due to the absence of understanding about the roots and essences of character. The reviewed theorists suggest that the root of character is generated by the connection between human beings and their environment (see Chapter 2.2.1), whilst the essence is generated as the experiences during connecting processes and as refined elements of tangible configuration (see Chapter 2.2.2). From this point of view, history is merely one part of experience (group experience but individual), and overemphasis on the ‘past experience’ of a group leads to ignorance about other important factors in planning, e.g. the ‘connection’ between citizens and the current urban environment (root) and the ‘elements’ (essence) of current urban space. As mentioned in Chapter 8.3.1, such over-emphasis on history leads to an over-emphasis on Western influences over Harbin and to the slavish copying of these European styles. This slavish following of historical patterns is a common phenomenon in current Chinese cities, especially those with a long history. Meanwhile, overemphasis on pursuing the ‘past’ would sacrifice the ‘present’, and the ‘present’ would be the ‘past’ for the future. Hence, to overemphasise history would lead to the division of all of urban history. Following this point of view, the urban character should be treated as a dynamic process but the end of history. Just as the practical feature of character mentioned in the Chapter 2.3.1, the identity of a place varies over time, so the specificity of a place is continuously reproduced.

From my point of view, history should be kept in a museum to remind us of the past; but we cannot live in a museum. Historic areas in the city centre can be protected and regenerated without destroying historic features; but the development of areas outside the city centre should not concentrate on the repetition of historic patterns. Innovation should be encouraged based on the analysis of initial local personalities. In this way, all areas of one city can foster their own local character (e.g. industrial patterns, unique residential pattern within specific era, etc.) without following a prescribed overall and uniform style. This promises the sustainable development of the entire city and requires the cooperation between local investigation at the neighbourhood level and appropriate arrangements with regards
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to character zoning at the macro level. More detailed suggestions are provided in Chapter 9.3.1 and 9.3.3.

Meanwhile, planning experiences can be cited back to Chapter Three. In Chapter 3.3.1, attitudes towards urban areas are various due to distinct planning proposals, however regeneration areas and new development should not be forgotten by planning regulations. Furthermore, the character mapping method and statements about local character (see Chapter 3.3.3) clarified local identities within each urban districts, instead of merely emphasising the historical ones. More importantly, the components of character (which are summarised in Chapter 3.4.3) reveal all necessary spatial elements which should be considered appropriately, and these elements involve both historic features and recent development marks. The projects reviewed in Chapter Three present abundant considerations of physical and social issues which closely connect the ‘past’ and development, instead of merely aiming at the preservation of history.

Fortunately, some Chinese researchers have started to explore other aspects to understand ‘character’, e.g. the aesthetics and the urban character (Xu, 2003), Chinese culture and local character (Zhang et al, 2008), etc. These researchers attempt to understand urban character from an overall level to reveal the connection between human beings and the environment. This is a good start towards the understanding about the essences of character, which involves the ‘connection’ and ‘tangible configuration’ (see the Chapter 2.2.2).

In general, the history of a place should be seen as one of the most crucial parts of urban character; however, the emphasis on history would not be completely transformed to the improvement of local character, since the history is not all part of the local ‘personality’ (see Chapter 2.3.1). Due to the emphasis on historical features, from aspect of regulation, a majority of Chinese planning policies concentrate on historical areas, whilst in contrast, guidelines are comparatively seldom provided for new development areas, which does not help in creating and recognizing local character in such areas. Loose regulation should not equal its absence.

9.2.1.2 Incomplete sociality of character

The misunderstanding about character in modern China also exists in the understanding about the social attribute of character. Based on the analysis in Chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, sociality is represented through both group experiences and
individual experience during the connection between human beings and the environment (see Figure 2-1 in the Chapter 2.2.1). As concluded above, such a dual directional process of sociality is normally simplified into a pure ‘recognition’ process which is dominated by governmental behaviours, whilst the ‘reflection’ process is rarely considered by current Chinese planning.

For the ‘recognition’ process, governmental determinations replace the group experiences and ignore individual experience in current Chinese urban development issues, including those of urban character. This phenomenon is a concern of scholars, and public participations are argued to change such phenomenon (Chen et al., 2003; Li and Han, 2005; Xin, 2005; Xu and Tao, 2012). As elaborated with regards to the Chinese planning context in Chapter 5.3 and the cases in Harbin in Chapter 6.4, one of the government-led ‘recognitions’ is the overall principles regarding urban character (see Chapter 8.2.1.1), which are based on an ‘aesthetic mainstream of character’ (see Chapter 5.5.1). This macro government-led ‘recognitions’ is hardly to be accepted by local scholars (see Chapter 8.2.1.1), and even misleads urban regenerations as described in the Harbin case studies (see Chapter 7.3, 7.5 and 7.7). Referring back to the global practices discussed in Chapter Three, character zoning and character statement (see Chapter 3.3.3) provide constructive experiences to process local recognitions at both the macro city level and the micro neighbourhood level. Meanwhile the listed components of urban character in Chapter 3.4.3 indicate necessary elements that should be recognised. The government has recently started to highlight the importance of ‘group experiences’ (public participations), but the public, government and experts can be treated as three equal units to supervise and administer urban development (Wu and Su, 2008); however, the effect of such a change has not been obviously presented in the case-based investigation in this research.

By now, the concerns about “ambitions and political targets” in Chapter 5.5.1 can be answered. The governmental dominated ‘social experience’ is the main reason for these unrealistic political projects, meanwhile ‘governmental experience’ is also one of the main reasons leading to inappropriate development patterns and outcomes (see Chapter 8.2). Such government-dominated ‘social experience’ can be regarded as an expression of politics. One of the fundamental intentions of these government-led ‘recognition’ is to purchase distinctiveness. As introduced in Chapter One, China
is facing the erosion of local identity, therefore many local governments treat ‘distinctiveness’ as a panacea to overcome such erosion (see Yu, 2001; Feng and Jin, 2006). In this way, officials propose to enhance local attractiveness in order to promote local economic development and other benefits (see Liu, 2006; Wu, 2004). These political ideologies also affect the attitudes of conservation, e.g. the regeneration project in the Sample G in Chapter 7.8. However, as seen in the analysis of character in Chapter Two, distinctiveness could be generated into outcomes as an ‘expression of character’ (see Chapter 2.2.3). In other words, distinctiveness should be a product of the process of evolution of local character instead of being an enforced procedure or a proposal.

For the ‘reflection’ process (see Figure 2.1), considerations about social influences during this process are universally ignored by both scholars and government officials. With regards to the sociality of the ‘reflection’ process (see Chapter 2.2.3) to the same external tangible configurations, people who belong to distinct social groups (e.g. tourists and local residents) have various feelings. Planning activity has both physical features to create on environment and social features to guide the behaviours of local users. However compared with the planning experiences outlined in Chapter Three, especially the planning guidance (see Chapter 3.3.2.2) and planning contexts (see Chapter 3.4.1), Chinese current regulations do not explain ‘why’, and do not follow an instruction to the operation. Thus, without rational guidance, these spontaneous ‘feelings’ of tangible configurations (see Chapter 2.2.2.2) would lead to unexpected pattern of development. As shown on Sample G area in Harbin, delicately regenerated blocks might be abandoned by their previous residents which can lead to desolation (see Chapter 7.8.4), a universal risk for conservation of Chinese historic features.

9.2.2 Defects in Chinese Policy Context

9.2.2.1 Chinese planning system

Based on the analysis about the Chinese planning context in Chapter Five, the evolution of Chinese planning exerts a considerable negative influence on the urban character; meanwhile, a problematical hierarchy also restricts the effect of policies. With the rapid economic growth since the 1980s, which echoes the starting time of Chinese urbanism, local character in modern Chinese cities has become ever more similar in appearance (see Chapter 5.2.3 and 5.2.4). Such concerns in Chapter 5.4.2
have been verified in Chapter Eight. To sum up, the purification of the functional zone at comprehensive level does not provide precise approaches to control developments at neighbourhood level; meanwhile, unevenness of intensity leads to unevenness of execution; furthermore, the basic mechanism of zoning would cause isolation between planning plots. Comparing the current Chinese planning context with zoning (see Chapter 3.3.3) and urban coding system (see Chapter 3.4.2), and following the analysis of detailed planning in Chapter 5.4.3, a crucial reason for these problems is that a planning hierarchy is technically absent at the neighbourhood level. Meanwhile, as in the introduction in Chapter 5.4, the status of character planning is comparatively low within the entire planning system. These two reasons are also empirically tested as crucial reasons to obstruct the execution of current planning policy.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.3, ‘designability’ and ‘acceptability’ should be fully guaranteed during the planning process, whilst a precondition to guarantee those is to make specific considerations within a given environment. Many reviewed practices have arranged such specific local considerations. In Chapter 3.3.4 and 3.4.2, urban coding is shown to be widely used by western countries to direct development at the neighbourhood level. It is also regarded as an effective tool to construct local character. Moreover, the character statement about local features is applied in England to clarify the evidence of character regeneration (see Chapter 3.3.3), which could be referred to for further consultations by the advisory institutes (see the analysis of current Chinese characterisation in Chapter 8.2). Therefore, based on the analysis of the status of site-specific planning and its necessity, this dissertation argues for a real site-level planning throughout the Chinese planning system. This suggestion is elaborated in Chapter 9.3.3.

9.2.2.2 Contents of regulation

In terms of planning theory, Chinese current character regulations can be thought of as rule-based planning. This is obvious for the statutory planning from the Comprehensive Plan down to the Regulatory Detailed Plan and the Construction Detailed Plan (see Chapter 5.3.3.1 and 5.3.3.2). The relevant regulations about urban character clarify the expected performance of outcomes, which can be thought of as performance-based planning. These non-statutory regulations usually provide considerable flexibility, whilst statutory plans assert a certainty of requirements. In
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this way, heritage planning and conservation trend to compromise with statutory plans, and their implementation cannot be fully guaranteed.

With regards to planning expression, current Chinese planning still relies on 2-D zoning maps plus descriptive guidelines, which have been used as if they can satisfactorily fulfil the requirements of modern urban development (see the Chapter 5.3.3). Referring back to the planning experiences with regards to characterisation, 3-D considerations about spatial issues are widely applied, and are mainly presented as urban coding system (see Chapter 3.3.4). Therefore, current regulations are expected to be complemented with more supplementary regulations which consider urban character from the three-dimensional perspective in order to provide more detailed arrangement about spatial issues. Urban design which was classified as non-statutory planning in China (see Chapter 5.3.2) is undisputedly argued by some scholars to earn a legal status within the Chinese planning system (see Ding, 2009; Zhang, 2010). Chinese scholars agree that a legalized urban design system is the most convenient approach to achieve immediate effects on protecting urban character (see Zheng, 2007; Chen, 2010; Huo and Bai, 2010).

Meanwhile, based on feedback from interviews and findings from the inquiry into planning the investigations (Chapter 8.4.3), Chinese planners and governmental administrators appear to ask for more specific guidelines and manuals for the processes of both design and execution. These specific guidelines should not be proposed to follow current rule-based planning in China, ideologies are encouraged to widely refer to performance-based and case-based planning. Some scholars concerned whether the government owns enough human power to invest in establishing new specialized planning, whilst the necessity of such planning is widely discussed (see Xu, 2002; Liu, 2008). Following these concerns, the applicability of establishing more supplementary plans are discussed in Chapter 9.3.2 and 9.3.3.2.

With regards to guidance, ambiguous terminology (e.g. feeling, atmosphere) permeates directions about character in both western and Chinese academic discussions (see the introductions about Harbin character regulations in Chapter 6.4). Nevertheless considering the current Chinese planning context, planning regulations need to get a clear concept about which issues should be regulated to contribute towards overall local character. Based on this question, this research classified the
urban character into various elements in the Chapter 3.4.3 (see Table 3-10). Comparing the global practices in Chapter Three and China’s character planning in Chapter 5.3.3, it can be argued that the elements and coverage of contents are comparatively insufficient. A wider coverage of regulatory issues is therefore suggested to supplement current policies. Based on the review of character statements in England and the analysis in Chapter Eight, this research also proposes to record local existing features into China’s planning documents. The necessity and applicability of this proposal are elaborated in Chapter 9.3.2.

To sum up, current planning regulations about urban character should provide more precise rules and involve more guidance about each specified spatial varieties instead of imprecise qualitative descriptions. These supplementary details should involve all relevant items about character, which could refer to the nineteen extracted varieties (Table 3-10). Concerns about the effectiveness of current policies in Chapter 5.4.2 could be classified into concerns about two aspects: the completeness of the framework to transit planning contents, and precise guidance to express planners’ ideas. The concerns about hierarchy of planning system in Chapter 5.4.3 and 5.4.4 are also pointed out as defects in this section. Via the discussions about findings above, these concerns have been confirmed and treated as the main problems to be addressed by recommendations in Chapter 9.3.

9.2.3 Advantages of Chinese Policy Context

Although there are misunderstandings about theories and considerable defects in policy contexts, undue pessimism about the character policies is not necessary. Character regulations in modern Chinese cities exert constructive effects due to the elaborate apparatus which could be provide valuable lessons for other countries.

9.2.3.1 Elaborate apparatus of regulations

The territory of Chinese cities is increasingly extending. Because of the top-down planning hierarchy in Chinese cities, the development of an entire city can be processed following integrated stages (see Chapter 8.3.1). Such an integrated consideration also guarantees that the local ‘tangible configurations’ (see Chapter 2.2.2.2) of an entire city are regenerated by cooperating with others in order to compose a harmonious environment. Regulations at a zoning level are also arranged to cooperate with each other (see Chapter 8.3.1). In terms of application, this
integrated consideration provides an applicable framework for specific urban plans to emphasize specific issues about urban character, which guarantees that one element of the character (Table 3-10), e.g. the colour or the architectural style, could be ranged throughout the urban realm. Furthermore, the overall considerations in current China clarify development principles for historical preservation areas, new development areas, as well as specific proposals for the remaining urban area. Such classification presents a similar ideology of reviewed character mapping approach in Chapter 3.3.3. Following these classification, specific plans could specify their design targets and approaches to address area-specific urban problems whilst establishing integrated connections between each area.

The RDP is one of the most crucial parts in the Chinese planning system. The RDP’s legal status clarifies a series of quantitative limitations to development, which do not merely control the density of development, but also indirectly influence local character (see Chapter 5.4.2). By using the RDP, planners are able to design a local morphology which is based on the integrated considerations of an entire area. Compared to the reviewed planning in Chapter Three, the content of the RDP is insufficient with regards to local character, and this has been debated in Chapter 8.2.2., however, its effectiveness of implementation should not be denied. One of the most crucial reasons for this effectiveness is that as a rule-based plan, the RDP provides certain requirements whilst ignoring the final performance (when compared with performance-based planning). Such purified requirements are easily to be fulfilled by developers. If more issues, e.g. aesthetics, are involved, its degree of effectiveness might be reduced.

Besides Harbin, there are also relevant regulations to attempt the discussions of individual character issues in other Chinese cities, some of which have already been incorporated into local planning policies. The importance of the continuity of a façade, as one element considered to represent local character, is emphasised by Kebing Zhou and Hongbo Jiao (2009); meanwhile the street interface is also mentioned by Yu Zhou and leads to a discussion about the ‘density of a façade’ (Zhou et al., 2012). Furthermore, the boundaries along streets in Shanghai have been regulated by one specialized plan, and a ‘Near-line Rate’ has already been legalized.

\[ \text{Near-line Rate} = \frac{\text{Length of Facade}}{\text{Length of Property Line}} \times 100\% \]
as one part of the RDP by Shanghai’s Planning Bureau (Kuang and Xu, 2012). Although these attempts merely concentrate on individual aspects of overall character issues, the recently increasing academic arguments about character form part of a constructive trend in the evolution of Chinese planning policies.

9.2.3.2 Lessons for others

As outcomes of the analysis of Chinese planning policies, the advantages of current contexts are set out in Chapter 8.3 to help other countries with similar problems. These advantages are generated within China’s ‘integrated consideration’ framework. Following an integrated arrangement of an entire city, detailed regulations would clearly distinguish their own aims and targets, and the considerations about those separate planning issues would not violate the overall development principles. Consequently, zoning-based plans could be applied focusing on specific targets with no internal contradictions emerging. Although a zoning mechanism is disputed during the implementation, and it indeed obstructs the effectiveness of regulations, distinct zones clearly define the status of each precinct, and one of the consequent advantages is that those various levels of buffer zones provide smooth transitions from one pattern of features to another. Therefore the zoning mechanism is still necessary to cover the overall urban territory. The coverage of each sub-zone should be smaller, and have guidelines that should be more precise. Following these mechanisms, as Chapter 8.3.4 explained, specific development strategies are necessary for distinct urban character areas. Even for the same area, the emphatic guidance may be different for each specialized character plan. Such detachment within each area can guarantee an exuberant local character.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHARACTER PLANNING IN CHINA

This section, following the advantages and weaknesses of the current planning context in China noted in Chapter Eight and referring to the wide review of theoretical and empirical experiences in Chapters Two and Three, provides recommendations for the future development of urban character planning.

Following the findings in Chapter 9.2.1, the recommendations should start by complying with the local ‘tangible configuration’ and then fulfilling the requirements of ‘sociality’. More specifically, the local ‘tangible configuration’ includes
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discussed geographical circumstances, historic signs, cultures and preserved folk customs, etc.;
whilst the requirements of ‘sociality’ are composed of group experiences including
pleasurable living, convenient facilities, comfortable leisure and eco-friendly
engineering etc. Such ‘sociality’ obviously asks for investigations into local
requirements to involve more ‘group experience’ within the considerations of local
caracter. These concepts echo the words ‘designability’ and ‘personality’ in Chapter
2.3.1. Meanwhile, they could enhance the notion of ‘acceptability’ in Chapter 2.3.2.
The improvement of these two basic concepts could be summarised as three main
planning aspects: a Local Identification Report, supplementary guidance and site-
specific design.

9.3.1 Local Identification Report (LIR)

9.3.1.1 Necessity and applicability

Considerations about ‘local personality’ (see Chapter 2.3.1) should be
established as the reference for planning within these areas. These considerations are
the essence of the subdivision of character zonings, and a precondition of
‘acceptability’ (Chapter 2.3.2). As reviewed in Chapter 3.3.3, character statements, which clarify local features for the evidence of further regeneration, are widely
applied in England. Considering actual situation of Chinese situation, the similarity
of urban character planning in a majority of Chinese cities means that there are no
specific local references that could be celebrated. Based on this classification, as an
introduction to China’s planning context in Chapter Five, current Chinese documents
concerning urban character merely emphasize the planning guidance, whereas no
relevant documents could be recognized as comprehensive records of a local
‘tangible configuration’. Meanwhile, as in the discussion in the Chapter 8.2.1 and
9.2.1.2, Chinese urban regeneration needs some reliable references to be cited to help
achieve ‘sociality’ during the regeneration process, therefore, as a derivative of those
‘reports’ of international practices, the Local Identification Report should be
established and applied as a reference in China and emphasized by the government.

9.3.1.2 Establishment of the LIR

This report should involve both the physical issues, such as local morphology
and patterns of blocks and streets, and social issues, such as living habits and folk
customs. Meanwhile, the local potential economic issues should also be analysed for
use in further regenerations. In this way, this report recommends a Local Identification Report (LIR) to seek to identify areas which have similar or special qualities, and to ascertain the key features which contribute to overall local character. This method is intended to ensure that in identifying the features which make a place special, regulations can be made about how much change, and what types of change, a specific area can accommodate without losing its original character. The information provides evidence supported by factual descriptions, rather than being based upon subjective recommendations or criticisms.

From specific contents, the LID should refer to the nineteen varieties in Table 3-10 (see Chapter 3.4.3) to involve the majority of urban spatial factors in a designable ‘tangible configuration’ of local character. For each element, schematic diagrams are heavily recommended for clear expression and delivery; meanwhile, the descriptions should be simple and worded in technical language. Besides the physical issues, local economic structures and social issues should also be involved into the LIR to represent comprehensive information to help government and planners to make decisions. This report is a material consideration in determining planning applications, and does not seek to identify which features positively (or negatively) impact upon an area’s character – the decision on which local characteristics should be retained or removed remains the responsibility of stakeholders, therefore suggestions for further regeneration are not necessary. All this is designed to be a process that will not stifle appropriate innovative design.

Distinct from other planning regulations, the main participants of the LIR should be scholars and planning experts, whilst the government provides any necessary assistance. Take the Architectural Style Plan and Colour Plan in Harbin as an instance to illustrate their applicability. When beginning to establish an Architectural Style Plan, Professor Suning Xu, based on his previous research and investigation about Harbin’s original architectural style (Xu, 2003), constructed the first version of an ASP in 2004. Meanwhile, Professor Songfu Liu has sought to reveal the potential usage of Harbin’s historic colour since 2001 (Liu, 2001), and had already published relevant reports about its historic architectural styles and made preservation suggestions which could act as a prototype of a Colour Plan. From this point of view, Chinese scholars have already spontaneously started to process such recordings before any systematic organization and arrangements have come from government.
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Therefore, the capability of local scholars to process such investigations should be confirmed. Local government should provide a framework to help experts and scholars to complete the ‘original background’ section in the LIR based on local academic and human resources and their knowledge. They can then organize the necessary local and/or nation-wide expert panels to review the outcomes.

Since current Chinese regulations are a zoning-based mechanism, therefore the LIR could also be operated based on such a mechanism to comply with the operation of other regulations. Meanwhile, such LIR should be considered and applied in combination with a comprehensive plan at the city-wide level, although the operational mechanism is based on the zoning level.

9.3.2 Supplementary Guidance

From discussions about the findings in Chapter 9.2.2, besides the RDP and CDP, the majority of current regulations about urban character remain on a theoretical level, whilst the issues likely to arise during implementation are absent. Broad and general guidelines are hardly a full guarantee of effective implementation (see Chapter 8.4.3). Based on these problems, supplementary guidance is recommended to complete the Chinese planning context. This should address not only local urban character, but also other relevant urban issues.

As Duany continues, “Bureaucracies will rarely be dismantled or reformed; however, they will willingly administer new standards” (Andrés Duany, 2003, p.56). In China, the current planning hierarchy and operational mechanism are strictly followed within the governmental administrative context (see Chapter 5.3.2), therefore, for professional planners and government officials, this system is a mature one (Zhou and Qi, 2009). From this point of view, any revision of the entire structure of the system is unlikely. Thus, suggested supplementary guidance basically conforms to the existing planning hierarchy and aims to fill the gaps in implementation rather than replacing existing sections.

9.3.2.1 Urban Design

In the current Chinese planning context, urban design normally has a site-specific spatial treatment. Based on such a definition, a site-specific design scheme is not legalized since the government seeks to ensure that such schemes are not just personal flights of fancy by designers. However, as a necessary linkage between
policies and implementation, Jianguo Wang (2011) insists that urban design in the Chinese planning system could comprehensively summarize, generalize and abstract original local backgrounds, which conforms to the proposed principle of character planning (see Chapter 9.2.2.2) and guarantees these local features will permeate the entire planning process (see Chapter 3.4.4). Moreover, since the participants in urban design are both planners and architects, urban design could therefore be seen as the introduction of more prescriptive constraints on what might be designed for planners; whilst it is also an attempt by architects to gain more influence over the creative process of designing the built environment. In this way, these participants could be defined as the suppliers of projects for local planning officials. In other words, the urban design technically creates a feedback system between suppliers and authority, between design proposals and policies. Carmona defines such a feedback system as allowing “applicants to take design considerations seriously if they expect to get planning permission but, equally, authorities should take the time to carefully formulate policies because, once in place, they will be expected to abide by them” (Carmona, 2006, p. 265). In this way, urban design provides a framework for a conversation between designers and government officials, and the ideal outcome would be that greater certainty will be offered by the planning process, and the delivery of a high-standard of design will become the expectation rather than the subject of unnecessary tension and protracted negotiation.

In general, to legalize the urban design as one part of China’s statutory planning system could reduce the gap between theoretical policies and practical executions. In this way, the principles of authority could be precisely transmitted down to actual implementations.

9.3.2.2 Executive Manual

Variation in the understanding and execution is the reason for unevenness of intensity in execution (see Chapter 8.4.4). From this point of view, an Executive Manual system could interpret prior planning work and embody proposed guidelines within actual projects, whilst the quality of implementation could be improved to some extent.

From the aspect of content, tangibility, comprehensibility and efficient process this is admirable. Meanwhile, the Executive Manual should be tailor-made to each project, not simply one design practice applying a predetermined kit of parts to each
and every new site. Based on the review of international experience in Chapter Three, a schematic diagram is highly recommended; however, the unintentional influence of an illustration must be avoided. As Murrain and Bolgar (2004) explain, illustrations must be precisely targeted to the issues being addressed and contain no extraneous information. Meanwhile, interpretations must be comprehensive, simple, and worded in technical language to guarantee a clear and precise expression. More specifically, an Executive Manual should be clear enough to produce predictable results, well-explained illustrations should be provided, and it should be easy to use and clearly understandable to those users who are inexperienced and untrained.

9.3.2.3 Supervision and administration

During the analysis of the implementations of actual projects, the ‘legal but irrational’ has become a universal phenomenon during the urban regeneration process, especially for the new high-rise building projects (see Chapter 7.3.4). The supervision system therefore should be reinforced to supervise such behaviour. Based on the establishment of the LIR in Chapter 9.3.1, supervision could be more objective and effective.

The administration of planning principles, regulations and operational mechanisms should permeate into each level of the policy context. The majority of regulations remain on the recommendation level, whilst revisions are normally permitted for named ‘rational’ reasons. However, the attitude towards regulations should be that the majority of issues should be mandatory, a minority can be recommended, and a tiny minority might be entirely optional (Murrain and Bolgar, 2004). Based on this comparison, Chinese regulations must revise their attitudes to reinforce their administrative power. Regulations should include protocols to aid the sequence of permissions and help the developer understand the selection, design and development procedure. Meanwhile, the administrative system should establish a formal standard by which it will be interpreted, provide enabling arrangements and be organised to accommodate any necessary future changes. Such formal standards should essentially involve the LIR as one of the crucial criteria.

9.3.3 Site-specific Design

9.3.3.1 Importance of a site-specific design

Urban character, as reviewed in Chapter 2.2, is composed by the connection
between human beings and local tangible configuration, whilst these objective tangible configuration and subjective social influences vary within distinct areas of the city. Therefore, the planning of urban character should consider specific situations in each planning sites. Based on the experiences of western planning outlined in Chapter Three, the site-specific coding system is widely accepted to handle local development, and character mapping and local character statement are another two method to define the site-specific identities.

Considering these in combination with the analysis presented in Chapter 5.3.3 and 5.4.4, the current RDP is processed following an uniform format which does not respond to a specific situation. The Construction Detailed Plan (CDP) presents more architectural features and trends to become the outcome of planning instead of one procedure (see Chapter 5.4.4). Based on the analysis of advantages and shortcomings of Chinese regulations in Chapters 8.3 and 8.4, it can be argued that integrated considerations lead to the integration of guidelines within one specific planning plot. However, such integration is uneven from plot to plot, which is one of the crucial shortcomings of the current planning system. To address these problems, site-specific design should be employed to replace monotonous guidelines by distinct approaches and to guarantee the variation and rationality of urban regeneration in each planning site. Such a subdivision could also prevent increasing the area of a single planning unit, which has been confirmed as one of most crucial obstacles to improving local urban character (see Chapter 8.2.1).

As alluded to here, a site-specific design should represent a deeper level of integration of the guidelines (see Chapter 8.3.4), which could help planners to embody their original purposes into final outcomes. Such site-specific design should avoid the current Chinese rule-based mechanism, and should emphasise the actual performance of local development. Therefore, this site-specific design could refer to the ideology of performance-based planning which sets clear unequivocal levels of performance, rather than a zone for each housing type with a maximum density, or minimum open space ratio, identified in the RDP. In this way, the site-specific design would not become a detailed repetition of the RDP, but an extension of the RDP to guarantee the outcomes of local character. Furthermore, the ideology of case-based planning would help site-specific design to concentrate on targeting sites by referring to other experiences. Obviously, this require higher planning skill for planners.
9.3.3.2 Applicability and rationally

To introduce a supplementary section within the existing planning hierarchy, the applicability and rationally of site-specific design should be discussed. As in the analysis of Chinese regulations in Chapter 8.3, one of the advantages of zoning-based ordinances is to guarantee the harmony within each distinct zone. The site-specific design has a tendency to create multiple new districts within zones, meanwhile adding length and complexity to the zoning ordinance. Hence, from the aspect of local character regulations, such multiple new districts would guarantee the ‘variety’ to break the current monotonous urban character and enhance local distinctiveness.

For the design of particular character, in having a division of creative labour and a variety of designers working within a single operating system, site-specific design seems intrinsically suited to producing variety with harmony. Carmona (2006) insists that such ‘variety with harmony’ could be equated with a particular kind of urban quality. This kind of quality could be particularly relevant for large development sites and major urban extensions, especially where a lot of development is designed and built by a limited number of design teams in a short period, which is particularly suitable for China’s current planning pattern. The adoption of site-specific design nevertheless implies distinct roles for the guideline writer and designer, and this could imply a redistribution of creativity in the design process, rather than necessarily a diminution of creativity. The practices reviewed in Chapter Three show a degree of variety and harmony spreading across large areas of city centres and their respective inner suburbs in a manner that does not suffer the charge of standardisation. Site-specific design, as practiced in the UK, for instance, can indicate how a proposed development within conservation areas relates to, fits into, and impacts on the character of the surrounding conservation area and how this is dealt with in the design proposal. As shown in the review of practices in Chapter Three, e.g. the regeneration projects in Bath (Bath and North East Somerset Council, 2004) and Gloucester (Thomas, 2004), site-specific design has achieved satisfactory outcomes.

Therefore the renewed site plan could be confirmed as fully applicable for China’s current planning system whilst being completely rational and able to help current regulations create local character. Meanwhile, it is an appropriate choice to
address the unevenness of intensity (see Chapter 8.4.4) of regulations in the current planning hierarchy.

9.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research diagnoses the regulations about urban character in modern Chinese cities from the aspects of both their internal contexts and final implementations. The implications of the research must take into account the special planning context of China. The conclusions of this research can be generalised to other modern Chinese cities or the ones in other countries with similar historical and developmental backgrounds. However, the generalisation should pay attention to the characteristics of the case study area. Harbin is a Chinese city which was planned and constructed by colonists; the urban regeneration is therefore influenced by both the Chinese nation-wide policy context and colonial prototypes. Such a planning and colonial background is different from the situation of some other cities. Hence, for further research on this topic, it is important to select a wider range of case study areas with distinct historical backgrounds to contrast and compare their experience in the making and delivery of urban character. This will also help to test the robustness of the theoretical framework presented here.

This research mainly focuses on the regulations about urban character in respect of architectural style, urban colour and historical conservation. However, a broad range of regulations in other aspects (e.g. architectural codes) are influencing the overall urban character. It would therefore be valuable to extend the scope of the analysis beyond studying just the impacts of direct planning regulations. Nineteen varieties are summarized as a category in Chapter Three and this category has been applied as the main reference in the subsequent analytical chapters. However, these varieties could not be guaranteed to cover all issues of local character – the issues might be different for different scholars. The reason to raise the concept of such a category is to encourage planners to extend their considerations more widely. Hence, for specific circumstances and proposals, the varieties in this category might be distinct. For the ‘sociality’ of character in Chapters 2.2 and 9.2.1.2, a dual directional process is mentioned; however, to compare the importance of these two separated processes following the concern in Chapter 2.2.3 about whether or not they are equal
or unequal could only be verified in psychological territory rather than urban planning territory. Therefore, whether the ‘creating of character’ or the ‘feeling of character’ (see Chapter 2.2.3) is the most important cannot be concluded in this research.

At the time the fieldwork for this research was carried out, Harbin municipal government has just started a new wave of urban regeneration and refurbishment activities (2010). As it was eager to quickly achieve instant operation, many planning guidelines and decisions were implemented in a rush and the contents were immature. Over the past two years, the provincial and local governments have been working on improving contents and principles by solving the problems that emerged in practice.

With regard to data collection, face-to-face interviews were employed as the main method in this research. This method helps to elicit the in-depth insights and different perspectives of different participants and also the relationships and intensions between them. However, a considerable proportion of the interviewees in the government hesitated to express their personal point of view, although anonymous recording was promised by the author. With the increasing degree of openness to the public in China, the decisions and operations of the government will be spontaneously exposed to public view and it will be increasingly valuable to include a wider range of governmental officials in the future research.
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