

*The Development of the City with the Historical District: The Comparison with Suzhou and Nantong*

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**Abstract**

The current construction of some historical district in China has become a social hot issue. On the one hand, the historical district as a space carrier with a high concentration of regional natural environment, history and culture, urban construction and other elements has high value for protecting the historical heritage of the city and highlighting the urban characteristics. On the other hand, driven by the huge land value and economic value, along with the rapid development of the city, the historical district suffer a considerable degree of constructive damage and is difficult to recover. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the contradiction between ancient city protection and urban development, and achieving a win-win situation between urban development and historical district protection is a key technical issue in contemporary urban design. This article compares and analyzes the case of Suzhou and Nantong and uses historical mapping and research interview method to analyze the relationship between historical district protection and urban development. First of all, it analyzes the urban development status of the two cities. Secondly, five key issues are identified: urban pattern change, regional function renewal, infrastructure optimization, spatial shape adjustment and lifestyle change. Then analyze its main constraints from three aspects of economy, policy and design. Finally, five strategies are proposed to explore the future development of modern city and historical district protection: Dislocation development, Featured positioning, Regional service, Morphological style and Flexible adjustment.

Keywords: Urban planning; Historical district; Suzhou; Nantong

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## **Background**

With the rapid development of China's economic construction and the gradual deepening of urbanization, the protection and development of traditional ancient district has become a hot issue of social concern. How to protect its historical, cultural and spatial characteristics of the historical district with being in harmony with modern urban life is an important topic in the face of contemporary urban planning.

In fact, the development of contemporary cities inevitably has an impact on the protection of historical district. On one hand, the goal of historical district protection is often jeopardized by urban development goals. "Constructive destruction" occurs from time to time. On the other hand, under the contradiction between the needs of contemporary urban life and the living environment of the historical district, the self-organized residential transformation behavior of the citizens often influence the architecture of the historical district. The pattern is disrupted and it is difficult to adjust it by urban planning. Therefore, in studying the relationship between protection and development, it cannot be separated from the actual characteristics of contemporary Chinese urban construction. This is not only the social background of our understanding of problems, but also the premise of our planning means and approaches.

The protection of historical district in China is divided into three levels: cultural protection units, historical blocks, and historical districts. Historical ancient districts are the largest scale. It contains the most comprehensive inclusive elements and the most rich in historical memory. It also has the most important influence. Compared with the former two, the protection of historical districts pays more attention to the historical pattern and overall style of the ancient city, which is conducive to shaping urban characteristics and retaining the impression of urban development. It has far-reaching significance for the overall planning of contemporary cities.

This paper selects Suzhou and Nantong as research cases. Through the analysis of urban historical evolution and contemporary urban pattern, the relationship between historical districts and urban development is sorted out. Combined with planning and practical experience, the historical districts protection development strategy is proposed to promote the harmony between historical districts protection and modern urban development.

## **The Relationship between Historical District Protection and Urban Development**

Foreign studies on the protection of ancient cities are relatively mature. The protection and development are explored in the context of high urbanization. Domestic research is mainly based on the realistic background of urban development, with the style of appearance as the research object. Although research has guiding significance for specific factors and cities, it is difficult to grasp the relationship between protection and development from the macro level as a whole. It is also difficult to coordinate the protection of ancient cities and cities from the overall level of the city.



Figure2: Scholars, developers, and government views on historical sites

Combing relevant research, the relationship between ancient city protection and urban development mainly includes three aspects: The first is the opposition between the two, which can be reflected from the goals of both. The goal of historical districts protection is to maintain the traditional material and morphological structure through the protection of the city's style and pattern, historical sections and cultural relics, and to continue and protect the traditional life, culture and place spirit while urban development is to transform and update the old architecture and urban structure to make it meet the requirements of modern society. Second is unity, the two are inseparable. Protection can only be combined with the development of the city, so that it has economic significance and actual value to have the driving force for sustainable development. Development must also cherish the characteristics of the ancient city and use it as an important way to shape the development of the city image. Finally, it is historical. In contemporary urban planning, the protection of ancient city and urban development have the same dimension of time. From this perspective, the protection of ancient city is also an important part of urban development and an important part of urban development.

### **Analysis of Urban Evolution and Pattern of Suzhou and Nantong**

In view of the current status of protection and development of domestic historical and cultural cities, this paper selects Suzhou and Nantong, which have typical representative characteristics, as a case study. The ancient cities of both are of great significance in urban development. Among them, Suzhou, as one of the earliest cities in the protection of historical and cultural cities in China, has achieved a good balance in protection and development. Its planning and development model has been highly praised by the domestic planning academic circles. The "one city, three towns" model of Nantong in the process of modern evolution is an important transition between the ancient mansion and the development of modern cities. There are many contradictions between the protection and development of its pattern in modern planning. The two can represent the two different stages and states of the development of China's current historical and cultural cities to a certain extent. Through the comparative analysis of the evolution of the urban structure of the two, we can comprehensively summarize and summarize the problem we are facing in the protection of the historical districts from the overall perspective of urban development.

#### *Analysis of Urban Evolution and Pattern in Suzhou*

Located in the southeastern part of Jiangsu Province, Suzhou is located on the south bank of the Yangtze River estuary. It is part of the Yangtze River alluvial plain. It is located in the Yangtze River in the north, Shanghai in the east, Zhejiang in the south, and Taihu Lake in the west. The city's waterway transportation is developed and it is

the birthplace of Wu culture. The history of the city can be traced back to the end of the Shang Dynasty. In 514 BC, Suzhou City was built.

To sort out the evolution of Suzhou urban spatial form, it can include five stages: The first is the initial stage, which mainly includes the Qin and Han Dynasties. Since it was the capital of Wu State at that time, it has carried out careful and careful research from site selection to planning and layout, laying the foundation for the ancient city of Suzhou. From the analysis of spatial form, Suzhou City adopts the shape of three city walls, which is composed of Miyagi, Ayutthaya and Waikyū. The ratio of its circumference is about 1:3:5.67, which is basically consistent with the construction of metropolitan cities in the same period. In addition, Miyagi chooses to be in the middle, slightly southeast of the city, and the big city has eight pairs of water and land gates. It adopts the planning mode of “like heaven and earth”. There are wide squares and dense rivers in the big city. The urban planning has considered the function. Zoning, military and living places, and commercial places are concentrated. During the Qin and Han Dynasties, due to the limitation of geographical location, the development of Suzhou at this stage was limited and the spatial form evolved slowly. Urban construction is mainly based on the construction of the palace city. There are two zones in the city as a special commercial area. The urban structure is loose and there are more agricultural land.

Followed by the stereotypes and maturity stages, mainly from the Sui and Tang Dynasties to the Song and Yuan Dynasties. The construction of this period has had a profound impact on the future development of Suzhou. The city's development in Suzhou has made great progress, and its economic status has gradually surpassed the northern region. The urban spatial pattern has also undergone corresponding changes. The city presents a pattern of water and land double chessboards. The city uses the water system as the vein, and the river channel forms the urban pattern of “water and land adjacent and river parallel”. The sub-city of the central part of the ancient city is still the architectural center of the whole city. The city follows the planning system of the city square, gradually forming the water city style of the small bridge, and the north and south ends of the city are still dominated by the pastoral. Among them, the urban plane in the Song and Yuan Dynasties gradually showed irregular rectangles. The urban layout was mainly divided according to functions. The square lane system replaced the city system and water became the theme of urban construction.

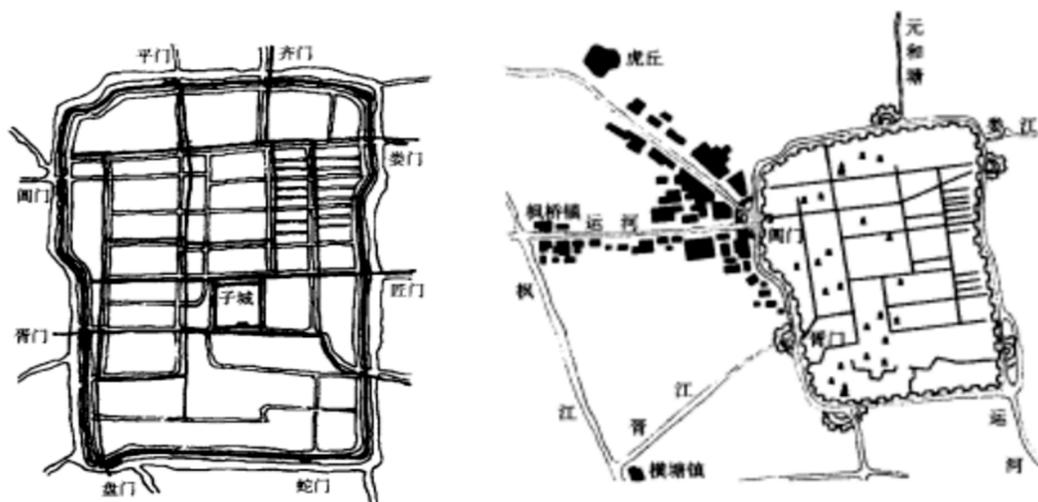


Figure3: The district in Tang Dynasty and Qing Dynasty

The third is the peak stage, mainly including the Ming and Qing Dynasties. During this period, Suzhou has become a major industrial and commercial center in the country, and it has nurtured the capitalist concept of production earlier. Its spatial form has been further adjusted and developed. The architectural center of the historical districts gradually shifted and the city was built. The city commercial center was expanded and the ancient city gradually became gardenized. The street system was formally formed and the urban functional division was adjusted to adapt to the new development conditions. The overall urban structure changed.

The fourth is the transitional period. From 1912 to 1978, China's social environment and political system have undergone major changes during this period. The urban development of Suzhou has also experienced certain turbulence and its spatial form has undergone a certain transformation. The city's commercial center gradually moved eastward. Guanqian Street became the new commercial center of the city. Western-style buildings gradually emerged and new types of buildings emerged. Peripheral traffic continued to be built. At the same time, the city and streets continued to be rebuilt and the city was demolished. Industrial buildings were scattered throughout the city. The river water environment has been deteriorating and the Nanmen area has attracted construction and development.

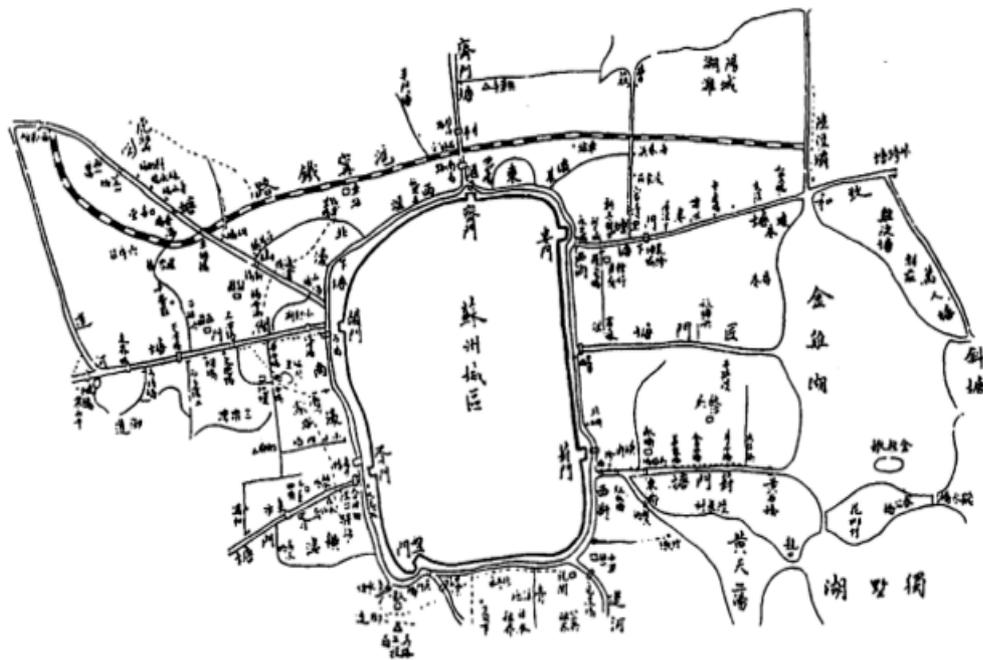


Figure4: The district in Republic of China

Finally, the stage of development of transformational change, from 1978 to the present, the huge urban transformation that Suzhou experienced in 30 years and the urban spatial structure has undergone tremendous changes. The urban pattern has developed from a single-center city to a two-city model in the ancient city new district, and then developed into a two-wing pattern of the East Park West District and the ancient city center. Finally, it has developed into the current windmill model and the spatial structure of the four corners. Through the overall control of the overall level, Suzhou urban development guides the differential development and interactive development of the ancient city and the new city. It further promotes the construction

and development of the city while realizing the protection and renewal of the ancient city landscape pattern, forming a good space between the new and old urban areas. Organizational model and development mechanism.

#### *Analysis of Nantong City Evolution and Pattern*

Located on the north bank of the Yangtze River Golden Waterway and the “T”-shaped intersection of the eastern coast, Nantong is China's gateway to the rivers and seas. It is also one of the earliest 14 coastal open cities in China. The barriers of the canal and the Yangtze River make the Nantong city free to expand. The large restrictions also contributed to the spatial integration and differentiation of urban functions, forming a unique urban spatial structure of Nantong.

To sort out the evolution of urban spatial form in Nantong, it can be divided into three stages:

The first is the period of ancient development (958-1840), with the square city wall and the cross street as the main spatial features. The scale of Nantong city has expanded with land growth, but the urban structure is based on Fangcheng and Cross Street, which are symmetric with the central axis. The formation of this urban structure is not entirely determined by natural or economic factors. At that time. The cosmology of the round place and the direct expression of the ideas of the heavens and the humans.

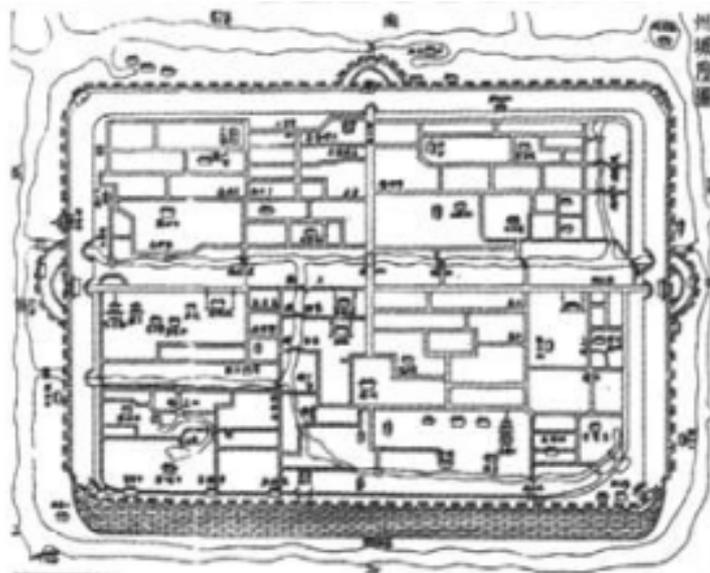


Figure5: The district in Qing Dynasty

Secondly, during the period of modern transformation and development (1840-1978), the multi-center group structure of “one city, three towns” was gradually formed. With the goal of developing industry, Zhang Jian has opened up new industrial and port areas outside Nantong City according to local conditions. The industrial zone was selected at Tangzhao, 8km northwest of Nantong City. The port area was selected in Tiansheng Port, 9km west of the city. The scenic spot was selected at Langshan, 9km south of the city. It is still a whole in terms of urban function. The urban space layout of a city and three towns. Since then, the urban spatial pattern of Nantong has continued this structure. It is only accompanied by the expansion of the old city and

the adjustment of functional structure. After the liberation, the scale of the old city and the internal functional structure of the city have undergone major changes. People's Road and South Street form a T-shaped commercial center, which has changed the cross structure of the past.

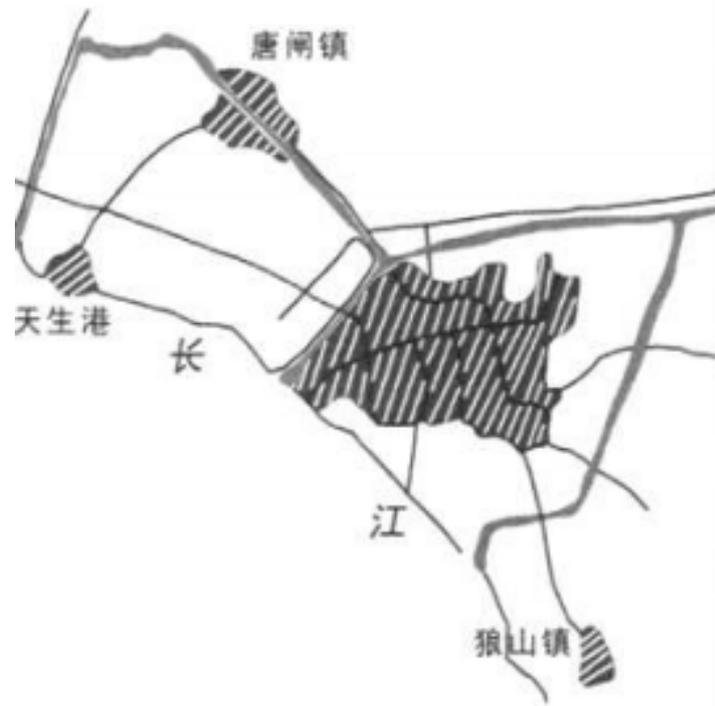


Figure6: A city with three towns

Finally, the period of contemporary accelerated development (1978 to present) is based on the axial expansion of the internal group of the city. Since 1985, the direction of urban development and urban form still maintain the characteristics of the original urban layout. Developing downstream along the Yangtze River coastline and gradually forming an urban center. A group of towns along the Yangtze River in a town, a district and a town. The urban functional land development is relatively fast and the groups are filled with each other. The urban scale of the old city continues to extend and expand around and there is a further axial extension along the river to form a strip-shaped development along the river. Forming a spatial structure of strips and clusters.

*Problems the protection of historical districts facing*

According to the thermal data, in the crowd activity level, Suzhou and Nantong continue the historical inertia of the urban structure. The historical districts and the surrounding area form a high degree of human clustering. However, compared with Suzhou, the functional layout in the ancient city of Nantong is chaotic and a large number of high-level Medical and educational resources are concentrated in the historical districts. There is no reasonable distinction between the historical districts and the modern city. The function and space organization in the past and the present makes it difficult to achieve a win-win result between Nantong's ancient city protection and urban development.

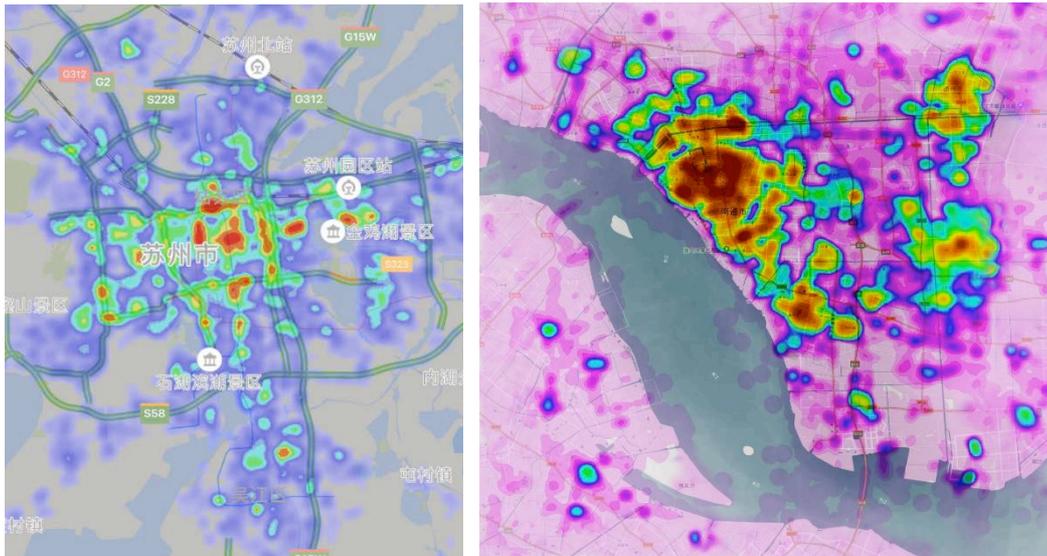


Figure7: The structure of Suzhou and Nantong based on the activity of crowd

Based on the analysis and comparison of cases, the problems between historical districts protection and contemporary urban development are mainly concentrated in five aspects:

The core issue is the change of the urban pattern. The historical districts of the city is limited by the construction process and the natural environment. Due to the functional needs of the protection, the address and mode of the selected city often have greater limitations, and the cities under the influence of the construction of the transportation hub during the development of contemporary cities. The expansion often differs greatly from the original urban pattern. The functional division and spatial connection between the ancient city and the new city have become problems that protection and development have to face.

Secondly, the regional function update, this is a key issue. Due to the historical inertia, the regional functions retained by the ancient city tend to concentrate on the city's main education, medical and educational resources, but with the further development of the city, the original functions are gradually unable to adapt to the new ones. Demand, the function renewal and conversion of the ancient city becomes the key to the sustainable development of the ancient city.

The third is infrastructure optimization. This is an important issue. The important goal of the government to carry out urban planning and construction is to improve the living standards of residents and the supply of basic service facilities. The infrastructure in the ancient city often has a lag, but is limited by the construction period. With the technical means, the damage to the remains of the ancient city in the optimization of facilities is often difficult to avoid.

The fourth is the adjustment of spatial form. The style and image of the ancient city are an important part of shaping the city's characteristics. The pursuit of land value makes the construction in the ancient city continue. How to find a balance between economic benefits and cultural inheritance, and continue the pattern and style of the ancient city. The important content. The last is the lifestyle change, which is the basic

problem and the most realistic problem for the residents. The self-organized transformation and construction behavior is often due to such needs. Community planning is often one of the effective means to solve such problems.

### **Study on the protection and development strategy of historical districts at the macro level of the city**

Based on the research on the problems faced by the historical district protection and urban development, combined with the author's planning and practical experience, this paper try to explore the study of the historical district protection and development strategy at the macro level of the city.

#### *Constraint factors' analysis*

In the protection and development of historical district, the factors that restrict the implementation and construction of the project mainly include three aspects: economic factors, policy factors and design factors.

Economic factors, namely land economic benefits and government development benefits. In the process of contemporary urban development, how to balance economic returns and other benefits has always been the main problem faced by the government and planning groups. The developer groups under the land value of the ancient city are interested in the interests. Chasing makes the plot ratio and development intensity of the land remain high. Even the development mode of traditional commercial streets faces the contradiction between the format guidance and the living groups.

The policy factors mainly include planning policies and renewal policies. Early planning and updating of ancient cities often focused on the protection of single elements, lacking attention to the overall pattern, causing irreparable damage, and contemporary urban renewal faced with regional synergies and public service facilities. Restrictions on the overall layout of the level.

Finally, there are design factors. The renewal of ancient cities in backward cities often depends on the personal ethics of developers and planners, the integration between protection and new architectural forms, and how to meet the needs of modern life while preserving historical memory is the key to design.

#### *Protection and development strategy*

On the basis of analyzing problems and limiting factors, the paper proposes the protection and development strategy of the ancient city from the macro level. It mainly emphasizes the interaction and win-win situation between the historical district and the overall development of the city.

The first is the functional layout of the old and new. The original highly concentrated educational and medical resources in the historical district should be appropriately migrated to avoid excessive traffic pressure and population pressure. Commercial resources and administrative resources should be combined and combined according to specific conditions and the functional layout should be optimized based on the spatial pattern of the ancient city. The development of differentiated functions with the new city to avoid the expansion of the functional level.

Secondly, it is characteristic positioning. The key to the difference between the historical district and the urban area lies in its historical style and form. From the perspective of the historical district itself, it emphasizes its characteristic positioning from the perspectives of culture, tourism, service, commerce, recreation and so on. It also clarifies its functions at the overall planning level. With the structure in the urban system, the image of the historical district with certain symbolic features is formed and the spatial cognition of the crowd in the city is guided by the gesture of the city.

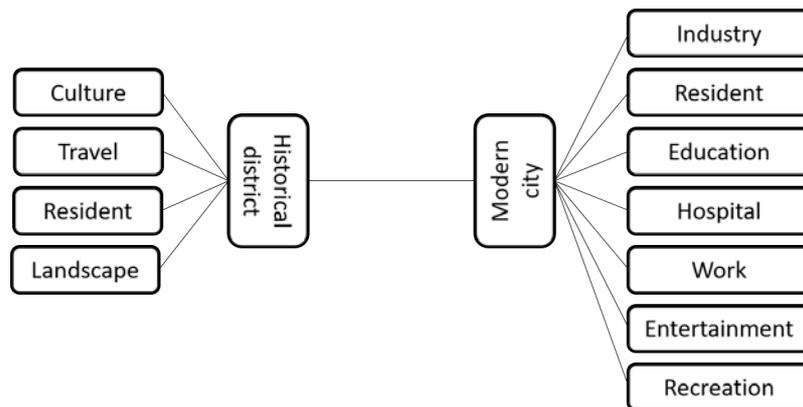


Figure8: The leading function of the historical district and the modern city

The third is regional services. Compared with the peripheral urban space, the space of the historical district often has physical space boundaries due to the existence of material bodies such as city walls. This strengthens the spatial pattern and enhances the value of the land. Public service facilities are often difficult to meet. Real life needs. The plan proposes to adopt an intermediary state, deploy public service catalysts between the new old towns, strengthen regional services based on service radius and service groups, and improve living standards.

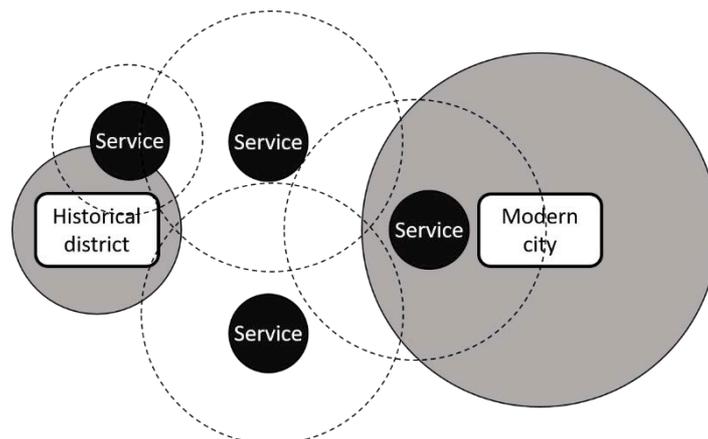


Figure9: Intermediary public service mode

The fourth is the form and appearance. The shape and style of the historical district has regional characteristics. It is the inheritance of the city's own memory. It is of great significance in the development of contemporary cities and is the key to solving the problem of “one thousand cities”. Protecting the shape and style of the historical district should start from the overall level and its overall image will be more obvious

to the city. This should also be the premise and foundation of all historical district development strategies.

Finally, the flexibility adjustment. Based on the current multi-participation participants in the process of protection and development of historical district in China, the pursuit of goals is often different. The protection and development of the historical district is a long-term process, through the bottom line control, index control, etc. Staged Achieving planning and design goals is often more practical.

## **Conclusion**

The city is a special carrier of human culture while the historical district contains more valuable historical and cultural information and plays an important role in cultural heritage. This paper introduces the process of urban development between Suzhou and Nantong and systematically analyzes the problems between historical district protection and urban development. It analyzes the contradiction between historical district protection and urban development. It tries to find urban development and historical district protection from the aspects of economy, policy and design. By using this as a guiding ideology, try to further explore the strategy of protection and development of historical district under the macroscopic level of the city. In this way, we hope to guide the protection and renewal of the historical district better.

This paper focuses on the relationship between historical district and urban development in the process of urban evolution. However, it has less intrinsic influence mechanism and which will be strengthened in later research.

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