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Book Wall - Adaptive and Integrated Urban Shared Reading Space

Di Ai¹, Xin Ge²

¹Architecture Design Centre, Architects & Engineers Co.,Ltd. of Southeast University, Nanjing, China

²Department of Architecture, Southeast University, Nanjing, China

Abstract: The reading level of Chinese urban inhabitants is backward compared with that of the developed countries, so it is an important aspect of the cultural and ethical progress to improve the reading habits of citizens. Plenty of researches have revealed the significant relationship between human behaviour in the public space and characteristics of the built environment. As the common spatial element in Chinese cities, walls, which mostly act as urban barriers, lead to the formation of numerous negative boundaries, hinder the openness, accessibility and continuity of urban public space, and set a strong limitation on people's activities and cognitions in the urban space. The design project, 'Book Wall', is a small-scale intervention that answers directly to the problems mentioned above. Through the redesign of existing walls, they are no longer the pure urban barriers, but available, accessible and flexible reading places in daily life with their level of permeability adapting to the changing needs and conditions. The article starts with a brief introduction including the reading conditions of Chinese urban inhabitants, the influence of urban exterior space on people's reading behavior and the spatial characteristics of Chinese cities. After that, the aim of this article that is to promote paper reading and build up shared reading space in the city is illustrated and interpreted. Then the article analysed the distribution and operational mode of 'book wall', together with its innovative tectonic design and multiple ways of utilization. 'Book wall' won the first prize of Zijin Design Competition in 2016. Shortly after that, a 1:1 scale model has been built and tested in use which showed great feasibility and potential of improving public reading.

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