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# Research on Characteristic Town Planning Based on the Concept of "Context Refurbishment" — With Hejie Ancestral Temple Characteristic Ancient Town as an Example

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**Abstract:** Ancient towns are the "living fossils" of ancient civilizations and traditional cultures. As a carrier of historical context, it has accumulated rich cultural connotations in the process of development. In the process of planning and design, we must dig deeply into its history and culture and adopt feasible methods to inject vitality into the cultural inheritance of ancient towns. This is especially important for the connotative construction of cities and towns in China. Facing the challenge of foreign culture, the ancient town such as Hejie, which carries heavy traditional culture, also suffers from the invasion of new culture and the reduction of the living space of traditional culture and excessive homogeneity. Therefore, triggered our thinking on the planning of ancient towns. Based on the concept of "cultural context repair", this paper proposes planning ideas for the ancient town's cultural context system from the point, line and plane scales by using the methods of cultural context repair, infiltration and reconstruction. It is hoped that by "repairing" the ancient town context, the living space of traditional culture of ancient town can be expanded, its competitiveness can be enhanced, and the road to sustainable development can be paved. At the same time, taking Hejie ancestral temple characteristic small town as an example, using the planning idea of context repair to carry out an empirical study, hoping to find a reference planning idea for the development of ancient towns with the same situation. At the same time, it provides theoretical guidance for the development practice of the context of small towns with characteristics in the next stage, and also provides a basis for the formulation of planning policies of small towns with characteristics.

**Keywords:** Context Refurbishment, Town Planning, Hejie Ancient Town

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## 1. Introduction

After the reform and opening up, China has experienced rapid urbanization. The overall level of China's urbanization in 2015 was 56.1% [1]. The urbanization rate is expected to reach 77.29% in 2035 [2]. The town has now crossed the high-speed development period, began to turn to the connotative renewal development stage [3]. At present, the rapid development of urbanization has made great achievements, but it is also accompanied by many problems, such as the ecological environment destruction, the lack of

urban characteristics, the lack of cultural protection and inheritance, the lack of coordination of architectural style, the lagging of municipal facilities and other "urban diseases" [4-9]. At the same time, it brings new challenges to urban planning [10]. Among these problems, cultural inheritance has a profound impact on urban development.

Small towns have always played an indispensable role in the process of population urbanization in China. Liu Shenghe et al. found that from 2010 to 2015, the contribution rate of "urbanization" of China's urban population reached 55.1%, higher than the contribution rate of "urbanization", indicating

that the construction and development of small towns deserve extensive attention [11]. And the characteristic traditional culture carried by the small town is a precious wealth of the town. Although China's development policies have attached great importance to small towns in various periods, more attention has been paid to the infrastructure, service functions and living space of small towns. There is a lack of macroscopic guidelines and microscopic methods for the protection and inheritance of urban characteristic culture. In 2016, the Chinese government issued the policy of small towns with characteristics to encourage the cultivation of the carrier of small towns with characteristics, so as to help the sustainable development of small towns. In East China's Zhejiang Province, for example, the local government plans to invest 500 billion yuan, or \$76.8 billion, in 100 featured towns over the next 10 years to seek remote land use planning, efficient transportation systems and social integration [12]. However, from the perspective of the small towns constructed in recent years, due to the lack of experience, the lack of theoretical and methodological guidance and the invasion of foreign cultures, there have been a series of problems such as "excessive homogenization" [13], which has even caused great damage to the characteristic context of small towns. This will not only fail to meet the strategic demands of supporting the development of small towns, but may cause the development of small towns to lag behind or even retrogression. Therefore, it is urgent to repair the urban context, regain the cultural recognition, re-cultivate the spirit of place and rebuild the quality of space.

Based on the concept of "cultural context repair", this paper proposes planning ideas for the ancient town's cultural context system from the point, line and plane scales by using the methods of cultural context repair, infiltration and reconstruction. It is hoped that by "repairing" the ancient town context, the living space of traditional culture of ancient town can be expanded, its competitiveness can be enhanced, and the road to sustainable development can be paved. At the same time, taking Hejie ancestral temple characteristic small town as an example, using the planning idea of context repair to carry out an empirical study, hoping to find a reference planning idea for the development of ancient towns with the same situation. At the same time, it provides theoretical guidance for the development practice of the context of small towns with characteristics in the next stage, and also provides a basis for the formulation of planning policies of small towns with characteristics.

## 2. The Planning Concept of "Context Refurbishment"

### 2.1. The Proposal and Practice of the Concept of "Context Refurbishment"

At the beginning of this century, Professor Xiao Baixing and others from Huaan University in Taiwan put forward the planning concept of "Context Refurbishment" for the first time in the process of spatial planning of Shiding Town [14].

This concept is proposed in view of the development of urban and rural mediocrity and evil quality caused by globalization and modernity, which requires new methods to investigate and understand their own spatiotemporal changes, so as to rebuild the living space showing regional characteristics. Therefore, the stone ingot construction team in the research and practice process put forward based on the cultural overall "historical geography architecture", and the use of "repair planning and design" theory and method. Later, Xiao Baixing and others verified the theory and method again in the investigation and practice of Taishun and other places. Liang Zhenran et al. discussed the application of the concept of "Context Refurbishment" in the protection and renewal of Dawei Ancient town [15]. Sun Yi discussed the application of the "Context Refurbishment" method in the context space planning of ancient towns [16], etc. Since then, theoretical and practical studies centering on the planning concept of "Context Refurbishment" have been gradually carried out in various Spaces.

### 2.2. "Context Refurbishment" Planning Method

Xiao Baixing et al. put forward that the investigation of regional culture and the grasp of the characteristics of regional landscape are the premise of "Context Refurbishment", and on this basis, the context of regional culture is woven. Such a planning method is the "Context Refurbishment" planning method, which is also a philosophical method of regional planning [17]. He summarized this method into two main points, one is "reconstructing function", and the other is "illuminating symbol". According to Liang Zhenran, the method of "Context Refurbishment" should deeply analyze the cultural form and site characteristics, excavate the cultural connotation and charm of the site, and achieve the purpose of inheriting its culture by repairing the carrier space [15]. Sun yi proposed repair system of organization to construct ecological space, and combining context dominant and recessive elements, to infiltrate into the area of low historical and cultural value, by the method of point, line and plane space construction, put forward the planning intention for cultural places, cultural corridors and cultural atmosphere areas [16]. The above discussion and application of the planning method of "Context Refurbishment" have their own emphasis, which also depends on the results of site characteristics. But generally speaking, the planning method of "Context Refurbishment" must grasp three contents, First, research regional culture, grasp the cultural characteristics, grasp the cultural context; Second, reconstruct the spatial function with cultural symbolic significance; Third, organize the context space system as a whole through certain spatial construction methods. The "repair" and "complement" of the cultural context of the site can be realized through the above ways. Its ultimate purpose is to inherit the regional context while adapting to the changes of The Times, enhance the competitiveness of regional traditional culture, and coordinate the balanced relationship between people, objects and culture, so as to realize the sustainable development of

the site. Based on the above considerations, this paper will take the planning of Hejie temple town as an example to explore the planning strategies and methods of cultural heritage in towns with distinctive culture.

### 3. General Situation and Context Analysis of Hejie Ancient Town

#### 3.1. Geographical Location

Hejie Town is located in Babu District, Hezhou City,

Guangxi Province, at the intersection of Hunan, Guangxi and Guangdong. The transportation is convenient. There are 207 National Highway, G78 Shanzhou-Kunming Expressway, Gui-Guangzhou high-speed railway through the land, Linjiang River, He River junction in the water, along the Linjiang River can reach Fuchuan, Zhongshan; Along the He River waterway can reach the Pearl River route. Guangzhou in the east, Wuzhou in the south, Guilin in the north and Liuzhou in the west are all within a two-hour economic circle (Figure 1).

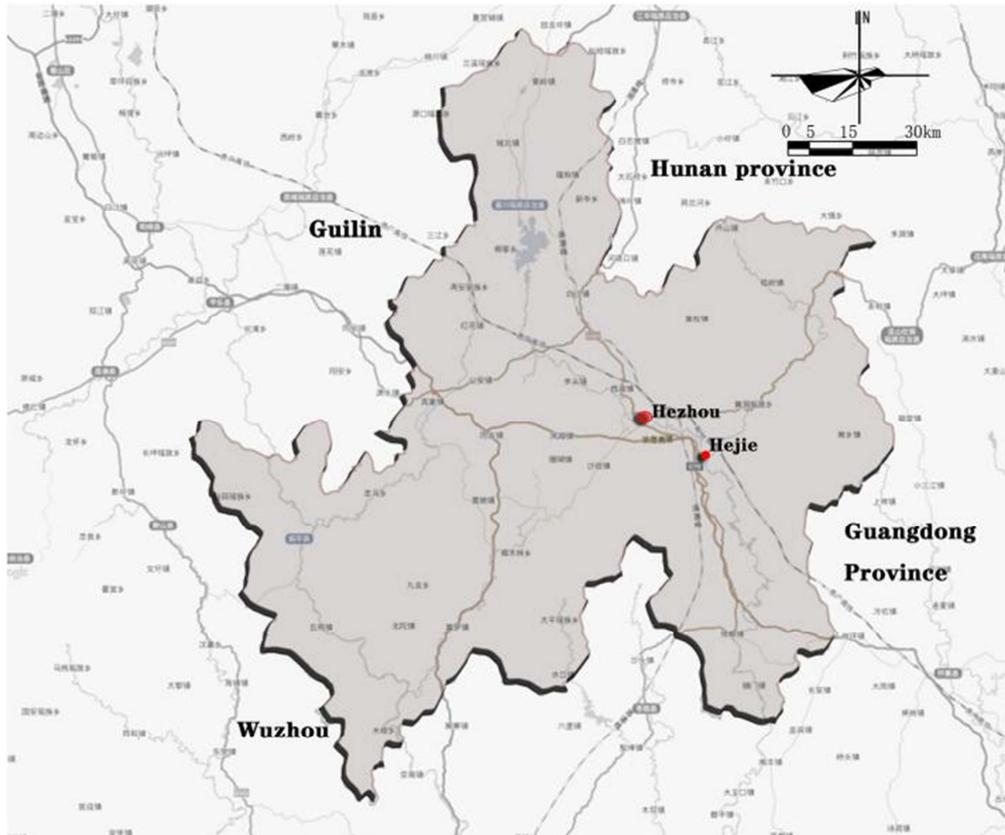


Figure 1. Location of Hejie Town.

#### 3.2. Historical Evolution

During the reign of Emperor Wudi (111 BC), Linhe County was established. Three Kingdoms Wu for Linhe county. During the Wude period of the Tang Dynasty, it was Hezhou. Ming Hongwu ten years to 1951 has been He county seat. After 1952, a town was established, named "Hejie Town" [18]. There are national key cultural relics protection units -Linhe town. It's more than 2,100 years old. Nationally, there are very few county-level cities like this [19]. The city has four sites [20], in chronological order: old Xiandu city ruin (early Western Han Dynasty), Zhouwei city ruin (MIDDLE and LATE Western Han Dynasty), ancient city of the west of the river (Eastern Han Dynasty) ancient city of and the east of the river (MID-Qing Dynasty). At two of the earlier sites only partial walls and moats remain.

#### 3.3. Analysis of Current Situation of Context

##### 3.3.1. Analysis of Contextual Elements

As a famous historical and cultural town in China, Hejie town is the confluence point of the eastern and western lines of the Xiaohe Ancient Road, and also an important node of the Maritime Silk Road. It has accumulated a large number of cultural heritage, such as land road, waterway and other transportation heritage; Historic business district heritage; Agricultural heritage; Human habitation sites, historical and cultural landscapes and other heritage. There are many different cultures here. More than two thousand years of historical deposits have laid the foundation of Hejie ancient town's profound cultural deposits and contextual elements. Referring to the methods of Chang Jiang [21] and Sun Yi [16], this paper divides the contextual elements of Hejie

Town into dominant elements and recessive elements for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of the cultural elements of Hejie Town.

Brief description of contextual elements			Comment on context elements	
Dominant factor	natural environment	hydrological	There are He River and Linjiang River, the two rivers join in the southeast of the city.	
		Natural look	Nanling Mountain hilly karst landform, the terrain is east-west, west by Ruiyun Mountain, east by Linjiang water, surrounded by mountains.	
	Natural heritage	Fushan scenic spots, Ruiyun Mountain, He River. (1) Historical area: Linhe Town. (2) Non - historical area: around the town of Linhe. (3) Linear historical landscape: Hedong and Hexi Commercial streets. (4) Historical landscape nodes: four city sites, Faushan scenic area, ancient tombs.	Water body has the function of transportation, life and landscape, but the function of transportation is weakened and the function of landscape is strengthened in modern life. The hilly karst landform in the town can enrich the visual effects of the landscape, but are not conducive to compact development. The natural heritage landscape is abundant.	
	artificial environment	building	Historical buildings: ancestral temple, tower, guild hall, city wall, temple, residential, Building overhang, etc.	(1) The overall layout is compact. (2) Easy to form a core development structure. (3) The historic district has mixed functions, diverse architectural styles and poor environmental quality.
Implicit factor	History and culture	Ancillary Heritage Sites	Ancient trees, ancient Wells, SLATE streets, wharves and water gate, social altar, gods and so on.	There are a large number of historical buildings, only ancestral temple buildings have more than 20, and are well preserved. (1) It is culturally identifiable. (2) Potential landscape resources.
		Ancient history	Central Plains culture, Baiyue culture, Chu culture, etc. ancestral temple culture, social altar culture, well spring god culture, tree god culture.	(1) Clear cultural context, rich cultural resources. (2) The core culture is still Confucian culture.
	Social customs	Folk culture	Ethnic sacrifice, Fushan Song Festival, lion dance, color music, King Chenhou parade and other traditional festivals and folk operas.	

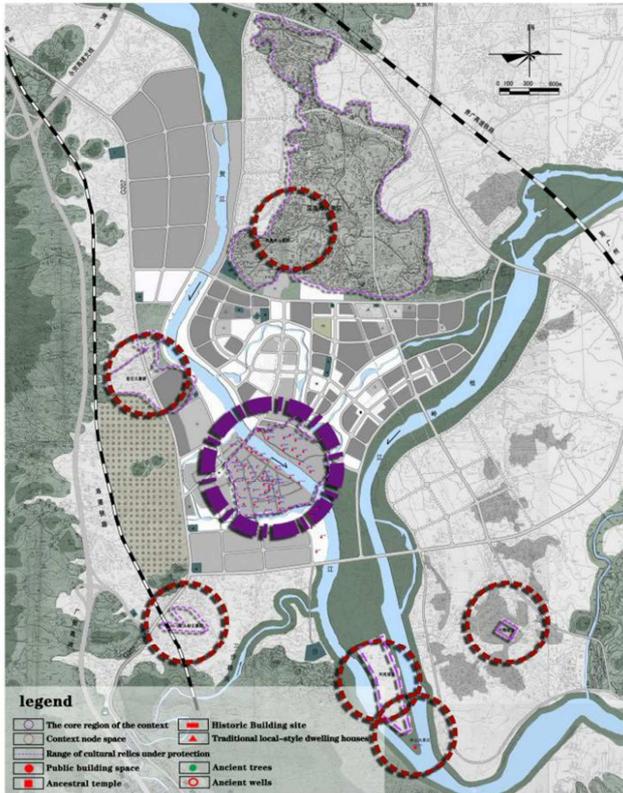


Figure 2. Analysis of Contextual Nodes in Hejie Town.

### 3.3.2. Analysis of Contextual Space

The cultural core area is the core bearing area of the culture in the whole site and the center of the whole cultural

system. Such as the historical buildings in the town, cultural relics concentrated distribution of the area. In Hejie Town, the well-preserved Linhe Town is undoubtedly the core cultural area of Hejie Town (Figure 2).

Context linear space is a channel space that radiates the core area of the context to the surrounding area in the site, or can connect the node space of each context. It is a network and skeleton composed of context space. This kind of space can be the explicit linear space with material entities, such as historical blocks, traditional streets, blue roads, greenways and other natural passages, etc., or it can be the implicit linear space with cultural infiltration and radiation effects [22].

There are two types of dominant linear space in Hejie Town. The first type is linear space formed by historical buildings or historical streets, such as the east of the river Street, Shangguan Street, Xiaguan Street, County government Street, Longevity lane, South of the city Wall, etc. The second is the linear space of water area, such as the linear space along the He River and Lin River. There are folk activity paths in the recessive context linear space, such as the traditional festival routes along the river of the Fushan Song Festival and the parade route of King Chen Hou (Figure 3).

Context planar space is a cluster space composed of multiple context nodes distributed centrally, or a homogeneous space composed of buildings of the same texture and function. In terms of the history of the formation of clusters in Hejie Town, there are historical context clusters mainly formed by historical buildings and modern clusters mainly formed by modern buildings (Figure 4).

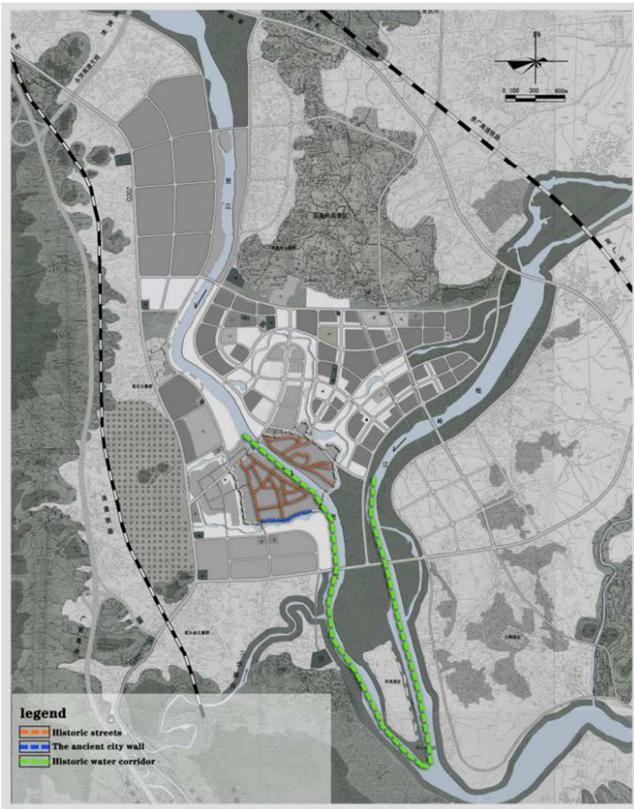


Figure 3. Linear Space Analysis of the Context of Hejie Town.

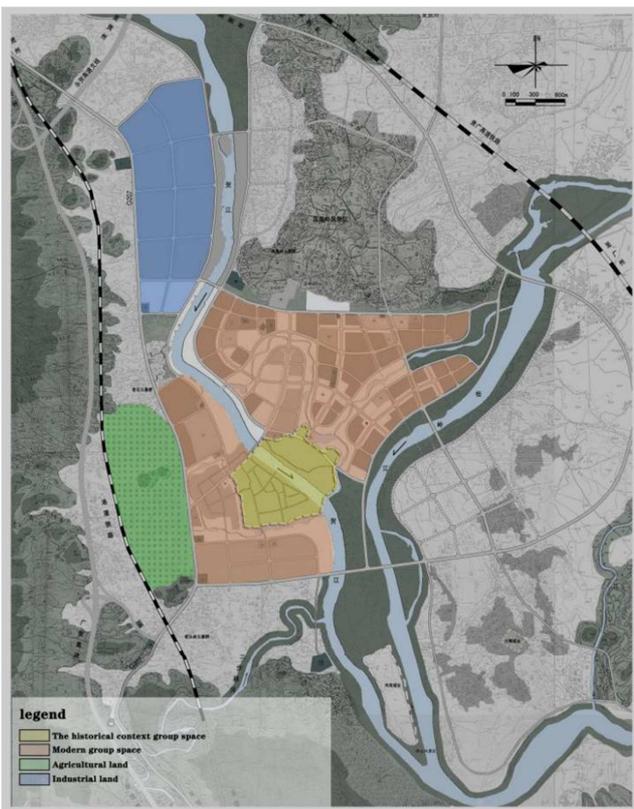


Figure 4. Areal Space Analysis of Context in Hejie Town.

### 3.3.3. Analysis of Context System

All contextual elements combine in the form of node space,

linear space and planar space to form the contextual system of Hejie town (Figure 5). Hejie Town after 2100 years of cultural accumulation, formed by Confucius temple, ancestral temple, kuixing building as a representative of the Confucian culture as the core, and blended in Buddhism, Taoism and other religious culture, typical buildings such as concept of zhenwu, Bashen temple, Confucian temple, the city god temple, Guangfu shrine and so on, and minority cultures such as tree god worship, they constitute the Hejie town context system. Despite the vicissitudes of life, the cultural system of Hejie Town is still clear and has a relatively stable cultural pattern.

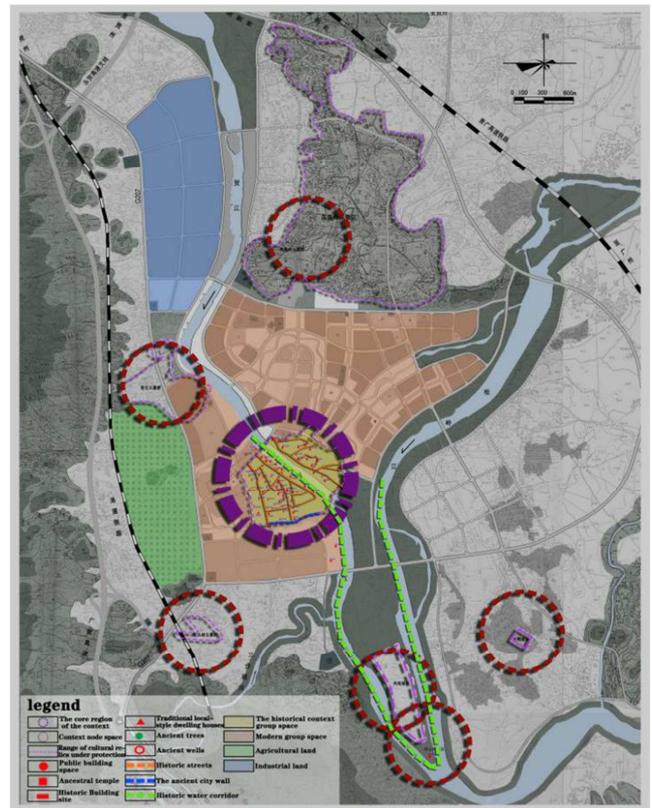


Figure 5. Analysis of the Context System of Hejie Town.

### 3.4. Analysis of Existing Problems

With the development of society, the inheritance and development of urban context are restricted by many factors, including natural factors and social factors, but the key factor is human. In recent years, affected by the needs of urban construction, economic development, the change of residents' life style and modern people's understanding of traditional culture, Hejie has shown the following problems in its historical context development.

#### 3.4.1. Lack of Protection of Contextual Space Nodes and Historic Buildings

The historical buildings in Hejie Town are rich and diverse, but they have been seriously damaged since modern times. For example, the four gates and most of the wall of Linhe Old Town have been destroyed, and only part of the southern

wall has been preserved and repaired. Most of the buildings in the Republic of China period do not exist, such as the newspaper office of the Republic of China, the girls' middle school and other buildings only remain as ruins. With the same situation, for example, the important spatial nodes representing the history of the Hejie context have not been effectively protected, such as the old county Du city site, Zhouwei city site, the surrounding ancient tombs, etc. Secondly, there are some folk cultures with the change of production, life style and the influence of modern culture are also facing a huge impact. Some local traditional operas and handicrafts are facing the dilemma of having no successors.

**3.4.2. The Connection Between Context Nodes Is Broken**

There are many cultural nodes in Hejie Town, and most of the nodes and historical buildings are included in the cultural relic protection units or protection scope, which plays a positive role in the continuation of the cultural context to a certain extent. However, the passage space between nodes does not play the role of linking the cultural context, lead to many cultural nodes have become cultural islands. In addition, the small amount of dominant context linear space in Hejie Town is also one of the reasons for the occurrence of context fracture.

**3.4.3. There Is No Epitaxy in the Core Region of the Context**

Linhe Ancient City as the core area of Hejie Town has laid a solid foundation for the heritage of the ancient town. However, the newly built areas outside Linhe Old Town do not continue its cultural context. The newly built commercial streets, cultural and entertainment land and other public Spaces are all in pursuit of modern design style, which cut off the old town's cultural context and extend outward. A large number of traditional residential buildings are preserved in Linhe Old Town, but the lack of guidance and control in the spontaneous construction of residential buildings by residents outside the old town leads to the fracture of the context between the external residential buildings and traditional residential buildings.

**3.4.4. The Texture of Space Is Messy**

The change of space texture is the result of external force and internal force. External forces come from changes in the natural environment, such as the amount of green space, water environment, building space, and so on. Internal force comes from the cultural environment, such as the identity of traditional culture, traditional customs, clan belonging, religious belief and so on. Hejie town's public green area is reduced, "Hollowing out" causes many traditional buildings to fall into disrepair and dilapidation, the new building overrides the traditional building in terms of volume and height, and is quite different in style, these factors lead to the appearance of texture disorder in both the plane and the facade of the ancient town. However, it is worth paying attention to that the people's sense of belonging to the clan and the cultural atmosphere of folk religious belief is still strong, and the endogenous force to maintain the texture of

the cultural context space still exists.

**4. Hejie Ancestral Temple Characteristic Ancient Town Cultural Context Refurbishment Planning**

**4.1. Context Space Node Repair**

It is the basis for the restoration of the Hejie cultural system to repair the historical context, cultural connotation and regional characteristics of the ancient town in Hejie Town. For the address node space, the methods of protection and reconstruction are mainly adopted, such as the establishment of ancient tomb site park to protect the historical relics of Hejie town, and the reconstruction of some historical buildings destroyed, such as city gates and city walls, to restore the carrier space of historical context. People are encouraged to repair the ancestral temple buildings and build new traditional ancestral temple buildings, so as to increase the context node space and highlight the cultural characteristics of Hejie ancestral temple. The restored node space and the original node space together constitute the historical memory space of Hejie. On the basis of protecting and restoring the authenticity of node space, tourism function is implanted, integrating cultural inheritance, tourism, life and other functions, to re-establish the historical context of He Street and awaken the public's memory of the context of He Street (Figure 6).

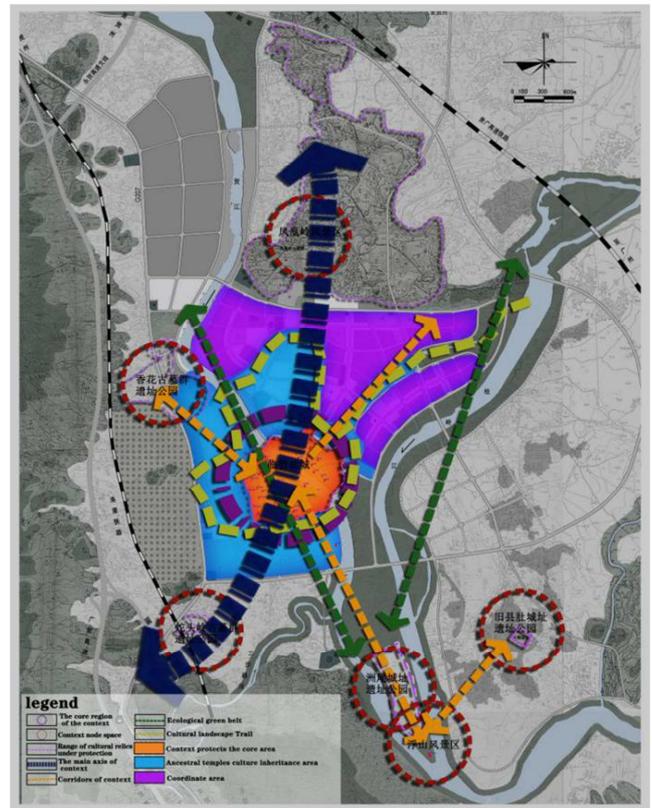


Figure 6. Hejie Town Cultural Context System Planning.

#### 4.2. Repair and Reconstruction of Contextual Linear Space

Aiming at the problem that linear space of Hejie context is broken and the connection between nodes is not strong, the new contextual linear space will be repaired and reconstructed on the basis of preserving the original contextual linear space. The first is to connect isolated cultural nodes; the second is to permeate the history and culture of Linhe Town, the core area of the cultural vein, thus the elements of each context are "reconstructed" into an organic whole.

The planning of the overall context linear space can be summarized as "one lane, one axis, two belts and four corridors" (Figure 6). A slow cultural landscape walking path connecting the north and south of the Hejiang River connects the two areas separated by the river, forming a historical and cultural tourist route. The temple as the center extends a main cultural axis to the north and south, the axis connects the Linhe city, Phoenix Mountain scenic area, Shetou Mountain Ancient tomb Park and the planning of the two ancestral temple cultural heritage area, designed to give the axis to repair the new and old town cultural continuity function. Two ecological green belts are planned along Lin River and He River to improve environmental quality. Linhe Old City is taken as the core area to plan four linear corridors of the cultural context to the surrounding nodes, among which the one linking Zhouwei site and Fushan Scenic spot is a water corridor and these four corridors are also channels of the cultural context penetration.

#### 4.3. Reconstruction of the Context System

The reconstruction of Hejie context system includes two parts: Context Refurbishment and infiltration. The Repair of the context refers to the development planning of the inner context of Linhe Ancient city. Repair refers to the "checking and filling" of the internal context space structure of the system. What is repaired is the carrier of the context. Only when the carrier space is connected with each other can a complete cultural system be formed. The inner cultural space of Linhe ancient city is dense, as a whole, the Confucian Temple is the core space, surrounded by 24 ancestral temples like stars, forming a spatial pattern of "many stars support the moon" [23], this main spatial pattern also laid the core position of Confucian culture in the Hejie context system. Temples, pagodas, towers, ancient Wells, social temples, gods and other buildings and structures that reflect religious culture and folk culture are scattered among the ancestral temples, enriching and supplementing the cultural system of the ancient city. It is also the embodiment of the diversity of the ancient city context system. Therefore, it can be seen that the reconstruction of Confucian temples is of great significance to the restoration of the cultural system of the ancient city. Infiltration of context refers to the extension of recessive and dominant elements of context to the surrounding core area of context. Infiltration mainly refers to the context development planning of new areas. On the one hand, the context is integrated into a larger carrier space; on the other hand, the overall context spatial

pattern is formed through the integration of dominant and recessive context elements. Therefore, through the infiltration and repair of the context space, the effective organization of the context space can be realized and a coherent context system can be formed (Figure 6).

## 5. Conclusion

At present, the urban construction of our country has entered into a culvert development stage, so the urban context planning is essentially a process of repair and maintenance of the development of the context. Based on the concept of "cultural context repair", this paper proposes planning ideas for the ancient town's cultural context system from the point, line and plane scales by using the methods of cultural context repair, infiltration and reconstruction. It is hoped that by "repairing" the ancient town context, the living space of traditional culture of ancient town can be expanded, its competitiveness can be enhanced, and the road to sustainable development can be paved. In order to have the same situation for the ancient town development, find reference planning ideas. At the same time, it provides theoretical guidance for the development practice of the context of small towns with characteristics in the next stage, and also provides a basis for the formulation of planning policies of small towns with characteristics.

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