Research on Homeless People’s Living Condition in City of Changzhou, China

As I originally planned, the research was conducted step by step with questions answered. The questions include: what do homeless people need? What do homeless people want? What kind of space or environment is favored by them? Do they enjoy shelters or public projects? Why or Why not? Are we providing what they need and what they want? Why are some projects and shelters more popular than others? What are the similarities and differences among projects? What can we do to make shelters and public projects more attractive? What kind of environment should we design as architects to give them a sense of home? Even with certain difficulties of getting into the shelter, I still got enough information to do a summary here.

When I walked around the sites, I observed most homeless people were the elders. This situation differs from the one in Berkeley, where many homeless people are suffering from their illness, or drugs, or alcohol, etc. What they needed were basic surviving necessities. What they want were places to stay. Where I saw them often were malls and streets that had high population. In such cold winter, with empty bowls, they beg for food and money. Besides high-population area, homeless people were also found in abandoned houses, which were surrounded by trashes. They lived by collecting bottles and selling bottles to recycling companies.
This old man was on this street every day, sitting next to a busy cross-section. This area was surrounded by shopping malls, highly intense population at weekends and rush hours.

This person lay on the ground in an underground passage way, which also included stairs to the bus stops. When people rush in, it was very hard to notice him in the crowed. That was very dangerous to both him and other people, since this behavior might cause stampede.
This woman was walking along the mall, collecting plastic bottles. She was staring at the clothes shop when I took this picture.

This picture was taken in an area that was about to taken down. Most houses were empty, and some were broken. Trashes were dumped along the roads. Not so far away, we could see the new buildings rising up.
These pictures present how homeless people occupying abandoned houses. They use boards, clothes, and other materials to block the holes on the wall to prevent cold wind. Clothes hanging outside claimed that this place was taken.

After knowing how homeless people outside shelter fought their way living, I paid a visit to the city’s shelter, which was located in between the downtown area and Wujin area. Since the time I went to the shelter was around a holiday, I was not able to get in. However, I found pictures online that showed the interior environment. The shelter was clean and large. However,
only few people were lived in it. According to the news, the shelter was a temporary place for homeless people to stay. The usual users were those came from other cities who got lost and could not go home. The shelter took them in for few days until they could go home. When I asked about the old homeless people on street, the officers said that they were not sure if the homeless needed their help. By saying this, the officers meant that there were people pretended to be homeless, so that they got money by utilizing people’s sympathy and empathy. In addition, the shelter required national ID card to live. People in homeless situation probably lost their IDs, which prevented them from going to the shelter.

This picture shows the city’s shelter.

This picture was cited from www.cz001.com.cn to show who were using this shelter and how many people were using the shelter.
As a final conclusion, Changzhou’s shelter policy system is clearly not advanced enough. The weakness of the policy system led to the unpractical physical system, failing the functions of shelter. The government should work on the policies and welfares that are related to the homeless and the elder. Moreover, more infrastructure should be added to public spaces, such as places to avoid rain and wind, places with chairs, and places that can be noticed easily, so that the safety and health of homeless people can be protected.