

# The Role of Chinese Private Museum and Cultural Sustainability

## -- A Case Study Xi'an China

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### Abstract

Private museums in China have grown at a very rapid rate in recent years. For private museums, abiding by the role of museums is a necessary condition for museums to approach their social responsibilities and survive. Developing strategies that are in line with cultural sustainability can benefit the long-term development of private museums. This thesis will take Xi'an as an example to analyze whether Xi'an's private museums comply with the above two concepts in their operations and the factors that affect the development of private museums. Finally, this thesis will propose that Eco-museums can be a possible path for developing private museums in China.

### Keywords

Private Museum; Cultural Policy; Cultural Sustainability.

## 1. Introduction

Since 2010, the Chinese government has paid great attention to the development of cultural industries. The State Council of the People's Republic of China (2017) established the development of public cultural industries and the protection of cultural heritage as a long-term policy in the national "13th Five-Year Plan" cultural development and reform plan, which includes support and development of various Type of private museum. Generally, a private museum refers to a museum whose ownership is an individual or a private organization. However, private museums in China are a broader concept (Fang, 2018, p.240). Museums whose ownership is not government-owned are all defined as private museums (Xi'an Cultural Relics Bureau, 2013), including individuals, private organizations, state-owned enterprises, and institutions of higher learning. Due to the government's emphasis on the development of cultural industries, especially the use of private capital to build museums, various local governments in China have issued a series of policies on the promotion and development of private museums (Goldberg-Miller and Xiao, 2018, p.26), including simplification of application, financial support, and tax relief. Due to government policies and financial support, China's private museums have begun to develop rapidly. This paper will use private museums in Xi'an as case studies. Case studies address the research questions of whether private museums in China are developing in compliance with the role of museums for society. The significance of cultural sustainability for the operation of private museums. And the factors that influence the development of private museums in China. Finally, this thesis will put forward suggestions for the development of private museums in China.

The role of museums and cultural sustainability is an essential basis for evaluating whether a museum has public service value and development potential. Arinze (1999) defined the role of museums as, "the traditional role of museums is to collect objects and materials of cultural, religious and historical importance, preserve them, research into them and present them to the public for education and enjoyment." Meanwhile, cultural sustainability is the fourth dimension of sustainable human development defined by UNESCO (Loach, Rowley, and Griffiths, 2016, p.187). The protection of cultural heritage and the improvement of cultural vitality are

considered one of critical factors in approach cultural sustainability (Duxbury, Kangas & De Beukelaer, 2017, p.94, Loach, Rowley, & Griffiths, 2016, p.187 & Museums Association, 2008, p.7). The essential role of museums in sociality is to protect, research and promote cultural heritage (Macdonald, 2003, p.3). Therefore, the Museums Association (2008, p7) believe that the development of cultural sustainability is an excellent opportunity to showcase the actual value of the museum. In addition, realizing the role of museum and incorporating cultural sustainability into the museum's operational strategy also promotes the sustainable development of the museum itself (Duxbury, Kangas & De Beukelaer, 2017, p. 94, Museums Association, 2008, p.8 & Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, & Christodoulou-Yerali, 2014, p.567).

The structure of this thesis can be divided into the following parts. First, in the research methods, this thesis will briefly describe the research goals, methods of data collecting and analyzing. Secondly, in the literature review, this thesis will briefly describe the role of museums, the relationship between cultural sustainability and museums, the history of Chinese private museums, and the existing research on Chinese private museums. After that, this thesis will briefly describe the development status of Xi'an private museums through Xi'an's private museum policies and the evaluation of Chinese official media, and state the importance of government support and supervision to the development of museums. Fourth, this thesis will use two private history museums with different development statuses to analyse museums' role and the decisive effect of cultural sustainability on the survival of museums. After that, this thesis will analyze the advantages and disadvantages of Xi'an Private Art Museum in realizing the role of the museum and cultural sustainability and briefly describe the reasons for its occurrence. Finally, this thesis will analyze the newly established Eco-museum in Xi'an and propose that the Eco-museum can fulfil the role of a museum and support cultural sustainability. Eco-museum can become a new strategy for the development of private museums.

## 2. Research Method

This thesis will collect information about private museums in Xi'an and analyze the implementation of the role of Xi'an private museums as case studies on the museums through the methods of content, discourse and comparative analysis, and whether these museums have implemented cultural sustainability in their operations. To explain the role of museums and the importance of cultural sustainability for the operation, development and implementation of social responsibilities of private museums, and to give suggestions on the current development of private museums in Xi'an.

The case study method is defined as the study of an example of the phenomenon being researched. Referring to the study of private museums in Xi'an, three case studies will be researched: private historical museums, arts private museums and Eco-museum. Private history museums account for the vast majority of private museums in Xi'an. This thesis will select the Eight Wonders of World Museum and the Datang West Market Museum as examples of the failure and success of private historical museum operations and analyze their similarities and differences. Private art museums have begun to develop in Xi'an. This thesis will take Xi'an Art Museum (the most famous private art museum in Xi'an) as an example to analyze whether its collections, exhibitions and social activities fulfil the museum's obligations to society and cultural sustainability. Eco-museum may be a choice for the future development of Chinese private museums. This thesis will take Xi'an City Memory Museum as an example to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the museum. Information about these museums will mainly come from second-hand data collection. Second-hand data collection refers to collecting relevant local planning, government policy documents on the development of private museums, related museum news reports, social media promotion, and feedback from tourists.

This thesis will mainly use content, discourse and comparative analysis to analyze the targeted museum. The content analysis method is focused on the content of organizations, such as an annual report, managers' comments or the main event in the press. Social evaluation and other aspects can measure whether the targeted museum fulfils the role of the museum. Discourse analysis is research on the use of language concerning the topic or academic texts and other communications media. Referring to the thesis, the major resources for this technique are government documents and academic texts of the private museum in China. Analyze these texts could provide an overview of the development of the private museum industry in China. Comparative analysis is based on the same standard, compares two or more related objects, and accurately analyses their differences. The purpose is to find the reasons for the differences and find ways to optimize them. In this thesis, the conclusions of case studies of different museums will be used for comparison. By comparing the operating conditions of various private museums, we can analyze the factors that affect the museum's fulfilment of social obligations and cultural sustainability and analyze for possible approaches for the development of private museums in China.

### 3. Literature Review

In the literature review, this thesis will explain the role of museums. The role of the museum will become one of the primary bases for the subsequent analysis of the case study. Second, the relationship between museums and cultural sustainability will be discussed. Two of the models used to analyze whether art and cultural organizations are culturally sustainable will be used to measure the development of the targeted museum. Finally, this thesis will analyze the current research of Chinese scholars on the development status of private museums in China.

The concept of the museum is to collect and maintain objects of scientific, artistic or historical significance and maintain that the public can display these objects through exhibitions (Arinze, 1999). Most museums have the nature of research institutes and exhibition halls when they are established (Chong, 2017, p.108, Macdonald, 2003, p.3, & Arinze, 1999). The social groups served by museums are diverse. According to the definition of the Museums Association (2008, p. 6), museums include: "eternal institutions open to the public for their development services". The institution should acquire, preserve, research, interpret and display the tangible and normative cultural human genetics and environment to achieve the goals of museum education, learning and entertainment (Museums Association, 2008, p.12). In addition, museums and other public institutions are places that directly embody new national ideas and public culture. Macdonald (2013, p.5) believes that the possession of public culture has become the key to nationalism and the politicization of national discourse. For different countries, museums use different methods to express its unique public culture. It represents the history, language, literature, art and culture of the nation (Chong, 2017, p.108). Everything can be reflected in the museum. In other words, the core role of the museum is to protect, research, display and promote culture and heritage while shaping identity of a country or region (Chong, 2017, p.108). Unlike public museums, private museums usually focus on specific aspects of cultural heritage (Liu, 2021, p.140). Xi'an's private museums are mostly museums that reflect the local history of Xi'an. Modern art museums and other types of museums are only a few.

As a social welfare cultural institution, museums often do not take economic benefits as their primary goal. For private museums, the main sources of funds are the founder's investment, state subsidies and social donations (Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, & Christodoulou-Yerali, 2014, p.558). However, the establishment and operation of museums cost a tremendous amount of money, and many museums are facing problems that are difficult to develop sustainably (Loach, Rowley, & Griffiths, 2016, p.188 & Museums Association, 2008, p.9). The concept of cultural sustainability may solve this problem. On the one hand, cultural sustainability promotes the

sustainable development of culture and other fields, and on the other hand, it can also promote the sustainable development of museum operations (Loach, Rowley, & Griffiths, 2016, p.188, Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, & Christodoulou-Yerali, 2014, p.191). Since 2015, the United Nations has placed cultural sustainability in a more critical position and has become the fourth pillar to promote the sustainable development of human society. Rayman-Bacchus and Radavoi (2012, p.652) believe that it is essential to take society, environment, and economy as the pillars of sustainable development, but such a concept dilutes the complexity of society and lacks cultural dimensions. Cultural sustainability can be summarized as cultural vitality, including social well-being, creativity, cultural diversity and innovation (The Urban Institute, 2006, p.3). Duxbury, Kangas and De Beukelaer (2017, p.214) believe that cultural sustainability can include other pillars of sustainability and become the overall dimension of sustainability. Cultural sustainability requires practitioners' cultural practice and expression in the cultural industry (including lifestyle, tradition, and life culture). The protection of more basic cultural characteristics and cultural heritage requires the attention of practitioners in the cultural field to achieve sustainable cultural development (Duxbury, Kangas & De Beukelaer, 2017, p.214). The protection of cultural heritage and the improvement of cultural vitality have been identified as the key to cultural sustainability. The museum's core purpose is to 'protect and study cultural heritage', which is consistent with the requirements of cultural sustainability. Therefore, incorporating the concept of cultural sustainability into museum operations is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the actual value of museums (Museum Association, 2008, p.12). Loach, Rowley, and Griffiths (2016, p.188) stated that although museums are committed to cultural sustainability, their Sustained potential development is also significant. There is a correlation between the two promotion effects. Efforts to reduce energy consumption to achieve environmental goals can save money, and outreach projects can also play a role in achieving broader social well-being (Museums Association, 2008, p.13). Therefore, museums have unique advantages in promoting cultural sustainability. The formulation of sustainable development policies and cultural sustainability as the focus of the museum's commitment to social, economic and environmental impact will help deepen the understanding of the social impact of these institutions. Recognize the unique value of society, thereby helping to ensure their future.

Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas and Christodoulou-Yerali (2014, p.581) provides a theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums. In the field of cultural sustainability, the model includes seven independent aspects, namely "heritage protection", "artistic skills and knowledge", "memory/Identity", "New Audience /Inclusiveness", "Cultural Diversity/ Intercultural Dialogue", "Creativity/Innovation" and "Art Vitality". Duxbury, Kangas & Beukelaer (2017, p.219) also proposed that in the operation of art organizations, they can be evaluated through the model of four strategic lines Whether it meets the requirements of sustainability (Figure 1). This thesis will mainly use these two models to measure whether the development of private museums is sustainable.

In summary, the museum's goal is to protect, research, and inherit culture, and shape the citizen's sense of identity through culture. Because of the social welfare nature of museums, museums often face the problem of limited development potential. The concept of cultural sustainability can help museums increase their development potential and promote the sustainable development of society, environment and economy through the museum's cultural promotion. In the 2010s, the Chinese government issued several incentive policies to encourage private organizations and individuals to set up museums. The number of private museums in China is overgrowing. However, due to the rapid development of private museums, Chinese private museums have also exposed some shortcomings in recent years. Among them, the lack of tourists and financial support for private museums is the most severe threat to the sustainable development of private museums. In addition, the government's cultural policy is

also a non-negligible part of the development of private museums. For the government, it is not enough to provide policy support and financial subsidies for private museums. The government also needs corresponding supervision and supplemental measures to help private museums have an improvement in their development process.

Primary objectives	Roles of cultural policy	Culture concept	Sustainability concept
To safeguard and sustain cultural practices and rights	Regulator and Protector	Cultural practices and rights of groups	Sustaining diverse cultural practices and environments into the future
To 'green' the operations and impacts of cultural organizations and industries	Translator and Politicking	The production and dissemination of cultural expressions through events, products, services, etc. as well as modes and habits of cultural consumption	Environmental sustainability, possibly also linked to social, cultural, and economic sustainability (includes reducing economic costs by focusing on resource efficiency)
To raise awareness and catalyse action about sustainability and climate change through arts and culture	Animator and Catalyst	Artistic and creative expressions – as works of art in themselves and explicitly (or sometimes) implicitly instrumentalised	Environmental sustainability dominant, possibly linked also to social, cultural, and economic sustainability
To foster global ecological citizenship to help identify and tackle sustainability as a global issue	Educator and Promoter	Identity and creative expression	Integrated social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions

Figure 1. The model of four strategic lines

## 4. Private Museums in Xi'an

### 4.1. Xi'an 's Private Museum Policy

Compared with developed areas such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, the development of private museums in Xi'an is relatively slow. Since 2010, the Xi'an Municipal Government has issued a series of policies to promote the construction and development of private museums, including policy support, financial subsidies and tax reductions (Xi'an Cultural Relics Bureau, 2013). By 2018, the number of private museums in Xi'an had reached more than 160 (Xi'an Evening News, 2019). In 2019, the State Council of China approved Xi'an's plan for building a "Museum City". In the plan, Xi'an plans to build and expand more than 40 private museums from 2019 to 2021 (Xi'an Municipal Government, 2019, p.2). In the past ten years, private museums in Xi'an have begun to develop rapidly, since the gradual focus of the Xi'an government on cultural policy and the implementation of this series of policies to promote private museums. However, a more severe problem was exposed; the Xi'an municipal government only pays attention to the number of private museums and promotes the construction of museums through government subsidies. However, the Xi'an Municipal Government has neglected to supervise and guide the development of museums, so that some private museums have not played the role of museums in cultural heritage and local identity establishment.

Xi'an has relatively strong financial support for private museums. However, in many academic documents (Ding, 2016,p.46 & Wang, 2014, p.55) has always been mentioned that one of the core problems restricting the development of museums is the lack of funds. Ding (2016,46) believes that the government's failure to provide practical support for private museums, including funds and other policies, has become an important factor restricting the development of private museums in Shaanxi Province. The financial subsidy policy of the Xi'an Municipal

Government has solved the problem of lack of funds for private museums to a certain extent and promoted the development of Xi'an private museums. In 2019, the State Council of China approved Xi'an's 'Plan for Building a Museum City', which increased the Xi'an government's capital investment in the private museum industry (Xi'an Municipal Government, 2019, p.5). However, judging from several government documents concerning the private museum industry in recent years, the Xi'an Municipal Government has defined the nature of private museums and clarified the subsidies for museums of different sizes. However, the Xi'an Municipal Government has neglected the role of the government in planning, guiding and monitoring the development of private museums in the construction and development of private museums, which makes some private museums in Xi'an lack potential for development. Some private museums have deviated from the nature of public welfare and the basic role of protecting, researching, and disseminating culture. There are two main problems exposed in the development of private museums in Xi'an. First, private museums in Xi'an have not formed a complete industrial chain, lacking government policy support and guidance. Secondly, some private museums in Xi'an lack government supervision, thus deviating from the role of museums.

In 2016, People's Daily (Tang, and Yuan, 2016) published a social commentary on the current situation of private museums in Xi'an. The comment pointed out that the Xi'an municipal government invests much money every year to subsidize private museums, but these subsidies are far from enough for some private museums. At present, most private enterprises are still in the initial stage of complex operation, the industrial chain is incomplete, and the industrial-scale has not been formed. Although the Xi'an Municipal Government has issued a series of policies to support the development of private museums, the lack of cooperation among various departments and the lack of attention to the development of private museums have prevented private museums from enjoying the same policy support as public museums in many aspects. However, there is no unified government policy to guide them. In addition, People's Daily also pointed out that if private museums want sustainable development, they cannot only rely on the government. Financial support needs to start from improving the governance structure of private museums, establishing a long-term mechanism for operating guarantees, strengthening the management of collection certification, and increasing the intensity of talent training and delivery. These aspects are not covered in the current Xi'an Municipal Government's policy on private museums. Furthermore, because the government has spent significant capital on the construction and subsidies of private museums but lacks proper supervision of the operation of private museums, some organizations have gradually turned the private museums they opened into profit-making institutions mainly for economic benefits. The Museum of the Eight Wonders of the World, which will be analyzed in Chapter 1 will prove the point that in terms of the supervision of private museums and the guidance of private museums to play their role, the Xi'an municipal government has not yet formed a complete supervision and development strategy.

In general, to promote the development of private museums in Xi'an, the Xi'an Municipal Government has invested numerous funds to support private museums, which has caused a surge in the number of private museums. However, it is not enough to increase the number of private museums. First, because of the lack of overall support policies, private museums in Xi'an cannot form a complete industrial chain, making it difficult for some private museums to survive. After that, due to the lack of appropriate regulatory policies for private museums, some museums have deviated from the role of museums, and the government's investment in private museums is challenging to achieve adequate returns.

## 4.2. Historical Museum

Private history museums constitute a significant part of Xi'an's private museum industry. Since Xi'an has a long history and has preserved various cultural relics, the first private museum to appear in Xi'an is a history museum. During the development of private history museums, some museums did not comply with the role of museums, neglected the dissemination of public education and culture, and lacked the concept of cultural sustainability in their operational strategies. These museums are difficult to develop sustainably, and some have disappeared in the private museum industry. Other private museums have played the role of museums, and their operating concepts are in line with the concept of culturally sustainable development, so they have a good development. This chapter will use the role of museum and cultural sustainability as core concepts to compare the operation and current situation of the Eight Wonders of World Museum and the Datang West Market Museum. The different developments of the two museums prove that only by adhering to the role of the museum and applying the concept of cultural sustainability in the operation process can promote the positive development of private museums.

The museum's primary purpose is to use cultural activities to improve social inclusiveness, provide social welfare, promote social development and social cohesion (Duxburg, Kangas & Beukelaer, 2017, p.222), not to obtain economic capital. The Eight Wonders of the World Museum failed in audience relations and operational strategies and made it difficult to survive because the museum ignored the role of the museum and its spread in the cultural field. First of all, the Eight Wonders of the World Museum has been recognized and praised by the Xi'an municipal government. The museum was recognized as a "patriotic educationalist base" by the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Education, and the Xi'an Tourism Resources Administration also recognized the museum as a 3A-level scenic spot. However, in October 2016, the museum was exposed to the problems of illegally attracting tourists, rough exhibits, and impaired functions (Tian, & Huang, 2016). Therefore, the Xi'an Tourism Resources Development and Management Evaluation Committee decided to cancel the certification of the 3A-level scenic spots of the Eight Wonders of the World Museum in Xi'an. The Eight Wonders of the World Museum ignores the role of cultural organizations in promoting social culture and only focuses on obtaining economic capital. In 2013, the Xi'an Municipal People's Government announced the "Implementation Plan for the Special Rectification of Xi'an Tourism Market Order", which stipulates that the sale of tourist services is not mandatory, and attractions and tour guides are strictly forbidden to solicit tourists through entrustment. By 2016, the Eight Wonders of the World Museum still has such violations by distributing income to those who bring the audience into it (Tian, & Huang, 2016). This fact proves that for the Eight Wonders of the World Museum, economic benefits are the first goal of its operations rather than the role of the museum.

The failure of the Eight Wonders of the World Museum proves that if the museum's operation does not follow the role of the museum, the museum will face a severe dilemma. Duxbury, Kangas, and Beukelaer (2017, p.223) developed four strategic routes to promote cultural sustainability. The power to protect and maintain culture requires cultural organizations to maintain multicultural practices and environments. The expression of cultural identity and creativity is a concept that promotes cultural sustainability (Museum Association, 2008, p.6), but the museum has not made innovations in the corresponding fields. In addition, the definition of a museum can be summarized as a non-profit organization that protects, researches, and promotes cultural heritage. The Eight Wonders of the World Museum have deviated from this definition and used illegal ways to make profits. As the result, this museum is severely punished by the government. Moreover, as explained in Chapter 1, shaping a cultural organization atmosphere with development potential is inseparable from the supervision and guidance of government cultural policies. The Xi'an municipal government's neglect of the museum's supervision has also become one of the significant reasons for the museum's failure.

In summary, the Eight Wonders of the World Museum express the failure of private history museums. For museums, the core task is to fulfil the role of museums in 'protecting, researching and educating cultural heritage'. If the museum ignores its core tasks, it is only devoted to obtaining economic benefits. Then the operation of the museum will fail. During the museum's operation, if the concept of cultural sustainability can be introduced, the development potential of the museum can be promoted. However, whether museums can play a role and implement cultural sustainability is also closely related to society, public habits and cultural policies.

### 4.3. Art Museum

Policies, social environment, and operational strategies may all impact the development of private museums. Compared with the history museum, the art museum in Xi'an is still an industry that has just begun to develop. Private art museums receive less attention from society and are easily restricted by government policies. The government's support policies for private museums can help private museums be established quickly. However, some imperfect government policies will restrict private art museums from fulfilling their role as museums. Then, the social environment may limit the sustainable development of private museums. In Xi'an, the urban culture considered by the public generally centers on Xi'an's history and culture, while local audiences and foreign tourists often ignore modern art. Such stereotypes limit the audience sources of private art museums (China Artists Network, 2021). Furthermore, the operation strategy of the museum will directly affect the number of audiences, the promotion of culture and whether the museum can maintain sustainability. The most influential private art museum in Xi'an is the Xi'an Art Museum. This chapter will take Xi'an Art Museum as an example, using the role of museums and Stylianou-Lambert (2014, p. 582) on the seven aspects of sustainable museum development to analyze the impact of policies, social environment, and operational strategies on private museums. The impact of cultural policies on the establishment and development of museums is two-sided. On the one hand, the government's support and subsidy policies for museums can promote the establishment of museums and address the funding difficulties that private museums generally face. On the other hand, some policies are not yet perfect for China's private museum industry, which is still in the developing stage may restrict the development of private museums.

Xi'an Art Museum is located at the core of Qujiang's cultural and tourist attractions in the southern suburbs of Xi'an. The government funds the scenic area to construct, and cultural facilities such as art galleries, concert halls, and theatres are planned. The tourism resources of Qujiang Cultural District provide a large number of potential audiences for Xi'an Art Museum. The management system of Xi'an Art Museum is state-owned and privately operated (Xi'an Arts Museum, 2021). The main fixed assets such as museum buildings and equipment are owned and funded by the state, rare among private museums. This may be due to the lack of operating personnel for the art museum in Xi'an. Up to now, there is only one public art museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province Art Museum. Therefore, the operation of art museums still requires the participation of non-governmental organizations (Ding, 2016, p.45). In China, most of the construction of private museums is funded by the founders. For the founder, the construction of venues is one of the most critical expenses. Many documents scholars (Fang, 2018, p.240 Zhang, 2014, p.227 & Ding, 2016, p.45) have mentioned that considerable funding problems are restricting the development of private museums. The construction of the Xi'an Art Museum has saved private founders the considerable amount of money needed to construct the site, allowing the founders to focus on the museum's operation. This private operation mode can make the museum have more flexible private management characteristics. The founder can pay more capitals on organize the exhibition with themes closer to the public. State-owned and privately-operated ownership has brought less financial pressure to Xi'an Art Museum.



However, due to the complex ownership, Xi'an Art Museum has been restricted in fulfilling its role as a museum. This is mainly reflected in that Xi'an Art Museum does not have any collections.

The lack of collections in the Xi'an Art Museum reflects the inadequacy of the Xi'an Art Museum in protecting cultural heritage, which is also a problem faced by most private museums in China. In the Xi'an Art Museum, no exhibition hall provide permanent collections. Although there is a "Museum Collection" page on the official website of Xi'an Art Museum, the page is blank (Xi'an Art Museum, 2021). Liu (2018, p.111) interpreted this phenomenon from a policy perspective. He believes that property rights in collections have long plagued private museums because the confusion between private property rights and the property rights of the legal representative of the museum is the main bottleneck hindering the development of private museums. Regarding this phenomenon, the Chinese government has not yet formulated a clear policy. Compared with other private museums, Xi'an Art Museum may face a more complicated situation in terms of ownership. The state and private individuals jointly owned the Xi'an Art Museum, so the ownership of the collections in the museum is difficult to clarify. Under this circumstance, museum operators or intended donors will treat the issue of donating collections more cautiously. The lack of collections restricts the development of the Xi'an Art Museum, and the protection and research of cultural heritage is the primary area for the role of museum. Therefore, the development of the Xi'an Art Museum in collections also needs to solve policy and funding problems.

The social environment will affect the development strategy of the museum and the role of the museum. One of the roles of museums is to shape local culture through museum exhibitions (The Urban Institute, 2006, p.6). Regarding the establishment concept of Xi'an Art Museum, Xi'an Art Museum hopes to shape a more diverse cultural environment in Xi'an through modern art (China Artists Network, 2021). The operating philosophy of Xi'an Art Museum highlights the role of museums and reflects the viewpoint of cultural sustainability. Yang's philosophy embodies the awareness of shaping the city's cultural identity and attracting more new audiences. This concept is in line with the theoretical model provided by Stylianou-Lambert (2014, p.582) for the sustainable development of museums, including "identity", "new audience", and "cultural diversity".

Xi'an Art Museum embodies the concept of cultural sustainability and the museum's role in its philosophy and operation methods. However, the lack of sustainability cannot be ignored. Xi'an Art Museum mainly operates various art exhibitions as its primary business projects, but it lacks cultural diversity in the content of the exhibitions. According to the locality of the exhibition (Xi'an Arts Museum, 2021), it can be divided into local art, Chinese art and world art. Since 2017 (closed in 2019 due to renovation of construction facilities), Xi'an Art Museum has held 44 exhibitions of various types, including 17 exhibitions with Xi'an or Xi'an-related factors, accounting for 40% of the total exhibitions. Among the 17 exhibitions related to Xi'an, there are 7 academic works by students of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, 4 Silk Road exhibitions, and 2 Xi'an youth painting exhibitions. There are 21 Chinese art (including ancient art and modern art) exhibitions, accounting for 52% of the entire exhibition, while there are only 5 world art exhibitions. In addition, Xi'an Art Museum also has a semi-permanent exhibition hall reflecting the traditional customs of Xi'an. Exhibitions reflecting the traditional culture of Xi'an are owned by many tourist attractions in Xi'an and surrounding areas, and the contents of the exhibitions are similar. The lack of international exchanges in the exhibition and the single content of the exhibition reflects the lack of cultural diversity and innovation of the Xi'an Art Museum, which shows that the Xi'an Art Museum needs to revise its strategy to stimulate the development of these fields.

#### 4.4. Eco-museum

Su (2008, p.29) have stated that Eco-museum is a model for sustainable tourism development of local culture in China. The basic idea of the Eco-museum is that cultural heritage should be protected and preserved in its community and environment. In the Eco-museum, a series of cultural factors such as cultural heritage, natural landscape, architecture, movable objects, and traditional customs all have other fixed values and meanings. The Eco-museum emphasises respect and cultural exchanges, believing that it is necessary to respect both the local culture and the culture of other regions to form a diversified community cultural value. Finally, the Eco-museum is based on the community group's participation and management and believes that the local public supports and owns the culture. Compared with the theoretical model of sustainable museum development (heritage protection, artistic skills, identity, new audience, cultural diversity, innovation and artistic vitality) proposed by Stylianou-Lambert (2014, p.582), the Eco-museum is consistent in cultural diversity, the shape of local identity, and cultural heritage protection with cultural sustainability. However, Eco-museums usually require the entire community to be used as a museum space to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the community and promote the community's development. Due to the social system and the widespread lack of funds, it is difficult for private museums in China to incorporate the community as a whole into the museum space. However, some private museums are built on community sites and protect and develop community culture. This chapter will use Xi'an City Memory Museum as a case study to analyse the establishment of private ecological museums and promote cultural sustainability.

The Xi'an City Memory Museum is located in a factory building on the original site of the Shaanxi Iron and Steel Plant. The museum is designed and refurbished based on the original factory building built in the 1950s, keeping the original architectural appearance and details to the greatest extent. The collections in the museum all come from ordinary life items from the past 100 years. Through texts, images, buildings and other forms of display, it evokes the public's memory of past urban life. It provides more ideas for shaping urban culture. The Eco-museum is defined as a cultural heritage that should be protected and preserved in its original state in the community and environment to which it belongs. Although the Xi'an Urban Memory Museum did not preserve its collection in the original environment, it was used in a factory building of a similar age. As a venue, allowing collections to be exhibited in a similar context can be said to be a new attempt to establish a private Eco-museum. In addition, the Eco-museum emphasizes cultural exchanges, multiculturalism and shaping regional cultural values. Song Qun, the founder of Xi'an City Memory Museum, believes that almost all descriptions of Xi'an city culture are related to rich historical resources. These descriptions describe Xi'an dogmatically, without realizing the vitality and vitality that the city should have. He also hopes to see different and diverse narratives about urban culture (Pengpai News, 2019).

The Xi'an Urban Memory Museum conforms to the basic concept of an Eco-museum. It also serves as other concepts in the theoretical model of the sustainable development of the museum proposed by Stylianou-Lambert (2014, p.582). The experience of Xi'an City Memory Museum can prove that the Eco-museum can become a possible choice for the future development of Chinese private museums. Compared with public museums, it is complicated to establish a sizeable private museum with many collections in China. Private museums in China generally lack funding and policy support, and the collection of precious artworks is also a big challenge for private museums. Eco-museum focuses on local culture and is not limited to artworks or cultural relics, so the cost of collections is low, and the sources are comprehensive. For the founders of private museums, the funding problems faced will be greatly reduced. In addition, the Eco-museum requires the participation of the local public to reflect the local culture. The local public will more easily recognize Eco-museum. Audiences interested in regional culture will also be more willing to visit museums that reflect the local culture.

Furthermore, the protection of culture by museums can be fulfilled by Eco-museums. Take the Xi'an City Memory Museum as an example. It pays attention to and reflects the culture from the daily life of the Xi'an public, and such culture is often overlooked. The exhibits and social activities of the Xi'an Urban Memory Museum have revived this culture. From the perspective of cultural sustainability, Eco-museum also contributes. Xi'an City Memory Museum focuses on local culture and reflects heritage protection, cultural memory and artistic vitality. In addition, the museum's collections, exhibition methods and social activities also reflect the creativity of art and the dissemination of knowledge. Finally, the audience defined by the Xi'an Urban Memory Museum includes people from different countries and regions living in Xi'an, reflecting the concept of inclusiveness and cross-cultural dialogue.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, a museum is a non-profit organization with a social welfare nature, which has the central role of protecting, researching and promoting culture. The core requirement of cultural sustainability is to protect and study cultural heritage. Therefore, the role of the museum is consistent with the concept of cultural sustainability. For private museums, it is necessary to abide by the role of the museum and achieve its obligations to society and the country. Adhering to the concept of cultural sustainability can provide private museums with a broader development prospect. Private museums in China generally face the dilemma of insufficient policy support, lack of supervision and lack of funds. Although China's private museums started early, they have been suspended for a long time. In the 1990s, modern Chinese private museums began to be established mainly in developed areas such as Beijing and Shanghai. Xi'an has recently established a development strategy for building a museum city with more historical and cultural resources. Therefore, the study of private museums in Xi'an is typical and can reflect the problems commonly faced by private museums in China.

Private museums are still an emerging industry in China, and government policies are not yet sound, especially supporting policies and regulatory policies. The current government support policy focuses on financial aid to private museums, pays attention to the number of newly built museums, and ignore the formulation of other policies related to museum development. The lack of government supervision has caused some private museums to deviate from the role of museums and become profitable institutions, which worsens the audience experience. For private museums, adhering to the museum's role and implementing the concept of cultural sustainability in the operation process can promote the sound development of the museum. However, if the museum's role is ignored and regarded as a profit organization, the use of illegal means to obtain profits will make the operation of the museum unsustainable. In addition to government policies, public preferences and the museum's operating strategies will also affect the role of museums and maintain cultural sustainability. When formulating museum development strategies, it is necessary to understand public preferences and local culture. Public preference will directly affect the number of museum audiences and its role in cultural communication. When the public does not prefer to visit museums, appropriate marketing strategies can attract the audience.

Museums also need to pay attention to cultural diversity and innovation in their operations. Finally, private museums face significant challenges in China. Eco-museum may become one of the development directions of future museums. The Eco-museum attaches great importance to the protection of regional culture and requires the participation of local audiences. Therefore, the audience has a wide range of sources and has the effect of protecting rare cultures. Compared with traditional museums, Eco-museum has a broader collection of collections, and its exhibition methods are more innovative, making it easier to attract audiences. Therefore,

the Eco-museum has both the role of a museum and the requirements of cultural sustainability, which is more suitable for the development of private museums.

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