

# Analysis of the Intervention Logic of Public Art Actions for the Renewal of Old Urban Communities under the Ecological View

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## Abstract

In order to revive the old community space module in the city, the unique role of public art in community renewal is brought into play. This paper analyzes the existing problems and needs of old communities in urban renewal, and clarifies the advantages of public art intervention under the ecological view. Taking the 3rd "Up and Down the Yangtze River: Public Art Action", Xianxialai Cooperative and COCOROOM as cases to conduct a comparative study based on three perspectives of space, humanities and organization, deduce the action logic of public art intervention in the renewal of old urban communities. This action logic is used as a universal path for public art to intervene in old urban communities.

## Keywords

Ecological Aesthetics; Public Art; Action Publicity; Community Renewal; Older Communities; Interventional Logic.

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous saturation of urban stock space, urban space construction has shifted from incremental expansion to stock excavation, especially in the post-epidemic era, communities, as an important part of the functional modules of urban areas, have been given many new demands in urban renewal. Due to its public nature of being close to society and the public, contemporary public art has gradually shifted from neighborhood space to community space, and this type of public art is also called new type of public art. With the theoretical and practical exploration of art for the city at home and abroad, it is confirmed that public art, through creative creation, can play a unique role in restoring environmental ecology, solving social problems, and reconstructing social relationships. Therefore, it is worth pondering and exploring the solutions of public art in the face of the loss and decay of China's old urban communities.

## 2. Definition of Concepts

(i) Public art in action. The public preceded art, and because of its own prescriptive nature it is still in the process of defining its artistic and legitimate identity. The concept of public art and public art practice that most scholars are now talking about are in a postmodernist historical and social context, and "These historic public spheres are bound to have different scopes and characteristics, with different public attributes and cultural dimensions, and the different public spheres formed by history are bound to have some decisive influence on the publicness of public art [1]. In public art, which is full of contradictions and complexities, "the new type of public art shifts its work from aesthetic, purely artistic self-discipline to an activist posture [2]," distinguishing itself from the "thing" attribute of a single work to the dynamic act of "thing. It is

a dynamic act of "thing" that becomes an aesthetic presence in the public space of the community and constructs urban culture and civic culture by relying on the physical space and public sphere of the community.

(ii) Ecological aesthetics. Ecological aesthetics originated from the "deep ecology" proposed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973, which realized the combination of the study of natural science and the exploration of the worldview of humanities, and formed the philosophy of ecological existence. The study of ecological aesthetics in China began in 1994 with Professor Li Xinfu's "On Ecological Aesthetics" [3], in which he discussed the background of ecological aesthetics, its object of study, principles of development, and future development. Ecological aesthetics attempts to explore and construct a state of co-prosperity and co-existence based on the aesthetic relationship among human, nature and society.

(iii) Old and old communities. From the perspective of old and new communities, the State Council in 2020 issued the "General Office of the State Council Guidance on Comprehensively Promoting the Transformation of Old Urban Communities", which specifies that old urban communities are residential communities (including single residential buildings) in cities or counties (Chengguan towns) that were built in an earlier age, are out of maintenance, out of repair and out of control, have imperfect municipal support facilities, have inadequate community service facilities, and have a strong willingness to be transformed by residents. Each place should combine with the actual situation and reasonably define the scope of transformation objects in the region, focusing on the transformation of old neighborhoods built before the end of 2000.

(iv) Community renewal. Since the urban organic renewal movement entered the stock era, the renewal method is mainly based on advocating micro-renewal and micro-intervention, which optimizes and integrates the texture and resources of the original space by facing the detailed space and its user groups in the city, in order to meet people's more refined living needs. As one of the types of spatial renewal, community renewal is important to prevent community decay, revitalize community space and stimulate public life. Community regeneration mainly consists of two aspects: the first is the transformation of the objective physical reality of the community, and the second is the integration of the community culture created by the community residents living together during the development of the community, and the development of community autonomy and operational capacity through the cultural policy of community creation to perpetuate the qualities of geo-culture.

### **3. Community Renewal and Public Art Actions under the Ecological View**

In the micro-renewal process of stimulating urban communities to regain vitality, the quality of community public space affects the quality of residents' public life to varying degrees. Based on the research and analysis of the renewal results of some communities in Zhengzhou, it can be found that the main contradictions of current community renewal are reflected in five aspects: spatial quality, regional culture, community community, residential population structure and regional economy. For communities, public space has both spatial and social connotations, and its aesthetic orientation is reflected in practical functions and spiritual shaping as well. A reasonable space not only creates a livable living environment, but also triggers a common memory under the same concept of time, which can provide an emotion of physical and mental pleasure and promote the production of a sense of identity belonging. Public life reflects the degree of connection between people and community space, and the relationship between community public space and public life is shaped by each other.

Public art initiatives under an ecological view have taken some attempts in various parts of society, and from a theoretical perspective, it serves as an experimental approach with the same

goals as community renewal, and based on ecological concerns to make art palpable in everyday life.

Tracing the development of public art, since the impact and criticism of "ready-made art" on traditional art, postmodern art has gradually eliminated the gap between art and life in the cultural context of consumerism. Art has shifted from cultural elitism to popularism, and urban "decorations" have shifted to public activities and events that promote interaction among modern social groups and have public welfare significance, and the aesthetic objects and spatial scope of art have sunk from neighborhoods to communities. Art gradually returned to the real world and the scenes of everyday life, and returned to sensual freedom. As publicness and the openness of the public sphere continue to expand, public art continues to shape the physical and spiritual space of the city, becoming a continuous energy that acts and reacts on society. Community renewal and creation in the age of inventory is also predicated on improving the quality of environmental space and satisfying public well-being, which coincides with the intent of public art in the construction of cities.

The influence on the ecological perspective refers, on the one hand, to its guidance of the development of public art proper in response to the global ecological crisis, especially in the face of a series of changes in the human condition in the post-epidemic era, such as the scale of life and the rise of the metaverse. On the other hand, ecological art and its practice continue to operate. "Ecological art begins with the restoration and protection of the ecological environment, but must be concerned with and anchored in the community and the human heart [4]," and the practical actions prompted by this vision are informed by strong ecological ethical issues.

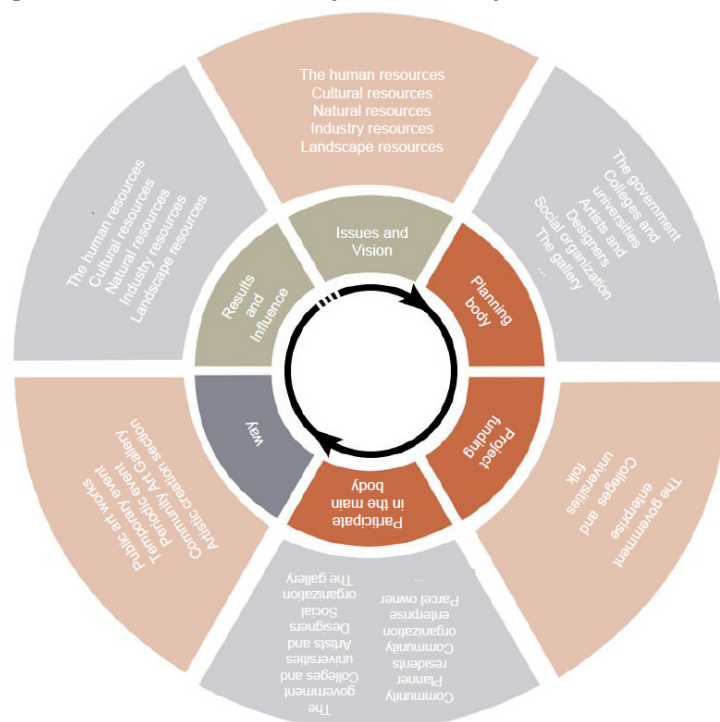
#### 4. A Comparative Study of Cases of Public Art Intervention in Urban Old Community Renewal in the Context of Ecological Aesthetics

**Table 1.** Comparative study of different public art initiatives

Cases	Ecological Art Growing in the Ground - "Up and Down the Yangtze: A Public Art Action Plan"	The Daily Ecology of Dialogue Space - Xianxialai Cooperative	Community Living Theater of Inclusive Art - COCOROOM
<b>Motivation to intervene in community renewal</b>	Community Decay and Cultural Loss	The lack of public space for young people and the fragmentation of the old youth	Economic Decline and the Aging of Day Laborers
<b>Initiating body</b>	Universities, tripartite organisations	Youth social organisations	Artists set up NPO
<b>Participating parties and organisational model</b>	Curatorial team: "curators + government + tripartite institutions" Creative team: "artists + graduate students + local residents" Academic Committee Observers	Community residents and city dwellers join the community community by applying for space masters, participate in public works through co-governance and co-creation, and carry out community-friendly actions to convey the aesthetics of life	A people-centred project that promotes pure human interaction and spirituality through theatre of life and collaborative projects with universities, companies and foundations
<b>Participating parties and organisational model</b>	Works, Events	Events	Events
<b>Update results</b>	Space: Diverse co-creation activates community public space Humanities: Tapping into regional culture, connecting collective memory and promoting social aesthetics	Creating youth centres and community centres to reshape everyday life through a bottom-up approach	NPOs build spaces for interaction and initiate art, charity and education projects to improve community issues and create an inclusive community healing ecology

### 5. Analysis of the Logic of Public Art's Intervention in the Renewal of Old Urban Communities in the Context of Ecological Aesthetics

The symbiotic logic of art intervention in community renewal. As society recognizes the effectiveness and practical advantages of art in urban renewal strategies, its initiators have become more diversified, especially social organizations and art museums' community interventions to realize their functional responsibilities of resource coordination, social governance and public services. Secondly, the revitalization of government, street, corporate investment, university project funding and private capital has led to a wider range of funding channels for community renewal, with private capital also including various foundations, public service organizations and community residents' self-funding. At the same time, because of the variety of ways in which art intervenes in communities, some of the independent projects are also able to obtain certain funds for operating costs. Moreover, because public art is widely public and participatory, the main participants in public art programs connect multiple parties for collective creative activities based on the local characteristics of the project. The involvement of different participants creates a diversity and uniqueness of specific art paths in the community, with public artworks, temporary art events, periodic art events, and community art galleries as the main types of existence. The chain reaction generated by these art implantations can, to a certain extent, reshape and create community resources in five directions: people, culture, place, production, and scenery, such as spatial quality, community identity, cultural heritage, natural healing, and industrial innovation, especially in a flexible way to promote the analysis and solution of serious social problems, and make the community present self-renewal, community autonomy, and other spontaneous activities production. "The distinctive feature of community landscape renewal is that it is a 'process' rather than an 'end', and is process-oriented and sustainable. It is a sustainable community development process that achieves 'shaping people.'" Thus, with certain outcomes and the ongoing influence of established effects, using common social issues and visions as a starting point may trigger renewals again or multiple renewals. Ultimately, the creative experimental act of artistic intervention in the community makes the community a social type of sculpture that promotes the ecological development of the community and society.



**Figure 1.** A symbiotic logic diagram of public art interventions in community regeneration

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of comparative cases and preliminary data, the symbiotic logic of public art intervention in the renewal of old urban communities is derived, that is, it is motivated by the existing problems exposed in the old urban communities or community renewal and the common vision of the future community, so as to create a specific organizational model through the collaborative operation of the initiating body, project funds and participating bodies, thus exploring creative paths to solve community problems through the perspective of public art, and triggering secondary or multiple renewals based on the results and impacts and the wishes of participating bodies.

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