

Research on "Publicness" in Public Art under the Perspective of Co-construction Concept

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Abstract: In the early stages of the reform and opening-up, the concept of co-construction gradually entered the public consciousness. China began to emphasize community development, community participation, and grassroots governance. Over time, China has increasingly emphasized multi-party participation, democratic decision-making, and collaborative construction in urban renewal, community governance, rural transformation, and cultural development. This emphasis on social participation and collaborative construction has gradually embedded the concept of co-construction, filled with a spirit of humanistic care, into the hearts of the people. This paper aims to delve into the "publicness" in public art under the perspective of the co-construction concept. By introducing relevant concepts such as co-construction, the paper clarifies the core concept of "publicness" under the co-construction perspective. It thoroughly analyzes the inseparable relationship between the co-construction concept and publicness in public art, elaborating on how the co-construction concept influences and guides the practice of public art design.

Keywords: Co-construction Concept; Public Art; Publicness.

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the co-construction concept to China in the early stages of the reform and opening-up, this concept has deeply taken root in various levels of Chinese society. In contemporary society, the co-construction concept, as a humanistic and sought-after concept, has not only shaped a new image of social solidarity but has also profoundly influenced the cultural, social, and artistic domains. In this context, this paper delves into the "publicness" in public art under the perspective of the co-construction concept.

The co-construction concept has sparked a new ideological wave in the creation and practice of public art. In public art projects, the co-construction concept emphasizes the interdependence between individuals and the community, thereby contributing to the development of public art. This approach makes public art more aligned with the needs of the people and more integrated into the pulse of society.

2. Research on the Co-construction Concept

2.1. Development of the Co-construction Concept

(1) Rooted in Western Humanistic Spirit

The origin of the co-construction concept is rooted in the spiritual tradition of Western humanism, stemming from a reevaluation of social relationships. This spirit is an ideology based on the reverence for human dignity, freedom, equality, and humanistic values. It emphasizes the respect for individuals, comprehensive development, and attention to human cultural traditions, placing humans at the center of thought, culture, and morality. The co-construction concept, thus, is deeply rooted in the humanistic spirit and serves as its manifestation.

Inspired by the humanistic spirit, the co-construction concept underscores the dignity, value, and shared exploration of human potential, framing the relationship

between individuals and society as a collaborative process. Influenced by Western sociology, community psychology, and other fields, the co-construction concept has evolved into a diverse and progressive ideological system. It emphasizes that society is constructed through collective efforts, collaboration, and participation. This concept has found a practical foundation in social construction, sustainable development, and participatory community development, providing robust theoretical support for building a more coordinated, co-constructed, and sustainable society.

(2) Developed in the Context of Socialist Modernization

The introduction of the co-construction concept in China originated from the urgent need for economic restructuring and opening up to the outside world during the early stages of the reform and opening-up. At that time, the introduction of advanced management concepts and experiences from the international community was a part of the national modernization process. During this period, ideas about social construction and co-construction began to permeate China. With the deepening of reform and opening-up, China joined various levels of the international community, introducing a series of management concepts and social science theories. During this period, the socialist market economy system gradually took shape, and the interconnection between economic and social development became apparent. The co-construction concept began to be applied in various fields, such as urban planning and community development.

Entering the 21st century, China experienced rapid urbanization and modernization, accelerating the spread and application of the co-construction concept. The co-construction concept in community and urban development emphasizes the participation, cooperation, and common development of community residents, attracting widespread attention.

Currently, the co-construction concept has deeply taken root at various levels of Chinese society, not only being reflected in urban planning but also playing a role in community development, corporate management, and social governance. The idea proposed by President Xi Jinping,

emphasizing the construction of a community of shared future through co-construction, co-governance, and sharing, reflects the evolution of the co-construction concept in China towards a concept more in line with local realities. It has become one of the guiding ideologies driving social harmony and sustainable development.

2.2. The Concept of Co-construction

2.2.1. The Concept of Co-construction and its Guiding Role.

The co-construction concept, rooted in the Western humanistic spirit, fundamentally revolves around the idea of cooperation and joint effort. This concept emphasizes collaboration and collective efforts among individuals or groups to achieve common goals or values. Here is an elaboration on various dimensions of the co-construction concept. Firstly, in the co-construction concept, participants are typically willing to share resources, experiences, and knowledge to facilitate the collective learning and growth of practical capabilities. Secondly, the co-construction concept usually advocates principles of equality and inclusiveness, encouraging each participant to voice opinions, share perspectives, and be included in collective decision-making. Thirdly, various stakeholders in the co-construction concept should establish common goals and values, enabling participants to work towards shared objectives. Lastly, the co-construction concept encourages open innovation, i.e., finding new solutions through collective efforts, promoting innovation, and progress.

The characteristic of publicness in public art aligns seamlessly with the co-construction concept. Firstly, publicness emphasizes societal interaction. Public art typically encourages social engagement, establishing connections between the artwork and the audience, including audience participation, interactive works, or fostering shared values and similar emotional responses through participation and interaction. Secondly, publicness underscores community involvement, whether through local community collaboration or consideration of community needs, creating more resonant and adaptable artworks.

The elucidation of various dimensions of the co-construction concept to some extent highlights its positive guiding role. The co-construction concept can promote collaboration and cooperation among various entities, establishing common goals and visions under its positive influence, driving community and social development through shared resources and knowledge. The co-construction concept encourages innovation by fostering a culture of openness and sharing of resources and experiences. Additionally, the co-construction concept promotes open communication and transparency in information, facilitating the establishment of common values.

3. An Overview of Publicness under the Perspective of the Co-construction Concept

3.1. The Opposition between Publicness and Privacy in Physical Space

In the perspective of the co-construction concept, there is a fundamental opposition between the publicness and privacy of public art. The co-construction concept emphasizes collaboration, inclusiveness, and sharing, while the privacy in

traditional art forms involves the artist's personal, individualized attitude, and emotions during the artistic creation period, including the privacy during the exhibition process. Therefore, the contrast between publicness and privacy under the co-construction concept and traditional art design forms is stark. This opposition manifests in several dimensions.

(1) The Open Nature of Publicness under the Co-construction Concept

Firstly, the co-construction concept typically advocates achieving common goals through joint efforts and collaboration, challenging individual privacy. Public art is often situated in public spaces, involving shared experiences among the audience, conflicting with the need for individual privacy. Public art is usually located in public spaces, which are social places, aligning with the emphasis on community participation and community development in the co-construction concept. However, this conflicts with the individual's need for privacy in public spaces, as individuals may wish to maintain some privacy without excessive interference from external observers, reflecting the opposition between shared public space and individual privacy needs.

(2) The Interactive Nature of Publicness under the Co-construction Concept

From the perspective of communal experiences and individual independent experiences, public art is often aimed at creating shared experiences and fostering community interaction. However, this may conflict with the desire of individuals seeking independent and unique experiences. The co-construction concept emphasizes collective efforts, but some participants may prioritize individuality and independence. Additionally, public art projects may involve an open and transparent creative process and significant public participation, aligning with the highly open innovation emphasized in the co-construction concept. However, some individual artists in traditional art forms may prefer to create in a private environment to protect their thoughts and creative process.

In summary, the publicness and interactivity under the co-construction concept emphasize the power of the group, encouraging participants to collectively unleash creativity and initiative, creating a space for collaborative construction and learning.

3.2. Social Level Publicness

In the context of the co-construction concept, publicness in public art has multiple dimensions. Apart from the opposition between publicness and private nature, there is also the aspect of social-level publicness, which includes social resources, social space, social services, and more. Firstly, the publicness of public resources refers to entities that do not belong to individuals or private entities but rather serve the society. This can include natural resources, cultural resources, educational resources, and more. Under the co-construction concept, there is an emphasis on the fair distribution and sharing of social resources, ensuring that they are not monopolized by a few but contribute to the entire public art project.

Secondly, the social space dimension of publicness is an integral part of public art. social space refers to specific geographical spaces such as cities, streets, parks, etc. Under the co-construction concept, social spaces should be open and inclusive, serving all members of society rather than being exclusive to a few or specific groups. This implies that urban planning and construction should consider the needs of

different groups, creating a shared and just social space.

Thirdly, the publicness of social services and social participation is a relative concept. Social services involve the objective serving the subject, while social participation is the subject actively serving the social object. This includes services such as social healthcare, education, and social security, which should be universal and public, providing equal distribution and high-quality supply to the entire society. The publicness of social participation refers to broad participation and democratic decision-making in public art, ensuring transparency and fairness in the process.

Finally, the publicness in public art also encompasses the publicness of water culture and social values. The co-construction concept focuses on the sharing of culture and values, including respect and inclusivity for diverse public art cultures, as well as the construction and inheritance of common social values.

3.3. Public Art Design in the Perspective of the Co-construction Concept

In the perspective of the co-construction concept, publicness takes on a special meaning in public art, emphasizing societal collaboration and participation, presenting both challenges and opportunities for public art.

Firstly, there is the introduction of participatory design. The co-construction concept highlights the involvement and collaboration of the public. In public art design, this means it is not solely completed by professional artists or designers but is generated through extensive social participation. This can include community input collection, democratic decision-making, collaborative creation between artists and the public, and other forms of involvement.

Secondly, public art design in the co-construction concept should reflect the diversity of society. The co-construction concept advocates respect for and reflection of social multiculturalism and diversity. In public art design, this means considering the cultures, values, and histories of different communities to ensure that artworks can establish connections with a wide range of societal groups. Such connections can, to some extent, promote social dialogue, which is also emphasized in public art design under the co-construction concept. Public art design under the co-construction concept can be seen as part of social dialogue, triggering discussions on social issues, history, and culture through artistic works, promoting social awareness and action.

Overall, public art design in the perspective of the co-construction concept emphasizes societal collaboration, inclusivity, and participation, aiming to create public artworks that deeply interact with communities and society. This kind of publicness not only focuses on the artwork itself but also on its relationship with the social environment and participants.

4. Conclusion--Publicness in the Perspective of the Co-construction Concept – A Case Study of Artistic Rural Transformation in China

4.1. Rural Development is Popular, but Rural Development is Challenging

The involvement of art in rural development is currently a popular trend, but it still struggles to address the issue of "artistic rural development" subjectivity. The traditional top-

down rural development model marginalizes the role of villagers throughout the process, leading to a disconnect between villagers' thoughts and the direction of village construction. The outcomes of rural development often deviate significantly from expectations. The integration of the co-construction concept into the process of artistic intervention in rural environmental development is beneficial for stimulating the endogenous dynamics of villages and promoting sustainable development.

Rural environments preserve memories of people's rural lives, and rural culture reflects the ways and wisdom of villagers' lives. By transforming villagers' artistic and cultural perceptions and thought processes, instilling cultural confidence, protecting traditional rural culture, and enhancing the quality of living environments, the co-construction concept contributes to the development of rural areas.

Rural environmental development is often initiated by the government, with designers leading the design process. While this top-down approach is highly efficient in rural development, the prolonged marginalization of villagers in the process has resulted in the accumulation of spatial issues and social conflicts.

4.2. The Guiding Role of the Co-construction Concept in Artistic Rural Development

(1) People-Oriented, Respecting Needs

In the current context of the great transformation of urban and rural development in China, adhering to the co-construction concept that respects the subjectivity of villagers aligns with China's people-oriented development philosophy. The co-construction concept places the development subject – villagers – at the center, aiming to meet their genuine needs as the goal of village environmental construction. The ultimate development objective is to stimulate villagers' sense of belonging and identity towards the village, thereby promoting autonomous and sustainable rural development.

(2) Diverse Participation, Collaborative Development

The co-construction concept emphasizes diverse co-construction subjects and stresses the indispensability and full participation of the development subject throughout the process. This reflects a reconsideration of the traditional "top-down" planning model, necessitating a shift in the government's role from management and control to guidance and service.

Rural development cannot rely solely on a single force. In practice, the co-construction concept strengthens the coordination of forces, harnessing the combined efforts of functional departments and villagers. In the new model of rural development where villagers are the main subjects, and the government and designers are the main participating entities, all stakeholders must contribute within the principles of preserving rural culture to foster collaborative development. The government, in practicing the co-construction concept, should first respect the unique regional culture of the countryside, avoiding a programmatic approach that erases the diversity of rural culture. Secondly, the government should utilize its functions to coordinate efforts and establish a communication platform for various stakeholders. Designers, in their role as "advisors," play a connecting role among diverse subjects.

(3) Villager-Centric, Autonomous Responsibility

The co-construction concept places villagers as the core subjects. Its implementation is not a "village-building movement" where various parties enter villages with

abundant resources. The essence of the co-construction concept is to integrate resources, leverage comprehensive capabilities, awaken villagers' subjectivity, and create a sense of identity and responsibility for rural development. This addresses the problem of insufficient endogenous driving force for rural development, promoting the long-term development of villages.

(4) Stimulating Motivation, Sustainable Development

Improving the material environment in rural areas is not the ultimate goal of the co-construction concept but a lever to propel sustainable rural development. A revitalized village cannot rely solely on beautiful natural environments or abundant products; it requires opportunities for development to attract talent back to the village.

The mechanism of diverse participation in the co-construction concept will inevitably bring new business concepts, production methods, and promote integrated development of industries in villages. This will enhance villagers' economic income, stimulate their enthusiasm for collectively building the village, and create a virtuous cycle. By mobilizing villagers' enthusiasm for rural development, the issue of insufficient development momentum in rural areas is effectively addressed, fostering a sense of responsibility among villagers and establishing a long-term development mechanism for rural areas.

4.3. Specific Measures of Public Practice Under the Co-building Concept Perspective

When discussing rural co-creation under the co-building concept, the emphasis is on residents' active participation. In this project, residents should be regarded as the main participants in co-building. Through participation in art creation, urban planning workshops, and collaboration with professionals, the goal of community co-creation can be achieved. This not only highlights collaboration and participation in the co-building concept but also demonstrates residents' importance as a significant force in rural construction.

Within the co-building framework, residents' decision-making authority has been more respected and realized. By establishing democratic decision-making mechanisms, residents have more say in project direction, resource allocation, and other aspects. This process not only reflects the democracy of co-building but also injects more comprehensive and in-depth resident participation into rural development.

Cultural inheritance under the co-building perspective emphasizes respect for and reflection of residents' cultural characteristics. Project design should consider the cultural diversity of community residents, ensuring that artistic works

and urban planning reflect unique local cultural elements, deepening residents' sense of identification and participation in the project.

Co-built and shared public spaces emphasize the shared experience and resources of public domains. Rural members jointly enjoy the public space of design innovation, which not only enhances the overall quality of the community but also strengthens neighborhood relationships, embodying the co-building concept of sharing resources.

Finally, combining public art with the co-building concept should also focus on addressing social issues. Through public art projects, rural areas can express concerns about social issues, sparking public discussions on topics such as the environment and social justice. This combination not only enriches rural aesthetics but also injects a sense of social responsibility into the co-building concept.

These five aspects of practice constitute a complete co-building framework, emphasizing community residents' participation and decision-making, cultural inheritance, shared public space, and the social mission of public art, collectively promoting the healthy development of the community.

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