

An Empirical Study of Public Art in Urban Regeneration – A Comparative Study of Liverpool and Dalian

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Abstract: The diverse and multi-dimensional management of public art is an important method to realize the preservation of urban heritage, promote public participation and stimulate urban vitality. This paper analyzes the application of public art in the urban regeneration practices in Liverpool and discusses the origin and development of public art as an important symbol in the urban development. Focusing on the conservation and transformation of post-industrial heritage based on participatory design within the context of urban regeneration in Liverpool and Dalian, this paper explores the methods and experience in urban regeneration and summarizes the major issues and countermeasures in urban regeneration that can be adopted to provide successful examples for the regeneration of post-industrial sites in China. Finally, it emphasizes the indispensable role that public art has played in urban regeneration.

1. Introduction

As the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, many industrial cities emerged in the UK and became important industrial centers in the world. After World War II, the world economy has undergone tremendous changes. Many traditional industries have lost their competitiveness and some former industrial cities are facing serious difficulties and experiencing large-scale transformation. After several decades of urban regeneration practices, many cities in the UK have successfully experienced industrial restructuring and upgrading and enhanced the city competitiveness. The successful transformation experience of these cities has set up great examples for China's urban regeneration and Liverpool is one of them [1].

Liverpool is an important port city in the UK, which has gradually developed from a small fishing village to an economic and trade center in the past three centuries. In the middle of the 20th century, Liverpool experienced urban decay and population decline due to the relocation of manufacturing industry. Since the end of the 20th century, Liverpool has accelerated the development of the service industry, which promoted the urban revitalization and development of stock buildings. Among them, the diverse and multi-dimensional management of public art is an important method to realize the preservation of urban heritage, promote public participation and stimulate urban vitality.

2. The Role of Public Art in Urban Regeneration

Since the Industrial Revolution, a large number of industrial buildings have appeared and it has lead to lots of docks and architectural heritage, which are important parts of urban environment in the UK. However, during World War II these areas became declined or were abandoned. Starting from the 1980s, the British government actively promoted the urban revival movement, implemented listed buildings on historical buildings, restricted arbitrary demolition, and strengthened the protection of industrial buildings that were built in the 19th century. The old docks and warehouses in the UK were widely distributed and most of them were in poor conditions. The

redevelopment of these places has become the core elements of urban regeneration in the UK. Culture-led urban regeneration has greatly promoted the changes of spatial transformation guided by the government, operated by the market and involving public participation [2]. The urban regeneration in the UK has changed from extensive reconstruction to market-oriented redevelopment of architecture heritage. A series of revitalization measures have brought out revolutionary changes of urban construction. Docklands and Bulwer's Wharf in London, the Canal Area in Birmingham, and the Albert Dock in Liverpool are all examples of successful urban regeneration practices [3].

2.1 Definition and application of contemporary public art

Contemporary public art is usually defined as a relatively long-lasting art form in a public environment, which is human-oriented and widely recognized by the public. Actually, contemporary public art is in harmony with the environment and most importantly, it is involved with public participation to a great extent. Some public art does not appear in a "public" way, which is just the expression of artists' feelings and far from the public's perception and recognition. Sometimes public art works exist like monuments in a public place and people can see them, touch them or interact with them. Nowadays, the rapid development of new media has made public art free from the limitations to materials, places and forms. Public participation is strongly encouraged in this new era. It can be a single piece of artwork, a public artistic performance, the planning of a public area, and a certain range of public art clusters, etc. The public artwork can become the complete and true artwork when people see its structure and participate in its creation process.

For a city, the emphasis of publicity, rationality and intervention effect of public art and the promotion of public spatial forms, design of public facilities, display of public art work and planning of public behaviors are all effective ways to make public art different from other forms of art.

2.2 Public art in urban regeneration in liverpool

In 2003, Liverpool was announced as the European Capital of Culture for 2008. The Albert Dock and this century-old port city have undoubtedly played a very important role. The turning point of Liverpool's urban regeneration began with the change in concepts. Liverpool has explored different ways for its urban regeneration, ranging from building a financial and commercial center to making a city focusing on a particular industry. After learning from the successful experience of other cities, Liverpool has gradually realized its advantages and aimed to redevelop the city based on its resources such as the park, port, museum, music, etc. After the change of design and planning concept, Liverpool attracted lots of funds and developed itself into an attractive city with extensive cultural heritage. The public art also became the key way to solve the urban and social problems. The redevelopment of the Albert Dock is one typical example.

The Albert Dock is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the UK, and it has won North West England Points of Interest and Places to Visit Award three times. Now the dock is standing at the waterfront in Liverpool with a totally new appearance. The Albert Dock shows the combination of its architecture and waterfront areas. At the beginning of the city's redevelopment, the design and planning of preserving the architecture heritage has great significance in increasing the values of world heritage, which can attract more funds to support the local economic development and promote sustainable urban regeneration. The planning of the Albert Dock is divided into the heritage conservation area and outer buffer zone for protection. Liverpool's World Heritage Site has six main areas in the city center, including Pier Head, the Albert Dock Conservation Area, Stanley Dock Conservation Area, Castle Street/Dale Street Conservation Area – the Commercial District, William Brown Street Conservation Area, and Lower Duke Street Conservation Area [4]. The regeneration of this area is supported by the protection of the diversity of local architecture, special landscape and historic features and social fabric. The regeneration of the Albert Dock covers almost half of Liverpool's urban space (see Fig.1).



Figure 1 Albert Dock after Regeneration

After the regeneration, Tate Liverpool, the Beatles Story Museum, the Museum of Liverpool, the Merseyside Maritime Museum, the Love Locks on chain fencing, sculpture of Superlambanana, docklands, various boutique shops, craft workshops, children's playgrounds, cafes, bars and restaurants have attracted many visitors at home and abroad. Local residents form a large proportion of the visitors and most of them are coming here to enjoy their family leisure time. The cultural and historical heritage gives the Albert Dock more meanings than a single place of interest and further enhances the economic and cultural vitality of the entire city.

3. Experience in Urban Regeneration

Located in the northeast of China, Dalian has developed from a small fishing village to an important industrial city after more than a hundred years of development. Dalian was once under the colonial rule of Japan and Russia and the city has a rich tangible and intangible heritage. Due to its unique history and natural scenery and urban features, Dalian has become one of the most prestigious livable and tourist cities in China. Now, Dalian is experiencing a large-scale urban regeneration. Dalian has many similarities with Liverpool in geographic locations, history and culture and the successful regeneration of Liverpool can provide useful experience and inspiration for the regeneration of Dalian.

3.1. Emphasizing the importance of industrial architectural heritage in urban regeneration

The change of concept is the key to the urban regeneration practice in China. The successful urban revitalization of Liverpool lies in the transformation of this decayed industrial city to a famous cultural and historic center. The culture of the city is closely related to the rise and fall of its port and the legend of the Beatles. This also becomes the guiding principle for the redevelopment of the Albert Dock. The history and development of the port during the Industrial Revolution give the dock great historical value and the revitalization of the dock will regain people's respect and memory for the city's maritime culture. The industrial architectural heritage that once occupied the central area of the city has great potentials for large-scale spatial transformation. There is a high cost for redevelopment and its value after the regeneration integrates social, economic, and cultural benefits. The port is located on the waterfront of the city and its historical heritage embodies its cultural connotation. Its unique geographical advantage can be used as a natural platform to show the city's culture. The open space with great possibilities for more changes makes the spatial transformation become possible and its inseparable relationship with water forms the most harmonious natural landscape.

Dalian Donggang Business District is composed of the old wharf and the surrounding area of Donggang. Under the overall planning of the government, a large amount of money was invested for the construction. Through reclamation and landscaping, great changes have taken place in this

area. Now it has become Dalian's commercial business district, including the musical fountain square, conference center of Davos, the water city in Haichang, yacht harbor, landmark buildings and a comprehensive area for tourism. The establishment of these public facilities has greatly promoted local tourism and relevant consumption. It attracts more tourists from a totally new way. However, from the perspective of humanities and history, it is necessary to change the concept of planning and further develop the architectural heritage such as Warehouse 15, old docks, dockyard, and lighthouse. It is more suitable for the redevelopment to follow the local culture and history. Tourists and citizens can benefit from the historical and cultural heritage and the city image can also be improved. This process requires the combination of new and old elements, which reflects the new trends and complies with the traditions without destroying the beauty of the original buildings.

3.2. Public art as a carrier of urban culture

The charm of cultural cities is indispensable for the support of important historical buildings, but they must be combined with the characteristics of the time. This requires an effective combination of these two with a participatory form of public art. Port culture is an important culture of Liverpool, and the role of ports in today's cities is not as good as before. Liverpool becomes world-famous because of its ports, so the transformation of the city is based on re-understanding the city and adding new cultural elements into the port. The regeneration of the city needs to grasp the concept of urban culture, study the new functions of historical buildings in the new era, and develop more possibilities of public art such as historical museums, theme workshops, and interactive spaces for the public. Preservation of heritage is also an effective strategy for developing local cultures. Heritage buildings and regions are the carriers to continue the urban culture. Only through effective planning and redesign can there be value for the development and promotion of culture and heritage.

The redevelopment of the Albert Dock makes good use of the numerous resources brought to him by the River Mersey. The Albert Dock takes advantage of the geographical locations of the waterfront area to preserve the dock and warehouse as a whole to form a place for public art clusters. The dock still has its function with many yachts in the harbor. It becomes a large outdoor exhibition hall, which successfully continues the maritime culture and expands the function of the warehouse to incorporate more cultural elements (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2 Albert Dock

In the 20th century, Dalian was an important industrial city and left many industrial heritage buildings. Now these buildings that were used for port transportation, ship docking, and warehouses become the heritage of the city. During the urban regeneration, these areas related to heritage buildings also need effective planning and redevelopment. By the end of 2018, there are 13 cultural and art museums, 11 state-owned museums, 2 memorial museums, and 1 art museum in Dalian. For a city with a population of 6 million, current situation needs to be improved. For this part, the successful regeneration experience of Liverpool provides a good example for the urban regeneration practice in Dalian. It includes the use of the existing industrial heritage buildings,

promoting the city's culture and maritime history, building distinctive art galleries, museums, and open space, integrating the preservation of heritage buildings with environmental protection, highlighting urban signs, and increasing the city's vitality and competitiveness.

3.3. Developing new cultural symbols based on heritage conservation

For certain areas that are looking forward to using the history and heritage to carry out cultural construction in urban regeneration, the most important thing is the combination of preservation and development. The development of new cultural symbols is also of great significance. It preserves the cultural heritage and provides the platform for new cultures. One good example of this phenomenon is the sculpture of Superlambanana in Liverpool.

The sculpture of Superlambanana is another key event for Liverpool's selection as European Capital of Culture in 2008, which started with a sculpture called Superlambanana. 125 sculptures of Superlambanana designed by Liverpool communities and art groups were placed in different places of the city (see Fig. 3). Designed by a Japanese artist living in New York, the sculpture of Superlambanana has two meanings. On one hand, it is a combination of a lamb and a banana. The lamb head and banana tail are intended to emphasize the fault of genetic engineering. On the other hand, exporting sheep and importing bananas were the main business of the ports in Liverpool's history. The sculpture is used to commemorate the prosperous period of Liverpool. Some artists in Liverpool create 125 unique works based on the prototype of Superlambanana, each of which has a story related to Liverpool. As a result, the sculpture of Superlambanana has become a new city symbol of Liverpool. Nowadays, the sculpture of Superlambanana can be seen in the Albert Dock and many other places in the city as well. Their existence is a collection of sculptures connected with particular areas, community symbols, public facilities, urban cultural activities and tourist souvenirs. It can be said that the sculpture has become a golden key for Liverpool to present the city's cultural identity.



Figure 3 Sculpture of Super Lambanana

Compared with the success of the sculpture of Superlambanana, there is not such a cultural symbol in Dalian so far. The main activities of developing public art in Dalian still focus on the construction of scenic spots, the planning of urban activities and the development of tourist souvenirs. It is possible to use the sculpture of Superlambanana as a reference to change the design concept of public art in Dalian. A series of urban planning activities need to be carried out to develop new urban symbols based on the local culture, history and humanistic characteristics.

4. Conclusion

After the forty years of reform and opening-up, China has made great achievements through industrialization and urbanization. With the acceleration of the urbanization, urban regeneration has become an effective strategy to solve the social and urban problems. As an effective tool to increase the urban identity, public art has displayed the uniqueness and attractiveness of the city and it will definitely play an indispensable role in it. China has a coastline of about 32,000 km and a total river length of about 420,000 km. There are many port cities with docks. Industrial buildings such as docks and wharfs are not only meritorious in the glorious period of shipping during the industrial

revolution, but they will still play an important role in the urban regeneration. The successful regeneration experience of Liverpool and the Albert Dock has provided the world with new ideas for protecting and renewing industrial architectural heritage.

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