

Complexity and Inclusiveness in the Regeneration of Urban Cultural Districts: An Exploration of Multi-Agency Collaboration in the Case of Wuhan Tanhualin Cultural District

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Abstract: This paper examines the large-scale regeneration of Wuhan's Tanhualin arts district, focusing on the interactions between government, market forces and community groups. By analysing the pre-renewal, early renewal and commercialisation phases, the paper explores the balance between regeneration and economic growth in historic areas. The findings highlight the benefits and challenges of collaboratively managed urban regeneration, including issues of gentrification and community inclusion. This study sheds light on the sustainable development of cultural districts and has important implications for urban planners and policy makers dealing with the complexities of historic district revitalisation.

1. Introduction

The rejuvenation of urban landscapes has significant academic and practical value in improving public livability. In particular, the comprehensive rejuvenation of cultural districts helps to promote socio-economic progress. Meanwhile, the sustainable development of cultural creativity plays a crucial role in enhancing social cohesion.[8]. Therefore, in recent years, with the continuous improvement of China's urbanization level, the growing spiritual and cultural needs of people are better met. The Chinese authorities attach greater importance to the development and protection of historical and cultural areas. This is also because of the unique style of historical and cultural districts, providing a gathering place for cultural and creative industries, and provides creative inspiration and resources for cultural and creative practitioners[12].

Wuhan, being the largest city in central China, it has rich cultural resources. See Figures 1 and 2 below. In 2017, Wuhan Joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and was named the 'City of Design'. This promotes the protection of culture and the creativity and integration of cities[10]. The Tanhualin art and cultural area located in the ancient city of Wuhan, is a well preserved historical and cultural district locally and globally. This reflects the protection of historical context and promotes cultural and economic development. This has also formed a unique situation where new buildings and historical sites coexist. The government and the public are responsible for the renewal and protection of Western architecture in the neighborhood and buildings from various periods in

China, and promoted the diversified development of culture. It has played an exemplary role in the protection of tourism industry and historical culture[9].

The history of the Tanhualin cultural district dates back to 1371, when it began as a street. In the following centuries, Western buildings, such as the Mandarin's College, the Yan Chai Hospital and the Swedish Diocese, as well as Chinese buildings from the Republican period, were built here, as well as Buddhist temples and monasteries with religious character. In 1985, the art colleges represented by Hubei Institute of Fine Arts are located here. These institutions are investing in and renovating this area, providing free operating spaces for numerous artists and young creative workers. Artists operate and develop creative and cultural industries here, forming an active artistic and creative space [3].

Chinese government authorities and government departments of Wuhan are increasingly valuing urban renewal, focusing on improving the local living environment, and revitalizing the cultural industry once again. According to Shang et al. (2023), since 2004, the government departments of Wuhan City in China have carried out several years of renovation and reconstruction in the area [8]. In particular, a number of exhibitions have been organized in the Tanhualin historical and cultural area. For example, "The Second Wuhan Design Biennale" [3].

With the acceleration of the transformation speed of historical and cultural areas in Chinese cities and the deepening of commercialization[4]. The Tanhualin art district has also undergone large-scale reshaping in recent years. However, excessive commercialization and gentrification have also occurred[15]. A study by Shang et al. (2023) shows that Tanhualin art district has a high degree of renewal of cultural and artistic spaces and commercial spaces. The space for cultural and creative industries occupies 5.73% of the space capacity of the entire Tanhualin historical and cultural district. This is also due to the influence of the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts and other artistic functions[8]. However, in 2004, the Wuhan authorities began to incorporate the Tanhualin historical and cultural district into the Wuhan urban planning system. Therefore, the renovation and renewal of the "Tanhulin" historical and cultural area can be seen as taking 2004 as the boundary[8]. In addition, the reshaping and transformation of the Tanhualin historical and cultural district is inseparable from the three main bodies of market capital, government departments and social groups. These three subjects have run through and influenced the large-scale conservation and development of the Tanhualin historical and cultural district from 2004 to the present[8].

The purpose of this essay is to focus on the impact of gentrification and commercialization on the Tanhualin art district. As well as the role of market capital, government departments and social groups in the early stages of the large-scale renovation of the Tanhualin art district in 2004, as well as in the aftermath of the large-scale renovation. According to Shang et al. (2023), taking the large-scale renovation of Tanhualin by the authorities of Wuhan government in 2004 as the time line. Therefore, this essay will divide the analysis into three parts. The first part, which precedes the large-scale regeneration of the Tanhualin cultural quarter, describes the conditions necessary for the formation of the area and its initial state. The second part is the early stage of the renovation and renewal of Tanhualin in 2004, which describes the formation of a free market and some complex situations in the Tanhualin art district. The third part is the large-scale renovation of the Tanhualin art district that began after 2004, a critical description of its generation and commercialization phenomena. During this period, there were also complex and controversial issues[8]. The three subjects in the renewal of the Tanhualin art district have contributed to the smooth and orderly renewal of the art neighborhood during this period.

This case study employs quantitative research methods, using secondary data to analyze existing similar cases, obtain relevant literature such as news reports and official announcements, used for analyzing and critically describing this case. The sustainable development of the arts and cultural district, as well as the renewal and preservation of the area. This has given rise to new opportunities

and challenges. Although multiple studies have explored the importance of sustainable development in art districts, there are still controversies and complexities in commercialization and generalization. The main objective of this study is to elucidate the complex interactions between market capital, government departments, and social groups, as well as the impact on the commercialization and generalization of historical district renewal. Therefore, this essay examines the complex and controversial issues encountered in the historic and cultural neighborhoods. This can promote its sustainable development in the field of culture and creativity.



Figure 1: Location of Tanhualin Cultural District in Wuhan, China.



Figure 2: The exact location of Tanhualin.

2. Method of study

This paper uses a qualitative research approach to examine the relationship and development of top-down versus bottom-up cultural precinct renewal within government, social and Aboriginal systems. It includes secondary data and a literature review. This study summarises the development patterns of urban cultural precinct regeneration and the literature feedback on the Tanhualin Cultural Precinct. It also analyses the collaborative strengths and weaknesses of cultural precinct regeneration. Figure 3 shows the key elements of top-down and bottom-up regeneration.

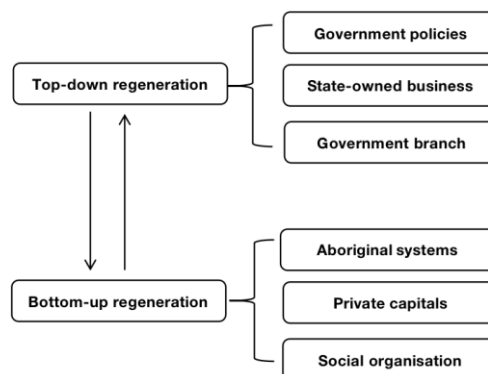


Figure 3: Relationships in the governance of cultural districts.(Source: drawn by the author).

3. The complex situation before the large-scale renovation of the Tanhualin art district

Before 2004, the Tanhualin art district had not yet been transformed, and this period was characterized by a chaotic situation with many residents, crowded commercial establishments, and uncontrolled development of art institutions [8]. This is due to the fact that the disorganization of the space in the Tanhualin art district is closely related to the influx of people, the small space of the art district, and residents renovating the exterior of buildings spontaneously and without guidance. The massive influx of people has resulted in overcrowding in local settlements. According to Shang et al. (2023), after 1949, the Chinese authorities have nationalized these buildings to provide housing for a large number of state-owned enterprise workers. Especially since China's reform and opening up, a large number of urban populations have flooded here. Laying the groundwork for future prosperity. However, it also creates a dense population by the time it gets here. Several families were merged in the same living unit, which were built as spontaneous, unorganized houses. This creates a negative impact of poor living conditions and difficulty in rehabilitation[8]. There have been three generations of households living together in a cramped residential unit [8]. In addition, in 1985, the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts moved here, bringing a large number of students and art institutions to Tanhualin. Therefore, The contradiction between the lack of space and the large population of the Tanhualin art district is beginning to emerge[9].

In addition, a study by Sang (2021) shows that the central area of the Tanhualin historical and cultural district is only 1.2 kilometers away, and dozens of historical and cultural buildings are clustered here. Art institutions spontaneously renovates these buildings to carry out cultural and creative activities. These buildings are connected to the road, and they spontaneously separate a large number of activity areas. This is due to the rapid development of cities in early China, the government's neglect of the protection of housing property rights, the failure to legally protect the housing boundaries of homeowners, and the lack of urban planning by the government, which led to the serious phenomenon of spontaneous renewal[13]. Spontaneous renewal is a family-based, unorganized small-scale renewal that does not change the public area to a private area under the guidance of a professional body. This has resulted in a crowded and chaotic situation in the Tanhualin art district [8]. Therefore, the renewal model of Tanhualin blocks before large-scale renewal is a bottom-up urban block renewal model, which is only a spontaneous group renewal without the participation of the government and other departments, which has a certain imbalance and confusion. Therefore, there is an urgent need for multi-stakeholder renewals[9].

4. In the early stages of the large-scale renewal of the Tanhualin art district

The early large-scale renovation of the Tanhualin art district was related to the support of influential social art institutions and governments in central China [8]. The Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, one of China's eight art schools, is adjacent to the Tanhualin art district[9]. After 2004, The campus of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has been renovated. The various entrances and exits of the school have been connected. The campus is integrated with the Tanhualin art district, which facilitates visitors to visit and forms a geographically convenient art support model. In 2010, Hubei Institute of Fine Arts will relocate its teaching area to a new campus in the outskirts of the city. A large amount of art or teaching space is idle here. Located in the old campus of Tanhualin and some areas of Tanhualin, it has been transformed into a base for undertaking cultural and creative industries especially with the financial support of the Wuhan government. Reparations to the area and provide it free of charge to artists and cultural and creative institutions. Therefore, this area has gathered over 40 art and cultural institutions and commercial projects, or attracted well-known artists to settle in, successfully driving the artistic development of the region [3]. The Wuhan Municipal Government has also determined to include the Tanhualin area in the Wuhan urban

planning system [8]. The Tanhualin art district is located in the ancient city of Wuhan, which is the central area of Wuhan. It integrates with the surrounding commercial areas, making industrial integration more convenient. It has also formed a gathering of ethnic costume design, sculpture art, and painting art. For example, the Wuhan Municipal Government invited renowned embroidery artists represented by Yang Xiaoting's team to settle in the Tanhualin art district[3]. As a well-known intangible cultural heritage in China, embroidery art can attract a large number of people to the art district, bringing commercial resources and economic value to the district. Therefore, through the renewal and renovations of the government and well-known art schools, professional artistic and financial support can be provided for the art and cultural areas.

It is clear that in the early stages of renewal, the Tanhualin art district has begun a top-down model of renewal. According to Park (2016, p.1), the top-down regeneration model has the government as the leader, transforming unused spaces into cultural districts through government intervention. This is a strategy or means of revitalizing urban areas, having led to the renewal of the city's historic and cultural districts. Especially in the face of resistance to large-scale development of the city, it is important to introduce creative industries to the cultural district, where artists can establish a platform for communication and cultural dissemination. Current urban development encounters population loss as well as urban hollowing out, and this approach can promote the return of population as well as the development of cultural and creative industries[7]. For example, in the United States, cities with arts districts have grown faster than those without [7]. Park (2016) also describes that with the current economic climate and development patterns, the development of cultural districts takes shape usually as a result of prolonged, multifaceted government support. For example, through laws and regulations and government financial subsidies for arts districts. This is because arts and cultural districts are susceptible to fluctuations in rents in the area in which they are located[7]. Therefore, whether it is the Tanhualin art district or other art districts, they rely heavily on the support of the government or commercial organizations, and this top-down model of development has become particularly important for art districts[7].

However, the early stages of the renewal of the Tanhualin art district were controversial in terms of pursuing non-profit rather than economic gain. In the early stages of the renewal of the Tanhualin art district, rather than pursuing purely economic benefits, the focus was more on making Tanhualin a place that could accommodate artists and the creative arts industry. For example, the leadership of the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has a philosophy of 'art rather than business' for the creation of the Tanhualin art district[3]. This shows that the government and art schools at the time were focused on providing places rather than solving the original sustainable development issues of the Tanhualin art district. The problem this brings is that the artistic atmosphere is relatively strong, but the commerce is not developed, and there is no financially supported art district, which cannot sustain development.

In addition, While the Tanhualin art district was developed, the contradiction between the new art and creative institutions and the existing residential places began to emerge[15]. According to Zhuang (2021), After the initial renovation of the Tanhualin art district, some of the historical buildings were destroyed, especially antique buildings and modern art stores, such as the 'Tanhualin Historical Exhibition Hall', which are interspersed with the modern housing buildings of the Aboriginal people and do not form a stylized whole. In addition, some small studios have formed closed individuals and are not connected to the main street of the "Tanhalin" art district, which cannot promote the joint development of the Tanhualin art district and local residential areas. It leads to gentrification[15].

As a result, government departments, as well as prestigious art colleges or art institutions, played a leading role during this period, but did not address the integration and development of art institutions and residential venues in the arts district. However, the art institutions and the

government in the early stages of the renewal introduced commercial institutions and art spaces, bringing an artistic atmosphere and a certain cultural and creative industry base to the Tanhualin art district [8].

5. The late stage and current situation of large-scale renovation of the Tanhualin art district

In the later stages of the large-scale renewal of Tanhualin, it was mainly led by the government and with the participation of market capital, and it was at this stage that commercialization and gentrification appeared. This is due to the introduction of commercial institutions to renew in the form of investment. According to Liu et al. (2022), from 2010 to 2020, Wuhan's real estate industry grew rapidly, and real estate companies had ample funds. Therefore, the government attempts to promote the transformation and renewal of historical and cultural areas through real estate enterprises[6]. For commercial institutions, the Tanhualin neighbourhood is located in the commercial core area of Wuhan. Local business clusters are profit-oriented and offer higher business activities here that will be highly profitable. However, the impact of this is the one-sided pursuit of commercial interests and the neglect of community livelihood issues[11]. According to Shang, et al.(2023), the development of the main street of Tanhualin is difficult, and the spontaneous space of residents near the main street is complex, being uneven, and it is difficult to renovate[8]. Therefore, the impact of commercialization is mainly confined to the main street of the Tanhualin art district. The impact of this is that the residential areas on both sides of the main street are less affected by the commercial sector, and the residents are not able to fully enjoy the commercial facilities. According to the study of Shang et al. (2023), the art area is divided into three areas: 'Tanhualin Main District', 'Gejiaying District' and 'Hansangong District'. Among them, the 'Tanhualin main block' has the highest renewal level, with the renewal rate of Tanhualin being renewed and being renewed, at 9% and 6%, respectively, and is also mainly concentrated in the Tanhualin main street, which has a high degree of commercialization, richer daily activities, and more concentrated cultural and creative industries [8]. Therefore, Yung et al. (2014) points out that the renewal of cities and historical and cultural districts is a joint effort involving cultural industries, economic development, and community renewal.This may effectively avoid gentrification[14]. After the renewal of Tanhualin, commercialization has also become more open to the spaces of the residential areas on both sides of the main street of Tanhualin. Based on the unique geographical advantages of the hilly area of Tanhualin, commercial institutions shape different landscapes according to the ups and downs of the terrain, connect the main street as a commercial pedestrian street, connect the residential areas on both sides, and closely integrate the residential areas with the creative culture of the main street[9]. As a result, after the large-scale renovation, Tanhualin will be more ecologically suitable for residents, and the creative industries will be closer to the residents, so that all classes of residents will be able to access the benefits of the renovation, thus avoiding a certain degree of gentrification.

In addition, the development of commercialization has also brought a more inclusive and positive impact to the Tanhualin art district. The government has introduced reputable commercial institutions to invest in the cultural district, and a variety of businesses have been derived from the cultural district, such as film and music, forming a creative industry cluster. Companies from other industries have also gathered here, forming a more large-scale business, as well as the provision of diverse services to foster a more inclusive atmosphere.[1]. A study by Liu et al. (2022) shows that the inclusive development level of various renewal communities in Wuhan can be divided into three levels: high, medium, and low. Among them, the block where Tanhualin is located has a high level of inclusive development, indicating that residents in the block are more likely to access public services [6].

However, promoting the renewal of cultural districts led by government departments may result in arts districts not being able to develop in a sustainable manner. According to Park (2016), the means of cultural district renewal is the government's introduction of policies to promote the pace of cultural district transformation by attracting the real estate industry and other business organizations to inject funds into the transformation of cultural districts. However, these attempts have not produced tangible results. In Sheffield, United Kingdom, for example, the city council initially brought in commercial capital in order to promote economic development and provide infrastructure for creative and cultural industries such as music and film in Sheffield. Similar challenges can be observed in the Tanhualin arts district. Due to the introduction of cultural institutions by the government, no industrial clusters have been formed. This is because the main body of the cultural zone is artists and art institutions, who generally resist the control of the government and accept the spontaneous formation of art and cultural clusters. This is also due to the spontaneous space, which has the characteristics of a high degree of freedom. Moreover, the cultural district after the renewals of commercial institutions has become more expensive and the rent has also become higher. In contrast, artists in Manchester, England, have had an easier time forming their cultural districts due to cheap rents and the historical context of an art community with an art scene[7]. Therefore, due to the government-led art districts, which mainly introduce the real estate industry and other businesses, commercial organizations are profit-seeking, and their presence will lead to an increase in rents, affecting the development of cultural and creative industries and causing artists to move to other places, resulting in gentrification. This is a spatial governance issue that is difficult to ignore in urban development under neoliberalism[5].

However, according to Park (2016), government intervention in the regeneration of cultural districts also ensures that artists and creative organizations are protected from fluctuations in rents and related costs[7]. This is because the Government can subsidize artists and arts business organizations through funding, so that these organizations can alleviate their financial pressure or even get rid of their operational difficulties, thereby achieving a reduction in the prices of arts products and selling artworks to a wide range of social classes, thus making arts more inclusive. For example, through the leadership of the Wuhan Municipal Government authorities, in 2013, the Tanhualin Art Zone organized cultural festivals, which included a sculpture exhibition by Li Sanhan, a famous sculptor, and an exhibition of Chinese paintings by Xu Shiming, a painter of Chinese paintings, as well as an exhibition of miniature films. These exhibitions are free and open to the public and involve multiple segments of the population[3]. Therefore, it is obvious that the Government, through subsidizing or purchasing services from business, will then provide cultural and creative services to the public and lower the threshold for the public to purchase creative-type services. The current situation also shows that after large-scale renovation, the Tanhualin art district has completed the transformation from disorderly to government-led transformation with a high degree of commercialization. Through this large-scale renovation, it has become a template for Wuhan's commercial streets, one of the city's ten famous attractions, and has become a highly developed and distinctive commercial cluster in Wuhan[2].

6. Conclusion

This case study reveals the complexity and role of government, commercial institutions, and social spontaneous groups during the large-scale renewal period of the Tanhualin art district. This advances our understanding of arts district renewal, potentially influencing the way the phenomena of commercialization and gentrification generated by arts districts are understood and dealt with. The Tanhualin Art District started with the spontaneous renewal of social groups, which was chaotic and disorderly, and has been renewed by government-led and commercial organizations, which

have developed a large-scale cultural and creative industry and developed commercial clusters. Although the Tanhualin art district has experienced gentrification and over-commercialization after large-scale regeneration, the situation can be improved by examining government policy actions and business support for community projects. Further research could focus on public participation in the regeneration of the area, which should not only include art practitioners but also cover the public from various sectors, to reveal new ideas generated for the future of the art district in the development model. Overall, this case study has advanced the understanding of the complexity of the renewal of the art district, and expanded the knowledge boundaries of the cultural and creative industries in the renewal of the art district.

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