

Research on the Shenzhen's Cultural Blocks in the Process of Urban Regeneration: A Case Study of Longgang District

Yang Li^{1,a}, Xiao Yong^{2,b}

¹CPC Shenzhen Municipal Party School Longgang Branch, Shenzhen, China

²Shenzhen Longgang Bao Long Sub District Social Stratum Association, Shenzhen, China
^a31621473@qq.com, ^b1439065841@qq.com

Keywords: Cultural Blocks, Urban space, Urban regeneration, Longgang

Abstract: Urban blocks play a crucial role in preserving historical memory and humanistic values, and have increasingly emerged as significant cultural, residential, commercial, and innovative spaces in urban development. This study provides theoretical and practical explanations on the contextual background, constituent elements, spatial representation, and industrial support of characteristic cultural blocks in urban areas. Additionally, it explores the emerging trend of constructing characteristic cultural blocks within the framework of urban regeneration. Using Longgang's construction of characteristic cultural blocks as a case study, this research investigates pathways for block design and planning, enhancement of cultural significance, establishment of industrial platforms, as well as policy and mechanism support to facilitate continuous exploration of Longgang's cultural development potential. The aim is to promote the creation of new high-quality urban cultural and creative spaces.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's urban development has entered a new stage with the continuous increase in its urbanization rate. Instead of prioritizing economic indicators, there is now a greater emphasis on enhancing the quality of urban life and striving to achieve a dynamic balance of multi-dimensional values, encompassing economic value, social value, ecological value, and cultural value through the transformation of the urban development mode.

The 20th National Congress of the CPC emphasized the imperative to enhance urban planning, construction, and governance, expedite the transition towards a new development paradigm for mega-cities, implement urban revitalization initiatives, bolster urban infrastructure development, and foster livable, resilient, and intelligent cities.

The study of urban cultural space has garnered significant attention from academia and industry, with "blocks" emerging as a crucial unit in contemporary urban development that serves as an important cultural, residential, commercial, and innovative space. This has sparked widespread interest across various fields.

Foreign research on urban blocks can be traced back to Jane Jacobs' seminal work "The Death

and Life of Great American Cities," which emphasizes the importance of street-level interactions for vibrant urban life and highlights the role of pedestrianization, small streets, old buildings, diverse block forms in shaping cities[1]. Research primarily focuses on developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, Germany and Japan examining urban blocks through lenses such as planning economics or environmental sustainability. Studies have pointed out that global migration has brought super-diversity to most local shopping streets.[2]Yoshinobu Ashihara proposed the concept of "The Aesthetic Townscape", believing that "streets are the symbols for visitors to evaluate a city"[3].

Chinese research on urban cultural blocks concentrates on architecture design spatial planning, regional characteristics expression, business planning, among other aspects proposing strategies for characteristic town development, historical preservation community renewal etc.

However, existing studies mostly adopt a perspective centered around historical street protection, while further exploration is needed regarding, such as policy environment, operation logic development path, spatial design of characteristic cultural blocks. Through theoretical discussion practical observation, this paper explores the spatial form industrial basis policy environment characteristic mode of these unique spaces ,and ultimately proposing effective approaches to promote high-quality construction of the urban cultural blocks.

2. The Characteristics of Longgang Cultural Blocks

2.1 Strengthened Policy Framework

In a strategic move to expedite the growth of the cultural industry conglomeration, the city of Longgang has introduced a comprehensive set of specialized support policies tailored specifically for cultural enterprises, digital creative talents, and original projects. These policies not only provide clear criteria for the identification of digital creative industry clusters and public technology service platforms but also establish guidelines for the identification of cultural industry blocks. The guidelines are explicitly defined in terms of spatial layout, building size, functional expectations, and cultural distinctiveness, fostering a conducive environment for the development of the cultural industry in Longgang.

2.2 Enhanced Industrial Leadership

The early-stage accumulation of cultural industry foundation in Longgang, coupled with the concentrated cultural industry space, provides robust momentum for the development of distinctive cultural clusters. This is primarily due to the active promotion of digital creative industries in the region, which include digital content, digital + traditional industry, digital design, and cultural creative development. Driven by these innovative sectors, the ongoing construction of seven blocks in Longgang is seamlessly integrating entertainment, leisure, lifestyle consumption, cultural tourism, and other functions. The digital creative industries are not only creating new job opportunities but also fostering the growth of local talent. Furthermore, they are enhancing the cultural and artistic scene of Longgang, thereby enriching the residents' lifestyle.

2.3 Strong Cultural Atmosphere

In recent years, Longgang District has made significant strides in hosting and promoting a variety of prominent cultural events, which have not only gained international recognition but have also successfully cultivated a niche for themselves within the district.

Some of these events include the Shenzhen International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF), a

prestigious exhibition that gathers the best of China's cultural and creative industries, showcasing a wide range of products and services such as digital media, design, animation, and publishing. Shenzhen "Creative December" is a month-long event that fosters creativity and innovation in the city, featuring various workshops, exhibitions, and performances. The Dafen International Oil Painting Biennial is a world-renowned event that attracts artists from all over the globe, displaying their stunning oil paintings in various styles and techniques.

3. Major issues

3.1 Limited Policy Mechanisms

The absence of targeted guiding and supportive policies constitutes a considerable impediment to the growth and development of Longgang's characteristic cultural blocks. At present, the top-level design and overall planning are found to be lacking, resulting in a high degree of similarity in the commercial formats within each block. This homogeneity creates a scarcity of unique goods and services, thereby promoting fierce competition among businesses operating within these blocks. Furthermore, while existing policies do provide some support for cultural industry agglomeration spaces, there is a conspicuous absence of specialized guiding and supportive policies for operational entities such as operation incentives and tax benefits.

The activation of architectural non-mobile cultural relics is indeed a challenging task. The overall repair cost of these non-mobile cultural relics is astronomically high, with the repair cost of Hakka walled houses usually exceeding 20 million yuan. The design and construction process are highly specialized, calling for a skilled and experienced workforce. Unfortunately, there is a severe shortage of professional talents in this field.

3.2 Difficulty in Private Enterprise Operation

The investment and operational threshold for engaging in cultural block projects is quite high.

This is primarily due to the fact that, in the long run, cultural blocks tend to generate higher social benefits than economic benefits. The continuous large input and small output' model, which is characteristic of block operations, serves as a realistic litmus test for the financial strength of the project operator.

The progression of operation projects encounters numerous impediments emanating from diverse sources. A result of historical contingencies, the ownership of building properties in specific areas of Longgang presents an intricate web involving villagers, residents, collective organizations, and other stakeholders. This complexity is further exacerbated during the process of block transformation and upgrading.

3.3 Insufficient Cultural Connotation

The cultural integration of the block space in Longgang is inadequate, as its current spatial design lacks a cohesive and distinct cultural identity. Although the area is home to a number of original architectural features such as urban villages and industrial parks, which provide a sense of historical authenticity, the overall design of the blocks does not incorporate these elements into a cohesive whole.

In the construction of some cultural blocks, there is an over-emphasis on creating a strong commercial atmosphere, often at the expense of cultural atmosphere. The focus on tourists' tourism consumption experience has led to a neglect of providing cultural education and experience for both tourists and residents.

4. High-quality Development Path of Longgang Characteristic Cultural Blocks

4.1 Strengthening Top-level Design

It is crucial to establish a comprehensive planning scheme for the Longgang blocks. This involves meticulously defining the thematic focus and category of each block, as well as formulating clear and achievable medium and long-term development objectives. The design details such as architectural landscapes, street paving, green walkways, signage systems, and point-to-point signs also need to be refined to create a cohesive and harmonious environment.

It is of paramount importance to increase the land supply for the establishment and growth of the unique cultural block. At present, the primary focus is on renovating and upgrading the existing spaces within the Longgang area. Immovable cultural relics in Longgang serve as tangible embodiments of the district's rich historical and cultural heritage. They embody the district's unique cultural identity and contribute distinctive cultural soft power to the region. It is recommended to actively promote projects aimed at safeguarding and rehabilitating these invaluable artifacts. Increased funding should be allocated towards their preservation efforts to ensure their longevity. The potential economic and social benefits associated with these immovable cultural relics should also be fully exploited.

4.2 Strengthening Policy Support

In order to attract market players to the block, a variety of supportive measures are being devised, including rent subsidies, incentives for key enterprises, operational benefits, event hosting assistance, and incentives for original and high-quality content creation. These initiatives are designed to guide cultural and creative enterprises and businesses towards congregating in the designated area, thereby fostering a thriving cultural and creative ecosystem in the block.

The government should guide multiple social actors to participate in the management of blocks. This includes private enterprises, social organizations, local communities, and other stakeholders. The government also encourages private enterprises to play a flexible management and service advantages, actively participate in the management of the block, to better meet the personalized needs of tourists and merchants. It is necessary to mobilize social organizations to participate in the enthusiasm of block management, and enhance the cohesion and self-management ability of the block through voluntary services and community cooperation.

4.3 Improve the Construction Quality

It is crucial to enhance the level of fundamental support in the block. Given the substandard quality of service facilities in the area, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive assessment of facility categories, layouts, and shortcomings.

Thoroughly explore the distinctive cultural resources of the block by systematically identifying its historical and cultural characteristics. By effectively narrating the story of the block in conjunction with local history, we can create a vivid and engaging narrative that not only preserves the block's cultural heritage but also makes it more accessible to the public.

Establishing the brand influence of distinctive cultural clusters is crucial in attracting renowned design studios to settle within these clusters, thereby leveraging their celebrity status and driving overall enhancement in the quality of such cultural blocks. Additionally, it is essential to introduce and nurture innovative and creative talents who can adapt to the demands of the new era of cultural tourism, providing intellectual support for building strong block brands. These talents are the lifeblood of any cultural cluster, as they contribute to its growth, development, and sustainability.

5. Conclusion

Through the aforementioned discussion on the construction practice of Longgang characteristic cultural blocks, the following conclusions can be inferred:

Firstly, with the transformation of governance methods in megacities and the acceleration of urban renewal, a new shift characterized by urban cultural space planning has emerged. This shift places greater emphasis on incorporating cultural connotations into urban planning and construction, as well as enhancing the living experience of urban residents, particularly their spiritual satisfaction and sense of fulfillment. The preservation of cultural heritage and collective memory is now equally prioritized in urban development, representing a significant manifestation of Chinese-style modernization's characteristics.

Secondly, the construction of urban characteristic cultural blocks is a complex process involving multiple stakeholders, including original residents, village collectives, governments, market investors, and other social entities. These parties have diverse interests and pursue different goals. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to take the lead in establishing a standardized management mechanism that can effectively stimulate market participants' enthusiasm for investing in and operating these blocks through policy incentives. Additionally, it is crucial to encourage collaboration among various social entities in both building and governing these blocks. The government should ensure the well-being of residents by guaranteeing livelihoods and infrastructure development while providing essential public services to support the growth of these cultural spaces. By fostering a collaborative partnership between the government, market forces, and society at large, we can continuously advance high-quality construction efforts aimed at creating urban public cultural spaces as well as culturally enriching consumption areas that cater to diverse needs.

Thirdly, the case study of Longgang characteristic cultural block construction demonstrates that urban cultural block development should fully leverage industrial and cultural characteristics, accurately assess market demand, and effectively position itself. The early establishment of Longgang digital creative industry corridor has laid a solid foundation for the cultural industry in Longgang characteristic blocks. The concentrated presence of numerous cultural enterprises and industrial parks has created favorable conditions for the construction of cultural and consumption spaces within the block. Therefore, during the construction and development process of Longgang characteristic cultural blocks, it is imperative to maximize existing advantages in the cultural industry while also exploring new drivers for its growth. This entails expediting urban renewal efforts to create opportunities for spatial expansion within the block. In essence, the construction of Longgang characteristic cultural block serves as an exemplary case that can be replicated and promoted towards Shenzhen's goal of becoming a modern international innovative city by 2025.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the financial support by CPC Shenzhen Municipal Party School Research Project.

References

- [1] Jane Jacobs. 1992. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books.
- [2] Sharon Zukin. Philip Kasinitz. Xiangming Chen. 2015. *Global Cities, Local Streets: Everyday Diversity from New York to Shanghai*. Routledge.
- [3] Yoshinobu Ashihara. 1984. *The Aesthetic townscape*. The MIT Press.