

Research on the Spatial Deconstruction of the Authentic Spaces in Historical and Cultural Blocks Based on Place Perception —A Case Study of Xi'an Sanxue Street

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ABSTRACT

Historical and cultural blocks are important for inheriting urban culture. They are of great significance for relieving the pressure of urban people's lives and enhancing local identity. Therefore, this article adopts in-depth interviews, grounded theories and other qualitative research methods to deconstruct the types and formation process of the authentic spaces from the residents' local perception, striving to understand the subject's values and inner feelings. There are 3 research results after the investigation: (1) Residents perceive authenticity through material space, social space, and local culture; (2) Based on life accumulation and real needs, residents have the original and continuous interaction with actual spaces, constructing more representative authentic spaces such as historical ruins, traditional streets and houses, and public spaces for leisure and business.

Keywords: *Authentic Spaces, Deconstruction, Place Perception*

1. INTRODUCTION

As an important carrier of regional culture, historical and cultural blocks are key elements to enhance the vitality and competitiveness of cities ^[1]. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, the "renewal boom" that swept the world's cities overly pursued economic benefits and ignored the inheritance and development of the city's historical context, which made the phenomenon of urban block homogeneity increasingly prominent, and consequently the city's own characteristics were blurred and the recognizability were decreased. This "deep crisis of the relationship between modern people and the environment" breaks the rhythm of people's daily life and triggers people's infinite desire for authentic spaces ^[2].

This article takes the historical and cultural block of Sanxue Street in Xi'an as an example, and analyzes the material remains, historical culture and daily life of the block from the perspective of locality theory. It combines the authenticity elements of the residents' perception with the space, and analyzes the types and characteristics of authentic spaces. This investigation not only reflects on the authenticity and lack of locality

of the blocks in the current re-urbanization of old cities in China, but also provides a reference for the humanistic perspective of urban heritage protection.

2. RELEVANT DISCUSSION ON AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHENTIC SPACES

2.1. *The concept and meaning of authentic space*

The authentic space is a new concept that has emerged with the development of modern society. As a space for urban construction and the development of tourist blocks, it reflects the discomfort of modern dwellers to the rapid development of society, and the desire to seek the origin of the authenticity of the city and the individual derived from this background. It is literally understood as the combination of authenticity and space. It is an individual's subjective cognition of a certain space in the city based on daily practice and life experience. It is also related to the original experience, continuous experience, or new beginning experience ^[7-8].

2.2. Relevant summary of authentic space

The discussion about the authenticity of the city and space originated from the urban crisis in the 1960s. Urban sociologists headed by Sharon Zukin launched a deep reflection on this, and the research objects were concentrated in urban communities^[2], public Space^[2] and consumption space^[7,9]. However, the current research is mostly to explore the transformation process of the authenticity of a certain space, or to study the original elements and manifestations of the space from the perspective of perception. There are few detailed studies on the interior of the space, and the content needs to be in-depth. In view of this, this article focuses on exploring the authentic space perceived by the residents of Sanxue Street, and divides it from the dimensions of original, continuous, and new beginning experience to provide a reference for better protecting the locality of the block space.

3. OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODS OF THE RESEARCH AREA

3.1. Overview of the study area

Sanxue Street is located on the south side of Mingcheng District in Xi'an, with Baishulin in the east, Nanda Street in the west, Shuncheng Lane in the south, and Dongmutou City in the north, covering an area of about 36.5km². It is a complex block with residential functions in the old city of Xi'an with rich site memory.

3.2. Research methods

The author conducted research on Sanxue Street in January 2020 and October-November 2020. The first round of surveys focused on participatory observations, and the second round of surveys used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the authenticity of the residents' perception of space, with 18 formal interviews and interviews. The outline was set up based on daily life practice, focusing on questions such as "Which places in Sanxue Street do you think are authentic", and followed up with the interviewees. The interview time is about 15-30 minutes, and it is finally transcribed into 15380 words of textual materials to explore the authenticity of space types in historical and cultural blocks.

4. AUTHENTIC SPACE TYPES

4.1. Original experience

The experience of origin is related to the history, heritage and tradition of a place^[8], As Zuo Jin said, authenticity marks a kind of "rootedness" and "historical newness" at the same time^[2], and those places or spaces with a long history are easier to

recognize original characteristics. They have the dual characteristics of "reality" and "construction". People perceive not only the present of the place, but also There are also past memories superimposed on the visible environment^[4].

(1) Historical ruins

The relic space is an important inheritance of the historical context of the block^[2]. First of all, it is related to the historical building environment and physical environment, including material forms such as architecture, volume and so on, revealing the intrinsic value or quality of a place^[4]. Sanxue Street, as one of the traditional ancient streets in Xi'an, is home to many historical sites such as the Anqing Temple Tower, and Forest of Steles Museum. Research shows that real material elements such as original relics at the original site and authentic paintings and calligraphy of cultural relics are the key to residents' perception of the space. Interviewee M01 (50 years old) said: "*The Anqing Temple Tower is still in its old location, it looks the same, and there is generally no change*".

Secondly, it is attributed to the personal experience of authenticity^[8]. This emotional response is often evoked by image archetypes and emotional models rooted deep in the consciousness of residents. Residents live here for a long time, and there are old scenes from a specific period and a specific place in their brains. As a long-term fixed existence, the ruins trigger the emergence of old scenes in people's minds, creating a sense of reality about memory. Interviewee F15 (68 years old) recalled: "*Behind the grain station opposite was Yang Hucheng's secret contact point in Xi'an. His tunnel leads directly to the Guanzhong Academy*".

(2) Traditional streets

Street space is an important carrier of life in historical and cultural blocks and the material basis of all related activities. The names, directions, and spatial patterns of the streets and lanes are important manifestations of the characteristics of the blocks, which reflect the historical meaning, structural characteristics and development laws of the blocks to a certain extent^[8]. Sanxue Street retains the name, direction and pattern of the old streets and lanes, as the real historical relics carrying life, giving people a more intuitive sense of authenticity.

Elements such as historical buildings, landscape sketches, and ancient trees are important material components of streets and lanes, creating a cultural atmosphere while telling stories about the history of streets and lanes.

In addition, the traditional style of the block and the interactive behavior of the neighborhood in the street reflect the vitality of the block to a certain extent, and its life scene is the most real existence perceived by the

residents, showing the more profound social and cultural connotation of the block. F06 (48 years old)'s point of view is more representative: *"I like the small alleys on this street. When you come out, you will see these old men eating, drinking, and playing here"*.

(3) Traditional houses

As a historical continuation that maintains personal and family life, traditional houses give people an infinite sense of root and continuity, and at the same time give people a sense of authenticity without thinking. It is a place to nurture a person. It can fully care and meet people's basic needs. At the same time, it isolates people from the disorderly world outside, and it is also the safest and most comfortable place. The feelings of the residents of Sanxue Street towards traditional houses are reflected in the architecture, decoration and structure of the houses. F13 (40 years old) said: *"The old courtyard is a traditional house suitable for people to live in"*. It is also reflected in the personal rich childhood memories, deep neighborhood emotions, and the symbolic sense of family history contained in the residential buildings. M06 (58 years old) said: *"Our old residents have lived here for several generations. I have lived here since I was born"*.

4.2. Continuous experience

The concept of authenticity has a time dimension and is a continuous process of life and work [2], not a stage setting of a historical building. The living space reappears every day and is used frequently, which brings people a pleasant mood. It is a concentrated expression of the continuous experience of the residents in the neighborhood. The living space here refers to the daily living and living place dedicated to satisfying people's psychological, social and behavioral needs and full of human touch. According to the coding analysis, the living space of Sanxue Street enters the consciousness level through the life experience of residents, carrying rich and hierarchical daily life and social communication, and manifested in two types of leisure public space and commercial public space.

(1) Leisure public spaces

Informal social networks are contained in traditional social communication places such as squares and street corner intersections, As the soil that nurtures social intimacy, it promotes the unique geographical advantages of the neighborhood and promotes the formation of a good social network relationship among residents. The survey found that the description of the residents of Sanxue Street is not only reflected in the use of daily functions, but more importantly, social interaction and neighborhood interaction.

(2) Business public spaces

The daily communication and interaction between

business customers and residents transform the commercial public space into the real tangible embodiment of life, making it a spatial expression of another continuous experience in the historic district. There are many fixed or temporary stalls in intersections and other public spaces. While shopkeepers or vendors are engaged in commodity trading activities, they are attracted Many pedestrians stopped to watch, promoting the interaction between people.

4.3. New beginning experience

The core concept of the new beginning experience is movement and change. It is related to the pursuit and realization of personal goals and identity interests in the sense of "becoming yourself"^[8]. In the context of globalization, the wave of "nostalgic consumption" has swept across. Cities use various nostalgic symbols to create a variety of consumption spaces to help consumers find more personal and collective memories, and encourage them to produce more self and cultural identities. Sanxue Street caters to the development requirements of the new era, opening Shuncheng Lane Bar Street, "Meet Chang'an" chain restaurants. Residents believe that as a combination of old and new elements, it injects new vitality into the development of the block.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

5.1 Conclusion

On the basis of perceiving the material, social and cultural spaces of the block, the local residents have an original, continuous and new interaction with spaces due to the accumulation of life and actual needs, constructing different types of authentic spaces. The results show that: (1) the real material space, social emotional space and cultural memory space are the main factors for the cultivation of authentic spaces. (2) Historical ruins, traditional streets and houses, public spaces for leisure and business, and new-fashioned consumption spaces correspond to the original, continuous and new experience respectively, forming representative space types.

5.2 Implication

Nowadays, with the increasing awareness of cultural heritage protection on a global scale, governments at all levels have enhanced the protection of historical and cultural blocks and the degree of capital investment. However, the focus is on material landscape construction or block resource development, which ignores the feelings of local residents especially the original and continuous experience. Residents are not only the inheritors and beneficiaries of urban culture, but also the creators and embodiments ^[25]. Citizens

themselves can show the urban image and city culture. Therefore, in further development of the block, we should pay attention to the rights to survive and develop of local people instead of only protecting the material environment such as the ruins, street and lane buildings.

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