Article

Does Public Participation Matter to Planning? Urban Sculpture Reception in the Context of Elite-Led Planning in Shanghai

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Abstract: Scholars have long debated how effective public participation is in urban planning. While most research was designed to assess the effect of public participation, the knowledge gap concerns whether urban planning would receive negative reception without public participation due to failure in managing people's emotions. One of the underlying reasons is that public participation is crucial to public emotion management. In this paper, we evaluate the impact of a case of public planning, and more specifically, the effects on public art reception when the planning project is developed by elites, without the involvement and participation of residents. Public art planning involves substantial symbolic and emotional components, and therefore constitutes a suitable case study. This research examines urban sculpture planning in Shanghai. The primary research method is a questionnaire survey, completed by 244 respondents. We argue that public participation is not the sole determinant of public art reception; other factors, particularly locality, also matter: an authoritarian-style urban sculpture planning creates a unanimous reverence and appreciation for flagship art projects on prominent public venues in central cities. However, people's feelings towards sculptures vary in neighborhoods; people are more likely to resist imposed artworks in the environment of their everyday life. Finally, we conclude that a lack of public participation does not always result in a negative reception to cultural projects on the part of the public; however, this lack of public participation is, nevertheless, culturally unsustainable.

Keywords: public participation; urban planning; public art; urban sculpture; art reception; cultural sustainability; Shanghai

1. Introduction

Public participation (or public/community engagement), as a required part of a more comprehensive concept of civic engagement, is a decision-making process that individuals (non-elected government officials, professionals, or group members) take part in to shape the outcomes of urban planning [1]. Its origin traces back to the 1960s [2], addressing the core value of democracy for dialogues and legal requirements as it embodies a power increase for citizens, known as the "ladder of participation" [3]. However, the effectiveness of public participation has been debated. Does public participation help urban planning to achieve more desirable outcomes? Although some scholars believe a broad scope of engagement is more likely to lead to social consensus [4,5], others argue that public participation does not really reflect public opinions and therefore has limited actual contribution to urban planning [6–8].

In recent years, the emotion issue in planning has attracted rising research interest, as Lyles and White suggest that "public engagement matters because it is emotional" [9]. Recent research highlights citizens' emotional stages of Arnstein's ladder model and points

out that public participation helps coordinate citizen's emotions or "extinguish the flames that opposition ignites" [9]. When people of nonparticipation (on the low rugs of the ladder) are allowed to voice their views and to acquire specific power from the powerful, their dangerous anger associated with the feeling of injustice would be pacified [9]. In this way, the angry "have-nots" would not become "offended and embittered" [3], and consequently, the planning process can be a "healthy and successful" one [9].

To explore the effectiveness of public participation, most research selected planning cases that included public participation and assessed the outcomes. Scarce research explores this question in the opposite direction: if public participation is positively correlated to public reception of a planning project, will lacking public participation cause public dissatisfaction and opposition, and then result in negative reception of the planning project? Or more specifically, if a planning project does not handle people's emotions well, will this cause discontent and aversion of the public and the consequent failure of the planning project? Moreover, when it comes to the outcome of planning, the scholarship in the past two decades has linked the discussion to the idea of sustainability [10–12]. How can we interpret the outcome of planning without public participation from the perspective of sustainability? Is planning without civic engagement sustainable?

This present research explores the place-based emotional involvement of community members to fill this vacuum, and we chose a cultural planning (Cultural planning refers to integrated city, regional and national development through strategic employment of cultural resources or a cultural approach to town planning, employing urban design, public art, cultural districts, and artists' studios [13]. In the U.S., cultural planning brings culture to various economic and social aspects of community development and focuses on place making [14]. Cultural planning facilitates cultural development [15–17]) project to explore the aforementioned research questions. This is because cultural planning involves substantial symbolic and aesthetic components, and is more likely to evoke emotions. One type of cultural asset that cultural planning deals with is public art, defined as artworks specifically designed and displayed in spaces accessible to the general population, reflecting collective and social values about social engagement and community caring; public art produces meanings and creates a sense of place. People tend to be more emotionally sensitive to such objects, as people's local identities have evolved [9,18,19]. Thus, public art planning is the focus of this research as we aim to explore the emotion management aspect of public participation in planning.

We chose a Chinese city for case study since China adopts an elite-led approach to planning decision making and lacks genuine public participation, which appears to be supported by public mentality (Mentality is defined as "the characteristic attitude of mind or way of thinking of a person or group" in *Oxford Dictionary*. We use mentality based on this dictionary definition. Our questionnaire survey includes relevant questions to determine if this is true) [20–22]. In recent years, participatory programs have been documented in Chinese urban studies literature (e.g., consultative meetings in water retaining projects, participatory place making, and Residents' Committee's election in local, urban and rural communities) [23–26]. Certain community groups are acquiring more power as part of the political agenda of the central and local governments [27,28]. Moreover, public antagonism and neighborhood activism occasionally occur in China, but genuine public participation is considered missing, yet to be absorbed into mainstream understanding [29,30]. There is a call for a more inclusive and accountable process to engage the public [21,31,32]. Cultural development and planning have emerged as a growing realm in Chinese urban studies [33–38]. In some cultural projects, certain activities related to public participation are documented [22]. Shanghai is the central Chinese city that developed an urban sculpture (Public art is called "urban sculpture" in China. Urban sculpture is one type of public art, featured by educational, commemorative, and aesthetic functions) planning administrative system that includes the "public participation" component. Urban sculpture planning in Shanghai is used as a case study in this research.

In this paper, we establish a theoretical framework to explain how variables other than public participation influence public art reception. The conceptual framework focuses on the variable of "locality", formulated through a combination of an urban design perspective and the "neighborhood love" approach, contextualized by the "cultural elite-led" approach. This framework conceptualizes "locality" along the continuum from prominent public spaces in central cities, a locus of political power, to neighborhoods of everyday life, and theorizes its impact on art reception within the context of elite-led cultural planning. The cultural sustainability perspective is also integrated into this conceptual framework. In the meantime, this project is open to recognizing other contributing factors through the research process, which exceeds the conceptual framework.

Our argument is twofold. The elite-led approach helps achieve unanimous affirmation for flagship art projects in prominent localities in city centers, which manifests the aesthetic image of the entrepreneurial-style authoritarian state and its didacticism. However, this approach often deviates from people's daily experiences and their perception of the community. Hence, the outcome of urban sculpture planning, or art reception, is varying and less desirable in neighborhoods. The research process also reveals additional factors that affect public art reception, i.e., people's mentality, and artistic excellence. The main theoretical implication for the public participation effectiveness discourse for urban planning is that public emotions are not a main reason why public participation matters to a successful urban planning project. The implication for sustainability, particularly cultural sustainability, is that, although lacking public participation in the planning for cultural development does not necessarily lead to failure in the planning outcome, this practice is not sustainable because the ostensibly unanimous acclamation is constructed by political power, which is debunked by its locality sensibility.

2. The Conceptual Framework: The Cultural Elite-Led Approach to Public Participation and the Factors That Influence Art Reception

In this section, we develop a conceptual framework to theorize how a hierarchy of localities along the prominent public space city center to neighborhood continuum affects people's perception of cultural projects within the context of China's cultural elite-led approach (no real public participation) in the planning for cultural development. This perspective is connected to broader international debates on democratizing public realm design and cultural sustainability.

2.1. Elite-Dominated Public Participation in China's Cultural Development Projects

There is a continuing debate regarding whether public participation is helpful to urban planning. The pros believe that engagement with a broad scope of the population is more likely to create social consensus and to improve the quality of decision making [4,5,39–43]. Public participation contributes to democratic governance in three aspects: "effectiveness", "legitimacy", and "social justice" [44]. The cons, however, question whether public participation reflects the honest opinions of the public [6,45–47]. Public participation has limitations in power struggles [48]. Public participation may not empower the public; instead, powers outside the planning system shape the general interpretation of their expectations and suggestions and then influence the final decision [46]. Engagement of an oversized citizen group skews the planning process, and people lose sight of an overall picture of interests, debated issues, and objectives [49,50].

While participation has been institutionalized in Western urban planning since the 1960s, many aspects of planning remain expert-driven. Indeed, a transition from profession-led to a broader base of public consultation does not mean public opinions are embraced to challenge the dominance of the elite. When planners introduced public participation into the planning process in the mid-1990s, they assumed that the public understood and gave consent to the goal of planning set by professionals. Planners also assumed that public consultation that does not result from legal requirements is what the local authorities are willing to conduct, so the authorities play the leading role [51]. These

assumptions indicate an elite-led approach to guiding public participation towards a shared vision desirable in the eyes of the elites [51]. Essentially, following "top-down strategies for bottom-up involvement", public participation has been carried out [52]. Townshend and Pendlebury point out that conservation planning has primarily been "expert professional" [53], and how this approach influences ordinary people's everyday lives is not concerned. Public participation aims to expose local authorities to conservation expertise and help people better understand planning's technical issues through public engagement [51,54]. The "community engagement" model consequently brings an end to the rational model for planning and understands community engagement as an essential component of planning and an ongoing process that facilitates the participation of diverse and unprivileged community members [55].

Unlike Western urban planning, the "cultural elite state" model describes a top-down manner of decision making in cultural planning in China. The decision makers consist of authority figures (e.g., planners, media, artists, and other stakeholders) in the form of the elite coalition in control of most social and economic resources. The elite coalition influences mainstream cultural tastes, imposes their visions on citizens, and does not genuinely engage the public for opinions [56,57] (The elite class is composed of "governing elites" and "non-governing elites" who are in charge of the direct and indirect ruling, respectively. Specifically, governing elites are political leaders who make decisions, whilst non-governing elites are intellectuals (e.g., consultants, media professionals, artists), participating in cultural production [56]. The former holds political power, whilst the latter informs and directs political power by mobilizing others [58]. "Non-governing" cultural elites work on institution building and claim jurisdiction within the governmental apparatus [56,57]). The Chinese urban studies literature recognizes a lack of genuine public participation as an urban planning issue [21,29–32]. Four outcomes come into the spotlight, namely, a lack of representative politics [59], not being representative of citizens' desires and needs [60,61], no full realization of humans [62], and discouraging free expression of different opinions (ibid.) These outcomes take shape in different types of localities, which can be explained using urban design and "neighborhood love" perspectives.

2.2. Hypothesizing the Impact of Locality on Public Art Reception

2.2.1. Prominent Public Venues in City Centers

From an urban design perspective, cities are the basic units to exercise jurisdictional and political power with urban demographic and economic features, whilst neighborhoods are a city's subunits of people of everyday life [63].

City centers and downtown zones, known as strategic centers, are powerful in physically convening and socially influencing people when installing cultural icons alongside administrative and education facilities [13,63]. Prominent localities of city centers are key spots of intensive foci, such as a city's central plaza or significant transportation junctions (e.g., Seward Square in Washington D.C.; the intersection of Alamo, Commerce, and Market Streets in San Antonio) [63–65]. The notion of public space, specifically prominent public venues in Chinese cities, differs from the West, in that these places do not equal the *commons*. They are not the place for the expression of civic identities, rights, or cultural expressions. Instead, these are the venues, prominent public venues, in particular, for the authority to demonstrate their authoritarian and convening power and for the people to show subjectivity and allegiance to the political power. Chinese local authorities perceive prominent public venue design as a means to showcase urban images and souls and advance the mainstream social values [30,66,67] (Accordingly, most Chinese people also perceive these sites as formal localities to receive official messages). They tend to install flagship public artworks, the "traditional" and "utilitarian" categories of public art (Public art is categorized into "traditional", "utilitarian", and "new genre" artworks [68]. "Traditional" public art is used as an educational, commemorative, or didactic instrument by the state, particularly through the creation of monuments, revolutionary monuments, and historic monuments, in a top-down manner from an elitist perspective [69]. "Utilitarian" artworks feature deco-

rative functions. They attract investment and visits, creating place identities, promoting civic pride, and often catering to upper-middle-class lifestyles (e.g., prestigious landmarks, flagship cultural infrastructures) [70]), in particular, to address the entrepreneurial urban goals and ideologically didactic purposes of local Chinese states [22,56,71].

The cultural elite-dominated approach enforces apparent uniformity of affirmative reception of monumental and utilitarian sculptures in principal public localities; the elites perceive the general public as the passive recipients of these transmissions. The underlying planning theory is that this approach may not necessarily result in negative reviews, as the public is uniform in its positive feelings towards didacticism [72]. Lacking public participation may not undermine the quality of urban planning because technical experts control the key steps and mechanisms to produce urban sculpture plans. Furthermore, most of the public are laypeople who have limited ability to contribute to proficiency [3,73–77]. It is therefore possible to achieve unanimously favorable receptions through elite-led planning despite the disempowerment of the public in the decision-making process on key localities in city centers.

Hypothesis 1. *The cultural elite-led approach causes uniform affirmative receptions of flagship art projects in the main public localities of the city.*

2.2.2. Neighborhoods

While flagship art projects at prominent urban venues may create unanimous acclamations, elite-imposed artworks can be resisted by local desires in neighborhoods. Unlike cities, neighborhoods shape people's perceptions and identities through neighborhoods' specific indigenous characteristics. Artworks chosen by the city's cultural elites are external to local communities, being disassociated from residents' senses of community embedded in their daily life experiences and needs.

The "neighborhood love" approach explains that neighborhood residents build their appreciation for neighborhoods on neighborhoods' amenities that comprise material and spiritual dimensions. The material and spiritual dimensions are known as "body" and "soul", embodied by neighborhood environment, neighborhood services, and cultural, symbolic, and emotional components, or "social interaction" and "areal distinctiveness" [63]. Psychological attachment to the neighborhood evolves based on everyday lives, aesthetic involvement, and individual community members' self-identification through emotional ties [77–79]. Cultural symbolism expresses a sense of belonging, social identity, and social inclusion. In other words, cultural components contribute to the evolution of cognitive bonds within these groups [80]. Public engagement introduces residents to the planned community amenities and helps grow a sense of compassion [9]. Cultural and historical planning in the U.S., for instance, allows people to better understand planning's technical issues through public engagement [51,54]. Community members' support for planning projects is rooted in their trust in the authority, and public participation strengthens their confidence [81]. Without this practice, however, the neighborhood becomes the base of place-based politics to fight against the external hegemony and acknowledging personal identity. There could be a conflict between recurrent local images through locals' representations and the objects imposed on the community [67,82]. Genuine participation allows community members to bring their social interactions and place-based emotional ties to the decision-making process, which provides planners insight. When the residents feel the imposed objects do not fit into their perception of neighborhood distinctiveness, opposite emotions such as indigenous landscape features or social and cultural expressions of the neighborhood with which residents build their identification would be engendered [63].

In theory, community-based public art projects are expected to capture community members' heartbeat and express their thoughts and desires with site-specific features [83]. Unlike flagship art projects, community art projects should be created through social engagement. Such projects should display a higher integration of community desires and hopes, express community members' emotional ties to the place, and create community

identities [83]. Moreover, community-based public art should be the voice for disadvantaged community groups and challenge conventional thinking (known as "new genre" art) [84] (For this reason, public art has been widely employed in community grassroots movements in recent decades [85]). At a minimum, citizen involvement strategically mobilizes public attention and enables the authority to support various constituencies for their budget and programs [86,87]. A lack of public participation may render elite designated artworks generic. Being less human or community-focused, as well as less responsive to community-based site-specific expectations increases the chance of creating discontent in its reception and draws attention to the issue of insufficient community participation.

Hypothesis 2. *Without public participation, urban sculpture planning causes discontent with artworks installed in neighborhoods.*

In addition, ignoring public participation can be a devastating force to the core feature of public art related to addressing public interests and spirited debates [72,88], and this may lead to residents' low degree of place satisfaction [89]. Since the mid-1940s, artwork is no longer perceived as a pair of author and passive audience, but rather a combination of meanings produced by actors and participants [85]. As residents do not envision the art landscape for their neighborhood, they become disconnected from the meanings of the artworks and consequently less satisfied with the place [89]. We hypothesize that top-down didacticism may trigger disinterest in sculptures, producing satirical interpretations of artworks (as opposed to the original artistic intentions), thus channeling interests to informal uses of art venues in neighborhoods. Such informal uses are typically flexible and pragmatic in struggles for survival, which generates "bottom-up social and economic justice" [90].

Hypothesis 3. *Lacking public participation, urban sculpture planning causes neglect and informal sculpture site uses in neighborhoods.*

2.3. The Perspective of "Cultural Sustainability"

If the above hypotheses about art reception in two different types of localities—a central city–neighborhood divide—is validated, we would interpret this outcome as undesirable from the perspective of cultural sustainability. Soini and Birkeland explore the connection between "cultural sustainability" as the fourth pillar of "sustainability" and "sustainable development" around seven storylines [91]. "Sustainability" or "sustainable development", defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [92], has become a buzzword since the publication of the World Commission on Environment and Development's report "Our Common Future". The underlying value of this definition broadly reflects ethical norms of equal distribution of social and ecological resources and welfare spatially and intra-generationally. In the realm of territorial or place-based sustainable development, "culture" refers to symbolic meanings contained in customs, norms, rules, and aesthetic objects that emerge in human communities [93,94]. Cultural sustainability refers to preserving to continue and thrive the symbolic meanings and social practices in the local community that contain these meanings and practices [95]. From this perspective, cultural sustainability must be achieved through local people's involvement in managing their community's cultural assets, including intellectual property, heritage, and cultural activities. In other words, the inheritance and integrity of indigenous values, traditions, customs, knowledge, craft, and skillsets entail the endeavor of local people, and a transparent decision-making process for the full engagement of community members is crucial [96,97]. The underlying theory is that local people are most concerned with culture and life in the place that contains their everyday life activities, known as the "local ways of life and culture", and they understand the meaning of the symbolic pattern of this place better than outsiders. Heidegger puts forward the notions of "dwelling" and "care",

underscoring the importance of the full physical and emotional involvement of local people in the planning for their community's development based on their understanding of the indigenous tangible and intangible culture, which is crucial to cultural sustainability [98,99]. Accordingly, the principle of cultural sustainability urges urban design teaching to adopt a new approach tailored to the cultural sensitivity of local people in the community and reflects their understanding and preference for symbolic meaning expression in the design of the community [100].

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design and Sampling Method

Based on the described conceptual framework that centers around a hierarchy of localities, a city can be modeled as a continuum from prominent public venues in city centers (abbreviated as "centers") to neighborhoods. The two ends of the continuum constitute the center-neighborhood divide for the study of "locality". This project mainly relies on a questionnaire survey-based quantitative research method that compares two groups of subjects that represent two types of urban sculpture venues (i.e., centers vs. neighborhoods). The idea of comparing two comparable groups that vary on one key feature was influenced by the classical experimental research design as described by Meier et al. [101]. This method helps to show the impact of a key variable, which in this research is locality.

The adopted cluster sampling method comprises two stages. In the first step, we classified all the urban sculpture venues collected according to a list of venues (offered by the Shanghai planning authority) roughly into three broad categories: (1) flagship artworks at iconic spots, (2) artworks in local residential neighborhoods, and (3) artworks that fall out of these two categories. The third type of artworks are located either in less prominent public venues (e.g., a corner of a secondary business street (For the concept of secondary business street in an urban design term, see Bentley, 1985)) or out of residential neighborhoods, being less informative or valuable for the fulfillment of our research objective. For this reason, only sites in Categories 1 and 2 were selected. The MUSCO's urban sculpture survey in 2017 [102] specifies types of sculpture venues, including prominent public spaces and neighborhoods, which provides supportive information for our sampling. According to MUSCO's statistical data in 2017, there are 1810 and 4936 urban sculpture sites and sculptures in Shanghai, respectively, with 380 sites in Category 1, 688 sites in Category 2, and 742 sites in Category 3.

The second stage involves a simple random sampling method, which allows each site to have an equal chance of selection, resulting in 18 sites, including 9 in Category 1 and 9 in Category 2. The team scrutinized each selected case and filtered cases that did not meet any of the two criteria. First, the neighborhood should be at least a medium degree of density, roughly equivalent to 80 households. Second, the case selection should evenly cover the 10 inner-city districts of Shanghai (Given the fact that Shanghai is the largest metropolitan city in China, one locality is not sufficient to represent the center of the city. We perceived the ten inner-city districts within the inner-ring road as the central area of the city and selected district centers for the study of city centers). Using this purposive sampling method, we selected 10 sites of two categories for a questionnaire survey (Table 1).
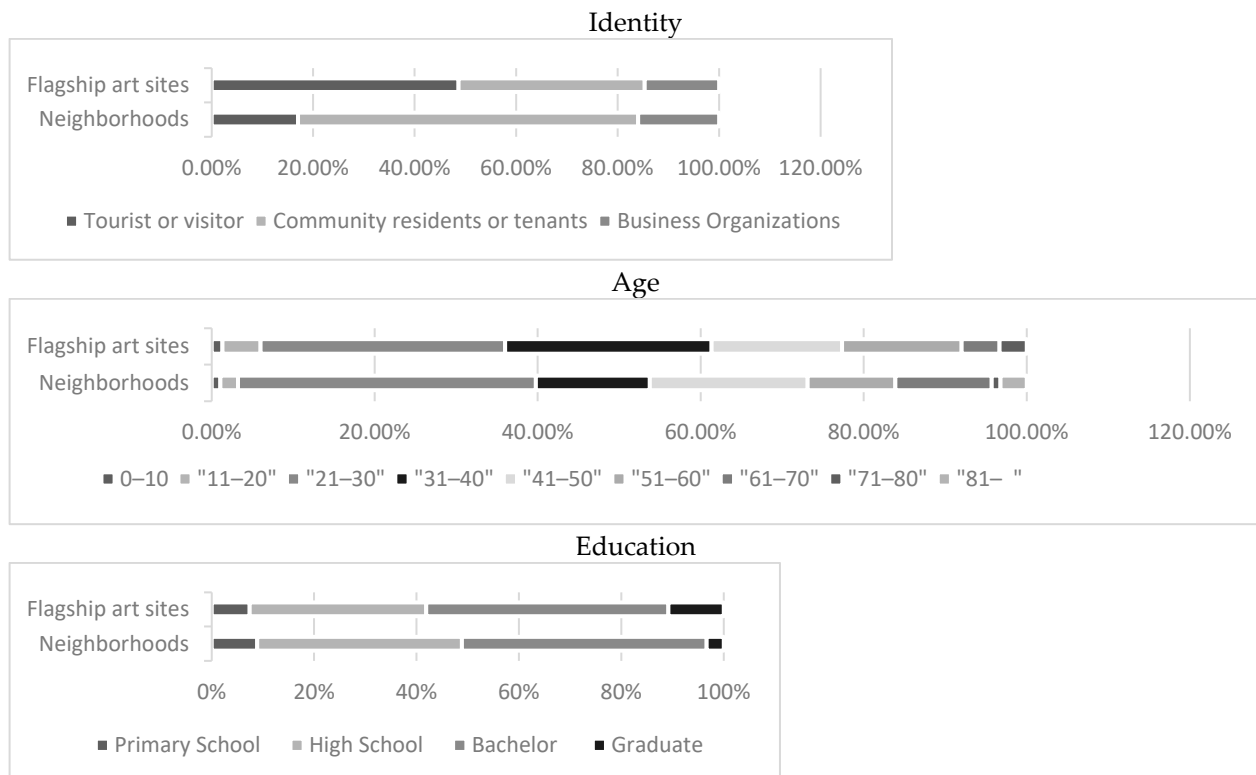
3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Demographic profiles of subjects (identity, age, education, sex) in two broad categories—prominent public venues in city centers (for flagship art site) and neighborhoods—are listed in Scheme 1. While the correlation of the variables "age", "education", and "sex" to public art reception is debated, "familiarity of artworks" and "social and symbolic proximity to artworks" have been verified to be positively correlated to public art reception [103]. This research therefore distinguishes "residents" from "local businesses" and "visitors" (Visitors are limited to Shanghai residents who do not reside in the neighborhoods of the sampled public art sites). "Residents" are assumed to possess a higher degree of

"familiarity of artworks" as well as social and symbolic proximity to artworks. "Local businesses" are familiar with artworks but have lower social and symbolic proximity to artworks. Presumably, "visitors" underperform in all three aspects. Flagship art localities are logically exposed to a higher percentage of visitors.

Table 1. Questionnaire survey distributed and rate of return.

Sculpture Venues	Venue Type	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Valid Questionnaires	Date of Survey
Gubei New Town	High-end neighborhood	30	29	8 June 2018
Zhangjiaxiang Neighborhood	Working-class neighborhood (WN)	20	20	18 June 2018
Chenan Neighborhood	WN	30	30	28 June 2018
Jing'an Sculpture Park	Flagship-art project (FP)—contemporary art venue (CAV)	40	36	28 June 2018
Shanghai International Sculpture Centre	FP—CAV	30	30	11 October 2018
Bundbull	FP—iconic landmark (IL)	15	15	26 March 2019
Huamu Avenue Pudong	FP—IL	30	30	18 June 2018
30 May Sculpture	FP—revolutionary monument	15	14	2 March 2019
Duolun Road Sculpture Walk	FP—historical monument	30	26	28 October 2018
Telephone Lady	Democratic monument	15	14	1 March 2019
Total/Rate		**255**	**244 (95.7%)**	

Scheme 1. Demographic profile of subjects in two categories of urban sculpture sites survey result.

Probing inhabitants' perception of the urban environment has a long tradition in the planning scholarship, and the questionnaire survey constitutes a routine research method [104]. In our two-page questionnaire, four questions are in the form of Likert scale

evaluation, enquiring about a variant degree of positive feelings towards the artworks and their localities, ranging from "substantial", "significant", to "negligible" for measuring attitudes. The rest are open-ended questions. Questionnaire surveys were conducted in May of 2018 to May of 2019 in Shanghai. Considering the fact that people are less likely appreciate outdoor artworks in high and low temperatures (above 25 degrees and below 8 degrees), we visited each site three times, i.e., March, June, and October, which evenly covers different seasons whilst excluding extreme weather conditions. A total of 255 questionnaires were distributed, and 244 returned valid. Simple random sampling enables respondents of a different age, sex, or educational background to have an equal chance of being selected. This method of research design ensures generalizability to a broad scope of the population.

Qualitative data allow for an in-depth understanding of respondents' opinions and attitudes towards the sampled artworks and their sites. The research method includes a qualitative component in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire that allows respondents to express their opinions on public artworks and public art planning. Participatory observation on reception was conducted on the 18 sites, assessing the effectiveness of urban sculptures combined with site reconnaissance. Actual numbers and percentages were used in our diagrams and graphs to produce cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics for data analysis.

In addition, we conducted interviews with all chief officials in the urban sculpture section of the planning system on both municipal and district levels to understand how they perceive and implement public participation.

The validity level of the data collected is medium to high as we had developed trust with the planning officers before carrying out the multiple in-depth interviews. Responses from residents can somehow appear be more "positive" than reality as Chinese people are overall cautious when making critical comments in public spaces despite the anonymous form of the survey. People tend to express negative views in an euphonous way or indicate "no opinion" when requested to respond. This could reduce data accuracy and give latitude to the researchers' interpretation (based on the context and supplementary ways of data collection). The data reliability is high, as the interviewees (government officers) can be contacted for confirmation and questionnaire surveys can be repeatedly conducted on the selected sites. The external validity of this research is high. In addition to the above-described sampling method that ensures the applicability of the findings to a broader geographic range of the city of Shanghai, the findings of this research also apply to other Chinese cities because they share the same method of public participation in the planning for cultural development. The findings are also applicable to cities in other countries with similar political systems, but not those that have a democratic political system. However, this research engenders theoretical implications for public participation in urban and cultural planning, which is a separate issue that is discussed in the conclusion.

4. Public Participation in Urban Sculpture Planning

This section begins with a contextual narrative and explains the significance of urban sculpture planning in relation to China's wider urban planning system. This section illustrates that the cultural elite coalition has directed urban sculpture planning with little actual engagement from the public in Shanghai based on Chinese people's mentality largely in support of elites in the decision making of public affairs.

4.1. The Background: Urban Sculpture Planning in Shanghai's Urban Development

The urban sculpture planning system works to address the cultural strategy of place making and marketing to construct an attractive urban image to enhance urban competitiveness in Chinese cities.

According to Zheng (2017a, b), urban sculptures first entered Communist China's cultural policy for revolutionary didacticism and political propaganda in the 1950s. The production of urban sculptures was interrupted during the succeeding political movements

and resumed in the late 1970s when China enacted the open-door policy. The Artists' Association (*meixie*) led urban sculpture production, monitored artist selection, hosted urban sculpture design competitions, and coordinated inter-artist organizations' communication in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the Artists' Association (*meixie*) changed the urban sculpture authority to the Urban Planning Bureau under the development-oriented entrepreneurial urban policy. The new urban policy emphasized city beautification for place making and marketing. In Shanghai, the "city urban sculpture planning group" was upgraded to "urban sculpture committee" under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Publicity Department and Construction Commission and was merged into the Urban Planning Bureau in 1993. The purpose of setting up the Municipal Urban Sculpture Commission Office (MUSCO), an office dedicated to implementing sculpture plan-making tasks assigned by the Municipal Urban Sculpture Commission (MUSC), was to advance entrepreneurial urban policies in the trend of large-scale urban (re)development. This agency enacted the *Shanghai Urban Sculpture Master Plan*, one of contemporary China's earliest domestic public art master plans [22,56,71,105].

The other noticeable characteristic of Shanghai's urban sculpture planning system is its ideological constraints. Public art encourages free expression in different contexts to empower underprivileged community members and address public interests (Lacy, 1995). It has become an outlet to seek justice to relieve social problems. However, the Chinese context is different, and these commitments are omitted in urban sculpture planning goals in Shanghai.

Zheng argues that Shanghai's urban sculpture planning system is "an entrepreneurial-style authoritarian" planning system [71]. On the one hand, Shanghai's urban policy clarifies an elite-dominant approach and denies a possible role for the public in driving community-based participation. When it comes to artistic expression, the authority favors a representational style and advocates allegorical narration to construct the history of the Party for didacticism. Abstract language and symbolic meanings are tolerated to produce aesthetic objects for urban beautification and higher quality of the built environment as part of the urban entrepreneurial program [22,71].

4.2. The Cultural Elite-Led Public Participation in Shanghai's Urban Sculpture Planning

The term "public participation" in the official language of urban sculpture planning refers to engaging ground-level administrative entities, such as the Street Office, Residents' Committee, and Town Office, instead of the general public. The municipal government requires sculpture project implementation on the ground level of leadership, heightening their roles in the sculpture planning system [106]. The reason for not engaging the public is twofold. Essentially, the Chinese political system has not yet embraced democracy. Government officials fear that the masses might utter nonsense and challenge their decisions if given the right to expression [106]. However, according to experts in the Arts Committee (*yishuweiyuanhui*), a government advisory agency, Chinese people have been trained to be obedient, only making mild critiques, if any, on artworks installed in public venues [107].

The leading role of an elite cultural coalition features the elite-led public participation system, while urban sculpture is generally leveraged as a form of high culture for civic education. In 2004, the MUSCO developed a system that requires four types of stakeholders to be engaged in artist selection, known as "Si Wei Yi Ti" (Four Actors in One System). The four actors are (1) curators and artists—the main body of art creators; (2) experts in the Art Committee—the reviewers; (3) the public—the commentators; and (4) the MUSCO—the advancer (The MUSCO and district Urban Sculpture Committee Office (DUSCO) are responsible for sculpture planning and related administration work) [108]. Political leaders decide on artist/artwork selection, absorbing professional advice from curators and sculpture officers at MUSCO [71]. However, social engagement is not really implemented. Even within a tiny scope of sculpture projects that did conduct public consultation, "public participation" is framed within the purpose of "market survey" (to determine the popularity of sculptures) instead of encouraging free expression to shape the decision-making

process. Views of the public are "taken" only when consistent with authority figures' own views [109].

The Jing'an Sculpture Park is a case that implemented the above-stated form of public participation. At the two sculpture exhibits hosted by the Jing'an District Government, artworks were selectively retained for permanent display through screening. The questionnaire listed the artwork on display and opened for public voting, which lasted for two months. Five artworks of top popularity were later moved to the park's central area, followed by a sculpture photography contest [110]. The artworks favored by the public were largely not retained for permanent installment due to the final decision from district political leaders [111]. In other cases, the state-backed Nanjing Road sculpture exhibit also launched a public consultation. However, the actual influence of the public opinions was weak: "No artwork gained 100% positive or negative commentary. Public reviews will not catch our attention unless we notice a severe controversy" [112].

Limited public consultation concentrates on practical issues. Artwork motifs are occasionally open only for public discussion for practical reasons. Site selection for religious-themed sculptures, in particular, is sometimes available for public discussion to match artwork meanings with their sites [113].

Communication with the public takes place in a one-way manner, i.e., from the elite coalition to the public, and often obscures the true meanings of the artworks. Descriptive boards on the art venues are the primary medium for communication. There are no art docents hired to guide artistic appreciation, even on key projects [114]. Several sculpture venues lack introductory information and can give misinformation on a few sculpture sites (e.g., Duolun Road). The public desires better information about these sculptures. Some of the critics focus on bad publicity to mediate with the audience: "TV programs and other media should give more spotlight on the sculptures"; "A board should be set up near the sculpture for introduction" [114].

Chinese citizen's mentality largely underpins this elite approach to public engagement. In line with government officials, most people perceive urban sculpture as a form of high culture, regardless of their localities, flagship venues, or residential neighborhoods [114]. In line with the perception of "high culture", the Chinese audience appreciates urban sculpture as traditional didactics and aesthetically decorative objects, but not "new genre" artworks. In tandem with the high cultural standards, most people rely on elites (e.g., art professionals, experts, and government) for decision making, whilst revealing low confidence in their abilities: "I am a layman, knowing nothing about this art form, not qualified to participate in sculpture planning . . . I do not have the credentials to participate. Will destroy the project". "I have scant knowledge of this. I hope professional people can design and select artworks". "I hope to participate but can only express superficial views. It ultimately depends on the expertise of professionals". "Experts should decide this. It's not that I am unwilling to participate, but it goes beyond my capacity to select public artworks". "I am not willing to oversee urban sculpture implementation. This task calls for professional capacity" [114].

5. Results and Discussions: The Impact of Locality on Public Art Reception within the Elite-Led Context

In this section, we argue that the cultural elite-led approach has shared positive views towards flagship art projects by contrasting urban sculpture reception at flagship artwork venues with art projects in residential neighborhoods. However, residents' reception varies, revealing partial resistance to the elite-led approach in people's daily lives due to lacking participation.

5.1. Reverence towards Flagship Art Projects in Prominent Public Localities

Flagship art, including "traditional" and "utilitarian" artworks, are produced through the mainstream social value systems under the direction of the elite coalition. These are the places that create cultural identities and promulgate aesthetic criteria for ideological and
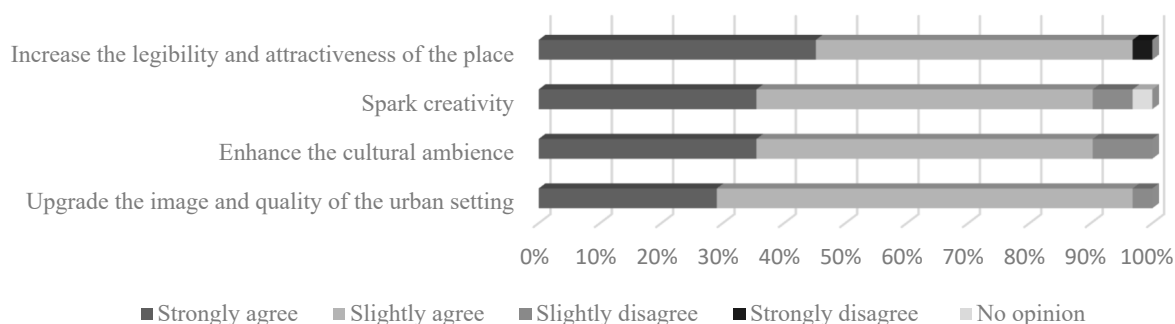
place making purposes. The public's positive feelings grow out of an obliged emotional tie to the country/city.

Revolutionary monuments of political didacticism fit into people's perception of "urban sculpture". If represented in an effective art form, these artworks are favorably received by the public. One example is the iconic revolutionary monumentalism entitled "May 30th", with abstract modernism. The revolutionary theme is represented via two Chinese numerical characters of twining steel spirals, a modernist artistic language similar to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao designed by Frank Gehry, but created ten years prior. "The sculpture ... symbolizes revolutionary fire on the ground. We must permanently keep this history in mind". "It displays a force, a revolutionary force". (×3) "It commemorates revolutionary martyrs, advocating their spirit, their immortal spirit". "The content is excellent, drumming up people in commemoration of the martyrs, driving our attention to hard-earned present lives". "Patriotic education is crucial to our society!" (Survey at the May 30th, Sculpture venue, 2019).

Masterpiece sculptures with international reputations have achieved wide popularity. Amid a trend of purchasing masterpiece sculptures, the Shanghai Lianyang Group Co., Ltd., a real estate company, bought a replica of Rodin's "Thinker" (produced by one of five authorized modes) and installed it on the plaza, attracting public attention. Most pedestrians glanced at the sculpture; some stalled and scrutinized, then took photos. Parents explained the meaning of this sculpture to their children lingering around (Site visit at the Shanghai Lianyang Plaza, 23 March 2019).

Decorative flagship landmarks are acclaimed as cultural icons. In the Huamu area, Pudong District (The Pudong District was developed in the early 1990s as a high-technology and financial center of the city. It features wide streets, glass-cladded skyscraper skylines, and spacious public areas), for instance, both passers-by and residents were enthusiastic about landmark sculptures: "They look good". (×2) "These are distinctive cultural icons about lights in the East ... aestheticizing the environment". (×3) Although these new cultural icons embody a sense of cultural essentialism and sacrifice cultural diversity of the population, the respondents made no critical comments on this (Survey at the International Sculpture Centre, 2019).

The overwhelming acclamation of these flagship artworks is also bolstered by the responses to the Likert-scale survey questions. As showed by Scheme 2, 90.3–96.8% of the responses for the Pudong Huamu art venue either slightly or strongly affirm that the artworks have "increased the legibility and attractiveness of the place", "sparked creativity", "enhanced the cultural ambience", and "upgraded the quality and image of the urban setting" (Scheme 2). Among these positive responses, 29% to 45% strongly agree with these attributes, particularly the last item (ibid.). (Figure 1).

Scheme 2. Sculpture group in Huamu area, Pudong, survey result.

Landmarks of historic monumentality manifest local history guided by dominant social values. The Duolun Road sculpture walk is an award-winning sculpture project representing ten cultural celebrities who resided in Shanghai during the Republican period, fitting into people's perception of "urban sculpture". Of 26 respondents, 20 were able to tell

the names and stories of these figures. Some comments acknowledge the strong historical commemoratory sense.
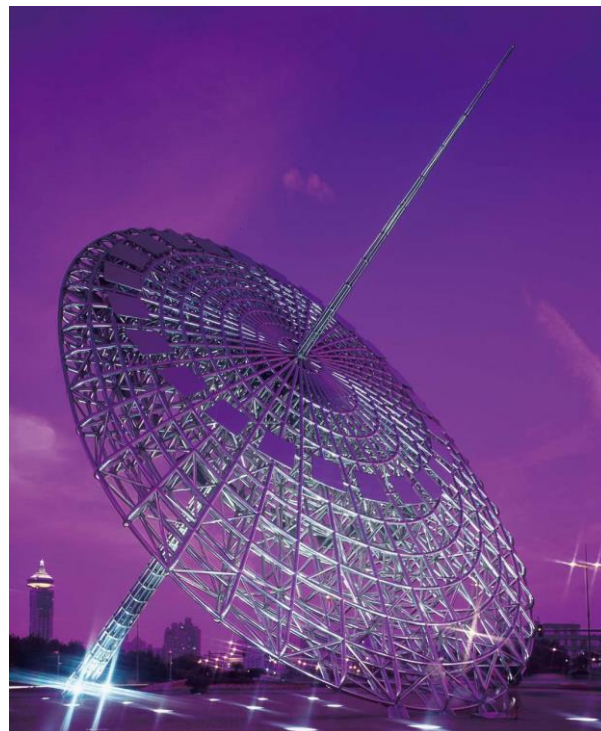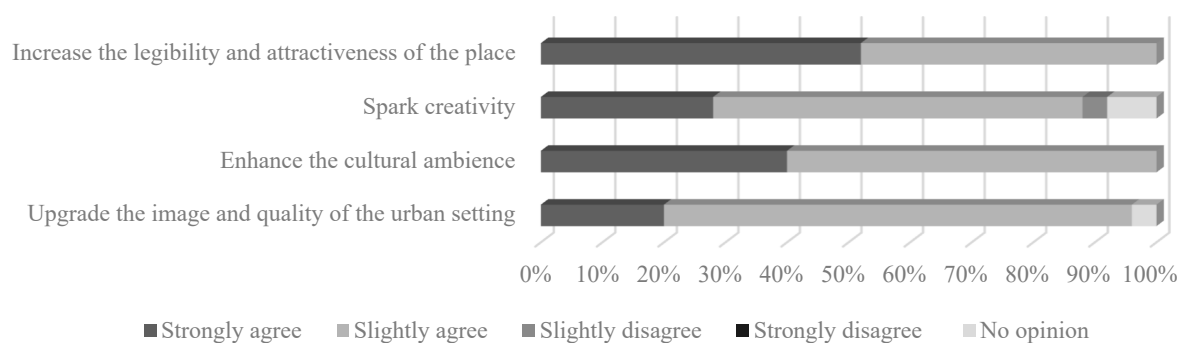

Figure 1. Jean-Marie Charpentier, 1999, *The Light of the East*, sculpture installed at the Century Boulevard in Shanghai, photos offered by the MUSCO, 2014.

According to the statistical data, 88–100% of the respondents acclaim the artworks on the four indicators. In particular, 52% of the respondents strongly agree that these artworks "increase the legibility and attractiveness of the place" (Scheme 3).

Scheme 3. Duolun Road Sculpture Walk, survey result.

Contemporary flagship art venues are also widely acclaimed. The Jing'an Sculpture Park collected internationally renowned artists' works through two sculpture exhibits in late 2000. Of 40 respondents, 39 expressed positive feelings towards the sculptures and the site. "The park is a feast of visual art!" (×2) "These sculptures make our city and showcase the glory of the world ... They use concise artistic language, working to popularize the art and opening a window for the city and exemplifying its distinctive traits". (×2) "Nice decorative objects. The content is positive, and the form, size, and shape look good". "Very creative artworks!" (Jing'an Sculpture Park survey, 2019).

At the Jing'an Sculpture Park, 77.1% to 85.7% of the responses are positive on the four indicators (Scheme 4). One university art teacher believes that sculpture parks such as this

are crucial to an international, metropolitan city like Shanghai. This park has achieved city-wide acclamation from a broad Chinese audience of varying ages and educational backgrounds. These findings support Hypothesis 1.
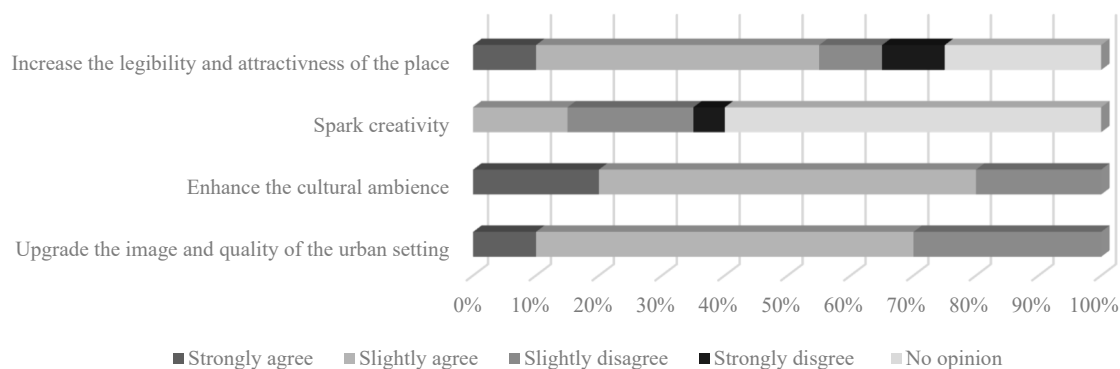

Scheme 4. Jing'an Sculpture Park, survey results, 2019.

5.2. Contested Spaces of Art in Neighborhoods

Although disempowerment of the public in the flagship art planning appears to be widely accepted, negative reception was found in a large section of sculpture sites in given neighborhoods. Discontent with the elite-imposed sculptures that are irrelevant to the heartbeat of the community shows that community members desire to participate in cultural planning projects in their neighborhoods.

The Zhangjiaxiang neighborhood, for example, encountered this embarrassment. In 2015, the Putuo District government commissioned Luo Xiaoping, a renowned local sculptor, to create four sculptures for the Zhangjiaxiang neighborhood. The entire planning process of artist and site selection and project financing were closed to the community residents' participation. An outcry erupted upon the debut of the sculpture in 2011. Positive ratings on this art venue are accordingly much lower than for other sculpture venues.

Only 8% of the respondents strongly agree that these artworks "increase the legibility and attractiveness of the place" and "upgrade the image and quality of the urban setting". Moreover, 17% of the respondents strongly support "enhancing the cultural atmosphere". These rates are much lower than other surveyed venues. No respondent expressed strong acclamation for "sparking creativity". In contrast, there is a conspicuously high rate of "no opinion": 62% and "27.5%" of the respondents indicated "no opinion" on "sparking creativity" and "increasing the legibility and attractiveness of the place", representing uncommon euphemistical expression of negative views in Chinese customs. The rate of strong and slight disagreement is higher than the counterpart on other surveyed art venues. Some 10% of responses strongly disagree that the artworks "increase the legibility and attractiveness of the place" and 8% strongly disagree about the effect of sparking creativity (Scheme 5).

Scheme 5. Sculptures in the Zhangjiaxiang Neighborhood, survey results, 2019.

Residents challenged the rationale of investing in sculptures instead of other types of amenities (e.g., fitness facilities). People questioned the importance of art to this specific neighborhood compared with its cost, i.e., 400,000–500,000 *yuan*. Why public art and not athletic amenity provision, e.g., plastic runways, pavilions, fitting facilities, and concern for overspending [115]? "These sculptures do not appeal to the tastes of the elderly. They should be installed in high-end neighborhoods, not here. The sculptures are impractical, too expensive, less desirable than pavilions" [116]. Further critics focus on how the art genre and form do not fit into the demographics of this specific neighborhood, a working-class neighborhood of elderly citizens who prefer conventional aesthetic attributes and traditional motifs over contemporary artistic experiments (Chen and Jiang show that fitting facilities achieved the highest scores of awareness, participation, and recognition, 100%, 65%, and 100%, respectively, overpassing seniors' activity rooms, libraries, and other facilities. Cultural facilities achieved a low participation rate despite a high degree of recognition [117]). Moreover, "why aren't the ladies represented in a photorealistic manner? Why are the necks so long?" Eighteen out of twenty respondents, ages 50–80, critically commented on the sculptures [116]. Another result of the lack of public consultation is the undesirable design of sculpture sites. One respondent, for instance, called for outdoor furniture or fitting facilities that go with the artworks [116] (Figure 2).
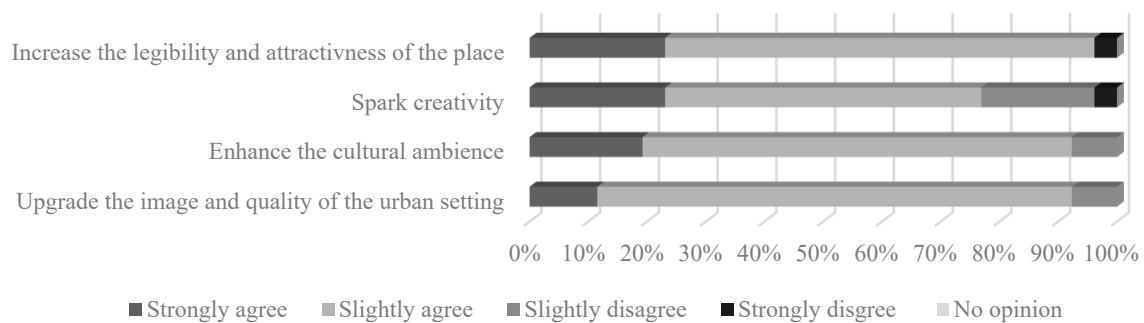

Figure 2. Luo Xiaoping, *Legacies of Shanghai Dream* sculptures, installed in the Zhangjiaxiang Neighborhood, photo by Jane Zheng, 2018.
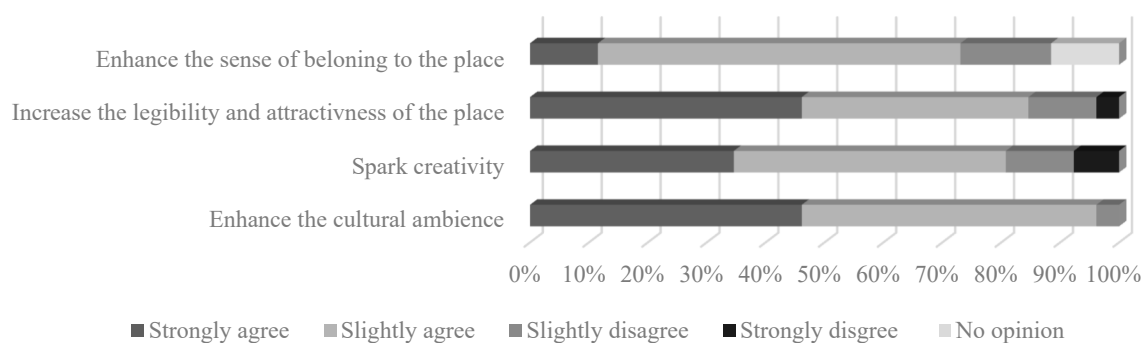
Discontent drove people to desire public consultation. Lacking public consultation was heightened as a problem. "Making sculptures should consult the local residents!" "We all feel that the ladies' images are not beautiful and protested upon their installment. Later, we got used to them . . . but they are too costly". "The sculptures are short of affinity to us". "The sculptures are so ugly. Why use green color? Why narrow necks like ghosts? They do not fit into our neighborhood. These sculptures were made without consulting us, the residents!" [116].

Receptions of urban sculptures located in neighborhoods vary, shaped by the third contributing factor: artistic excellence. This means the actual reception is determined by whether the cultural elite-directed cultural projects could capture the community residents' heartbeat. For instance, Ling Feifei, the vice chief executive of the Yuanming Group Co., Ltd., is committed to promoting sculpture projects as part of her company's property marketing strategy. She observes that the public favors motifs associated with popular traditional Chinese stories and life-sized human sculptures over large-scale objects and sponsored sculptures of such motifs and characteristics [118]. Her company's sculpture exhibitions were warmly received [119]. This explains why urban sculpture receptions vary significantly across neighborhoods: the Chenan neighborhood achieves a high-medium

level of reception (Scheme 6), and the Gubei neighborhood has artworks well-received (Scheme 7) because of the actual artistic effect of artworks.

Scheme 6. Sculptures in the Chenan Neighborhood, survey results, 2019.

Scheme 7. Sculptures in the Gubei neighborhood, survey results, 2019.

Findings of this section generally partially support Hypothesis 2 and underscore the third variable of "artistic excellence".

5.3. The Construction of Informal Urban Sculpture Sites in Daily Lives

The cultural elite-led approach in neighborhoods also increases the chance of residents' blindness to artworks, particularly when conflicts erupt between the community's expectations and the artwork offered. Residents widely invest in subjective interpretations (mostly satirical and hostile) and informal use of the artworks.

Neglecting artworks is common. We observed few residents paying attention to the sculptures in Gubei New Town. Some complained about the mismatch between the sculpture motifs and the heritage of the residents [120]. We witnessed a few local residents washing their feet in the fountain while a janitor cleaned up. Grandparents kept their grandchildren from the sculptures adjoining the fountains because of the dirty water [121]. The Putuo District government launched an "art entering community" program in the early 2010s and excluded even the Residents' Committee from the planning process. Community residents were confused about the meaning of the artworks, casting doubt upon the imageries and the cost of the sculpture projects. Residents indicated needs for social or environmental facilities, not image-making projects such as artworks, and ascribed this problem to no consultation [122].

People gave alternative uses to the sculptures which were not intended by the original artists, leading to the informal reconstruction of art venues. In a neighborhood in Putuo District, two stone-made fish sculptures (created as part of the Putuo District government's neighborhood art program) were witnessed to be informally used as stands for airing out blankets by the residents during the site visit [123] (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Stone sculpture fish in a community in the Putuo District and its alternative use, photo by Jane Zheng, 2018.

The Jiuzi Park (The Jiuzi Park is located on the Suzhou Creek, land area: 7,700 square meters, constructed in 2006) is featured mainly in people's leisure activities, such as jogging, skateboarding, camping, and photography; artworks barely receive public attention. One respondent commented: "Sculptures are the decorative objects in the park. Most senior and middle-aged visitors value the public open space for physical exercises. Only young people care about art" [124]. Many people are not even aware of these artworks and use these sculptures according to personal needs, contrasting with the original design of the artwork. Our site visit witnessed a young couple taking wedding photos. Their bridesmaids used the artworks as chairs, sitting at their hard edges and placing personal belongings on them. Others tramped on the artworks while seated, playing with cell phones [124] (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Interactions between visitors and artworks installed in the Jiuzi Park, photo by Jane Zheng, 2018.

This raises a question: If the public were consulted to understand their needs and expectations prior to planning, would the design of the artworks be different? If people demanded street furniture instead of pure aesthetic objects at this specific spot, should furniture with artistic features or interactive artworks be installed instead? If a place for washing or cleaning is preferred over aesthetic objects, should the fountain and sculptures be replaced by a public toilet? The findings of this section support Hypothesis 3.

6. Conclusions

Whether public engagement helps to fulfill its purpose in urban planning has been debated for decades. The broad purpose of this paper was to examine the effectiveness of public participation in achieving desirable outcomes through managing people's emotions. This paper began with a specific research question: Will a lack of public engagement cause dissatisfaction and negative reception in public art planning? We utilized urban sculpture planning and reception in Shanghai for a case study because (1) genuine public

participation is missing from the Chinese context of planning, and (2) people are more emotionally sensitive to art objects which contain rich symbolic and aesthetic components.

We argue that imposing aesthetic tastes and social values may not cause negative reception, as public emotion and psychology can be shaped by other contributing factors. The locality of art projects constitutes one significant factor that affects reception. Specifically, flagship art projects at prominent urban venues are widely acclaimed. However, as the artworks are not derived from community members' psychological and emotional attachment to their neighborhood, discontent and resistance erupt in residential neighborhoods when the artworks conflict with the residents' perception of indigenous distinctiveness. The underlying rationale is a hierarchy of urban localities on the continuum from formal official localities to informal neighborhoods (*shijin*). Formal official localities are fraught with social and ideological pressures on individuals and enforce uniformity-affirming monuments and functionalist aesthetic/symbolic objects. The public views such localities as places for didacticism and education more than personal identity involvement. Neighborhoods, in contrast, carry everyday life experiences and collective memories of community storylines. It is also the place where residents are motivated to resist external hegemony. That accounts for community members' resistance to the aesthetic and symbolic objects that misrepresent their cultural identities. Blaming a lack of public engagement becomes the outlet of community members' collective discontent. In addition to locality, the primary factor structured to be tested from the outset, this research also reveals two additional factors. First, a Chinese city was selected due to its authoritarian style of governance and the matching mentality of its people. Second, the reception of cultural projects is also shaped by the excellence of individual elite-led projects. The community would welcome artworks with aesthetic merits that capture the citizens' heartbeat even without public engagement in the process of cultural planning.

This case study has implications for the discourse on public participation effectiveness in urban planning—the emotional issue of planning can be managed without public engagement, as additional factors shape this process, typically the locality of projects. In addition, people's mentalities in support of elites for decision making matters. If this case study were conducted in the U.S. or other democratic societies, the outcome would have been different, as people would not accept exclusion from the process of planning. Moreover, the excellence of elite-dominated projects also matters in that specific context. This means that public artworks are likely to have positive receptions even omitting public participation if (1) people have largely accepted the reality of no public participation and are supportive of the decisions made by elites, (2) political didactic artworks appear in prominent public venues that represent the power of the authority, and (3) the artworks have displayed excellence in design quality. This finding is to deny the importance of public engagement in urban planning. The point is that emotional and psychological aspects are not reasons why public participation matters to a successful process of urban planning.

This research also has significant theorical implication for the discourse of cultural sustainability. Our research shows that public reception of art (outcome of public art planning) may diverge from that of cultural sustainability, which indicates the possibility that publicly acclaimed public art projects can be utterly culturally unsustainable in Chinese cities. Whether judging from the perspective of cultural sustainable principles (i.e., transparency of the decision-making process, locals' rights to control over their community's cultural assets, locals' full participation in the planning process) or the outcome of planning (e.g., variation in the reception in the community, ignorance of aesthetic objects), urban sculpture planning has failed in achieving cultural sustainability. The warm reception in prominent public venues can actually be understood as a socially constructed representation of people's subjectivity to authoritarian power conveyed through charismatic artistic devices in the specific locality.

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