

Developing a conceptual Framework for Participatory Art in Old Building Regeneration: A Grounded Theory Investigation

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1. Introduction

With urban renewal has rising to a national strategy in China during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period. Urban renewal not only addresses urban development issues, but also enhances citizen well-being, and stimulates economic growth. By 2022, 571 cities had undertaken 65,000 projects, investing 5.8 trillion yuan in China. With the continued promotion of national policies in China, the urban renewal market will continue to be active in the future. It is expected by 2029, the investment scale of urban renewal work will exceed 9 trillion yuan.(Qianzhan Industry Research Institute,2023) .In this interplay of old and new, breathe new life into old structures. Participatory art has increasingly played a special role in urban renewal, leveraging community engagement to transform spaces into vibrant cultural quarters, offering cultural dialogue, and socio-economic revitalization.

Five critical research questions will guide the inquiry: How does participatory art contribute to the reconstruction of old properties in China and the UK? What roles does it embody in the urban renewal processes of these nations? How is participatory art integrated into urban planning strategies for the regeneration of historical buildings and neighbourhoods? What impact does participatory art have on the sustainable development of areas undergoing regeneration? And crucially, how do policy frameworks and funding mechanisms compare in supporting participatory art initiatives within the context of old property regeneration in China and the UK?

In answering these questions, my research purpose is to examine and understand the role and impact of participatory art in the regeneration of old buildings.By adopting a grounded theory approach and policy analysis, the research aims to develop a conceptual framework that captures the dynamics of participatory art in this context.Research on the multi-dimensional influences of participatory art, from the microcosm of community identity to the macrocosm of urban sustainability. Through this investigation, it aims to contribute a nuanced perspective to the academic discourse on urban renewal, offering insights that may inform future policy and practice within China and beyond.

My research going to employ grounded theory, a systematic methodology that allows for the generating of conceptual frameworks from qualitative data to analysing complex social processes. Through this approach, the study will develop theories grounded in empirical observations, given the exploratory nature of comparing two different systems—the

centralised and rapid-paced Chinese model versus the more decentralised and measured UK approach.

Complementing the grounded theory, policy analysis serves as the chosen research method, help to sort out the matrix of governance, community involvement, and financial strategies. Policy analysis will capture the frameworks that how to organise participatory art projects, comparing the intricacies of funding mechanisms and legislative support that integrate art into the urban renewal process. This dual application of grounded theory and policy analysis forms a methodological synergy that promises a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

2. Methodology: Grounded Theory

While narrative research focuses on individual stories told by participants and phenomenology emphasizes the common experiences for a number of individuals. Grounded theory approach is move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory or a general explanation of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a larger number of participants.

2.1 My understanding of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, it just like it names, Grounded and Theory:

- Grounded, it is an approach that emphasizes the importance of empirical fieldwork and the collection of data that are “grounded” in “real-world” situations. It starts with empirical research and lets the theory emerge from data. The emergence of the theory is a process.
- Theory, it is an approach dedicated to generating theories. It is different from research whose main purpose is to provide descriptive accounts of the subject matter (e.g. ethnography).

2.2 Rationale for selecting grounded theory

My choice of grounded theory is driven by multiple factors:

2.2.1 From “me” perspective

Firstly, grounded theory align with my transformative interpretive framework, which aims to understand and change the world, particularly through social justice and empowerment. Ontologically, I believe reality is shaped by interactions between people and their environments. Grounded theory excels in exploring these complex realities, building theories from individual experiences and perceptions. Epistemologically, I view knowledge as co-created by researchers and participants, a process that grounded theory enhances by emphasizing dynamic knowledge creation over static discovery. Axiologically, I value research that influences policy and practice, and grounded theory facilitates this by developing practical, impactful strategies from empirical data (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Secondly, My academic background in engineering of digital media, which values structured analysis, harmonizes with grounded theory's systematic approach. This methodology's rigor is beneficial for dissecting complex social phenomena through a continuous comparative method, enhancing theory refinement and development (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Thirdly, My contradictory background of past practices in this topic requires me to approach without any preconceived assumptions.

Many academic papers and government propaganda tell us that participatory art is beneficial for urban renewal projects. However, when I myself served as both a project manager for urban renewal and a participatory artist, I found it difficult to apply participatory art effectively. Therefore, I hope to conduct this research without any predetermined premises or hypothetical conclusions, using the systematic guidance of grounded theory. This approach will help me explore the subject in an unbiased and thorough manner. Start out with an "open mind". Contrast to the researcher who sets out to test a theory, grounded theory embarks without any preconceived theory that dictates, prior to the research, "relevancies" in concepts and hypotheses' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

2.2.2 From "my research" perspective: Application and Advantages

In my research, grounded theory will be employed to explore and compare the participatory art models in the UK and China. The methodology's flexibility and inductive nature are crucial for:

Firstly, grounded theory approach is well suited to new territory exploratory topics. My research topic is aim to understand complex social processes and interactions within urban renewal. Grounded theory is particularly effective in studies where the research aims to construct a theory based on data rather than testing an existing one. It allows for discovery of new insights and patterns that have not been previously articulated.

Secondly, by facilitating the identification, categorisation, and linkage of complex social processes inherent in participatory art, grounded theory supports a deep understanding of its role in urban regeneration. The selection of items to be included in the research reflects the developing nature of the theory. (Martin Denscombe, 2021)

Thirdly, comparative analysis: My research needs to comparing the models of participatory art in the UK and China. Grounded theory can accommodate the complexities of the comparing by providing a structured method to manage and analyse the qualitative data from two different socio-cultural environments, enabling the emergence of a nuanced understanding of each context.

Fourth, emphasis on process: My research involves looking at processes – how participatory art contributes to and interacts with urban renewal efforts. Grounded theory

excels at analysing processes over time and can help articulate the phases, strategies, and interactions that characterise the integration of art in urban renewal.

2.2.3 From literature evidence perspective

There are studies employ grounded theory in urban studies and participatory art: Chen and Liu utilizes grounded theory to explore participatory and non-participatory observations in urban planning (Liu,chen, 2023). Charmaz examines new urbanism, place-making, and public art, providing insights into participatory methods in urban planning and community engagement (Pollock, 2014). Aghajani Refah, R discusses the role of public participation in urban planning and its historical roots (Aghajani Refah, R, 2022).Vaart, G research impacts of the arts on communities by highlighting when and how they can have binding the dividing effects on a community.(Vaart,G,2017) Carey and Sutton provide insights on a large scale community arts programme in Liverpool to seek the way for increase community involvement though participatory art. (Carey, P. and Sutton, S. 2004)

2.3 Limitation and challenges

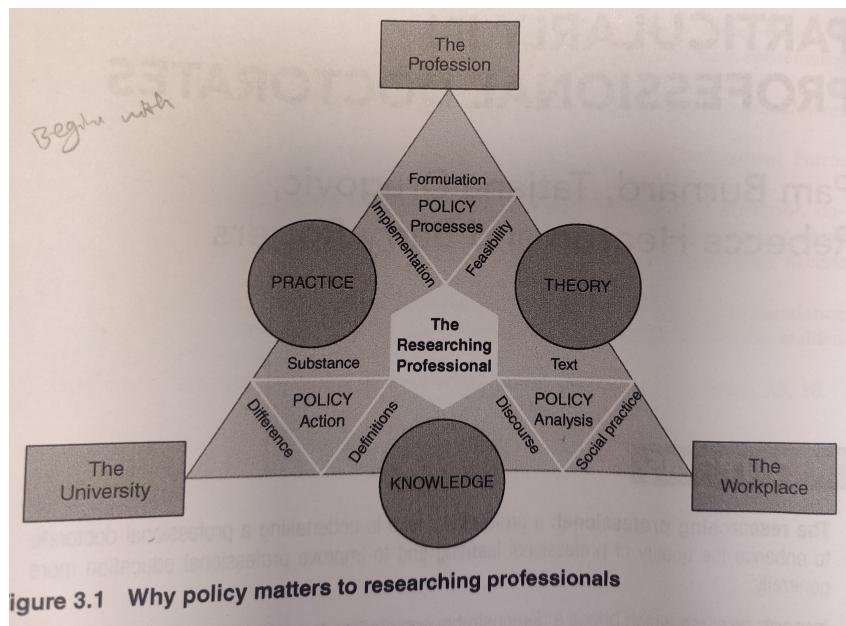
Utilising grounded theory in the context of examining participatory art in old building regeneration within the comparative frameworks of the UK and China also introduces several significant challenges and limitations. Cultural specificity is a primary concern, as grounded theory's emergent concepts are deeply rooted in the specific contexts from which data is collected, potentially limiting the applicability or transferability of findings across diverse cultural, social, political, and historical landscapes such as those of China and the UK. The complexity of managing vast amounts of qualitative data, which can be highly subjective, may lead to the oversight of crucial nuances and requires rigorous, systematic analysis. This method's iterative nature demands extensive time for continuous data comparison, potentially making it a resource-intensive endeavour, especially when aiming for theoretical saturation across two different models. Researcher bias poses a risk of distorting data interpretation through personal cultural perspectives, which could affect the authenticity of the theories generated.

3. Method: Policy Analysis

Policy analysis as a kind of document analysis. According to Carol costly, "Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to a topic. "

Policy highly involves the ongoing production, curriculum and practice requirements, it is very much to the fore and the background for professional doctorates operate professional practice.It illustrated in Figure 1(Burnard, P., Dragovic, T., Heaton, R. and Rogers, B., 2018.). Policy impact is an important part of research impact. Policy development can be concerned as long-term movements of research professional, which can be examined by exploring policy formulation, implementation and feasibility. Policy often tends to represent a model of unidirectional mandates of non-linear relationships between research on policy.

Figure1. Why policy matters to researching professionals



3.1 My understanding of Policy analysis

Policy analysis is a research method employed in public policy and administration to evaluate the effects, outcomes, and implications of public policies. As a systematic approach, policy analysis involves identifying and clarifying policy problems, defining objectives, examining the consequences of policy alternatives, and choosing among those alternatives (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016). This method focuses on providing evidence-based recommendations that are actionable and designed to inform policymakers and stakeholders in their decision-making processes, thereby aiming to improve the efficacy and efficiency of public policies.

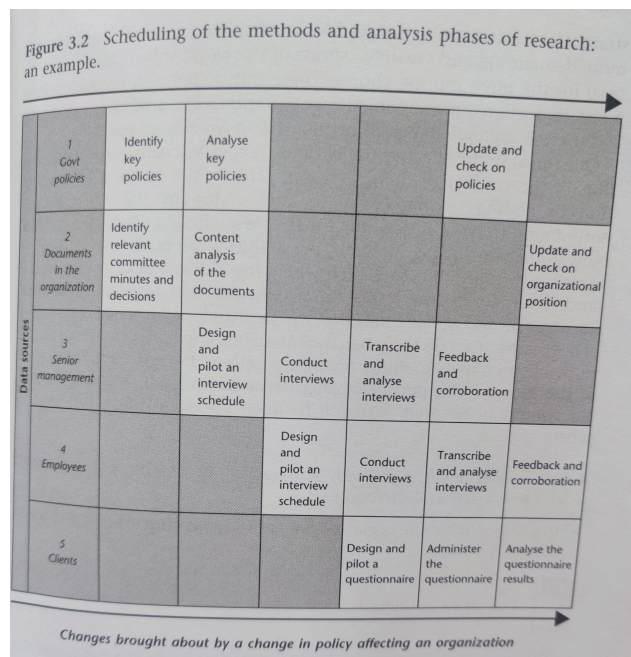
As Dunn (2017) highlights, policy analysis helps in making informed decisions based on empirical evidence, which can lead to more effective and sustainable urban renewal strategies. According to Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl (2019), policy analysis often involves various stakeholders, providing a multi-dimensional view of the urban renewal process. This is particularly beneficial for participatory art projects, which rely on active community involvement.

3.2 Application of Policy Analysis in My Research

In my research on the integration of participatory art in urban renewal, particularly within the frameworks of the UK and China, policy analysis will serve as a critical tool to examine how public policies support or hinder artistic interventions in urban spaces. Policy analysis is particularly useful in the context of urban renewal and participatory art projects as it allows for an in-depth examination of the policies that influence these initiatives. Meltzer

and Schwartz (2019) suggest that policy analysis can provide a structured framework to evaluate how current policies support or hinder the integration of participatory art in urban regeneration projects. In my research, using policy analysis will enable the identification of policy gaps, evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies, and recommend more effective policies that could support artistic interventions in the regeneration of old buildings.

Figure 2, Scheduling of the methods and analysis phases of research.(Denscombe, Martyn, 2002)



Secondly, I am going combine case study to conduce a policy analysis, the analysis aims to examine the impact of policy changes on participatory art organisations. By selecting one or two organizations or artists as case studies, the study will analyze how specific policies influence the operational, creative, and community engagement aspects of these entities. This approach will provide insights into the broader implications of public policy on the arts sector, particularly in the realm of participatory art. The idea is stem from Martyn mentioned changes brought about by a change in policy affecting an organisation in Figure 2.

Further more, I will also involve collecting data through stakeholder interviews, policy document reviews, and possibly surveys to understand the impact of current policies. This approach aligns with the recommendations by Bardach and Patashnik (2020), who advocate for a meticulous collection and analysis of data to inform policy recommendations.

3.3 Limitations of Policy Analysis

Policy analysis require significant resources, including the resources to access the corresponding policies, some policies in China are hard to search in open-access, it needs to get to know the key person to achieve the policy. Dunn (2017) notes that obtaining relevant and comprehensive data can sometimes be difficult, especially if the policy processes are not transparent or data is restricted. This can limit the scope of analysis and the reliability of the findings. Policy analysis often requires access to sensitive or restricted information, which can be difficult to obtain, limiting the scope of analysis.

For doing the UK's policy research, I think also facing the same situation, particularly the researcher need to understand the organise and law structure that can have better interpretation for the policy. Weimer and Vining (2017) caution about potential biases in policy analysis, which can stem from the subjective interpretations of the analyst or from skewed data sources. Sometimes, the potential biases may come from the misunderstand of the culture language. Lastly, the focus on current and past policy effects can sometimes restrict innovative thinking about future possibilities and might not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of public policies and their impact on urban renewal initiatives.

4 Conclusion

"Who gets to hold the umbrella?", the person who holds to umbrella is implicitly allowed to shape the narrative; they maintain control over definitions and frames, getting to say what makes up the umbrella and what is allowed to shelter under it." (Jeffers Alison, 2017) After I go through serval methodologies, grounded theory and policy analysis offer me the main structure to create my umbrella. My research goes to make a comparative analysis of participatory art in urban renewal context in China and UK to get insights for the cultural, political and social frameworks. Policy analysis should be the first job as the foundation of my research, and grounded theory going to guide me on the way to pursue the answers.

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