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# A Study of Place Making in Historical and Cultural Districts Driven by Cultural Conservation

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## ABSTRACT

Historical and cultural districts are the concentrated display places of local culture, and cultural conservation activities are closely related to them. With the high-quality development of cultural tourism, place theory plays a vital role in place-making in historical and cultural districts. However, the difficult creation of identification hinders the development of the spirit of place. So the research question is if cultural conservation activities inspire participants to create the spirit of place at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts. It is based on place theory and conducts mixed methods research through literature review, questionnaire, field investigation and interview. Firstly, it analyzes the different types of cultural conservation activities in historical and cultural districts and the different spaces that are generated. Secondly, it innovatively puts forward the argument that creating the fixed and open cultural conservation activity space in historical and cultural districts as a miniature urban living room can empower the districts, which is distinguished from cultural display space and urban living room. Then, the paper analyses the existing structure of cultural conservation organizations in China and takes Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps as an example to explain its core driving force, analyses the behaviors change of tourists: learning, protecting, and communicating in the transformation process, and clarifies the important role of fixed and open space, story-driven and interactive activities that ultimately lead visitors from a one-off tour to the local attachment to the historical and cultural districts. This research aims to reshape the space vitality of historical and cultural districts and revive the space charm, so as to achieve the purpose of improving place experience and enriching the spirit of place.

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## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Research Background*

Place theory plays a vital role in place making, which not only breaks the subject-object structure model and establishes the people-world structure (Ye, 2009) in the theory, but also benefits digging cultural resources and showing authenticity in the historical and cultural districts. Especially, the spirit of place is the core concept in this theory, it is constituted by orientation and identification (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). And more and more scholars introduced new concepts to complete this theory, such as ego-centrism and ethnocentrism of Tuan (1974). However, the insufficient discussion of the role of people leads to the failure of creating the spirit of place. Furthermore, to create the spirit of place, lots of cultural display spaces are established in the historical and cultural districts, but the single way to provide information and individual cultural gaps lead participants to understand hard and fail to gain the identification and spirit of place. While, cultural conservation can provide cultural heritage information and lead participants to join in protecting cultural heritage together by activities, which is easier to be understood for participants about what is shown at these spaces in historical and cultural districts. Importantly, as the information resource, cultural conservation activities can create rich understanding for participants by different methods, which helps to activate the identification and even the spirit of place. Therefore, the research hypothesis is the spirit of place can be activated by cultural conservation activities. Followed by it, the research question of this paper is can cultural conservation activities inspire participants to create the spirit of place at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts? This research creatively introduces cultural conservation activities into place theory. Also, it helps to solve the predicament cultural display spaces face in practice. The aim of this research can be divided into three parts, firstly, for the place theory, it makes up the theory gap by getting more information to gain identity in this process. Secondly, for the spaces, it provides an accessible method to dip and produce cultural content for these spaces in historical and cultural districts and reshape the space vitality, so as to gain more attraction and sustainable development for these spaces. Thirdly, for the participants, the introduction of cultural conservation activities in these space leads them to gain richer experiences.

## *1.2 Literature Review*

As the combination of architecture and phenomenology, place theory was the representative of architectural phenomenology, relating architecture with people through the concept of place, and focused on life-world and people's behaviours.

"The primary position in phenomenology is that the most basic human truths are accessible only through inner subjectivity and that the person is integral to the environment" (Flood, 2010). The important contribution of phenomenology was to surpass the subject-object structure model and establish the people-world structure model (Ye, 2009). The schools in architectural phenomenology align with phenomenology, dividing two representatives, including existential phenomenology and perceptual phenomenology. The first one is more theoretical and the second one is more practical (Sheng, 2015). This research focuses on the first one. In detail, Heidegger's existential phenomenology influences Norberg-Schulz deeply. Heidegger (2006) proposed the idea that dwelling was our existence way, which decided our nature. In addition, place and location were basic and essential. Based on them, space could have the existential foothold and life characteristics. As a developer of this thought and founder of architectural phenomenology, Norberg-Schulz (1979) held the view that architecture was the foothold of people's existence, the basic spirit of architecture was to go back to the life world, and then he came up with the concept of spirit of place, which originated from ancient Rome. At that age, people believed every independent existence had the genius. Guardian spirit was needed to experience the specific environmental characteristics (Tang, 2017). This idea was similar to animism, which inspired primitive religion and mythology in some countries with rich history. As for Norberg-Schulz, he divided the structure of place into space and character. Comprehensively, "space denotes the three-dimensional organization of the elements which make up

a place, and character means the general atmosphere which is the most comprehensive property of any place". When man dwell, he was simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character, which might be called orientation and identification, both of them make up with the spirit of place. To gain the foothold, man had to be able to orientate himself, he must know where he is, and he could also identify himself with the environment, which meant he should know how he was in a certain place (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). From the perspective of psychology, man experienced an environment including three kinds of psychological connection: perception, cognition and identification. The perception was to establish the relationship between the environment and ourselves. By collecting, recognising, memorising and processing the information from the environment, we could understand where we were and try to gain orientation (Guo,2011). It was the most basic connection mechanism between people and the environment, which provided the sense of security(Lynch,1960). If the man failed orientation, he would feel lost, and the terror from loss would come, which contrasted with the sense of security (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). Furthermore, cognition was the mental process by which people became familiar with and confirmed previously perceived objects (Liu,2002), which connected with the accumulated images and created an imaginary world with rich memory and emotion. When people and the imaginary world interact more frequently and fiercely, the relationship between them gets closer. The imaginary world also guided and influenced people's cognition until identification was brought out. This process was close with memory, emotion and imagination. It should be noted that identification is not only the last psychological connection between people and the environment but also feelings to the layer of character in place structure. In short, cognition is helpful to know both a new world and become a new self. With interaction, the emotion gets stronger until identification emerges, therefore, cognition can be regarded as the prelude of identification. Moreover, identification helps people to know how they connect with the environment, and create a highly personalized world. This result breaks the subject-object dichotomous worldview and finds out the people-world structure model. Back to spirit of space, though orientation and identification are close, they are distinctive. Orientation relies on a basic ability: perception. However, even if people have an orientation with the sense of security, identification does not necessarily arise. Interestingly, if people stand in the same position, they can own the same orientation information, but they can't have the same identification. Importantly, "true belonging presupposes that both psychological functions are fully developed" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979), in other words, the sense of belonging can be the final result of the spirit of place. The above relationship between people and place structure can be displayed in Fig. 1.

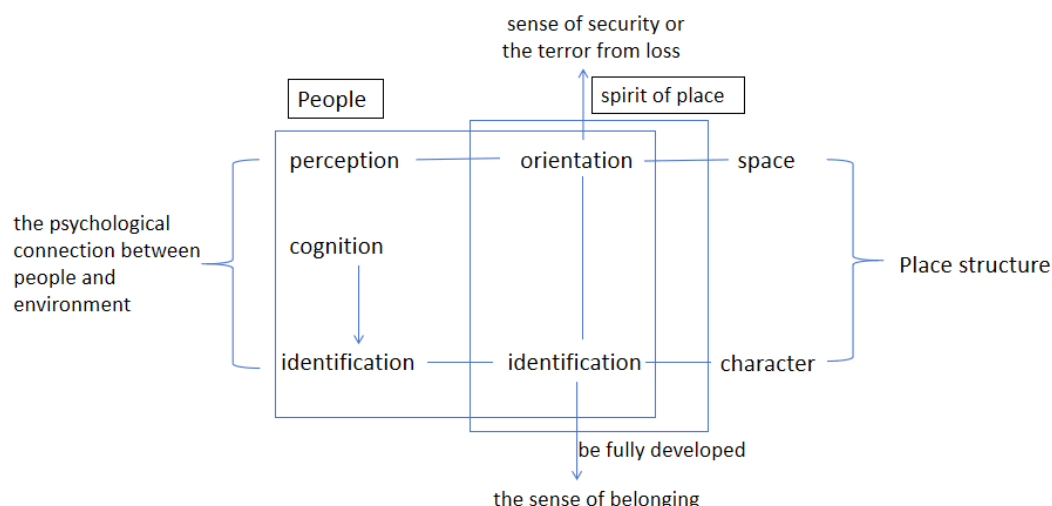


Fig.1. the relationship between people and place structure

Now the development of place theory can be divided into two parts, theoretical research and practical research. In the first one, Tuan(1974) proposed the concept of ego-centrism and ethnocentrism, which explained the situation that people thought the idea that they and their races are the centre of the world is unavoidable. With the development of growth and the adaption of environment, biology, physiology, and social culture, ego-centrism could be controlled. This idea supplemented the core of phenomenology and explained the form and development of the people-world structure mode. As for the image of the city, Lynch(1960) held the view that “there seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images” and “each individual picture is unique, yet it approximates the public image.” This point extended the research objects from the place to the city and found out the relationship between place image and public image, which provided important ideas for urban planning. Meanwhile, paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks etc. helped people to orientate, the relationship among these above elements made up the image of the environment (Lynch,1960) In this viewpoint, Lynch adopted micro perspective to explain the orientation concretely, which was as a pretty good supplement to the view of Norberg-Schulz’ spirit of place. Additionally, “mental mapping” was an important concept in the development of place theory, which formed from people keeping trying and memorizing and close with orientation and experience(Sheng,2015). Jiang(2013) thought mental mapping arose out of the scaling of city artefacts and locations. Certainly, the sense of belonging is a common research object in place theory, which is usually linked to home, families, childhood memory, etc, all of them were unique places of personal inner and intimate value in phenomenological research. (Bachelard,1967).

In the second one, place theory played a vital role in practice, especially urban renewal. The greater part of these literature focused on the psychological connection between people and the environment in design to help users gain orientation, identification, and the sense of belonging, to turn space into place. In detail, on the topic of harmonious coexistence of old and new buildings, designers can adopt the following ideas to make the spirit of place, including refining special characters, unifying styles, and coordinating massing (Dong,2019). Moreover, for the change of paths, designers preferred to add walking paths for residents and tourists (Huang,2021). Also, material texture, artistic modelling, and sensory stimulation needed to be thought of in design (Li,2022). Interestingly, much of these research payed particular attention to old streets, especially historical streets, which was defined as the historical architecture and districts in Athens Charter (1933). In China, the concept of historical streets was turned into historical and cultural districts, and in 2008, the Chinese government announced that “a certain scale of areas that are approved and announced by the governments of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities with particularly rich preserved cultural relics, concentrated historical buildings, able to fully and truly reflect the traditional pattern and historical features.” Therefore, historical and cultural districts were the typical representative of old streets, which carried cultural context of the city. Meanwhile, to show rich cultural resources, historical and cultural districts had been establishing kinds of cultural display spaces. Comprehensively, the history and present development of these streets by words, photos, videos, artworks, etc. were displayed in the fixed and open spaces. The creation of these spaces was helpful for the exploration of the spirit of place, and in line with space revival in historical and cultural districts. However, in practice, these spaces were just with the function of culture content display, rather than real places. Because it was rare for participants to own the identification and spirit of place, due to culture gaps.

All in all, the great break of place theory is to consider the experience of people in space to gain places. The relationship among them can be understood by a mathematical formula:  $\text{place} = \text{people} + \text{space} + \text{the feelings/imaginary world (creation by people and space)}$ . Based on place theory, the above researchers developed some new concepts to complete this theory. However, most researchers ignored an important point: the difficulty of the creation of feelings and the imaginary world between people and the strange space, which hinders the production of identification and spirit of space. Therefore, the insufficient discussion of people is the theory gap. In practice, led by place

theory, historical and cultural districts gradually improve landscape design and cultural display, and the establishment of cultural display spaces helps to create the spirit of place. However, due to the single providing information methods, participants lack of understanding of cultural context, leading them not to join these spaces really, the spirit of place is rarely created, so cultural display spaces are just spaces instead of real places.

So culture conservation activities are introduced in this research, supplementing the static exhibits. From the theory's perspective, cultural conservation activities are a pretty good method to provide more information, which makes up the incomplete discussion of the role of people. Now most researchers discuss the role of information recipients and ignore the role of information providers. However, as the dynamic culture carrier, the information providers can interact with participants around cultural conservation activities, promoting new experiences that can be linked to their previous experiences. And then the imaginary world can be created and the identification can be produced. Finally, the spirit of place can be owned by participants. From the practice's perspective, culture conservation activities can be the bridge to relate participants and cultural display spaces in historical and cultural districts closely. With participation in activities repeatedly and deeply, participants can create the rich spirit of place there, and the space can turn into miniature urban living rooms realizing the revival of space charm, it also benefits the historical and cultural districts by reshaping districts' vitality.

## **2.Methodology**

In this research, mixed-method research was employed to collect data, which used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study. And it was helpful to avoid some limits of the single research method.

### *2.1 The Flow Of Research*

In order to find the influence of cultural conservation activities in participants on the fixed and open space, the researcher adopted longitudinal research to find the nearly one-year changes of 25 participants after joining cultural conservation activities in historical and cultural districts by Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps. And two research methods were employed. Firstly, qualitative research was conducted. Field investigation and interviews were employed to learn about the kinds of cultural conservation activities and their characteristics. Then semi-structured interviews were used to explore the reasons, gains, the impressive experience, the core driving force, of cultural conservation activities, and the change of identities after more one year. Secondly, quantitative methods were also utilized. Questionnaires were sent to these interviewers too, containing the frequency and degree of their behaviours in cultural conservation activities. The result of questionnaires was the generalization of the interviews. Meanwhile, the result of the interview also helps understanding and supplementing the content of questionnaires. Also, this longitudinal research was divided into two stages, including 01.2022-02.2022 and 02.2023-03.2023. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in two stages.

### *2.2 Sampling Methods*

Before conducting this research, the researcher learned about the basic information from the leaders of Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps. "because cultural conservation activities are time-consuming and unpaid, the most cultural conservation volunteers are the retired old." so the age was the significant characteristic in cultural conservation volunteers, which was as the basis for sample selection to conduct this research. In 01.2022, there were 1350 registered cultural conservation

volunteers totally in this organization. For the age, there were 220 people between 0-15 years old, 108 people between 15 and 30 years old, 168 people between 30 and 45 years old, 142 people between 45 and 60 years old, and 776 people between 60 and 75 years old. And the sample size was determined according to volunteers' rates with ages and people who participated in cultural conservation activities for the first time between 01.2022 and 02.2022. Finally, based on informed consent, the researcher selected a total of 25 people, the number of each group was 4, 2, 3, 2, 14 people from young to old followed by the above age groups. During which, to get the information quickly, random sampling was used widely, and snowball sampling was also employed, which identified the next sample from inquiring the previous respondent (Baker, 2006; Ortiz & Beach, 2013). And the 25 people were all field investigation, interview and questionnaire samples.

### *2.3 Research Method*

In qualitative research, field investigation and interview are utilized. In detail, field investigation contained participant observation and direct observation. To understand cultural conservation activities better, the researcher participated in all kinds of activities which were held by Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps at the two investigation stages. Meanwhile, direct observations were also used, which played a vital role in finding out the situations of people participating in cultural conservation activities and the reflection between people and spaces.

Moreover, semi-structured interview was adopted, which helps to know clearly their experience and feeling about cultural conservation activities. And the semi-structured interview had a good balance between the structured interview and the unstructured interview. It could not only set the scope of the interview setting, but also allowed the interviewees to have broader expression space, and the researcher adjusted questions according to different situations too.

Lastly, the questionnaire was very important in quantitative research to collect structured information. The steps of developing a questionnaire can be explained as follows. Firstly, based on literature review and the result of fieldwork, the researcher designed a questionnaire involving 20 questions. Then, referring to the experts consultation in Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps, these questions were adjusted. Finally, after the first stage interviews, the questions were adjusted again by the reflection from interviewees. The final version has twelve questions, except 3 questions for the basic information, including age, gender and occupation. The remaining nine questions were used to describe the different dimensions of behaviors, when they participate in cultural conservation activities in historical and cultural districts. Importantly, the nine questions were divided into 3 groups, every three questions explained one dimension in cultural conservation activities, including learning, protecting, and communicating behaviours. Thoroughly, each item in the nine questions was divided into four levels: 0=never, 1=low, 2=moderate, 3=high. Usually, the interviewees can spend 2-3 minutes to finish it, and it was usually sent to them by face to face, also it can be sent to them as the online version, if they can't finish it by face to face.

### *2.4 Data Analysis*

As for the qualitative data, grounded theory was employed to code the data from field investigation and interview, which helped the researcher to gain more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, explained and understood the data, and to identify patterned relationships within it, based on individual cases and experiences (Zhe, 2020). As for quantitative data, the result of questionnaires offline and online were coded to Excel, which was helpful to simply describe data. Also, SPSS25 was used to test the Independent samples T-test, whose aim was to test the influence of cultural conservation activities in historical and cultural districts to the participants' behaviours both before and after.

### 3.Result

#### 3.1 Activities And Spaces Of Cultural Conservation

Now there is no specific definition for cultural conservation activities, so it should be explained by the similar concepts. Cultural conservation started at the conservation movement of historical buildings, structures and other cultural relics in European and American countries. It included measures such as protection, restoration, reconstruction, renovation and adaptive utilization to preserve the cultural value of physical remains (Li,2017). This idea explains the original and types of culture conservation, however, the scholar doesn't put a clearer standard for cultural conservation activities. Moreover, Cultural conservation behaviours refer to the intentional acts to actively participate in resolving or preventing cultural heritage issues under the stimulation of certain social situations, based on personal understanding, responsibility, and values (Zhang,2013). This idea explains the motivation to participate in cultural conservation activities, but it still doesn't take the types of conservation activities in consideration.

Based on the above similar definitions and the specific situation in Chinese culture conservation activities, the researcher divides the types of cultural conservation activities into finding cultural heritage, including cultural relics, historical architectures, historical landscapes, etc., repairing and protecting them, and propagandizing what we have done. So the researcher defines cultural conservation activities as follows: based on something inspiring, personal understanding, responsibility, and values, the participants spontaneously join in activities of finding cultural heritage, repairing and protecting it, and propagandizing it, which can echo and reinforce the above personal emotions.

Following this classification standard, the Chinese cultural conservation activities can be divided into Table 1. It should be noticed that a sub-type activity may have multiple meanings for different participants or multiple functions, therefore, it belongs to multiple types. Also, the sub-type activities have lots of forms, for example, the training can be explained as academic education, short-term training courses, and cultural conservation volunteer training, etc., and conferences can contain academic conferences, sharing experiences conferences, reading conferences, etc.

**Table 1**  
the type and sub-type of Chinese cultural  
conservation activities

Type	Sub-type
Finding	Research, training,cultural tours, cultural relics investigation
Repairing and protecting	Research, training, repair cultural relics, checking cultural relics
Propagandizing	Research, training, conferences, seminars, cultural tours, lectures, exhibitions, celebration, workshops(usually for a artistry)

In historical and cultural districts, all of the above activities can take place. Particularly, cultural tours are more common to be held. It can be divided into flow cultural tours and fixed cultural tours by the differences in activities spaces. In detail, by the aim, logic and flow of activities, the flow cultural tours create space of flows to relate different fixed spaces. The fast and efficient flow characteristics of space of flows separate time and space of places(Castells,1996), at the same time, space of flows is established by fragmentation of space of place and the whole activity time, and creates

a new meaning around the activities' aim. As for fixed cultural tours, they are usually held in fixed cultural spaces, which are usually shorter, more fixed, and more frequent repetition than flow cultural tours. Importantly, because of the repetition of activities, participants can create close relationships and even place attachment in the fixed space by repeatedly joining in fixed cultural tours to gain more complete meanings of space of place.

In conclusion, there are lots of cultural conservation activities that can be held in historical and cultural districts. Because of the rich cultural resources, cultural tours are more common and easier to hold than other activities. Thoroughly, according to the differences in the relationship between space and time during the activities, cultural tours can involve flow and fixed mode. Especially, the fixed mode provides more frequent and similar activities for participants, which can create a closer relationship between participants and the space, including orientation, identification and the sense of belonging. Therefore, these fixed spaces with open cultural conservation activities can help participants to own place attachment, and both space and participants can create the spirit of place together.

### 3.2 Another Identity: Miniature Urban Living Room

These fixed and open cultural conservation activities spaces in historical and cultural districts have another identity- miniature urban living rooms, which are different from cultural display spaces and urban living rooms.

Though both miniature urban living rooms and cultural display spaces have cultural functions to help participants learn about the historical and cultural districts deeply. The basic difference between them is the methods of providing information. The common cultural display spaces show static cultural content through words, pictures, artworks etc. Meanwhile, some is hard to understand, especially the artworks. While miniature urban living rooms provide both static and dynamic information. The reason why fixed and open cultural conservation activity spaces have another identity: miniature urban living rooms is that they have the same activity mode. Their corresponding relationship is shown in Table 2. In this table, guides lead participants to do cultural tours in the fixed and open cultural conservation activities spaces, which is similar to that hosts invite guests to come and introduce their home.

**Table 2**

the corresponding relationship between fixed and open cultural conservation activities spaces and miniature urban living rooms

Category Space	Information providers	Information recipients	Activities
Fixed and open cultural conservation activities spaces	Guides	Participants	Cultural tour in this space etc.
Miniature urban living room	Hosts	Guests	Introduction of their home etc.

Importantly, as the active information providers, the hosts' explanation supplements with the static exhibits, which has vital significance to guide guests to visit this space through suitable ways. In the same vein, cultural tour can also provide dynamic information by guides for participants, to have clearer cognition of the space than cultural display spaces.

As for urban living rooms, there is no clear definition about it in academia, but there is a consensus that urban living rooms refer to urban public space. According to it, some scholars defined it by their



perspectives. It can be divided into two main angles. The first one is about the connection between tourists and residents, urban living room refers to the urban public space where tourists and residents can do activities freely(Jiang,2019). The second one focuses on lifestyles, Dian Zhang(2015) explained it as representing a new way of living outdoor in the city, which can contain kinds of people in the city. In the same vein, Maing(2017) held the idea that urban living room is the public space where families can gather too. Moreover, there are lots of practice about urban living room in urban planning, and most of them are the large facilities, including transportation hubs, gymnasiums, theaters, libraries, museums, etc.

The differences between miniature urban living rooms and urban living rooms are not only the scale but also the treating guests' mode by the city. Urban living rooms prefer to express this city in macro and abstract ways to show the impressive city images. As for miniature urban living rooms in historical and cultural districts, they have more specific and micro goals: to introduce these districts. In these spaces, the guides are the city's dynamic and vigour representatives, the close interaction between them and participants looks like the hosts treat the guests, which is the distinguishing difference from urban living rooms, where participants face inanimate architecture, objects, etc. And most can't understand what they want to express accurately and totally. While, in miniature urban living rooms, participants can be led by the guides' stories, which are more humanistic, personalised and attractive. Moreover, as the local, guides are influenced by the city deeply, the process they lead the tourists is to show the city's image from their perspective, this interactive way is more micro, intimate and easier to be accepted by participants. The thorough understanding of the historical and cultural districts has the power to inspire participants to relate their previous experiences forming new cognition of the world and themselves, which plays a vital role in creating the identification and spirit of place. Furthermore, from the perspective of participants, especially the foreign participants, it provides a precious chance for them to chat with the locals about their city and their lives through these active stories, which meets foreign participants' curiosity about active authenticity created by the locals. Lastly, through repeated participation in cultural conservation activities in the miniature urban living rooms and deepening the degree of participation in these activities, the participants can own place attachment and have the sense of belonging to the kind of spaces in historical and cultural districts.

In conclusion, because of the local guides leading the cultural conservation activities, miniature urban living rooms can provide both dynamic and static information for participants, helping them learn about the historical and cultural districts more completely than the single static information provided by cultural display space. Furthermore, the micro expression of miniature urban living rooms is closer than the macro expression of urban living rooms. Both of them are helpful for participants to have clearer cognition about the districts, and to create the identification and spirit of place there. Therefore, miniature urban living rooms not only directly show cultural resources in the districts but also adopt humanized, personalised and easily accessible services for the participants. Meanwhile, the participants create the richer spirit of place for the districts in return. All of them empower the historical and cultural districts.

### *3.3 The Situation Of Chinese Cultural Conservation Organizations*

With the development of cultural conservation awareness and policy support, many people join cultural conservation organizations in China. Based on the participants' identities, it can be divided into three types of cultural conservation organizations, including the elite type, university type and folk spontaneous type, which have been a necessary part of the system of Chinese cultural conservation, making up with the law system, academic research and media publicity.

As for the development of cultural conservation organizations in China, it developed later than in Western countries, till now it has been developing for nearly 20 years. The origination of it has two

forms. Firstly, the small-scale activities, such as the teachers led students to draw or take photos of historical heritage (Cai&Yuan,2016). Secondly, the establishment of small internet organizations. This form started around 2010 and relies on the development of the internet, which has greater influence than the first type. Their actions protect some historical and cultural districts from being dismantled or dismantled, create rich folk materials and influence the improvement of the law system and government management.

Still now, there are three main types of cultural conservation organizations by the classification standard of participants' identities, the details are as following Table 3.

**Table 3**  
the situation of the three kinds of cultural conservation organization

Organization Item	Guangzhou Historic Village Protection and Development Association(Cai&Yuan,2016)	International Research Center for architectural Heritage Conservation, Shanghai Jiao Tong university(IRCAHC,2024)	Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps
Establishment time	2013	2013	2011
Character	NGO	Academic organization	NGO
Aim	Establish the information platform to seek more corporation chances among experts to protect cultural heritage	Conduct academic researches in architectural heritage, and promote the transformation of scientific research results by educational training and public communication activities	Call for more people to join in cultural conservation to learn about and protect our city
Participation system	Membership system	Professors lead their student to do researches together	The cultural conservation volunteers and new activity participants
The identity of participants	Most are elite, including media staff, investment managers, architects, tourism staff, cultural staff, government officials	Professors and students in Shanghai Jiao Tong university, and other members in partner institutions and schools	The public, including the retired old, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, professors, media staff, students etc.
The type of activities	Lectures and exhibitions, historical urban and rural tours and international exchange seminars	Researches (Historical architecture survey and mapping, historical building protection and repair, industrial heritage protection and reuse, historical architecture protection technology	Cultural tours, lectures, exhibitions, cultural relics investigation, checking cultural relics, celebration

		research), conferences and workshops	
The activities work	Website, magazines, academic works, workshops to support conservation projects	Academic work: The planning, protection, mapping, and investigation of historical and cultural districts, protection and repair the single buildings, reuse the traditional space, the development and application of historic architecture protection technology; Educational work: students and training class members	Training cultural conservation volunteers, finding some vital cultural relics, continuous protection and investigation cultural relics, establishing cultural conservation propaganda space for locals and foreigner tourists
The activities scope	Guangzhou is the core, and nearby historical cities also can be activities sites, such as Hong Kong, Shunde, Kaiyuan	Shanghai is the core, some historical and cultural districts in China is also the investigation spots, such as Baiheliang	Mainly focusing on urban areas of Chongqing, supplemented by surrounding districts and counties in Chongqing, and conducting exchanges cultural conservation with other places.
Cooperation	Government, university, and markets	University, government and markets	Other cultural conservation organization, government, university, primary schools, middle schools, foundations

In conclusion, the different identities of participants determine the different of activity's characters. The elite platform has a strong ability to influence the conduct of projects and the government departments' service, and the university type has obvious academic characteristics to conduct systematic academic research and train more talents. As for the folk spontaneous type, the participants scope is wider, and the activities are easier to join in than other types. Importantly, the bottom-top activities inspire the public to participate in cultural conservation.

### 3.4 The Change Of Participants

Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps is taken as the core example to research. In historical and cultural districts, it conducts both flow and fixed cultural tours. As for the flow cultural tours, it usually invites local guides to lead participants to tour cultural relics, forming complete tour paths by connecting dots to the line. As for the fixed cultural tours, it established Mountain City Story Hall in a historical and cultural district in 2020. Old objects exhibition, cultural conservation volunteers training and fixed cultural tours are the main tasks in this space. After training, volunteers can be guides to lead participants to learn about cultural conservation by old objects exhibitions. Mountain City Story Hall is indeed the fixed and open cultural conservation activity space and miniature urban living room in the historical and cultural district.

The researcher takes 25 participants as the observation, interview and questionnaire objects. From 01.2022 to 02.2022, it was the first time that they participated in cultural conservation activities in historical and cultural districts including flow cultural tours and fixed cultural tours. From 02.2023 to 03.2023, the researcher conducted observation, interview and questionnaires again to check their changes for nearly one year. In detail, the interview questions have changed a little for the two time to following the different situations of participants.

Table4 presents the basic characteristics of participants. Followed by the basic age characteristics for all participants in 01.2022. The 60-75 years old group is the most in the 25 participants. There are 16 males and 9 females, accounting for 64% and 36% respectively. As for occupation, students, white-collar workers and others are equal, 7 people(28%). Also, 4 blue-collar workers take up a proportion of 16%.

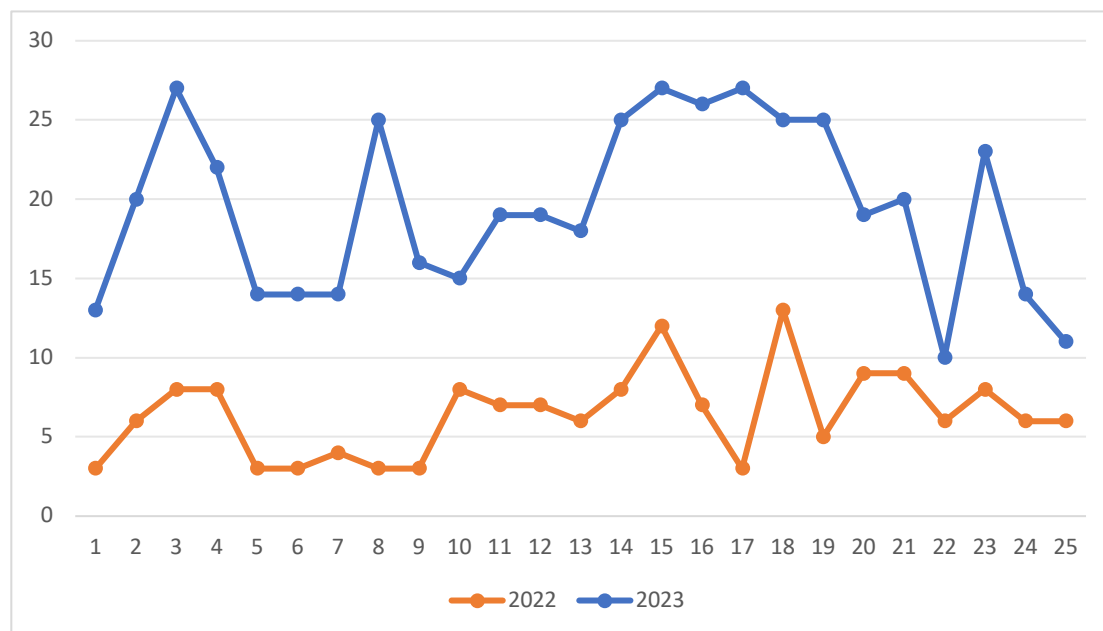
**Table 4**  
the basic characteristics of participants (n=25)

Category	characteristics	n(%)
Age	0-15	4(16)
	15-30	2(8)
	30-45	3(12)
	45-60	2(8)
	60-75	14(56)
Gender	Male	16(64)
	Female	9(36)
Occupation	students	7(28)
	blue-collar workers	4(16)
	white-collar workers	7(28)
	others	7(28)

As for the qualitative research, the researcher adopts the grounded theory to code the answers about interviews and information from observation, which forms 12 concepts in the first time and 15 concepts in the second time, then it follows the chronological order to form the categories by before activities, in activities and after activities to find out the changes of participants.

As for the quantitative research, the questionnaires were designed to make up the qualitative research. Table 5 shows the changes in total scores for each participant in quantitative research between 2022 and 2023. It is easy to find out that every participants have distinct improvement of cultural conservation behaviors. In 2022, the lowest score is 3, and the highest score is 13. However, in 2023, the lowest score is 10, and the highest score is 27.

**Table 5**  
the changes in total scores for each participant in quantitative research between 2022 and 2023



In the interview, the researcher employed grounded theory to code the subjective reason for them to participate in cultural conservation activities at the first time, the situation showed in Table6. Story-driven attracted 16 people, accounting for 64%. Comprehensively, some were interested by the urban stories, some were attracted about the stories of this organization, and other cared about the stories in Mountain City Story Hall. Also, there were 9 people led by curiosity-driven, accounting for 36%.

**Table 6**

the subjective reason to participate in cultural conservation activities at the first time

The main reason	n(%)
Story-driven	16(64)
Curiosity-driven	9(36)

As for the result of impressive experiences in cultural conservation activities in the year, 100% of interviewees gained both stories and interactive activities. In detail, the impressive experience includes interactive activities among cultural conservation volunteers, guides and participants from the guides' perspective, guides and participants from the participants' perspective, parents and children, teachers and students and classmates and friends. The statistical result is shown in Table 7, most people are interactive activities among cultural conservation volunteers and guides and participants from the guides' perspective and the participants' perspective, 11 people account for 44%.

**Table 7**

the situation of impressive experience led by interactive activities

Type	n(%)
1+3	3(12)
1+3+6	2(8)
1+2+3	11(44)

1+3+4	2(8)
1+2+3+6	2(8)
1+2+4+5	1(4)
1+2+3+4+6	1(4)
1+2+3+4+5+6	3(12)

Note: 1 represents cultural conservation volunteers;  
2 represents guides and participants (guides' perspective);  
3 represents guides and participants (participants' perspective);  
4 represents the parents and children;  
5 represents teachers and students;  
6 represents classmates and friends

Importantly, as for the gain in the first time, most participants offers the information that they have three different behaviours, including learning, protecting, and communicating, then the questionnaires were adjusted again by the three dimensions to measure the cultural conservation behaviors of participants on the two investigation stage. The researcher adopts SPPSS25 to analyze these data. Table 8 shows the situation of Mean±SD and P in these behaviours of the two times. In all group,  $P < 0.01 < 0.05$ , which means the data differences of all behaviours and the total in the two times have statistical significance, which proves that cultural conservation activities play an important role in forming these three identities for participants.

**Table 8**  
the data of three kinds of behaviours at the first and second time(Mean±SD )

Dimension	Learning	Protecting	Communicating	Total
Investigation	Behaviours	Behaviours	Behaviours	
The first time	3.84±1.463	1.92±0.862	0.68±0.802	6.44±2.740
The second time	7.88±1.333	6.48±2.143	5.16±2.322	19.52±5.448
P	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Note: the first time is between 01.2022 and 02.2022;  
the second time is between 01.2023 and 03.2023.

During the year, the enthusiasm of participation cultural conservation activities has a little changed. Most of them choose to continue to join in. Table 9 shows the situation for it. In detail, after the first activity, 2 people don't join in activities again. While, after one year, it increases to 7 people. The main reason for it is that they have left Chongqing and have no more chances to join in. Also, 3 people don't attend for other reasons.

**Table 9**  
the changes to willingness to participate in cultural conservation activities at the two time

Category	characteristics	n(%)
After the first activity	No longer participate	2(8)

After one year activities	Continue to participate	23(92)
	No longer participate	7(28)
	Continue to participate	18(72)

As for the core driving force of cultural conservation activities, the result is presented in Table 10. The first category is identification and the second one is both identification and the sense of belonging. As for the characteristics, there are three kinds: urban culture driven by stories, Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps and Mountain City Story Hall. As for the data, 8 people(32%) think identification is the core driving force. Comprehensively, 2 people referred to the first characteristics, and 3 people account for 12% in both the first and second characteristics and all characteristics. Then the core driving force of 17 people is both identification and the sense of belonging, accounting for 68%. Thoroughly, 15 people account for 60%, having the views of all characteristics in this group.

**Table 10**  
the core driving force to participant in cultural conservation activities

Category	Characteristics	n(%)	Total number(%)
Identification	1	2(8)	8(32)
	1+2	3(12)	
	1+2+3	3(12)	
Identification and the sense of belonging	1+2	2(8)	17(68)
	1+2+3	15(60)	

Note: 1 represents urban culture driven by stories;  
2 represents Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps(organization);  
3 represents Mountain City Story Hall(the fixed and open space)

Finally, after almost one year, most interviewees finish the volunteer training to become cultural conservation volunteers. And they are granted as the volunteer certification by Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps. The situation of their identity's change is shown on Table 11. Only 3 people (12%) don't become cultural conservation volunteers, and 22 people had been the volunteers, accounting for 88%.

**Table 11**  
the final identity for these interviewees

Identity	n(%)
Cultural conservation volunteer	22(88%)
Non-Cultural conservation volunteer	3(12%)

In conclusion, 88% of participants turned their identities from participants into cultural conservation volunteers after nearly one year. In this process, story-driven is the core factor, which is not only attractive for new participants, but also an important gain for them. It should be noticed that stories are still basement in the impressive experiences led by interactive activities, which is the basic

communication content by the interaction among cultural conservation volunteers, guides and participants from the guides' perspective, guides and participants from the participants' perspective, parents and children, teachers and students and classmates and friends in cultural conservation activities. Meanwhile, after participating in cultural conservation activities repeatedly, stories and interaction lead participants to create the deep identification of urban culture, even the sense of belonging. Furthermore, the activities can be divided into learning, protecting and communicating behaviours too. The statistical significance of the differences among three types of behaviours in the two investigation times proves the important role of cultural conservation activities. Then the participants create deep friendships during interactive activities, which lead them to have more identification and the sense of belonging of the space and the organization. This feelings attract them to continue to participate in cultural conservation activities. Moreover, the fixed and open space, Mountain City Story Hall, provides a steady space for participants to join in cultural conservation activities. Many interactive activities around stories take place in this space, it has been the home of cultural conservation activities and the concreteness of the organization, also it provides a more convenient way for participants to join in cultural conservation activities. That is the reason why participants can create identification and the sense of belonging in this fixed and open space. Finally, most of them realize the turn of identities from participants to cultural conservation volunteers. Therefore, the cultural conservation activities are held by the organization(Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps) at the fixed and open space(Mountain City Story Hal) in the historical and cultural districts, which leads participants to own the spirit of place. The result echos the research question that cultural conservation activities inspire participants to create the spirit of place at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts. In conclusion, cultural conservation activities are interactive activities by story-driven at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts, which attracts participants coming and lead them to create identification and the sense of belonging and realize the turn of identities. During which, the spirit of place is created by people and space.

#### **4.Conclusion**

In this paper, it focuses on the place theory, many scholars have studied it for a long time(Tuan 1974; Norberg1979; Liu 2002; Sheng 2015; etc.), but understanding how people create identification is very often overlooked, which further hinders people to gain the spirit of place. In practice, the single static information and the neglect of cultural gaps makes participants can't create enough identification at the cultural display spaces in these historical and cultural districts. Due to them, this research considers cultural conservation activities into this process, analyzing the cultural conservation activities in fixed space can create closer relationship with participants than flow space, and explaining the two identities of these cultural display conservation spaces held cultural conservation activities: fixed and open spaces and miniature urban living rooms. Then the representative cultural conservation organizations in China are demonstrated, and the researcher focus on one of them: Chongqing Cultural Conservation Corps, to record the nearly one-year change of some participants of this organization in historical and cultural districts. Participation observation, direct observation and interview were conducted in qualitative research, and the questionnaires were adopted in quantitative research. The final result presents that most of participants can create identification and the sense of belonging through the cultural conservation activities by story-driven and interaction at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts, and they experienced the three dimensions behaviors change: learning, protecting and communicating to realize the identities' change from participants to cultural conservation volunteers. This finding echoes the research hypothesis and research question that cultural conservation activities inspire participants to create the spirit of place at the fixed and open spaces in the historical and cultural districts. As for the implication, this research finds out the



accessible method to make up the gap of the creation of identification in place theory, and deepen the place-making at cultural display spaces in historical and cultural districts by the activities, which provides more participation chances for visitors, all of them are helpful to generate the spirit of place in theory and practice. Importantly, this research stresses the vital role of cultural conservation activities in the development of historical and cultural districts, which helps the enhancement of cultural content in both activities and space to gain more sustainable development in historical and cultural districts. Though this research has a quiet complete research design, the sample size is a little small and the questions in interview and questionnaires are not very rich, further research can adopt richer questions to do more detailed dimensions for qualitative and quantitative researches.

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