Chinese Cultural and Opera Stage Architectural Design for Urbanization Henan, China

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Urbanization in Henan, China has rapidly transformed the landscape, posing challenges to preserving traditional cultural elements like Chinese cultural and opera stages. This study aimed to provide qualitative insights into integrating traditional cultural/opera architectural design with modern urban development in Henan.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 Henan residents to gather perspectives and experiences. Interview data was thematically analysed.

Findings: Residents highly valued traditional cultural/opera stage design, indicating strong cultural interconnectedness. However, challenges were identified including commercial pressure in development, implying difficulty balancing economic growth and cultural preservation. Community participation was mixed with some active engagement. Environmental sustainability concerns and financial/institutional capacity constraints highlighted the need for collaborative approaches.

Conclusion and Implications: Traditional cultural elements retain deep meaning for Henan residents amidst rapid urbanization. Preserving these traditions while enabling modernization will require overcoming multiple complex challenges across commercial, environmental, social, and institutional dimensions. Findings indicate that collaborative, multi-stakeholder urban planning approaches are needed to integrate cultural preservation with sustainable growth in Chinese cities undergoing rapid development. Study insights on resident perspectives and challenges can inform policies and frameworks to effectively balance economic, environmental, and cultural priorities.

Keywords: Chinese culture, Opera, Architectural design, Urbanization, Henan.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, urbanization has been motivated by industrialization and the demand of tertiary services. The development of service sector and urban migration have played a critical role in shaping urban development of cities. In a similar way, China's urban development has resulted from extensive industrialization (Guan et al., 2018). The rapid expansion of urban cities was prominent in the Chinese real estate boom in the 1990s and many traditional areas have been transformed by modern urban development. Nonetheless, with rapid urbanization, emphasis is being put on the integration of heritage and cultural integrity into architectural design needs of urbanized cities (Li et al., 2020).

A number of challenges are encountered by urban architects in these contemporary times, such as preserving the cultural integrity of designs while ensuring resilient landscapes that are able to withstand the changing climate and mitigate the risks arising from natural disasters (Udeaja et al., 2020). There is a traditional emphasis on aesthetics and cultural elements into the design. Nonetheless, striking a balance between rapid urbanization, thriving market and cultural integrity is challenging for architects and planners (Zhao et al., 2020). This has resulted in the lack of standards and quality as Wang (2015) highlighted. The absence of a design concept with a focus toward "fast food" style buildings is indicative of foreign trends incorporation. Criticism regarding the declining quality of urban environments and a lack of cultural values have emerged. A positive development of Chinese architectural design can be hindered due to imbalances in judgement of cultural values, barriers to intercultural dialogues, and institutional and systematic challenges (Giglitto et al., 2022). Research has discussed the current state and development of Chinese architecture by taking into consideration the global architectural requirements. There is a significant challenge in the "Chinese context" due to the interplay of rapid pace of urbanization, complex cultural background and the vision of a "Beautiful China" (Wang, 2015). Subsequently, this context provides not only challenges by also opportunities for Chinese architectural design. The challenges brought by urbanization require effective strategies where studies have discussed the role of government, residents and architects (Li et al., 2020). Residential input regarding community and cultural concerns are regarded critical in defining local developmental contexts as well as cultural heritage values. It is observed that local residential inputs and community-based organization play a crucial role in the incorporation of residents' interest in Chinese heritage management.

Udeaja et al. (2020) explored how the rapid urbanization is affecting the cultural preservation in India, establishing the influence of urbanization on cultural architectural design. Wang and Gu (2020) explored and scrutinized the how historic and cultural values are incorporated into urban landscape; however, the study was focused on the historical site of Pingyao (Wang & Gu, 2020). Consequently, while literature concerning urbanization in China has evolved over the years, a focused study is required that deals with the challenges of cultural and opera stage architectural design in the province of Henan.

Therefore, the study proposes to investigate the challenges and limitations in the integration of traditional cultural and opera architectural design with modern urban development in Henan. The study expands on prior literature by adopting a qualitative methodology to incorporate the valuable perspectives of local residents in Henan. By considering the province of Henan, which is rich in cultural heritage, the study intends to provide significant implications for urban planning and cultural heritage. The research attempts to address the ongoing challenges faced in the integrated of traditional cultural and opera architectural design amidst the modern urban development. The rapid urbanization poses a threat to rich cultural heritage of Henan; therefore, by providing understanding of the challenges, the study offers policymakers, urban planners, and local authorities insights into mitigating the risks to ensure a balance between cultural preservation and urban development. Additionally, the study contributes to the knowledge base by informing sustainable urban development practices for the cultural heritage of Henan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature explores the relationship between traditional architecture, urban development, and cultural preservation, with a particular focus on how the challenges presented by the changing urban landscape can be addressed in smart city settings.

Integrating Traditional Architecture into Modern Urban Development

Hurlimann et al. (2021) argued that although traditional Enterprise Architecture Frameworks (EAF) are frequently used in planning and architecture, it is possible that they do not always precisely match the demands of urban development. In order to tackle this, the implementation of an EAF focused on smart cities is proposed, with the goal of promoting conversations about modern methods in the early stages of design. An EAF has been introduced in the EU's +CityxChange smart city initiative to address these issues. Hurlimann et al. (2021) suggest that the arabinan peninsula's traditional towns, villages, and cities started to change about forty

years ago. They lost their distinctive regional characteristics and gained more contemporary shapes and architecture. During this time, the unique qualities of these places have gradually deteriorated due to changes in social and cultural dynamics and institutional modifications imposed by planning and architectural standards. As a result, disagreements and conversations between conventional values and modern influences have been raised by this evolution. Even though they are the least representative of local characteristics, projects started after 1975 have nevertheless attempted to forge a unique urban and architectural identity. Mitigating conflicts between tradition and modernization is the main challenge local community planning and development agencies face in the context of new urban development. One workable approach is to incorporate different architectural and urban features from the historic core to create a cohesive link between the new developments' changing urban environment and cultural identity. To be in line with the ideas and technological requirements of the modern day, these components must be redefined. Traditional town and neighbourhood planning, traditional architecture, and design principles are all rich sources of inspiration for planners, architects, and engineers. The liveability, comfort, privacy, land-use patterns, street hierarchy and design, open-space design, house design and arrangement, climate control, scale, light, and building techniques and materials are all covered by these references. Careful selection and adaptation of these references are essential to effectively promote cultural identity and continuity in the urban fabric of new developments beyond the historic core. This entails taking into account the particulars of the project at hand, as well as the historical background and cultural customs of the area (Alzahrani, 2022; Hurlimann et al., 2021). Across much of the world, alien designs are steadily replacing traditional urban and architectural environments. A prevalent perspective in contemporary times holds that the loss of place-specific identity is a result of the commodification of locations and standard concepts for planning and development. There are situations when this process conflicts with a society's culture. Although the ramifications of this cultural loss are rarely discussed, they have a wide range of frequently irreversible effects on society (Alzahrani, 2022).

Urbanization's Effect on Cultural Heritage

According to Viki and Al-Harithy (2019), cultural heritage has been defined by scholars as the "present-day interpretation of the past," which is intentionally created from historical elements, their remnants, and memories in order to meet the needs of the present society. A vital component of human endeavours, cultural heritage takes on material and immaterial manifestations, leaving visible traces from antiquity to the present. Selected examples of built

cultural heritage include artefacts, archaeological sites, architectural works, groups of buildings and their environs, natural landscapes, and physical and biological formations that are recognized for their extraordinary universal value, whether in terms of aesthetics or science.

Urbanization is a worldwide phenomenon that is both inevitable and common. Although growth and expansion are advantageous to many individuals as well as businesses, there is a chance that historically significant areas that hold cultural significance for people could be lost. Our research identified particular physical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural aspects of urbanization that led to discernible and noteworthy alterations in Kumbakonam's heritage features (Kiruthiga & Thirumaran, 2019). The cultural heritage of Kumbakonam has undergone substantial changes due to its rapid urbanization, deviating from the town's historical characteristics. Once distinguished by opulent palaces, temples, and mansions bearing the signatures of mythical monarchs, the town's distinctive urban fabric has come under increasing pressure from modern development. Once home to a diverse range of architectural styles influenced by local vernacular and historical periods, the historic centre is currently seeing an invasion of angular, modern designs. The aesthetic and physical components that embodied the town's allure, such as arched windows, tiled roofs, and adorned parapets, are giving way to the pressures of urbanization. Building use and occupancy rates have changed as a result of urbanization, which has been accelerated by the expansion of commerce and rising land values (Kiruthiga & Thirumaran, 2019). One important finding that the study Alqahtany and Aravindakshan (2022) highlights is that there is a significant trade-off between the need to preserve historic sites and the demands of an increasing number of people and growing economic needs for increased urbanization. Urbanization pressures are forcing a revaluation of the traditional assessment of heritage site value, especially in light of Saudi Arabia's economic and cultural conservation viewpoints. Achieving a balance between the practical demands of an increasingly urbanizing society and the obligation to preserve historical and cultural legacies is the fundamental challenge. A thoughtful conversation about how to balance the needs of economic development in Saudi Arabia with the preservation of cultural identity is sparked by the growing pressures of urbanization, which call for a critical reevaluation of the importance and role accorded to heritage sites.

Challenges to Cultural Conservation with Urbanization

Rastandeh and Jarchow (2021) argued that the protecting and restoring biodiversity is essential for improving environmental quality in urban environments, there are many obstacles in the

way due to the city's rapid urbanization. According to our hypothesis, following the COVID-19 pandemic, urban areas will continue to expand at a faster rate due to two different mechanisms: an increase in informal settlements caused by a rise in poverty and an increase in urban sprawl as a result of increased suburban development. The preservation of cultural heritage in urban settings is hampered by these dynamics.

The numerous changes in societal values and lifestyles highlight the difficulties facing cultural conservation in the context of urbanization. There is a chance that the importance of preserving cultural heritage will decline as urban areas grow quickly due to causes like rising poverty and suburban development. According to the study Manfredo et al. (2020), there is a continuous shift in wildlife values from domination to mutualism orientations. This shift is indicative of a larger pattern of cultural change driven by modernization. The rise of mutualism values the belief that wildlife is an essential part of society is facilitated by urbanization, which is marked by changes in daily life, economic prosperity, and educational advancements. The traditional domination values, which support keeping humans and animals apart for practical reasons, are in opposition to this change. The process of urbanization and the resulting changes in lifestyle have an impact on cultural fabric as a whole, in addition to individual values. The ramifications go beyond issues with the social acceptability of long-standing wildlife management techniques, and they present difficulties for conservation organizations trying to adjust to changing priorities and social norms.

Moreover, the difficulties associated with urbanization and cultural conservation arise from the urban areas' quick growth, which is fuelled by suburban development and rising rates of poverty. The rapid expansion of cities creates challenges for the conservation of cultural assets, impacting customs, values, and the social fabric in general.

Architectural Significance of Chinese Cultural

Van et al. (2019) affirmed that the investigating efforts, both domestically and internationally, in innovative planning and architecture directed toward urban revitalization and environmental modernization. Urban landscapes and the natural world coexisting harmoniously, as well as the deliberate improvement of living conditions and environmental quality are studied. The emphasis is on planning urban areas, developing environmentally sound infrastructure that meets the needs of a wide range of residents, and putting economic and environmental policies into action. For example, Shanghai is a prime example of a city dedicated to becoming environmentally conscious. This is demonstrated by sensible land use planning, the creation

and upkeep of green areas, the encouragement of biodiversity, support for renewable energy sources, efficient transportation systems, the preservation of cultural and historical sites, and population control policies.

The study Jiao et al. (2023) explores the spatial arrangements and cultural sustainability of the historical area of Damazhan and Xiaomazhan, a singular location that perfectly captures the development of Guangzhou's assembled-clan hall culture. The importance of traditional culture is becoming increasingly crucial in defining architectural uniqueness and promoting adaptive development that is in line with societal demands in the face of modernization and reconstruction. As such, the conservation of cultural traits becomes even more important. In order to develop analytical strategies that connect cultural sustainability with spatial evolution within the framework of sustainable development, this study combines typo-morphological analysis with research on historical literature.

The results of the study Jiao et al. (2023) show that while cultural change and man-made social factors are responsible for some shifts in spatial forms, cultural continuity is reflected in the continuous pattern of block and architectural spatial features. This paper enhances current methodology by combining the cultural sustainability perspective with conventional typo-morphological approaches to urban spatial analysis. It also has a great deal of practical significance to direct the development of urban morphology through the lens of cultural sustainability.

The Pearl River Delta reached its peak of development in the Song Dynasty when it became the centre of Lingnan region's economic growth and population concentration. Many regions had already seen the establishment of villages, but at this time a clan-based social structure had not yet developed. The cultural core of the development of clan halls had not fully developed, even though clan halls first appeared in Guangzhou during the Southern Song Dynasty, exhibiting a nascent sense of clan consciousness. By illustrating the early phases of clan hall culture and its possible impact on later architectural developments in the area, this historical context highlights the architectural significance within the larger framework of Chinese culture (冯江)**.** Chinese tea or other refreshments could be enjoyed while watching local operas in tea gardens, which increased sales of food and drink. Shrewd entrepreneurs quickly realized the performance market had a commercial potential. An attractive "opera garden" replaced a tea garden. After that, guests to these opera gardens had to wait in line to get show tickets. Local stage plays, operas, and occasionally even movies were presented in these for-profit theatres.

The opera gardens saw renovations that made them the focal point of urban cultural consumption for the period. Since the People's Republic of China was founded, some have even continued as well-known theatres. (Xiao et al., 2019).

As a whole, the literature highlights the challenges of incorporating traditional architectural features into contemporary urban development and emphasizes the importance of giving cultural continuity careful thought. The effects of urbanization on cultural heritage are demonstrated by examples from Saudi Arabia and Kumbakonam, which highlight the delicate balance needed for sustainable urban growth. Furthermore, the architectural significance of Chinese culture which has been studied in Guangzhou and Shanghai makes clear how crucial it is to integrate cultural sustainability into urban planning in order to maintain harmony between modernity and tradition. The review concludes by recommending a nuanced strategy that honours the historical background while adjusting to the changing demands of modern society.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research design was adopted for the study, which supported the fulfilment of the present study's research objectives to investigate the challenges and limitations in the integration of traditional cultural and opera architectural design with modern urban development in Henan. The qualitative research design facilitated the researcher to explore the cultural heritage of the Henan province, which is rich in culture. In addition, this research design was appropriate for gathering the subjective perceptions and experiences of residents of Henan regarding the cultural significance of opera theatres in Henan. Thus, the qualitative research design of this study integrated the subjective perspectives of research participants. Furthermore, an interpretive research philosophy supported the investigation of residents' attitudes and perceptions regarding the significance of traditional opera theatres in the urbanized Henan. The researcher adopted the inductive research approach to gather rich and high-quality data through interviews with residents of Henan.

Data Collection Tool

The present study targeted the residents of the Henan province to gather their valuable insights and perceptions concerning the cultural and historical significance of opera theatres and their architectural designs. A convenience sampling technique was employed to approach the residents who were readily available for the interview. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted with residents of Henan to conduct an in-depth exploration of the significance of opera theatres in the present day's Henan. In addition, the semi-structured interviews facilitated the researcher in the collection of rich and relevant qualitative data. The present study targeted the residents of Henan, China as they had an in-depth understanding of their local culture and traditions. Moreover, they had sufficient knowledge regarding the local history of opera theatres and their cultural relevance. The residents of Henan were also familiar with the challenges associated with the preservation of traditional opera theatres' architectural design in an urbanized Henan. Thus, the population of Henan residents provided rich and valuable insights into the interplay between cultural preservation and urbanization in Henan. The research participants were asked open-ended questions regarding the role of opera theatre in the preservation of China's cultural heritage. In addition, the interview questions also focused on the impact of urbanization on the architectural design of opera stages in China. The researcher also inquired from the participants regarding their expectations of the opera stages and their architectural design in the wake of rapid urbanization. Since the study is focused on the interplay between cultural preservation and urbanization, the participants were also asked to provide their opinions on the impact of urbanization on the preservation of cultural heritage in Henan. Furthermore, the researcher also assessed the participants' knowledge regarding any initiatives to promote collaborative efforts between authorities and residents for the preservation of cultural heritage in Henan.

Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The researcher has used inductive thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data gathered from the interviews. The process of thematic analysis involved transcribing the responses of the research participants and familiarization with the transcript. Initial codes were generated with the help of NVivo software, which helped analyse the data efficiently. The themes were generated based on the initial codes and were later reviewed to verify their coherence. The researcher fulfilled all ethical considerations while collecting the data. While conducting the interviews, the researcher ensured the participants of their anonymous participation in the study and protested the confidential data. The researcher refrained from invading the personal information of the participants. Moreover, the participants were familiarized with the purpose of the interview and the implications of their participation in it. Thus, the present study is ethically grounded and provides authentic, reliable, and valid findings.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings from the qualitative collected from the ten local residents is discussed. Data analysis conducted through inductive thematic analysis resulted in six primary thematic areas, as shown in Figure 1.
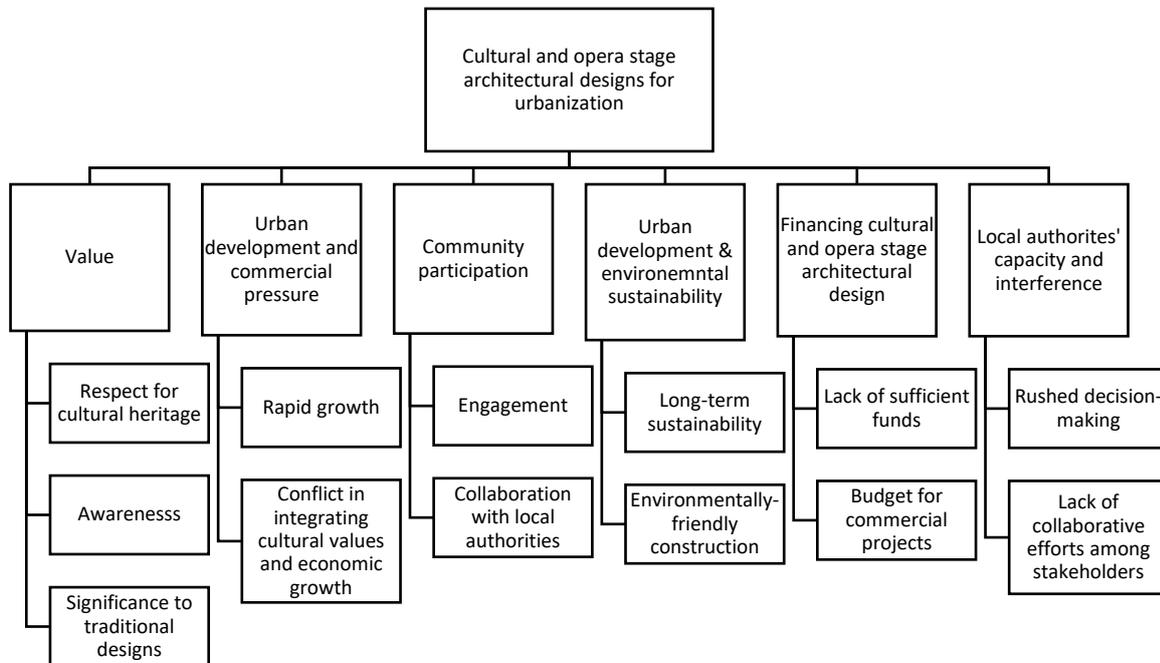
Figure 1: Mind Map

Valuing Cultural and Opera Stage Architectural Design

The first theme identified from the qualitative data is the value of cultural and opera stage architectural design, implying the awareness and acknowledgement of locals in the interconnectedness of traditional culture in opera stage architecture in Henan. Thus, the cultural heritage is emphasised in the province and plays a crucial role in ascertaining the cultural identify of the province through local development processes and historic urban planning as one of the participants stated:

> *"We, in China, have utmost respect for our traditional architecture and cultural heritage. The traditions and the communities have long kept the heritage and cultural values, it provides the basis for the architectural designs."*

Similarly, another participant highlighted the significance given to traditional Chinese design when it comes to cultural and opera stages.

"The Chinese opera stages are a pure depiction of harmony, aesthetics, and traditions. The traditional concepts are integrated into the scenic designs. The shapes, colours, patterns, and textures in traditional Chinese architectural design are deeply incorporated into construction."

Figure 2: Word Cloud for Theme 1

Urban Development and Commercial Pressures

Urban development in Henan faces challenges such as the commercialization pressure which puts profit above the interests of community. Majority of the participants agreed that there is a struggle to balance the urban growth with cultural preservation as decision-makers have to make critical decisions not just for the cultural identity but overall economic growth, as indicated by one of the participant's statements below:

"I think the problem is also with the constant burden on urban spaces to accommodate the influx of people and to achieve the targeted growth."

There exists a conflict to integrate cultural values in the modernization projects motivated by economic goals. The increasing demand of urban infrastructure requires preservation of authenticity and integrity; however, these are often ignored as per participants' opinions:

"Over the years, I have noticed how our cities have transformed. I understand that with the growth of population and the desire to live in urbanized and more "western" spaces have led to the shift with new spaces and expansion of buildings, but I feel that driven by the real estate pressures, we are not focused on cultural heritage."

"Urbanization have resulted in all these commercial developers, urban planners and architects that are more into money rather than cultural values."

Figure 3: Word Cloud for Theme 2

Community Participation

There was a mix of opinions regarding the involvement of communities in cultural and opera stages architectural design in the context of urbanized Henan. Some of the participants demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding of the architectural design, informing about their exchanges with local authorities and cultural exports.

"I have been actively engaging with local authorities for some time now, I enjoy sharing ideas for cultural design and values. I have always been an advocate of engaging communities for meaningful impact, especially when it comes to cultural heritage and preserving our cultural identity."

On the other hand, few participants demonstrated passiveness, lacking the knowledge on how to promote and exchange ideas related to cultural heritage, values, and architectural design in urbanized Henan. This indicated that there is a lack of collaboration among residents and decision-makers, as highlighted below:

"I have not observed or actually been involved in any real dialogue that has resulted in any outcome regarding the architectural designs of cultural stages, the locals' opinions are not given much significance."

However, participants agreed on the need to incorporate community-based participation in cultural and opera stage architectural design.

> *"The local people are aware of the culture, the values, and traditional elements of Chinese design. What we want to see matters, the designs we love matter. So of course, the locals have an extraordinarily strong influence in mixing the traditional architectural elements in Chinese cultural and opera stages."*

Figure 4: Word Cloud for Theme 3

Urban Development and Environmental Sustainability

While discussing the role of urbanization, residents highlighted the concerns of rapid urbanization in leading to a negative impact on the environment. The construction of new spaces has led to increasing concerns about environmentally friendly construction. Emphasis is being given to long-term sustainability of the rapid construction of new spaces. The participants highlighted the significance of balancing development with not only cultural preservation but environmental conservation:

> *"I do not think we can only focus on a single aspect of building new spaces, buildings, and opera stages. By only focusing on the design or cultural elements, we overlook the importance of ensuring that whatever we build or maintain is done through environmentally sustainable practices."*

> *"While we talk about urban development, we must consider the effect of climate change. How can we ignore that? Climate change influences our cultural heritage and architectural designs as our buildings and sites are vulnerable to the risks of climate change."*

Figure 5: Word Cloud for Theme 4

Financing cultural and opera stage architectural design

Another prominent challenge resulting from the analysis was the financial management and constraints as residents in urbanized Henan described the role of appropriate financial management in preservation of the cultural values in architectural designs. The participants were of the opinion about the lack of appropriate and sufficient funds given to managing cultural stages and sites.

> *"The integration of traditional cultural stages and architectural designs with urbanization is also difficult due to financial constraints. The maintenance of cultural stages and designs require funds, but more focus is given to commercial buildings, so more budget is given to that."*

> *"More commercial projects are given importance; cultural initiatives are not considered that important. I think due to the lack of importance given to cultural and opera stage architectural design, there is also lack of funds."*

This implies that there is a need for a focused approach and financial mechanism to ensure that cultural heritage is protected during urbanization to contribute to the development of the cities.

Figure 6: Word Cloud for Theme 5

Local authorities' capacity and interference

The locals suggested that along with efficient fund mechanism, local authorities play an important role in management of cultural and opera stages in Henan. Nonetheless, participants also suggested that there are challenges related to their capacity to manage complex urban issues due to lack of training and expertise. One of the participants highlighted the there is rushed decision-making which can affect the urban cultural planning:

> *"The local authorities are overwhelmed, it does not seem like they focus on the cultural aspect, this shows when their plans are not well-thought out."*

Local authorities also face interference from political officials as they make quick decisions for planning and designing. As per the respondents, there is a lack of effective collaborative efforts among local authorities, political officials, urban planners, and architects.

> *"What is required is a structured approach that is based on collaboration. When different stakeholders, such as urban architects, designers, planners collaborate with local authorities and political officials, everyone can make an aligned plan which focuses on both aspects: traditional cultural elements and modern urban development."*

> *"Local authorities as well as political officials should address the challenges in ensuring that the urban development is met through cultural and traditional values."*

Figure 7: Word Cloud for Theme 6

DISCUSSION

Discussion of findings

Cultural significance of traditional opera stages

The present study has presented valuable findings regarding the cultural and historical significance of traditional opera stage architectural design in the urbanized Henan, China. The present study's focus on the traditional opera stages indicates the cultural relevance of traditional theatre in modern-day Henan. The interviewees exhibited a consensus regarding the significance of traditional and cultural heritage represents the importance of cultural identity in modern-day urbanized China. The most significant finding from the study is the utmost valuing of cultural opera stages in terms of their architectural design in urbanized Henan. The residents of Henan exhibited great regard and respect for their cultural roots and identity. Thus, the study affirms the role of communities and traditions in preserving cultural heritage and values. The interviewees regarded opera stages as a manifestation of harmony, aesthetics, and traditions. The architectural design of opera stages depicts the cultural integrity of Chinese society. Thus, the present study reveals the significant role of traditional Chinese architectural design in preserving the cultural history and aesthetics of Henan.

Urban pressure and its impact on cultural heritage

Moreover, the study has revealed valuable findings concerning the pressure of rapid urbanization and commercialization on cultural preservation, which fulfilled the research objective of the study. As the study aimed to delineate the challenges, which impeded the

preservation of cultural heritage in urbanized China. The interviewees had a consensus regarding the need to attain a balance between urban growth and the preservation of cultural assets. The present study, thus, highlights the significant impact of rapid urbanization on cultural preservation. The findings of the study emphasize the utmost pressure on decision-makers to strike a balance between maintaining the cultural identity and sustaining the economic growth of the country. Interviewees expressed their concerns regarding the constant burden on the urban landscape to accommodate a constant influx of people, looking for economic prosperity. Thus, another significant finding of the present study is the negative impact of urbanization on the preservation of cultural heritage. In this regard, the financial constraints also emerge as a significant obstacle in the way of cultural preservation in Henan. Therefore, local authorities have to play a proactive role in managing the financial resources needed to preserve cultural heritage.

Conflict between cultural preservation and urbanization

Furthermore, there is a constant conflict between the integration of traditional values in the urban landscape and the projects aimed to modernize the urban settings for economic growth. The rapid urbanization has increased the demand for urban space and infrastructure. As a result, the preservation of cultural assets often gets compromised. Interviewees also expressed their perceptions regarding the rapid transformation of cities into overpopulated and westernized urban landscapes at the cost of the cultural heritage of the country. In other words, rapid urbanization has posed a grave challenge to the preservation of the cultural heritage in Henan. Interviewees agreed regarding the crucial role of commercial developers and urban planners in compromising the cultural heritage for the material growth in the region. Modern-day urban planners and architects often compromise the cultural assets of a region in exchange for urbanization and economic growth.

Role of community and authorities

The present study's findings also highlight the role of communities in the preservation of cultural and opera stages architectural design in the context of urbanized Henan. Interviewees shared a variety of opinions. Some of them shared enthusiasm regarding the role of the public in preserving the cultural identity by sharing unique ideas and collaborating with urban authorities for cultural designs of opera stages. On the other hand, some of the participants lacked knowledge regarding the role of the public in the preservation of cultural heritage. Interviewees shared inexperience regarding the exchange of any valuable dialogue concerning

the architectural design of cultural and opera stages. This indicates the lack of general awareness regarding the cultural significance of traditional Chinese architecture. Nonetheless, the study emphasized the significant impact of people in the integration of traditional Chinese elements into opera stages.

Environmental impact of urbanization

As the study focuses on the impact of urbanization, its environmental consequences cannot be overlooked. Interviewees expressed their environmental concerns by highlighting the negative impact of urbanization on the environment. The overcrowded urban spaces have led to such practices that are harmful to the environment. Therefore, another significant finding of the present study is the need for integrating urban development and environmental conservation. The study reveals that cultural preservation alone cannot sustain the sustainable development of a region. The practices of urban development should, therefore, align with environmentally friendly practices. The findings of the study, particularly, highlight climate change as a harmful factor for culturally and historically significant architectural designs. The present study has thus fulfilled its objectives of investigating the challenges associated with the integration of traditional elements into the architectural design of modern urban landscapes. The findings of the present study align with those of Xiao et al. (2019) who revealed a significant impact of urbanization and western architecture on performing arts architecture in China. Wen et al. (2023) also emphasized the impact of urbanization on cultural preservation and suggested the crucial role of public engagement in preserving cultural assets in the context of China.

CONCLUSION

The present study has revealed significant and valuable insights into the challenges and limitations associated with the preservation of cultural architecture and the integration of traditional elements into the modern urban landscape. The study has provided relevant findings from the interviews conducted with the residents of Henan, who shared their concerns regarding the impact of urbanization on cultural preservation. The findings of the study also highlighted the environmental concerns associated with rapid urbanization and its impact on the preservation of the traditional architectural design of opera stages in Henan. Moreover, the study emphasizes the potential of the public as well as authorities to play a significant role in promoting the preservation of traditional culture. Thus, the study fulfilled the objectives of highlighting the impact of urban and commercial pressure on cultural and opera stage architectural designs in Henan, China.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical implications

The findings of the present study hold significant theoretical implications as they help fill the research gap regarding the studies on architectural designs of opera stages in Henan, China. The present study, thus, advances the literature concerning the cultural significance of traditional theatrical architecture in Henan. Moreover, the findings of the study help extend the sustainability literature by highlighting the significant impact of urbanization and the associated environmental concerns on the preservation of culturally significant architecture in China. The present study also makes significant contributions to the existing theoretical literature concerned with the architectural significance of traditional Chinese opera stages in urban landscapes.

Practical implications

The present study's findings hold significant practical implications for urban planning and the conservation of cultural heritage. By addressing the current challenges associated with the integration of traditional elements into the opera architectural design in the urban landscape of Henan, China. The study highlights urbanization as a significant factor that impeded the preservation of cultural heritage amidst rapid urbanization. Thus, the study offers significant findings and recommendations for policymakers and urban planners to mitigate the negative impact of urbanization on environmental as well as cultural preservation. The study suggests the need for collaboration between the public and the authorities to attain a balance between cultural preservation and urbanization.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present study has delineated valuable findings regarding the challenges associated with cultural preservation in contemporary Henan due to rapid urbanization. However, the study's findings are limited to the context of Henan, China and may not resonate with other such culturally rich region across the world. Therefore, future studies can focus on other regions and analyze the factors associated with cultural preservation in the region. In addition, the present study is qualitative and, thus, offers no quantifiable findings regarding the factors affecting the cultural preservation in Henan. Future studies can adopt a quantitative research design to present statistical findings.

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