

# Study on the Development of Urban Micro-Renewal Driven by Ethnic Culture-Taking Ebian Yi Autonomous County as an Example

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## ABSTRACT

Urban micro-renewal needs to rely on urban culture, and the Opinions on Strengthening the Protection and inheritance of History and Culture in Urban and Rural Construction, issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council in 2021, pointed out the great significance of culture in urban and rural construction. Taking Ebian Yi Autonomous County as an example, this paper discusses the important role of ethnic culture in urban micro-renewal in ethnic areas and puts forward some development suggestions. At the same time, it also supplements the theoretical foundation for the search of urban micro-renewal model in ethnic minority areas.

## KEYWORDS

Ethnic Culture; Yi Culture; Urban Renewal; Micro-Renewal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, China's urbanization process is advancing continuously, and the urbanization rate of China has reached 63.89%. Most of the urban construction has shifted from an incremental phase to a stock phase. Progressive local renewal of small community spaces and public space facilities has become a new way to activate the vitality of cities and improve the quality of public space for residents[1]. The research on urban micro-renewal in China mainly focuses on the economically active and developed big cities, and there is less research on small towns, especially in ethnic areas. China's research on urban micro-renewal mainly focuses on big cities with more active and developed economy, and there are fewer researches on small towns, especially on urban micro-renewal in ethnic areas. With the completion of China's poverty alleviation work, some of the residents of poor ethnic areas have basic protection for their lives, and the growing spiritual needs of the people make it necessary to pay attention to the quality of public space in ethnic minority neighborhoods.

Sichuan Province is a multi-ethnic region and has the largest Yi population in China. However there is a lack of research on urban micro-renewal of Yi culture. Ebian Yi Autonomous County will exit the provincial poverty-stricken county in 2020. In recent years, under the leadership of the Ebian County government, Ebian Yi Autonomous County has begun to renovate the streets and alleys and other public spaces. Taking the Yi culture as the background color, combining with the local landscape and idyllic scenery, local customs, using the vivid expressive power of landscape wall paintings and relief walls, with rest and recreational facilities, it creates a number of unique cultural and historical corridors. Therefore, studying the needs and deficiencies in the process of urban micro-renewal in Ebian is conducive to improving the quality of public space in order to enhance the sense

of well-being of the local people, realize national unity, create the characteristics of the Yi ethnic minority settlements, develop characteristic tourism, and stimulate the development of the local economy.

## **2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN MICRO-RENEWAL AND CULTURE**

China's urban micro-renewal research originated from Mr. Wu Liangyong's theory of "organic renewal", which advocated that urban construction should follow the city's internal order and laws and deal with various relationships on an appropriate scale and reasonable scale, pointing out that it was necessary to further explore research on small-scale renovation and improvement, and to explore small and flexible urban renewal. Subsequently, Fang Ke put forward the theory of small-scale renovation on the basis of the theory of "organic regeneration", which involves the alteration renovation, maintenance and repair of housing, environmental improvement, as well as the enhancement of residents' employment, living and working environments. Other scholars have also explored urban renewal in China, pointing out the blindness of large-scale urban renewal and advocating the protection of the good parts and the improvement and remediation of the poor parts in urban renewal. Domestic scholars believe that micro-renewal is an effective way to makeup for the urban and social fabrics, and that it is a must for the refinement and quality of urban construction; they believe that the promotion of micro-renewal should not only pay attention to the creation of public space, crowd activities, and social culture, but also pay attention to the additions of facilities and the connection of urban functions[2].

Hou Xiaolei believes that different neighborhoods and communities have different community cultures, and for urban micro-renewal, culture not only refers to history or traditions but more importantly to the habits or living norms of ordinary people in the use of local spatial environments, which are transformed into the original human environment with the accumulation of time! Urban culture is the core value embodied in urban design and the main basis for urban micro-renewal design. Urban culture is the core value embodied in urban design, and it is also the main basis for urban micro-renewal design, which integrates the value of culture into the daily planning and design in urban renewal and design, At the same time, the regenerative nature of urban culture can be reflected in the study of the nodes of the detailed structure, the interaction of the external urban space and the empowerment of the scene space. Moreover, the regeneration of urban culture is also a kind of internalized spatial generation mode, which dominates the micro.renewal design of urban scenes in terms of space and form .[3] Liu Shilin believes that excellent traditional culture is the soul of urban micro-renewal, According to Liu Shilin, excellent traditional culture is the soul of urban micro-renewal. National policies and strategies also pay more attention to the city's traditional culture, in 2015, the central urban work conference clearly put forward to pay attention to the "cultural characteristics" and "continuity of the cultural lineage" in the preparation of the plan. 2017 January 25, the Chinese Office, the State Office issued the "Opinions on the Implementation of the Project for the inheritance and Development of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture" proposed to "distill and select a number of classic elements and classic elements that highlight the cultural characteristics. The Opinions on the Implementation of the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture" proposed to 'refine and select a number of classic elements and iconic symbols that highlight cultural characteristic sand incorporate them into urbanization, city planning and design" [4]In 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Protection and Heritage in Urban and Rural Construction, which puts forward the systematic protection and inheritance of historical and cultural heritage, which is of great significance to the continuation of the historical lineage, the promotion of the high-quality development of urban and rural construction, the strengthening of cultural self-confidence, and the construction of a strong socialist cultural country. From this, we can

see that the urban micro-renewal driven by national culture is the best inheritance of the spiritual core of the city, and also the biggest boost to the development of the city.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF EBIAN COUNTY AND ITS MICRO-UPDATES**

#### **3.1. Overview of Ebian Yi Autonomous County**

Ebian Yi Autonomous County of Leshan City, located in the Liangshan Mountains in southwest Sichuan Province, is at the intersection of Chengdu's economy and the economic corridor of west of Panxi, and is the largest window of Yi culture. The county has seven towns under its jurisdiction, including Shaping Township and Xinlin Township, as well as six townships, including Yiping Township and Jinyan Township, with an area of 2,382 square kilometers. As of 2020, the county has a total of 153,000 people, 36.6% of whom are Yi, and is listed as a national key ecological functional area and the sixth batch of national ethnic unity and progress creation demonstration unit. In recent years, with the completion of the poverty alleviation work, Ebian County has renewed and reconstructed the public space based on the Yi culture, which has greatly improved the living environment and at the same time tapped into and preserved the local characteristic Yi culture.

#### **3.2. Background of Urban Micro-renewal in Ebian**

Every town has its unique humanistic and regional characteristics, only by effectively shaping the personality characteristics of small towns and deeply excavating their cultural features can they be made dynamic and thus enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness. There are many ethnic minorities in Southwest China, and in the planning process of urbanization each small town should make a deep impression with its unique characteristics according to its own reality. However, most of the towns and cities in Southwest China nowadays are similar to each other, lacking traditional ethnic customs and unique humanistic landscapes.

At present, many small towns in the construction planning did not find their own positioning more not combined with their own characteristics to carry out scientific planning, and in the planning, just simply copying. Therefore, it is necessary to start from the reality, to carry out the correct positioning, in order to scientifically plan and arrange the construction of small towns.

1) Enhance the County's overall image to the outside world.

Ebian County is located in Shaping Town, surrounded by mountains and crossed by Dadu River and Baisha River, County urban area is small, only 2.8 square kilometers, due to historic reasons, the city is crowded, old buildings, lack of cultural facilities. Through the creation of a cultural district, with the point for the surface, the urban land structure, block function, traffic organization, municipal facilities, living environment optimization, etc., select the high use rate of the lot for transformation, through the design of architecture and sculpture to guide the design of the block show inheritance of traditional culture, carry forward the characteristics of the Ebian, to create a cultural city.

2) Promote the development of the whole region's cultural and tourism industry.

In the past, due to the poor environment around the county, poor supporting services, it is difficult to attract tourists in the county, and tourists often just pass through the county. High-quality cultural tourism resources have not really been transformed into cultural tourism economy, Urban micro-renewal is the construction of cultural neighborhoods, the urban area into a tourist attraction, ecological restoration of the urban area, functional improvement, cultural empowerment, display of the connotation of the national culture of Ebian County, so that tourists also have to play in the county, attracting tourists to stay.

3) Satisfying the cultural needs of the people.

Nowadays, the people of Yi region have solved the problem of poverty, and the demand of the masses for cultural life is growing, through the construction of cultural districts, we have summarized and refined the self-confidence and boldness of Zhigealu shooting the sun, the steadfastness of Ganzi Arnoux in love, the hard work of Yi and Han people in building up the city, etc., and nourished the masses in a silent way. We actively develop a large stage for cultural performances, create high-quality cultural programs, and regularly organize performances by mass performers to show the excellent ethnic culture.

### 3.3. Content of Urban Micro-renewal in Ebian County

Ebian combined with the county renovation, Yi family new village construction and rural tourism development, to create a cultural development carrier, the initial formation of the county's rural "2 + 3 + 2 + N" cultural display places. Among them, the first "2" refers to the "Dadu River Water Culture Museum" "Lexi Anti-war Highway Memorial Museum" two museums; "3" refers to the "Dadu River Water Culture Museum" "Lexi Anti-war Highway Memorial Museum" two museums; "3" refers to the "Dadu River Water Culture Museum" "Lexi Anti-war Highway Memorial Museum" two museums. The "3" refers to the "Beifeng Mountain Park", "Qianchi Peach Expo Park" "Yangzhuba Park" three cultural parks; second "2" refers to the two cultural neighborhoods of "Memory Ebian Street" and "Yi Culture Street", "N" refers to N village-level folk customs. refers to N village-level folk culture halls, This paper selects "Memory Ebian Street", which can better reflect the Yi culture, as the research object, and analyzes the development of urban micro-renewal under the impetus of ethnic culture[5].

The "Memory Ebian" cultural block is located in Ebian County on the banks of the Baisha River including the Ma Liuwan Square, the Square of the Years of Love, and a 711-meter-long cultural scene wall. Since 2018, Ebian County invested a total of 21 million yuan to renovate and upgrade the neighborhood, deep and orderly excavation of the local Yi and Han cultural resources, in June 2019, began to transform the riverfront road, to create a "Memory of Ebian" cultural neighborhood constructed into the Ebian history and culture of the display lines and corridors, so that the masses of the people are subject to The neighborhood was awarded "Traditional Folk Performing Arts Cultural inheritance Base" in 2021, "New Ten Scenic Spots of Leshan City Cultural Tourism" in 2021 and "National Non-heritage Tourism Neighborhood" in 2022. The micro-renewal of the neighborhood focuses on the following three points.

#### 1) Highlighting Yi culture and creating a cultural corridor.

Prior to the renewal and reconstruction, there were only old residential building facades stores, and a small amount of greenery on one side of River Road. The old River Road had a series of problems such as aging street facilities, homogenization of architectural styles, and lack of use of public space. After the transformation of the neighborhood to the time as an axis, to create the "ancient call", "a step of a thousand years" and other six themes, combined with the existing retaining wall planning, the use of scenic walls, half-reliefs, two-dimensional half-relief, GRC sculpture, ancient copper culture sculpture, round sculpture, and interspersed with old photos and other techniques, integrated with the Yi ethnic group, and so on, Using the techniques of integrating the unique Yi astronomical calendar, Bimo culture, Yi writing and other essence of Yi culture, it reproduces the historical life scenes that Ebian people know in different periods. it shows the road of national rejuvenation in which the Ebian people concentrate on poverty alleviation and struggle hard, highlights the great historical changes of the Yi people "one step across a thousand years", and expresses the beautiful expectation of unity between Yi and Han compatriots, with full and rich emotions and a rich cultural atmosphere[6].

#### 2) Increase space openings.

Before the renovation, there were only a small number of open-air benches in the Ma Liu Wan Plaza for the elderly to play chess and cards, and there were few other public open spaces in the neighborhood. After the renovation, there are public open spaces throughout the

neighborhood. Among them, the sculptures of cows and horses attract children to play, the stone benches in Maliuwan Plaza are used by the elderly to gather for leisure and entertainment, and the seats around the storytelling and interactive landscape wall attract visitors to take photos and rest their feet. The leisure facilities of the entire cultural promenade drive the vitality of the crowd.

### 3) Integration into the natural and landscape environment.

The Ebian Memory Corridor is created by integrating the style of residential buildings, emphasizing the regionality in the vertical interface of the open space, and giving the public an intimate feeling. The waterfront area along the river is made into a sunken corridor, which increases the interaction with the environment[7]. It also preserves the old trees and the old waterworks in the Mallory Bay Plaza.

## 4. MICRO-UPDATE EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

The research methods include literature review method, activity labeling method, interview recording method, observation and photo recording method. Literature review includes collecting and organizing Ebian county records, related reports, and research on Ebian county by experts and scholars, and combining with the theoretical research on urban micro-renewal. The field research was conducted to understand the renewal of public space in the Ebian neighborhood of Memory and the evaluation of the neighborhood by local residents. In January 2023, one weekday and one weekend were selected for activity marking and research analysis, and the observation and marking content included the characteristics of the people visiting the neighborhood and the behavioral activities of the people. Field interviews were conducted with people in the neighborhood to understand their satisfaction with the renewal of the neighborhood.

In the field interviews, there were 10 interviewees, all of whom were residents of Ebian County. The age ratios of the interviewees were: 10% below 18 years old; 50% between 18 and 35 years old; 30% between 35 and 60 years old; and 10% above 60 years old, with 20% Yi and 80% Han. The results of the interviews were summarized and the following conclusions were drawn.

### 4.1. Residents Were Generally Satisfied with the Micro-renewal of the Memory Ebian Block.

According to the results of the interviews, the residents of Ebian County are generally satisfied with the results of the micro-renewal of the neighborhoods, and all ten interviewees said that they were satisfied with the overall appearance of the buildings, the forms of expression, and the aesthetics and quality of the landscape walls, and that the overall evaluation had reached a relatively satisfactory level. In the interviews with local residents, the residents affirmed that the urban environment and public space in the micro-renewal of memory Ebian neighborhoods have not only maintained the Yi and Han cultures of Ebian County, but also greatly improved the material space of Ebian County as a whole. However, some residents also pointed out that there are still many deficiencies in the micro-renewal of Ebian neighborhood, such as the lack of open space, small community management, and insufficient participation of residents.

### 4.2. Insufficient Efforts Have been Made to Publicize and Promote All Aspects of Culture, Including Sculpture, Landscaping, and Signage.

Most of the Han Chinese interviewees said that they did not know much about the Yi stories presented in the neighborhood, and that there was a lack of introduction on the scenic wall, as well as a lack of corresponding content on the county government's public website and public number. For Han Chinese residents, this cultural unfamiliarity makes it difficult for them to form a sense of cultural identity, and the effect of Yi and Han people living in harmony and working together is greatly

reduced. At the same time, the young respondents do not understand the history of Ebian, which is also a difficulty in creating a cultural atmosphere in the neighborhood. The micro renewal of public space needs to maintain the cultural authenticity, which requires using the opportunity of designing and renewing the micro public space to organize a series of community activities and establish a certain operation mechanism to jointly advocate and maintain the community culture and neighborly relations. Ebian county government has organized and organized 16 cultural and artistic programs with national characteristics and characteristics of the times, and organized more than 100 mass performers to organize regular mass performances on holidays and weekends. Combined with the memory of Ebian neighborhood hardware, to enhance the soft power of culture, interpretation of the excellent traditional culture of the Yi people. However, local residents know less about this, and the publicity and promotion of this series of activities are not enough.

#### **4.3. The Top-down Renewal Model Has Led to a Lack of Resident Participation.**

Hong Ma et al. argue that micro-renewal of community spaces maintains the level of public participation at a "minimal" level [8]. The term "minimal level" means that decisions should be made at the neighborhood level, at the community level, and so on. The term "lowest level" refers to the fact that issues at the neighborhood level should be decided at the neighborhood level, issues at the community level should be decided at that level, and so on. The scale and content of micro-renewal projects in neighborhoods are designed to "zoom in" on the most immediate concerns of neighborhood residents, thereby encouraging them to take an active role in public activities that are closely related to their immediate interests and daily lives. In this interview, most of the interviewees believe that the public has not been involved in the renewal of the neighborhood, and that the neighborhood has not been adequately researched. After the construction of the neighborhood, the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress passed the Regulations on Comprehensive Management of Habitat Environment in Ebian Yi Autonomous County by the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress, which provided legal support for the problem of "dirtiness and disorder". Ebian county town hall has issued the "Memory Ebian" neighborhood management measures, implemented institutionalized and open management, publicized on the city's public screen, 14 departments have taken the initiative to undertake the cleaning work of the "public area" under their jurisdiction, and carry out weekly cleaning and maintenance of facilities. Neighborhood management and maintenance is government-led, with insufficient participation, motivation and responsibility on the part of the population.

#### **4.4. A Single Industry and an Immature Multi-party Operation Model.**

The Memory Ebian Cultural Neighborhood has attracted more than 40 enterprises and merchants from the Liangshan area and other parts of Leshan to invest and build their businesses. With the county agricultural investment company as the core, a number of agricultural specialties and geographical indications products sales service points have been established, and one poverty alleviation point has been set up in the whole county, providing 12 disabled people with employment in Yi embroidery and on-site processing and sales of agricultural specialties. So far the Memory Ebian Cultural Neighborhood has created more than 500 jobs in the performing and service industries, with an annual per capita income of more than 5,000 yuan. However, the commercial operation of restaurants, water bars, tea houses and other catering industry, the industry is relatively single, residents in the process of playing can be consumed in the place of choice is also relatively small, around the consumption of the pulling power is insufficient.

The micro-renewal of urban public space needs to put government departments, residents, enterprises, social organizations and professional teams on a communication platform to jointly promote the implementation of the project. Through this, multiple stakeholders can express their wishes and demands, and residents can be mobilized to actively participate in the preliminary analysis, specific development, and maintenance management of the project. The establishment of a multi-stakeholder

platform will help to synthesize a bottom-up, long-term and sustainable micro-renewal plan[1]. The neighborhood mainly adopts the government-supported, enterprise-led and market-operated mode. The neighborhood mainly adopts the government-supported, enterprise-led and market-operated mode, such as the Gan ugly woman's art troupe adopts this mode. This also means that the participation of residents and social organizations is insufficient, and it is not easy to form a bottom-up micro-renewal model.

## **5. DEVELOPMENT COUNTERMEASURES FOR URBAN MICRO-RENEWAL IN EBIAN COUNTY**

According to the results of the interviews and the analysis of the research, the residents are generally satisfied with the results of the evaluation of the ethnic culture shown in the renewal of the Memory Ebian neighborhood, but there are still some problems. In this regard, the following suggestions are made for the next stage of urban micro-renewal in Ebian County.

### **5.1. The Renewal of Neighborhoods Should Follow the Principles of Originality, Wholeness and Sustainability.**

Micro-renewal of urban public space emphasizes attention to the preservation and development of local culture, and guarantees the authenticity of the space's physical environment and residents' lives by integrating the daily lives of users and aborigines.

### **5.2. Improvement of the Level of Construction and Management of Cultural Districts through the Participation and Sharing of Residents.**

Adherence to the people-centred development concept, active participation of residents in community governance, and standardization of management through the establishment of rules and regulations have enhanced the effectiveness of neighbourhood management.

### **5.3. Increase Channels and Efforts to Publicize and Promote All Aspects of Culture, Including Sculpture, Landscaping, and Signage.**

Through the introduction of sculptures, landscapes and landmarks in the neighborhood, more people will learn about the Yi culture and local residents will develop stronger cultural confidence thus cultivating a better soil and atmosphere for urban renewal.

### **5.4. The Balanced Development of Multiple Business Modes Creates a Mature and Stable Business Model.**

Developing new businesses according to local conditions, forming a mature commercial street in the Memory Ebian neighborhood, boosting consumption in the county and fully revitalizing the economy. It will provide a reliable sample for other streets to be remodeled and explore the business model after micro-renewal in other ethnic minority areas.

## **6. SUMMARY**

The special characteristics of the culture of ethnic minority areas determine the special characteristics of their urban micro-renewal. Through the research on the "Memory Ebian" cultural district in Ebian Yi Autonomous County, we focus on analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the district, and summarize the development suggestions of urban micro-renewal promoted by ethnic culture, so as to add theoretical bases for the model of urban micro-renewal in ethnic minority areas. This will provide a theoretical basis for the study of urban micro-renewal in ethnic minority areas. The renovation and

upgrading of the “Memory Ebian” cultural neighborhood is an important part of Ebian County's positive response to the Opinions on Strengthening Historical and Cultural Protection and Inheritance in Urban and Rural Construction of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, and a useful exploration of “cultural empowerment” for urban renewal. It is a useful exploration of "cultural empowerment" for urban renewal. Through the construction of the cultural district, the myths and legends of the Ebian Yi people, the Yi language and Yi books, religion and other national cultures and non-heritage projects have a publicity window, reflecting the cultural charm of the Ebian Yi people, showing the excellent traditional culture of the Ebian County, and greatly enhancing the cultural self-confidence of the masses.

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