

Research Article

An Approach to Mapping the Sense of the City: Making Invisible “Constraints” Tangible

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Abstract

The lives of residents in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, China, coexist with protected cultural relics, bringing challenges to the protection and management of cultural relics, as well as different degrees of impact and restrictions to the daily lives of residents. This article implements an artistic strategy of cultural mapping, combining the concepts of a sense of place with community participation. Its method emphasizes the emotional attachment of community members to the place and reshapes their sense of identity in the process of community and art practice. Finally, the article discusses how community citizens can use art in their collective memory to deepen the sense of place and alleviate the contradiction between cultural relic protection and management in the daily lives of residents in terms of aesthetics and how to improve residents' awareness of cultural relic protection in this process.

Keywords: Cultural Mapping, Sense of Place, Community Engagement, Design of Mapping Methods, Citizen Art and Aesthetics

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Introduction

This study is conducted in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Northwestern Yunnan, China. Jianchuan County is rich in historical and cultural resources and has unique regional and ethnic characteristics. At present, the Jianchuan County People’s Government has announced information on 253 cultural relics protection units (List of Immovable Cultural Relics in the Third National Cultural Relics Census of Jianchuan County, 2021). These include six National Key Cultural Relics Protection Sites, six Yunnan Provincial Cultural Relics Protection Sites, 12 Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture Cultural Relics Protection Sites, and 47 Jianchuan County Cultural Relics Protection Sites, while the rest are newly discovered cultural relics sites that have not yet been valued. National key and provincial cultural relics spaces are mainly concentrated in Jinhua Town, Shaxi Town, and Diannan Town (List of Cultural Relics Protection Units in Jianchuan County, 2013).

The spatial distribution of cultural relics in Jinhua Town is the most concentrated, with the largest proportion being cultural relics with high historical value. This study investigates and assesses the current status of 40 ancient folk houses, 33 ancient temples, six cave temples and stone carvings, 15 ancient bridges, and four stone pagodas and stone pailou artifacts (Figure 1).

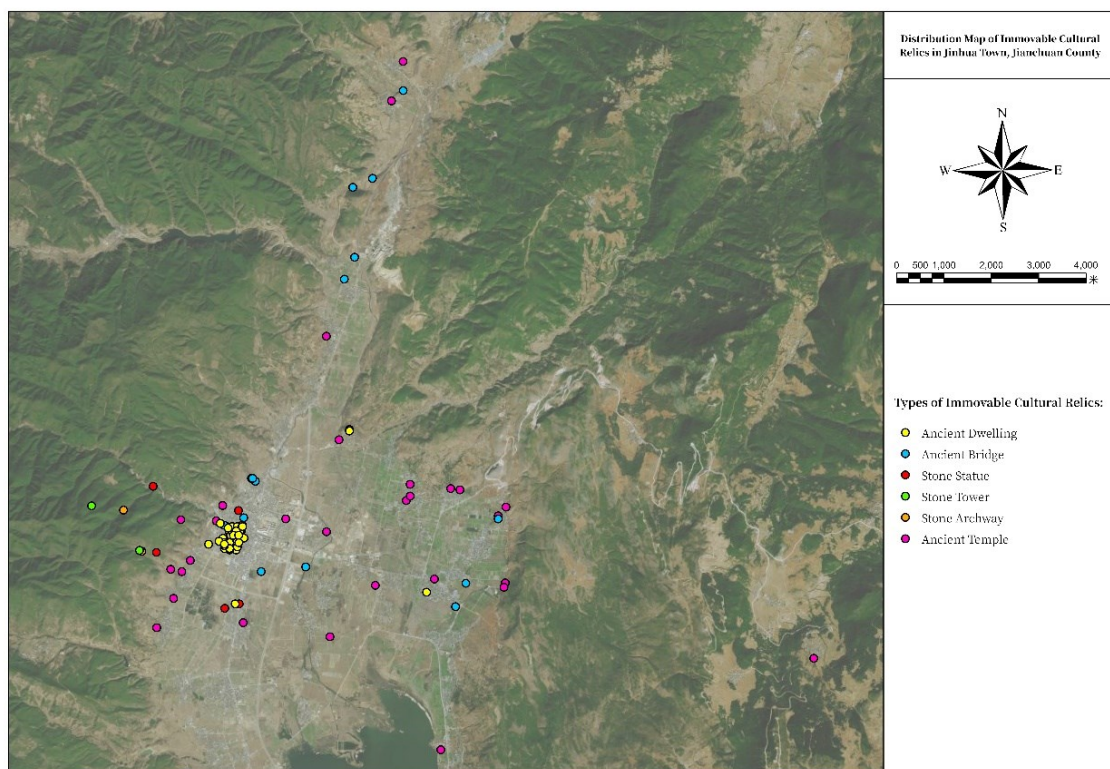


Figure 1 Distribution map of immovable cultural relics in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2023-2024

In this study, long-term, in-depth observations were conducted within the framework of qualitative research, using fieldwork as the main method of data collection.

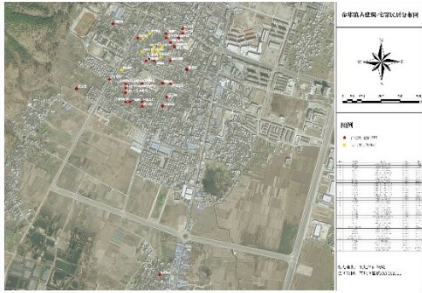

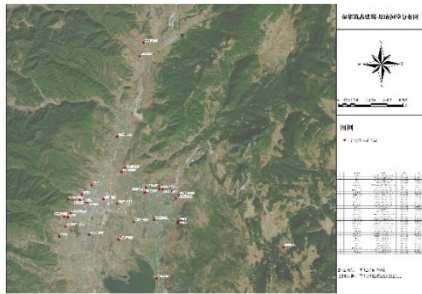

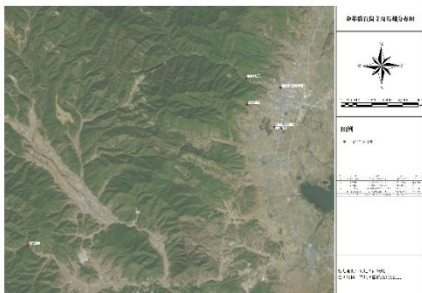

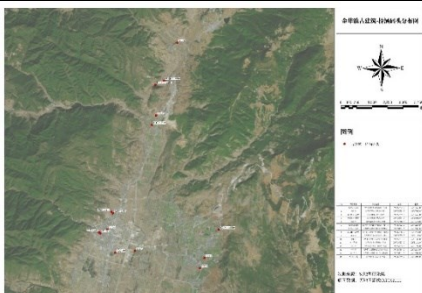

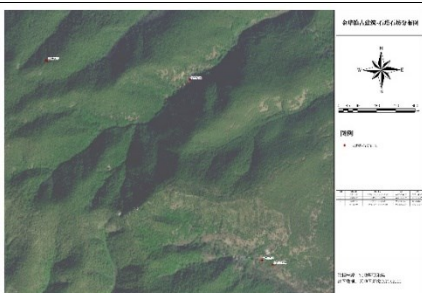

Firstly, the author invited managers from the local cultural and tourism departments in Jianchuan to attend multiple in-depth interviews to understand the current status and challenges of cultural relics protection and management (Table 1).

Table 1 Interviews and findings

Interviewee	Key Information
Management Group	“Under financial constraints, the protection of non-key cultural relics in most villages, especially ancient temples, faces huge challenges.”
	“Most of the ancient temple sites in the village are still in use and managed by elderly women, who tend to be leaders of the ‘Mama Association.’ Except during temple fairs, they burn incense at a certain time every morning. Our management work needs to be based on long-standing local customs, and these women are undoubtedly the most suitable managers at present.”
	“The same is true for the ancient dwellings in Jianchuan Ancient City. Since the residents have lived in them for generations, they have very close contact with the ancient dwellings, and they are all traditional wooden structures. Part of our work focuses on preventing potential fire hazards in life, as well as replacing or repairing damaged local building components.”
	“Before better management measures were taken, the best managers of ancient dwellings were probably the family members living in them. First of all, this was their home, so they would naturally take good care of it. Secondly, my house is also made of wood, and the maintenance of wood requires the ‘breath of life.’ In many uninhabited houses, the wood decays faster. However, this needs to be based on the popularization of good cultural relics knowledge. It is important to raise awareness of the whole community to protect cultural relics on their own, so this has become the focus of our cultural relics protection and management work.”

There are many cultural relics in Jinhua Town, and the residents come in frequent contact with them in their daily lives. Cultural heritage management departments experience many blind spots in the protection of these historical buildings because some are the private property of residents, and others are the public property of community members. In this special cultural and historical context, it is difficult for protection and management work to go deep into every specific link. The results of the field investigation further verified the difficulties and challenges in the protection and management of cultural relics, as previously described by members of the management group.

Table 2 Investigating the current status of cultural relics in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County

Type of Cultural Relic	GIS Map	Empirical Photos
Ancient Folk Houses		
Ancient Temples		
Cave Temples and Stone Carvings		
Ancient Bridges		
Stone Pagodas and Stone Pailou		

source: GPS data was collected on-site by the author, GIS maps were drawn by the author, and photographs taken by Zhou & Buranaut, 2023-2024

Secondly, according to the field investigations, the vast majority of cultural relics are still closely related to the lives and customs of local people, especially houses and ancient temples (Table 2). In most cases, residents and cultural relics coexist in the same space.


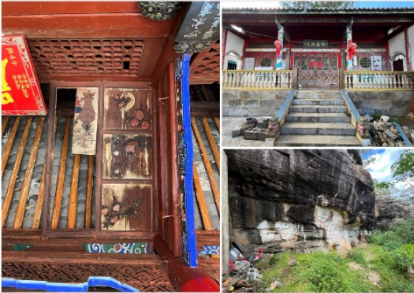
1) The 39 ancient folk houses in Jinhua Town are concentrated in the Jianchuan Ancient City District. Most are closely related to the daily lives and production of residents. Field investigations reveal that the ancient buildings on Ximen Street (including nine ancient houses), listed as national key cultural relics, have been inhabited since the Ming Dynasty. The remaining ancient houses are historical buildings in existence since the Qing Dynasty, and people have also lived in them from ancient times to the present (Table 2, Ancient Folk Houses).

2) There are one or two ancient temples in every community or village. The worship practices of each community are different, so their opening also differs. They are usually managed by a middle-aged or elderly woman. This type of cultural relic space also interacts closely with the daily lives of residents. Population contact is complex, and mobility is prevalent (Table 2, Ancient Temples).

3) Ancient bridges are distributed between communities, between communities and farmland, or along ancient roads and rivers. At present, the ancient bridges between communities are still used by people, while those connecting communities with farmland and along ancient roads and rivers have been replaced by modern roads or bridges (Table 2, Ancient Bridges).

4) Cave temples and stone carvings, stone pagodas, and stone pailou are generally distributed in natural or religious environments. Under the influence of history and religious customs, they are still spiritual objects that people worship or offer sacrifices to, and residents have a strong awareness about protecting these types of cultural relics (Table 2, Cave Temples and Stone Carvings, Stone Pagodas, and Stone Pailou).

Table 3 Observations and findings

Problems	Empirical Photos
<p>The protection and utilization (tourism) of cultural relics space is insufficient, leading to conflict between cultural relics protection and the daily lives of residents.</p> <p>For example, the protection department has installed cameras, fire-fighting facilities, smoke alarms, and protection boundary stakes outside the houses near the cultural relics (which are also living areas). These facilities have affected people’s lives to a certain extent.</p>	
<p>Residents have limited knowledge of these cultural relics, resulting in insufficient daily management and maintenance.</p> <p>For example, due to the lack of awareness concerning the value and protection of cultural relics, people often need to repair these damaged cultural relics at will, ignore them, or manage them inadequately.</p>	

In the multi-faceted factors of cultural relic protection, management, and tourism, residents’ daily lives are affected and restricted to varying degrees. During the field investigation, the author interviewed 23 residents living in ancient folk houses and 29 local people who worshiped at ancient temples, including nine managers and 20 pilgrims. This situation was further confirmed by the following key oral information provided by the interviewees:

Table 4 Interviews and findings

Interviewee	Key Information
Ancient residential household group	“The emergency sign installed at home is scary at night because it glows green.”
	“The large water tank and firebox installation used for fire prevention does not create a big impact, but it is not very aesthetically pleasing.”
	“I am somewhat uncomfortable with cameras, so I usually try to avoid them.”
	“The alarm has never gone off. We usually pay attention to fire prevention.”
	“My house is on the roadside. Tourists will come in to see the cultural relics sign and protection boundary stakes at the door. Sometimes, they walk around in the yard and take pictures. For this reason, we can only enter and exit through the small door and keep the main door locked.”
	“Although my house is not on the roadside, sometimes they will come in. I am still very friendly and introduce my house to them. But when I am busy, I can’t deal with it.”
Ancient temple managers and pilgrim group	“I don’t like tourists coming in, especially to my bedroom, mainly because they like to take pictures.”
	“Several people from the village take turns in burning incense and cleaning the house. They come around 6 or 7 every morning and lock it up when there is nothing else to do.”
	“These days, I also host an event that involves organizing the elderly women in the village to come here to chant sutras, buy vegetables, and cook. Those who come to burn incense can eat together, but most of them are locals.”
	“The community has sent people to repair this temple. We usually fix small parts ourselves when they break. For bigger repairs, sometimes people in our village pool money to hire someone to repair it and other times the government repairs it.”
	“The address of the temple has not changed from ancient times to the present, but various parts of the temple have been repaired intermittently.”
	“If we have money, we can repair it effectively and try to restore it to its original appearance. If we don’t have money, we can only ensure that it may be used normally.”
	“Paint is used to protect the wood. There are generally no rules on what colors to use. Usually, it is customary to use the colors seen locally.”
	“The temple is quite old. I don’t know much else about it. The inscriptions can be seen on the stele. Every stele records the history of the temple.”

Research questions and objectives

Research Question 1: How can the contradiction between cultural heritage protection, utilization, and residents’ daily lives be balanced?

Research Question 2: How can residents’ awareness of actively protecting cultural heritage spaces be improved?

Research Objective 1: To map the sense of the city based on the cultural mapping methodology and combine the concepts of a sense of place and community participation.

Research Objective 2: Throughout the implementation process, emotional attachment and sense of identity are strengthened through the participation of community members to enhance awareness of cultural relics protection.

Theoretical and methodological approaches

Cultural mapping to make the intangible visible

Cultural mapping projects often begin with the identification of tangible cultural assets, engaging community members to identify and categorize local cultural spaces, activities, and resources while attempting to capture more symbolic and intangible aspects of a place (Duxbury, 2015). Cultural mapping is a practical, participatory planning and development tool and an emerging research model (Duxbury et al., 2015), as well as being an ethnographic approach, much like anthropological thought (and the concept of “culture”) is a scientific method for systematically collecting social data (Strang, 2010).

Cultural intangibles include traditions, stories, values, and meanings, both in relation to the past and expectations for the future of the site. The process of data collection and analysis follows the concept of hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2013). The recent Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place, adopted by ICOMOS in 2008, defines the spirit of place as tangible (architecture, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colors, smells, etc.) In other words, giving meaning, value, emotion, and mystery to the place (ICOMOS, 2008). Maps are often used to study the geographical nature of stories, representing their spatiotemporal structure and relationship to places. Maps are not only used to decipher and locate stories but also to tell them. Oral stories, written stories, and audio-visual stories have been widely mapped (Caquard & Cartwright, 2014).

The Declaration of Foz Do Iguaçu, drafted by ICOMOS for the Americas in 2008, clearly states that the tangible and intangible components of heritage are essential to protecting the identity of the communities that create and disseminate culturally and historically significant spaces (ICOMOS, 2008). Cultural Mapping: Making the Intangible Visible is a key dimension of current research in the field of cultural mapping. This area of research focuses on mapping the intangible aspects of a place (e.g., stories, history, etc.), those aspects that provide a “sense of place” and identity to a particular place, and how these meanings and values may be based on embodied experiences. It aims to capture those elements that are not easily counted or quantified but are key to understanding a place and what it means to residents and visitors (Longley & Duxbury, 2016).

In *Story-telling about Place: Engaging Citizens in Cultural Mapping*, M. Sharon Jeannotte describes and analyzes community efforts to tell “stories of place” and positions these stories within a cultural mapping protocol emphasizing tangible cultural assets. She explores how citizen engagement is linked to mapping the intangible cultural assets of these communities (Jeannotte, 2016). In the oral history tradition passed down from generation to generation, these storytelling projects aim to pass on this legacy, preserving and sharing local history, identity, ways of knowing, and knowledge for future generations, suggesting that “sustainable development” is often more closely tied to intangible cultural assets than to tangible assets (Longley & Duxbury, 2016). *Mapping Community Identity: Safeguarding the Memories of a City’s Historic Core* This article explores the critical role of community memory in protecting the intangible cultural heritage of a city’s historic core by narrating stories associated with landmark buildings in the city center. Roberta Cauchi-Santoro points out that cultural maps become “a means of making intangible cultural heritage more visible and understandable, including information that is excluded from mainstream literature or not recognized by official power structures” (Cauchi-Santoro, 2016).

Community engagement and artistic approaches based on a sense of place

Cultural mapping is a rapidly growing and transforming methodology in the field of art and education research as practice-led creative methods become more acceptable and common (Haseman, 2007). With the development of practice-led or artistic research paradigms, various forms of expressive practices, rehearsal processes and studio techniques, collaborative, interdisciplinary forms of decision-making, and other types of knowledge unique to creative labor are also evolving (Longley & Duxbury, 2016).

“Felt sense” is a core concept of community experience but has been missing in past mapping (Duxbury, 2019). *Artistic Approaches to Cultural Mapping: Activating Imaginaries and Means of Knowing* is

a book on artistic methods of cultural mapping, published in 2019, bringing together cutting-edge research and works, from ideological awareness to methodological change. The book discusses the sensory value of seeing and hearing, emphasizing the importance of aesthetics in social self-expression and self-representation, establishing a sense of identity through a variety of artistic expressions and performance modes, applying the discourse logic of artistic openness to challenge the “realism” and “copying” traditions of mapping. In this context, the artistic approach to cultural mapping emphasizes the importance of community participation and aesthetics as key components of community self-expression and self-representation. There is a growing belief among those involved in cultural mapping that incorporating artists and artistic methods into mapping fosters grassroots and experimental initiatives within participatory and creative community planning processes. Furthermore, “arts-led conversations” can be positioned as a form of civic engagement in community decision-making, identity formation, and participatory mapping (Duxbury, 2019).

In a conceptual framework for community engagement built on art, Doug Borwick pointed out the categories of community participation in Chapter Four of *Building Communities*, not audiences. The first category, arts-based programming, supports community economic construction and education, while the second category, art as a community citizen, supports community interaction, providing space and expertise (Borwick, 2012).

Borrip and Moore (2012) pointed out in *Economic Development and the Arts* that “arts play a vital role in maintaining the world economy and revitalizing cities”. The article introduces eight strategies for sustainable development, aiming to illustrate how arts and cultural organizations can enhance economic vitality. The eight economic and social capital development strategies based on the arts and their significance are presented in Figure 2.

Strategies	Significance
Job Creation	Nurture artists and small cultural organizations as businesses and microenterprises to increase employment.
Create and Enhance Identity	Develop civic pride and responsibility through good “place-making” and community-centered arts practices.
Build Capacity/Social Capital	Strengthen connections between neighbors, cultural organizations, and businesses through collective cultural experience.
Stimulate Trade and Tourism	Create the right conditions for cultural tourism and engage with it to bring new resources to the community.
Attract Investment	Support artists and artists’ living/working spaces as anchors for building local economies.
Economic Diversification	Focus or cluster arts organizations as retail anchors and activity generators to attract and support other enterprises.
Enhance Value	Leverage the proximity of cultural amenities and the artists’ touch to improve the property and increase its value.
Retain Wealth	Support local artists and business owners to keep funds in the community.

Figure 2 Eight economic and social capital development strategies based on the arts and their significance
source: Borrip & Moore, 2012

Among the eight strategies mentioned above, Tom Borrip and Stephanie Moore emphasized the importance of creating and enhancing identity and building capacity/social capital because people must feel part of a collective identity and be able to work together to make the local economy successful (Borrip & Moore, 2012).

The article “Sense(s) of the city: Cultural mapping in Porto, Portugal” demonstrates how to map the sense of a city based on the sense of place concept. Three cultural mapping workshops were designed to collect and map information on the sensory attributes and characteristics of Porto and its cultural resources, including information belonging to its secular cultural landscape. Some potential for collaboration with local artists in the sense of place research was explored (Savić, 2017). Savić designed and implemented three themed workshops based on the form of cultural mapping workshops. The art project was designed for people’s feedback on spaces and places. This study showed that this tool is easily adapted to other cultural contexts. Not only can the technology be used to explore existing characteristics but also the connection between places and people’s memories, attitudes, opinions, and preferences. The practice model guided by Savić’s approach is presented in Figure 3.

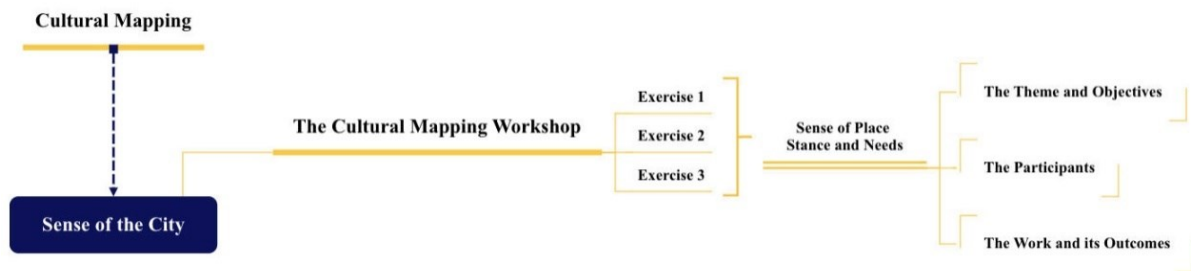


Figure 3 Savić's sense(s) of the city method model
source: Savić, 2017

Jelena Savić pointed out that there are three trends in artistic projects tackling sense of place: 1) focusing on the need for a multi-sensory approach to urban reality. 2) pointing out and criticizing the predominance of the visual in contemporary city experiences, and 3) exploring and capturing a sense of place in diverse cultural contexts (Savić, 2017). They can be understood as researchers' rethinking on the theory of sense of place and theoretical positioning based on needs. This is particularly important in cultural mapping practices dominated by the concept of a sense of place. It is the core of research design and determines what methods are chosen to capture “feeling data” or intangible cultural heritage and whether a new theoretical perspective or academic significance can be provided for the existing concept of a sense of place in the methods and practices created.

Edward Relph regards a “sense of place” as a state of having deep feelings and understanding of a place formed through direct experience and perception. Relph believes that different places have different identities and meanings for different individuals and groups. The identity of a place is created through the experience and intention of individuals and groups, including the physical environment, activities and events of the place, and people's experience and meaning of the place (Relph, 1976). Relph emphasizes the multidimensional experience of place and the deep connection between people and the environment, which play an important role in forming individual and collective identities. Yi-Fu Tuan focuses on the difference between space and place and how to transform space into a meaningful place through personal experience (Tuan, 1977). Tuan's theory provides a comprehensive perspective to understand the formation of a sense of place. In other words, the place is not just a physical existence but also the result of giving meaning through personal and collective experience. Cresswell focuses on the individual or collective perception and emotional experience associated with a specific place (Cresswell, 2004).

Lucy Lippard emphasized the importance of walking methods in dealing with a sense of place in *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*, pointing out that “sense of place does arise from the senses” and “place can be felt as an extension of the body, especially the walking body, passing through and becoming part of the landscape” (Lippard, 1997). Through multi-sensory participation, community members can more fully express and record their emotions and memories of the place, thereby providing stronger support for the protection and planning of cultural landscapes (Mason, 2002). Rodaway uses touch, smell, and hearing as elements of the human multi-sensory experience of place, thus offsetting his emphasis on the visual characteristics of place in previous studies (Rodaway, 2002). The trend of the “sensory revolution” has permeated design and art practices related to urban space (Zardini & Schivelbusch, 2005). The multi-sensory experience method not only enhances the depth and breadth of cultural mapping but also promotes a deeper understanding and identification of community members with a sense of place (Degen, 2008). Cultural mapping, as an important tool for understanding the sense of place, has introduced multi-sensory theory in recent years to fully capture the complexity of place (Pink, 2015). This approach is very useful in cultural mapping because it can capture a richer and more comprehensive place experience (Howes, 2021).

Using the method of “going walkabout,” cultural mapping explores the historical and contemporary relationship between people and their local environment. In *Mapping Histories: Cultural Landscapes and Walkabout Methods*, Veronica Strang also points out that “walkabouts” provide a relaxed and productive

environment for “interviews,” “observations,” and “workshops” in which researchers collect social, historical, and ecological data based on the site. As a participatory and observational activity, this process focuses on people’s interaction with places because places not only reflect the materialization of cultural beliefs and values but also serve as repositories of information and practical memory. The representations produced by cultural mapping can be interrogated in many ways and may also be viewed as a reflective and collaborative process (Strang, 2010). Strang points out that “for collecting and analyzing ethnographic and ethnohistorical data, cultural mapping provides researchers with one of the most useful and informative methods (Strang, 2010).” Strang believes that this process reflects the method of visual research, as defined by Banks and Morphy: making visual representations, analysis of existing statements, and collaborative production of visual representations (Banks & Morphy, 1997). Visual experience is usually achieved through photography, painting, and video recording, which can intuitively show the physical characteristics and landscape of the place (Tuan, 1977). For example, through recording and sound mapping, the sound landscape of the place can be captured, which is very important for understanding the atmosphere and daily life of specific places (Schafer, 1993). Multi-sensory theory emphasizes the understanding and recording of the sense of place not only through vision but also through multiple sensory experiences such as hearing, smell, touch, etc. (Paul, 1994).

Design for mapping the sense of the city

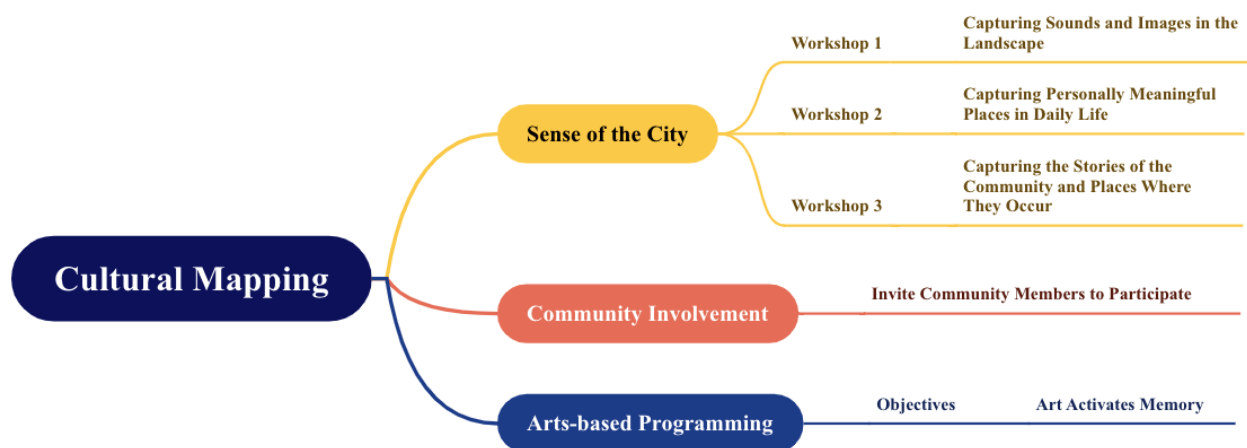


Figure 4 The methodological framework for mapping the sense of the city in this study
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2023-2024

Based on the theoretical and methodological background of cultural mapping, sense of place, and community participation, as well as the current status of cultural relics in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, and the challenges faced in their protection and management, a community art project is designed and implemented in this study under the theme of capturing sense of place. The methodological framework is shown in Figure 4.

Workshop 1: Capturing sounds and images in the landscape

The first workshop was designed to allow the author to explore and record the sounds and images of the natural and cultural landscapes along the Yongfeng River using the walkabout method. Secondly, the collected “landscape sounds” and “landscape images” were passed on to community participants, who then expressed what they heard and saw in the form of paintings.

Theme and objectives

Using sound and images to activate the community members’ memory and imagination of the landscape helps to strengthen their emotional attachment to the community environment and reshape their sense of identity. This emotional attachment to the community and sense of identity is expressed in the paintings of community members, depicting their memories and imagination of the familiar environment.

Participants

The 57 participants were art students living and studying in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, comprising 26 girls and 21 boys, aged between 19 and 24, with an average age of 23.5 years. They had good painting skills and at least three years of painting experience. They were all locals of Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, and have lived and studied there for a long time, thereby meeting the workshop criteria.

The work and its outcomes

The first part of this workshop was completed outdoors in three days. The author used a river as a clue, observed, recorded, and took photos by walking, and recorded the landscape characteristics along the river from auditory to visual. This river was chosen for hiking and collecting sound and image data for the following reasons:

- 1) This river passes through Jinhua Town, and the cultural relics are most densely distributed and have the highest cultural relics value.
- 2) The river passes through the main urban area of Jianchuan County, which has the highest population density.
- 3) The river passes through different areas and landscapes of Jinhua Town, including mountains and forests, urban areas, rural areas, farmlands, and breeding areas.

These factors are considered to increase the richness of sound and image data (Figure 5).

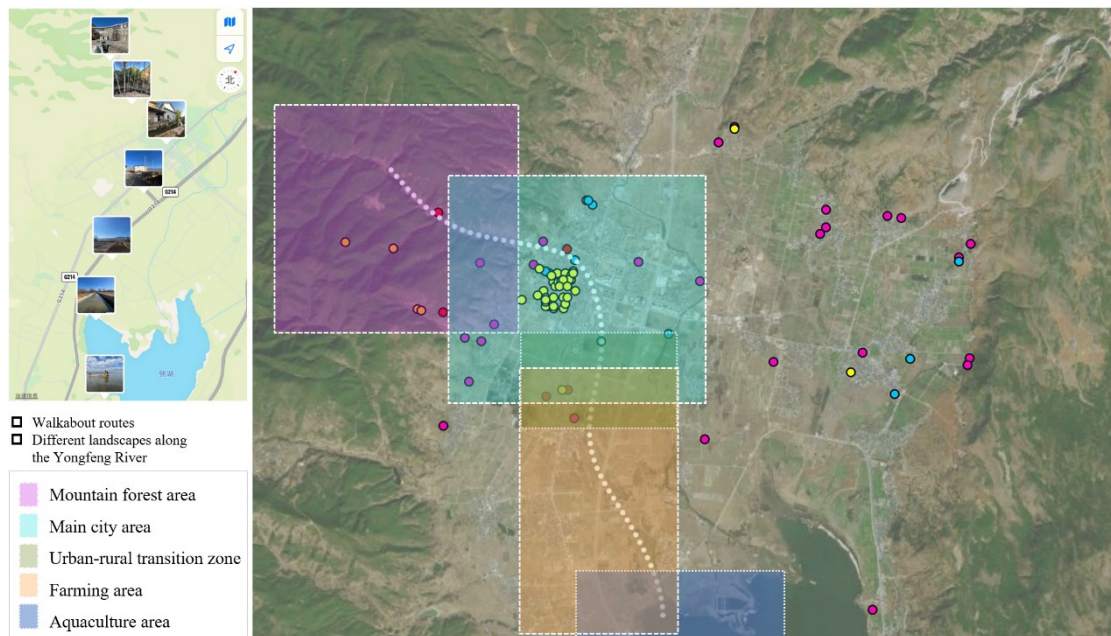


Figure 5 Walkabout routes, regional and landscape features, and information on the distribution of surrounding cultural relics
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2023-2024

The second part of the workshop was conducted in the classroom, lasting one day from project introduction to completion of the painting. Based on the sounds and images provided by the author, 57 art students produced their own works, reflecting the landscape of different areas in Jinhua Town. During the process of creation, the participants were guided by sounds and images, activating memories and associations of their hometown.



Figure 6 Workshop 1 scene
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024



Figure 7 Workshop 1 outcomes: Paintings by 57 local students
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

Workshop 2: Capturing personally meaningful places in daily life

This workshop involved interviews at different locations in the community, with records made by marking maps. The locations were selected from places in Jinhua Town where people gather or where there is a large flow of people. For example, cultural squares, parks, public leisure, or entertainment places. Community members were invited to walk, observe, and mark places of special significance to them on the map or recall a route they often walk, stroll, or travel. Each person was asked to provide at least three locations. These places may be part of their daily lives, such as workplaces, gathering places, places where important community events occur, or places with important personal memories.

Theme and objectives

The theme of this workshop was the meaningful places in daily life, with its goal being to create a collective memory map. Capturing places in daily life that are meaningful to individuals can reveal new relationships between contemporary residents and their living environment. These places reflect the collective memory in the making.

Participants

The participants consisted of 30 residents living in historical buildings in Jinhua Town, Jianchuan County, and 30 residents from various villages (60 participants in total). They differed in age, occupation, and gender and were all permanent residents of Jinhua Town.

The work and its outcomes

A total of 60 items of valid data were collected. Data analysis showed that among the places of personal significance identified by the 60 residents, certain places were frequently mentioned. Among them, Manxian Forest and Jinhua Mountain were mentioned the most, indicating that these two places occupy very important positions in people’s hearts.

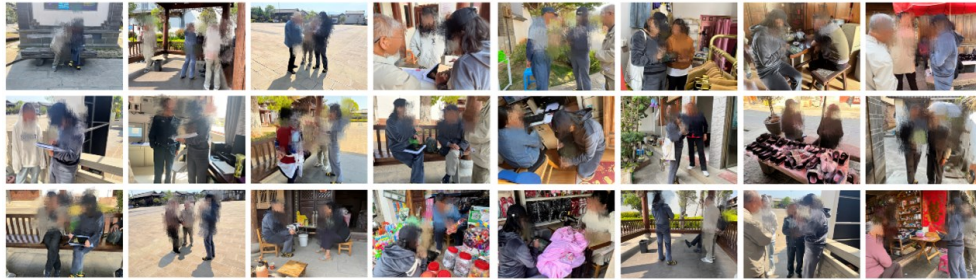


Figure 8 Workshop 2 scene
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

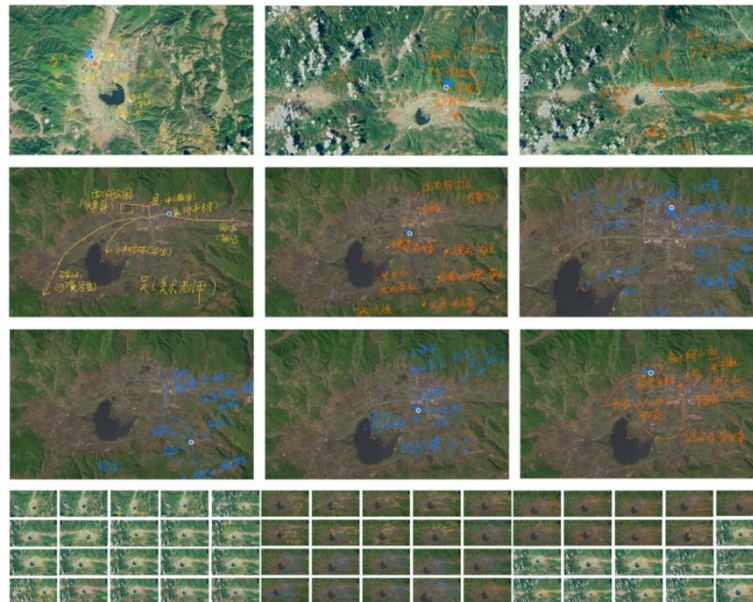


Figure 9 Workshop 2 outcomes: 60 residents provided personal place markers
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

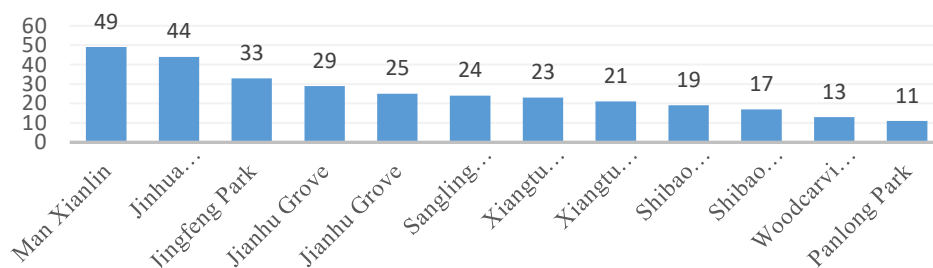


Figure 10 The most mentioned places, calculated based on the locations provided by 60 residents
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

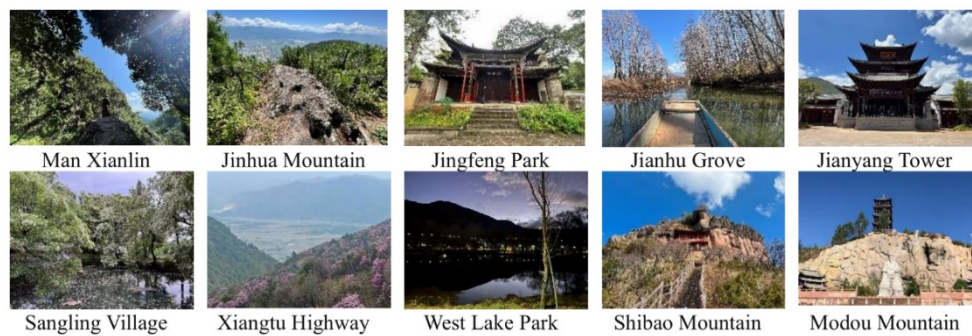


Figure 11 Most frequently mentioned locations
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

Workshop 3: Capturing the stories of the community and places where they occur

Interviews were conducted at different locations in Jinhua Town, recorded through notes, audio, or video, and residents were encouraged to share local stories. The mobile sites were set up in different locations of the four main blocks and surrounding villages, with large crowds or traffic, such as cultural squares, parks, public leisure or entertainment venues, etc. A total of 20 fixed collection locations were set up.



Figure 12 Fixed collection sites
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

Theme and objectives

Local stories and place collection. Stories related to places. Most of these stories relate to the local area, fully reflecting the collective memory of local people and the places related to them.

Participants

At least one person was in each mobile recording booth or video station; 10 people came from the county seat of Jinhua Town and 10 from the villages (20 people in total).

The work and its outcomes

Through Workshop 3, we collected 20 stories or places where events took place. Each story or event is associated with a specific place and these stories or places are widely circulated in the local area. They cover a range of genres, including folk history, myths, real historical events and local legends.

Several of the events are rooted in local myths and folk tales. For example, stories like “The Origin of the Sangling Village Mosque” (folklore) and “The Legend of the Carved Dragon” (folk mythology) reflect nature worship and historical significance in the form of local legends. Some events are rooted in tangible history, such as “The largest stone lion sculpture project in the country” and “Fire on Beimen Qiaotou Street.” These stories deal with actual historical figures or places, representing tangible local history. Some stories focus on local figures, such as “Xu Xiake” and “Zhao Fan,” whose legacies live on through folklore and stories. Other stories,

such as “Ship capsizing incident in Liuying Village” and “Fire on Beimen Qiaotou Street,” involve modern or contemporary historical disasters.

These stories reinforce local identity and community connection to the places where they occurred. By connecting cultural heritage with specific locations, these stories serve to keep the traditions alive. The diversity of events (myths, historical figures, disasters, etc.) points to a broad spectrum of cultural narratives that have shaped the local landscape, influencing both the tangible environment and intangible cultural heritage.



Figure 13 Workshop 3 scene
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

No	Local Stories/Events	Story/Event Overview	Story/Event Place
1	“The Origin of the Sangling Village Mosque”	Folk history stories	Sangling
2	“The Construction History of the Main Temple of Jinxing Village”	Folk Mythology – Nature Worship (Origin of Heaven and Earth)	Jinxing
3	“Ship capsizing incident in Liuying Village”	Modern and contemporary real disaster historical events	Liuying/Jianhu
4	“The Story of Xinxin Bridge”	Folktales – inspirational and educational (academic), the origin of the name of the ancient bridge	Outside the West Gate of Jianchuan
5	“Grandpa Chenghuang Eats Suigua”	Folktales – Enlightenment (Fairness, Honesty, and Reincarnation of Good and Evil)	Xianghu Village
6	“China Commodity Fair”	Modern and contemporary real, local famous events	Jianchuan County Woodware Factory
7	“The Legend of the Carved Dragon”	Folk Mythology – Praise to the Carpenter	Jianchuan, Dengchuan and Nujiang
8	“Xu Xiake”	Folktales – deeds or legends of famous people	Jinhua Mountain, Manxian Forest, Ancient City North
9	“Zhao Fan”	Folktales – deeds or legends of famous people	Xianghu Village
10	“The largest stone lion sculpture project in the country”	Modern and contemporary real, local famous events	Meiyuan Village
11	“The incident of connecting the old city and the new city”	Modern and contemporary real, local events	North of Yongfeng Street, Jinhua Town
12	“Li Siwei’s Complaint to the Imperial Court”	Folk tale – A carpenter risked his life to sue a corrupt official and unfortunately died seeking justice for the people	Jianchuan during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty
13	“The Story of General Lu Yuan”	Local historical figures	Ximen Street
14	“Fire on Beimen Qiaotou Street”	Real historical disaster events	Qiaotou Street
15	“Ancient City God Temple Fair”	Folk Myths and Stories – The Legend and Origin of the Ancient City God Jingdi	Xianghu Village Town God’s Temple
16	“Besieging the City and Calling for Relief”	Famous local historical events	Dongying Village
17	“The Story of General Zhao”	Historical stories from genealogy	Ximen Street
18	“Kublai Khan’s Southern Conquest of Dali”	Historical stories recorded in historical materials	Xianghu Village
19	“The Story of Wang Ying’s House”	Historical stories from genealogy	Ximen Street
20	“The Story of Jianchuan Apeng”	Folk love story	Apeng Memorial Square

Figure 14 Workshop 3 outcomes: Summary of local stories or events and the location
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

Discussion: The arts as a community citizen and the aesthetic process

The Arts as a Community Citizen is essentially a map. The design focuses on the message of the artwork, which guides the viewer’s memory in the process of communication to enhance their understanding of the message. The design principle of color and shape makes it eye-catching and clear, while a color combination with high-brightness contrast is selected to form simple icons with different meanings. High-contrast color combinations often produce strong visual effects, such as yellow and purple and red and green, two common complementary color combinations (Color-Combinations, 2024), used to maintain color harmony while maintaining high contrast (Westland et al., 2007). Therefore, the brightness of colors in the work indicates the importance of different information (Lipton, 2011). Since special colors and shapes may affect the audience’s aesthetic judgment and deviate from the main theme, this work does not emphasize the psychological implications and metaphors of colors and shapes.

Arnheim’s Visual Perception Model affirms that visual art conveys meaning through the interaction of form and content, emphasizing the importance of perceptual processes in art appreciation (Arnheim, 1954). In A Model of Aesthetic Appreciation and Aesthetic Judgments by Leder et al., the audience automatically

associated the artwork with their experience, knowledge, and memory. This metaphor and association process helps the audience to understand and appreciate the work. In addition, the audience forms an aesthetic judgment of the work, a process that comprehensively considers cognitive analysis and emotional response. Aesthetic judgment depends not only on the characteristics of the work itself but also on the audience's background and culture (Leder et al., 2004).

In addition, collective memory has a complex relationship with history. It plays an important role in reshaping identity. Through shared memories and experiences, collective memory helps groups establish and maintain their collective identity. Halbwachs emphasized the socially constructed nature of memory in *On Collective Memory*, pointing out that any recalled event is the result of group effort. Collective memory is the shared memory of social groups. These memories not only help individuals understand their group identity but are also constantly reconstructed in social interactions and emphasize that any recalled event is the result of group effort (Halbwachs, 2020). Brown et al. also discussed how memory is reconstructed through social interaction in *Memory's Malleability: Its Role in Shaping Collective Memory and Social Identity*, forming shared collective memories that help to establish and consolidate group identity (Brown et al., 2012).

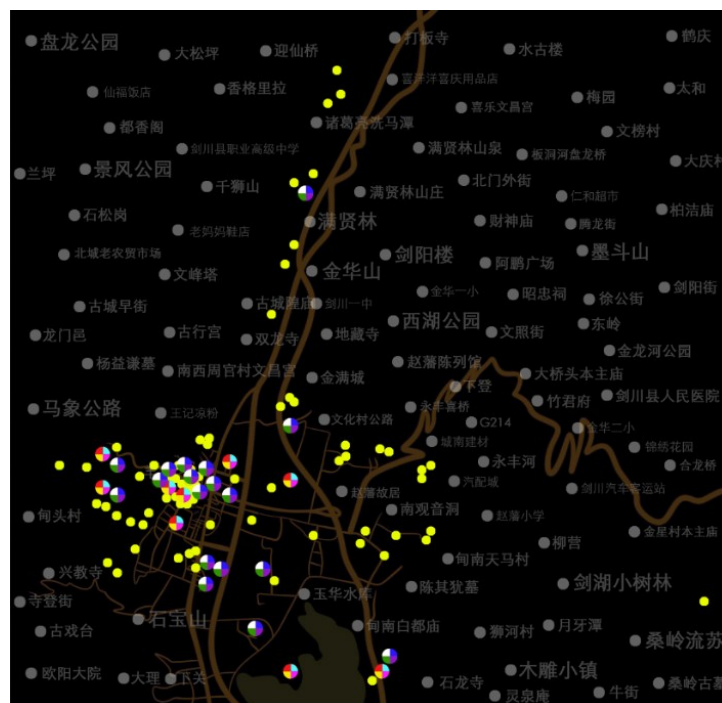






Figure 15 The Arts as a Community Citizen
source: Zhou & Buranaut, 2024

Table 2 Creative motivation for the arts as a community citizen

Icons	Icon Meaning	Discussion
	Distribution of cultural relics in Jinhua Town	The purpose of adding the distribution points of Jinhua Town cultural relics to this aesthetically oriented map is to guide community residents to find that the cultural relics are in their living space and not far from their frequent activities during the process of identifying the map.
	60 residents provide places of personal significance	These places are very familiar to locals and closely related to people's daily lives, but most of them lack the so-called "historical sense." However, people now consider these places to be important or meaningful to them, reflecting their contemporary memory and

Icons	Icon Meaning	Discussion
		<p>lifestyle. These “new places” participate in shaping people’s collective memory and their sense of identity.</p> <p>As emphasized in the Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place: “The spirit of place is a constant process of reconstruction that responds to the needs of change and continuity of the community. It can change over time and from one culture to another according to the memory practices. A place can also have several spirits shared by different groups” (ICOMOS, 2008).</p>
	Frequently occurring places of personal significance	<p>These frequently mentioned places mean that they provide residents with some kind of good experience. Research statistics show that they have more historical and cultural sense than other places with personal significance. These places are both historical and present and act as bridges between the past and present. They have participated in, witnessed, and shaped the identity of residents.</p>
	20 local story locations	<p>The places where these stories took place are undoubtedly part of the collective memory. They are widely circulated among people, and the plots are deeply engraved in people’s memories. Recalling these stories once again activates the locals’ identity and sense of belonging.</p>

Conclusion

An artistic approach to cultural mapping incorporating concepts of a sense of place and community engagement was designed and implemented in this study. This method emphasizes the activation of community members’ emotional attachment to the place and reshapes the sense of community membership in the process of community and art practice. This strategy highlights two processes. The first process involves three workshops conducted jointly by the community and community members, while the second comprises the presupposition of the aesthetic and acceptance process of artworks drawn by community citizens. The effectiveness of both processes is based on concepts, methodologies, and models of cultural mapping, sense of place, community engagement, aesthetics and perception of visual arts, and collective memory.

Mapping the sense of a place captures those things that are symbolic, intangible, or intangible. Things that are invisible but have a profound impact on people’s daily behavior and consciousness. One advantage of the artistic approach to cultural mapping is that it makes these intangible things visible. Many studies have shown that this method not only helps to identify tangible cultural heritage, but also to realize the identification of intangible cultural assets in the concepts of sense of place and community participation. However, a bridge needs to be built between the two, and the artistic approach is one of the paths. This study mainly discusses the role that visual aesthetics can play in the field of mapping. The core of the role’s construction is to let the intangible assets of a place “constrain” people’s behavior and consciousness, thereby stimulating their willingness to actively protect tangible cultural assets.

By capturing meaningful places and artistic programming, cultural relics information, and places significant to individuals in daily life, these elements can be brought together in one picture, using the collective memory of residents to deepen and activate the emotional attachment of community members to the place, thereby strengthening their sense of identity. This kind of artwork drawn by community citizens can be used on various platforms to disseminate and popularize cultural relics information. In the process of enhancing aesthetics, it can help alleviate the conflict between the protection and management of cultural relics and the daily lives of residents, thereby improving their awareness of cultural relics protection.

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