

Public Exhibition of Important Landscape Planning & Design Schemes in China

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Abstract

Though Public Participation in the field of landscape architecture in China is still in an initial process, it has brought positive effects. The public exhibition of important landscape planning and design schemes is part of current public participation in China. The aim of it is to seek the opinion of the broad masses. Based upon particular situations in China, this paper analyzes two latest significant cases, public exhibitions of Landscape Design Schemes of Beijing Olympic Green & the Central Zone and Beijing South Axis Road Green Space Planning Schemes, pointing out that media introduction, voting, and feedback are three indispensable sections of Public Participation. The approaches by making full use of public exhibitions to create a partnership in public participation are also examined.

Key Words : Public Participation, Public Exhibition, Voting, Media Introduction, Feedback

I. BACKGROUND

Not until the late 1980's was the awareness of Public Participation introduced into the field of landscape architecture in China. Because of modern concepts such as "design for the people" and "democratic", participation have gradually melted into Chinese landscape planning & design system. The society has paid much attention to Public Participation. For instance, the construction of big structure at the top of the Zijin Hill was prosecuted by citizens in Nanjing due to its damage to the whole natural landscape and finally it was demolished in order to protect the Zhongshan Scenic Spot. However, Public Participation in China is still in initial stage, with many disadvantages in aspects of legislation, system organization and operation.

In China, some of regulations lay stress on the authorization of city planning & construction departments, paying little attention to Public Participation. In some cases, the government made the public to accept the design and the public cooperated passively. Some of clients of projects in China are from local governments. They believe they can represent the public and command landscape architects to work as painters instead of designers. On the other hand, some designers consider landscape design a professional process that cannot be interrupted by opinions of laymen and even think Public Participation is time-consuming and may lead to low efficiency.

In addition, citizens in China are not well aware of the academic texts and illustrations. They can't have a well understanding of ichnographies and the difference between three-dimensional movies and the real

and so on, which is also a baffle to public participation.

The current public participations in China include:

- 1) Designers visit the locals, spread out questionnaires, and do discussions and consultations as part of on-site survey.
- 2) Public exhibitions of schemes of the design approved by jury.
- 3) The schemes are approved by local National People's Congress.
- 4) To the problems brought by certain construction that interfere with public life, citizens would try to find solutions by media and even lawsuit.

However, such involvement is not satisfactory. At present, great efforts have been made. For example, current community construction movement is, to a large extent, to give rights back to citizens. Designers and citizen presentatives are sharing "Sunny Planning" committees in some communities, which has made some positive effects. Now, one of the primary activities of public participation in China is the public exhibition of important landscape planning & design schemes.

II. THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PLANNING & DESIGN

In many cities of China, public exhibition of important landscape planning & design schemes is being actively followed and popularized. For example, Shenzhen rules that the planning sketch must be exhibited for 30 days to consult the broad masses. Qingdao is carrying out the regulation that the process of pre-approval stage, in-approval stage and post-approval stage must be open to the public. Shanghai Afforestation Management Bureau declared to set up the public exhibition system for all plans of

new parks and green space. The first one entered this system is the Sanchagang Forest Park, the largest park in the suburbs of Shanghai, which will be put into practice in October, 2004. The reason why public exhibition practice should be introduced and popularized in China is its applicability to the particular situation of a developing country and its outstanding advantages.

1. The Advantages of Public Exhibition and Effects

1) The exhibition, by means of models, perspective views, telefilms and photographs, is so vivid and easy to understand, which is helpful to seek, adopt and coordinate opinions from all circles.

2) Public exhibition has changed the status that management department decides the schemes behind doors and shape the supervision which can ensure the selection procedure to be open, fair and official.

3) According to suggestions by citizens, the designers could adjust their schemes and make them to be more feasible and economical.

4) As the bridge between the government and citizens, public exhibitions show citizens the construction objectives and methods of the government. Meanwhile, citizens' reactions provide the government with information about environmental management and therefore enhance supervision ability by the administration.

2. Three Sections Indispensable in Public Exhibition

1) Media Introduction

Good media introduction to public exhibition encourages public participation. Visitors to public exhibition can better understand background and vision of the project by means of TV, radio,

newspaper, Internet etc.

2) Voting

Taking a vote is an easy, fast way to know the public preference for schemes. It can also be conducted on internet. Well-designed votes can fully convey public opinions.

3) Seeking opinions and Feedback

According to Q/A or Y/N forms filled by visitors and many other records, different opinions can be classified and forward both to the client and designers, who are responsible to give clear explanations and decisions.

3. Two Case Studies

1) The Public exhibition of Landscape Design Schemes of Beijing Olympic Green and the Central Zone.

The Olympic Green and the central zone, located in the north of the city central axes in Beijing, is the important component of 2008 Olympics. The total area is about 860 hectares.

From November 17 to 18, 2003, the jury committee, which comprised 5 foreign and 8 local persons, including famous planners, landscape architects, architects, and the representatives of Beijing Municipal Government, BOCOG (The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad), owners, judged and voted independently. From 7 schemes qualified, 3 excellent design schemes were decided, including the scheme A01 "The Soaring Dragon" from EDAW(USA) with China Architecture Design and Research Group, A02 "The axis leading to the nature" from Sasaki Associates (USA) and Urban Planning & Design Institute Tsinghua University(China), and A04 "Farm Land" from Beijing Turen Design Institute(China).

From November 19 to 21, 2003, the landscape design schemes of Beijing Olympic Green and the central zone, including three winning schemes and four entries, were exhibited and received votes from the public in the fourth exhibition hall of Beijing international conference center. The news was spread by TV, newspapers and internet.

This exhibition involved the detailed designs and refined models of the seven schemes. The 3-day exhibition attracted more than 6,000 citizens to visit with great interests. It was crowded by many zealous audiences, ranging from professionals in landscape design, architecture and art to common citizens. Each scheme was presented by the designers. More than 3500 persons voted and selected the scheme A01, A06 and A02 as the three excellent ones.

To the clients' surprise, the result of public voting was a little different from that of the jury. In the ranking by visitors, scheme A04, "farmland", was replaced by scheme A06 which did not liked by experts but gained the preference of citizens (figure 4). It was natural that the public opinion does not need to keep accordance with the experts', and it showed something true. As a matter of fact, some of the ideas of A06 were integrated into A01 which was finally selected as the implementation scheme by the local government.

In order to seek opinions and feedback in more broad range, the organizers set many visitor-books in the exhibition area. After voting, many visitors wrote down their appraisal to the design of the Beijing Olympic Green and the central zone in earnest. A graduate student named Pan Shengbo put down: "The schemes exhibited are all very beautiful, so it is hard to make the final choice. Thanks for the efforts of organizers and designers and I have a vision of an outstanding huge garden in Beijing." Liu Xianyi who worked in China Science and Technology Museum expressed his wish that the design of Olympic park

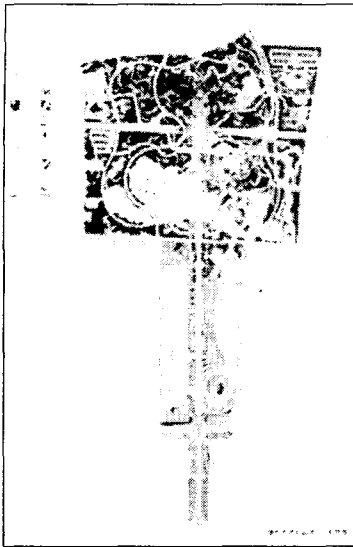


Figure 1. Plan of scheme A01 "The Soaring Dragon"

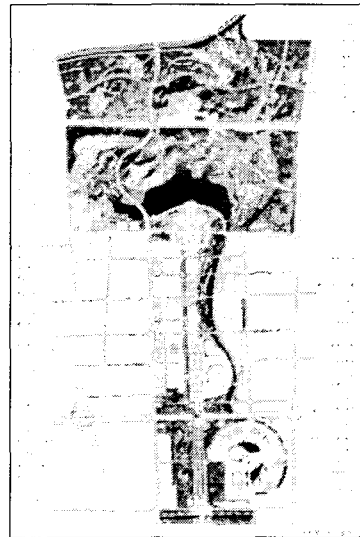


Figure 3. Plan of scheme A04 "Farm Land"

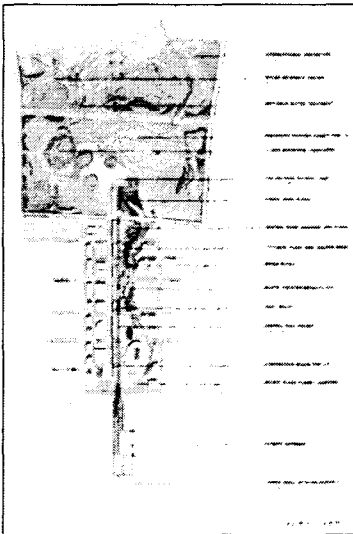


Figure 2. Plan of scheme A02 "The axis leading to the nature"

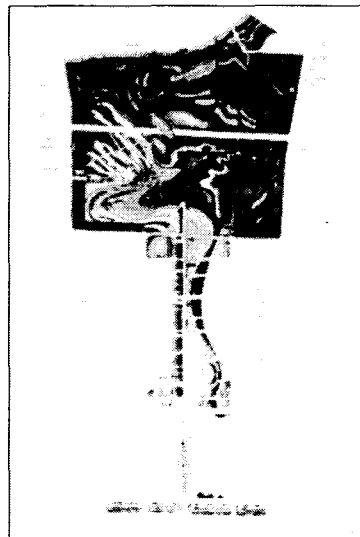


Figure 4. Plan of scheme A06

should integrate the ideas of the humanism concern and the harmony between nature and person in China to the world.

After this large-scale scheme exhibition, Beijing municipal commission of urban planning carried out a series measures for public participation. In late November 2003, Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning released information about the

transportation development nearby the Olympics Park and peripheral regions by its website. The public could E-mail to the government departments their own opinions and suggestions. That's the first time that the government asked for the opinions of public for the important strategy of transportation development in Beijing. On April 29, 2004, the naming of the roads of Beijing Olympic park was also announced by its website. Until May 5, citizens could put forward any

opinion or suggestions.

2) The Public Exhibition of Beijing South Axis Road Green Space Planning Schemes

As the main city axis, the South Axis Road is one of significant historic and cultural streets. The area of future Beijing South Axis Road Green Space is more than 20 hectares, about 1,000 meters in the length and 285 meters in width. From September 22, 2003, the three winning schemes of Beijing South Axis Road Green Space Plan recommended by the jury began their one-month public exhibition at the Xiannongtan Traditional Architectural Museum. The final decision was made by both experts and citizens and votes on net were as valid as those on the spot. This exhibition was organized by Beijing Bureau of Landscape Architecture, Committee of Civil Engineering and Committee of Urban Planning. The three schemes were the black one by China Research Center of Landscape Architecture Planning & Design (Figure 5), the green one by Beijing Institute of Architecture Design&AREP France Inc.(Figure 6),

and the red one by Beijing Institute of Landscape and Traditional Architectural Design and Research (Figure 7).

During the exhibition, professionals gave the presentation for the schemes to the public. According to statistics, 7,214 persons visited the exhibition and the daily average is about 240 persons. About 74.8 percent of them voted and details are as follows: (Figure 8)

As displayed in Figure 9, the black scheme ranked first by supporting rate of 46.7%, the green one 29.9% and the red one 23.4%, so the black one designed by China Research Center of Landscape

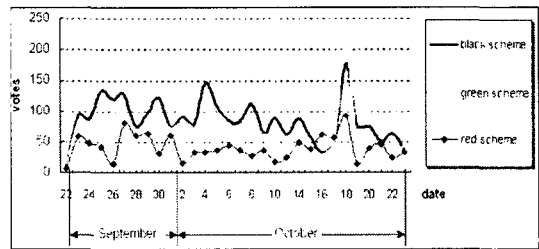


Figure 8. Daily votes details of Beijing south Axis Road Green Space Planning Schemes

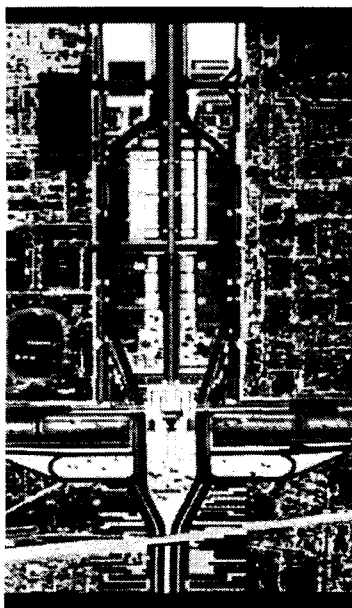


Figure 5. Plan of black scheme

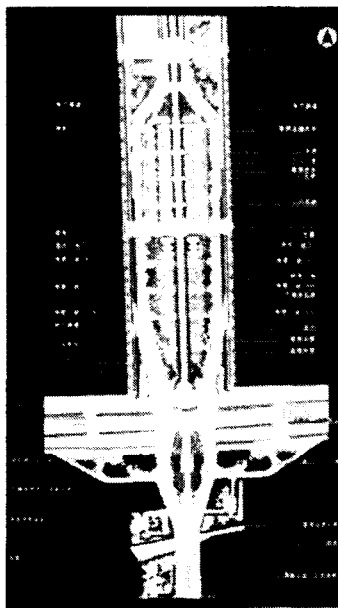


Figure 6. Plan of green scheme

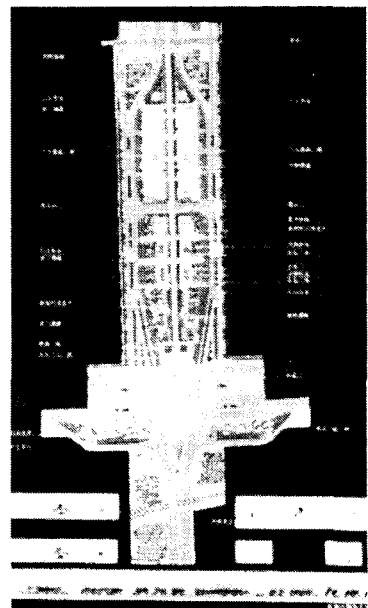


Figure 7. Plan of red scheme

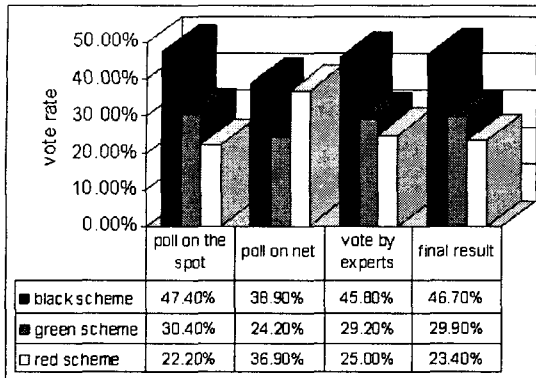


Figure 9. Poll results of Beijing South Axis Road Green Space Planning Schemes

Architecture Planning & design was selected to be the final(Figure 9).

From the figure 8 and 9 above, in comparison with net-voting, the voting on spot was highly in accordance with the result by the jury because of on-spot presentation by professionals. In this way, visitors could know schemes better and make their good judgment. The result of poll on net without professional help and on-spot experience was different.

Moreover, the organizer of this exhibition also prepared visitor's book seeking advice and ideas. Constructive or feasible suggestions among them were classified and conveyed to the designers, on which the appointed scheme would be adjusted.

3) Responses to these two activities

(1) Good points:

It can be seen from these two important large-scale public exhibitions of landscape architecture plan, the positive effects are evident as followed:

- Sufficient media introduction brought about the passionate citizen action.

In the two cases above, public exhibitions were reported in detail by Beijing Daily, Beijing Morning, Beijing Noon, Beijing Evening, Beijing Youth Paper, China Construction Paper, Message Collection, China

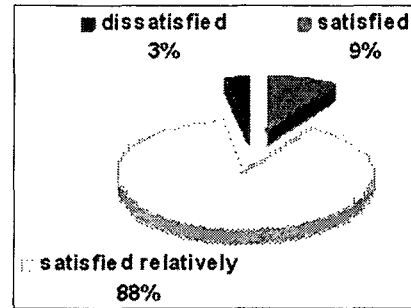


Figure 10. Public satisfaction rate

Flowers Paper, Beijing Traffic Broadcasting Station, Beijing People Broadcasting Station, Beijing TV Station, Wings of China Journal and most of the web stations. Because of this, citizens responded actively: some came to the exhibition by three-hour-bus: some sent the letter of advice immediately after his visit: some led their family or friends or neighbors to visit and vote. To be involved in this impressive urban construction was really an honor for each person.

- Citizens offered various advices and suggestions.

These two public exhibitions received totally 1460 pieces of comments. Among them, 130 expressed satisfaction, 1287 relatively satisfied and 43 dissatisfied. The satisfaction rate was up to 97%. (Figure 10)

The comments varied, ranging from the city characteristic, development strategy, traffic&civic projects, old city renovation and protection, environment protection, infrastructure, city quality, building color to preservation of historic features.

- The public participation works well.

The citizens' advices were partly adopted, which enhanced citizens' master consciousness. And the practice of partnership among governments, professionals and commons were also well conducted.

(2) Bad points:

- The exhibition sites were not easy-accessible.

Lots of citizens lost interests in participation just because of inconvenient transportation, which resulted

in the run off of a large number of potential participants and neglected part citizens' benefit.

· short of interactions

The participation-feedback-reparticipation system didn't shape in the public exhibition process. The organizer didn't make a direct response to citizens whether their advice or idea were adopted after the exhibition. And related administration departments didn't reward the citizens whose advice was constructive, which may encourage public reparticipation. The public participation stopped once the final appointment was decided. The future implementation of projects turned to the clients and designers while citizens were not informed about this.

III. CONCLUSION

From the research above, in China, it is urgent to set up legislation and policies of public participation to encourage citizens to care for their living environment on their own initiative. Therefore, as one of the key processes of public participation, it is necessary to set up a complete and scientific managing system for public comments by means of all kinds of social or

technical supports, in order to implement a well-oriented and sustainable project.

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