

Evaluating Revitalization-engaged Art

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Abstract

Community-engaged art initiatives have been largely regarded in recent decades as a mechanism for the tentative revitalization of periphery Japanese communities. There is a rising academic understanding of the links between contemporary art, creative placemaking, and creative tourism for social transformation through the arts. Much of the existing research on this area does not take an interdisciplinary approach. This study first highlights the significant research gap created by time, geospatial distribution, and inadequacies in the field of multidisciplinary concentration. Furthermore, this study offers ten evaluation indicators based on a narrative literature review of previously published research. This paper seeks to suggest possible evaluation criteria based on actual data from studies of art instances in the Setouchi region, with the goal of encouraging future research to critique and improve on this research framework.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization, Socially Engaged-art, Creative Enhancement, Art Place-making, Periphery Japan

1. Revitalization-engaged Art

Rural regions in more developed countries around the world share or will share the infrastructure decline, aging, depopulation, and social development stagnation caused by the quick pace of urbanization and the out-migration process in Japan (Matanle, 2006). Rural communities are relegated to the margins or periphery in this scenario (Manzenreiter et al., 2020). As a result of peripheralization, many communities are losing their distinctive cultures, regional identities, and local social traditions. Some towns have completely disappeared, and the nature and forests have reclaimed their homes. According to this scenario, art has already gained widespread acceptance in the context of the global north and is thought to have the potential to revitalize rural communities (see for Anwar McHenry, 2011; Borrup, 2016; Crawshaw & Gkartzios, 2016). In rural Japan, art tourism produces a distinctive kind of socially engaged art that is concerned with revitalization (Klien, 2010; Qu, 2019; Sasaki et al., 2014; Tu, 2022).

Japan has been making various attempts through cultural creation to revitalize the countryside for the past 50 years, despite the fact that the overall trend of rural decline is hardly slowing down as a result of rapid globalization and urbanization (Sasaki et al., 2014). More than 100 local art Biennales, Triennales, and festivals, on both large and small scales, have emerged in recent decades from a multifaceted cultural and socioeconomic integration, experimenting with various potential artistic revitalization techniques to revive some villages and regions (Qu, 2019; Qu et al., 2020). Due to the new social phenomenon of "art in rural society," research in art, cultural anthropology, tourism, creative geographies, community place-making, and rural sociology is now considered to be interdisciplinary (Qu, 2022).

The Echigo Tsumari and Setouchi Triennale are two of the leading revitalization projects in Japan on a large scale (see for Klein, 2010; Prince et al., 2021; Qu, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022; Qu et al., 2020, 2022; Qu & Funck, 2021; Tu, 2022). Simultaneously, there are smaller-scale art initiatives like

Project Omishima in Ehime Prefecture, Kamiyama Art in Resident in Tokushima Prefecture, Shiosai Art Festival, and Momoshima Art Project in Hiroshima Prefecture, Art Bridge on the Kasaoka Islands, and Art of Noren in Katsuyama at Okayama Prefecture (see for Qu, 2021; Qu & Cheer, 2021). This study summarizes research findings for revitalization-engaged art from recent literature and case studies in an effort to develop an evaluation method.

2. Current Research Gaps and Methodology Framework

This paper examines historical and contemporary studies of the revitalization of the arts in peripheral Japan using a narrative literature review methodology largely based on the author's own findings as well as scholars who have made a significant contribution to the field in both Japanese and English literature (Klien, 2010; Prince et al., 2021; Qu, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022; Qu et al., 2020, 2022; Qu & Cheer, 2021; Qu & Funck, 2021; Sasaki et al., 2014; Tu, 2022). This study attempts to concentrate on the role of art in revitalization through case studies, viewpoints from various disciplines, and multi-angle research perspectives that center on art place-makers as well as community stakeholders. However, those fieldwork and discussion revealed three significant research gaps:

1) Insufficient long-term measuring from a sustainability perspective.

It is simple to observe an art event while it is being hosted from a temporal and spatial perspective. It may be challenging to conduct a 5- or 10-year research assessment, but it is crucial to track the long-term evolution of art place-making and community transformation. The rural decline is a temporal backdrop that cannot be changed. No artistic practices or socially engaged art projects will be able to press the reset button because there is no plan B for these rural communities. Practice entails attempting experimentally with uncertainty.

2) The absence of geographical approaches.

When comparing and measuring multiple villages at an art festival, it becomes much more difficult to compare and measure just one village. According to Setouchi Triennale's research, earlier studies have shown that different communities can experience different results from the

same artistic intervention strategy (Qu et al., 2020, 2023). Research conclusions that are biased and overly optimistic will unavoidably result if it only focuses on the chosen successful case studies. Particularly, many art historians prefer to draw research conclusions through the method of selected case analysis.

3) The absence of an interdisciplinary focus.

Studies in architecture, tourism geography, cultural anthropology, sociology of art, and art and art history each have a unique disciplinary theory for evaluating revitalization-engaged art. Like Hawkins noted in *Creative Geographies*, artistic practices push us to develop a wider perspective beyond disciplinary teleologies in addition to challenging them (2015). I frequently see academics looking at some notable representative cases, like artwork and events, particularly in the field of art and cultural anthropology. Their samples and interpretation angles, however, severely restrict their findings.

In sum, scholars should require a research perspective based on a blend of the multidisciplinary research framework for evaluating revitalization-engaged art. "A meaningful assessment can only be achieved if the qualitative observation is engaging the researcher as a full person, and beyond the limitations of purposive consciousness" (Kagan, 2011, p. 470). Kagan contends that studying art necessitates a scholar's evaluation of other social actors, such as academies, in addition to the artists and the arts' social system (ibid). Researchers are no longer limited to only taking into account the evaluation from qualitative approaches because of the social transformation of the arts, such as art tourism and festivals. In the case of the Setouchi Triennale, academics are already working to develop a three-dimensional viewpoint that unites art, tourism, and community under a single research framework of community revitalization (Qu & Funck, 2021). Therefore, interdisciplinary research methods using a combination of art, social, and applied sciences are more frequently used to evaluate revitalization-engaged art.

This paper argues ten evaluation methods for revitalization-engaged art's motivation, art intervention strategy, creative landscape change, art and social leadership, art

tourism management, community involvement, local culture asset, micro-business creation, social structural change, and co-creation and social interaction perspectives. This article seeks to refine new evaluation metrics and their potential limitations based on previously published research.

3. Evaluating Revitalization-engaged Art

3.1. Revitalization - evaluate its socially engaged dedication and actual motivation

Good art generates dialogues and social discourse about contemporary social, political, and ethical concerns. Negative legacies of urbanization and globalization include depopulation, the outmigration of the young, and the abandonment of people's spiritual hometowns. Beyond art's global social level significance, in the local context, 'revitalization-engaged' could be a baseline indicator for determining whether the art place-making is 'art developed in the name of revitalization' or 'art activities for revitalization'. During the process, the reality of art revitalization is frequently muddled.

Typically, art organizers have a strong commitment to the community without sacrificing the tourism component (Franklin, 2018). This question requires not only long-term observation but also data collection from as many stakeholders as possible, including organizers, residents, and tourists. Sometimes, the perceptions of community members are more important to the organizer than the facts. Using the organizer's goals (often revitalization) to measure the actual results and impacts is the simplest method for determining the organizer's commitment to the community.

Art tourism development on Naoshima, Japan's art island, already demonstrates the power dynamic between organizers' 'community well-being' pledge and receiving millions of art tourists (Prince et al., 2021). On the one hand, art must be sufficiently developed to acquire the capacity to activate the community for long-term growth. Conversely, if the community does not acknowledge art with a positive attitude, it will be difficult to find an opportunity to enhance the community's well-being and quality of life. As an activator of community enterprises, art should permit other social forces to intervene in this process. Moreover, to avoid art colonization through a large-scale commercialization model,

community control of the development process (Bosworth et al., 2016) is the key that can also be used to evaluate the engaged revitalization role.

3.2. Art placemaking that bridge the culture rearticulation and social relation building

As a creative place-making strategy, revitalization-engaged art must attempt to localize, especially in outlying contexts, its roots from the globalized contemporary art context and creative urban development soil. At the same time, it must move past a binary transformation from the perspectives of "social with art" and "art in society." The most well-known "Kitagawa Fram style" art festival in Japan combined two major types of art: relational/social interaction art, which is more socially engaged, and elite art, which can be identified as having "borrowed" from the urban (Qu, 2020). The latter type is much more difficult to design in a rural setting but would produce a setting that is more genuinely socially and communally engaged (ibid).

Previous research has provided us with numerous helpful insights. Artwork with utilitarian functions, such as art public bathhouses, art restaurants, and art libraries, is also very popular among residents (Qu et al., 2023; Qu & Funck, 2021). Implementing the method by adapting artwork or even 'custom made' art into the community is more socially engaged than simple reproduction of artworks but requires more effort and resources to manage (Qu, 2020). Additionally, effective activation of the disappearing region culture and local events/festivals are necessary and effective means for art to successfully revitalize rural communities' culture (Qu & Cheer, 2021). Although good quality community-engaged art place-making requires considerable planning and persuasion with locals' trust, beginning on a small scale can be enlightening (ibid). In conclusion, the 'organic growth' method of artistic commercial development is more effective than the 'urbanized construction' method.

3.3. Landscape transformation between creative enhancement and tourism destruction

Art revitalization is not just the process of fostering or stifling community-level creativity and traditional arts (Qu, 2021, 2022). As a visual-based creative strategy, measuring the transformation of the landscape through art is also essential.

Not only can the visual landscape created by art attract tourists, but it can also significantly alter the perceptions of new local cultural symbols among community members (Qu, 2019). The outcomes of the art intervention and placemaking process depend on the placemaking technique described in the preceding paragraph. In the worst-case scenario, community members might view it as a "theme park" (Qu, 2019). In some instances, it is capable of reactivating and triggering vanishing landscapes and collective memories (Qu, 2019; Qu & Cheer, 2021).

Mitchell provides a solid framework for evaluating the effects of creative enhancement and creative destruction on the transformation of rural landscapes (2013). It can also be applied to evaluating the change in the art-community mixed landscape by observing whether the new art area or creative districts are monolithic tourism scapes or a more diverse, coexisting space. In other words, striking a balance between preserving a certain artistic appeal and blending subtly into the local landscape and culture is difficult.

3.4. A dual role between art place-makers and social change-maker

Each art event organizer/place-maker/curator has a unique history and artistic intervention techniques. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate their artistic leadership. In many instances, the organizers of an arts project may be unable to accurately identify the community-level issues and constraints of their projects (Franklin, 2018). During the socially engaged art place-making process, a more complex problem can be identified: "how can he or she behave as an entrepreneur in social conventions and remain an agent of the conventions of his art world?" (Kagan, 2011, p. 419).

One difficulty is determining whether or not they are aware of the problems their artistic activities face at the community level. Another factor is whether they are actively attempting to resolve these issues. Adjust the strategy frequently and establish a mechanism for communicating with residents, for instance. In some cases, "Shiosai [art festival] organizers set clear goals for both festival and community with respondents indicating deep concerns about ensuring optimal involvement of the local community is maintained" (Qu & Cheer, 2021, p. 1764). Therefore, a strategy that

accurately identifies community needs and strikes a balance between community and arts activities is the foundation of effective community revitalization.

3.5. The impacts, influence, and dispersion of the art tourism development

Contrary to urban art or tourism development, a community-engaged rural art project rarely duplicates an urban creative strategy. Evaluations of whether art tourism enhances or invades the living space of locals are valuable for tourism and other social science research (Cheer et al., 2022; Qu & Funck, 2021). On the one hand, developing tourism in a remote community is a difficult endeavour. Alternatively, does art tourism mitigate or exacerbate problems within the community? Including issues such as population decline and aging. Does it result in gentrification of tourism or art washing (Qu, 2019)? These are crucial evaluation questions from a tourism perspective. Considering that large-scale art tourism frequently originates from multiple communities or communities share similar background, it is also essential to evaluate the equal development of art tourism in each art community.

In rural Japan, art is frequently presented in festival, biennial, and triennial forms (Klien, 2010; Qu, 2021). Festival tourism is among the least sustainable types of tourism. Consequently, it is difficult to continue evaluating community-level influences beyond festival tourism activities such as social interaction, network development, and resource exchanges when examining how art festivals can improve sustainable development capabilities. Revitalization requires long-term investment in the sustainable development of art festivals (Qu et al., 2020), sustainable revitalization in the community (Qu & Cheer, 2021), and the development of social resilience between new and old residents (Qu et al., 2020; Qu & Cheer, 2021). The effect of "festivalization" on local microbusinesses cannot be overlooked. While the value of art itself cannot be measured through quantitative methods, but its social impact by tourism can. Micro-businesses serve the centre role of window of interaction between locals and tourists.

3.6. Community involvement between passive participation and active co-creation

A comparative study of two comparable communities

revealed that the same artistic intervention can elicit contrasting responses from locals, depending on whether they actively participate in the creation of micro-businesses or simply assist in the completion of the art festival (Qu et al., 2023). According to the case study of the Setouchi Triennale, local success is dependent not only on cultural openness but also on local creative entrepreneurship, art/creative businesses, and their networks' co-creation efforts (Qu, 2020; Qu et al., 2020, 2023). Therefore, contrary to the concept of co-creation, community 'participation' (see Klien, 2010) cannot be regarded as a prerequisite for community revitalization.

In the long run, co-creation also helps to strengthen the community's own resilience. The role of revitalization-focused art is to stimulate a certain capacity for sustainable community development. In other words, art revitalization must foster a neo-endogenous approach as opposed to merely an exogenous one (Qu, 2022). Throughout this continual social interaction between art and community, both parties should be in a state of mutual benefit and symbiosis.

3.7. Enhancement of the community's cultural resource

Evaluation of the cultural creation aspect of a community requires a balance between the cultural colonization of art and the enhancement of local culture through art. In the majority of instances, the allure of local culture is the impetus for artistic creation for small-scale as well as community-engaged art development (Qu & Cheer, 2021), and it is also something that must be transmitted in a non-traditional form.

Key to the revitalization of engaged art is the question of whether or not new art can reactivate community culture as an enhanced hybrid attraction via inventive enhancement. The community on the periphery cannot return to the "good old days," but it can create a cultural legacy that the majority of people recognize. In an ideal situation, art respects traditional culture in terms of the means of intervention in works and the mode created by the entire urban area for both tangible and intangible cultural heritages (ibid).

3.8. Creative micro tourism businesses spawn social enterprise at the local level

The objective of the creation of an art community with a revitalization mission is not only to produce art or culture tourism products, but also to create an environment with a self-recovery function capable of resolving the underlying problem. The creation of community-based microbusinesses is facilitated by revitalization-focused art (Qu, 2020; Qu et al., 2020). In addition to the commercial role of entrepreneurship, research demonstrates the social enterprise role of art and creative businesses for community social improvement (McCormick & Qu, 2021; Qu et al., 2020). Art place-makers have a clear vision that only if emerging businesses can play both roles of tourism business and community social enterprise, it will significantly improve the community's infrastructure and quality of life (Zollet & Qu, 2023). This can be used as a quantitative indicator to measure changes in the community's social and economic patterns. These small businesses contribute significantly to the creative allure of the community.

In order to examine the long-term social impact of art revitalization, it is crucial to consider the quantity and caliber of micro-entrepreneurship, as well as their role in social structural transformation. In addition, the ability of these creative tourism/social enterprises to establish themselves in the community is an additional indicator of the health of community businesses. In some unsuccessful instances, a certain number of non-local commuters operate a new business that contributes less to the local economy (Qu et al., 2023). This may be evidence of economic unsustainability.

At this level, gaps in community revitalization can be easily distinguished from a geographical perspective. Along with revitalization-engaged art, the emergence of creative tourism/social enterprise necessitates large case studies to investigate the deeper role of revitalization-engaged entrepreneurship not only as an individual case study, but also as a collective network and social structure impacting a community.

3.9. The transformation of the social and economic structure of the community

Unquestionably, the evaluation of art practices and projects is not quantifiable (Kagan, 2011); however, it does not include art's expanding realm in society, tourism, creative place-

making, or its social and economic structural transformation. Through originality, art enriches a business's soil. The artwork is merely a social draw for non-local audiences (Franklin, 2018). The social concept of the collective art field is more important than the aesthetic significance of a signal artwork (Qu, 2020, 2022) Art's social function diminishes the aesthetic value of the work in society (ibid, 2020). After that, sociology, geography, and economics dominate. However, they were unable to quantify the outcome of creativity. In general, rural revitalization through art necessitates a mixed method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data.

In addition to the revitalization of community cultural assets, social structural change is an important agenda item for sustainable development (Qu et al., 2020). Agriculture and manufacturing comprise the traditional social structure of rural areas. The emerging creative and service economy gradually replaces the waning industrial economy (Cheer et al., 2022). Re-exploring the value of traditional industries through the inventiveness of art is a widely adopted strategy for communities that can foster art development in favorable circumstances. These transformations are not as swift and simple as the urban industrial transformation. It must also be based on long-term observations spanning 5 to 10 years.

Evaluation category	Creative community enhancement (revitalization)	Art tourism destruction (commercialization)
Revitalization goal	have a vision and goals that are lucid, as well as implement them	just an empty promise
Art placemaking	social relation-building or socially engaged	copy urban-based elite art
Landscape change	more on the creative enhancement side	more on the tourism destruction side
Leadership	both art and social leadership	art place-maker
Art tourism	more positive influence with even geographical distribution	more negative tourism impacts (art washing, tourism gentrification) also unevenly distributed geographically.
Community involvement	active co-creation	passive participation
Local cultural asset	enhancement	replacement
Local micro-business creation	a certain number of creative tourism/social enterprises	commuter-based business or none
Social and economic structural transformation	long-term observation of social and economic growth	regional community is still in decline
Sustainable co-creation, social interaction, cultural exchange, relational network	co-creation between art and community	Typically, one-sided intervention is limited to art development

Table 1. Evaluation criteria of the revitalization-engaged art.

3.10. Sustainable co-creation, social interaction, cultural exchange, and relational network

Co-creation can be seen as the greatest social achievement facilitated by art through interaction and the exchange of knowledge. However, it is extremely difficult to evaluate the results of social interaction and cultural exchange. For quantitatively evaluating the resident-tourist interaction, research findings cannot evaluate the actual social outcome (Qu, 2019). The social structure of today is networked rather than industrial. The multiple social actors brought by art make the creative periphery's social structure more complex than urban. It includes artists, local businesses and industries, residents, non-profit organizations, and government entities. This greatly increases the precision with which social interactions cannot be measured easily from a social science standpoint.

In lieu of focusing on 'provable' social outcomes, evaluating the co-creation process can be a useful indicator for assessing the art-community outcome. Examining the roles of various social actors in co-creating a balance between sustainable community revitalization and the maintenance of artistic activities is necessary (Qu & Cheer, 2021). Co-creation also requires a certain level of resident and tourist satisfaction. Diverse cultural and social networks, partnerships, and local-level organizations make the co-creation process simple to implement (Prince et al., 2021; Qu et al., 2020; Qu & Cheer, 2021). In addition to fostering healthy competition within the community, the complexity of the various social networks within the regional and extra-regional context is responsible for this (Cheer et al., 2022).

4. Conclusions

From Table 1, this study attempts to evaluate revitalization-engaged art based on previously discussed topics, such as measuring its revitalization-engaged commitment and actual motivation, art placemaking methods between visual reproduction and social relationship building, art place-makers role between art place-makers and social leadership, art tourism development impacts influence and distribution, and community involvement between passive participation and active participation. Each of the various evaluation criteria corresponds, respectively, to the ideal outcomes of revitalization and the worst-case scenarios of excessive commercialization.

There is no such thing as a "perfect" community revitalization art project; rather, each case retains its own distinct features by striking a balance between commitment to the host community's growth and survival and the artist's own style and expression. To put it another way, we need to be compensated for the distinction between revitalization-focused art projects and "revitalization-focused" as a commercial branding for art development.

One of the study's major limitations is that the majority of the research conclusions are based on art projects in Japan's Setouchi region. Based on local conditions and art intervention techniques, new evaluation criteria for revitalization-engaged art may be developed in other regions of the Asia-Pacific or around the world. However, this is precisely the debate that this paper hopes to spark. Like the inability to define 'art,' the meaning of 'revitalization' may vary with time and local conditions. Nonetheless, effective art revitalization is socially engaged, co-creates with the community, enriches local culture and tradition, and is positively sustainable, according to our current observations.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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