

Article

Artistic Interventions in Urban Renewal: Exploring the Social Impact and Contribution of Public Art to Sustainable Urban Development Goals

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to explore the multiple roles of public art in urban renewal and sustainable development goals, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, with an emphasis on community engagement and the application of theoretical frameworks. Through a detailed analysis of public art projects in Teruel, Spain, and Chengdu, China, this study shows how public art plays an important role in enhancing cultural values, promoting social inclusion, and driving economic growth. Qualitative methods such as interviews and content analysis were used to gain in-depth insights into the views and experiences of artists, urban planners, policymakers, and community members. At the same time, quantitative methods such as questionnaires and spatial analysis were used to assess the specific impacts of public art on urban beautification, social inclusion, and economic growth.

Keywords: sustainability; social impact; public art; artistic interventions; urban renewal



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1. Introduction

Urban regeneration and sustainable development have been the keys to the most advanced cities in the world. The urbanization and growth of cities, which are very complex topics, have various issues related to ecosystems, social injustice, and economics [1]. When examining public art, the fact that its integration and renewal in cities have increasingly been discussed is also essential. Public art, which includes monuments, buildings, gardens, and community-led projects, can be the best means to renewing urban spaces, and these elements of art can encourage the formation of belongingness, cultural identity, and community involvement [2]. The involvement of art in urban areas is the best method to bring beauty to cities, increase social cohesion, start public conversations on sustainability issues, and create social bonds among people.

In addition, public art is a significant means of revitalization programs, which create new life in abandoned or inactive areas. By making something new, artists bring new interpretations and revisions into the sites; then, these sites relate to sustainable development concepts through the new meanings they gain [3]. When the community members are invited to be a part of art projects and made to feel as though they are among the group's core team, they become increasingly interested. The forms of decision-making can transform into those that are more democratic. On the other hand, sustainable urban development is meant to "green" cities and serve as the social and economic factors behind them. Public art can address all three pillars of sustainability since it will enhance awareness of environmental issues, foster cultural diversity and social inclusion, and maintain the economy through the tourism and creative sectors.

This research, therefore, maintains that public art, including monuments, buildings, gardens, and other art forms, is an essential element for achieving sustainable urban development goals. Through research on the intersection of public art, urban renewal, and

sustainability, the study aims to offer readers details on the vital role of artistic practices in creating more livable, resilient, and inclusive cities.

2. Methodology

Our research employed a methodologically designed “method wheel” (Figure 1), rooted in sociological methodologies, to explore the intricate relationship between public art and urban regeneration within the framework of sustainable development goals [4]. The method wheel visually depicts the different components of the research design used to integrate the research methods. At the core of the wheel lies the primary research objective: examining the impact of public art on attaining urban sustainability development goals. Around the core idea are four concentric circles representing separate layers of methodological approaches that form a coherent and multi-faceted approach.

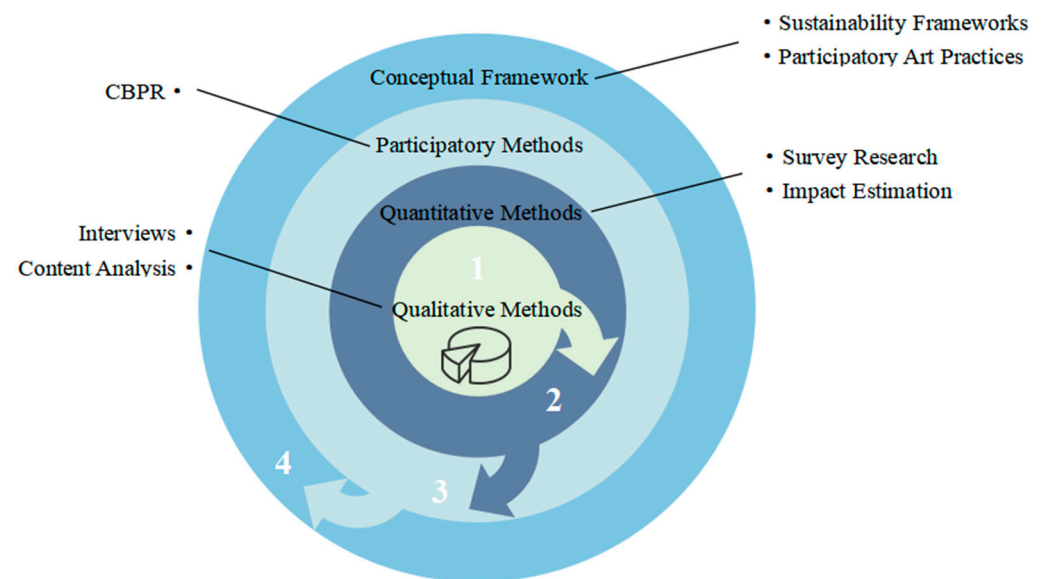


Figure 1. Method wheel. 1. Explore the details, meanings, and real-life experiences of public art. 2. Provide statistical data on public art’s impact on sustainability. 3. Emphasize community participation and co-creation. 4. Framework based on sustainability and participatory art practices.

The innermost circle embraces qualitative methods [5], a must-have approach for realizing public art interventions’ subtleties, meanings, and real-life experiences. In-depth interviews (Appendix A) [6] were used in working with artists, urban planners, policymakers, and the local community to learn about their points of view, what drives them, and what they have encountered in projects related to public art, in addition to content analysis. Candidate selection for the qualitative research was conducted through purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in public art projects in Chengdu and Teruel, such as artists, urban planners, policymakers, and community members. Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, either online or in person, for approximately 30 min, allowing participants to share their experiences in detail. The qualitative evaluation was conducted through thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes. A critical review was conducted of relevant documents, such as urban planning strategies, project plans, and media reports, to assess the position of public art in the overall urban renewal and sustainability agenda [7].

The second circle is related to the quantitative approach that serves to provide numerical data and statistical analysis alongside the qualitative view [8]. This involved survey research [9], conducting polls among residents, visitors, and other parties who are interested in this issue, in order to obtain statistics about the opinions, attitudes, and awareness of public arts within the context of urban sustainability that includes environmental issues, social integration, and economic prosperity. Estimations were made regarding the impact

of public art projects on the region in terms of their attractiveness to tourists, the business boost, and the creation of the job opportunities in the creative sector [10].

The next ring concerns participatory methods [11], which implies that community involvement and co-creation are the fundamental aspects of public art and green development. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) involves the community research process, from the definition of the problem to the data collection, analysis, and dissemination, and should be conducted in such a manner that the community members, artists, and stakeholders are actively engaged. The research results should provoke a positive reaction from the community members, acknowledging their needs and purposes [12].

The outermost circle comprises concepts and principles that function as a base for the research outcomes, which are then explained and put in context in the circle. Sustainability frameworks involve turning to well-established sustainable development frameworks and principles, for example, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to evaluate public art's role in environmental, social, and economic sustainability objectives [13]. Participatory art practices look at the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of participatory art practices, community engagement, and co-creation of public spaces, thus ensuring that this study is congruent with these practices and add to these discourses [14].

2.1. Data Collection Methods

To examine the complex relationship between public art and sustainable urban development, this study employed a variety of data collection methods. The qualitative methods included face-to-face interviews with artists, urban planners, policymakers, and community members to explore their views and suggestions on public art and sustainable development goals. A total of 20 artists, 20 urban policy planners, and 20 community members were interviewed across the two cities, with 10 participants from each group in each city, Chengdu and Teruel. In this case, the candidates were sourced from people who were or had been directly engaged in public art projects within the urban renewal processes of either Chengdu, China, or Teruel, Spain. To achieve this, the selection criteria focused on having participants from diverse backgrounds so that the spectrum of how public art supports sustainable development goals (SDGs) in cities was well captured. A content analysis of relevant urban planning documents, project proposals, and media reports was also conducted to reveal the content of public art projects and their contribution to sustainable development goals.

A total of 100 individuals were surveyed through a questionnaire conducted among citizens, tourists, and other stakeholders in Teruel and Chengdu to investigate their thoughts and feelings on the impact of public art on urban revitalization and sustainable development (Table A1). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographic questions and questions about public art perception.

In addition, the content analysis of the urban planning documents, newspapers, and magazine articles from Teruel, Spain, and Chengdu, China, provides a richer perspective on how public art is integrated into urban renewal and realizes sustainable development goals. A community participatory research (CBPR) approach was adopted, in which community residents in Teruel and Chengdu played an active role and community members were actively involved in the research process from research conceptualization to research analysis.

2.2. Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using robust methods to ensure consistency and coherence of the results. Qualitative data were synthesized into narrative form by transcribing the interview content, comparing the recurring characteristics and features in the data. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Through these methods, this study provides a rich understanding of the relationship between public art and sustainable urban development, helping to develop effective urban renewal strategies to achieve sustainable development goals.

3. Theoretical Concepts and State of Research

The link between arts and sustainability has been a subject of intense debate that has made people change their minds about what is perceived as art and its role in resolving global problems [15]. Since environmental degradation, social inequalities, and sustainable development have become the main concerns of artists and researchers, they use their creative expression in a way that involves social transformations toward a more just and environmentally friendly world [2].

Hildegard Kurt is among the most important figures in this discussion. Edith etched the art and environmental theme in this place. As Kurt aptly states in her work, *Art and Ecological Transition*, art is a source of social change. It incites people to think outside the box, see the future they dream of, and become fully aware of their environmental problems. She aims at interdisciplinary cooperation among scientists, artists, and policymakers to find sustainable solutions to environmental problems that may not respond well to a discipline-based approach alone [16].

Leaving us with a conceptual framework designed by Kurt, it can now be noted that the well-known scholar Sacha Kagan, who specializes in arts and sustainability, has further developed these ideas. In his book *Art and Sustainability: In the Art of Many Patterns: Art & Sustainability* [17], the author shows the undercurrent that unifies artistic practices and sustainability. He argues that art can be a cultural transformer by stirring up the settled questions, helping us bond with each other socially, and assisting us in knowing both the human and nature's essence.

The discourse on art, ecology, and sustainability itself has already been effectively initiated by T.J. Demos, who is a famous art historian and critic, analyzing artworks from the last decades that focus on the environment. In his book *Decolonizing Nature* [18], through his essay *Contemporary Art as a Political Tool of Ecology* [18], Demos explains how modern artists employ their art to battle Western culture, which is based on the notion that nature is here for the people, and the injustice in the environment. In addition, he claimed that art could be used as an arm for the oppressed and as a means to offer new perspectives to problems.

This is demonstrated through the example of Lucy Lippard, an authoritative art critic who worked as a curator for many years and always appreciated art as the social and ecological sustainability factor. In her influential work, *Undermining*, Lippard in the article *A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* [19] sees the relationships between land use, tribes' rights, and art in the American West [20]. For her, art is a weapon for change in the world. She uses it to contest the existing narratives, describe environmental issues, and introduce the adoption of sustainable land management.

Yasmine Ostendorf, a Dutch artist and researcher specializing in art for social and environmental sustainability, is the author of the artwork *Artistic Research for Sustainability*. Ostendorf stands for the holistic approach that includes community and stakeholder involvement in developing sustainable solutions through art. Teams of artists also include other professions, as explained in 2020 by Sharp et al. [2]. Her research points to the role of art in igniting conversation, awareness, and community empowerment in fighting environmental issues.

Currently, artists and scholars are very keen on the search for the means that can be used to amplify the voices of the less represented; to challenge the power structures that are dominant at the moment; and to fight for equal access to natural resources and a clean environment [21]. The artist's concern for environmental equity raises the question of the disproportionate environmental problems in some communities and the artist's desire to use expression and activism to level the playing field.

Along with the art–sustainability debate, the inflexibility of the current ecological crises, such as global warming, exhausting natural resources, and biodiversity loss, should be considered. Artists endeavor to discover the best approach to illustrating the complexities and the uniqueness of the events, and they try to find new ways of telling stories and assisting the audience in understanding their connection with nature [22].

In addition, studying how art contributes to sustaining cultural living is one of the new research fields. Artists and researchers study how one can make creativity an integral part of cultural diversity maintenance, indigenous knowledge, and the preservation of traditional ecological practices [2]. Thus, within that framework, cultural sustainability means creating the conditions for long-term, inclusive, and equitable development. In such a way, the existing discussions of art and sustainability are diverse, complex, and international.

Sanz-Hernández and Covalada explored sustainability and creativity through mail art in their case study with young artists in universities. Their research demonstrated how artistic practices could be used to communicate and promote sustainable development goals [23]. This aligns with the role of public art in urban renewal, where artistic interventions not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of urban spaces but also engage communities in sustainable practices and foster social cohesion. Through these creative approaches, art becomes a powerful tool for driving sustainable urban development.

4. Public Art Movement

At the heart of public art is the multidimensional and socially engaged movement geared towards removing the barriers between art and everyday life. It refutes the idea of art as an elite activity that can be found and experienced only in galleries and museums. Instead, it promotes the democratization of artistic expression by bringing it directly to the people [24]. Public art artists are focused on producing works designed to be open to the public, inclusive, and inspired by the specific settings and the communities they are in.

Viewing art as a process of interaction between the audience and the artists is one of its most distinctive features. Contrary to the tradition where art is for the audience as observers, public art is more about community participation and interaction in the creative process. Artists of this movement participate in the activity through involvement, collaboration, and site-specific interventions that lead to dialogue, engagement, and co-creation with the community.

Another central idea is that social and political concerns take the lead. Public art is not only about making a place more beautiful or adding decoration; it addresses pressing social problems, gives the voiceless a voice, and facilitates social transformation. The artists who employ this approach deal with environmental justice, urban renewal, community empowerment, and cultural identity. They use their works as tools for critical discussions and podiums to launch community actions.

The public art movement began in the 1960s and 1970s when a group of artists who wanted to go beyond conventional art forms started constructing new boundaries. Suzanne Lacy, who is most likely the mother of public art, was among the first artists to advocate for this idea. In her seminal work, *Mapping the Terrain* [25], in her paper entitled *New Genre Public Art* [25], she introduced the term “New Genre Public Art”, which defined public art as a genre of art that fosters community and addresses social issues through community engagement and public debate.

Barbara Steveni, a British artist and educator, is also one of the key figures who became an agent in shaping the development of public art in the early period. In the 1960s and 1970s, she worked with the Artist Placement Group (APG), which opened new horizons for artists’ involvement in various institutions. The basic idea was to create a new type of art that is present in all aspects of life and brings the boundaries between art and life.

John Latham, the conceptual artist and theorist, not only brought into the discussion on public art his philosophical explorations of the interaction between art, society, and the built environment, but also contributed much to the discourse. He offered the concept of the “Flat Time” theory, which shook the traditional understanding of art as a static object and instead presented it as the process of continuous transformation and interaction with the public arena.

David Harding, an American personality, artist, and educator, was the first to stand out in community-based public art. The main idea of his works was the involvement of local communities in the development of public art projects, which helped to strengthen

the people's ownership, pride, and collective identity [24]. Public art has its principles, and Harding's approach was a perfect example of this by being collaborative, site-specific, and incorporating art into daily life.

Although public art initially crystallized into a separate movement, it only included some artworks in the public arena. The expression "public art" can sometimes describe any artwork or installation placed in public space, irrespective of its goals, methods, and philosophical roots [26].

One mistake that is sometimes made is the merging of land art with public art. While these may have some parallels and shared values, the two arts are discrete artistic practices with different histories, goals, and approaches [27]. Land art, also called Earth art or Earthworks, originated in the 1960s and 1970s as a movement directly interacting with the natural environment, primarily creating site-specific large-scale installations in remote or wild spaces [28]. Works of artists such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria can be characterized as leading examples of this movement. They used natural materials and landscape interventions to explore topics such as time, scale, and human nature about the environment.

Although some land art projects were placed in public areas or areas accessible to the public, the fundamental principles and intentions behind land art are quite different from those of public art. Land art predominantly relates to the materiality of the land, questioning the traditional notions of sculpture and monumentality and interacting with conceptual and philosophical dimensions of the human–environment relationships [29]. In contrast to public art, which we have already discussed, audience engagement, social relevance, and community participation are perceived as central pillars. While a few public art projects involve the elements of land art or revolve around environmental themes, they do so solely for their own purposes and using their own distinct techniques [24]. To understand the difference between land art and public art, we must learn about their historical origins, philosophical foundations, and artistic methods; confusing the two would miss the subtleties and complexities that determine each practice.

Furthermore, critics and debates on land art have focused on some projects seen as extractive, invasive, or destructive to fragile ecosystems [27]. Sustainability and ethical issues have been brought up by some land art critics, who argue that some projects are not environmentally friendly and may pose some ethical problems, which should be considered before the implementation of any project that may affect indigenous lands and cultural heritage [28].

The difference between land art and public art is also significant in this context because the former is a personal expression. In contrast, the latter has a community-oriented perspective, which includes social responsibility and environmental problems (for instance, sustainability and equity). The distinction between the two practices is important because it influences the practice's depth, complexity, and philosophical foundation. The public art movement arose from the new emphasis on audience participation, social problems, and public space as a dissent against the conventional notions of art and public space. Lacy, Steveni, Latham, and Harding, the early pioneers of public arts, were the ones who paved the way for the current public arts, which deal with critical social concerns and invite collective actions that are community-oriented.

Recognizing the misconception of equating land art with public art is equally essential. While some overlaps may exist, these are separate artistic movements with distinct histories, objectives, and methodologies. Land art's primary focus on engaging with the natural landscape and exploring conceptual dimensions of human–environment interactions sets it apart from public art's emphasis on community engagement, social relevance, and addressing sustainability and environmental justice concerns.

By understanding these distinctions and recognizing the nuances within each artistic practice, we can better appreciate the rich tapestry of creative expressions that have emerged in the public realm, each contributing to our understanding of the world and our collective pursuit of a more sustainable, just, and equitable society.

5. Results

5.1. Qualitative Findings

Public art plays a significant role in achieving sustainable urban development goals in Chengdu, China, and Teruel, Spain. Another key point raised in the interviews was the understanding of public art as a valuable means to promote people's participation and improve the city's social environment. According to artists and other stakeholders, the creation of artworks should reflect their location and history to foster solidarity and identity. For example, artists from Chengdu explained that their works, which depict their city, incorporate Chinese classical imagery, thereby beautifying the space while also promoting cultural memory in a rapidly changing urban environment.

City planners and officials, nevertheless, centered on the functionality of art in the urban redevelopment program. In both Chengdu and Teruel, public art was viewed as a way of bringing new life to areas that were previously vacant or underutilized and, therefore, as a means of reviving such areas and enhancing their appeal to the investors, as well as an instrument to create a more aesthetically pleasing urban environment. Teruel's planners observed that beautification through public arts had exemplarily revitalized dormant parts of the city and turned them into social hubs where people conducted business and relaxed during their leisure, helping the city meet sustainable development goals [30].

Some of the points raised by the participants included that for public art to fit into sustainable development, it had to go beyond aesthetic value and should play an active role in facilitating public participation. Some recent outstanding public art projects in cities like Chengdu have involved the community in design and decision-making. This also helped in ensuring that the intended message, culture, dreams, and aspirations of the engaged people of the community within which the arts were put up were being honored, as well as also helping in creating ownership and pride among the people of the community, thus leading to the creation of socially sustainable art projects.

However, the study also revealed areas that require further attention to enhance public art's effectiveness in contributing positively towards sustainable urbanism. Many respondents mentioned that developing several policies and ensuring sufficient funding for public art programs is crucial. Policymakers and urban planners agreed that public art has the potential to positively impact one of the most pressing sociopolitical agendas of urban regeneration and sustainability but were quick to mention that this can only happen if there are enough resources and a favorable policy environment available. For example, in Teruel, some of the interventions in the public domain faced issues of sustainability in terms of obtaining long-term funding, which created problems in the maintenance and sustainability of public art projects [31]. The analyses also highlighted the lack of cohesiveness between public art and the larger urban planning context. Some participants pointed out that public art is always seen as an add-on or an annexation of the urban design. This may result in missed opportunities to develop a better integrated and effective urban environment. Therefore, to effectively realize the benefits of public art in support of SDGs, it is recommended that it be integrated during the planning phases of such projects, artistically, spatially, and with total endorsement from the people.

In this study, the qualitative data gathered from interviews and analysis of content supported by the multiple-concept method offered a complex view of the role of public art in the sustainable development of cities [32]. Creative professionals, designers, architects, developers, local authorities, and citizens still had various visions of how public art might help achieve one or more targets of sustainable development goals. Emphasis was laid on the stunning potential of art for unity, increased awareness of the population, and active participation in environmental and other issues. They emphasized the need to involve community members in such projects to make significant art for the community and analyze its needs and wants. Local authorities and town planners knew that public art could improve the aesthetics and sociability of urban domains, bring new life and dynamism to abandoned or underutilized zones, and stimulate economic activity [33]. At the same time, they also highlighted the importance of formulating and implementing

specific policies for public art projects and providing sufficient funding to ensure effective implementation as part of urban revitalization strategies. Concerning community values, people wanted art to have meaning and relevance and connect people to a community. They focused on community engagement as a significant factor that should guide the implementation of public art ventures toward improving living standards.

The qualitative analysis also highlighted the social, cultural, and economic significance of public art intervention and how they align with one or more SDGs. Public art was viewed in the context of effective social integration, conversation, and bridging of divides such as race, gender, and class [34]. Meanwhile, sculptures were linked to places, supporting specific areas' cultural heritage and traditions. In addition, it was noted that public art positively impacted the tourist industry as people traveled to explore public art pieces, boosted business in local stores, and created employment opportunities in the art sector.

5.2. Quantitative Findings

Based on the survey of Teruel and Chengdu (Table A1), it was demonstrated that public art is an important factor in urban aesthetics and the social and economic revitalization of cities, which can be enhanced through urban renewal. Public art is one of the most crucial prerequisites for adding elegance and beauty to any urban area. It illustrates the extent to which public art transforms the urban environment, making it more than just an ordinary and mundane space. Respondents believe that public art projects, especially those involving the community, foster a sense of co-creation and co-ownership in urban life, contributing to inclusive and resilient urban communities. Respondents also believe that public art has the potential to increase awareness of environmental sustainability. It is believed that art installations with environmental themes can effectively promote sustainable behavior among citizens. Public art contributes to the economy by creating jobs and supporting local artists. More specifically, in Chengdu, the art industry can be a growth pole of the national economy, with public art projects promoting and driving economic development.

Surveys and analysis supported quantitative findings about how public art contributed to sustainability in urban centers. Social assessments showed that many residents, tourists, and other stakeholders regarded public art as a welcome addition, improving and beautifying the city's image, increasing social inclusion, and encouraging sustainability. Information from the online survey also highlighted that public art was positively associated with feelings of safety, order, and quality of life in urban communities. Analysis of the geographical mapping of public artworks provided a powerful link between the location of the artwork and the surrounding factors, including density of public transport, presence of green space, and socio-economic status of the area. It was found from some of the results of the study that public art was installed in areas that have high people traffic and that accessibility to the art was better, suggesting the possibility of using art to improve the connectivity and use of empty areas in cities [34]. Various studies conducted to measure the economic effects of public art projects showed that these projects generated a huge positive financial impact by raising the profile of tourism, business growth, and employment opportunities. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that public art projects can foster a diversified and vibrant economy, mainly where people depend on the cultural and tourism sectors [3].

5.3. Participatory Findings

Public art in Teruel represents one of the most effective ways to preserve its cultural heritage, along with increasing tourism in the area. Through this urban renewal project, including the incorporation of art, it is perceived that the city strategizes and improves its cultural identification to make it a tourist destination [35]. Among all the approaches, this will attract tourists and create jobs related to the arts and culture in this small town. By focusing on culturally significant art installations, Teruel has been using public art to achieve social cohesion among citizens, linking historical traditions to modern urban life.

In Chengdu, China, it is prescribed as a guide and not an embellishment to address diverse urban issues. The city's approach entails active participation with the community for the works of art to depict the value and vision of the community. Environmental sustainability is also evident in all the forms of public art in the city and is mainly centered on topics such as ecology and the climate. Their art projects are inclusive because they help to foster togetherness and increase public engagement.

The core studies from community engagement revealed the importance of the community in influencing public art interventions and SDGs. Citizens participated in deciding where new art pieces should be placed and ensured that the chosen places had significance and would indeed be relevant to their community's vision for their streets and blocks. These participatory mapping exercises demonstrated the effectiveness of community engagement in integrating local knowledge and perspectives into the planning process, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for public art projects. The co-design workshops, involving artists, planners, policymakers, and community members, revealed a strong commitment to collaborative planning and design. The participants helped create concepts actively and supported the concrete ideas of the public art projects where the idea was to sketch an image of the future of the communities. The cross-disciplinary and cross-functional collaborative design processes developed among the trans-disciplinary team members successfully transferred ownership of the public art projects to the intended beneficiaries. They improved the efficacy of the public renewal programs in urban centers.

5.4. Conceptual Framework

In Teruel, the people themselves were involved in decision-making. They were choosing the areas most suitable for establishing public art with the largest impact. This anchored the research on the level of living experience in the community so that findings that would be relevant and those that would be acted on were obtained. For instance, in the context of the city of Chengdu, the CBPR approach incorporated such activities as public workshops and consultations, in which people could share their opinions about the prospective design and location of street art.

This study drew on established sustainable development frameworks and principles such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [36], which emphasize improving the inclusiveness, safety, adaptability, and sustainability of cities. By applying these frameworks, this study explored how public art can promote the achievement of these goals at multiple levels. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks of participatory art practice, community participation, and co-creation of public space were used to ensure that the research was consistent with these theories and contribute to discussions in these areas. Participatory art practice emphasizes co-creation between artists and community members, aiming to enhance the community's sense of participation and belonging. This approach makes art not only a tool for beautifying public spaces, but also an important means to promote social interaction and community cohesion.

6. Discussion

6.1. Case Studies of Spanish and Chinese Cities

6.1.1. Teruel, Spain

The case of Teruel, a Spanish town in the region of Aragon, is an excellent example of how public art can be used to raise cultural value and attractiveness for tourism. Teruel, as a UNESCO World Heritage site with its unique Mudéjar architectural expression of Islamic and Gothic influences in an almost piercing way, gained a reputation as one of the most impressive places in the world. It superbly merges contemporary public art into its historical landscape to effect an intense dialogue between the past and the present. This is an aesthetic integration for a greater purpose: celebrating local traditions, fostering community identity, and stimulating economic growth through cultural tourism [37]. Public art projects in Teruel would show concern for the city's rich cultural history, with a nod toward contemporary taste. For example, works from contemporary sculpture

and installations form a visual and thematic continuity with the historical heritage of monuments; this valuation enriches the visiting experience for all visitors. Many of these actions are developed in collaboration with local artists and community members so that the artworks can precisely express their residents' collective memory and aspirations. Thus, Teruel can accomplish more than conserve heritage—revitalize it for future generations. This will also mean benefits in terms of economic effects, as a developed cultural landscape attracts more tourists to support local businesses and create jobs.

In Teruel, a prominent piece of public art is the sculpture "El Torico" (The Tower of Amores) by local artist Pere Planells. Located in a square in the city center, the sculpture attracts a large number of tourists with its unique design and historical background. The sculpture not only showcases Teruel's rich history, but also establishes a deep cultural connection with the local community through a modern art form, promoting cultural tourism and economic development.

Promoting public art as the key to reclaiming and rebuilding the city during renewal is recognized as an important component of public space, according to the documents on urban planning in Teruel. In these projects, public art is closely related to the concept of the city's theme and pays much attention to cultural enhancement [38]. This is well illustrated by fashion, in which most of the articles discussed the social contextualization of art projects, especially the role these works have played in reviving the dormant zones of Teruel. This approach complies with Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Sustainable Cities and Communities, since it encourages the practice of compact, inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urbanization.

6.1.2. Chengdu, China

Another example is the city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province in China, which further shows how public art can induce new potential for urban development and social cohesion [39]. Conscious of the colorful cultural life dating back over 2000 years, Chengdu has evolved into a modern and dynamic city with a rich heritage. Recently, Chengdu has undergone rapid urbanization, placing public art at the forefront. In Chengdu, artistic interventions are utilized to express a specific cultural identity of the city—a residual of its rich history blended with modernity. Public artworks installed within the public spaces in Chengdu City try to enhance aesthetic value, ensure social bonding, and support sustainable urban living [40]. These artworks merge the wealth of Chinese subject matter with different contemporary art manifestations, embracing a multi-layered cultural view. These also include mega-scale murals and sculptures in parks, plazas, and main streets to turn daily spaces into colorful and interactive ones.

In Chengdu, a famous public artwork is the "Flower of Tianfu" sculpture located in East Lake Park. This work combines traditional Chinese flower patterns with modern sculpture techniques and has become a landmark of the park. The sculpture not only beautifies the urban space, but also enhances community cohesion and cultural identity, reflecting Chengdu's emphasis on and support for public art in the process of rapid urbanization.

In Chengdu, public art is regarded as one of the strategic components of the city's renewal initiatives for public facilities, which focus on environmental and social issues. The texts dealing with urban planning suggest integrating public artworks into the aesthetics of the city, improving its image, and encouraging environmentally friendly attitudes [41]. Most of the reported media in Chengdu have depicted art installations that engage people in environmental conservation issues and social justice following the general sustainability agenda. The use of both abstract art and artifacts in areas that are accessible to the public seems to be a way of trying to keep up with the fast growth of cities while retaining customs and traditions.

6.1.3. Interview and Survey Analysis of Public Art Perceptions in Chengdu and Teruel

The data collected from the interviews and questionnaires conducted in Teruel, Spain, and Chengdu, China, illustrate that public art is not only a medium that addresses the

concept of a sustainable city but also many other interconnected factors. Various stakeholders, such as artists and urban planners, depict public art as more than just a form of beautification of open spaces. Public art contributes towards the realization of the sustainable development goals of cities and can shape urban development through arts and technology. It is acknowledged as a versatile medium that links tradition and the contemporary world, fosters social inclusion, raises environmental awareness, and contributes to the redevelopment initiatives of urban areas.

How Public Art Fosters Social Being and Cultural Belonging

The artists interviewed in both cities noted how art continues to bridge the gap between past and present, preserving cultural identity while embracing contemporary forms. Chengdu artists emphasized the exploration of history and the realization of sustainability within their art. As one artist said, "I would like to promote the essence of traditional Chengdu culture and introduce new, eco-friendly technologies". Similarly, artists in Teruel aimed to restore the spirit of the medieval city through installations that represented resilience and renewal. There were similar sentiments from urban planners in both cities, who also stressed the practical benefits of public art in bringing beauty to urban landscapes and promoting local pride. A Teruel planner stated, "Tourism helps promote art and increases the city's appeal and sustainability over the years". The responses to the questionnaire also pointed to the relationship of art in the public domain with social harmony. Over 50% of respondents from both cities confirmed the social functions of art within the community context, which is a unifying force within the community, offering a common ground for cultural expression and gathering. In Chengdu, public art in murals and sculptures was valued because it promoted social cohesion among different groups in growing urbanization. This sentiment was echoed in Teruel, where public art installations have become focal points for cultural events, further strengthening community bonds.

Environmental Awareness and Sustainability through Public Art

Both cities have also incorporated public art that advocates for environmental causes, thus promoting sustainability. When asking urban planners and artists about eco-friendly artworks, the respondents indicated increased concern with or commitment to eco-art installations—artworks made of recycled materials fueled by renewable energy. Similarly, in Chengdu, they described how these installations created by the new generation planners are acceptable and support the general objectives of making the city environmentally friendly and sustainable in the future. In the same way, as Teruel did, aesthetic interventions became another focus combined with increasing environmental awareness among the citizens.

As revealed through the quantitative section of the study, more than 48% of the participants in both cities supported the view that public art has the practical benefit of enhancing environmental awareness. One of the respondents said, "Eco-art projects help to realize how we treat nature and encourage residents to live in a more environmentally friendly manner". Based on these outcomes of the study, it can be concluded that the public art of Chengdu and Teruel inspires the public to be environmentally conscious and take appropriate actions.

Furthermore, both cities have witnessed successful implementation of participatory design processes with a view of empowering the communities. Cities like Teruel and Chengdu have strengthened citizens' connection to their environment by involving residents in creating public art, fostering a greater sense of ownership and pride. For instance, one planner who worked in Teruel said, "If people themselves paint something on the wall, they are likely to care more and protect public property and participate more in other activities in the city".

Public Art as an Engine for Urban Transformation

This study's findings prove that public art brings value to changing cities' look and feel. Chengdu and Teruel are good examples of how public art interventions can help

push forward urban regeneration, addressing cultural, environmental, and social goals. These projects have empowered citizens and increased cities' openness, flexibility, and resilience through multi-disciplinary collaboration between artists, urbanists, designers, and environmental engineers. Most respondents reported that sustainability considerations and community engagement are the most important factors when integrating public art into urban renewal projects.

6.2. Analysis of Typical International Public Art Projects

By looking into the art practices of Suzanne Lacy, Barbara Steveni, John Latham, and Harding, it is clear that these artists were the head architects of the public art movement, which is now considered to be one of the most productive tools for city regeneration and creating more livable and united towns [42]. The genesis of public art has surmounted the problem of classical art by the vehicle of community engagement, social importance, and site-specific installations. Their performance in this regard emphasizes that public art is capable of painting life into run-down cities and is also a platform for the voiceless to speak out and for the future of cities [43].

Suzanne Lacy proved, in her significant pieces such as *Three Weeks in May* and *The Crystal Quilt*, that public art is a great way to undertake urban change by transforming under-used public spaces into dynamic places of expression and social commentary [29]. She established a participatory approach to ensure that communities of different origins repatriated their spaces and developed new visions of their environments. Therefore, the community has taken ownership of the urban area, an aspect needed for sustainable urban development [44].

Additionally, the notion that art can be used to resolve some complex social problems through the implementation of public art initiatives is a great example of the capabilities of this method to draw the attention of the public to the specific issues faced by vulnerable urban communities such as violence, discrimination, and lack of access to public spaces [45]. Lacy was the first to undertake this by giving a voice to the voiceless and setting the conversation among the people through public art to achieve justice and multi-purposeful planning in the city.

The work of Barbara Steveni with the Artist Placement Group (APG) is a good example of how important an interdisciplinary approach is and how to embed artists in institutional and organizational contexts. The APG attempted to dispel established boundaries by placing artists within executive offices, industrial settings, and urban planning processes. This opened up new pathways for integrating artistic perspectives into city development.

Steveni adopted a line of thought that, in the future, the role of artists, designers, and creative minds in urban renewal will increase in popularity. Currently, placemaking, creative city planning, and urban design practices often involve interdisciplinary teamwork, which is appreciated for enriching the artistic perspectives in designing innovative solutions to complex urban problems.

John Latham's theoretical contribution, especially his notion of "Flat Time", broke the idea of conventional art as a static object and theorized it as a continuous and evolving process [46]. It bears evidence that the outlook of public art in urban regeneration is so important because it can be developed and modified to match the various demands and situations of urban settings.

David Harding's work in public art, where everyone was involved, showed the success of community-based, bottom-up methods in city revitalization. Projects such as "Meridian Hill Park" and "Philadelphia Green" facilitate public involvement in urban planning using participatory design, thereby promoting community ownership and a sense of pride, which are vital for sustainable urban development (2019).

Harding's legacy is in the heightened importance of community participation and co-creation in other urban regeneration initiatives. Contemporary placemaking, tactical urbanism, and communal design are now being implemented by building upon Harding's methods. They embrace collaborative processes that ensure that public art interventions

and urban renewal projects are rooted in the needs, aspirations, and cultural aspects of the communities they are serving [46].

Harding's theory of integrating the rhythm of the community's everyday life has been one of the critical factors in the modern understanding of public art as a means to uplift the level of life, vitality, and social cohesion of urban areas. The transformation of dead spots into activated hubs and artistic interventions has become the most efficient tool in urban rehabilitation. In this regard, it generates social activities and a sense of pride that they have become a part of the new way of living in the old urban areas.

The ideas of Lacy, Steveni, Latham, and Harding, altogether, have shown that the concept of public art can take urban regeneration to the next level. They span from socially oriented performances and community-based actions to purely theoretical research and unusual and new (if not yet typical) methods [47]. These techniques are very different from each other, but they have proven that public art does not only depict the places where it is exhibited but also influences the development of cities to become more environmentally friendly, people-friendly, and comfortable [48].

By their atypical methods, partnerships, and in general through theoretical speculations, these crusaders have pointed out that public art can, therefore, become the engine that can be used to drive urban revitalization. These trailblazers are the ones that have shown that public art can be the trigger point of urban renewal, which is often achieved by means of their innovative projects [37], collaborations, and theories. These pioneers have demonstrated that public art can catalyze urban renewal through the following [49]:

1. Developing abandoned areas into spaces enunciating the community's voice and presenting the social conditions.
2. Encouraging and enabling the marginalized to speak for themselves to ensure that discussions on social injustice and fair urban planning take place.
3. Collaborations among different disciplines and including artistic viewpoints in urban decision-making.
4. It must be Adopting a context-specific and changing strategy that takes into consideration the changing situation and environment of the cities.
5. Making local communities agents of change via participatory design methods encourages them to feel ownership of urban spaces.
6. Facilitating the existence of the living environment, the liveliness, and the social cohesion of urban areas by installing artworks that assimilate art into daily life.

As cities worldwide grapple with urban renewal, gentrification, and sustainable development challenges, these public art pioneers' legacies have left behind invaluable ideas and types of inspiration. Through the implementation of community engagement, social relevance, interdisciplinary collaboration, and site-specific interventions, public art can become an effective tool for urban regeneration—it can bring new life into the cities, lead to conversations and greater inclusivity, and help to create sustainable, equitable, and extraordinary urban futures.

Public art appears to be a formidable tool for accomplishing the sustainability goals of urban design and development. These visionary artists, creators, and thinkers inspired the public art movement that is now known for the transformative capacity of art in offering a platform for community engagement [50], social equity, and the development of multiple, more environmentally conscious, and inclusive urban environments. Through cross-boundary linkages and interdisciplinary cooperation, site-specific interventions and participatory processes are the key initiatives public art can offer to achieve sustainable urban development from a holistic perspective [51].

Public art can also help to achieve the environmental dimension of sustainable urban development through thoughtful depiction of ecological issues, highlighting sustainable practices, and revisiting our connection with nature. The work of artists and groups of environmentally oriented artists [52], as well as landscape artists and ecological installations, can play an essential role in promoting social reflection on the consequences of human activities for the environment, engaging people in sustainable behavior, and redesigning

urban living spaces by incorporating natural features [53]. Public art can be employed as a tool for dialogue that would lead to art interventions that challenge how we perceive the urban environment; thus, discussions about urban ecology, green infrastructure, and creating cities that are more resilient and environmentally conscious can be set off. Moreover, public art has the capability to make site-specific interventions and evolving, responsive exhibits linked to the prerequisite of urban spaces being dynamic and adaptive to the issues and challenges in a mutable environment [54].

Furthermore, public art can engage with the city's economic viability and the economic aspect of urban sustainable development. These artistic destinations, as well as active community hubs created from neglected and abandoned urban spaces, will offer a chance for public art installations to demonstrate their placemaking power, attracting a new category of visitors, boosting local businesses, and supporting the growth of creative industries in cities [38]. Additionally, public art commissions and projects can create jobs for artists, designers, and other creative professionals, followed by the development and growth of the cultural sector and the building of a dynamic and resilient economy in urban areas.

Public art, being an interdisciplinary practice like that of Barbara Steveni with Artist Placement Group (APG), stresses the significance of collaboration and merging art's influence into urban planning, proving such endeavors' importance. The motion planning showed the way for the cooperation among artists with government officials, industrialists, and urban planners in addition to the new dimension of what they can see and achieve by placing artists in government institutions, industrial sites, and urban planning processes.

In the contemporary world, the current urban regeneration projects and the sustainable city planning processes mainly emphasize the significance of artists, designers, and creative minds being involved in the process while also acknowledging the capacity for independent artists to bring more dynamic, vivid, and resilient urban environments into being. This multifaceted approach is central to the integrative nature of sustainable urban development. It is characterized by merging different views and fields of expertise to tackle the diversified issues that cities are currently experiencing.

Public art's role in achieving the goal of sustainable urban development is mainly exemplified by its power to create social inclusivity, raise the voices of the marginalized, advocate environmental awareness, catalyze community empowerment, and facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration [55]. Via community participation, site-specific artworks, and artistic intervention, public art can contribute to the growth of creative, welcoming, and resilient cities. These cities can withstand different challenges.

The roots of many modern public art practices that are linked to issues such as social inclusion, environmental awareness, and the embedding of art in cities were laid by Suzanne Lacy, Barbara Steveni, John Latham, and David Harding. With the rapid urbanization, gentrification, and environmental degradation that cities worldwide are grappling with, public art comes in as a great tool to promote dialogue, acceptance, and even action for sustainable and attractive, fairly distributed cities.

The exploration of these great artists and thinkers' legacies and the perpetual efforts to push the limits of public art's potential leads to us being in a position to utilize the power of creative expression to create a city that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also socially just, environmentally responsible, and sustainable for the future.

7. Conclusions

This study has demonstrated how influential public art is in becoming a catalyst for achieving urban community sustainability goals. Through the observation of the emerging works and techniques of visionary artists, we have revealed the transformative nature of art and its interventions in the creation of more inclusive, artistic, and environmentally conscious cities.

The results show that public art is a medium that can relate to sustainable urban development in multiple ways. Social equity is one of them, since it helps amplify the voices

that are not receiving enough attention; environmental awareness is another, since it uses eco-art installations; and the last one is community empowerment through participatory design processes. Additionally, focused site specificity, impermanence, and the present infusion of art into municipal life coincide with the necessity for urban areas to be flexible, adaptive, and reflective of the changing requirements of their inhabitants.

Interestingly, this study continues to demonstrate the advantages of interdisciplinary collaboration and the incorporation of artistic style into urban planning. By applying the Artist Placement Group's ethos, cities can utilize the innate abilities and creative thinking of artists, designers, and cultural practitioners to generate novel, sustainable, and resilient solutions to urban complications.

In the face of challenges to global cities in terms of gentrification, urbanization, and environmental deterioration, the findings of this research are a testimony to the essence of public art that can act as the engine of transformation and be the driving force of more inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable cities of tomorrow. Through the successful emulation of the accomplishments of the forefathers and through the continuous exploration of the limits of the potential of public art, we may use the innovative power of creative expression to create cities that are not only aesthetically fascinating, but also socially just, environmentally conscious, and sustainable for the future generations.

The findings are crucial to the discussion on the union of art and urban development and sustainable growth. Thus, it acts as a tool for expanding research and developing interdisciplinary cooperation and community-oriented public art projects that incorporate ecological concerns. By embracing the results and recommendations provided here, cities may capitalize on public art as a tool not only for creating more livable, inclusive, and sustainable urban environments for all but also for unlocking the full potential of public art as a tool.

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Appendix A. Interview Questions

For Artists:

1. Can you describe your involvement in public art projects within Chengdu/Teruel? What motivated you to participate?
2. How do you perceive the role of public art in contributing to the sustainable development of urban areas?
3. In what ways do your artworks reflect the locality and cultural heritage of Chengdu/Teruel?
4. Have you encountered any challenges in integrating sustainable practices into your public art projects? If so, how did you address them?
5. How do you think public art can influence community identity and social cohesion in rapidly changing urban environments?

For Urban Planners and Policymakers:

1. How is public art integrated into the broader urban renewal plans in Chengdu/Teruel? What are the key objectives of these initiatives?
2. What challenges have you faced in implementing public art projects in terms of funding, policy, or community engagement?
3. How do you measure the impact of public art on urban development and sustainability goals?
4. In your experience, how does public art contribute to the revitalization of underutilized or vacant urban spaces?
5. What strategies do you recommend to ensure that public art is not just an add-on but an integral part of urban planning?

For Community Members:

1. How do you feel about the public art projects in your community? Do they reflect the local culture and identity of Chengdu/Teruel?
2. In what ways has public art influenced your daily life and the overall atmosphere of your community?
3. Have you been involved in any decision-making processes related to public art in your area? If so, how was your input considered?
4. Do you believe that public art contributes to the social and environmental well-being of your community? Can you provide examples?
5. What improvements or changes would you like to see in future public art projects to better serve the community's needs?

Appendix B. Design and Conclusion of the Questionnaire Survey**Table A1.** Questionnaire Survey Results.

Questions	Option	Percentage
Gender:	Male	45%
	Female	48%
	Non-binary/Other	7%
Age:	18–25	21%
	26–35	30%
	36–45	26%
	46–55	14%
	56 and above	9%
Country of Residence:	Spain	45%
	China	45%
	Other	10%
In the last one year, have you come across any art sculptures in public places?	Yes	85%
	No	15%
If yes, what type of public art installation have you personally attended?	Murals	40%
	Sculptures	29%
	Street art	14%
	Graffiti	12%
	Installations	5%
What is the frequency with which you get to engage with public art?	Daily	21%
	Weekly	32%
	Monthly	23%
	Less often	24%

Table A1. Cont.

Questions	Option	Percentage
In your opinion does the public sculpture enhance the beauty of your city in such a way that people would consider living there?	Strongly agree	40%
	Agree	35%
	Neutral	15%
	Disagree	7%
	Strongly disagree	3%
Do you believe public art helps promote social cohesion and community engagement?	Strongly agree	52%
	Agree	26%
	Neutral	12%
	Disagree	9%
	Strongly disagree	1%
Do you think public art can help address social issues such as poverty, inequality, or discrimination?	Strongly agree	46%
	Agree	35%
	Neutral	9%
	Disagree	7%
	Strongly disagree	3%
Do you believe public art can raise awareness about environmental issues and promote sustainable behaviors?	Strongly agree	48%
	Agree	34%
	Neutral	11%
	Disagree	5%
	Strongly disagree	2%
Do you believe public art can create job opportunities in the arts and related industries?	Strongly agree	40%
	Agree	30%
	Neutral	14%
	Disagree	11%
	Strongly disagree	5%
Do you think public art should be a priority in urban renewal projects?	Strongly agree	58%
	Agree	30%
	Neutral	8%
	Disagree	3%
	Strongly disagree	1%
What do you think are the most important factors to consider when integrating public art into urban renewal projects?	Community engagement	20%
	Artistic quality	32%
	Sustainability considerations	30%
	Economic feasibility	8%
	Policy support	10%

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