

# PUBLIC EXPERIENCE OF TRADITIONAL LOCAL OPERAS



## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE, PUBLIC SPACE,  
REGENERATION, ATTRACTIVENESS, HERITAGE,  
ARTS, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, GROWTH, COVID



## 1. Xi'an and culture

Xi'an is the capital of Shaanxi Province in China. It was the starting point of Ancient Silk Road and was an ancient capital for flourishing dynasties with a rich history. Cultural heritages of Xi'an have witnessed the development of the city and are unique assets of the local community.

Since the reform and opening-up in 1980s, Xi'an has developed booming industries and expanded more than tenfold in size with significantly increasing population. Not only is Xi'an a city with a long history, it's also a bustling city of prosperity. The city has progressed as "an international metropolis with historical and cultural characteristics" and established civil friendships with 38 cities globally. It is also one of the most popular tourist destinations.

**THE PROJECT AIMS TO ESTABLISH A NETWORK TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND ARTS, AS WELL AS TO PROVIDE PUBLIC SPACE WHICH INVOLVES EVERYONE IN CULTURAL EVENTS, ENSURING THE CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONAL ART, HISTORY AND CULTURE.**

## 2. Project goals and implementation

### 2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The objectives of the project are to establish a network to promote the development of traditional culture and arts, as well as to provide public space which involves everyone in cultural events, ensuring the continuity of traditional art, history and culture. It also guarantees the conservation of historical buildings through sustainable measures.





Meanwhile, it revitalizes and reform traditional arts. Cooperating with local government, education departments, cultural institutions, commercial organizations and citizens, the project is devoted to maintaining and diversifying cultures of Xi'an, improving local people's appreciation level of cultural heritages, introducing the city to the global stage via exchange of cultures, and providing top-notch facilities that can reduce the impact of the pandemic on cultural development and citizens' cultural rights.

## 2.2. Project development

Main actions can be categorized as follows:

- Public performances every weekend;
- Museums and cultural centers open to the public on a daily basis;
- Large-scale opera activities twice a year;
- Frequent education and research activities for young people;
- Commercial performances every day;
- Measures taken to ensure people's equal access to a rich cultural life during Covid-19 pandemic.

Specific projects were demonstrated below:

- Protection of historical buildings of Yisu Theatre, which is a major historic and cultural site under state protection with more than 170 seats.
- Construction and opening of the Centennial Museum of the Yisu Theatre, which is divided into two exhibition parts: one is Historical and Social Influence, and the other is Artistic Achievements of Qin Opera.
- Construction and opening of China Qin Opera Art Museum, which tells the origin, development and evolution process of Qin Opera, as well as the development path of Chinese Opera Art (including contemporary Chinese folk-art forms).
- Construction of Xi'an Time-honored Commercial Cluster, which combines modern fashion block with traditional market to create a unique place of time-honored food culture experience.

- Construction of Qin Opera Performance Square. The Square has the largest ancient theatrical stage with traditional structures built. The design imitates the style in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It has a whole wood structure decorated with cornices, lending it a quaint and elegant appeal. The Square is a comprehensive vehicle for the cultural heritage of stone-carving and wood-carving art, painting art and couplet inscribed on the wall.
- Construction of Dongbangge Underground Retro Pedestrian Street. It is a hot tourist spot with vintage neon lights, old sewing machine wall, television wall and other old objects, which brings back the memory of market-strewn street in ancient Xi'an.
- Renovation of Yisu Theatre, which can seat 1161 people. The theatre caters for comprehensive events such as theatrical performances and cultural exchange exhibitions.

**THE CHINA QIN OPERA ART MUSEUM TELLS THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION PROCESS OF QIN OPERA, AS WELL AS THE DEVELOPMENT PATH OF CHINESE OPERA ART (INCLUDING CONTEMPORARY CHINESE FOLK-ART FORMS).**

## 3. Impacts

### 3.1. Direct impacts

The project provides an effective channel for Xi'an municipal government to plan budgets, formulate policies, and guarantee sponsoring programs that will promote cultural development, people's welfare and historical preservation. The relevant regulations and policies introduced by the local government ensure the sustainable development of Qin Opera and traditional troupes such as Yisu Society.

Improved facilities and space will enable performers of traditional operas to adopt innovative performance styles, providing visitors with unique experience that cannot be replaced by hi-tech products.

Located at the central area of Xi'an, the project, with great accessibility and various components, provides citizens and tourists with novel experience of traditional opera. It also encourages people to gain cultural experience, particularly for the younger generations to appreciate traditional arts and operas, by which the traditional opera education will be facilitated.

Moreover, this project also helps attract more tourists, boosts local economy, and plays an important role in upgrading local infrastructures and driving economic growth.

### 3.2. Assessment

Evaluation mechanism consists of evaluations from the government, non-governmental organizations and third parties, based on field investigation, questionnaire survey, financial statement auditing, expert scoring and public satisfaction. Moreover, evaluation indicators are embodied in comprehensive social and economic benefits, general utilization of indoor and outdoor space, public use of the cultural quarter, tourist's utilization of the cultural quarter, satisfaction rate, and specific indicators which address the demands of vulnerable groups and juveniles.

### 3.3. Key factors

Key aspects of the project fall on how to attract people, ensure the experience of real culture, explore the possibilities for traditional operas being appreciated, and extend its continuity and creativity. Besides, great accessibility, highlights for multiple visits, supporting catering services, and its linkage with surrounding cultural attractions are also crucial in the development of this historical and cultural quarter.



THE PROJECT PROVIDES AN EFFECTIVE CHANNEL FOR XI'AN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT TO PLAN BUDGETS, FORMULATE POLICIES, AND GUARANTEE SPONSORING PROGRAMS THAT WILL PROMOTE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, PEOPLE'S WELFARE AND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.

### 3.4. Continuity

The organizational and technical support provided by the local government includes forming an expert team from cultural, design and cultural relics protection institutions, and holding regular meetings with relevant administrative departments and business institutions to facilitate coordination. As for financial support, the project is recommended to apply for special funds for culture and tourism and cultural promotion set at the provincial and municipal level.

## 4. Further information

Xi'an was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury of the award drew up the final report in September 2022, and requested the Committee on Culture to promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Shi Qi, Director of Center for International Friendship Cities, Xi'an, Shaanxi, People's Republic of China.

Contact: [will.xpu \(at\) qq.com](mailto:will.xpu@qq.com)

Website: [www.xa.gov.cn/](http://www.xa.gov.cn/)