

The Invalidity Analyse on Feasibility of Urban Color Planning

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Abstract. As one of the most effective ways to create the urban scene, urban color planning was once a hot spot in the planning industry in the past years. However, the implementation of the planning always ended up with nothing or fails to come up to the expectation. This paper analyzes profoundly the reasons for the failure of current urban color planning in our country, and puts forward several aspects to be focused for the practical urban color planning from nature of the urban color and complexity of the problems existed in the urban color planning.

Complexity of Urban Color Composition

The urban color is a rather complicated system focusing on the total color perceived. The color is formed and perceived by such three indispensable parts as existence of light, material surface of various objects and physiological mechanism of eyes. The material composition of urban color refers to the total color of the exposed exterior parts perceived in the public space in the city. It is the whole picture of urban entity color factors, which includes, in a narrow scene, natural environment color (such as mountain, soil, water system and vegetation), urban artificial building color (such as building, road and landscape sketch) and flow color (such as celebrating activities, costumes and automobiles). The generalized urban color is the products of regional culture accumulation, which is the combination of the whole picture, historical context, national tradition, regional culture, environment, citizen temperament and zeitgeist of a city.

Problem Representation for Failure of the Urban Color Planning in Our Country

Contradiction between traditional color order integration and modern urban color order deficiency. The urban color planning in ancient China was influenced by the “five elements and five colors theory” and hierarchy of feudal “morality”, and each social class had a unique color standard, thus the construction color became a symbol to distinguish the low and high grade. Other than royal palaces and temples featured with diversified colors, ordinary dwellings did not have big difference in color. Another reason for the unified color was the limitation of traditional social construction materials and construction technology. From the overall arrangement in city, urban color in ancient China showed a high sense of order.

With the transformation from a traditional society to a modern society, the superstructure of the social economy undergoes a profound change. The old color order is broken, but the new color order has not been set up, and the formation mechanism of urban color is entirely different. New users involved, coupled with functional replacement, architectural scale resulted from new material and technology, as well as acceptance and understanding of people in different areas to new matters will make increasingly sharp conflict between the traditional local color system and new architectural color system from abroad or selected randomly. The “diversity” of modern urban color can be found everywhere.

Contradiction between complicated composition of urban color and simple individual cognition . Different country or region has its own local color and traditional color. The formation of urban color is often impacted by local ideology, cultural tradition, citizen aesthetic attitude, etc. The unique regional environment influences directly the formation and development of race, custom and

culture, which directly lead to different color expression. Meanwhile, selection of architectural color also shows different regional characteristics. Each county, city or village has its own tradition for using the color, which to a large extent forms the cultural characteristics of a country.

In ordinary cities in our country, there is a serious shortage of urban color. Because the urban color in traditional society shows a distinguished class order, citizens have no chance to take part in the selection of urban color, which makes them feel indifferent to the aesthetic appreciation of urban color, and even disgust the traditional urban color.

Currently, the color education in our country is rather backward, and the overall national color quality is not high. The color cognition for most publics is simple with neither distinction among dominant tone, supplementary tone, dominant color and even standard color, nor demarcation among tone, color spectrum, color system and color. They believe that the urban color is just a certain color or several colors. There is conceptual confusion even for professionals on the cognition of color planning, for example, they can not tell the difference between color planning and color design, and difference between architectural color and urban tone. Therefore, it is not appropriate to discuss and determine and even perform the urban color under this background.

Contradiction between color subjective orientation and public aesthetic appreciation. Similar to the concept of other aesthetic category, people are subjective to the cognition of color. People are long accustomed to perceiving the color with the purpose to understand and experience it. People will have different perception for the color under different weather conditions, cultures, and professional backgrounds and with different moods. For individuals, there are strong uncertainties in color.

However, the urban color is for publics and shall be perceived by all people who live, work, and visit the city everyday. The information is transferred by it to groups with a certain quantities rather than individuals. The final user and appraiser of the urban color environment are the vast urban residents. The public attribute has been neglected for a long time with urban color determined by a few people. The architectural color is in fact determined by government officials, administrative departments, developers and planning personnel with little influence of urban citizens on the architectural color. Thus, many urban color problems appear due to the influence of personal factors during the practical management operation. The developers determine the urban color in representative of policy-makers, which leads to competition of urban color due to individual aesthetic tendency.

Contradiction between wait-and-see attitude and active management of administrative departments. Urban color not only reflects the external urban characteristics and urban appearance, but also influences the development of urban economy. Lack of legal urban color regulation system, the color is disorganized with individual features appearing here and there due to emphasis on morphology rather than color itself. Over the past two years, relevant countermeasures had been taken by urban planning administrative departments in many cities. The “planning manager” often serves as a “builder” for the shortage of planning technological document to guide the color implementation, and thus the color is single and rigid for the new color planning due to the centralized management.

Reasons for Failure of Current Urban Color Planning in Our Country

Weak color research foundation. It reflects on two aspects, one is weak of uniform architectural color standard, and another is weak of management technology for urban color planning. The practice of urban and architectural color abroad is inseparable from the reliance on the important basis of color standard. At present, many western countries have their own mature color standard, and have gradually established a whole set of complete urban color planning system. Among which the most influential ones are: CIE standard colorimetry system, Munsell color system, Ostwald color system, Japanese Practical color coordinate system, Swedish natural color system, as well as Optical Society of America Uniform Color Scales System (OSA-USA), German Industrial Standard Color System (DIN) and Hungarian color system (Coloroid). Our country has formulated and issued the national standard (GB/T15608-1995) of *Chinese Color System* according to the visual system characteristics of Chinese in 1993, symbolizing that we have our own standard system of color measurement.

However, the formulation of urban and architectural color standard has not been unified within the industry field, and the color standard in the urban color planning is not corresponding with the color standard of building materials. Furthermore, there is a shortage of supervision and execution by competent authorities. The shortage of a unified, coherent and strong operative color standard during the process of planning—management—execution is the major technological reason for inconsistency of urban color planning and execution and difficult implementation of urban color.

There is a lack of scientific management technology for urban color. The composition of urban color is a complicated system with onerous data collection, long collecting time and large information of urban color. Moreover, the urban color is the color spectrum after analysis of several architectural colors. Only one time of urban color planning is far beyond to collect all urban color information which requires long-term perfection on urban color data. The depth of urban color collection impacts the depth of urban color planning. The survey methodology of traditional urban planning is out of date and special urban color database shall be established to keep, update and analyze the data. Thus, it is essential to properly retain the urban color data by virtue of technological method.

Lack of urban technological supporting. The basic theory of urban color planning in our country is just in its infancy: Firstly, there is a lack of urban color planning theory acknowledged in the system and industry; secondly, there is not a unified standard for compiling content of urban color planning, so different planning design units and planning management departments may have different understandings on the planning contents, and thus the urban color planning is more diversified for shortage of unified technical standard and review management methods, which obstructs the execution of urban color planning; thirdly, there is a lack of research on urban color management, and quantification is hard to achieve in implementing the urban color and control of color execution degree. The urban color planning is too perceptual, and has not be included into the scientific and rational planning scope; finally, it is lack of practical and beneficial theory guidance, simplification of urban color planning results in similar or even the same urban color planning results, and hence the urban color becomes assimilated from disorder.

The urban color planning has not been included into the legal planning system, which is the major reason for its failure to serve as the execution basis to guide the planning management. The urban planning compilation in current nation is divided into general planning and detailed planning. The requirement of “putting forward urban design guidance on architectural color” is only mentioned in the compilation of regulatory plan by *Urban Planning Methodology (Ed. 2006)*. However, the detailed regulatory plan is to deepen and implement of the urban overall planning, focusing on the control and guidance on land utilization and land developing intensity. Though the current controlling compilation and controlling management are gradually rational, they are still limited to the space arrangement of material aspect, and the controlling index is limited to general control on construction intensity, construction height and nature of land utilization, with shortage of control details and technological rationality on three dimensional space configuration, and thus lead to a series of problems such as relative rough of urban public landscape. The function of regulatory detailed planning in the plot architectural color regulatory guidance is not significant for detailed management and implementation. Therefore, further research is needed to be conducted for urban color planning results currently on the management and implementation of urban color in coordination with urban planning compilation in different planning stage.

Research Ideas on Feasibility of Urban Color Planning

Perfect the urban color compilation content .The writer thinks that urban color planning mode shall focus on the conjunction of “macroscopic system” and “microscopic element” through practice. It shall focus macroscopically on the linkage with overall urban planning and overall urban design, with perfect color positioning in the whole city and each function area in the city. It shall focus microscopically on the control of detailed space element, and establish the space elemental system from macroscopic aspect to microscopic aspect and the system of surface-line-point relation through the control mode establishment of “characteristic region + urban characteristic axis + characteristic node”, which facilitates the guidance of integration of urban color control requirement into regulatory detail planning microscopically.

Linkage with statutory urban planning system.The regulatory detail planning in our country has become essentially the direct operative basis for planning management. It is an active attempt to enhance the urban color environment control and guidance by consolidating the regulatory detail planning into the contents of urban color control principle. The supplementary of color regulatory guidance of public space and public landscape on basis of perfecting the original control facilitates the implementation of planning control of urban color environment.

Technical means to improve the urban color planning management.The perfection of urban color management relies on scientific technical means. Such information treatments as collection and analysis of urban color data depend on scientific and rational technical means and methods. The formulation of urban color shall be the policy making based on the current information. Therefore, it is of great importance to investigate and survey the building color statistics, store the information and establish an “urban color database” for a continuous urban color research, management and implementation.

Conclusion

The urban color planning research in our country is just at the exploratory stage. It is still a long way to go to truly achieve the harmonious coexistence of urban color. However, the study on feasibility of urban color planning is extremely urgent.

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