Thesis Title: Sustaining Art Ecosystem: Social Diversity and NGO-Government Cooperation in Song Zhuang Art Village

Author: Yan Chu

Thesis Advisor(s): Xin Li

Reader: Marcela Tovar-Restrepo

Department(s): Urban Planning

Abstract:

In recent decades, many cities in China have encouraged the cultural and art sector as a pathway for urban development. With this trend, many art districts and clusters rose and fail and in Beijing and Song Zhuang became the largest original artists cluster in the whole country. While prevailing voices interpret this phenomenon as the result of “rent” changes, this paper argues that “art ecosystem diversity” in Song Zhuang has more impact on attracting artists. Borrowing the concept from natural ecosystem diversity, “art ecosystem diversity” refers to the dynamic interactions and relations among civil society, government, non-governmental organization, artists and villagers. Art ecosystem diversity is strengthened and also leads to a diversified pattern of social stakeholders in the system as well as a mixed-use pattern of land use. While Song Zhuang gains popularity, it is also facing potential impedances, such as loss of diversity and over-commercialization. The analysis conclusion suggests that non-governmental organizations, as representative of public bodies, and its cooperation with governments and artists can anchor the diversity of Song Zhuang and sustain its art ecosystem.