

# Ethical Consideration on the Promotion of Soft Power of Urban Culture

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**Abstract:** *The construction of civic morality is an important part of the soft power of urban culture, which can provide strong spiritual motivation for the promotion of the soft power of urban culture. To examine the construction and promotion of urban soft power from the perspective of ethics, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of civic morality and improve the moral quality of citizens. On the practical level, we should construct the moral system and moral concept suitable for the reality of the new era, inherit and carry forward the unique advantages of the excellent traditional Chinese ethical culture, and promote the moral education of citizens.*

**Keywords:** *Soft power of urban culture; Ethics; Moral construction*

## 1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, Joseph Nye, a professor at Harvard University, first proposed the concept of Soft Power. In his opinion, a country's comprehensive national strength can be divided into "hard power" and "soft power". "Hard power" is composed of obvious and direct elements such as economy, science and technology, military strength, etc., while soft power comes from a country's culture, values and foreign policy that is not mandatory to other countries. It is the ability to influence and persuade others to recognize and accept certain rules of behavior, values and institutional arrangements through spiritual and moral appeals. It will surely become the key to winning the competition among countries in the future information age. In the current process of urbanization, "soft power" has become the main yardstick to measure the development and progress of a city. To achieve high-quality development, a city must pay attention to and enhance soft power. As an indispensable part of people's social life, the construction of ethics and morality is of great practical significance to the construction and promotion of the soft power of urban culture.

## 2. The Status and Value of Moral Construction in The Promotion of Urban Soft Power

In the increasingly fierce international competition, a city should not only pay attention to the construction of "hard power" such as economy, science and technology, finance, but also pay attention to the promotion of "soft power" covering politics, culture, ethics, art, values and other dimensions. From the perspective of ethics, moral elements are an indispensable part of improving the soft power of urban culture.

### 2.1. Morality is the core element of urban cultural soft power

In the development of the soft power of urban culture, morality is the key core element, and the moral construction and the promotion of the soft power of urban culture are mutually interactive and intrinsically unified. Wei Zhengtong, a famous scholar in Taiwan, pointed out that "culture is the whole or whole picture of a nation's activities, and ethics is a set of value system in cultural activities, which can also be called cultural spirit." Domestic scholar Fan Hao stressed: "In a broad sense, culture and ethics have an inclusive relationship, and ethics constitute the core of the cultural value system... Ethics is quite characteristic of culture." Morality is the common values formed by people in practical activities, as well as the norms and norms of behavior that guide people to live together. It is the value yardstick for people to measure and judge right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness in social life. The ethical values at the social level reflect the basic orientation and spiritual core of urban culture. In this sense, the value system of social ethics determines the basic characteristics of urban culture. The reason why Chinese traditional culture shows the tendency and characteristics of valuing morality over

self-interest, valuing collective over individual, valuing human relations over nature, is inseparable from the influence of Confucian ethical value system and the role of social moral education. In the development process of urban cultural soft power, the core role of morality is to provide a set of guiding, normative and core moral value system support. A good moral value system reflects people's common value pursuit and represents the value orientation of social civilization development. It has great guiding power, inspiring power and cohesive force. It can guide people to establish the value concept of separating right from wrong and avoiding humiliation, restrain and adjust people's behavior, and provide powerful spiritual motivation for social development and the improvement of urban soft power. Once the moral value system, which is the core element supporting and leading the development of cultural soft power, is lost, the chaos of value system and social alienation will inevitably occur, and the formation of cultural soft power will be out of the question.

### ***2.2. Morality is the internal driving force for the improvement of urban cultural soft power***

Morality as a spiritual force can provide a strong inner power for the construction of urban culture. Without moral construction, the development of a city will only stay in the development of material force, and the lack of a spiritual soft power support, then the maintenance of cultural soft power of a city will lack of internal power, resulting in a lack of momentum, urban development will lose sustainability, naturally, urban cultural construction without moral support will lose its development vitality. "The real survival and creative power of man, the inexhaustible survival and creative power embodied in any culture created by man, comes from moral motivation."<sup>[1]</sup> Moral construction affects the improvement of social life and people's spiritual realm, and injects strong spiritual power into the improvement of urban cultural soft power. Therefore, the improvement of urban cultural soft power cannot be separated from moral power.

### ***2.3. Morality provides an important ideological and moral guarantee for the promotion of urban cultural soft power***

The promotion of the soft power of urban culture needs a long process and needs to create a good social environment. This is not only the inevitable requirement of urban development, but also the indispensable way and link of urban soft power promotion. Moral level is an important symbol of social civilization, the formation of good social fashion is inseparable from people's social moral practice. As a flexible force, morality exerts a subtle influence on people's ideological and moral quality and the overall moral level of society through social education and public opinion, which helps people internalize external norms into their inner consciousness of rules and responsibilities, improve citizens' moral quality and moral quality, and improve people's ability of moral judgment and moral transformation. We should foster a favorable social and moral environment, and foster a social trend of promoting good while suppressing evil and worrying morality toward good. The improvement of urban cultural soft power cannot be separated from the social fashion of honesty and trustworthiness, friendship and mutual assistance, and the enhancement and improvement of citizens' ideological and moral quality. A good social moral environment can provide important ideological and moral guarantee for the improvement of urban cultural soft power.

## **3. The Moral Dilemma Restricting The Promotion of Urban Cultural Soft Power**

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. On the one hand, core socialist values are deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and the ideological and moral quality of the whole nation has been greatly improved. On the other hand, while people's ideas and moral qualities are obviously improved, the prevalence of utilitarianism, the lack of bottom-line ethics and ethical and moral anomalies still exist within a certain range, which become the main factors hindering and restricting the promotion of urban cultural soft power.

### ***3.1. Bottom line ethical retreat***

"Bottom-line ethics is a deontology in contrast to teleology or consequentialism, in this case a more moderate deontology. Bottom line ethics is first of all "universalist", it is universally applicable to all people, is the same requirements for all people, does not allow any "subject exception"; The second is a deontology that no longer brings high moral ideals into the realm of the norms of moral principles, but aims at fundamental obligations."<sup>[2]</sup> Bottom-line ethics defines the minimum and minimum moral

boundaries of people's behaviors, as well as the most basic behavioral norms and norms for human beings. At present, our society is in a comprehensive transition period, in the transition period of society will inevitably appear some moral anomia phenomenon, such as power corruption in the field of political life, official morality corruption, the interests of the field of economic life, integrity crisis, the secular utility of social life, lack of shame and so on. A series of moral anomie phenomena in the transitional society is closely related to the retreat of the bottom line of ethics. With the modern transformation of the traditional society, the basic ethical concepts advocated in the traditional society, such as "righteousness in the first place", understanding glory and knowing shame, honesty and self-discipline, have been gradually dissolved in the modern society. Examining the vicious events that break the bottom line of ethics such as "helping or not" and "rescuing or not" in the current moral life, it is not only influenced by the cultural spirit of the interest-oriented market economy, but also the trend of "receding" from the bottom line of ethics and morals of the whole society.

### ***3.2. Lack of fairness and justice***

Social justice is the basic value orientation of eliminating social conflicts, maintaining social stability and realizing the normal operation of social machine. It is because of the existence of justice scale that the social order is expected to achieve stable, orderly and harmonious development. Just as Rawls said, "Justice is the primary value of social system, just as truth is the primary value of ideological system." The principle of social justice is the most basic moral principle to coordinate the relationship between social interests and individual interests. It is not only the need of a society to realize its own vitality and orderly development, but also the requirement of social members to the society. The development of market economy has liberated people from the traditional dependence relationship and endowed them with more independence, autonomy and creativity. The independent personality and consciousness of equality of individuals have been released and publicized in an unprecedented way. They gradually realize the status and role of individuals as subjects in the society and require the society to realize the free and comprehensive development of individuals with the principle of justice. Although the development of market economy makes people get rid of the shackles and emancipate their independent personality to a certain extent, it also has some negative effects, causing a series of social justice problems that restrict the modernization process, such as imperfect distribution system, imperfect social security system, individual differences in wealth, education and so on. Inevitably, contradictions and conflicts at the social level are increased. In the absence of social justice, good people do not get good rewards while evil people do not get bad consequences, it will inevitably cause the imbalance of social moral psychology, resulting in the loss of people's sense of moral responsibility, social moral construction will be difficult to achieve the ideal effect, and to some extent, it affects the improvement of urban cultural soft power.

### ***3.3. Weak moral consciousness***

Moral consciousness is an important yardstick to measure social progress and civilization. The so-called moral consciousness means that people have common cognitive rules for morality. Such cognitive rules do not need to be constrained by laws and other coercive forces, but can rely on such conventional norms, inner beliefs and public opinions to restrict people's behaviors. In traditional Chinese society, ancient thinkers attach great importance to the cultivation and stimulation of people's moral consciousness. On the basis of the practice of moral education, they put forward many valuable theories of moral education and self-cultivation. According to traditional Chinese ethics and morals, the formation of a good moral atmosphere not only needs to play the exemplary role of moral education, but also needs the practical efforts of individuals. Specific cultivation methods, such as "cultivating one's moral integrity", "looking after oneself" and "examining and restraining", are put forward, which play a positive role in stimulating the subject's moral consciousness and improving the social atmosphere. With the development of The Times, the conflict and collision between Chinese and Western cultures have formed the development pattern of multi-culture. The excessive emphasis on replacing traditional culture with modern culture has led to the gradual decline of traditional moral education and weakened people's moral consciousness. The lack of moral consciousness has caused a great impact on the moral system of the whole society, which also leads to some outstanding problems in the field of value culture. There are moral anomies in some places and fields to varying degrees, and money worship, hedonism and extreme individualism still exist in a certain range. Therefore, the degree of moral consciousness should be regarded as an important principle and criterion for the promotion of urban cultural soft power.

#### **4. The Ethical Countermeasures to Enhance The Soft Power of Urban Culture**

##### ***4.1. Build an advanced moral culture system***

The construction of advanced moral culture system needs to adapt to the fresh practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Today, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. This is a new historical juncture in China's development. The new historical orientation is the basic foothold of constructing advanced moral culture system. The principal social contradiction in the new era has evolved into the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. The change of the principal contradiction will inevitably lead to the adjustment of the social interest relationship. How to adjust the previous relationship between different interest subjects and how to meet and realize the needs of different interest subjects is related to the stability and harmony of the society. In modern social life, people have not yet established a kind of moral consciousness, the consciousness of public morality is weak, the behavior of the lack of a basic moral bottom line, in the process of dealing with interpersonal relations, often eager for quick success and instant benefits, excessive pursuit of material desire to meet. Some people have lost the moral shame of being human, the distinction between honor and disgrace, right and wrong. In social life, the loss of shame, the chaos of value order, the absence of moral ethics, harm social stability, disturb the process of modernization, and affect the historical great cause of national rejuvenation. Therefore, in order to enhance the soft power of urban culture, in the perspective of ethics, it is necessary to build an advanced moral culture system which is adapted to the reality of Chinese characteristics in the new era according to the needs of the development of The Times.

##### ***4.2. We will thoroughly implement the project to improve civic morality***

In 2019, the CPC Central Committee issued the Outline for the Implementation of Civic Morality in the New Era. Through unremitting efforts, remarkable progress has been made in the ideological and moral development of citizens. In the process of promoting the Chinese-style modernization, The Times change and practice innovation make the ideological and moral field of citizens face many new problems, new challenges and new tasks. The promotion of the soft power of urban culture should not only focus on the construction of advanced moral culture system, but also promote and implement the construction project of civic morality in the whole society. On the one hand, in the process of civic moral construction, we should focus on strengthening the construction of social ethics, professional ethics, family virtues and personal virtues, inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese virtues, guide people to consciously cultivate and practice the core socialist values, encourage people to firm moral beliefs, improve moral personality, improve moral cultivation and sublimate moral realm. Form upward to the good Chun wind beauty vulgarity. On the other hand, we should cultivate and strengthen citizens' awareness of responsibility, rules, responsibility and dedication, consciously fulfill their due social responsibilities and obligations as social citizens, and take the initiative to shoulder the historical mission of national rejuvenation, social progress and national development. From the perspective of ethics, every citizen needs to start from the national interests, social interests, collective interests and public interests, consciously abide by the code of ethics in public life, the code of professional ethics and the code of behavior in family life, strengthen individual moral cultivation and improve their own moral quality.

##### ***4.3. Strengthen citizens' ideological and moral education***

The soft power of urban culture cannot be separated from the improvement of the overall ideological and moral quality of citizens, which will directly affect the image and cultural influence of a city. The ideological and moral qualities of citizens are mainly manifested as their subject consciousness, just consciousness, legal consciousness, political participation consciousness and so on. The normative principles in the society can become the normative force in reality only when they are grasped by the members of the society and internalized into their own moral consciousness.

Without the awareness of individual identity of social group members, the promotion of soft power of urban culture is empty talk. To improve the overall moral quality of citizens, it is necessary to strengthen ideological and moral education, build a comprehensive system of civic moral education, and create a good atmosphere conducive to moral cultivation of citizens. In order to construct an all-round civic moral education system, it is necessary to integrate social morality, professional morality, family virtue, socialist morality, communist morality, honor concept education and civic

education into various forms of education practice on the basis of comprehensively grasping China's national conditions, historical position and development rules, so that it can become a value code of conduct widely recognized and consciously practiced by people.

## 5. Conclusions

To sum up, it is a long and arduous task to enhance cultural soft power, and ethical construction is one of them. As the foundation of the soft power of urban culture, morality not only standardizes the flexible binding force of people's words and deeds and enhances the driving force of the soft power of urban culture, but also carries the function of promoting harmony among people and purifying social atmosphere to create a good soft environment. Only by attaching importance to and strengthening ideological and moral construction can the moral quality of people and the moral level of the whole society be improved, and only the promotion of the soft power of urban culture has the real moral foundation and moral fulcrum.

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