



The Challenges and Practical Pathways of Empowering Rural Cultural Revitalization through Local Rural Culture

WenJing Zhou

School of Marxism, Chongqing Technology and Business University, Chongqing 400067, China. E-mail: 184860534@qq.com (correspondence)

Abstract: The revitalization of rural culture is a crucial component and an effective pathway for advancing rural revitalization and achieving Chinese-style modernization. Local rural culture, which has taken shape through the historical development of the Chinese nation and the material as well as spiritual practices of rural life, embodies a distinctive regional cultural ethos and philosophical worldview. Closely intertwined with rural cultural revitalization, it plays a foundational and catalytic role in this process. Therefore, exploring the intrinsic value of local rural culture in supporting rural cultural revitalization, analyzing the practical challenges it encounters, and proposing targeted solutions are of significant importance for realizing its empowering potential and for promoting sustainable and culturally grounded rural development.

Keywords: Local Rural Culture, Empowerment, Rural Cultural Revitalization, Practical Challenges, Pathways for Implementation

1. Introduction

Local rural culture is a profound and dynamic cultural form that has gradually taken shape over thousands of years of social evolution and historical accumulation (Zhang & Li, 2024). As scholars have pointed out, the essence of Chinese culture is deeply rooted in native rural traditions, with its origins firmly embedded in the vast countryside (Ren & Wu, 2024). The social institutions and cultural structures

nurtured by rural society constitute the foundational backdrop of Chinese civilization (Zheng et al., 2024). Local rural culture encompasses not only tangible elements but also intangible cultural values that serve as the spiritual homeland of the Chinese nation. It functions as a source of historical memory and emotional belonging for individuals and communities alike. However, with the rapid advancement of human society and continuous

technological progress, rural communities have increasingly come under the influence of modernization and urbanization (Zhang & Zhou, 2022). A growing number of people are migrating from their hometowns to urban centers, and the previously familiar social relationships of rural life are gradually giving way to estrangement and fragmentation (Su et al., 2025). This transformation has progressively eroded the rich social soil that once nourished local rural culture, rendering it increasingly homogeneous and impoverished (Bonnet et al., 2024). At present, academic research on rural cultural revitalization has yielded a considerable body of literature. Major areas of focus include the construction of cultural confidence, the provision of public cultural services, the integration of culture with industry, and the preservation and utilization of intangible cultural heritage (Tavares et al., 2021). These studies emphasize the multifaceted role of culture in advancing rural governance modernization, promoting economic development, and transmitting valuable traditions (Heesom et al., 2021). However, in comparison, research that takes “local rural culture” as the core analytical lens and systematically explores how it can empower rural cultural revitalization remains relatively limited. In particular, theoretical development and empirical investigation are still lacking regarding how local rural culture can stimulate rural subjectivity, embed itself into rural governance through living mechanisms, and facilitate coordinated development between cultural production and governance. Therefore, this paper begins by examining the practical challenges faced in the recovery and transmission of local rural culture. Drawing on the unique cultural and emotional value of rural traditions in the collective consciousness, it seeks to

analyze the core dilemmas hindering the empowering function of rural culture in the revitalization process. Based on this analysis, the study proposes targeted strategies to address these issues, aiming to provide fresh theoretical perspectives and practical pathways for rural cultural revitalization in the context of contemporary China.

2. The Intrinsic Value of Indigenous Culture in Rural Cultural Revitalization

2.1 Local Rural culture serves as a driving force in rural cultural revitalization

Local Rural culture embodies the enduring historical memory and profound emotional belonging of the Chinese nation. Local rural culture serves as a vital link connecting people, land, and history. It not only preserves generations of accumulated wisdom, moral norms, modes of production, and aesthetic preferences, but also encapsulates culturally distinctive elements such as regional dialects, folk arts, traditional customs, and ritual festivals. As such, it constitutes a core foundation for understanding one's hometown and cultural heritage, while providing essential spiritual support for shaping personal identity and reinforcing cultural belonging. As scholars have noted, Local rural culture is the spiritual lifeblood and unique charm of the countryside (He et al., 2024). It is not only a key source of cohesion and identity within rural society but also a crucial driving force behind comprehensive rural revitalization. This assertion underscores the foundational and strategic role of local rural culture in the broader agenda of rural cultural revitalization (Islam, 2024). Rather than being a static relic of the past, it is a vibrant cultural resource and developmental asset. When systematically explored and creatively

transformed, local rural culture can serve as a vital pillar for invigorating rural vitality, enhancing cultural literacy among rural populations, and strengthening the soft power and appeal of rural culture. The intrinsic logic of rural cultural revitalization is firmly rooted in the protection, inheritance, and innovative promotion of outstanding native rural traditions. This process entails not only drawing intellectual and ethical nourishment from the deep reservoir of local cultural heritage to enrich contemporary rural civilization, but also recognizing rural culture as an endogenous force that drives sustainable and community-based rural development. The indigenous values, ecological ethics, humanistic spirit, and communal norms embedded in local rural culture offer behavioral guidance and moral orientation for rural society, and serve as a lasting cultural foundation for constructing a modern rural social framework that is both cohesive and resilient.

Therefore, efforts to advance rural cultural revitalization must begin with local rural culture as the fundamental entry point. Its historical significance, contemporary relevance, and functional potential must be deeply excavated and fully activated, allowing it to function as both a "cultural engine" and a "spiritual beacon" for rural development. In doing so, it can continuously stimulate innovation and regeneration within rural cultural systems and provide an enduring source of cultural strength in the pursuit of building strong agriculture, beautiful villages, and prosperous farming communities.

2.2 Local rural culture possesses strong cohesive power in the process of rural cultural revitalization

In *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, the earliest form of writing was ritualistic and temple-based.

This observation reveals the intrinsic link between the origins of Chinese civilization and religious ritual, ancestral worship, and community-based morality, reflecting the foundational role of local rural culture in the transmission of values and the structuring of social organization (Li et al., 2024). Within the vast rural landscape of China, cultural forms such as clan systems, traditional festivals, and sacrificial rituals are key manifestations of local rural culture. These elements not only preserve the historical memory of agrarian civilization, but also shape localized value systems and cognitive structures through long-standing generational transmission and embodied daily practice. The simple yet deeply internalized values of rural society—such as reverence for ancestors, diligence and frugality, mutual aid among neighbors, and loyalty and integrity—serve as the moral compass of rural life. Moral consciousness is the belief that one should voluntarily adhere to social behavioral norms while living within society. It includes behavioral norms, the beliefs of the actors, and societal sanctions (Yuan et al., 2023). Within this ethical and normative framework, local rural culture provides both stabilization and guidance, offering a moral architecture and value orientation that form a spiritual foundation and behavioral code for rural communities. In the operational mechanisms of rural society, local rural culture functions not merely as a carrier of emotional attachment, but also as a powerful force of social cohesion. Practices such as clan ancestral halls, village-wide rituals, and seasonal festivals reinforce the internal logic of kinship systems and collective identity (Riccio, 2022). These cultural rituals cultivate a sense of belonging, ancestral respect, and communal responsibility among villagers. Institutional forms

such as elder-led governance and customary village rules—both emerging from these cultural roots—are not only embodiments of grassroots wisdom but also serve as important pillars for the revitalization of rural culture (Qiu, 2020). Moreover, through its ritualistic and spiritual functions, local rural culture fosters a profound reverence for nature, cosmology, and life itself, strengthening collective identity and group cohesion. This cultural consciousness elevates participation in rural cultural revitalization from a functional task to a deeply rooted belief and communal mission. Such an ethos contributes to the development of a civilized, harmonious, and progressive social atmosphere, thereby infusing rural revitalization with enduring spiritual momentum and cultural resilience.

2.3 Local rural culture serves as a foundational pillar in the revitalization of rural culture

As an integral component of rural revitalization, local rural culture not only carries the weight of cultural identity and a sense of spiritual belonging but also plays an irreplaceable supporting role in driving the revitalization of rural industries (Xu et al., 2024). By deeply exploring and revitalizing local rural cultural resources, rural areas can develop culturally distinctive industries and establish unique, appealing rural cultural brands. This, in turn, stimulates economic vitality, enhances the added value of local industries, and broadens income-generating channels for rural populations.

The integration of culture and industry fosters a mutually reinforcing dynamic — where culture drives industrial growth (culture-driven industry) and industrial development, in turn, provides sustainable support for

cultural revitalization (industry-enhanced culture). Guided by local rural culture, many regions have explored development paths with strong local characteristics (Shen & Chou, 2022). Utilizing traditional festivals, intangible cultural heritage, local cuisine, and artisanal handicrafts as cultural carriers, they have launched initiatives such as cultural and creative product development, rural performing arts, cultural exhibitions, and folk experience projects. These efforts have gradually nurtured emerging sectors including rural cultural tourism, agricultural sightseeing, and experiential education in rural contexts.

These culturally empowered industrial models not only respond to increasingly diverse consumer demands but also enhance the cultural richness and market competitiveness of rural development (Chen & Barcus, 2024). They further provide favorable conditions for attracting well-educated and creative talents to return to the countryside and participate in rural cultural construction (Chen & Barcus, 2024). Moreover, the vitality and adaptability of local rural culture have significantly advanced the integration of culture and tourism, imbuing traditional agricultural and material products with renewed cultural value. Through the development of cultural-themed towns, folk culture villages, and "beautiful countryside" initiatives, regional cultural identities are effectively fused with modern tourism services. This not only elevates the aesthetic image and cultural appeal of rural areas but also catalyzes improvements in infrastructure and public services.

Consequently, a multifunctional rural industrial chain has emerged, encompassing agricultural production, food processing, cultural product marketing, rural dining and

accommodation, ecological tourism, and immersive cultural experiences. As some scholars have noted, “The supportive role of local rural culture can be realized through models such as themed cultural towns and beautiful countryside initiatives, which enable the spatial clustering and functional integration of rural primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. This culture-guided model of industrial integration effectively dismantles traditional sectoral boundaries, promoting deep interconnectivity and coordinated development across agriculture (the primary industry), manufacturing (the secondary industry), and services (the tertiary industry), thereby fostering new momentum and development patterns for the rural economy.

In this light, local rural culture is not only the “spiritual core” of rural cultural revitalization but also the “driving engine” of rural industrial development. Embedding it effectively within the broader industrial system enhances the sustainability, dynamism, and competitiveness of rural development, while simultaneously providing strong cultural and economic support for the realization of rural revitalization goals.

3. The Practical Dilemmas in Empowering Rural Cultural Revitalization through Local Rural Culture

3.1 Severe Deficiency of Core Driving Forces

The continuous outflow of the rural population, coupled with the widespread indifference of the remaining demographic groups toward cultural development, has created a core dilemma concerning the principal agents of rural cultural revitalization. Against the backdrop of accelerated urbanization,

large numbers of young and middle-aged rural laborers have migrated to urban centers for employment, business, or permanent relocation (Chen et al., 2023). The direct consequence of this demographic shift is the acute depletion of the most dynamic, creative, and organizationally capable segment of the rural population—those who would otherwise serve as the backbone of cultural revitalization efforts. As a result, rural cultural activities suffer from a lack of leadership and momentum, a general absence of innovation, and a disruption in the continuity of cultural transmission.

At the same time, population mobility has precipitated profound structural changes within rural society. On one hand, the widespread emergence of “left-behind” households—caused by the migration of family members—has led to spatial fragmentation within family units and growing emotional detachment between families and their communities (Boccagni, 2022). The traditional social fabric of rural life, once rooted in dense networks of familiarity and mutual assistance, is gradually unraveling. On the other hand, the weakening of interpersonal relationships has also undermined the very social environment upon which local rural culture depends. Cultural practices such as local customs, community rituals, and seasonal festivals are increasingly marginalized, and in some areas, face the risk of extinction.

With regard to the cultural participation of the left-behind population — primarily the elderly, women, and children — although they continue to play indispensable roles in sustaining daily village life, their limited social roles and responsibilities often constrain their ability to deeply engage

with or transmit the values embedded in local rural culture (Batidzirai et al., 2021). Elderly individuals, constrained by physical and energetic limitations, are generally unable to undertake the tasks of cultural innovation or leadership. Children, still in formative developmental stages, primarily absorb culture through external educational systems, which diminishes the influence of traditional rural culture. Women, while central to emotional cohesion and household education, often have fewer opportunities and platforms for active cultural expression or participation. Consequently, the left-behind population tends to exhibit both a limited capacity and reduced willingness to engage in rural cultural revitalization.

In sum, this “dual imbalance” in population structure—characterized by the large-scale outmigration of core working-age individuals and the relative marginalization of the remaining population—has significantly weakened the social foundation and community support systems necessary for effective rural cultural revitalization. Addressing this dilemma requires identifying effective mechanisms for stimulating cultural participation among the left-behind population, cultivating a more diverse and resilient cohort of cultural actors, and reconstructing a culturally cohesive and participatory rural community.

3.2 Constrained Development Space

With the rapid advancement of urbanization and the pervasive infiltration of modern lifestyles, traditional village spaces are undergoing unprecedented structural compression (Ma & Su, 2024). This pressure is not only evident in the physical reconfiguration of rural landscapes but also exerts far-reaching influence on cultural ecologies, social relationships,

and systems of values. Once the carriers of collective memory and stages for public spiritual life, traditional rural spaces embodied strong senses of belonging, identity, and cultural resonance. Yet, under the transformative impact of modernization, such spaces are increasingly shrinking, fragmented, or disappearing. Village forms are becoming homogenized, cultural symbols are fading, and the spatial functions of these environments are gradually weakening. More critically, the expansion of urban culture entails not merely the physical substitution of rural forms, but also a fundamental reorientation of daily life and value structures. Within the dominant discourse of urban modernity, utilitarianism, efficiency, and consumerism have supplanted the kinship-based ethics, ritual order, and localized lifeways that once defined rural society. This paradigm shift has diluted the distinctive charm of local rural culture, marginalizing its aesthetic values, philosophies of life, and normative systems (Schoffeleers, 2021). Consequently, rural culture finds itself relegated to a subordinate position in an urban-centered narrative and modern value system, lacking effective platforms for expression, continuity, and reinvention. It risks falling into a vicious cycle of marginalization, silencing, and eventual extinction. In both its tangible and intangible forms, rural traditional culture now faces serious challenges. Urban expansion often involves the demolition of old villages and the reconstruction of physical space, resulting in the destruction of vernacular dwellings rich in local character and historical meaning. This spatial rupture severs the continuity of cultural memory embedded within the rural landscape. Simultaneously, traditional festivals, folk rituals, and other community-centered cultural activities

are in sharp decline. Particularly vulnerable are grassroots cultural expressions—such as temple fairs and local opera performances—which are weakening due to fragmented organization and discontinuous generational transmission.

Moreover, traditional crafts and artisanal techniques, as emblematic forms of intangible cultural heritage, are increasingly at risk of disappearance in the absence of robust mechanisms for systematic protection and succession (Newisar et al., 2024). In many cases, they have been reduced to static “cultural relics” rather than living sources of creativity and community identity. As scholars have observed, “In the process of urbanization, traditional rural culture faces a survival crisis: many traditional houses with regional characteristics are being destroyed; traditional festivals and customs are waning; folk festivals and their organizing structures are deteriorating; and intangible cultural heritage such as traditional crafts is on the verge of extinction” (Zhao & Liu, 2021). These phenomena reflect the asymmetric distribution of cultural influence and spatial authority between urban and rural areas, exposing the disadvantaged position and structural dilemmas that rural culture encounters in the context of modernization.

Therefore, in the pursuit of rural cultural revitalization, it is imperative to acknowledge and actively address the deep-rooted impact of urbanization on traditional village spaces and cultural systems. Through rational spatial planning and institutional safeguards, efforts must be made to preserve the spatial patterns of traditional settlements, restore the vitality of rural cultural venues, and creatively revitalize endangered forms of intangible heritage. Only through such integrative efforts can traditional and modern elements

achieve genuine synergy and symbiotic development, enabling local rural culture to reclaim its relevance, resilience, and regenerative power in the contemporary era.

3.3 Underdevelopment of Rural Cultural Industries

The revitalization of rural culture is currently confronted with a range of structural and practical challenges, among which the underdevelopment of rural cultural industries stands out as a particularly salient issue (Hale et al., 2023). This problem manifests across several interconnected dimensions, reflecting both institutional deficiencies and operational constraints.

First and foremost, the policy framework supporting the development of cultural industries in rural areas remains incomplete and insufficiently targeted. In particular, the rural cultural tourism sector suffers from a lack of coordinated planning in areas such as land use, infrastructure, and investment mechanisms. This institutional vacuum has significantly hindered the effective design, implementation, and scaling of distinctive cultural projects. The absence of flexible, context-sensitive, and legally grounded policy instruments makes it difficult for local governments and rural collectives to carry out culturally driven development in a sustainable manner.

Secondly, the development of folk culture industries—such as traditional performing arts, customary practices, and craft-based intangible heritage—lags considerably behind. Although rural regions are rich in cultural resources rooted in long-standing traditions, these assets have yet to be systematically identified, industrialized, and integrated into contemporary consumer markets. The weak interface between traditional culture and modern market dynamics severely limits the

commercial potential, cultural renewal, and creative transformation of rural folk traditions. As a result, many of these practices are reduced to symbolic forms of preservation, rather than evolving as living, economically viable cultural expressions.

Thirdly, the quality and diversity of rural cultural tourism products remain relatively underdeveloped. Innovative and high-value cultural offerings centered on traditional festivals, folk narratives, historical figures, and regional legends are notably lacking.

Many tourism initiatives rely on superficial or stereotyped representations of local traditions, failing to incorporate deeper cultural narratives or immersive, experience-based engagement.

Consequently, rural cultural tourism often suffers from homogenization, weak brand differentiation, and limited visitor retention, reducing its attractiveness and profitability in an increasingly competitive cultural marketplace.

Finally, rural cultural industries have not yet fully embraced the opportunities presented by the digital economy. As one scholar observes, “In the context of the internet age, new models of rural cultural industry development based on digital platforms remain underdeveloped.” The digital divide — evident in the lack of infrastructure, limited e-commerce capacity, and insufficient cross-platform promotional strategies — hampers both the visibility and market penetration of rural cultural products. This technological gap not only restricts the dissemination of rural culture but also constrains rural areas from participating meaningfully in the broader creative and cultural economy.

Taken together, these challenges reflect deeper systemic barriers that extend beyond the cultural sector alone. They intersect with broader issues in rural governance, infrastructure, education, entrepreneurship, and capital investment — all of which shape the enabling environment for vibrant, adaptive, and economically viable rural cultural industries. The current underperformance of this sector not only hinders the transmission and innovation of local rural culture but also limits opportunities for economic diversification and rural industrial upgrading. Addressing this multifaceted issue requires an integrated strategy that includes institutional reform, capacity-building, cultural innovation, and digital transformation to fully unlock the developmental potential of rural cultural revitalization.

4. Practical Pathways for Empowering Rural Cultural Revitalization through Local Rural Culture

4.1 Addressing the Subject Participation Dilemma in Rural Cultural Revitalization

One of the core tasks in empowering rural cultural revitalization through local rural culture lies in effectively addressing the “subject dilemma” that impedes progress. Amid profound structural transformations in rural society and frequent population mobility, rural cultural development faces multiple challenges—most notably, the absence of core actors, weak participation awareness, and limited organizational capacity. To realize the endogenous empowerment of local rural culture, it is essential to restructure the cultural development framework and activate intrinsic cultural vitality, thereby fostering a dual-drive model in

which endogenous leadership is complemented by external support.

On the one hand, it is crucial to fully leverage the positive roles of capable individuals within rural communities — such as village cadres, respected local elders, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors, and grassroots cultural advocates. These actors often possess both strong organizational capacity and deep cultural identification, making them key connectors between local cultural traditions and the broader community. Educational initiatives, awareness campaigns, and policy incentives should be employed to stimulate the initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity of farmers, transforming participation from a passive “compliance-based” model into one of proactive “self-driven” engagement. Moreover, enhancing the cultural literacy and participatory capabilities of long-term residents is essential. This can be achieved through targeted capacity-building efforts such as farmer training programs, participatory village forums, and cultural planning workshops — thus enabling villagers to engage meaningfully in content creation, spatial governance, and the organization of public cultural events.

On the other hand, resolving the subject dilemma also requires the strategic mobilization and integration of external resources, particularly through the introduction of high-quality human capital. Policy instruments, project-based funding, and institutional platforms should be utilized to attract university graduates, professionals from the cultural and creative industries, ICH researchers, and artists to participate in rural cultural development. These external actors can provide technical support and professional guidance in areas such as cultural transmission,

product innovation, festival planning, and brand cultivation. Special emphasis should be placed on fostering partnerships among universities, local governments, and village collectives to co-construct platforms for industry-education integration. By aligning “academic resources” with “rural scenarios,” mechanisms such as “embedded cultural teams” and “rural revitalization practicum courses” can be implemented to ensure that young professionals are not only willing but also equipped to engage in rural cultural work — thus injecting new perspectives, methods, and vitality into the rural revitalization process.

In summary, addressing the subject dilemma in rural cultural revitalization requires a holistic strategy grounded in both internal activation and external collaboration. On one side, it is imperative to empower local actors by enhancing cultural consciousness and strengthening participatory engagement. On the other, the introduction of diverse and specialized external resources can promote the professionalization, diversification, and innovation of cultural development practices. Only by building a collaborative, inclusive, and sustainable cultural governance framework can we fully unlock the revitalizing potential of local rural culture and achieve a deep, enduring transformation in rural cultural life.

4.2 Strengthening the Protection of Indigenous Cultural Heritage

Prioritizing the protection of historical and cultural heritage, while ensuring its rational utilization to maximize its role in delivering public cultural services, constitutes a key strategy for advancing rural cultural revitalization and addressing spatial development constraints. Strengthening the preservation of local rural cultural

heritage is not only essential for maintaining the continuity and texture of traditional culture, but also serves as a fundamental pillar for invigorating the intrinsic vitality of rural communities, fostering cultural identity, and constructing a multilayered rural cultural system. This endeavor encompasses both tangible and intangible cultural heritage—including the protection of traditional architecture, historic villages, and ancient manuscripts, as well as the living transmission of folk crafts, oral traditions, ritual customs, and regional operatic forms.

First, from a strategic perspective, cultural heritage preservation must adopt a scientific and systematic approach, emphasizing precision, digitalization, and classification. Advanced technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence can be deployed to establish a comprehensive local rural cultural resource database. This includes conducting thorough surveys, cataloging and digitizing cultural assets, and managing them through classification systems based on cultural significance, degree of endangerment, and communicative potential. The development of cultural maps, dynamic databases, and real-time updating mechanisms can significantly improve the accuracy and efficiency of heritage protection, while also offering visual and actionable platforms for academic research, public education, and the development of cultural tourism.

Second, heritage protection must be effectively integrated with rational utilization to avoid the dual pitfalls of “sealed-off preservation” and superficial “performative reenactment.” Preservation efforts should adhere to the natural logic of cultural development and the lived realities of village society. On the premise of preserving

authenticity, emphasis should be placed on the “living regeneration” of cultural heritage—embedding it into daily life through mechanisms such as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) workshops, folk culture experience centers, and rural performance platforms. In doing so, heritage becomes a dynamic process of cultural production and consumption, enhancing its contemporary relevance and expanding public participation.

Furthermore, the spatial infrastructure necessary to support rural cultural revitalization urgently requires restructuring and enhancement. For decades, rural public cultural spaces have suffered from inadequate provision, limited functionality, and low utilization rates, making it difficult to meet the diversified cultural needs of contemporary rural life. It is thus imperative to reimagine and modernize traditional cultural spaces—ancestral halls, opera stages, temples, and village cultural halls—by transforming them into comprehensive cultural complexes that integrate exhibition, communication, education, and entertainment. These upgraded venues must align with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities and digital media environments. Beyond serving as sites for cultural performance, such spaces should function as arenas for community cohesion, cultural identity consolidation, and informal mechanisms of social governance.

Equally important is the need to strengthen villagers’ agency in the processes of cultural preservation and utilization. On the basis of improving cultural content and revitalizing spatial forms, institutional mechanisms should be established to enhance grassroots participation and governance capacity. Through deliberative mechanisms such as village assemblies, cultural advisory councils, and participatory planning workshops, villagers can be empowered

to identify, manage, and creatively utilize local cultural resources. This shifts the trajectory of cultural heritage protection from an externally driven model to an internally motivated and community-based approach — transforming government-dominated initiatives into shared, participatory governance structures.

In summary, intensifying the protection and revitalization of local rural cultural heritage is not merely a strategy for sustaining cultural memory; it is a structural and operational prerequisite for building a modern rural cultural system. Only by activating heritage through protection and innovating through transmission can local rural cultural resources be transformed into endogenous drivers of rural revitalization. This will facilitate the deep integration of public cultural space and community agency, ultimately achieving a synergistic relationship between cultural heritage protection and the broader goals of rural cultural revitalization.

4.3 Focusing on the Development of Rural Cultural Industries

“ Industrial revitalization ” occupies a central position within the broader strategy of rural revitalization, and a solid economic foundation is crucial for enabling local rural culture to effectively contribute to the revitalization of rural cultural life. Rural cultural revitalization is not merely the renewal or reconstruction of cultural forms; rather, it is a systematic process through which cultural value is reactivated and embedded within the evolving structures of rural society and economy. Within this framework, the development of cultural industries functions not only as an external expression of rural cultural revitalization but also as a critical

pathway and operational mechanism for its implementation.

The key to developing rural cultural industries lies in the organic integration of cultural resources with the rural economic system. Rural areas possess abundant intangible cultural heritage, historical memory, folk art traditions, and unique regional landscapes. If these distinctive resources can be cultivated through diversified, content-rich, and locally grounded cultural activities, they can not only extend the vitality of traditional culture but also convert cultural value into economically productive forms. For instance, developing culture-tourism integrated products based on traditional festivals, creating cultural and creative goods inspired by local folklore, and designing immersive experiences centered on rural memory can promote the industrialization of cultural content and support the emergence of a sustainable rural cultural economy.

In practical terms, the development of rural cultural industries directly contributes to increasing farmers ’ income and advancing agricultural and rural modernization. On the one hand, leveraging cultural resources to build tourism-oriented industrial chains can mobilize a broad range of participants— including local artisans, folk performers, and agricultural producers — thereby generating employment and diversifying income sources. On the other hand, cultural industry-driven infrastructure development, such as cultural squares, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) workshops, rural theaters, and creative marketplaces, can enhance the quality of public space and improve living environments, thereby increasing both the attractiveness and carrying capacity of rural communities.

More importantly, rural cultural industries play a transformative role in

optimizing public cultural service systems. Traditional cultural services in rural areas often suffer from outdated content, limited formats, and poor alignment with actual demand. The rise of cultural industries has catalyzed a shift in both the substance and delivery of cultural services. On the supply side, integrating projects such as ICH transmission, rural artistic innovation, and local opera revitalization into public service frameworks enables more accurate and responsive cultural provisioning. Simultaneously, the integration of public service platforms with market mechanisms — via government procurement, social organization participation, and cultural tourism development — significantly enhances the efficiency, responsiveness, and sustainability of rural cultural services.

In addition, cultural industries play a vital role in fostering the living transmission and creative rearticulation of outstanding rural traditions. Under the dual influence of market forces and modern communication technologies, many formerly declining forms of folk culture have experienced a revitalization, emerging in formats that are more flexible, accessible, and visually engaging. With the growing support of digital platforms and new media, rural culture has significantly expanded its reach and visibility. This not only strengthens local residents' sense of identity and pride in their cultural heritage but also broadens external recognition and appreciation—fostering dynamic two-way cultural interactions between urban and rural spheres.

In conclusion, promoting the development of rural cultural industries is essential for transforming cultural resources into economic value and injecting both practical momentum and institutional support into the process of

rural cultural revitalization. Only by constructing an integrated development system centered on a “culture+” model — and cultivating a rural cultural industry chain characterized by strong endogenous dynamism and sustained market appeal — can we achieve a resilient and sustainable revitalization of rural culture. Such a strategy lays a solid foundation for rural prosperity, cultural confidence, and long-term social cohesion.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to the field of rural revitalization by reconceptualizing local rural culture as a dynamic framework for sustainable development. It advances beyond traditional analyses of cultural preservation by proposing a tripartite theoretical model that integrates cultural capital, social cohesion mechanisms, and industrial hybridization. The research innovatively bridges the gap between cultural studies and development economics through its "subjectivity-embeddedness" paradigm, which challenges the urban-centric modernization narrative prevalent in current literature.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable insights for multiple stakeholders engaged in rural revitalization. For policymakers, the study underscores the need for integrated cultural-industrial zoning plans that protect heritage sites while enabling commercial development — an approach that could mitigate the spatial fragmentation caused by rapid urbanization. Rural communities may leverage the proposed dual-drive participation model to establish cultural cooperatives that combine traditional knowledge (e.g., intangible cultural

heritage techniques) with digital marketing platforms. The tourism sector benefits from empirically-tested frameworks for developing non-commodified cultural experiences, addressing the persistent problem of product homogeneity in rural tourism markets. Notably, the research provides NGOs with a blueprint for "embedded capacity building" by demonstrating how external actors can synergize with local leadership structures without disrupting cultural authenticity. These practical solutions are particularly valuable for developing economies experiencing rapid urbanization, offering pathways to balance cultural preservation with economic modernization.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While providing groundbreaking insights, this study has several limitations that suggest fruitful avenues for future research. The exclusive focus on Chinese cases, though yielding context-specific findings, necessitates comparative studies with other Global South contexts to test the model's generalizability. Methodologically, the research could be strengthened by longitudinal tracking of cultural-industry integration outcomes, particularly to assess whether digital preservation strategies effectively sustain intergenerational knowledge transmission. Future investigations should also examine the political economy dimensions of rural cultural revitalization, including how land tenure systems and fiscal decentralization policies mediate the implementation of proposed frameworks. Emerging technologies such as blockchain-based cultural asset management and AI-driven vernacular architecture preservation represent promising but unexplored applications of the study's

theoretical model. These extensions would address current gaps while maintaining the research's core emphasis on culturally-grounded sustainable development.

5.4 Conclusion

"Revitalizing local rural culture is the key to rural revitalization; the success of rural revitalization fundamentally depends on the rejuvenation of local rural culture." Rural cultural revitalization aspires to compose a new chapter in the narrative of Chinese national modern civilization within the rural context. It profoundly reflects the cohesive, normative, intrinsic, and innovative functions of culture in shaping rural development, serving as both a foundational pillar and the spiritual core of comprehensive rural revitalization. In the context of the new era, it is of urgent theoretical and practical significance to explore the intrinsic relationship between the protection and inheritance of local rural culture and the broader agenda of rural cultural revitalization. A deeper understanding of the long-term value inherent in empowering rural development through local cultural resources — alongside a sustained commitment to constructing revitalization pathways rooted in rural traditions — is essential to advancing a visionary blueprint for the renaissance of rural cultural life in contemporary China. However, rural cultural revitalization continues to face persistent challenges, including the severe absence of cultural subjectivity, the spatial compression of cultural development, and the underdevelopment of rural cultural industries. Addressing these difficulties requires a multifaceted strategy: fostering the collaborative participation of diverse actors, strengthening the preservation and dynamic utilization of local rural

cultural heritage, and accelerating the development of rural cultural industries. Empowering rural cultural revitalization through the revitalization of local rural culture not only lays the groundwork for cultivating cultural confidence in rural communities but also constitutes an essential step toward the realization of a culturally strong socialist nation in the new era.

6. New knowledge Contribution

This study advances rural revitalization research through three key contributions. First, it establishes the "cultural-industry integration" framework, demonstrating how traditional culture can drive economic development while maintaining authenticity, challenging the conventional separation of preservation and commercialization. Second, the research introduces the "dual-actor revitalization model", articulating how local communities and external stakeholders can collaboratively govern cultural resources. This model provides new insights into balancing grassroots participation with professional expertise in rural development. Third, the study develops the "living heritage space" concept, redefining rural cultural sites as dynamic systems where physical environments and intangible practices co-evolve. This perspective offers fresh approaches to sustaining cultural identity amid urbanization.

References

Batidzirai, B., Trotter, P. A., Brophy, A., Stritzke, S., Moyo, A., Twesigye, P., Puranasamriddhi, A., & Madhlopa, A. (2021). Towards people-private-public partnerships: An integrated community engagement model for capturing energy access needs. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 74, 101975. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.101975>

Boccagni, P. (2022). Transnational migration and homemaking. In *Handbook on transnationalism* (pp. 141-154). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789904017.00016>

Bonnet, B., Chotte, J.-L., Hiernaux, P., Ickowicz, A., & Loireau, M. (2024). Desertification and climate change: Are they part of the same fight? In: éditions Quæ.

Chen, L., Huang, Y., Qin, X., Xu, W., Qin, Y., & Li, X. (2023). Return migration and in-situ urbanization of 79 migrant sending counties in China: Characteristic and driving factors. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 104, 103155. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103155>

Chen, Z., & Barcus, H. R. (2024). The rise of home-returning women's entrepreneurship in China's rural development: Producing the enterprising self through empowerment, cooperation, and networking. *Journal of Rural*

Studies, 105, 103156.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103156>

Hale, J., Irish, A., Carolan, M., Clark, J. K., Inwood, S., Jablonski, B. B. R., & Johnson, T. (2023). A systematic review of cultural capital in U.S. community development research. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 103, 103113. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103113>

He, B., Peng, Y., & Deng, W. (2024). The aesthetic construction path of harmonious beauty rural based on the theory of perspective aesthetic experience: A case study of Jiaba Tibetan Village in Ganzi Prefecture. 3rd International Conference on Culture, Design and Social Development (CDSD 2023),

Heesom, D., Boden, P., Hatfield, A., Roobie, S., Andrews, K., & Berwari, H. (2021). Developing a collaborative HBIM to integrate tangible and intangible cultural heritage. *International Journal of Building Pathology and Adaptation*, 39(1), 72-95. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBPA-04-2019-0036>

Islam, M. Z. (2024). Can China's rural revitalisation policies be an example for other countries aligning with sustainable development goals (SDGs)-1, 2 and 12? *China Agricultural Economic Review*, 16(4), 763-786. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CAER-10-2023-0301>

Li, Q., Sun, Y., Liu, Z., Ning, B., & Wu, Z. (2024). Spatial Distribution, Influencing Factors and Sustainable Development of Fishery Cultural Resources in the Yangtze River Basin. *Land*, 13(8).

Ma, X., & Su, W. (2024). Local government intervention in tourism-driven rural gentrification: Types and interpretative framework. *Tourism Management*, 100, 104828. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104828>

Newisar, M., Selim, G., & Li, M. (2024). Place-Based Perspectives on Understanding the Value of Sustainable Heritage-Inspired Arts and Crafts in Jordan. *Sustainability*, 16(17).

Ren, K., & Wu, T. (2024). Analyzing the Evolution of a Rural Construction Community in China from the Perspective of Cultural Landscape. *Buildings*, 14(1).

Riccio, T. (2022). Zhuiniu Water Buffalo Ritual of the Miao: Cultural Narrative Performed. *Religions*, 13(4).

Schoffeleers, J. M. (2021). Practical Philosophy and Religion. In V. Y. Mudimbe & K. Kawahirehi (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of African Religions and Philosophy* (pp. 571-573). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-2068-5_314

Shen, J., & Chou, R.-J. (2022). Rural revitalization of Xiamei: The development experiences of integrating tea tourism with

ancient village preservation. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 90, 42-52.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.01.006>

Su, Y., Hu, M., & Zhang, X. (2025). How Does Rural Resilience Affect Return Migration: Evidence from Frontier Regions in China. *Systems*, 13(2).

Tavares, D. S., Alves, F. B., & Vásquez, I. B. (2021). The Relationship between Intangible Cultural Heritage and Urban Resilience: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability*, 13(22).

Xu, J., Zeng, Z., Xi, Z., Peng, Z., Chen, G., Zhu, X., & Chen, X. (2024). Research on Sustainable Urban–Rural Integration Development: Measuring Levels, Influencing Factors, and Exploring Driving Mechanisms—Taking Eight Cities in the Greater Bay Area as Examples. *Sustainability*, 16(8).

Yuan, L., Chia, R., & Gosling, J. (2023). Confucian Virtue Ethics and Ethical Leadership in Modern China. *Journal of business ethics*, 182(1), 119-133.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-05026-5>

Zhang, C., & Zhou, W. (2022). New Direction of Sustainable Urbanization: The Impact of Digital Technologies and Policies on China's In Situ Urbanization. *Buildings*, 12(7).

Zhang, P., & Li, S. (2024). Associative cultural landscape approach to interpreting traditional ecological wisdom: A case of Inuit habitat. *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 13(1), 79-96.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j foar.2023.09.008>

Zheng, N., Wang, S., Wang, H., & Ye, S. (2024). Rural settlement of urban dwellers in China: community integration and spatial restructuring. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 188.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02680-8>