Landscape Locality in Rural Cultural Space: Strategies for Protection and Development

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Abstracts: The rural cultural space, though enhanced by policies like rural revitalization, faces challenges such as weakened cultural inheritance, insufficient depth, and homogenous planning. This study, focusing on Ping'an Village in Longsheng County, Guangxi, utilizes local knowledge theory to analyze and address these issues. The aim is to propose a development strategy for improving the cultural space system, enhancing cultural potential, and refining the mechanism system. This research aspires to offer insights for the protection and development of cultural spaces in other villages.

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of rural population outflow has resulted in the 'hollowing out' of rural areas, where urban culture assimilates traditional rural values, leading to the decline of rural cultural spaces. Challenges include uniform cultural spaces, unclear functions, a diminished rural cultural presence, mundane public life, and a crisis in local cultural identity. Urgently addressing these issues is crucial for showcasing cultural heritage, improving living environments, and meeting the aspirations of villagers. Research focused on protecting and developing rural cultural space, with an emphasis on the 'locality' of the landscape, is imperative. This study, centered on northern Guangxi, aims to explore strategies for revitalizing and restructuring rural cultural spaces, advocating for a more rational approach.

2 The Planning and Construction of Rural Cultural Space Needs to be Based on the Perspective of Landscape Locality

2.1 Cultural spaces play an important role in the development of rural habitats.

The conceptualization of 'cultural space' gained prominence when UNESCO acknowledged it as a pivotal form of intangible cultural heritage. Contemporary scholars have embarked on thorough investigations into rural cultural space, scrutinizing its multifaceted concept and functions from the intricate interplay of public, social, and cultural perspectives. This scholarly endeavor underscores the evolving discourse surrounding the significance and preservation of cultural spaces in the contemporary context. Xiang Yunju defines cultural space as a physically significant location with cultural attributes[1], while Gao Chunfeng sees rural public cultural space as integral to rural culture, serving as both a practical space for life and production and a repository of historical memory and cultural identity for individuals and communities[2].

China's rural cultural development confronts challenges such as the erosion of tradition and a disassembled cultural system. The imperative to revitalize rural culture becomes paramount for sustainable development amid ongoing reconstruction efforts. Cultural spaces, serving as essential repositories for collective memory, emerge as a unifying force in the context of urbanization. Through the integration of local, folk, and urban cultures, these spaces play a pivotal role in shaping a multifaceted cultural environment conducive to rural living.

2.2 The importance of locality for the preservation and development of rural cultural spaces

Locality encompasses unique features of a specific place, including both material distinctions in geography and space and consciousness differences in culture and psychology [3]. Integral to daily life, intellectual exchange, and social interactions, rural cultural space embodies diverse values, notably the preservation of local culture. Serving as a pivotal conduit for rural culture, it exerts profound influence through spatial, cultural, geographical, and human attributes. Operating as both a venue and medium, cultural space mirrors the distinct material and consciousness dimensions of locality, thereby wielding significant importance for rural development.

Currently, many studies on locality have been done by authors in academia and abroad, A. Giddens argues that locality is affected by the interplay of sociocultural

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and local identities, and can be reconstructed and reproduced through the social practices of the local population [4]. A. Pred expands the meaning of locality by arguing that locality is shaped through the construction of social practices and that at the same time can also have a feedback effect on social practices[5]. Despite a later commencement, domestic researchers have made substantial advancements, notably in the sphere of cultural integration. The focal point remains on the preservation of rural identity, with local knowledge being comprehensively and expansively across the various dimensions of rural social life. These efforts reflect a nuanced understanding and dedication to unraveling the intricacies of rural culture.

The concept of 'locality' serves as the defining factor for cultural space, encapsulating distinctive regional features[6]. Effectively addressing challenges in rural cultural spaces necessitates a concerted emphasis on the core, achieved through the adoption of a local perspective and a profound understanding of intrinsic developmental logic[7]. The critical steps involve the systematic analysis of mechanisms and the formulation of protection and development strategies, which are pivotal for fostering comprehensive and sustainable growth in rural cultural spaces.

3 The Current Situation of the Development of Cultural Space in Ping'an Village, Longsheng County, Guangxi Province

Ping'an Village, an exemplary Zhuang ethnic village located in northern Guangxi, has gained renown for its picturesque landscapes and proximity to the Longji Rice Terraces. Nonetheless, the village's developmental trajectory has predominantly leaned on its scenic allure, inadvertently sidetracking cultural advancement. Boasting a historical legacy dating back to the Qing Dynasty, Ping'an Village grapples with challenges in safeguarding its profound intangible cultural heritage and traditional architectural styles. Despite a diverse cultural space, (as outlined in Table 1), the village contends with limitations, hampering the seamless inheritance of both spiritual and tangible cultural attributes.

### Table 1. Types and functional characteristics of cultural space in Ping'an Village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Layout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wind and rain bridge</td>
<td>Ethnocultural</td>
<td>Landscape symbols</td>
<td>Punctate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancestral hall</td>
<td>Architectural</td>
<td>Sacrifice to the ancestors</td>
<td>Punctate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient and famous trees</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Cultural exchange</td>
<td>Group type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice paddy terraces</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Life and production</td>
<td>Strip type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village schools</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Cultural heritage</td>
<td>Punctate</td>
</tr>
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3.1 Few cultural spaces, scattered distribution, and weak connectivity.

Ping'an Village residents encounter challenges in safeguarding and conserving cultural spaces attributed to insufficient awareness and expertise. This has resulted in the disturbance of the village's cultural spaces, which are characterized by scarcity and dispersion. The fragmented nature of these cultural spaces, combined with restricted cultural flow and connectivity, impedes their optimal contribution to village cultural development. Furthermore, the limited reach of cultural spaces exacerbates the segmented development, particularly when the core space is not effectively linked to its surrounding areas (refer to Figures 1).

![Fig. 1. Aerial view of Ping'an village](image)

3.2 Insufficient excavation of the connotation of cultural space and weakening of the function of cultural inheritance

The development of cultural space in Ping'an Village appears superficial, failing to delve deeply into the traditional cultural essence of the village. For instance, despite the establishment of a cultural promotion space for the Longji Rice Terraces, featuring informational boards introducing the development history and cultural aspects of the terraces, both villagers and tourists find it challenging to resonate profoundly with the cultural construction of the village solely through these promotional materials. The revitalization of cultural space faces numerous challenges, hindering a comprehensive showcase of its cultural value and resulting in a diminished cultural impact. Currently, the development of cultural space in Ping'an Village heavily relies on lateral expansion of existing resources, restricting the core development of its spiritual content. Consequently, cultural spaces lack cohesion and cultural appeal (refer to Figures 4).

Furthermore, the infrastructure of the village's cultural space is relatively inadequate, and its capacity for cultural inheritance is weak. This has led to difficulties in preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the village and has constrained the development of ethnic arts. The actual needs of villagers in terms of cultural space remain insufficiently addressed, making it challenging to foster cultural identity at the cultural level. As a result, there is a gradual occurrence
of a 'discontinuity' in cultural inheritance, posing challenges to the sustainable development of the cultural heritage in Ping'an Village.

3.3 Cultural spaces are overly commercialized, and vicious competition is frequent.

In the course of Ping'an Village's construction and development, an undue emphasis on commercial interests for economic gains precipitated a surge in commercial structures, thereby jeopardizing the authenticity of the cultural space. The traditional stilted buildings, emblematic of the village's cultural heritage, encountered disruption stemming from the intense competition over the viewing rights of the Longji Rice Terraces. The erection of taller buildings not only deviated from the traditional architectural style but also inflicted damage upon the integrity of the cultural heritage. The pervasive commercialization extended its influence, reshaping not only the village's physical layout but also its historical context, thereby hastening the disintegration of the cultural space.

4 Optimization Strategy for the Protection and Renewal of Ping'an Village's Cultural Space Based on the Perspective of Locality

The dynamic contribution of rural cultural space to sustainable development is intricately woven through the intersections of environmental, humanistic, and cultural considerations. Effectively safeguarding and nurturing these spaces requires a profound understanding of historical culture, human sentiments, and the geographical environment. By accentuating local characteristics within cultural spaces, the augmentation of the village's cultural value becomes not only a goal but a strategic imperative. The preservation and development of rural cultural space transcend mere functional enhancements; they serve as indispensable arenas for the perpetuation of local history and cultural expression. Through the lens of localized perspectives, this research advances optimization strategies deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge (refer to Figure 2).

4.1 Improvement of the cultural space system and enhancement of local cultural cohesion.

In response to the cultural space challenges encountered in Ping'an Village, characterized by insufficient connectivity and constrained cultural heritage functions, strategic interventions are recommended to fortify local cultural cohesion. These encompass refining the cultural space system, introducing diversity to village cultural spaces, and optimizing their spatial arrangement to establish a centralized core with intensified cultural activities. The objective of this approach is to augment local cultural cohesion and amplify the cluster effect within cultural spaces (refer to Figure 3).

Fig.2. Optimization strategy for the protection and renewal of cultural spaces.

Fig.3. Cultural Space Layout Plan of Ping'an Village.

Harness the potential of cultural spaces as central nodes, strategically drawing villagers into vibrant cultural exchanges. In tandem with preserving the village's authenticity and integrity, elevate cultural infrastructure to catalyze substantive and enriching cultural interactions among residents. This holistic strategy not only safeguards the intrinsic landscape but also perpetuates historical cultural patterns, fostering a robust and interconnected fabric of local cultural cohesion (refer to Figure 4).

Fig.4. Infrastructure Planning.
4.2 Elevate Cultural Potential, Emphasize Local and Regional Landscape

The strategic elevation of cultural potential in Ping'an Village involves enhancing cultural continuity and showcasing unique village aspects, including ethnic arts, traditional craftsmanship, and folk festivals. By seamlessly integrating these cultural elements into the local landscape, the objective is to forge a rich and distinctive cultural environment that emphasizes Ping'an Village's regional characteristics. Utilizing cultural spaces as a platform, the village seeks to communicate its historical culture and values, fostering collective cohesion and mobilizing actions for the transformation of social order.

4.3 Sound institutional system to protect local cultural stability

The transformation of tourism-oriented cultural spaces and the promotion of robust business competition necessitate an enhanced rural grassroots management system. The infusion of professional knowledge is crucial for enlightening villagers about the intrinsic value of traditional cultural spaces and nurturing healthy competition for comprehensive village advancement. Strengthening the rural management system serves as a catalyst for creating a diverse cultural value system rooted in the villagers' identity and guiding them toward culturally responsible conduct. This holistic approach safeguards the cultural standing of villagers, propagates the right cultural ethos, and enhances the village's cultural significance, fortifying the bedrock of local culture from a social standpoint.

Advancing cultural potential involves strategically refining cultural space systems and enhancing mechanisms, rooted in the synergy of cultural space and local knowledge. This approach supports the comprehensive development and preservation of rural cultural spaces, fostering stable growth in localities. Informed by local knowledge, these strategies consider the historical depth, cultural breadth, and folk values inherent in rural areas. The overarching goal is to provide a continuous driving force for local and sustainable village development, fostering symbiosis among localities, cultural spaces, and the three key elements crucial for village sustainability (refer to Figure 5).

5 Conclusion and Discussion

As the foundational organizational unit in China, rural areas shoulder the pivotal responsibility of constructing cultural spaces to propel the revitalization and development of the countryside. The infusion of local knowledge permeates the conceptual framework of rural cultural space construction, operating from the grassroots level upwards. This inclusive approach involves the transmission of cultural heritage, the meticulous design of cultural landscape symbols, and the cultivation of a distinctive local cultural atmosphere. Through this comprehensive strategy, the aim is to catalyze the protection and development of rural cultural spaces.

However, the practical development of rural cultural spaces faces an array of increasingly intricate challenges, necessitating a profound examination and research into the intricate development mechanisms of rural areas. An in-depth analysis of the tangible issues in Ping'an Village serves as the foundation for proposing strategic recommendations. Nevertheless, grappling with challenges such as insufficient village resources and the complexities of coordinating various stakeholders underscores the imperative for a more thorough and nuanced exploration in the construction and development of rural cultural spaces. Looking ahead, sustained endeavors will continue to deepen both research and practical initiatives in rural cultural space, integrating local knowledge to make substantive contributions to the sustainable development of rural cultural spaces.

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References


Fig.5. Triadic symbiosis of cultural space and locality