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THESIS

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**Cultural Inheritance and Rural Construction**

DLA

Thesis

Supervisor

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*Humanity follows the Earth, the Earth follows Heaven.  
Heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows Nature.*

— *an ancient Chinese philosopher*  
*LaoZi*

## **Introduction**

Rural culture is the foundation of rural prosperity. Culture plays various roles in rural construction. Cultural inheritance in rural culture includes a common content but also includes inheritance focused on subcategories and subregions. The requirements for content and inheritance are different in different types and regions of rural cultural inheritance.

The contents of rural cultural inheritance include material aspects and nonmaterial aspects. Material aspects include regional landscape features and historical architecture, environmental factors and the historical cultural landscape with its prominent historical meanings and humanistic values. Nonmaterial aspects refer to spiritual culture, institutional culture, social norms, folk customs, and social awareness formed in the villages; it also refers to social values, modes of thinking and living, and means of production formed by residents throughout history. All this cultural content not only reflects rural regional appearance in the most direct and authentic way but also constitutes important cultural elements for the stable development of rural society and has a far-reaching influence on the entire countryside.

Terraced fields in South China



Regional landscape features Fig.1

Shadow Puppets in North China



Folk traditional art Fig.2

Traditional house in North China



Historical architecture Fig.3

Tea picking in South China



Lifestyle Fig.4

Water town in South China



Historical cultural attractions Fig.5

Manchu festival in North China



Folk customs Fig.6

Material Aspects

Nonmaterial Aspects

RURAL CULTURAL INHERITANCE

## Thesis Statement I.

The rural cultural inheritance is grounded on local characteristics. Rural construction in China has experienced a progressive process of revivification, placing equal stress on economic and cultural factors and achieving certain results, but can still benefit from lessons learned in developed countries.

After contrasting the backgrounds of rural transformation between China and developed countries, Zhang Jingxiang<sup>1</sup> proposed a comprehensive concept of rural revival and concluded that the revival of the countryside should be executed with multiple aspects in mind, such as culture, policy, industry, and management.

In my opinion, there is a universal cultural identity in developed countries, and there is a strong sense of national cultural protection. The government's strong support, improved cultural inheritance mechanisms, and cultural protection policies have supported the development of rural cultures in the process of rural construction. The practice mode of rural construction in developed countries is based on national conditions and local characteristics, with the ultimate purpose of protecting and extending the original culture of the countryside.

1 Zhang, J. X.- Shen, M. R.- Zhao, C.: Rural renaissance: rural China transformation under productivism and post-productivism. Urban Planning International. 2014. Vol. 29. pp. 1-7. (in Chinese)

## Thesis Statement II.

In China, economic development has increased the flow of urban and rural populations; the invasion of urban culture has undermined the closed traditional village, and villagers have blindly worshipped urban civilization, causing rural culture to fall into a crisis of marginalization.

This investigation has revealed that the process of rural construction in China lags behind that of urban construction and that consideration of the protection of villages is relatively weak. The rural patterns of life, architectural style, and traditional skills have all been eroded by certain external factors. The memory of the countryside will gradually be lost as villagers blindly pursue the “urban style”. This situation requires planning, with government and villagers participating in various ways to preserve the authenticity and unique aspects of the local culture.



Fig.7

### Thesis Statement III.

Rural culture should be passed from generation to generation, including the authenticity of the natural landscape, traditional architectural culture, local customs, traditions of production, and lifestyle. Different villages must choose different cultural inheritance modes.

I have summarized three modes of rural cultural inheritance, according to the characteristics of the village, to be applied in rural planning.

1. The inheritance mode of landscape authenticity refers to the natural landscape, spatial texture and traditional architecture, and public space. This mode is suitable for the construction of beautiful villages with rich natural resources and desirable historical features.



Fig.8



Fig.9

Chuandixia, is a historic village dating from the Ming dynasty located in Mentougou District in Beijing, China. It is a popular tourist attraction known for its well preserved courtyard homes, which has the regional characteristics of Northern architecture. The village is known for its architecture and natural beauty. Stone paved lanes and steep staircases help define Chuandixia's architectural identity. The village is a frequent subject of photographers and painters.

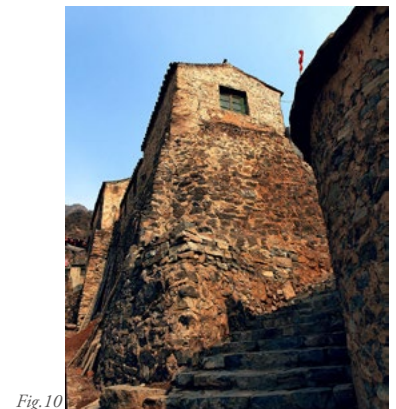


Fig.10



2. The inheritance mode of industrial development focuses on the development of culture. The essence is to drive the economy through the industrialization of culture and react upon the cultural inheritance while considering the coordinated development of rural culture and economic society. This mode is suitable for the construction of beautiful villages with better development of nonmaterial culture and unique regional cultural characteristics.



Fig.11

Industrial agriculture tourism



Fig.12



Fig.13

Folk culture industrialization



Fig.14

3. The inheritance mode of cultural reshaping considers the development of connotation in the process of rural construction and repairs the faults in traditional culture. Traditional cultural heritage should be preserved to protect local culture and folk customs in order to pursue the reconstruction of traditional culture in the process of rural construction. This mode is suitable for the construction of beautiful villages with special cultural landscapes and traditional culture.



Fig.15

The traditional Jiangnan elements include white walls and dark grey roof tiles, its characteristics are like Jiangnan ink painting. The design for construction drawings explores the best usage of the traditional Jiangnan elements. Explaining the meaning of cultural reshaping. The project brings an opportunity to regenerate the countryside with local features, using modern design method to reshape the rural culture.



Fig.16

## Thesis Statement IV.

Rural planning should rely on cultural resources to develop rural industries and explore the excavation of traditional culture and innovation of inheritance modes.

Beikanzi Village is a typical village with traffic advantages and a favourable ecological environment. How should such a village, which is surrounded by mountains, reflect its distinctive advantages?

First, the farmland should be replanned and divided into agricultural planting areas and greenhouses to meet the agricultural demand of an entire year.

Second, the characteristics of the farming culture should be emphasized, and a traditional farming experience area should be created. The planning concept involves characterizing and emphasizing the farming culture and using rural tourism to develop and reshape the rural landscape.

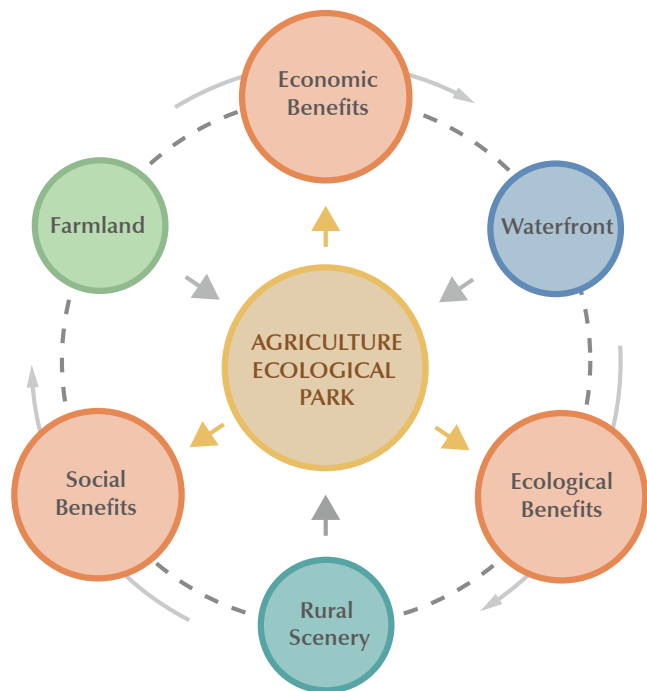


Fig.17

## **Thesis Statement V.**

Rural cultural inheritance is a process of dynamics and “activity”, as culture needs to confer different values according to the times. Cultural inheritance requires a thorough understanding of people’s real lives.

In the process of the construction of a beautiful countryside, it is necessary to refine and excavate the material value of the village, to protect and respect its spiritual and cultural values and to shape and enhance its value. My goal is to meet the needs of modern production while retaining the original rural elements and culture.

It is necessary neither to preserve nature's qualities with perfect fidelity nor to copy “fashion trends” to create replicas. Instead, it is desirable to extract and retain the authenticity of the village, grasp the scale of choice and transformation of the model, and create an identifiable cultural village.

In constructing Beikanzi Village, adherence to the principle of “according to local conditions” has brought internal impetus to rural development. To respect the wishes of local villagers, the traditional rural lifestyle in Beikanzi Village has been revived to reshape the landscape of the countryside. Recreating the traditional farming culture of the area and selecting the appropriate leisure tourism mode for Beikanzi Village preserves and inherits rural culture.



Fig.18



Fig.19



Fig.21



Fig.20



Fig.22

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*Discovering the local features in a certain village,  
Keeping the ecological landscape,  
Reshaping the rural culture with modern design methods,  
Creating a new tourist attraction.*

*It's not about it just looking gorgeous,  
it's about creating spaces for villagers and with future  
generations in mind.*

—— *Author*

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A R C H I T E C T

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