

The inheritance mechanism of rural living heritage in China based on the model of “rural governance - policy supply - protective activation”

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Abstract

This paper studies the triadic dialectics of “rural governance - policy supply - protection and activation”, builds a theoretical influence model of the three, and puts forward the views that rural governance is the tool, policy supply is the guarantee, protection and activation is the purpose.

Taking rural governance as the starting point, this paper analyzes the protection and utilization of cultural heritage in the process of rural evolution in Zhongshan under the influence of policy supply since 2018. It also proposes five suggestions for establishing the mechanism: improve the regional resource survey mechanism, strengthen the design of top-level protection and activation policies, enhance the Role of Village Collectives through Governance-Oriented Mechanisms, improve the dynamic protection-update feedback mechanism, establish a supervision and inspection mechanism.

Keywords: rural governance; policy supply; protection and activation; rural lived heritage

The countryside is an important space for carrying the culture^[1] and an indispensable part of heritage protection^[2]. However, since the reform and opening up in 1978, rapid urbanization has had a significant impact on China's rural areas. Rural heritage generally faces two major situations. First, urbanization in some areas is based on the annexation of rural areas, and many traditional villages have been completely demolished. Second, there is a large loss of population, the backwardness of village infrastructure, and serious damage to rural buildings and landscapes. Rural heritage protection is urgent. For a long time, China's rural heritage protection has been a continuation of urban policies (such as demarcating protected areas and listing cultural relics/historical buildings), which has played a good role in single-point static protection of heritage, but has insufficient dynamic activation of the entire region. From the endogenous characteristics of Chinese villages, it is a highly autonomous clan society and is independent of the “central-provincial-municipal-county” administrative agencies. This determines that the protection and renewal of villages needs to rely on rural governance. However, as a strong government society, China's rural self-revitalization ability is not strong, and the protection and utilization of rural cultural heritage cannot be separated from policy supply.

Therefore, it is particularly important to achieve dynamic protection of rural heritage through comprehensive policy supply and rural governance tailored to local conditions. It is necessary to systematically sort out the relationship between “rural governance-policy supply- protective activation”, re-understand the connotation and characteristics of rural governance, and then think about the impact of policy supply on the protection of rural living heritage.

1. Research review

1.1 Rural lived heritage related research

The New Oxford Dictionary's definition of heritage includes “unspoilt countryside”. The Venice Charter of 1964 points out that “rural setting” is also a monument that bears witness to history. The Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage of 1999 points out that rural heritage plays an important role in human emotions and pride. It is informal, orderly and has use value, the focus of life in an era and a record of social history. The Guidelines for the Protection of Chinese Cultural Relics and Historic Sites proposes that historical and cultural villages and cultural landscapes are still closely connected with contemporary life, reflecting specific cultural significance and possessing “living characteristics”.

Foreign scholars have long recognized that rural heritage includes all tangible and intangible systems and spaces^[3], and is the product of the coupling of people, society and ecosystems^{[4][5]}. The authenticity and effectiveness of rural heritage protection are closely related to local policies^[6]. Establishing a good relationship with local residents is conducive to the protection of rural cultural heritage^[7]. In summary, the protection of rural heritage deeply depends on policy support and rural governance.

Chinese scholars' understanding of the living characteristics of rural heritage involves aspects such as rural historical stratification^[8], rural landscape^[9], and living traditions^[10]. They also start from multiple dimensions such as architecture, geography, economics, sociology, and management to study topics such as traditional dwellings^[11], rural cultural heritage systems^[12], rural heritage protection paths^[13], and rural heritage landscapes^[14]. It can be seen that the protection and inheritance of rural living heritage has received more and more attention from Chinese scholars, and has become an important supplement to the research on urban and rural heritage.

1.2 Rural governance related research

Mr. Fei Hsiao-Tung mentioned in "Rural China" that the origin of Chinese society is rural, and the rural society regulates everyone's behavior through close and long-term common life. "Governance" has been running through the entire process of rural development since ancient times. The research on rural governance is mainly divided into two aspects. On the one hand, scholars have realized that under the background of rapid urbanization, the social structure of villages has become increasingly atomized, the ability of rural governance has gradually weakened^[15], the lack of villagers' subjectivity has led to governance difficulties^[16], and it is difficult for a single government to meet the diversified needs of public goods^[17]. On the other hand, scholars have also proposed that the action strategies and governance capabilities of village communities play a key role in rural construction and protection^[18]. Rural governance is needed to achieve coordination of village affairs and build consensus^[19], promote rural protection and development^[20], and then play a role in promoting policy transmission, industrial development, cultural protection, and common prosperity for rural revitalization^[21].

1.3 Rural policy related research

There are relatively few studies on rural policy mechanisms. Scholars point out that the flexibility of public goods supply policies, the organizational mobilization capabilities centered on village cadres, and the group governance capabilities constitute the policy organizations and social foundations for activating autonomy^[22]. The establishment of policy supply mechanisms such as village creation and financial incentives plays a certain role in mobilizing village enthusiasm and social participation^[23]. However, in the traditional rural policy system, villages lack the autonomy to make project decisions, supervise and evaluate, and use funds. Rural grassroots organizations lack the necessary financial resources, and their space and autonomy for action are limited^[24]. Strengthening the design and research of policy mechanisms plays an important role in ensuring the implementation of plans^[25].

1.4 Summary of research review

Overall, rural governance, policy supply, and rural living heritage are attracting more and more attention from scholars, but existing research focuses on a single content, and there is little research on the relationship between the three. There is insufficient research on how policy supply affects the protection of rural living heritage and what role governance plays in it.

2. Research framework

2.1 Research on the Institutional Framework for Rural Heritage Protection in China

Heritage protection in China has always been directly affected by policy system, and can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage was the "cultural relics protection unit" period, which was mainly single-point protection. The second stage was the "historical and cultural city" period (1982 to present). The third stage was the "whole-region heritage protection" period (2003 to present). Up to now, relevant ministries and commissions have successively launched historical and cultural villages (a total of 487 from 2003 to 2014), the list of traditional Chinese villages (a total of 8,155 from 2012 to 2014), and provinces and cities have successively issued policy documents to protect rural heritage. It can be seen that China's rural heritage has gradually received attention from the central and local governments. In 2025, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council's "Notice on Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage" clearly stated that "in the process of urbanization, we must effectively protect the historical and cultural environment, and make outstanding vernacular architecture and other cultural heritage an important part of the urbanization development strategy."

At present, the framework of China's rural living heritage protection and inheritance system mainly includes three aspects: legal documents, top-level policies, and listing certification. First, legal documents, including "the Cultural Relics Protection Law" and "the Regulations on the Protection of Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages", stipulate that local governments at or above the county level must provide necessary financial support for the protection of historical and cultural villages, propose development intensity and construction

control requirements based on the traditional pattern and historical style of the village, and formulate a phased implementation plan for the protection plan. The second is the listing certification, which mainly clarifies the protection requirements through the list of famous historical and cultural towns and villages in China, the list of traditional Chinese villages, the list of cultural relics protection units and the list of historical buildings issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Finance, etc. The third is the top-level policy. Since 1978, a total of 26 "Central Document No. 1" (1982-1986, 2004-2024) have mentioned the issue of rural development and protection. The programmatic documents issued by the State Council in recent years, such as the "Rural Comprehensive Revitalization Plan (2024-2027)", have also put forward new requirements for the protection and inheritance of traditional villages and the cultural empowerment of rural development.

It can be seen that most rural protection policies are issued by the central government and its ministries, as local governments just play a supporting role. The top-down policy mechanism has played an important role in the protection of rural living heritage, but the content is mostly directional guidance, and there is often a big gap between policies and implementation^[12]. The national-level protection system can only play a bottom-line protection role for villages with listed identities, while a large number of rural cultural heritage with protection value but not included in the protection system are facing the risk of demolition. This requires, on the one hand, strengthening the vertical extension of the mechanism, paying more attention to local policy, strengthening control, and focusing on implementation. On the other hand, strengthening the horizontal expansion of the mechanism, promoting the continuation of the use function, cultural expression, social connection, and management and care of rural cultural heritage, and truly realizing the "living up" of heritage.

2.2 Connotation of rural governance in China

In recent years, with the decentralization of power and the influx of capital into villages, rural interest groups have become more diverse, and the rural self-organization governance system that has lasted for thousands of years has been impacted. The key role of rural governance in the protection of living heritage is reflected in some fields. First, it is the participation of multiple subjects. The government's public power guarantees the bottom line of heritage protection and seeks a balance between heritage protection and revitalization. The village collective strengthens the cultural identity and internal integration of the village through the guidance of local sages, forms a "community of thought", builds a "protective wall" of collective consciousness, and promotes the implementation of protection measures. Corporate investment in the social field is an important supplement to rural governance and an important support for the revitalization of rural heritage, as the villagers are the real users and conservators of rural heritage. Second, there is continuous collaboration throughout the protection process. Heritage protection and revitalization is not a single physical space repair, but a whole process of planning, construction, management, and operation. Third, the whole work is dynamic and sustainable. The complexity of rural population, industry, and economy determines that the protection and revitalization of rural heritage is a dynamic process, which must be promoted continuously and effectively. This requires exploring village development empowerment, operation transactions, and income distribution mechanisms on the basis of protection and revitalization to stimulate the "self-generating" ability of villages.

2.3 Construction of theoretical model based on institutional perspective

Mr. Hok-Lin Leung proposed in "Policy Planning and Evaluation Methods" that policies are achieved through a series of means, and the policy process includes "value selection-determination of goals-clarification of means-policy results". It is generally believed that the government formulates policies based on public value, and its implementation requires the use of governance tools that take into account both policy attributes and social attributes, and ultimately improves the policy implementation path through policy results. There is often a certain deviation between the protection of rural heritage with long-term value and the short-term economic interests of the village collective, which leads to the implementation of policies must rely on the power of rural governance. Therefore, the efficient unification of policy, governance, and protection has become the key to rural development.

Therefore, firstly, this paper proposes to construct a theoretical model of "rural governance-policy supply-protection and activation" from the perspective of theoretical understanding. Policy is a means to actively mobilize various resources, promote rural heritage protection, and achieve institutional and mechanism innovation; governance is a capability, which is an important driving force behind the effectiveness of heritage protection and

an important angle for evaluating whether policy supply is effective; rural heritage protection and activation is a carrier, an object of observation and an object of action. Ultimately, the three interact with each other to promote the sustainable protection and utilization of rural living heritage (Figure 1).

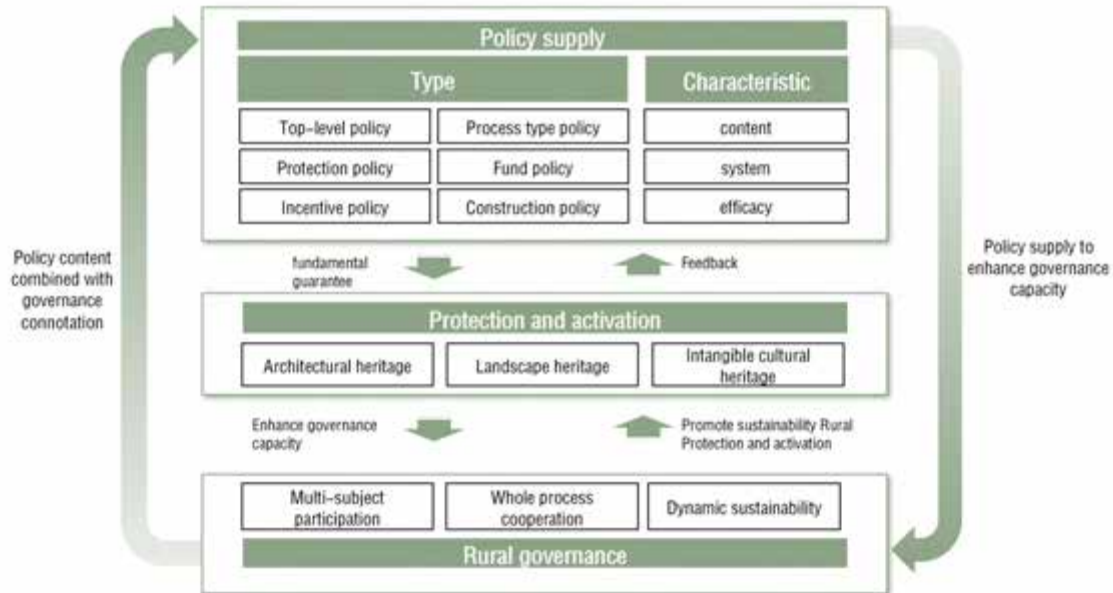


Figure 1: Dialectical relationship of “policy supply - rural governance - rural construction”
Picture source: self-drawn by the author

Secondly, we respond to the theory from the perspective of case practice. We explore the impact of policy supply on the protection and revitalization of a traditional Chinese village since 2018, study the role of rural governance in protection and revitalization, and propose suggestions on how to accurately match policies and promote efficient governance in the protection and revitalization of rural living heritage.

3. The practice of rural living heritage inheritance in Yungmark Village, Zhongshan City

Established in the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhongshan's villages have gathered a large number of buildings that combine Chinese and Western styles, nurtured Mr. Sun Yat-sen and many celebrities, and witnessed half of China's modern history. Among 900 villages, more than 300 have typical cultural values, and have formed a rural heritage circle around Wugui Mountain in space (Figure 2). The historical and cultural value of Yungmark Village includes: Yungmark is the hometown of Zheng Guanying, the “first person to open his eyes to the world” in the late Qing Dynasty. Yungmark is the place where Deng Xiaoping proposed “never walk backwards” during his southern patrol, an important witness to reform and opening up, and the first village in mainland China to open up to the outside world. Yungmark is a window for Sino-Western exchanges, a typical hometown of overseas Chinese, and rich in historical and cultural relics. Yungmark is the geographical center of Zhongshan, Zhuhai and Macau, and a strategic place for ancient transportation and coastal defense.

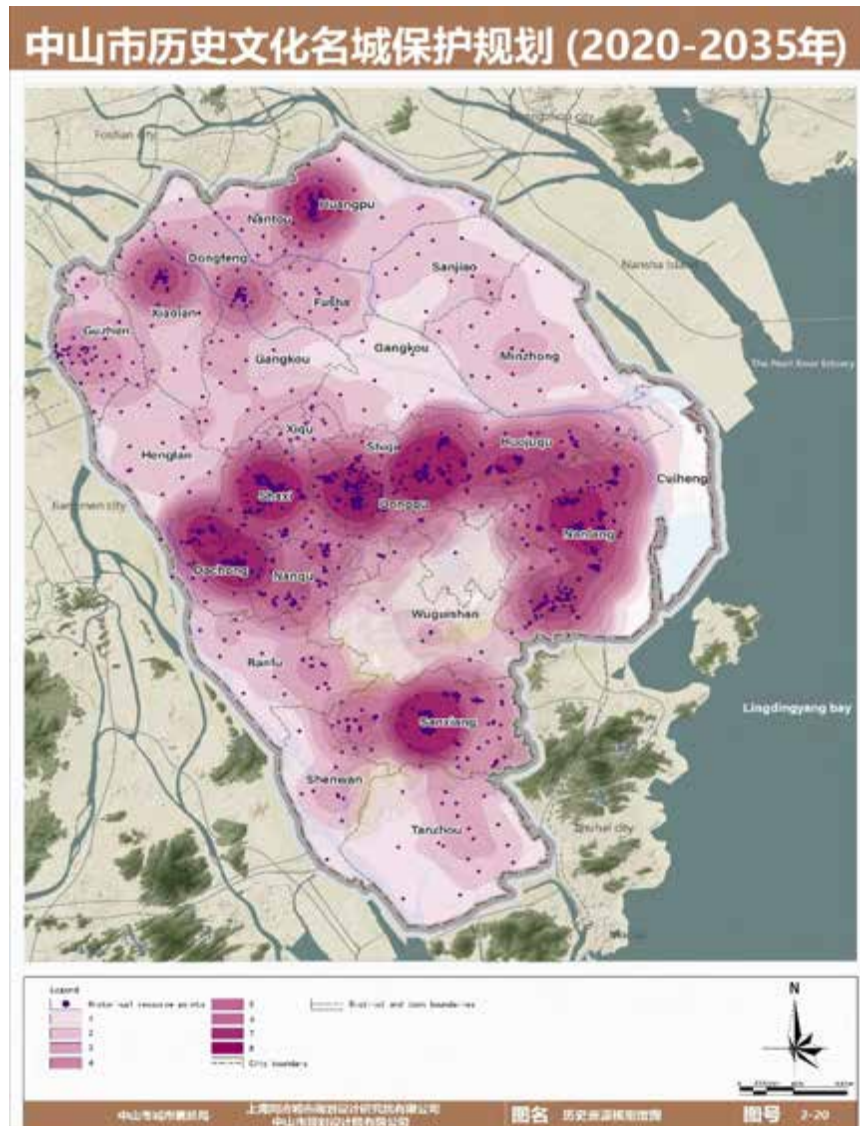


Figure 2: Distribution map of historical resources in Zhongshan City
Picture source: self-drawn by the author

3.1 Types, effectiveness and problems of policy supply

3.1.1 The type of policy supply

Since 2018, Zhongshan City has successively published dozens of policies related to rural revitalization and protection, which can be divided into seven categories (Table 1). Top-level design policies clarify the outline of rural revitalization and lay the foundation for the promulgation of subsequent detailed policies. Protection policies clarify that urban-rural renewal must carry out historical and cultural protection evaluations and strengthen financial subsidies for the protection and repair of historical buildings. Process policies simplify the process of small construction projects, promoting the rapid implementation of protection and repair projects with a total investment of less than 2 million yuan, as well as single projects with an investment of less than 1 million yuan. Funding policies focus on the management of special funds, and propose the scope of fund use, project reserves, fund allocation, use management, project acceptance, performance evaluation and other contents, which are the core policies to ensure the implementation of protection and revitalization projects. Incentive policies include city leaders taking charge, evaluation of human settlement environment improvement, etc., which mobilize the collective will of villages through a healthy competition mechanism. Construction policies ensure that rural architectural styles and forms are appropriate through guidelines, positive and negative lists, etc. Talent policies mainly strengthen the management of craftsmen who repair traditional buildings.

Table 1: List of rural revitalization policies in Zhongshan (2018-2024) Source: Zhongshan Municipal Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau Government Affairs Website and Zhongshan Municipal Natural Resources Bureau Official Website Compiled by the author

Types	Name
Top-level design	"Zhongshan City's Implementation Plan for Promoting Rural Revitalization Strategy"
	"Zhongshan City's Implementation Plan for Promoting Rural Living Environment Improvement and Building Ecologically Livable and Beautiful Villages in the Whole Region" (Zhongshan Office [2018] No. 15)
	"Zhongshan City's Action Plan for Implementing the "Thousand Villages Demonstration, Ten Thousand Villages Improvement" Project"
	"Zhongshan City Rural Human Settlement Environment Improvement and Improvement Five-Year Action Plan"
	"Zhongshan City Action Plan for Promoting Rural High-quality Development"
Protection policies	"Zhongshan City Urban Renewal Historical and Cultural Protection Evaluation Report Preparation Work Guide"
	"Zhongshan City Historical Building Protection and Repair and Historical and Cultural Protection Area Protection and Renewal Subsidy Fund Management Measures"
Process policies	"Zhongshan City Simplified Rural Small Construction Project Process Guidance Opinions"
	"Zhongshan City Simplified Rural Small Construction Project Process Guidance Opinions" (revised version)
Funding policies	"Zhongshan City "One Village One Product, One Town One Industry" Construction Fund Management Rules (Trial)"
	"Zhongshan City "Hundred Counties, Thousands of Towns and Tens of Thousands of Villages High-quality Development Project" Twenty Fiscal Policy Measures"
	"Zhongshan City Rural Revitalization Strategy Construction (Rural Human Settlement Environment Improvement) Special Fund Management Measures"
Incentive policies	"Zhongshan City Leaders' Contact with Characteristic and High-quality Demonstration Village Creation Work Plan"
	"Zhongshan City Characteristic and High-quality Demonstration Village, Beautiful and Livable Demonstration Village Construction Project Database Implementation Work Guide" (Central Committee Agricultural and Industrial Office Letter [2020] No. 9)
	"Zhongshan City Rural Living Environment Improvement Comparison and Learning Evaluation Plan"
	"Zhongshan City Beautiful Countryside Index Evaluation Work Plan"
Construction policies	"Zhongshan City 2019-2021 Beautiful Rural Construction Project Positive and Negative List" (Central Committee Agricultural and Industrial Office Letter [2022] No. 16)
	"Zhongshan City's "Ten Dos and Ten Don'ts" for Rural Construction"
	"Zhongshan City Rural Revitalization Construction Guidelines (Trial)"
	"Zhongshan City's "14th Five-Year Plan" Rural Toilet Revolution Implementation Plan" (Zhong Nong Nong [2022] No. 6)
Talent policies	"Zhongshan City Agricultural and Rural Special Talents Implementation Rules"
	"2023 Zhongshan City Rural Craftsmen Professional Title Evaluation Reform Implementation Plan" (Zhong Ren She Fa [2023] No. 49)

3.1.2 The characteristics of policy supply

In terms of content, the first is administrative guidance. The 2021 "Zhongshan City Leaders' Contact with Characteristic and High-quality Demonstration Village Creation Work Plan" clearly states that characteristic and excellent villages are contacted by city leaders. Under the influence of administrative effectiveness, the villages have formed comparative advantages in heritage protection, financial rewards and subsidies, etc. The second is healthy competition, policy supply tends to villages with good basic conditions and strong willingness to revitalize. Strong villages will first invest funds to carry out ancestral hall repairs, cultural building conservation, etc. to express their own willingness and organizational capabilities. Townships are more willing to recommend villages with strong initiative and high execution to strive for funds. The third is third-party evaluation. Starting from 2022, the Municipal Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau will entrust a third-party organization to randomly select villages and communities to conduct rural beauty index evaluation every year, and reward and subsidize the top 8 townships in the monthly evaluation to promote healthy competition in village construction. The fourth is to implement supervision, establish a rural environmental improvement inspection mechanism, report on villages with poor assessment results, and provide additional financial rewards for villages with outstanding achievements.

In terms of system, policy supply is continuously upgraded throughout the life cycle of rural construction, including encouraging the transition from "individual village heritage protection" to "rural heritage belt conservation". Emphasis is placed on correcting the implementation effect, and the "Zhongshan City 2019-2021 Beautiful Rural Construction Project Positive and Negative List" and "Zhongshan City's "Ten Dos and Ten Don'ts" for Rural Construction"" are promulgated to strengthen the management of design units and construction units, and clarify the contents of the positive and negative lists such as protection and repair, protection technology, and farmhouse style control.

In terms of effectiveness, high-effectiveness policies include financial subsidies, process simplification, leadership appointments, protection policies, etc. Medium-effectiveness policies include assessment, fund management, positive and negative lists, etc., which cannot play a decisive role, but have a certain promotion effect on rural construction. Low-effectiveness policies are mainly special policies and talent policies. This type of policy is difficult to directly affect the village level, takes a long time to be effective, and has a low degree of impact.

3.1.3 The problem of Policy supply

On the one hand, rural construction is mainly funded by government investment, and policy supply focuses on the improvement of public space and the protection and repair of public buildings. However, there are insufficient policies on how to mobilize villagers to carry out the renovation of their own traditional buildings, and the operation of houses after repair is insufficient. On the other hand, with the government's continued investment but low returns, Zhongshan City requires that rural construction and heritage protection should focus on self-balancing funds. This has led to the fact that although most villages are facing problems such as imperfect infrastructure, poor architectural style, and heritage in urgent need of rescue repairs, it is difficult for people's livelihood investment to directly generate economic benefits, so the funds for rural revitalization have been greatly reduced, which has also affected the confidence of social capital to be injected into the countryside, resulting in insufficient motivation for rural construction and protection.

3.2 The influence of policy supply on the lived heritage in Yungmark Village

Funding policies are the basis for the protection and revitalization of rural heritage. From 2018 to 2021, Yungmark Village received 55 million yuan in central special funds, 30 million yuan in municipal funds, 15 million yuan in town fiscal funds, 3.6 million yuan in village collective funds, and 650,000 yuan in donations from local elites and villagers, making it the most funded village in the city, and directly promoting the implementation of hundreds of small projects.

Protection policies have laid the foundation for rural heritage protection. Under the guidance of the "Zhongshan City Sanxiang Town Yungmark Village Traditional Village Protection and Development Plan", it is proposed to protect the "mountain-village-field" pattern in an integrated manner to maintain the natural and cultural heritage of the village. In the village, an overall protection framework of "cultural relics (20) + historical buildings (14) + traditional style buildings (16) + historical streets (55) + environmental elements (ancient trees, ancient wells, ancient roads, ancient springs, etc.)" is constructed.

Process policies have improved the efficiency of heritage protection and repair. Based on the simplification of rural small-scale project processes, Yungmark Village has repaired two cultural relics protection units represented by Zheng Guanying's former residence, and Dongxuan Zhenggong ancestral hall, three general immovable cultural relics, five historical buildings, and 40 traditional buildings. It has also rectified more than 40 inharmonious buildings around cultural relics and historical buildings, renovated 17 historical lanes, improved six public spaces represented by Yungmark Art Square, built a new tourist parking lot, and rectified two water systems, Zhongzhu Sewage Channel and Qianyang River (Figure 3). As they felt the benefits brought by the improvement of the implantation of business functions, some villagers began to change their mindsets and agreed to renovate their houses, which in turn pushed governments to increase investment in rural construction. Eventually, the village collective invested in Zhongshan Yonghui Cultural Tourism Investment Co., Ltd. and Zhongshan Yonghe Cultural Tourism Development Co., Ltd., promoting the entry of social capital and forming a virtuous circle.

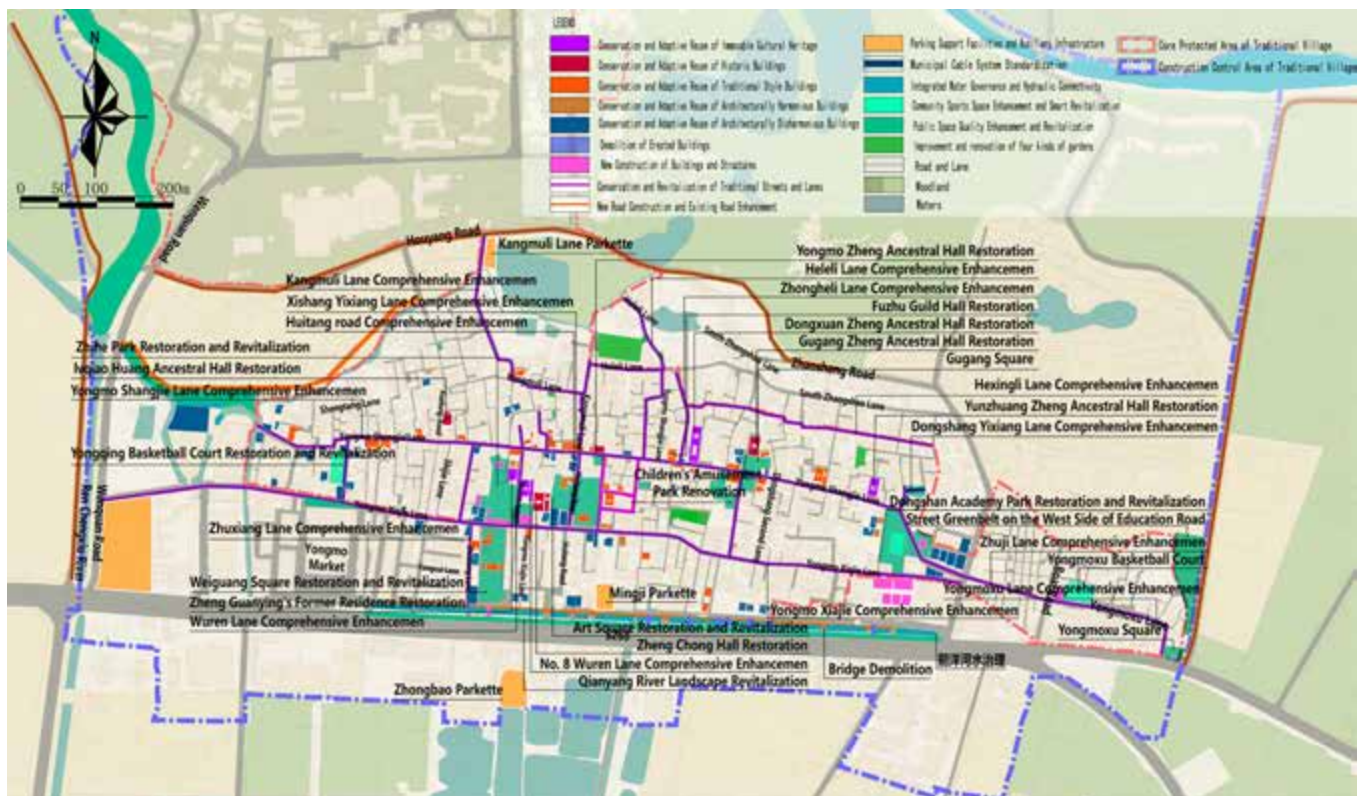


Figure 3: Distribution map of construction Project in Yongmo Village
Picture source: self-drawn by the author

Incentive policies played a guarantee role. Through the appointment of the then municipal party secretary and the appointment of the leaders of the municipal/town agriculture and rural bureau as the village's first secretary, Yungmark Village opened up a communication channel directly from the village to the municipal level, effectively ensuring the implementation of funds and the advancement of project review.

3.3 The effect of protection and inheritance of lived heritage in Yungmark Village under rural governance

3.3.1 Multi-subject participation: to achieve multiple governance of "co-consultation, co-operation, co-management"

"Co-consultation" is to build a village-level discussion platform for the government, village committee, enterprises, designers, villagers and other parties. Through a multi-party co-discussion meeting, the protection and renovated project will not be started until the villagers all agree. "Co-operation" is to encourage social groups to participate in the promotion and operation of Yungmark. Since 2018, Yungmark Village has held more than 200 art performances, Cantonese opera cultural evenings, etc., vigorously promoting the cultural card of village. "Co-management" is to implement rural house style control for buildings that have not been included in the protection system, and put forward the five styles of rural house style guidelines to provide design guidance for

villagers to renovate their houses by themselves (Figure 4). The mechanism has greatly promoted the continuation of the “use function-cultural expression-community connection” of living heritage.



Figure 4: The five styles of rural house design style guidelines
Picture source: self-drawn by the author

Continuation of the use function: the renovation of the Yungmark ancestral hall is a typical case. Before the renovation, the ancestral hall had been vacant and abandoned, and part of it was demolished and occupied by villagers. Whether from the perspective of heritage or life, the function and space conversion should be given priority. To this end, the renovation took the following measures: 1) The village collective negotiated with the villagers who occupied the ancestral hall to demolish the houses and formulated a proper resettlement plan. 2) Encourage villagers to donate money to achieve “self-repair of the ancestral hall”, which guaranteed the funding needs. 3) According to historical photos, the ancestral hall was repaired to reproduce the damaged and covered historical information to continue the original function, continue the functional positioning of the ancestral hall as a public space in the village, and transform it into a cultural space that is currently lacking in rural areas (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Before-and-after comparison pictures of the Yungmark ancestral hall 's renovation
Picture source: Photographed by the author

Continuation of cultural expression: The changes in heritage include tangible and intangible parts. The former is the material space, and the latter is festivals, customs, and beliefs. The two are interdependent as a unified whole. The renovation of the surrounding area of Zheng Guanying's former residence well presents the process of cultural transformation and derivation: with the concept of "amber", the historical deposits of each stage are protected, including the restoration of the private school (Xiaoxi Zhenggong ancestral hall) based on the old photos provided by the villagers in 1980, and the preservation of some of the interior walls and corridors of the Yungmark Primary School classroom. The memory of the old and middle generations is continued (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Before-and-after comparison pictures of the renovation
of the surrounding area of Zheng Guanying's former residence
Picture source: Photographed by the author

Community connection and continuation: The Nara Authenticity Document states that the responsibility and management of heritage should belong to the heritage community. The residents of the heritage site and their communities are both creators and users of heritage. The restoration of the Fengshui Pond in front of the Overseas Chinese Building embodies this spirit. The vacant land on the south side of the Overseas Chinese Building was originally planned to be transformed into a village square, but during the construction process, the surrounding villagers proposed to change the design based on their childhood photos and memories of the "pond" and "pondside granite". In the end, the design party, the construction party, and the village collective adjusted the plan on site to restore the old pond environment and realize the connection between the site and the villagers' memories (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Before-and-after comparison pictures of the restoration of the Fengshui Pond
Picture source: Photographed by the author

3.3.2 Whole process coordination: “planning-design-construction-operation” overall coordination

The rural revitalization chain is improved through four steps. At the planning level, the short-term and long-term implementation plans for the protection and revitalization of village heritage are clarified from the perspective of the entire region and all time periods, the bottom line of protection is formulated, and the recent project library is delineated. At the design level, the villagers are encouraged to design together, and designs are carried out for the urgent problems of the villagers. At the construction level, the design party and the construction party visit local old craftsmen and use traditional craftsmanship to repair the ancient village. At the operation level, it is to mobilize the villagers to combine self-operation with the introduction of social capital. At present, the repaired traditional style buildings have introduced rural operation formats such as “Winter Melon Pastry”, “Macau Bakery”, and “Yungmark Pub”.

3.3.3 Dynamic sustainability: Improving the value realization mechanism of rural heritage resources

The residential houses, ancestral halls, streets, squares, and farmlands formed by the spontaneous growth of villages are important components of rural heritage resources. The positive cycle of “rural heritage → rural assets → rural capital → rural funds → reintegration of rural heritage” promotes the dynamic sustainability and spiral rise of rural heritage protection. However, as a highly autonomous self-growing settlement, the property rights of houses in the village are mostly dispersed among the villagers, which makes it particularly difficult to transform rural heritage into rural assets. The degree of realization is highly related to the collective willingness and governance capacity of the village collective. In the practice of Yungmark Village, the village collective first counted the “rural resource list”, including village collective properties, long-term rented private houses, overseas Chinese houses that can be managed, and farmlands that can be operated. Secondly, the village head led the team to carry out house collection and storage. This process involves multiple aspects such as ownership determination, transfer of use rights, resale of operating rights, and agreement on income rights. In the end, nearly 40 dilapidated houses and ownerless houses were collected and stored. The rural heritage resources collected within a certain period of time were packaged again, and rural assets were formed through joint ventures/self-operation. The capital income generated after the capital entered the market was reinvested in the next round of resource integration. This cycle process ensures the asset appreciation of rural heritage and obtains the support of villagers.

4. Relevant suggestions on improving the protection and inheritance mechanism of China’s rural living heritage

4.1 Improve the regional resource survey mechanism

At present, rural heritage listed in the framework of historical and cultural villages, traditional villages, cultural relics protection units, and historical buildings is strictly protected by law, but there are still a large number of rural heritages with typical value not included in the list. Take Zhongshan City as an example. Among the 300 villages with protection value, there is only one national historical and cultural village and seven national traditional villages. This has led to the possibility that other villages may be demolished during the urbanization process due to the lack of a protection system.

First, the survey mechanism needs to be improved. Through the joint efforts of multiple departments, use remote sensing, drones and other technologies to form a digital record chassis to take stock of the village's architectural style, property ownership, and intangible cultural heritage. Secondly, the property rights mechanism also needs to be improved. Villages with better property rights collection are similar to "rural clean land", which makes it easier to carry out asset confirmation, transfer of operating rights and income distribution, and reach a consensus. It is necessary to strengthen the relevant policies on property rights collection and land preparation, and provide policy guarantees for the participation of multiple subjects. Finally, the survey conclusions will be used as an important reference for the revision of the protection plan, and according to the principle of "protecting everything that should be protected", the work from resource surveys to resource protection will be effectively promoted.

4.2 strengthen the design of top-level protection and activation policies

On the one hand, firstly strengthen the bottom line protection. Under the institutional framework of "historical and cultural city-historical and cultural town-historical and cultural village", add the "Historical village" level, including villages that do not meet the conditions for inclusion in the historical and cultural village but have relatively rich heritage into the "traditional village". The protection and development of "Historical village" should formulate special contents for historical and cultural protection, delineate historical and cultural protection lines, and clarify positive and negative lists. In recent years, Zhongshan City has promulgated 79 traditional villages, promoting the protection of rural areas throughout the city at the overall level. Secondly, Improve the listing mechanism, promote the implementation of the "rural traditional architecture" system, and "rural traditional architecture" will be listed by the village collective to protect the village from the bottom up. Taking Yungmark Village as an example, a total of 52 traditional buildings in Yungmark Village have been listed, and has promoted the formation of village cultural cognition community.

On the other hand, strengthening heritage revitalization requires vigorously promoting the supply of rural operation policies, stimulating multiple participating entities to jointly operate rural heritage through a diversified policy package, and improving the construction of rural asset operation mechanisms. From the experience of Yungmark Village, although state-owned enterprises have carried out rural heritage operations, the operating quota accounts for a relatively low proportion of the overall asset, and rural operations are difficult to become a key area of concern for state-owned enterprises. Instead, they are more about completing administrative tasks in accordance with municipal requirements, which leads to insufficient innovation in rural operations, insufficient flexibility, and difficulty in making dynamic adjustments to the operation content according to actual conditions. Although villagers actively participate, their operational capabilities are not strong, their sensitivity to the market is not high, and there is a lack of preferential policy support to encourage private capital investment. In addition, the policy mechanism for investment promotion and operation is not sound. Public welfare projects such as the Zheng Guanying Life and History Museum invested by the government are operating well, but there is no clear business access list and attraction mechanism for the architectural heritage that is rented out to the public, making overall operation difficult.

4.3 Enhance the Role of Village Collectives through Governance-Oriented Mechanisms

First, reconstruct the dominant position of village collectives. Strengthen the organizational capacity of village collectives in heritage protection, such as establishing a compilation team led by the collective, organizing villagers to participate in the compilation of oral history and the collection of old objects, and activating the enthusiasm of villagers to participate in governance. Clarify the legal responsibilities and rights of village collectives in heritage protection, such as giving village collectives the right to supervise the repair of traditional buildings, and requiring them to cooperate with the government to complete the heritage census and registration, forming a power and responsibility system of "government guidance and village collective implementation".

Second, formulate protective village rules and regulations, incorporate heritage protection into the framework of villagers' self-governance. Taking Yungmark Village as an example, the government timely incorporated the village appearance management requirements into the village rules and regulations, and regulated the control of building height and volume, maintenance of public facilities and green environment, protection of natural resources and cultural heritage, control of building style and parking management, etc., to improve the self-supervision and self-management level of villagers' self-built houses.

Third, realize the multi-governance of city-town-village planners-public. incorporate village collectives into the assessment system for protection effectiveness, evaluate their organizational capabilities, villagers' participation and other indicators through third-party institutions, and link the results with policy support.

4.4 Improve the dynamic protection-update feedback mechanism

The inheritance and development of rural living heritage is a continuous evolutionary process, which requires policies to respond to actual rural problems and stage goals in a timely manner and establish a dynamic response mechanism. A policy evaluation action group should be established to track the entire process of policy implementation, build a rural construction implementation indicator system, and conduct policy implementation evaluations at half-yearly time nodes. Provide timely feedback on areas where policy implementation effects are not as expected or even have negative effects, and formulate the direction of policy adjustments. For policies with good feedback, trace the specific paths of policies to promote rural construction, explore whether they have universal value and the possibility of being promoted to more villages. Key issues should be discussed through villager discussions, expert consultations, and other methods to explore solutions and fill policy gaps in key and difficult areas.

It is also necessary to realize that the inheritance and development of rural living heritage is not a campaign-style behavior that can be achieved overnight, and policy supply must be consistent and sustainable. The effectiveness of policy supply cannot be measured solely by investment returns. Rural protection and development is a long-term incubation process that needs to respect its objective laws. Rural policy supply should also play a long-term leading, corrective and supervisory role.

4.5 Establish a supervision and inspection mechanism

Firstly, emphasize the self-supervision of the village collective and villagers. The village collective assumes the daily supervision responsibility, organizes villagers to participate in heritage protection inspections, coordinates conflicts of interest among multiple parties, and improves the self-supervision and self-management level of villagers' self-built houses.

Secondly, improve the incentive and accountability mechanism. Responsibility binding: link the supervision results with the performance evaluation of village cadres, and clarify the statutory responsibilities of the village collective in heritage protection. Villager participation incentives: encourage villagers to actively participate in supervision through the points system, honorary awards, etc., and enhance their subject awareness. The third is to improve the supervision methods and technical means. Digital monitoring: Use remote sensing, drones and other technologies to establish a digital monitoring platform to record the status of heritage protection in real time.

5. Conclusion

Based on the inheritance of rural living heritage, this paper constructs a theoretical model of "rural governance-policy supply- protective activation ", and conducts an empirical study using Yungmark Village in Zhongshan City as an example. The study found that the protection and revitalization of rural heritage is driven by both the external influence of policy supply and the internal role of rural governance. The integration of rural heritage protection and revitalization into the rural governance helps the effective implementation of policies. First, as a top-down intervention, policy supply is prone to "failure" when facing villages with endogenous logic and governance order. It is necessary to fully respect the contractual spirit and clan ties of Chinese villages, consider the important role of collective economic organization relations in rural governance, give play to the core role of village collectives in rural building property rights identification, village rules and regulations, and building repair coordination, and formulate policies from the perspective of activating the endogenous organizational strength of villages. Secondly, protective activation is a dynamic maintenance process, which requires multiple dimensions such as improving the heritage survey mechanism, improving the protection mechanism, and establishing a supervision and inspection mechanism to achieve heritage protection throughout the life cycle.

Compared with cultural relics and historical sites, China's research and practice on the protection of rural living heritage is still in its infancy. The key lies in how to coordinate the collaborative relationship between the government, village collectives, and villagers in heritage protection. Limited by the research object, this article focuses on the practical content of the protection of the material space of Yungmark Village. Further follow-up

observation is needed on how to further enhance the social autonomy of villagers and form sustainable heritage management. At the same time, given the significant differences in heritage characteristics and protection conditions in various parts of China, existing protection experience and methods may not be applicable to other regions. Therefore, how to establish an effective demonstration promotion mechanism and form a heritage protection system suitable for China's national conditions needs further discussion.

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