

Governance Innovation of Rural Public Cultural Spaces in the Context of Government Procurement: Postprint

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Abstract

Under the rural cultural revitalization strategy, resolving governance dilemmas and innovating models in government procurement of rural public cultural spaces can facilitate high-quality development of rural public cultural services. Based on an analysis of 39 typical cases of governance practice progress in rural public cultural spaces from the “2021 Yangtze River Delta and National Selected Cities Most Beautiful Public Cultural Space Competition,” this study proposes characteristics and future strategies for governance practices in government procurement of rural public cultural spaces. The research finds that the features of government procurement of rural public cultural spaces are manifested in the spatiotemporal interweaving of spatial governance scenario design and service representation, the implementation mechanism of spatial governance becoming the core discourse of policy practice, and the need for further enhancement of value co-creation through collaboration among spatial governance subjects. “Responsible” governance innovation in rural public cultural space governance necessitates exploring multi-stakeholder collaborative governance pathways for rural public cultural spaces, excavating the dynamic mechanisms for cultural institutions’ participation in rural cultural space governance, and perfecting the standard guidelines and normative systems for rural public cultural spaces.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Research on Rural Public Cultural Space Governance Innovation in the Context of Government Purchase

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Abstract: Under the rural cultural revitalization strategy, resolving governance dilemmas and innovating models for government-purchased rural public cultural spaces can promote high-quality development of rural public cultural services. Based on typical case analyses from the “Yangtze River Delta and National Beautiful Public Cultural Space Competition,” this study proposes practical characteristics and future strategies for rural public cultural space governance through government purchase. Research findings indicate that government-purchased rural public cultural spaces exhibit three key features: the spatial-temporal interweaving of spatial governance scenario design and service representation, the implementation mechanism of spatial governance becoming core policy discourse, and the need for enhanced collaborative value co-creation among governance subjects. “Responsible” governance innovation for rural public cultural spaces requires exploring multi-subject collaborative governance paths, excavating the dynamic mechanisms for cultural institutions’ participation in rural cultural space governance, and improving standard guidelines and normative systems for rural public cultural spaces.

Keywords: Rural public cultural space; Public cultural service supply; Public cultural service supply effectiveness; G250.2

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Government purchase has become an important means for local governments to procure public services, promoting multi-subject participation and addressing shortcomings in rural public cultural services [1]. It involves direct appropriation or public bidding to outsource public services to social institutions. Government purchase of cultural spaces focuses on entrusting social institutions through contracts, providing a new governance model for rural cultural governance [2]. Under the requirements of high-quality development of rural public cultural services, the construction of government-led rural public cultural spaces has shifted from incremental development to connotative development aimed at improving service effectiveness. Rural public cultural spaces refer to public places built by government, social forces, or villagers within rural areas where people can freely access public cultural resources and participate in cultural activities [4]. The government purchase model transforms traditional service supply patterns and diffuses public values into the social domain [5]. According to the 2013 “Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Government Purchase of Services from Social Forces” and the “Guiding Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Rural Governance” [9], the governance framework for rural public cultural spaces has entered a substantive implementation stage. Cooperation mechanisms are primarily based on signing service contracts according to the “Opinions on Doing a Good Job in Government Purchase of Public Cultural Services” [10], specifying service plans and evaluating service content and effectiveness [12]. Current research on rural public cultural space governance practice mostly focuses on case analyses, such as Yunnan Heshun

Library [18], Liuyang Zhulian Village Beautiful House Field [19], and Hangzhou Rural Cultural Hall [20], all exemplifying typical government-purchased rural public cultural spaces.

1. Related Research

A thematic search was conducted on CNKI using “public cultural space” as the keyword. After manual verification, deduplication, and supplementation, these research findings provide an important foundation for related practical work and this study. The main themes include the logical transformation of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces, practical cases and implementation paths.

From a theoretical development perspective, research on new-type public reading spaces has extended to rural areas [14], and the trend of introducing spatial dimensions into public cultural service construction has emerged [13]. The logical transformation of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces in China is manifested in two dimensions: the reconstruction of integrated rural public cultural spaces that fuse various spatial functions under policy participation [12], and the shift of rural public cultural system construction toward a space-centered direction. The construction of public spaces returns to the essential needs of people [23]. These studies generally agree that introducing social work professional forces through government-purchased service project systems to integrate and reconstruct rural public cultural spaces can better enhance grassroots public cultural service functions and bridge the gap between urban and rural public cultural services [24].

From a practical progress perspective, government-purchased rural public cultural spaces represent an important implementation path for the orderly governance of rural public cultural services [25]. The order of rural public cultural spaces is maintained and reconstructed through government purchase, benefiting from government subjects’ continuous setting of new dimensions and scenario design for rural public cultural spaces [26]. Existing research mainly proposes promoting traditional rural public cultural space construction through more diverse government purchase models such as “government-led,” “social participation,” “cooperative construction,” and “N+” [27-28]. Rural public cultural spaces face practical dilemmas such as weakened traditional spatial functions [29-30] and value identification crises [31], which together constitute the theoretical foundation for government-purchased rural public cultural space governance.

Government-purchased rural public cultural spaces are holistic concepts that include not only the physical venues relied upon by rural cultural life but also cultural resources, cultural activities, and cultural mechanisms [17]. The objects of government purchase of rural public cultural spaces include typical town comprehensive cultural centers, scattered village stages, leisure corridors, and other public cultural spaces, as well as abandoned courtyards [37]. Under the influence of multiple cultural systems, the practice of rural public cultural space

reconstruction under the government purchase context has generated internal logic [15], explaining why supply of rural public cultural spaces encounters new barrier states [16]. Since reconstruction of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces originates from farmers' cultural needs [34], while capital and social forces are basic factors participating in rural public cultural space reconstruction [35], spatial models can also be classified to guide rural public cultural space reconstruction [36].

From the above research, it is evident that government-purchased rural public cultural space construction is an important carrier and strong guarantee for achieving rural cultural revitalization [38-40]. Government purchase empowers rural public cultural space governance innovation with dual theoretical implications: government purchase of new-type public cultural space services provides new development momentum for rural revitalization, while modernization of rural public cultural space services provides an application field for government purchase. The two complement each other and jointly promote high-quality development of rural public cultural spaces under the government purchase context. The article focuses on discussing government-led rural public cultural spaces, thus adopting a broad definition that also includes indirectly purchased public cultural service spaces and rural public cultural spaces operated by enterprises or individuals receiving partial government funding or support, which helps understand the specific practical situation of current rural public cultural space governance.

2. Progress in Government-Purchased Rural Public Cultural Space Governance Practices

Various strategies have given rise to diverse forms of rural public cultural spaces. To better excavate the functional mechanisms of government purchase and provide more choices for governance models of public cultural services, cases were selected from award-winning examples in the aforementioned competition. Ultimately, 24 rural public cultural spaces were selected as research objects.

Among the sample cases, comprehensive rural communities are the most numerous, followed by rural libraries, reflecting the participation enthusiasm and contributions of rural libraries in rural public cultural space governance practice. In terms of operational subjects, government-led public cultural service supply accounts for the highest proportion, demonstrating that the government is the dominant force in public cultural undertakings [41]. Rural public cultural space governance primarily requires financial support and policy promotion from public departments. The government provides construction scenarios for rural public cultural spaces, which has become a characteristic of rural public cultural space construction.

For instance, the "Cloud Courtyard" in the sample cases is an original ecological boutique homestay transformed from an abandoned school. Based on the concept of empowering rural revitalization through culture and tourism,

the local government created it into a comprehensive space integrating cultural creativity, tourism, and other industries, driving the development path of rural revitalization in surrounding villages [42]. Government purchase can play a greater role in the development and reuse of old buildings such as ancestral halls and factories in rural areas. The Guangshan Dabie Mountain Rural Living Room was transformed from an old grain reserve warehouse and township government compound, designed according to new forms of rural public cultural development.

Rural public cultural spaces serve as venues for rural residents to carry out public cultural activities. Due to the regional particularities of rural areas, some spaces are renovated based on original buildings, using local construction materials while preserving original local customs and styles, which both effectively utilizes rural building materials and endows rural public cultural spaces with local characteristics. For example, the Laomiao Cave Library in Henan Province's Mogou Village was transformed from abandoned cave dwellings, funded by the village collective, while hiring renowned rural construction designers. The entire courtyard was divided into functional areas such as adult reading rooms, electronic reading rooms, and calligraphy rooms, activating cultural vitality in rural areas while preserving and displaying the original cave dwelling style.

The construction of rural public cultural spaces in the sample cases also involves digital intelligence technology application and user perception design. Through incorporating these governance contents, higher-quality development of government-purchased public cultural services can be achieved. Social organizations undertaking government-purchased public cultural services through various rural public cultural spaces help solve the practical dilemma of misalignment between supply and demand ends, opening new types of public cultural service spaces for rural areas beyond farmhouse bookhouses and grassroots cultural stations.

The degree of government purchase involvement varies among the aforementioned practical cases, demonstrating different cooperation models, purchase methods, and operational mechanisms of government purchase, as well as differences in rural public cultural space patterns under different operational mechanisms. The focus of optimizing government-purchased rural public cultural space services lies in continuously improving service content. A prominent path for comprehensively leading the operation and maintenance system of rural public cultural spaces under purchase models is the government joining social forces to create local rural public cultural space brands.

The 24 sample cases collectively feature 73 service activity projects, among which local characteristic cultural activities are the most numerous (27), followed by cultural study tours (15), each accounting for 36.99% and 20.55% of total activity projects respectively. Local characteristic cultural activities and cultural study tours are the main forms of service activities in the sample cases. World Reading Day activities are the least numerous, indicating that the capacity of rural public cultural spaces under current government purchase models to

undertake professional reading activity projects remains to be strengthened.

The forms of government-purchased public cultural space service content include themed party day activities, patriotic culture education activities, red poetry recitation meetings, etc. For example, Pudong Zhujiao Xinghuo Village Rural Revitalization Demonstration Village holds stamp collection characteristic party classes and poetry recitation meetings. The Huzhou Brush Town Public Cultural Space's "Charming Shizhuang" local characteristic cultural activity includes the "Huaxia Brush Worker Brush Worship Ceremony." Zhuyi Village Scenic Area's bamboo science exhibition and Miaoshan Art Museum's seal cutting exhibition are examples of science popularization exhibitions.

Cultural study tours include different themes such as natural study, study learning, and cultural tourism study. The Yierge Academy, which performs prominently in the sample cases, was established relying on Changde Library as the Changde Library Yierge Branch. With government support, the academy utilizes its collection resources and library position advantages to develop study bases and carry out themed party day activities, achieving good social benefits [44]. The Yangtze River Delta Salt Culture Cultural and Creative Base traces and excavates the historical accumulation of salt culture in the Caojing area, creating a salt culture brand. The base is committed to holding service activities combined with salt culture themes, including developing online courses with Shanghai Open University and Shanghai Education Television, and cooperating with Jinshan District primary and secondary schools to offer study practice education activities. Jinxiang Weicheng Cultural Living Room's cross-boundary cultural space construction practice brand relies on the Wenzhou Municipal Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau to hold cultural forums and art exhibitions through optimized policy support and innovative service concepts.

3. Characteristics of Government-Purchased Rural Public Cultural Space Governance Patterns

The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Cultural Development Plan," promoting high-quality public cultural resources to rural and border areas, narrowing the gap in public cultural services between urban and rural areas and across regions, and promoting the effective connection between consolidating and expanding poverty alleviation achievements and rural revitalization. Under the macro guidance of national policies, the rural public cultural governance model has gradually extended to spatial governance.

For this practical pattern and governance method transformation, some scholars regard rural public cultural space governance as a new field in modern public cultural research [46] and an important breakthrough point for rural cultural revitalization. Through typical case analysis of rural public cultural space governance, we can explore the current status and future trends of government-purchased rural public cultural space governance, excavating practical patterns

and development paths.

Spatial Governance Scenario Design and Service Representation Exhibit Spatial-Temporal Interweaving

The occurrence of rural public cultural service governance relies on certain forms of virtual or physical spatial scenarios. The practical experience from typical cases in this study indicates that rural public cultural space governance scenarios may exhibit spatial-temporal interleaved extension at different stages. When spaces extend from physical to virtual spaces, there exists a certain time lag, creating structural misalignment in cultural governance. This spatial-temporal interweaving is particularly evident when facing different cultural space formats such as cultural exhibition and museum spaces.

The shift toward service effectiveness enhancement is a consistent goal pursued by rural public cultural space governance. Both the aforementioned comprehensive rural communities and these spaces essentially reflect the governance concept of government and operational subjects promoting inclusive, equitable, and accessible public cultural services. The activity projects carried out are important manifestations of spatial-temporal interweaving and key content for cultural production, supply, processing, and feedback evaluation in rural public cultural governance.

Due to significant spatial-temporal differences in the development goals, processes, and methods of regional rural public cultural space governance, and given the large variations in spatial-temporal sequences, groups, and regional differences in rural public cultural service demands, the practice orientation objectively advocates building urban-rural integrated public cultural spaces based on urban and rural characteristics. In areas with insufficient conditions, village cultural activity rooms and public service supporting facilities in new residential communities can be fully utilized as new types of public cultural spaces, encouraging eligible new public cultural spaces to become branches of public libraries and cultural centers.

Spatial Governance Implementation Mechanisms Have Become Core Policy Discourse

The rich practical cases of rural public cultural space governance also indicate that reshaping cultural formats is the core objective for stimulating rural cultural vitality. The policy discourse on service personnel and governance subjects in existing government-purchased rural public cultural service policies tends to be prospective descriptions, such as explicitly proposing training for service personnel and the number of activities each team should conduct annually. China's early-stage foundation and future planning for rural public cultural space governance have basically established a path arrangement and characteristic tasks dominated by government, led by cultural institutions, and participated by social forces.

The policy discourse on governance subjects mostly appears in relevant stan-

dards for rural public cultural fields, such as the national standard “Construction and Service Specifications for Rural Cultural Activity Centers,” which proposes combining full-time and part-time personnel with villager autonomy. The “Weihai City Rural Public Cultural Exquisite Service Regulations” support multiple subjects in carrying out effective public cultural service innovation using village comprehensive cultural service centers and other public cultural service venues as platforms. Only rural public cultural spaces with well-developed functions can enhance effectiveness under the participation and promotion of government-purchased cultural institutions such as libraries.

Collaborative Value Co-Creation Among Spatial Governance Subjects Needs Further Improvement

The absence of subjects in rural cultural space governance has always been the primary factor hindering the equalization of rural public cultural services. Subjects face issues such as vague functional definitions, incomplete rural resident participation mechanisms, vague social subject functions, and unsound rights protection mechanisms, affecting the balanced performance and effective action of rural cultural space governance subject functions [48].

In the 24 sample cases selected for this study, comprehensive rural communities and rural libraries account for the highest proportion, while operational subjects are primarily government-led, presenting a pattern of active participation from rural libraries in rural public cultural space governance practice. Inter-provincial and inter-regional geographical spatial gaps in cultural resources remain prominent, reflected not only in talent distribution but more significantly in the maturity of cultural capital, cultural industries, and cultural formats.

This content is also reflected in the above cases, thanks to the collaborative efforts of various forces. For example, Shanghai Pudong widely invites professional designers to participate in urban-rural cultural space design transformation by arranging special funds and launching grassroots cultural space design subsidy projects covering 36 townships in the district. However, digital cultural strategy, common prosperity, and new urbanization strategies also pose new challenges. The construction of digital rural areas makes the subject problem in digital rural cultural space governance urgent to solve. Rural residents facing digital poverty are forced to drift away from rural cultural digital governance, and the digital information literacy and data governance capabilities of staff are both insufficient [49]. These issues limit collaboration among governance subjects and make it difficult for the existing rural cultural governance system design to effectively facilitate in-depth participation of new subjects.

4. Optimization Strategies for Government-Purchased Rural Public Cultural Space Governance

Under the government-purchased public cultural service model, rural public cultural space governance serves as both the foundation and action direction for improving the rural cultural revitalization and modern public cultural system.

Facing future prospects, exploring multi-subject collaborative governance paths for rural public cultural spaces has become an important breakthrough point for rural cultural revitalization.

Exploring Multi-Subject Collaborative Governance Paths for Rural Public Cultural Spaces

Government-purchased public cultural services often face the risk of publicness erosion, which is closely related to responsibility-shifting and power alienation of purchasing subjects, profit-seeking nature and capability gaps of undertaking subjects, and collective apathy of consuming subjects [50]. The implementation of rural revitalization strategies has brought new opportunities for rural public cultural development [51]. Rural public cultural space governance is a cultural governance activity conducted by government, cultural institutions, social organizations, and the public within rural areas.

Optimizing the practice of government-purchased rural public cultural space governance requires greater attention to multi-subject collaborative participation and its standardized development. The role positioning, functional mechanisms, and implementation mechanisms of grassroots public cultural service institutions in rural cultural space governance need to be addressed at the institutional level. Differences in economic, cultural, and historical-social development conditions across various regions of China result in different entry points and focal points for public libraries' participation in local rural public cultural space governance policies.

Most provincial and municipal rural public cultural services tend to encourage and support the inclusion of eligible mass cultural activity spaces and functional spaces into the main-branch system, establishing and improving a main-branch system with county-level public libraries and cultural centers as main libraries and comprehensive cultural service centers as grassroots service points. Some regions also require public libraries, memorial halls, and other cultural institutions to carry out public cultural space services in cultural activity centers and intangible cultural heritage venues.

Excellent cases of rural public cultural governance can provide references for rural libraries and other cultural institutions to participate in rural cultural space governance. For example, the National Development and Reform Commission highlighted in its "National Rural Public Service Typical Cases" column that one important practical experience in rural public cultural space construction is attracting social forces to participate in governance. The case of You County, Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province, summarized and promoted the "Xiangxian Serving Rural Culture" model, building physical scenarios for rural public cultural services by constructing small squares at villagers' doorsteps and utilizing idle spaces such as old village department buildings, with farmers becoming the protagonists on stage.

In the context of new infrastructure construction, the rural public cultural service system is undergoing transformation [24,30]. The cultural digitalization

strategy is driving rural public cultural space governance to gradually shift toward digital spaces, while cultural services are carried by spaces. Exploring multi-subject collaborative governance driven by concept and interest coordination is the guarantee for orderly development of rural public cultural spaces. Strengthening multi-subject collaboration to enhance equilibrium and accessibility is an important step in building a socialist cultural powerhouse.

Excavating the Dynamic Mechanisms for Cultural Institutions' Participation in Rural Cultural Space Governance

Cultural institutions, as professional subjects, undertake government-purchased public cultural services. In the field of responsible innovation institution building [3], the dynamic mechanisms for cultural institutions' participation in rural cultural space governance need to be excavated. In the context of the rural revitalization strategy, the supply and effectiveness of rural community library service spaces provide support for modernizing rural cultural governance systems and governance capabilities, becoming an important tool for bridging urban-rural cultural supply gaps and reconstructing rural cultural governance systems.

Improving Standard Guidelines and Normative Systems for Rural Public Cultural Spaces

Standards, as important components of national basic institutions, have significant discourse power in rural public cultural governance policies. The Standardization Administration of China has designated agriculture and rural areas as the first key field for national standard project establishment in 2021 [54]. The "2022 National Standard Project Establishment Guide" includes basic public service standards covering libraries and other public cultural facility service standards [55]. However, in terms of quantity and quality, China's existing national standards for rural cultural governance and related local standards for rural public cultural service governance are far from sufficient, especially since most rural public cultural service space infrastructure construction in central and western regions lags behind, with limited extended service capabilities [56].

The compilation of strong standard guidelines and norms is the innovative dimension for government-purchased rural public cultural space governance. Only through guiding, interactive spatial standards can we better grasp the governance innovation of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces and achieve high-quality development of public cultural services.

5. Conclusion

Under governance model innovations such as socialized operation, China's rural public cultural spaces continue to radiate new vitality through government purchase, demonstrating the important value of improving the public cultural service system in the process of Chinese-style modernization. Only through guiding standard guidelines and normative systems can we better grasp the governance innovation dimension of government-purchased rural public cultural

spaces.

This study follows an analytical approach of excavating characteristic cases, pattern features, and response strategies, effectively demonstrating the critical role government plays in jointly completing the reconstruction of rural public cultural space venues, regeneration of services, and brand operation and maintenance with social institutions. However, rural public cultural spaces in different regions and periods are influenced and affected by multiple factors including capital, policy, and demographic environment, causing the specific mechanisms of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces to present different development priorities, governance dilemmas, and practical challenges.

In subsequent research analysis of government-purchased rural public cultural spaces, researchers need to draw on newer governance concepts such as holistic governance and responsible innovation, employing richer and more scientific research methods like quasi-natural experiments, field surveys, and case analysis. Focusing on government practices oriented toward rural cultural revitalization, they should deeply explore issues concerning practical cases and supervision evaluation in China's journey from comprehensive moderate prosperity to common prosperity, providing intellectual support for enhancing rural residents' cultural participation and sense of happiness.

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