



Renewal Strategies for the Design of Public Space in Yunnan Traditional Villages

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Abstract. With rapid urbanization, China's traditional villages confront challenges like cultural dilution, ecological harm, and social restructuring. Yunnan Province, celebrated for its cultural and natural diversity, illustrates the imperative for heritage preservation and revitalization. This study formulates strategic approaches to renewing public spaces in Yunnan's traditional villages, targeting functional obsolescence and vitality deficits. A robust renewal strategy has been crafted through extensive literature synthesis and village public space assessment, emphasizing structural, functional, and material rejuvenation alongside aesthetic enhancement. The study advocates for innovative design integrating contemporary materials to elevate living standards and community vitality, all while honoring historical and cultural legacies. It presents actionable insights for sustainable rural development and heritage conservation in Yunnan, enriching the broader dialogue on rural revitalization and heritage stewardship.

Keywords: traditional village; public space; design renewal; cultural heritage; rural revitalization.

1 Introduction

Traditional villages in China constitute an integral component of the Chinese nation's historical and cultural heritage, rich with social, cultural, ecological, and historical resources. The rapid pace of urbanization poses unprecedented challenges to these villages, including the loss of cultural identity, ecological degradation, and transformation of social structures. Yunnan Province, renowned for its cultural diversity and natural landscapes, is home to a multitude of such traditional villages. These villages serve not only as vital conduits of local ethnic cultures but also as non-renewable cultural heritage sites[1]. Characterized by unique architectural styles, harmonious layouts, and lifestyles deeply intertwined with the natural environment, these villages are emblematic of cultural depth.

However, the acceleration of modernization brings forth a myriad of challenges for Yunnan's traditional villages, such as population outflow, destruction of traditional architecture, and erosion of cultural distinctiveness. Consequently, examining the design strategies for public spaces within these villages is imperative for the preservation and transmission of these invaluable cultural heritages and for fostering sustainable local

development. It holds significant contemporary relevance and profound historical importance.

2 Literature Review

Scholars increasingly prioritize the renewal and design of rural public spaces, recognizing the multifaceted approach required for their conservation and renewal. The government's role is essential, enabling protection and revitalization through policy and funding[2]. Studies underscore the urgent need for updating public spaces to counteract decay and functional decline [3]. Moreover, strategic planning for public spaces is vital for enhancing village value, ensuring social stability, and supporting rural sustainability within the framework of beautiful village construction[4].

Furthermore, the historical and cultural values of traditional villages must be profoundly respected and preserved in the design of public spaces. The significance of ecological and green architectural design in the renewal of public spaces has been underscored by Xie et al.(2024) [5]. They advocate for scientific transformation and environmentally friendly design to foster a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

In addition, the application of modern aesthetics in the design of public spaces in traditional villages has garnered considerable attention. Jie & Jieying(2022) [6] have noted that integrating modern design elements while retaining the original cultural characteristics can enhance the visual appeal and living quality of the public spaces. However, there is a caveat: excessive modernization could lead to a loss of cultural identity, a concern that must be vigilantly addressed.

The holistic preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage is of equal importance. Research by Xie et al. (2024) [5] indicates that while the protection of traditional architecture is crucial, the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, such as folklore and handicrafts, should not be overlooked. Comprehensive conservation and renewal measures are essential to foster economic development and social advancement in traditional villages.

Aesthetic construction, cultural narrative, and sustainable design are key strategies propelling the renewal of public spaces. He et al. (2024) [7]emphasize the role of aesthetics in shaping community identity, while Wang et al. (2023) [8]propose a protection mechanism based on cultural narratives. Additionally, Ou & Xiao(2020) [9]offer innovative design strategies from the perspective of sustainable design.

Studies specific to traditional villages in Yunnan Province are also abundant. Yi & Zhenyu (2021) [10]investigated the spatial scenic area construction of Keyi Village in Yunnan, highlighting the positive cycle between cultural heritage and tourism development. Their research points out that with the growth of the tourism industry, the cultural heritage of traditional villages has been better protected and passed down, leading to an increase in the economic income of the villagers. Siyu et al. (2022) [11]found that traditional villages in Yunnan Province have a high level of protection and utilization in aspects such as history, culture, society, human settlements, and the economy.

However, there is still room for improvement in the revitalization and utilization of these assets.

Briefly, existing research often centers on general traditional village conservation, yet lacks focus on public space renewal in Yunnan's villages. This study addresses this gap, offering strategies to revitalize these spaces and improve residents' quality of life, thereby supporting cultural heritage preservation globally. It aligns with national rural revitalization, promoting sustainable development.

3 Current Status of Public Spaces in Traditional Villages of Yunnan Province

3.1 Functional Obsolescence

Public spaces in traditional villages of Yunnan Province exhibit a degree of historical inertia, with established functions that have been shaped over time. However, with the acceleration of social development and population mobility, these public spaces are experiencing a degree of functional obsolescence. For instance, some villages present with public spaces that are overly simplistic in function, have subpar environmental quality, and exhibit uneven spatial distribution (Lu Jie et al., 2023). As shown in (Figure 1), most village roads are stone paths, which, despite their historical and cultural value, are old and uneven. Modern lifestyles make this infrastructure inadequate for villagers' daily needs, leading to a lack of vitality and population loss, with young people leaving to work or live elsewhere, making the streets and areas around houses very quiet.



Fig. 1. Current status of traditional villages in Nano Township, Yuanjiang County, Yunnan Province, China

3.2 Lack of Vitality

Investigations reveal that the public spaces in traditional villages of Yunnan Province are encountering issues due to the impact of modern socio-economic conditions. Initially, there is an evident lack of management, leading to a certain degree of deterioration within these spaces. Additionally, the duration of public space usage is relatively short, creating a disconnect between the daily lives of villagers and the utilization of public spaces[1].

4 Design Strategies for the Renewal of Public Spaces in Traditional Villages of Yunnan Province

The strategies developed for the renewal of public spaces in traditional villages of Yunnan Province encompass multifaceted design considerations, including structural, functional, and material updates, as well as enhancements to visual appeal and aesthetic value.

4.1 Structural Renewal - Reconceptualizing Traditional Public Space Layout and Function

Traditional Public Space Layout and Function The structure of public spaces in traditional villages has evolved through time and various stages of village development. To effectively renew and restructure the design of public spaces, a comprehensive approach is necessary, ranging from overall planning to detailed adjustments, spatial layout to functional settings. The design process must take into account the daily activities and needs of the villagers, optimizing the layout and functions to better suit contemporary living. For example, repurposing main village thoroughfares and activity areas can better serve the daily life and community events of the villagers while maintaining harmony with the overall village aesthetic.

4.2 Functional Renewal - Creating Multifunctional Public Spaces

Most public spaces in traditional villages of Yunnan Province are characterized by a singular function based on the villagers' lives. To meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the villagers, the design can integrate multiple functions into the public spaces. By combining various functions such as leisure, entertainment, and education, these spaces can cater not only to daily needs but also provide a wealth of cultural and spiritual services.

4.3 Material Renewal - Integrating Traditional and Modern Materials

The essence of material renewal lies in the organic combination of traditional building materials with modern ones to meet the demands of modern living while preserving the village's cultural and spiritual identity. For instance, by enhancing the structure of traditional materials, improving their functionality, and innovating their forms, the integration of traditional and modern materials can be achieved. This approach not only continues historical and cultural heritage but also enhances the practicality and durability of buildings, making them more suited to contemporary life.

4.4 Enhancing Visual Appeal and Aesthetic Value

Visual appeal and aesthetic value are crucial in the design of public spaces, especially in Yunnan's traditional villages with rich cultural backgrounds. Improving the visual

attractiveness of public spaces can attract tourists, boost the tourism economy, and strengthen the villagers' pride and sense of belonging.

- **Architectural Style Uniformity:** Maintaining a consistent architectural style throughout the village prevents conflicts between modern and traditional buildings. Using uniform building materials and colors creates a harmonious visual effect.
 - **Landscape Node Design:** Establishing multiple landscape nodes within the village forms visual focal points. Designing distinctive landscape features, such as ancient trees, stone sculptures, and stages, enhances the village's aesthetic value and visual appeal.
 - **Integration of Public Art:** Incorporating public art pieces, such as sculptures and murals, into public spaces elevates the artistic ambiance. These artworks should be integrated with local culture, reflecting the village's history and cultural characteristics.
- Design strategies as shown in (Figure 2).

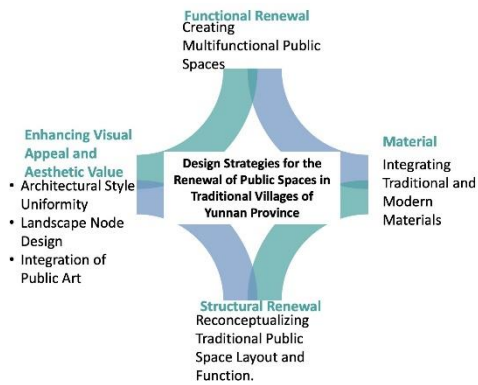


Fig. 2. Design Strategies for the Renewal of Public Spaces in Traditional Villages of Yunnan Province

5 Conclusion

This study delves into the design and renewal strategies for the public spaces of traditional villages in Yunnan Province, addressing the challenges posed by urbanization and fostering the preservation of cultural heritage alongside rural revitalization. The research identifies functional obsolescence and a lack of vitality as the predominant issues currently confronting these communal areas. By developing a comprehensive assessment framework, this study proposes strategies for structural, functional, and material renewal, as well as for enhancing aesthetic value, all aimed at improving the quality and vibrancy of public spaces.

The study underscores the importance of integrating traditional and modern elements in design renewal, reflecting regional characteristics, and focusing on humanistic care and ecological sustainability. The strategies presented are designed to not only elevate the living standards of residents but also to strengthen community cohesion and cultural heritage transmission. Ultimately, this research provides practical guidance and

theoretical support for the renewal of public spaces in traditional villages in Yunnan Province and other regions across the country, offering significant reference value for the global preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage.

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