

Universitat de València

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CREATING CULTURAL SPACES AS SOCIAL INNOVATION

CASE STUDIES IN THE CITY OF KUNMING (CHINA)

TESIS DOCTORAL

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ABSTRACT

As a prevalent and widely adopted cultural planning method in the post-industrial era, cultural space is increasingly prominent in cultural heritage protection, diverse value space creation, and urban sustainability. By innovative utilization of abandoned urban areas, cultural space aims to stimulate cultural creativity and social innovation, enhancing the resilience and adaptability of both spaces and cities. However, as a specific social innovation practice, the creation of cultural space exhibits distinct trajectories and characteristics between Europe and China. The inherent tension between global sharing and local experiences presents new research potential concerning cultural space and social innovation.

This dissertation investigates the convergence of urban development, cultural studies, and social innovation. By integrating theories of social innovation and the social production of space, it establishes a specific framework for understanding the creation of cultural spaces as a social innovation stream. It offers an in-depth analysis and discussion of China's cultural industry's involvement in creating cultural spaces.

The research is conducted by answering three questions: 1) What innovative solutions and strategies do cultural enterprises implement to promote social innovation in cultural spaces? 2) How do cultural enterprises manage and sustain social innovations within the context of cultural space creation? and 3) What socio-spatial impacts arise from the creation of cultural spaces by enterprises, and how do these outcomes balance economic and social values? The aim is to identify the specific process of cultural space creation and the resulting socio-spatial outcomes through case studies and inductive analysis.

The research findings suggest that while implementing cultural strategic planning, enterprises within the cultural industry can play a vital role as catalysts for urban renewal and drivers of innovative initiatives, contributing to social innovation through adopting interdisciplinary methods to create cultural spaces. Additionally, China's endeavors to develop such spaces present fresh prospects and challenges for social innovation research within this domain. It is crucial to consistently monitor diverse national and regional practices to ensure harmony between theoretical applicability and sample interpretation. It also underscores the significance of reflexive methods in future social innovation studies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

Social sciences, deeply rooted in specific social realities, provide valuable opportunities for critical contemplation, empirical investigation, and nuanced interpretation of observed social phenomena. This scholarly process can be enhanced by composing academic papers that seek answers grounded in subjective experiences.

In 2016, as a Chinese cultural researcher, the author was privileged to participate in the "Eurasian Creaspace Network"¹ international exchange project. This project was jointly organized by Yunnan University and the University of Valencia and received funding from the Asia-Europe Foundation. The primary objective of this initiative was to explore small and medium-sized cultural and creative spaces in Europe and Asia while facilitating exchanges among selected cultural managers, city administrators, and researchers. Its overarching aim was to enhance innovative cultural planning practices through study visits and workshops while strengthening formalized and informal international networks associated with cultural spaces. Engaging with scholars and space managers from Europe and Asia during these exchanges revealed numerous shared perspectives on cultural spaces between these two regions. These included recognizing the significant value of safeguarding cultural heritage for promoting cultural production, prioritizing local development as a core aspect of cultural policy, embracing culture-led urban renewal as a universal model for urban development, and acknowledging that artistic interventions within urban spaces serve as vital mediums/platforms for stimulating innovation.

Simultaneously, an intriguing observation in the post-industrial era is the distinctive nature of cultural space creation in Europe and Asia, particularly evident through the significant contrast between 'the pivotal role of civil society versus the predominant role of commercial organizations.' In Europe, cultural space development primarily rests upon non-profit organizations, artists' groups, or civic associations.

¹ See detailed project information on the website of ASEF: <http://asef.org>

Financial sustenance for these spaces relies on local governments, communities, or private donations. Cultural spaces serve as social mediums that foster social innovation by bridging culture and art with community development. Conversely, China predominantly operates cultural spaces commercially with a focus on self-entrepreneurship. Cultural entrepreneurs (cultural innovation enterprises) leverage their innovative capabilities to offer solutions for urban space transformation and sustainable development. These enterprise-managed cultural spaces provide diverse and enriching venues for cultural consumption while creating public spaces centered around culture and art. This approach effectively promotes both cultural and social innovation while enhancing urban vitality.

The divergence in observations and experiences from diverse professional backgrounds has sparked the author's interest in conducting extensive research on how cultural spaces can act as catalysts for stimulating social innovation. The author considers herself fortunate to have been granted the opportunity to pursue doctoral research at the University of Valencia, making this dissertation an endeavor to address these observations and reflections.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Creating Cultural Spaces as Social Innovation

After Entering the 21st century, cities are confronted with competitive challenges(Lazzeretti 2004) that are prominently reflected in the multi-dimensional orientation of human well-being. This orientation aims to achieve sustainable development across social, economic, cultural, ecological, and other dimensions. It promotes a reevaluation of the role and function of innovation in urban development and stimulates the necessity and potential for broader innovation. Social innovation encourages collective participation and cooperation among the public sector, private organizations, and civil society to expand innovative power sources (Maccallum et al. 2009; Moulaert et al. 2013; Moulaert et al. 2013). It emphasizes utilizing new methods, practices, and processes to address complex social challenges, providing practical solutions to social problems(European Commission 2011). These solutions can better meet social needs than existing ones (Phills Jr et al. 2008; Murray et al. 2010; The

Young Foundation 2012). The functional value of social innovation as a solution to social problems is clearly demonstrated through its relationship with the creation of space. This process integrates the expansion of physical space ('renaissance') with the needs of people, while also reflecting the broader social dynamics involved in urban space development. Consequently, space planning has become an essential practice within social innovation (Christmann et al. 2020).

In recent decades, culture has been widely acknowledged as a pivotal means and driving force for urban revitalization (Hall 2004; Scott 2010; Sacco and Blessi 2009; Go et al. 2014; Sacco et al. 2014). The discourse surrounding cultural regeneration has become integral to city strategies in Asia, Europe, and North America. Culture and creativity foster extensive connectivity by forging links among individuals across diverse regions while bolstering the resilience of territories (Rausell-Köster et al. 2013). Among these approaches, cultural intervention in spatial regeneration is a prominent practice within the realm of cultural revitalization. It facilitates the integration of spatial reproduction with cultural programming in various settings, such as abandoned industrial areas, waterfront spaces, historical communities, and cultural heritage sites (Gibson and Stevenson 2004). These newly acquired cultural spaces embody "novel forms that are typically creativity and innovation based" (Sacco et al. 2008). They serve as knowledge hubs for artistic expression while also functioning as incubators for creative enterprises that explore sharing economy models (Pultrone 2017), along with other modes of expression, to establish connections and forge new relationships. Consequently, they offer solutions for constructing urban spaces capable of generating multi-layered significance and human value (Tremblay and Pilati 2013).

Innovation is crucial in achieving a harmonious integration of multiple values within urban spaces. Culturally-driven spatial regeneration is closely intertwined with the concept of innovation (Sacco 2010). Culture nurtures the constructive utilization of knowledge, values, and skills (Ansell and Gash 2008; Willis et al. 2004), generating human capital and social capital that stimulate creativity and innovative capabilities in space reproduction. In the process of creating cultural spaces, the significance of innovation mainly lies in:

- 1) Facilitating the introduction of transformative elements in policies for the production and use of cultural products and services, by developing cultural assets and related projects, practices, and activities, to turn the space into a

dynamic and attractive shared resource, thereby achieving value satisfaction in various dimensions (Billi and Tricarico 2019).

- 2) Achieving effective coordination between the past and the future, tradition and innovation, to promote heritage protection and innovative utilization, and revitalize urban decline areas(Florida 2003; Landry 2012).
- 3) While improving the spatial image to attract investment and drive economic and employment growth, and promoting the innovation of economic development models, it also pays attention to the negative consequences of increased social division behind economic development, and further focuses on social well-being to promote community identity and social cohesion (Čamprag 2023; Gibson and Stevenson 2004)).

In this regard, creating cultural spaces within an urban sustainability framework can be seen as a socially innovative urban practice that utilizes cultural approaches to create multi-dimensional value.

1.1.2 Social Innovation in the East and West: The Great Tensions Between Global Sharing and Local Experience

Social innovation has its roots in Western countries¹, where knowledge production on this topic is driven by new thinking and practice that addresses Western society's complex and pressing challenges. Over time, this process has evolved from scattered case studies to systematic theoretical construction. While social innovation is gradually becoming a global discourse system, mainstream research and thinking still primarily focus on the social reality of Western countries, considering their political, economic, and social conditions. The role of civil society and the third sector as essential drivers of social innovation is emphasized due to perceived failures of government and market mechanisms. This bottom-up model is also described as "radical (or disruptive) social innovation"(Moulaert et al. 2007; Novy and Hammer 2007; Nicholls et al. 2015; Ayob et al. 2016) in an extreme sense – a targeted approach to challenging existing power relations and structures through novel societal practices.

¹ Based on the author's place of birth and nationality, the terms "Western society" and "Western countries" are used in the dissertation to refer to most countries in Europe and North America. - Author's note

Therefore, in the field of spatial planning, community development, and urban governance, social innovation aims to empower citizens and their communities to address their interests and fulfill their needs effectively (Angelidou and Psaltoglou 2017; Moulaert et al. 2005a). It underscores how individuals can enhance their sociopolitical capabilities and access resources through innovative approaches, fostering collective empowerment and equity as outcomes of reproducing social space. This philosophy of “community-centered” (Pultrone 2017) social innovation has significantly influenced urban development by emphasizing citizen participation in culturally and socially innovative projects. It establishes a systematic way of life that promotes social inclusion and cohesion (Moulaert et al. 2005a; Moulaert et al. 2014).

Meanwhile, in the realm of culture, diverse cultural institutions are considered crucial platforms for citizens' daily engagement in cultural, social, and democratic activities. Public policies and practices about culture underscore the significance of inclusive civic participation, which entails transforming conventional audiences and users into active participants. This approach implements “cultural equality, interculturality, democratization, and active citizenship through involvement in cultural and artistic endeavors” (ENCC¹). When faced with the practical challenge of substantial reductions in public funding allocated to cultural and artistic domains, fostering a culturally participatory society necessitates collaborative engagement from other societal actors while promoting the socialization of culture and art through stimulating broader innovation (Turrini et al. 2016).

Hence, cultural spaces have emerged as pivotal arenas in numerous Western (primarily European) nations to explore the potential of culture and art in driving social innovation through active citizenship. The inclusivity and diversity of participation formats create opportunities for addressing diverse motivations and interests through innovative approaches. By promoting cultural practices and ensuring their positive impact and effectiveness, specific cultural spaces can foster multiple social values for participants and their communities, potentially facilitating significant societal transformations (Choi and Majumdar 2015; Eriksson et al. 2018).

On the other side of the globe, China has emerged as the world's second-largest economy since implementing its reform and opening-up policy in 1978. The country has achieved remarkable economic growth and social stability through effective

¹ See the website of ENCC: <https://encc.eu/>

governance. Reform and opening up is a pivotal innovative practice in China's socio-economic development. With further deepening of economic reforms and continuous transformation, marketization has provided abundant opportunities for the nation to undertake a series of innovations within its socialist system. It facilitates state-led innovation, addresses institutional constraints, and profoundly influences societal development and urban landscapes.

Firstly, owing to stringent ideological control imposed by the state authorities in China, severe constraints exist on the developmental scope of value-based advocacy within its third sector, thus requiring additional time to promote civil society advancement. Concurrently, businesses and enterprises enjoy considerable flexibility as they benefit from consistent leniency provided by state institutions and governmental bodies (see for example: The State Commission for Economics and Trade 2000; The State Council 2012, 2015a). This leniency is evident through the progressive relaxation of enterprise registration requirements and an increasingly diverse range of supportive policies and incentives. The introduction of an innovation-driven development strategy, alongside the vigorous promotion of public innovation and “mass entrepreneurship,” (see The State Council 2015b, 2015c) has further highlighted market forces' pivotal role in national-level resource allocation decisions. Ongoing reforms continuously unlock more opportunities for market players while fostering entrepreneurial practices, employment generation, and service-oriented initiatives that stimulate social innovation across the country.

Secondly, during the initial stages of reform and opening up, corporate participation in the market played a crucial role in providing essential capital to alleviate resource scarcity within the country (Wu 2001, 2002). Marketization emerged as a pivotal approach to address significant social issues such as pensions, medical insurance, and reemployment. Against the backdrop of China's remarkable achievements in social and economic development and its renewed focus on "the third income distribution" and "common prosperity" in this new era, the evolving social landscape presents fresh demands for enterprises' societal role - transforming them into critical agents for solving social problems. This fundamental shift has led to a gradual enhancement of the "sociality of enterprises as market subjects," replacing traditional notions of "corporate social responsibility" with an emphasis on "corporate social innovation." Consequently, under the wave of state-led initiatives promoting social innovation, enterprises emerge as pivotal forces driving societal progress. Over the past

decade, localized instances of social innovation have predominantly taken shape within commercial companies and have continued to evolve alongside movements like "B Corp" and "Social Value Investment Enterprise."

Thirdly, within the current socialist system and political structure of one-party rule in China, cultural enterprises bear social responsibilities regulated by the state's unified power system. The ruling party directly leads and supervises enterprises (primarily state-owned cultural enterprises) regarding values dissemination and meeting cultural demands by establishing party organizations within these enterprises, thereby actively driving social innovation in both the cultural and commercial domains. On the other hand, as the cultural industry emerges as a pillar of the national economy, the state further stipulates and strengthens its fundamental principle of prioritizing social effects within this industry from a policy perspective. Consequently, the cultural industry assumes greater social responsibilities and actively participates in various aspects of national social development.

Institutional innovation focused on reform and opening up has profoundly influenced urban development. The consistent advancement of market transformation has given rise to what is referred to as the "entrepreneurship of local governments after reform", establishing an urban governance model characterized by robust leadership from local authorities and enduring collaboration between the public and private sectors since the 1990s (See for example, Cao and Shi 2009; Zhang 2014; Fang and Yang 2024). Urban renewal and spatial planning innovations predominantly rely on institutional, policy-oriented, and privately driven advancements at multiple levels while emphasizing the crucial role played by private sector ingenuity. Consequently, enterprises are expected to integrate social problem-solving with sustainable development by establishing local spaces through enduring and substantial collaboration with the public sector. This robust public-private cooperation foundation allows them to identify innovative solutions for urban challenges.

Like many Western countries, China's urbanization has entered a phase of cultural rejuvenation since the beginning of the 21st century. The culture-driven urban renaissance has gradually replaced the model characterized by large-scale "demolition and construction" and actual estate-led development. The rapid growth of the cultural industry has fundamentally facilitated significant transformations in cultural production, emerging as an essential market-oriented approach for revitalizing urban spaces, enhancing urban resilience, and promoting urban marketing. Cultural enterprises and

other commercial organizations play a pivotal role as catalysts in spatial renewal by acquiring leasing and management rights over underutilized urban spaces through various means, such as government bidding and enterprise procurement. Building upon this foundation, they proactively leverage their innovative capabilities to undertake adaptive transformations and repurpose physical spaces for environmental renewal in older areas. Simultaneously, these entities engage in numerous cultural commercial activities and public events that contribute to functional revitalization while fostering innovation networks and influential connections. It stimulates broader efforts toward cultural innovation, effectively promoting the city's vibrancy.

In European countries and China, creating cultural space is considered a social innovation practice that utilizes cultural methods to foster the creation of multi-value spaces and promote sustainable urban development. However, while the Western experience can be described as an endeavor to stimulate social innovation potential beyond government and market sectors by promoting the fusion of culture, art, and civic participation, China's approach exhibits a localized characteristic where social innovation is effectively nurtured and stimulated through space regeneration combined with business activities. As Western countries increasingly explore creative spatial solutions for urban and cultural challenges through private or social initiatives, China is progressively harnessing the potential of "seeking public welfare through cultural commerce" within a context characterized by limited civic awareness and an underdeveloped civil society. This significant tension between global sharing and local experiences presents new opportunities and avenues for further research on social innovation utilizing cultural spaces as mediums.

1.1.3 Social Innovation Research: Knowledge Communication Between Theory and Practice

The core characteristics of social innovation are highly contextual and path-dependent (Westley et al. 2010; Brandsen et al. 2016), which implies that the generation and development of social innovation are closely intertwined with location, space, and societal factors (Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez 2012). Different socio-political conditions such as social needs, values, and cultural adaptability influence the acceptance and evaluation of innovations (Kluvankova et al. 2021). The political-

administrative system plays a pivotal role in responding to social innovation through diverse approaches. Consequently, the "broad" societal benefits and novelty of social value generated by social innovation are contingent upon specific norms and cultural backgrounds (Nicholls et al. 2016). Solutions tailored for a particular region may not be universally applicable due to their reliance on current societal conditions and operational environment. Although they may still be considered "novel" (Grimm et al. 2013), these innovations fundamentally work "in the here and now, and in the place they are operating." (Brandsen et al. 2016)

Objectively, there still needs to be a universally recognized and systematic theory on social innovation in the global social sciences. The current mainstream knowledge production on social innovation is primarily based on empirical experiences from developed countries in Europe and the United States, with limited inclusion of typical cases related to social innovation in South America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and other regions. The research design, thinking logic, and text writing predominantly reflect a relatively mature "Western perspective." Consequently, research on social innovation lacks the "perspective" from Asian countries and the "empirical materials" from different political and socio-economic systems. This gap has led to a certain degree of "decoupling" between Western theories and Eastern practices. In order to address this issue within Western social science research on social innovation, it is necessary to supplement new cases and knowledge that provide valuable and diversified experiences for furthering research in this field. This approach will align with the essential characteristics of the textual representation of social innovation and path dependence while avoiding any tendencies towards "Western centralism" in knowledge production.

Meanwhile, the strict conception of humanities and social sciences research emerged in the Western world during the 19th century. While China began translating and introducing specific Western research achievements in the latter half of that century, it was only after the initiation of reform and opening up policies in 1978 that a comprehensive introduction to Western disciplines, theories, and systems within humanities and social sciences took place on a large scale. In other words, Chinese humanities and social sciences research has predominantly relied on Western theories to study phenomena specific to China. Despite some progress in theoretical transformation, an independent humanities and social sciences system has yet to be established. In the Chinese context, even social innovation research originating from the West can be considered an "imported product." Consequently, social innovation

research in China faces intellectual risks - not only must it avoid falling into a "West-centric" approach as mentioned earlier, but it also refrains from excessively emphasizing empirical experiences' particularity, which could lead China into becoming an "isolated island" within this field (Nee 2019).

The "risk" associated with the "universalization" (Bates and Glennerster 2017) of social innovation presents an opportunity for this Chinese study, which aims to integrate globally applicable knowledge of social innovation with localized experiences. By leveraging local institutional knowledge and objective data to address inquiries, it facilitates international exchange and sharing of theories, prevention strategies, and practical experiences in social innovation across diverse social and cultural contexts. This endeavor advances urban and cultural development by fostering knowledge communication between textual resources and real-world practices.

1.2 HYPOTHESIS, OBJECTIVE, AND QUESTIONS OF RESEARCH

1.2.1 Research Hypothesis

In the contemporary context of urban development, cultural industries have emerged as vital players in the transformation of cities, not merely as aesthetic or entertainment entities but as catalysts for socio-economic and environmental change. Cultural enterprises—defined as those involved in the production and dissemination of cultural goods, services, and creative content—are pivotal to urban renewal and economic growth by harnessing creative production—ranging from art and design to media and performance—as vehicles to innovate, respond to, and alleviate complex urban issues.

Therefore, the research hypothesis proposed in this dissertation is: Enterprises in the cultural industries sector significantly contribute to urban renewal and economic growth through social innovation by leveraging cultural and creative production. This process enhances urban environments, fosters social cohesion, and creates new market opportunities, with measurable impacts on physical, social, and economic development.

This hypothesis can be specified by the following three aspects in order to benefit the clarification of research objective and questions, as well as the accomplishment of research design.

- 1) **Financial Contribution:** Enterprises employing innovative financing models (e.g., public-private partnerships) and heritage management practices positively impact urban restoration and landscape enhancement.

One key dimension of the role that cultural industries play in urban renewal is their ability to generate financial resources and attract investment. Enterprises within this sector frequently deploy innovative financing models that combine public and private investment to fund large-scale urban restoration projects. These models, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs), enable cities to pool resources, distribute financial risks, and capitalize on the potential for cultural ventures to drive sustainable development.

Heritage management, another key element, involves the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic urban structures, making these buildings a focal point for cultural enterprises to generate economic returns while maintaining historical integrity. The strategic management of cultural heritage not only provides a direct financial return but also contributes to landscape enhancement by integrating historical elements into modern urban settings. The preservation and creative reuse of heritage sites—whether through museums, galleries, cultural centers, or even performance spaces—inject life into urban landscapes, transforming them into vibrant cultural landmarks that attract tourism, local investment, and international attention.

- 2) **Cultural Vitality:** By integrating cultural narratives and urban symbols into their services, cultural enterprises enhance social cohesion, cultural incentives, and residents' quality of life in regenerated urban spaces.

Beyond financial impacts, cultural enterprises have a profound effect on the social dimension of urban renewal, particularly in terms of enhancing cultural vitality. Cultural enterprises serve as vehicles for integrating cultural narratives and local urban symbols into the fabric of regenerated neighborhoods. This process of cultural integration fosters a sense of place and identity, enhancing social cohesion among diverse community members.

Through the promotion of local traditions, arts, and history, cultural enterprises not only preserve but also revitalize the unique characteristics of urban spaces, turning them into living symbols of collective memory and community pride. Such initiatives encourage residents to engage more deeply with their surroundings, leading to higher

levels of participation in public life and greater support for urban renewal efforts. Moreover, these enterprises create cultural incentives that improve residents' quality of life by offering access to cultural experiences—such as art exhibitions, performances, festivals, and interactive cultural events—that enrich the urban experience and increase social well-being.

- 3) **Network Building:** Enterprises engaging in cultural and artistic collaborations establish new social and cultural networks, fostering knowledge exchange and innovative solutions for societal challenges.

Cultural enterprises also serve as critical hubs for the formation of new social and cultural networks. By engaging in artistic collaborations and creative partnerships—whether with other cultural organizations, local businesses, or even community-based groups—these enterprises facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources across different sectors. This network-building aspect of cultural production is particularly significant for addressing complex urban challenges such as inequality, access to education, or the environmental sustainability of cities.

These collaborative networks extend beyond the boundaries of the cultural industries themselves and include a diverse range of actors, from educational institutions to municipal governments and social organizations. Through these networks, cultural enterprises contribute to the development of innovative solutions to societal challenges, whether by fostering new models of inclusive community engagement, advancing environmental sustainability practices, or promoting social justice initiatives. In this regard, the cultural sector does not merely produce art or cultural goods but acts as a key player in broader societal transformation.

Moreover, these collaborative efforts often result in cross-disciplinary innovation, bringing together expertise from fields such as urban planning, technology, sociology, and environmental sciences to address the multi-dimensional problems facing cities today. The social networks that cultural enterprises establish can thus be seen as engines of urban innovation, where creative solutions are developed through interdisciplinary cooperation and collective action.

In general, the overarching hypothesis and its specific sub-hypotheses seek to test the role of cultural enterprises in driving urban transformation through innovation, ultimately evaluating their ability to align economic objectives with societal value creation.

1.2.2 Research Objective

The functional value of social innovation in urban development is demonstrated through its integration with the construction of urban spaces. Specifically, this integration is achieved by leveraging spatial planning and reproduction to realize the combination of spatial regeneration and human needs. This process aims to create urban spaces that align with sustainable development goals and achieve a balance and coordination of multiple values.

From a functional perspective on social innovation (i.e., social innovation as a creative solution to social problems), the primary research objective of this study is to explore the role of cultural enterprises in fostering social innovation within urban development, particularly through the creation and revitalization of cultural spaces in the context of Chinese urban renewal.

This objective is pursued by:

- 1) Investigating Enterprise-Driven Social Innovation: Analyzing how enterprises in the cultural industries sector leverage innovative practices to address urban challenges, focusing on spatial regeneration aligned with sustainable development goals.
- 2) Examining the Development and Management of Cultural Spaces: Studying how cultural enterprises utilize product, service, business model, and organizational innovations to create cultural spaces that integrate cultural production, consumption, and community interaction.
- 3) Assessing Socio-Spatial Outcomes: Evaluating the impacts of cultural space creation on urban communities, including enhancing social cohesion, fostering cultural vitality, and balancing economic and social values.
- 4) Identifying Key Characteristics and Mechanisms: Unveiling the inherent advantages, risks, and mechanisms of enterprise-led cultural renewal practices, with an emphasis on their role as mediators in urban innovation networks.

This research seeks to inform academic scholarship and policy-making by providing insights into the dynamic interplay between cultural entrepreneurship, urban regeneration, and social innovation.

1.2.3 Questions of Research

In order to systematically conduct the research and achieve the objectives, this dissertation formulates the overarching research question: How do cultural enterprises facilitate social innovation in the creation of cultural spaces? It addresses the following three sub-questions hierarchically and progressively to address this inquiry effectively.

1) What innovative solutions and strategies do cultural enterprises implement to promote social innovation in cultural spaces?

This question emphasizes identifying and analyzing creative approaches that cultural enterprises adopt to foster urban revitalization. It includes evaluating how these innovative solutions align with broader societal goals such as sustainability and spatial regeneration while leveraging organizational visions and resources to create vibrant, adaptive cultural spaces.

2) How do cultural enterprises manage and sustain social innovations within the context of cultural space creation?

This question highlights the management processes and strategies cultural enterprises employ to nurture social innovation. It focuses on stakeholder engagement, collaborative networks, knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and organizational culture in driving and scaling innovation efforts to achieve specific spatial and societal objectives.

3) What socio-spatial impacts arise from the creation of cultural spaces by enterprises, and how do these outcomes balance economic and social values?

This question evaluates the tangible and intangible outcomes of cultural space creation, such as social cohesion, cultural vitality, and economic value. It explores how these spaces address urban challenges, support community development, and align with sustainable development objectives, offering a framework for balancing diverse stakeholder interests.

1.3 METHODOLOGY: POSITIVISM, QUALITATIVE, AND REFLEXIVITY

1.3.1 Research Approach

Social science systematically analyzes and comprehends social phenomena (social facts) from a specific perspective, employing rigorous methods and techniques to address theoretical and practical issues. Methodology plays a crucial role in social science research. It reflects researchers' fundamental position, assumptions, and starting points and elucidates the logical process employed for theory generation and development, ultimately determining the framework within which corresponding theoretical investigations occur (Remenyi et al. 1998).

However, an effective social science research endeavor is influenced by methodology, ontology, and epistemology as they shape our perception and understanding of social phenomena, guiding the construction and interpretation of our explorations (Smy 2018). In social science, society is acknowledged to be subject to multiple constructions. On the one hand, this prompts researchers to depart from the perspective of natural sciences by actively engaging with the subject matter to comprehend observed phenomena comprehensively (Rehman and Alharthi 2016). On the other hand, it necessitates situating the object of observation within a specific context that emphasizes its structural (spatial) and historical dimensions.

The interplay between philosophical-theoretical thinking and empirical-practical work is paramount in this context, as social facts are not static entities; they are shaped not only by specific societal environments but also through evolving dynamics among various social relationships.

First, a systematic approach is essential for comprehending the dynamic nature of lived social realities and grasping the critical dimensions of social problems (Jackson et al. 2007). Empirical research aims to understand objective facts by uncovering the internal components of objective phenomena, summarizing their essence and operational principles while striving to transcend value judgments and provide accurate and practical knowledge. Social innovation represents a synthesis of knowledge derived from novel social practices in response to pressing challenges rather than being solely influenced by academic discourse (The Young Foundation 2012). Its research

necessitates an understanding of contextual factors underlying the process of social innovation (Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Mair and Martí 2006; Moulaert and Nussbaumer 2005; Friedman and Miles 2002) as well as their relationship with the market (Austin et al. 2012; Dawson and Daniel 2010a; Howaldt and Schwarz 2010; Pol and Ville 2009a). Therefore, empirical research on social innovation aligns with its practical and empirical characteristics. The data and information utilized in this paper are directly obtained by researchers from cultural spaces serving as case studies supplemented by firsthand experiences and innovative practices. Theoretical hypotheses are tested to draw relevant research conclusions regarding how cultural enterprises promote social innovation through space construction. It ensures that the research findings correspond with the macro-social background and prevailing conditions surrounding the current study objects while fostering "a better interaction between philosophical-theoretical ideas and empirical-practical sources of inspiration." (Smy 2018)

Second, qualitative and quantitative research are the two primary methodologies employed in social science. In contrast to quantitative analysis, qualitative research traditionally aims for "a profound comprehension of specific phenomena" (Domholdt 1993). It is exploratory and seeks to elucidate how and why a social phenomenon or process operates within a particular context, enabling us to grasp the significance of our social world (Polkinghorne 2005a). As previously mentioned, due to its amalgamation of culture and business practices in China differing significantly from Western countries' spatial experiences, adopting a qualitative research approach would be more conducive to providing an extensive and comprehensive depiction of the underlying cultural dynamics, relationships, and human emotions associated with this phenomenon. This study situates itself within diverse political, social, and cultural contexts encompassing researchers, participants, and readers alike, thereby facilitating exploration, description, and understanding that yield rich insights into human behavior – ultimately fulfilling the purposeful pursuit inherent in social science research (Golafshani 2015; Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

Third, positivism underscores the objectivity of social phenomena and social facts and the imperative for researchers to approach knowledge interpretation objectively. However, researchers inevitably possess their positionality within society, which fundamentally hinders eliminating subjectivity. This subjectivity influences how researchers scientifically interpret collected data and information from diverse perspectives (Jackson et al. 2007). Therefore, in qualitative research, it is essential not

only to acquire a comprehensive understanding of human behavior, attitudes, and experiences but also to acknowledge the impact of these experiences on knowledge production" (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

The production of knowledge on social innovation arises from interdisciplinary research conducted within its specific application context. Given the intricate nature of social innovation texts and themes, the diverse and heterogeneous participation of stakeholders, and the utilization of various methodological approaches in practicing social innovation (European Commission 2013), reflexivity becomes imperative in knowledge production. Reflexivity highlights the complex interplay between language, society, politics, theory, and other elements in generating knowledge. It also underscores the relationship between knowledge production and knowledge producers since empirical materials are constructed, interpreted, and articulated within these processes and relationships (Calás and Smircich 1992). Emphasizing reflexivity in social sciences, research further promotes a broader pursuit of different forms of knowledge by encouraging researchers to transcend positivist demands for objectivity while embracing inclusivity and humility towards diverse forms of knowledge while respecting diversity and differences (Ma 2016).

This study aims to apply social innovation theories and knowledge derived from Western sources to examine and analyze the Chinese experience, with a particular emphasis on gaining insights into the process of knowledge generation. This reflexive nature is evident through two main aspects discussed in this dissertation:

- 1) While Western theories provide opportunities for understanding Chinese empirical facts, it is essential to acknowledge that social innovation in China is influenced and constrained by factors such as sociopolitical conditions, models of social organization, and institutions. The study of social innovation in China should be firmly rooted in the existing community and living scope, considering its historical context and formation conditions. Furthermore, critical comparison and application of relevant theories through observation, refinement, and summarization of facts and experiences are necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of social innovation within the Chinese context.
- 2) Recognizing the significant influence of the researcher's values, beliefs, cultural background, and life experiences on decision-making in research methods, interview selection and data collection, theoretical application, and

phenomenon interpretation is crucial. The motivation behind this study stems from the author's subjective experience conducting cultural research in China and Europe. Its objective is to comprehend and elucidate the contradictory efforts in establishing a cultural space for social innovation in both regions. It requires the author to focus on continuous internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of their positionality, as (Mitchell et al. 2018) emphasized, facilitating effective theoretical discourse and practical cross-referencing between Chinese social innovation research and Western countries.

1.3.2 Methodology

The selection of research strategy in social science research is contingent upon both the specific research object and the specific research questions, which can be classified as "who," "what," "where," "when," and "how" (Yin 1989). This study constitutes an empirical investigation into social innovation. As previously mentioned, an intrinsic connection exists between knowledge production in social innovation and pursuing societal objectives within particular contexts. The inherent nature of social innovation implies that it cannot be comprehended objectively (Moulaert et al. 2013). Therefore, when examining social innovation, special attention should be devoted to addressing the questions of "what," "how," and "who" while also considering the researchers' position during the research process.

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on urban cultural space as the research subject, to explore proposed research hypotheses and relevant theories concerning social innovation by addressing how spatial creation by cultural enterprises promotes social innovation. Case studies and inductive analysis are considered effective research strategies: firstly, case studies serve as valuable methods for addressing the "how" question, enabling comprehensive and detailed investigations into cultural space construction as a practice of social innovation within the context of urban development; secondly, inductive research facilitates synthesizing findings from empirical data derived from cases (social spaces generated by enterprises through social innovation) and aids in constructing models of social innovation regarding cultural space creation. These approaches contribute to hypothesis testing and theory verification. The study's conclusion allows room for further reflective thinking based

on empirical experiences, which is particularly significant for advancing social innovation research.

- **Data Collection**

The research on social innovation in cultural space faces challenges in data collection. Firstly, social innovation requires a unified and widely recognized statistical index system as a practical and empirical concept. Secondly, although this study focuses on the cultural space defined as the spatial form regenerated through cultural intervention in urban waste space, there are significant variations in historical origin, physical form, and renewal process among different cultural spaces due to diverse primary conditions. Consequently, no established data is available regarding the social innovation of these cultural spaces. Thirdly, existing research primarily emphasizes the role of civil society and the third sector in cultural renewal and social innovation. However, further investigation into enterprise-driven cultural space and social innovation is still needed.

In order to address the limitations of data collection, this study employs the following methodologies to systematically gather observations and obtain firsthand knowledge, generating original insights into the research problem.

- *Semi-structured interview*

Interviews are essential in primary data collection in qualitative research, and semi-structured interviews offer several advantages. They enable researchers to concentrate on specific areas of interest by employing a predetermined set of essential questions. This approach ensures alignment between the research topic and relevant theoretical frameworks, effectively addressing the research problem. Moreover, semi-structured interviews empower interviewees to provide open-ended or innovative insights. This flexibility fosters dialogue between interviewers and interviewees, facilitating the exploration of contradictory concepts, theories, hypotheses, and previously overlooked yet significant information (Gill et al. 2008). Consequently, researchers can delve deeper into these findings or respond accordingly.

This research conducts semi-structured interviews with primary decision-makers in the sample space, responsible companies, key managers, and significant participants and stakeholders to comprehensively comprehend the historical context of the space itself and the associated enterprise. Moreover, these interviews investigate entrepreneurial innovation processes, innovative networks established within these spaces, resultant socio-spatial outcomes, and their corresponding societal influences.

- *Archived records and documentation*

Archival records and documents serve as visual representations depicting the historical trajectory and advancements of enterprise and space development while also serving as vital data sources for semi-structured interviews in case studies. The materials utilized in this study include policy documents and urban planning records obtained from local governments, archival resources providing historical context, developmental process information, spatial arrangement details, and construction of the target area, along with associated enterprises sourced from local libraries, archives, and sample spaces. Additionally, pertinent statistical data concerning cultural settings and activities within each space are crucial for assessing and evaluating the enhancement of cultural space for urban community vitality.

- *Participatory observation*

Observation is a highly effective method for collecting qualitative data in analysis. Among these methods, participatory observation enhances the external validity of research and facilitates researchers' comprehensive understanding of the research subject from an insider's perspective. Given that the author's research institution in China has established long-term and extensive cooperation and exchange relationships with various cultural spaces in Kunming (including the three selected cases), it presents a valuable opportunity for conducting prolonged participatory observation within these cultural spaces. The participatory observation involves:

- a Active participation in seminars on sustainable development of spaces.
- b Engagement in diverse cultural and artistic activities hosted by these spaces.
- c Informal conversations with relevant staff regarding spatial innovation.

Participatory observation provides intuitive and abundant empirical materials for this study while validating the data collected through semi-structured interviews.

- *Questionnaire survey*

A questionnaire survey is a written method of data collection that involves posing questions and gathering relevant information about specific research topics through the completion and responses of participants. The data obtained from questionnaire surveys possesses the advantages of objectivity and uniformity. Respondents often provide more realistic information, while standardized questionnaires facilitate measurement and data processing during the analysis stage. Given that this study explores the social impacts and value creation of cultural spaces, conducting a questionnaire survey among visitors to cultural spaces is beneficial for fully understanding the influence of cultural

spaces on an individual's perception and experience, which contributes to evaluating the correlation between space, community, and urban development.

- **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is crucial for qualitative social science research, as it empowers researchers to extract meaningful insights from vast amounts of unstructured data, thereby uncovering the underlying causes, patterns, and essence behind social phenomena. Different types of data require distinct analytical techniques. In this qualitative study, the non-numerical data collected through archives, interviews, and observations on cultural spatial innovation cannot be subjected to quantitative analysis and processing. Consequently, case studies and inductive methods are employed as the primary analytical approaches for these qualitative data. Furthermore, concerning the related data on cultural facilities and participation gathered, appropriate descriptive analysis is utilized as a supplementary tool to present spatial outcomes of community cultural vitality. Lastly, questionnaires are quantitatively analyzed for specific projects to evaluate the social impact generated by cultural spaces.

- *A multi-site case study*

As a research approach, the case study method encompasses exploring individuals, groups, or phenomena. Particularly in analytic generalization, this method is a theoretical exposition where researchers employ cases as evidence to refine, refute, support, or elaborate on generalized concepts, models, or theories (Yin 1989). The multi-case study method (Thomas 2011; Gustafsson 2017) is frequently employed to validate research hypotheses by collecting observational materials and research data from multiple cases in order to enhance the reliability and persuasiveness of research findings. This study explicitly focuses on cultural spaces within Kunming City as the investigated cases; similarities and differences are explored and discussed after each case. Through relevant empirical experiences, the interplay between culture and social innovation in space creation is examined. The diverse spatial outcomes generated by multiple cases provide an opportunity for elucidating the relationship between empirical results and research hypotheses while ensuring logical coherence and rigor to improve external validity.

- *Inductive analysis*

The inductive analysis method is widely employed in qualitative research, particularly case studies, as it requires synthesizing, analyzing, and describing collected data to unveil meaningful insights within specific cases (Rehman and Alharthi 2016;

Strauss and Corbin 2008). By condensing extensive texts into concise summaries or codes, induction aids in establishing the relationship between research objectives, employed methods, and findings derived from original data. It enables the development of models or theories based on experiential evidence reflected in textual or empirical sources. In this study, interviews were conducted alongside other data collection methods. Each interviewee was individually processed, and their responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. It facilitated a comprehensive exploration of critical dimensions of cultural space social innovation while identifying spatial models that foster social innovation within enterprises. Moreover, the specific process of creating cultural spaces and their socio-spatial outcomes can be holistically identified by comprehensively collecting and summarizing data on cultural facilities, cultural participation, perception, and satisfaction with the spaces.

1.4 MAIN STRUCTURE

This dissertation is structured into seven chapters that unfold according to the order and logical structure of the research.

In Chapter II, a comprehensive review is conducted on social innovation and corporate social innovation within sociology. Based on this foundation, particular attention is given to exploring the intersection between urban development, cultural studies, and social innovation. A detailed review is provided regarding the existing research on the connection between spatial production, urban cultural strategic planning, and social innovation, followed by a critical conclusion that summarizes the limitations and highlights the opportunities for future studies.

Chapter III provides a systematic introduction to the history, ideology, and policies of urban development in China. It comprehensively analyzes vital influencing factors that shape urban development, such as socio-economic systems and cultural policies. Then, it presents an overview of the current status of social innovation in China and elucidates the fundamental logic and general mechanisms underlying the production of urban cultural spaces. Consequently, it furnishes detailed information essential for accurately comprehending the social context within which this research is situated.

Chapter IV focuses on the construction of a theoretical framework. Following an in-depth discussion of the concept, essence, and characteristics of cultural space and its

creation and its relationship with social innovation, it discusses creating cultural space as a social innovation stream in its novelty, practicality, and intermediation dimensions. Then, by integrating the theory of social innovation and the social production of space, the dissertation establishes a framework for cultural space creation from both a process-oriented perspective of social innovation and the socio-spatial perspective of spatial production, with specific research methods included.

Chapter V presents a multi-case study that offers in-depth discussions of three cultural spaces in Kunming City. Through exploring five key subjects (space objective, practice, process, value creation, and outcomes), this chapter provides a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the causes, consequences, and specific processes involved in creating each cultural space. Furthermore, it offers detailed explanations of research findings and summarizes and discusses the socio-spatial outcomes of each case.

Chapter VI is dedicated to reflexive thinking of the research process and findings. It discusses both the advantages and negative impacts of cultural industry innovation on urban regeneration and its influencing factors and reexamines corporate social innovation from the value creation perspective. Then, by illustrating the contextuality of social innovation in China and its “opportunistic” interpretation of Western theories, it tries to shed light on the challenge of social innovation studies and its theoretical applicability. A discussion of research enlightenment and limitations is also conducted in this sector as a part of reflexivity.

Chapter VII is the dissertation's conclusion, concisely summarizing the research findings and principal conclusions. It also responds to the preface from the beginning, offering an overall reflection on the study's origins.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past two decades, there has been a significant surge in academic interest in the field of social innovation(Christensen et al. 2018; Phillips et al. 2015; Shaw and Carter 2007). However, existing literature and practices have predominantly focused on economic and social development (Parra and Mouleart 2010). Concurrently, social innovation has gained prominence in international policy discussions (Ayob et al. 2016). US President Obama established the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation at the White House in 2009. The European Horizon Project for 2020 has also brought social innovation to the forefront of policy agendas(Massey and Johnston-Miller 2016), with projects like SI-DRIVE, SIMPACT, and TRANSIT aiming to deepen our understanding of theoretical issues related to social innovation. Research topics encompass various aspects, including the economic foundation of social innovation, incubation processes, and their impact on societal change¹. Furthermore, renowned universities have established specialized research institutions for social innovation, such as Stanford University, Cambridge University, and Oxford University. The "Stanford Social Innovation Review" and "Harvard Business Review" have also published scholarly articles on this subject matter. Social innovation is globally recognized for creating societal order, enriching social structures, and fostering integration and assimilation processes (Baker and Mehmood 2015). It is gaining influence within academic circles (Moulaert et al. 2013) and becoming an increasingly popular topic for empirical research (Ayob et al. 2016; Howaldt Jügen and Schwarz Michael 2010; Pelka and Terstriep 2016; Moulaert et al. 2017).

2.1 SOCIAL INNOVATION: AS A DIVERSE CONCEPT

Although social innovation has been a prominent subject in the field of social science research for an extended period, it is widely acknowledged that the concept of

¹ See e.g. SI-DRIVE (www.si-drive.eu), SIMPACT (<http://www.simpact-project.eu/>), TRANSIT (<http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/>) and CrESSI (<http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/cressi>).

social innovation remains in a state of ambiguity (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017; Howaldt and Schwarz 2014; Benneworth and Ratinho 2014; Nicholls et al. 2015; Grimm et al. 2013; Massey and Johnston-Miller 2016).

On the one hand, this "ambiguity" is evident in the "weakly conceptualized" nature of social innovation (Voorberg et al. 2015; Goldenberg et al. 2009; Mulgan 2006). The dispersion and complexity surrounding social innovation challenge the development of generalizable knowledge that can be analyzed systematically (van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016). Due to the need for more systematic elaboration on social innovation (Mulgan et al. 2007), insufficient continuous and systematic analysis of its theories, characteristics, and impacts exist. Additionally, there needs to be more clarity regarding the conditions, scope, and level of social innovation (Domanski et al. 2019; Ardill and Lemes de Oliveira 2018). Consequently, the concept of social innovation lacks accuracy, while knowledge about it remains fragmented (Cajaiba-Santana 2014a; Dawson and Daniel 2010a; van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016a; Pol and Ville 2009b).

On the contrary, due to the multidisciplinary nature of social innovation, different disciplines have varying definitions and emphasize different aspects. Consequently, reaching a consensus on the definition of social innovation becomes challenging (Mulgan et al. 2007; Rüede and Lurtz 2012; The Young Foundation 2012; Moulaert, MacCallum, et al. 2013; Cunha et al. 2015). Simultaneously, social scientists' application of social innovation concepts exhibits a range of characteristics (Dawson and Daniel 2010a; Moulaert et al. 2005a; Pol and Ville 2009b), particularly within policy domains where social innovation demonstrates high adaptability to various situations while remaining closely linked to empirical analysis (European Commission 2013; TEPSIE 2014).

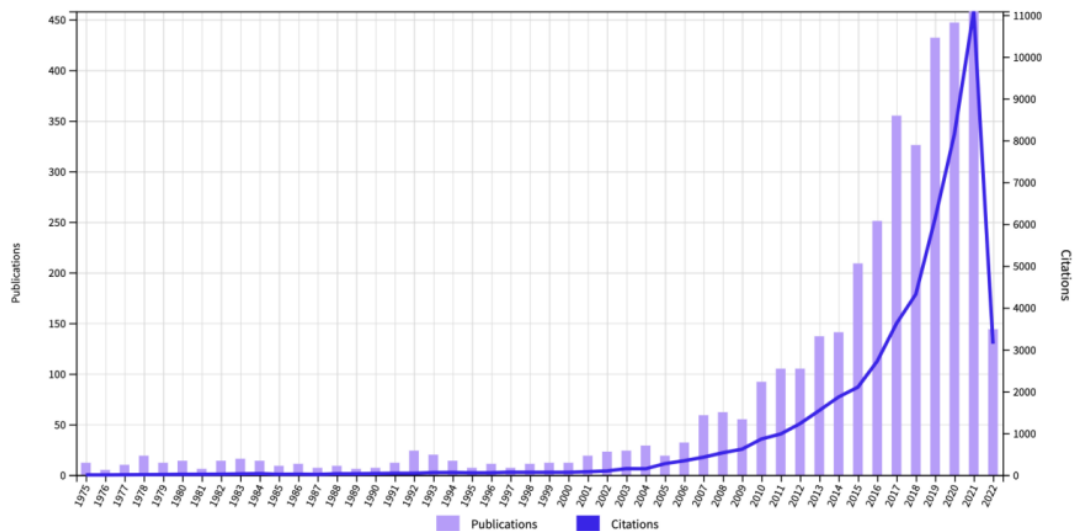
The construction of social innovation has gradually been established in various social science practices, leading to the proposal of the concept by different disciplines based on their respective problematics or modifications according to problem-solving codes (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011). Consequently, social innovation has become a "controversial" concept (Slee et al. 2021; Tracey and Stott 2017). The inherent complexity results in diverse participant descriptions within the system, while its openness allows for changes over time. Different concept users acknowledge this complexity and dynamics (Ayob et al. 2016b).

2.1.1 The Evolution of the Social Innovation Concept

Although the Web of Science database indicates a significant surge in research on social innovation since the 21st century, scholarly literature reveals that as early as the 18th century, Benjamin Franklin put forth suggestions regarding social innovation during his study of social organization in Philadelphia (Mumford 2002). Furthermore, Gabriel Tarde's discourse on societal functioning considered society an autonomous economy, thereby fostering the dissemination of novel production technologies and innovations (Tarde 1899). (Hoggan 1909) also depicted the "replacement of African tribes and tribal life by West Indian plantations" as a noteworthy instance of social innovation.

At this stage (before the 20th century), the study of social innovation was perceived as an economic phenomenon encompassing the societal context of large-scale technological and economic advancements that emerged in Western nations during the 19th century. Research on social innovation primarily focused on examining the potential impact of technological innovations on society.

Figure 1 Schematic diagram of the results obtained by "social innovation" retrieval in the "topic" of Web of Science database
(Source: Web of Science database)¹



¹ Inquiry conducted on 20220512; Search method employed includes core index, title, and the topic index for 'social innovation' (Entering 'social innovation' in the 'topic' index yields more than 65,000 results. However, as per the website's information, citation report cannot be generated for over 10,000 results).

In the early 20th century, Max Weber endeavored to investigate the societal changes brought about by technological and economic transformations, delving into the correlation between social order and social innovation (Mikhailovich et al. 2017). Subsequently, Schumpeter's research profoundly influenced the advancement of innovation theory. He further perceived social innovation as a structural alteration within enterprises, social organizations, or organizational forms (Schumpeter 1947), building upon his original comprehension of innovation. (Durkheim 1997; Weber 1968) underscored the significance of social innovation in engendering novel societal frameworks amidst technological change.

In the 1960s, a civil society movement emerged from Western Europe that effectively addressed significant social issues through publicity and service provision (Defourny and Nyssens 2010), marking a pivotal moment in advancing social innovation research (Slee et al. 2021). Subsequently, (Taylor 1970) explored social innovation within projects to develop rehabilitation procedures for low-income individuals. In this context, social innovation refers to novel societal forms or practices oriented towards community development. Taylor's research identified two challenges and five fundamental principles for designing and implementing social innovation, establishing him as the pioneer in employing "social innovation" for scholarly investigation. Concurrently, Gabor (1970) sought to comprehend social innovation from a territorial development perspective by considering it as "new social arrangements" or "new balances," serving as tools to combat pollution, crime, urbanization, economic inequality, and other pressing issues. In 1982, Chambon et al. proposed that "social innovation [...] encompasses practices directly or indirectly aimed at addressing unmet individual or collective needs," highlighting its potential to drive societal change through collective action (ANECHITEI 2018).

In this period, research on social innovation is gradually shifting away from the traditional organizational and technological perspectives, aiming to move beyond the previous overemphasis on science and technology as the sole driving force of social change (Drucker 1987). It seeks to transcend innovation research's previous management and economic logic by focusing on innovation's origin and social impact. Moreover, it integrates innovation into a comprehensive social theory to facilitate further in-depth analysis and development of innovation (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011).

After the 1990s, the study of social innovation witnessed a new surge in momentum. Social innovation has been extensively applied across various academic sub-disciplines and interdisciplinary fields (Baker and Mehmood 2015; Slee et al. 2021), establishing itself as a multidisciplinary concept (Grimm et al. 2013). Particularly within the realm of social sciences, social innovation encompasses a wide range of research directions, including but not limited to social enterprises, social movements, social networks, empowerment initiatives, organizational theory, management science, and public governance (Ayob et al. 2016; Cajas-Santana 2014; Dawson and Daniel 2010; van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016; Pol and Ville 2009; Slee et al. 2021). Social innovation is more regarded as a separate type of innovation (Domanski et al. 2019) and made more accessible as an object of empirical investigations.

2.1.2 The Research of Social Innovation within the Realm of Social Sciences

As a concept with an explicit interdisciplinary nature, social innovation has emerged as a prominent research topic in significant disciplines such as economics, management, and sociology. Firstly, it is widely acknowledged within economics that innovation plays a pivotal role in driving social progress and economic development. This notion can be traced back to Schumpeter's seminal theory of innovation in 1911. He was the first to systematically integrate entrepreneurship with market reform, elucidating innovation's central significance in fostering dynamic economic growth. Subsequently, scholars have examined social innovation from various perspectives encompassing government function (Friedman 1962), economic growth (Schumpeter 1911), entrepreneurship (Drucker 1985), market mechanism (Hayek 1945), competitive advantage (Porter 1990), policy formulation (North 1990), social capacity (Sen 1999) and other dimensions.

Economics focuses on studying and analyzing the significant impact of social innovation on the economy and society across various dimensions. It primarily involves examining the dynamics of economic growth theory, including the influence of technological innovation and market structure on the economic cycle (Schumpeter 1911; Solow 1956). Entrepreneurship theory also emphasizes how entrepreneurship can act as a catalyst for innovation and competition while having long-term effects on

economic development (Drucker 1980; Baumol 1993). Market mechanism research reveals the fundamental role markets play in resource allocation and incentivizing innovation (Friedman 1962; Hayek 1945), while policy formulation analysis explains how institutions and legal frameworks shape market operations and business behavior (Coase 1960). Additionally, multidimensional research cites human capital theories (Becker 1964) along with social capital theories (Coleman 1988), highlighting the impact of knowledge and social networks on innovation and productivity. Simultaneously, it is essential to note that social innovation enhances production efficiency and social welfare (Friedman and Friedman 1962; Sen 1999) and strengthens social cohesion, ultimately improving both the economy and society (Porter 1990).

The study of social innovation in economics offers a multidimensional perspective for comprehending social innovation's multifaceted and multilevel roles, ranging from individual actors to macroeconomic systems. Social innovation encompasses not only technological breakthroughs and productivity enhancements but also people's quality of life, social justice, inclusivity, and the overall health and stability of the societal structure. These studies provide theoretical and empirical references that facilitate our understanding and promotion of social innovation.

In the field of management, research on social innovation is typically conducted from the perspectives of organizational behavior (Kanter 1999; Besharov and Smith 2014; Battilana and Casciaro 2012), entrepreneurship (Mair and Martí 2006; Santos 2012; Zahra et al. 2009), strategic management (Yunus et al. 2010; Porter and Kramer 2011), leadership (Westley et al. 2013; Waddock and Post 1991), to examine how diverse organizations address social issues and generate social value through social innovation. These studies underscore the significance of cross-sector collaboration (Bryson et al. 2006; Selsky and Parker 2005), and sustainability (Elkington et al. 2006; Mulgan 2006), as well as the importance of creating shared value (Prahalad and Hammond 2002; Porter and Kramer 2011), and managing complexity (Unger et al. 2012; Bason 2010) in fostering social innovation.

Generally, management studies on social innovation offer a comprehensive range of established theoretical frameworks and practical tools, encompassing the construction of theoretical models (Mulgan 2006; Phills Jr et al. 2008), organizational and strategic design (Austin et al. 2006; Dees 1998; Moore and Westley 2011), leadership and cultural development (Waddock and Post 1991), social impact measurement and evaluation (Sawhill and Williamson 2001), sustainability, and

business models (Yunus et al. 2010). These resources provide practical guidance for creating, implementing, and developing social innovation within and between organizations.

Social innovation addresses and resolves social problems and challenges in sociology through novel products, services, temporal frameworks, models, strategies, or organizational structures. Social innovation research in sociology examines how the innovation process influences social structure, group behavior, and societal change while seeking to comprehend the value and contribution of social innovation to societal well-being and social capital. The research in this field has yielded several key findings, including the multidimensional nature of social innovation, the significance of active participation from society members, the connection between culture/values and social innovation relevance, and considerations for its sustainability. These studies serve as a foundational knowledge base that contributes to our understanding of the nature, dynamics, impact, and challenges associated with social innovation. A detailed review of research on social innovation within sociology will be presented in subsequent sections.

2.1.3 Definitions and Main Dimensions of Social Innovation

An earlier discussion of the "social aspects" of innovation appeared in the EU Green Paper on Innovation (European Commission 1995), which describes innovation as:

"...being a synonym for the successful production, assimilation, and exploitation of novelty in the economic and social spheres' (p.1)."

The document also emphasizes the sociality of innovation. :

"Innovation is not just an economic mechanism or a technical process. It is, above all, a social phenomenon. (...) By its purpose, effects, or methods, innovation is thus intimately involved in the social conditions in which it is produced" (p.11).

Since then, various perspectives have emerged regarding the precise connotation of "social" in social innovation, ultimately determining this concept's definition. Firstly, there is a debate concerning whether social innovation should be considered a fundamental type of innovation (Pol and Ville 2009) or a non-technological innovation

paradigm (Tao and Gao 2019), based on the notion that "social" distinguishes between social innovation and other domains of innovative practices.

According to (Domanski et al. 2019), social innovation is widely recognized as a new paradigm in international innovation research. It is because it encompasses three key aspects: 1) an open innovation process that involves society; 2) a focus on addressing significant social challenges; and 3) a more robust recognition of non-technological innovations aimed at transforming social practices (Howaldt Jügen and Schwarz Michael 2010). The establishment of the post-industrial innovation paradigm by sociology (Howaldt and Kopp 2012) marks the transition from an industrial society to a knowledge economy and service economy. This societal background contributes to the paradigm shift of the innovation system. Therefore, it is essential to view innovation as a social phenomenon rather than solely an economic one (Godin 2010; Solis et al. 2021), with its unique role in promoting reorganization and improvement of social structures. Consequently, introducing the concept of social innovation represents a fundamental change in the international innovation paradigm. It not only entails opening up the process to society but also stimulating innovative solutions by addressing societal challenges and emphasizing non-technological advancements.

Based on diverse research perspectives, theoretical frameworks, research objects, and problems, even within the field of sociology, the understanding of social innovation also exhibits significant characteristics of diversity and differentiation. It can be attributed to the fact that the term "social" is subject to different interpretations and applications of social innovation (Nicholls and Murdock 2010; Domanski et al. 2019; Ayob et al. 2016), while the social attributes of social innovation in practice demonstrate considerable uncertainty (Howaldt Jügen et al. 2010). Consequently, it becomes challenging to establish a unified and authoritative definition of social innovation. Nevertheless, there is widespread recognition that comprehending its "intrinsically social nature" (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011a) is pivotal in grasping the essence of social innovation since it cannot be fully recognized or understood without considering its societal context. Social innovation delves into issues associated with the broader socio-cultural backdrop, particularly when a problem persists or fails to meet expectations. A profound understanding of such problems necessitates close alignment with the environment (Foroudi et al. 2021).

Table 1 Influential definitions of social innovation (in the field of sociology)

Article	Quoted definition
(Mumford 2002)	“the generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or societal interactions, to meet one or more common goals.”
(Cajaiba-Santana 2014a)	Social innovations are new social practices created from collective, intentional, and goal-oriented actions aimed at prompting social change through reconfiguration of how social goals are accomplished
(The Young Foundation 2012)	social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act’
(Pol and Ville 2009)	“an innovation is termed a social innovation if the implied new idea has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life.”
(European Commission 2013)	“encompasses the development and implementation of novel interventions, processes, programmes, products or models to meet social needs.”
(Moulaert et al. 2005a)	“Those changes in agendas, agency and institutions that lead to a better inclusion of excluded groups and individuals in various spheres of society at various spatial scales.”
(OECD 2000) ¹	“Social innovation” seeks new answers to social problems by: identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities; identifying and implementing new labour market integration processes, new competencies, new jobs, and new forms of participation, as diverse elements that each contribute to improving the position of individuals in the workforce.
(Phills Jr et al. 2008)	“a novel solution to social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals.”
(Mulgan 2006) (Mulgan et al. 2007)	“Innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social.”
(Murray et al. 2010)	“Being social in both means (actors) and ends (results and outcomes) such innovations can be considered as new products, services and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations.”
(Moulaert et al. 2013)	“SI means fostering inclusion and wellbeing through improving social relations and empowerment processes: imagining and pursuing a world, a nation, a region, a locality, a community that would grant universal rights and be more socially inclusive.”
(European Commission)	“social innovation can be defined as the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. It represents new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interaction. It is aimed at improving human wellbeing.”

¹ See detailed information in OECD LEED *Forum on Social Innovations*: <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/Forum-Social-Innovations.htm>.

- **Five "social" dimensions of social innovation**

Based on the existing literature, comprehending the "sociality" of social innovation through the examination of five distinct dimensions can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives on defining social innovation and elucidate the principal disparities and intrinsic interconnections among these definitions. The five dimensions encompass social goals, processes, practices, relations, and values.

A. Social objectives

This definition highlights the essential "sociality" of goal-oriented social innovation. Regardless of its manifestation in various forms, such as products, activities, and services, the fundamental purpose of social innovation is to address social problems and/or fulfill social needs (van Wijk, Zietsma and Dorado 2019; Phills Jr, Deiglmeier, and Miller 2008; The Young Foundation 2012)). Unlike commercial innovation driven by market and consumer demand, social innovation aims to enhance the well-being of individuals, communities, and society (Mulgan 2006; Dawson and Daniel 2010; Lettice and Parekh 2010). It strives to improve quality of life through the creation of new social organizations and to foster creativity potential, promote sustainable community development (Baker and Mehmood 2015b), optimize resource utilization for addressing societal challenges, and contribute to building more cohesive and inclusive societies (Grimm et al. 2013). The SINGOCOM project (2001-2004), funded by the European Commission FP-5 program, developed an alternative model for local innovation known as ALMOLIN, which defines social innovation as "(social innovation) refers to those changes in agendas, agency and institutions that lead to a better inclusion of excluded groups and individuals into various spheres of society at various spatial scales.. (and) ... explicitly refers to an ethical position of social justice." Meanwhile, (Mulgan et al. 2007) define social innovation as implementing novel activities and services to address societal needs, focusing on organizing, developing, and disseminating such innovations to achieve social objectives.

B. Social process

Beyond the social objectives of innovation, numerous researchers have also observed the pivotal role of social factors as intermediaries in the innovation process (Rogers 2004). Therefore, emphasis is placed on understanding innovation's organizational and social processes, as social innovation does not solely focus on social objectives. The delivery process, encompassing cooperation, interaction, resource sharing, and cooperative production, among others, constitutes a significant outcome

of innovation (Grimm et al. 2013). In this sense, social innovation serves both as a goal and a means to achieve that goal. Understanding social processes involves the participation of the third sector and civil society in decision-making and provision of social services (Evers and Ewert 2015), individual creativity along with organizational structure and environment (Baker and Mehmood 2015b), creative actions coupled with new governance processes (Moulaert et al. 2007), as well as an open stakeholder process involving end users' participation, cooperation, and communication (Voorberg et al. 2015). (Moulaert et al. 2013) focuses on empowerment and disempowerment within social innovation while underscoring the significance of focusing on the process since empowering certain groups may entail depriving other groups of power. Similarly, (Ayob et al. 2016a) argues that viewing social innovation as a political dimension inherent to its nature highlights how collaboration or combination between different groups holds excellent importance for generating desired societal outcomes.

C. Social practices

This perspective posits that social practice is the fundamental unit for comprehending social innovation, primarily due to its potential to identify the social dynamics of change processes (Domanski et al. 2019). Social practices are generated by actors from diverse societal sectors representing varying interests and theories during innovation. Particularly within sociology, social innovation often centers on different combinations of social practices (van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016), emphasizing that meeting social needs can only be achieved through practice. From this viewpoint, social innovation is perceived as a "major change" or "reconfiguration" of existing social practices, leading to institutional changes (Kluvankova et al. 2021), system modification and reconfiguration (Avelino et al. 2017; Loorbach et al. 2020) and other outcomes, while also promoting civil society participation and enhancing overall welfare levels. Additionally, it may involve creating a "new combination/new configuration" of existing practices aimed at better addressing specific group needs or resolving problems in targeted ways (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010).

In addition, social innovation encompasses novel social practices that are not purely innovative in an absolute sense but somewhat relative innovations. These include the introduction of new combinations of social practices, the evolution of original social practices, and the transfer or integration of different practices into new environments or situations (Christman 2019). Flor Avelino et al. (2017) have highlighted that new social practices encompass fresh ideas, models, rules, products

and services, social relations, and changes in roles, norms, and values has previously addressed this by emphasizing that not all new social practices can be considered social innovation; true social innovation requires imitation and institutionalization of these new practices. Furthermore, for goal-oriented social innovation purposes, Slee et al. (2021) have emphasized that assessing whether a practice qualifies as a form of social innovation cannot solely rely on the alignment with societal goals; how these goals are implemented through specific social practices serves as a crucial measurement factor.

D. Social relations

Based on the perspective of social practice, Moulaert et al. (2005) have highlighted that social innovation is not merely a social practice but rather a transformative endeavor aimed at fostering enhanced social justice and inclusion by reshaping existing power dynamics. Given that the development of novel social relations within systems or structures constitutes a crucial characteristic of social innovation (Westley et al. 2010; Mumford 2002; Manzini 2014), numerous definitions encompass the reorganization of social relationships or networks (Howaldt and Kopp 2012; Rehfeld et al. 2015; Hämäläinen and Heiskala 2007). Accordingly, social innovation is *"the generation and implementation of new ideas about social relationships and social organization"* (Mumford 2002).

There have been many literature attempts to integrate social innovation and social relations in research, emphasizing that social innovation is a creative approach to addressing specific problems through positive and sustainable societal transformation (Moulaert and Sekia 2003). Social innovation encompasses developing social creativity and social relations by integrating knowledge, resources, and people (Cajaiba-Santana 2014). This dynamic process involves the reconfiguration of social relations through purposeful collective action, which not only generates new solutions but also triggers significant societal impact (Tapsell and Woods 2008; Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Ayob et al. 2016). As the term "social" in social innovation refers to the object of innovation rather than indicating products or technologies, it should be defined based on intent and outcomes. Social innovation aims to address societal challenges by empowering actors, thereby promoting transformative change within society.

E. Social values

Numerous studies posit social innovation as the catalyst for generating social value. Social innovation is considered the primary tool and means to foster sustainable value creation (Peredo and McLean 2006). While social practice is widely acknowledged as

the fundamental unit of social innovation, Howaldt and Schwarz also underscore the importance of creating shared interests as an essential foundation (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010). According to (Ayob et al. 2016a), there has been a decade-long debate between research on social innovation's role in challenging power relations versus creating social value. On one hand, many scholars argue that new power relations facilitate novel ideas and more effective solutions to societal issues. On the other hand, several studies aim to explore the social value engendered by social innovation, with Phills et al.'s research as a significant indicator of shifting focus from interpersonal relationships to societal outcomes.

According to (Phills Jr et al. 2008), numerous innovations aim to address social needs or solve social problems. The distinguishing factor that sets social innovation apart from other forms is its focus on "social value," where the created value primarily benefits society rather than individuals. Furthermore, the outcome of generating social value aligns with meeting societal needs or resolving social issues. Unlike innovations benefiting investors, entrepreneurs, and consumers, social innovation generates advantages for the entire public or society. In this context, only in social innovation does the distribution of financial and social value tilt towards benefiting society. Therefore, the foundation of social innovation lies in promoting societal well-being and serving the public good (Dawson and Daniel 2010). It encompasses impacts beyond individual levels (Baker and Mehmood 2015b) by influencing broader political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts that give rise to problems.

The definition of social innovation becomes a "descriptive metaphor", reflecting its descriptive, heuristic, voluntary, or normative characteristics (Neumeier 2012). Moreover, the multidimensionality of social innovation in theory and practice drives the interdisciplinary development trend of research methods. This "lack of unified paradigm" and the existence of "plural framings and discourses" in social innovation research highlight significant differences among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in terms of disciplines and epistemologies when conducting such research.

2.1.4 Core Characteristics of Social Innovation

The initial step towards profound comprehension of social innovation involves comprehending the definitional perspectives and focal points of diverse definitions

from various "social dimensions." However, more is needed to achieve an in-depth understanding of its essence. As an established concept, despite evident characteristics of diversity and differentiation within its definition, social innovation still possesses essential attributes encapsulated in this paper as novelty, social complexity, and path dependency.

The first characteristic that social innovation must possess is **novelty**, encompassing the innovation of ideas, methods, products, services, and other elements to address existing social problems, as well as the novel configuration and/or combination of known elements (Christman 2019). It does not necessarily entail a technological breakthrough. However, it typically manifests in new organizational forms, processes, strategies, and service models (Schumpeter 1912) while also encompassing new production methods, distribution approaches, and novel forms of labor organization. Simultaneously, social innovation often involves the integration of non-traditional resources along with new collaboration models and social capital, facilitating collaborative, innovative effects through cross-sectoral participation via transboundary cooperation and fostering the generation of innovative solutions by introducing novel roles (Angelidou and Psaltoglou 2017; Murray et al. 2010). Furthermore, novelty is not confined solely to business model innovations but also encompasses transformations in social relations and power structures (Moulaert, MacCallum, et al. 2013). Social innovation needs to provide systemic impact-driven solutions to societal needs. "Novelty" extends beyond mere changes within individual organizations; it should possess the capacity to trigger or catalyze broader societal change, thereby promoting inclusivity and justice (Phills Jr et al. 2008).

Social complexity can be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, social innovation emerges within the social process due to intricate interactions and combinations among diverse social actors, exhibiting unpredictable dynamics (Christmann et al. 2017; Howaldt 2018). It necessitates fostering effective collaboration and networks for social innovation while holistically considering innovative solutions to multifaceted problems at various levels, as only by embracing diverse viewpoints and values can complex issues involving multiple societal forces be effectively resolved (Heiskala 2007). Secondly, as a comprehensive concept, social innovation manifests in different socio-cultural contexts. These local contexts serve as localized manifestations of national frameworks that determine the space and conditions for the emergence and development of local social innovation, providing sustainable opportunities and

shaping the scope of policy learning (Domanski et al. 2019). The dynamics and uncertainties inherent in socially complex systems and the embeddedness of social systems (Cajaiba-Santana 2014), dictate that methods and processes of social innovation should comprehensively consider society's dynamism, multidimensionality, and multifaceted nature as a system in order to address present-day challenges while anticipating future ones effectively.

Path dependency underscores the impact of historical factors on reality, particularly evident in social institutions, cultural technologies, and existing technological practices. Consequently, deconstructing past models and creating innovations constitute crucial elements within social innovation (David 1985; Hodgson and Knudsen 2010). The process and outcomes of social innovation are often profoundly influenced by prevailing social practices and institutional arrangements. Current technologies do not solely constrain its transformative trajectory and capacity but are also shaped by preceding societal decisions and accumulated experiences. Once social practices become entrenched along a specific path due to technological lock-in, institutional inertia, or power structures, they may exert long-term constraints on subsequent innovative endeavors (North 1990; Garud and Karnoe 2001; Sydow et al. 2009).

2.1.5 Mechanism of Social Innovation

It is essential to examine the processes and mechanisms involved in its emergence, development, and diffusion to understand social innovation deeply. In existing literature, two distinct research perspectives attempt to summarize and elucidate social innovation's general principles and fundamental mechanisms from both micro and macro standpoints. The micro perspective commences with analyzing the innovative subject's viewpoint, wherein social innovation is perceived as a linear model encompassing input, output, consequences, and influence. Conversely, the macro perspective adopts a holistic approach by considering society as a complete or dynamic system involving various societal actors interacting. Furthermore, disciplinary disparities contribute to divergent research perspectives on social innovation mechanisms. For instance, management methods and economics often perceive social innovation as a linear process while focusing on cultivating and managing it gradually.

On the other hand, disciplines such as politics and geography society view social innovation as a non-linear cycle characterized by conflicts that drive transformations in public institutions or power relations (Parés 2015).

- **Process-perspective**

In Schumpeter's (1964) seminal work on "Creative Destruction," innovation is conceptualized as a social process, encompassing not only technological advancements or economic phenomena but also driven by the entrepreneurial pursuit of profit. Within this dynamic framework, entrepreneurs act as agents of innovation, investing in creating novel products, methods, and markets while utilizing resulting profits to amass capital. Numerous studies have underscored the need for a "process methodology" to understand social innovation comprehensively. This necessity arises from both the analysis of discrete events through historical narratives that require elucidation on how these events unfold over time (Slappendel 1996; Van de Ven et al. 2004) and empirical research methods that predominantly describe the process itself with further identification aiding theory development (Baker and Mehmood 2015b; Cajasanta-Santana 2014). Concurrently, there is an exigency for investigating adaptive processes within social ecosystems to comprehend how social innovation operates at micro levels driven by needs satisfaction and meso levels involving social relations. Moreover, it occurs at the intersection between these two levels, leading to macro-level changes through empowerment and scaling (Baker and Mehmood 2015b).

Numerous studies have significantly contributed to the comprehension of the social innovation process (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020; Howaldt and Schwarz 2010; Kluvankova et al. 2021; Moore et al. 2014; Mulgan 2006; Murray et al. 2010; Secco et al. 2019). Notably, the frameworks proposed by (Mulgan 2006) and (Murray et al. 2010) have gained widespread acceptance and application within this field.

- **System-perspective**

The theory of innovation has evolved from a "linear view" to a "systems view." Innovation is a comprehensive, dynamic, and non-linear process involving multiple national, regional, departmental, and enterprise participants. According to (Lundvall 1992), when the interaction and mutual learning among various actors in the innovation process become decisive, the innovation process begins to transition from linear to non-linear. There is an increasing awareness of the critical role that social capital, cooperative support, fostering an innovation culture, and promoting collaboration drive innovation. Innovation research adopts a systems approach

focusing on interactive modes based on the innovation process while emphasizing market and non-market knowledge exchanges between enterprises, institutions, and relevant human resources. In technological innovation systems specifically, there is particular emphasis on the dynamic nature of innovation, with actors, networks, and institutions as three core elements.

In their initial research, Howaldt et al. identified systemic and social nature as one of the core characteristics of innovation from a sociological perspective (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010). Social innovation, as an innovative paradigm, is increasingly recognized as a systematic concept, involving participation among diverse actors, cross-sector collaboration, interaction and evolution across various dimensions of innovation, institutional roles and changes therein, and system-level transformations (Sherraden 2016; Edwards-Schachter et al. 2012; Neumeier 2012; Mikhailovich Vasin et al. 2017).

In the system approach, social innovation is analyzed as a commitment to comprehensive and systematic social change, with a focus on the collective aspects of the innovation process. As social systems encompass resources, practices, procedures, power relations, etc., social innovation must transcend various social boundaries by uniting individuals and organizations through networks (Parés 2015; Westley et al. 2010). In addition, the system view also highlights the crucial role of institutions in social innovation (Edquist and Johnson 1997; Leoncini 1998; Rolfstam et al. 2011), including the influence of interactions among institutions, governments and social networks on local social innovation. As a nascent social practice, social innovation fundamentally comprises participants and institutional frameworks (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), encompassing the relationship between institutional innovation and social innovation (Slee et al. 2021), as well as how the state can simultaneously act as an impediment or catalyst for social interaction by hindering or stimulating social innovation within national or market spheres (Jessop et al. 2013 p.114).

- **Multi-resource and multi-sector approach to social innovation**

From the system perspective, diverse participants, their interactions, and the social networks they establish play a pivotal role in fostering innovation (Freeman 1991). The same holds for social innovation. Multi-level innovation subjects serve as multidimensional sources of social innovation. All sectors and organizations within society, including non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, community groups, individuals (private sector), government (public sector), enterprises,

and entrepreneurs (private sector), possess the potential to generate and advance social innovation (European Commission. Directorate-General for Regional Policy. 2013; Mulgan et al. 2007; European Commission 2013). Particularly under the concept of open innovation introduced by (Chesbrough 2003), social innovation is regarded as an embodiment of open innovation at its core. The evolution of societal-oriented innovations renders individual institutions and organizations no longer exclusive agents in innovating. Especially when addressing issues related to sustainable and inclusive growth, all societal actors can leverage open innovation to drive social development.

Recognizing the diverse sources of actors in social innovation is a fundamental prerequisite for gaining an in-depth understanding of its development. Not only do different actors exhibit distinct demand orientations (Nordberg et al. 2020), but the networks that play a pivotal role in the process of social innovation are formed through the amalgamation and collaboration among these actors, resulting in the emergence of "hybrid" and "intermediate" organizations (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010; Anania and Passani 2014; The Young Foundation 2012). Furthermore, various subjects within social innovation assume different functions and roles. It includes critical institutions such as funds, agencies, brokers, incubators, and intermediaries. Additionally, enabling conditions for social innovation encompass the public sector, civil society's grant economy, private sector involvement, and household contributions (Murray et al. 2010). These "individual and collective actors," acting as agents within the social innovation process, participate in the innovation strategy work to varying degrees. They interact and act to create or promote innovation (Christmann et al. 2020).

- **Social innovation strategies: Top-down vs. Bottom-up**

Social innovation can be achieved through various strategies based on diverse relationships and interactions. Like their mechanisms, social innovation strategies are continuously evolving with the progression of society and its institutions (Phills Jr et al. 2008). They can be implemented through grassroots efforts or top-down approaches (Manzini 2014b). However, the specific pathways depend on spatial levels, knowledge domains, and cross-sectoral collaborations (European Commission 2011; Murray et al. 2010).

The top-down social innovation strategy is grounded in the national innovation system (Lundvall 1992; Freeman 1987; Nelson 1993; Edquist 1997). Social innovation is perceived as a collective learning process driven from the top, offering novel approaches to develop and strengthen national institutional arrangements (Rao-

Nicholson et al. 2017). It underscores the significance of policy innovation and institutional support (Berzin et al. 2016) with governments and large institutions playing a pivotal role by providing necessary structure and resources for social innovation. It facilitates the active involvement of governments in mobilizing funds, human resources, and other assets for innovative activities (Adams et al. 2016), thereby promoting significant technological advancements and social innovations through resource allocation. Moreover, the top-down social innovation strategy is deemed more capable of ensuring sustainability and diffusion of innovations during policy formulation and implementation stages due to the more significant influence exerted by involved organizations on the system (Rogers et al. 2019; Westley et al. 2011). Simultaneously, top-down social innovation places excellent emphasis on cross-sector collaboration among multiple stakeholders, particularly in large-scale structured projects, which directly impacts resource integration efficiency, implementation of innovations, and expansion of influence (Gray 1989) (Phills Jr et al. 2008; Selsky and Parker 2005).

The top-down approach is widely acknowledged for its robust institutional and analytical frameworks, efficient cross-sectoral cooperation, effective policy dissemination, and successful innovation diffusion. It highlights the crucial role governments and relevant authoritative organizations play in promoting social innovation and driving social change. However, this approach has also faced criticism due to concerns over excessive centralized control of the innovation process, limited grassroots participation, and inadequate responsiveness. These criticisms undermine the potential of social innovation.

In contrast, the bottom-up strategy emphasizes the grassroots dynamics of social innovation. On the one hand, increasing social innovations originate at the community level, typically initiated by individuals or small groups, enabling them to address social needs better (Mulgan et al. 2007; Seyfang and Smith 2007). On the other hand, due to a shift in the general social policy paradigm - "greater attention towards meeting the social needs of broad citizen groups, particularly those who are economically and socially vulnerable and disadvantaged" - economic and social inequality has directly contributed to an inclusive model of social policy. This model has also significantly emphasized the development of bottom-up innovation strategies (Turrini et al. 2018). Therefore, the bottom-up approach to social innovation underscores citizen participation and empowerment as it enables quick response to societal issues while effectively utilizing local knowledge and resources. Additionally, it enhances

community cohesion and democracy (Ansell and Gash 2008b; Fung 2006; Hartley 2005). Despite its local solid dynamics though, bottom-up social innovation is greatly influenced by institutional and policy environments (Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Heiskala 2007; Moulaert et al. 2005a), while a lack of social capital networks along with limited cross-regional or hierarchical cooperation can negatively impact such initiatives (Dee et al. 2004; Naviaux and McGowan 2000; Putnam 2001).

Bottom-up social innovation strategies are highly adaptable and responsive. They can effectively adjust to local needs and environmental changes, enhancing local democracy through citizen participation and empowerment. Additionally, they foster trust and social capital within communities, promoting community cohesion. However, these strategies often need help scaling up and sustaining innovative outcomes due to resource limitations such as funding, expertise, and external support.

2.2 SOCIAL INNOVATION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Under the sustainable development goal, population growth, climate change, and economic crises have emerged as significant social challenges for urban development. This pressing need necessitates cities to shift their development approaches from profit-driven renewal models towards embracing multiple value propositions encompassing social, economic, cultural, and ecological aspects. Achieving this requires exploring innovative sources, paradigms, and pathways to address complex urban issues more efficiently and sustainably by creating novel solutions that differ from previous ones. Consequently, there has been a growing focus on social innovation within urban research (see, for example, (Angelidou and Psaltoglou 2017; Bartels 2017; Brandsen et al. 2016; Christman 2019; Christmann et al. 2017; European Commission 2013; Godin 2012; Jessop et al. 2013; Khan et al. 2014; Moulaert et al. 2005a; Moulaert, MacCallum, et al. 2013; Nyseth and Hamdouch 2019; Maccallum et al. 2009)).

2.2.1 Social Innovation in the Urban Context

In urban development, (Moulaert et al. 2005) was the one which introduced the concept of social innovation for analyzing urban and spatial development across social,

economic, political, and cultural dimensions earlier. This perspective provides a novel lens for comprehending the complexity and dynamics of urban development by examining the interactive relationship between social innovation and urban space. According to Moulaert's research, social innovation is a multidimensional process aimed at meeting urban spaces' social, economic, political, and cultural needs by introducing new ideas, practices, and tools. With the increasing research on social innovation in urban contexts, there has been a trend towards diversification and differentiation in understanding social innovation. For example, it is a strategic approach that promotes innovative and transformative urban development through interdisciplinary collaboration and experimentation (von Schnurbein et al. 2023). It is also seen as an ability to establish relationships and create new connections to improve the urban environment by promoting the transformation of social institutional frameworks through collaboration and co-construction (Pultrone 2017). At the same time, social innovation can be regarded as those initiatives mainly created by networks and joint action in non-business or government realms that raise hope and expectations for progress towards a "better" society in terms of being more socially sustainable/democratic/effective (Brandsen et al. 2016).

Social innovation is widely recognized as beneficial for promoting urban and regional development (Angelidou and Psaltoglou 2017; Christiaens et al. 2007; Moulaert et al. 2013; Moulaert et al. 2005). As a practical approach to urban development (Jessop et al. 2013; Moulaert et al. 2007; Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez 2012), it focuses on addressing social issues in the process of urbanization, particularly those that cannot be effectively resolved through traditional market or policy means. By fostering collaboration and sharing among urban producers through cross-sectoral cooperation involving public organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private sectors, it aims to build a comprehensive knowledge and skills base from different domains (Christiaens et al. 2007). It advocates for new values, behavioral norms, and social relationships to promote positive changes in urban communities, contributing to urban governance and competitiveness.

The recognition of the functional value of social innovation for urban development further stimulates research on social innovation in cities, covering topics such as urban planning, urban governance, community development, social justice, and urban power relations.

First, in research related to urban planning, the discussion on social innovation focuses on the relationship between urban resilience and social innovation, the interaction between creative cities and social innovation development (Landry 2008), the role of the "creative class" in urban innovation ecosystems and sustainable development (Naylor and Florida 2003), the role of urban policies and knowledge dissemination in inspiring social innovation, and how cultural policies and creative industries promote economic and social innovation development (McCann and Ward 2012), etc. Social innovation occurs at a meso or macro level, including non-governmental organizations, community development, public policy, etc.

Second, in urban governance, social innovation is seen as a driving force for transformative change in city governance. Introducing new organizational forms, practices, and institutions aims to enhance the social well-being of cities. It promotes the transformation of social system frameworks by "encouraging collaboration, co-construction, and co-creation" (Moulaert et al. 2013), thus bringing new hopes and possibilities for urban development policies. In this regard, the urgent need for inclusive decision-making and effective governance under sustainable goals is an essential condition and indicator for promoting social innovation practices and development. It is closely related to participation modes in urban governance, decision-making processes, management approaches, public services provision, etc. Therefore, relevant research mainly focuses on specific aspects such as governance structures, government roles, stakeholder networks, corporate collaboration methods, policies, and technological support for social innovation (see, for example, (Fainstein 2014; Fung 2006; Healey 1997; Newman 2009; Osborne and Gaebler 1992).

Third, community development is important in discussing social innovation and cities from a micro perspective. In communities, social innovation is a collaborative and community-led development process that promotes positive urban change through cooperation among community organizations and stakeholders, interactive learning, inclusive and participatory public decision-making, and effective utilization of resources and knowledge. This type of innovation often involves cross-sector collaboration, innovative practices, and empowering communities to adapt to diverse social relationships in cities. By stimulating innovative activities at the community level, it enhances inclusiveness and cohesion within communities while addressing other social, economic, and environmental issues in urban development." (see for

example: (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011b; Moulaert and Nussbaumer 2005; Ostanel 2017; Seyfang and Smith 2007; Innes and Booher 2010).

Fourth, the intensification of economic stratification and social exclusion in urbanization has extensively promoted research and discussion on social innovation and equity because urban space is a crucial social justice dimension. In contrast, social innovation effectively addresses the narrowing economic and social gaps, promotes fair utilization and distribution of urban space, and seeks new solutions. These studies focus on knowledge flow, collective action, and interdisciplinary research in shaping urban spatial justice, especially in addressing social exclusion and inequality issues in cities, improving urban policies, and promoting social change to enhance inclusiveness. They also examine how city residents make decisions about urban space, resources, lifestyle choices, and usage patterns (See, for example (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009; Cipolla and Bartholo 2014; Sassen 2008; Soja et al. 2011).

In addition, researching social innovation as a method for urban development involves several aspects such as urban cohesion, the role of multi-level stakeholders, regional development, and social innovation networks (Ardill and Lemes de Oliveira 2018; Brandsen et al. 2016; Cunha, Benneworth, and Oliveira 2015; Edwards-Schachter, Matti, and Alcántara 2012b; Fung 2006; Putnam 2001). In recent years, with the deepening of sustainable concepts, research on the relationship between social innovation and sustainability has become a new hot topic. The topics covered include green technology, sustainable planning concepts, intelligent cities, and the health and harmony of urban environments and ecosystems (Agyeman and Evans 2004; Caragliu et al. 2011; Bulkeley et al. 2011; Townsend 2013).

2.2.2 The Spatiality of Social Innovation

Social innovation exhibits characteristics of path dependence and environmental dependence, which fundamentally determine the crucial association between place and space about its occurrence and development (Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez 2012; Ostanel 2017). Places and cities are significant for social innovation as they arise from locally constructed responses to relevant societal issues. The specific context involves transforming societal challenges into tangible social demands (Dyck and Van den Broeck 2013; Tricarico et al. 2021).

If social innovation is understood as a process involving the transformation of social practices and stimulating societal change, emphasizing the generation of new strategies, concepts, and ideas to meet social needs and address social problems (Moulaert et al. 2005a; Mulgan 2006; Phills Jr et al. 2008), then addressing the issues and challenges faced by cities/communities requires finding the basis for social-spatial change at different levels (urban, community, existing life organizations, etc.), focusing on the distinct characteristics of their respective contexts (Ostanel 2017), and combining local knowledge with the needs of local communities using interdisciplinary approaches (Innes and Booher 1999). On the one hand, social innovation provides new opportunities for urban development through organizational transformation and spatial utilization, formulation of development strategies, and promotion of dynamic democratization in urban governance. On the other hand, a combination of different institutions forms a spatial network for social innovation that enhances the capacity for urban initiatives through establishing communication and governance models. All these require a comprehensive understanding of specific localities and spatial environments.

Space is both a product of human activities and shapes the background of human activities (Soja 1996; Harvey 2009). As a container for social relations (Lefebvre 1991), urban space encompasses symbols and power in dynamic relationships, accommodating social differences such as class, gender, and race. It can reflect and reproduce societal inequalities while serving as a platform for protests, social movements, and collective identity formation. As the physical form and structure of cities, space undergoes transformations driven by multiple levels, including economic globalization, technological advancements, and cultural exchanges (Sassen 2001). The reconfiguration of power relations has also blurred the boundaries between public and private domains (Foucault 1982; Soja 2010). From this perspective, social innovation involves discussions on whether it serves as a driving force for structural changes in power relations or merely complements linear political systems (Ardill and Lemes de Oliveira 2018), as well as debates on radical versus complementary forms of social innovation (Domanski et al. 2019).

On the one hand, Ardill and Lemes de Oliveira (2018) categorize social innovation in urban environments into two types: "social innovation as a driver of structural changes in power relations" and "social innovation as a complementary interpretation to current political systems." The former emphasizes that social innovation changes power relations, challenges existing power distribution and organizational forms to

promote societal transformation and creates new social fairness and inclusivity. From this perspective, social innovation serves as a means to promote equal, democratic, and just power relations. On the other hand, "social innovation as a complementary interpretation to current political systems" views social innovation as an addition or extension to the existing political system. It may not directly challenge existing power relations but instead seeks to address problems or meet needs through new non-traditional approaches. This type of social innovation may aim for something other than fundamental societal change but to provide more effective and fair solutions within the current societal framework.

On the other hand, Domanski et al. (2019) divides the current broad definition of social innovation into two polarities: the first is seen as radical social innovation (Ayob et al. 2016a; Christiaens et al. 2007; Nicholls et al. 2015; Novy and Hammer 2007), which is often critical and aims to challenge existing power relations and structures. The second is seen as complementary social innovation, aiming to meet societal needs more effectively than existing methods. This type of innovation typically occurs within top-down power relations (Bonifacio 2014; Marques et al. 2018) with a broader range of beneficiaries.

The Spatiality of social innovation prominently manifests in the deep integration and close correlation between space and social innovation, which possess their respective "sociality." The development and changes in space are not merely objective or physical transformations but rather occur within specific historical-cultural-social contexts through social practices, relationships, and power structures. This "spatial embeddedness" determines that the process of change in space and place is a core element of social innovation. Space (including spatial forms, scales, and scalar articulations such as boundaries, reconfigurations, and networks), place (involving local identity rebuilding and defragmentation of urban space), as well as the interaction between space and place constitute the spatial outcomes of social innovation (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011b).

In addition, the perspective on the dimension of social innovation space also points out that social innovation within the urban framework is not only about product or service innovation but can also be an innovation in the reproduction of actual physical space (Amin 2002). It highlights the spatial nature of social innovation in place-making and spatial network processes based on regional development initiatives, forming the most concentrated discussion area on social innovation in current urban research.

2.2.3 Space Creation and Social Innovation

The production of space is a multidisciplinary research field that explores not only the physical reconstruction and transformation of urban spaces but also how space is reimagined and produced at social and cultural levels. There are three influential directions in the study and discussion of spatial production. Firstly, it focuses on how space reflects and influences social relations based on Lefebvre's spatial theory (Lefebvre 1991). Secondly, it examines how global capital reshapes and enriches geographical and social structures, particularly in the context of neoliberalism from Harvey's political economy perspective (Harvey 1985). Thirdly, it adopts a cross-disciplinary approach from sociology and human geography to investigate how space is produced, defined, and understood in everyday life (Massey 2005; Soja et al. 2011). Despite differences in perspectives and methods among these influential studies, they have demonstrated that spatial production as a multidimensional concept encompasses economic, social, cultural, and political transformations. Especially under the backdrop of globalization, modernization, and the post-industrialization era, urban space reproduction not only relates to the renewal of the physical environment but also has significant implications for residents' quality of life, social capital development, and economic recovery (Jacobs 1961; Harvey 2012), which significantly promotes interdisciplinary approaches to studying social innovation within a spatial framework as well as empirical research on social innovation in urban areas.

In urban regeneration, new innovative strategies are needed to adapt to and lead cities' constantly changing spatial and social structures. Social innovation plays a vital role in urban spatial production by reshaping urban spatial structures, adjusting power relations, and reconstructing social order (Maccallum et al. 2009b; Moulaert et al. 2005a; Pultrone 2017a)). It has excellent spatial planning and production potential, becoming a new method for achieving a balanced value system in space reproduction.

At the local level, the production of space promotes the generation and development of social innovation activities. By intervening in different elements such as policies, planning, projects, and communities, spatial production provides a powerful tool and platform for addressing various social issues in urban renewal processes. The positive outcomes of urban renewal involve promoting empowerment, encouraging

cooperation between public and private actors to create shared spatial value, and fostering innovation in community relationships and governance (Romanelli and Zbucheá 2020). This complex 'social-spatial' process makes spatial production a concrete social innovation practice (Christmann et al. 2017). The complex social challenges faced in urban renewal constitute an essential driving force for implementing innovation in spatial reproduction. The 'novelty' in spatial production is widely studied as an example of social innovation ((Dawson and Daniel 2010a; Jessop et al. 2013; Mulgan 2006; Mumford 2002). As spatial production changes existing social relationships and promotes the development of local community social capital and inclusive participation, it is also seen as a complex multidimensional process of social innovation itself (Christmann et al. 2020a). Therefore, social innovation is also a key means to lead and promote urban space regeneration and evolution in response to urbanization challenges (Gerometta et al. 2005; Moulaert et al. 2005).

In the realm of urban studies, interventions in urban planning and design are considered an important aspect of promoting the transformation and reproduction of urban spaces, thus achieving social innovation (Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 1999). Spatial production is a physical expression reflecting social dynamics and relationships (Harvey 1989), and social innovation in spatial production can be achieved through cultivating urban public spaces (Lefebvre 1991) or providing open and collaborative spaces to support various socio-economic activities (Soha 1996). Public space plays a role in social integration by redesigning and improving the lives of marginalized groups on the city's edges (Sennett 1990), implementing shared space strategies, and creating more inclusive and interactive urban environments (Gehl 2000). At the same time, innovative architectural practices and sustainable urban design are important in promoting social innovation and its thinking development (Guy and Marvin 2001). Urban projects that support environmental sustainability and social inclusiveness not only contribute to urban ecological balance but also promote changes in citizen behavior to guide cities towards a more harmonious direction (Banerjee and Loukaitou-Sideris 1998).

In the context of communities, social innovation in spatial production refers to the process of 're-socializing' urban spaces through innovative approaches, thereby transforming social relationships between groups and individuals within the community to meet urban/social needs (Maccallum et al. 2009b; Ostanel 2017). Community-led spatial production projects and practices can promote the development of social capital

and enhance local governance (Cooke and Kothari 2001), strengthening social capital and community cohesion (Putnam 1993), thus activating communities as intermediaries between markets, global forces, and societal change (Hansen et al. 2001). In community-led spatial production, public participation is crucial for structuring the process of space production and improving governance quality and efficiency to achieve more equitable and sustainable urban spatial outcomes (Fung and Wright 2001). Social innovation in spatial production enhances citizen engagement and cooperation as an integral part of empowering actions not only better reflecting residents' needs and desires but also increasing decision-making transparency and fairness, enabling residents and communities to effectively participate in shaping future urban forms.

2.3 CORPORATE SOCIAL INNOVATION

With the continuous deepening of social innovation in the market, many practices have shown that social innovation may include new business practices, as most business innovations have demonstrated an evident friendliness towards innovators and communities (Pol and Ville 2009a). Since social innovation can occur in different forms of organizations such as government, companies, non-governmental organizations, etc., the judgment that enterprises can increasingly create and develop social innovation has been widely confirmed. In the business field, social innovation has become a dominant term in corporate social responsibility and business ethics, guiding people to rethink the roles of social enterprises, social economy, commercial institutions, and private sectors in socio-economic development (Moulaert et al. 2013).

The Grameen Bank, founded by Professor Muhammad Yunus, is a classic example of corporate social innovation. It has played an important role in helping the impoverished overcome poverty through the provision of financial services. This innovative initiative has driven social change and even earned Professor Yunus the Nobel Peace Prize. The Subscription Library case was exemplified in Franklin's study on social innovation to demonstrate how corporate networks foster creativity and development in general (Mumford 2002). Fair trade is widely recognized as a paradigmatic example of commercial social innovation, as it generates substantial social and environmental value through pioneering business models (Phills Jr et al. 2008).

Other notable examples of corporate social innovation include Wikipedia Open University (Mulgan 2006), Google Scholar (Ponte and Klein 2016), micro-finance (Cajaiba-Santana 2014), collaborative fundraising (The Forbes Funds, 2018)¹, the Fair Trade movement promoting environmental sustainability (Stanford Business Center for Social Innovation 2019)², as well as major companies like Apple, Siemens, and Dell addressing China's societal needs through startup initiatives (Salim et al. 2015). These cases clearly illustrate that profit-driven entities increasingly recognize their potential to develop and manage projects focused on social innovation.

"Ecological innovation" and "green innovation" are key concepts in the fields of innovation economics and environmental economics (Rennings 2000). They emphasize how new market opportunities can develop at the societal level (Prahalad and Hammond 2002), and how product and process innovations can promote environmental integration (Berchicci and Bodewes 2005; Foster and Green 2000; Phillimore 2001). "Open innovation" (Chesbrough 2008) highlights businesses' use of internal and external ideas and pathways to drive innovation. These concepts are essential to social innovation within the business domain (Boons et al. 2013; Demirel and Kesidou 2012). The challenges posed by globalization to sustainable development goals have prompted companies, organizations, and firms to seek more promising innovative solutions that yield greater benefits while addressing social issues (Caroli et al. 2018; Mirvis et al. 2016b; Murray et al. 2008). Social innovation has rapidly gained traction in the business sector as it reflects continuous efforts by companies to enhance social responsibility through impact investing initiatives such as value investments or venture philanthropy (Zhang et al. 2013).

2.3.1 The Concept of Corporate Social Innovation

In the business field, Peter Drucker was the first to introduce the concept of social innovation explicitly. In his book "Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices," published in 1973, he proposed the idea of "social innovation," placing it alongside product and management innovation as a type of corporate innovation (Drucker 1973). Later on, "corporate social innovation" was defined as companies identifying unmet

¹ The Forbes Funds. <https://forbesfunds.org/> (Assessed by Nov 2019).

² Stanford Business Center for Social Innovation. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/centers-initiatives/csi>

needs and proposing solutions to address them in order to create new markets. It involves strategic alliances between companies and social sectors with the fundamental principle of promoting company development through addressing long-term social issues (Kanter 1998). Social needs serve as a means for promoting company development and sources for corporate innovation. Subsequently, more research adopted the expression “corporate social innovation” and defined it as innovative activities and services driven by companies aiming to meet societal needs involving new ideas, concepts, relationships etc. (Canestrino et al. 2015; de los Reyes et al. 2017; Michelinini and Fiorentino 2012). This comprehensive approach can enhance employee motivation and transform company image and strategy while generating more socially relevant corporate innovative systems and culture (Herrera 2015; Mirvis et al. 2016b). Additionally, companies can successfully define and develop related social innovation projects targeting vulnerable groups, the poor, and marginalized communities so that benefits generated from innovations accumulate within these specific societal segments.

The development of corporate social innovation is closely related to corporate social responsibility. Firstly, the importance of corporate social responsibility lies in the fact that the interests of other stakeholders may be affected by or influenced by the activities of a company (Mitchell et al. 1997). Therefore, managers of profit-making enterprises should not only consider owners' interests. When companies fulfill their social responsibilities to obtain commercial profits, they demonstrate more robust product and process innovation capabilities and are more likely to succeed (Bocquet and Mothe 2011). The emphasis on corporate social responsibility strategies (or designs) highlights how companies can develop ideas and create new opportunities in the social sector through innovative methods and practices that serve both new markets and provide community benefits (Kanter 1998), which has promoted a shift from corporate social responsibility towards corporate social innovation to some extent.

Furthermore, social innovation by economic sectors is an application of corporate social responsibility in enterprise management (Moulaert 2009; Rexhepi et al. 2013). On one hand, corporate social responsibility design primarily focuses on how to apply design to address social, environmental, political, and economic issues. The design process regarding products or services (Papanek 1985; Whitney 1993; Whitney 1993; Dearden et al. 2007) constitutes a significant aspect of corporate innovation and can bring about notable social or environmental benefits. Therefore, they should be regarded as forms of social innovation (Davey et al. 2007). On the other hand,

innovation often emerges during the implementation process of corporate social responsibility strategies (Hanke and Stark 2009; Harazin and Kósi 2013; Mulgan 2006), where these innovations result in new products, services, processes, or market spaces driven by societal concerns such as environment or sustainability issues (Hedstrom et al. 2005). Henceforth, they should also align with the definition of social innovation.

Many companies' innovation experiences have proven that well-designed corporate social responsibility projects have a strong motivating effect, enabling companies to apply imaginative business thinking to social issues and thus promote the development of social innovation (Mulgan et al. 2007). Especially in regional or community development issues, business activities related to community challenges further enhance companies' sense of social responsibility (Dawson and Daniel 2010b), thereby stimulating innovation. Therefore, corporate social innovation is directly defined by corporate social responsibility, namely that corporate social innovation is defined as companies putting their CSR strategies into practice through innovative products, services, and business models (Altuna et al. 2015). In addition, corporate social responsibility is also used together with theories on social innovation to construct research models related to sustainability (Hull and Rothenberg 2008).

2.3.2 Understanding Corporate Social Innovation in Three Dimensions

Under the framework of social innovation theory, the discussion and research on corporate social innovation can be understood from three dimensions: innovation goals, innovative practices, and value creation.

- **The objectives of corporate social innovation**

In the business field, innovation is often associated with problem-solving. As a goal-oriented approach, innovation provides practical solutions to organizational problems (Sudbury-Riley et al. 2020). Technological innovation (Bower and Chirstensen 1995; Cohen and Levinthal 1990; Prahalad and Hamel 1997) and economic innovation (Arrow 1971; Freeman and Soete 2009; Romer 1990) have long been the focus of business attention. Companies need to seek new sources and innovative methods to achieve sustainable development. At the same time, companies also need to take on more social responsibility by providing creative and innovative business

solutions to address challenging social, economic, and environmental issues. Numerous corporate practices have shown that social innovations involving business models can effectively meet the needs of underserved populations while offering new strategies for significant social issues such as climate change, ecosystems, education, healthcare, etc. These efforts directly contribute to corporate engagement in social innovation (Mirvis et al. 2016b).

Identifying the objectives is also a key entry point for understanding social enterprises and social innovation in the business field. As the purpose of the social economy is to provide goods or services to community members rather than seeking profit, it is considered a legal-institutional innovation (Defourny and Nyssens 2013). Therefore, social enterprises are commonly defined as companies or organizations that conduct business for specific social purposes. They aim to meet social needs by applying innovative methods from different fields, including new organizational forms or new markets explored by these enterprises (Haugh 2005).

The social innovation approach of using business methods to address societal issues (Munir 2016) is described as "the corporate social responsibility practices of businesses engaged in cross-sector collaboration" (Mair and Martí 2006), which contributes to the improvement of product and service efficiency in social enterprises (Reis and Clohesy 2001). This integration also promotes the convergence between social innovation and social entrepreneurship. In this sense, the combination of entrepreneurship, business methods, and social goals is considered the key characteristic of social entrepreneurship (Alvord et al. 2004), as the essence of a social entrepreneur's spirit lies in inseparably linking purpose and means together (Auerswald 2009).

The search and identification of opportunities to address social problems and meet societal needs are key elements that connect social entrepreneurship with social innovation (de Bruin and Ferrante 2011; Korsgaard 2011; Lehner and Kaniskas 2012; Perrini et al. 2010; Phills Jr et al. 2008). Social entrepreneurship involves engaging in innovative activities with social objectives (Austin et al. 2006), exploring and discovering new methods for delivering new products and services (Abbate et al. 2019), or creating new ventures or innovating existing organizational management approaches, in order to address unmet social needs that the public sector or market have failed to fulfill and tackle societal challenges while enhancing societal wealth (Zahra et al. 2009).

- **The innovative practices of corporate social innovation**

With the increasing intersection of innovation in business and society, research on social innovation in business, especially corporate social innovation, emphasizes that innovation should be a focal point of relevant studies rather than organizations or individuals (Phills Jr, Deiglmeier, and Miller 2008). Although the same social benefit goals are an essential intrinsic connection between social entrepreneurship and social innovation, companies that consider or focus on social issues and decision-making environments often combine with social entrepreneurship to seek better development (Aguilera et al. 2004). At the same time, more and more characteristics and benefits of innovation demonstrate advantages for both businesses and society, exerting significant influence on various levels of societal and economic development (Agostini, Nosella, and Filippini 2017; Eggers and Macmillan 2013; Mirvis et al. 2016b). Therefore, this market-based approach to social innovation is seen as a market-oriented societal method (European Commission 2010) and is considered by companies, organizations, and entrepreneurs as a triggering concept for "successful innovation and change" to some extent (Dawson and Daniel 2010b).

Schumpeter's research on innovation categorizes it into five types, namely new or improved products, new or improved processes, opening a new market, obtaining new sources of raw materials or semi-finished products, and organizational change (Schumpeter 1934; Martin 2015). Correspondingly, the types of corporate social innovation also include product innovation (see, for example, (Iyer and Soberman 2016; Su 2023)), service innovation (see, for example, (Aksoy et al. 2019; Osborne and Brown 2005)), organizational innovation (see for example, (Rexhepi et al. 2013; Ruef 2002)), business innovation (see for example, (Lee and Jay 2015; Mention and Torkkeli 2012)), as well as technological innovation (see, for example, (Antonelli and Scellato 2013; Gupta et al. 2020)), and innovative combinations of these methods.

In addition, attention to enterprise innovation practice also includes the design and implementation of innovation strategies and corporate social responsibility strategies. For example, companies can integrate social responsibility strategies with social innovation to solve societal problems while creating economic value to achieve business strategies with more significant social impact (Porter and Kramer 2006; Crane et al. 2014). How companies can adopt innovative strategies to address systemic social challenges, act as catalysts for social innovation, and understand their roles in different social environments (Mair and Martí 2006; Mulgan 2006). How companies can integrate social innovation into their business models through strategic alliances and

collaborations with non-profit organizations, as well as solve environmental, educational, and healthcare issues through business practices (Kanter 1999; Austin et al. 2006). Moreover, how companies can stimulate, conduct, and manage internal social innovation within organizations to address societal problems (Di Domenico et al. 2010; Tidd and Bessant 2015).

There have been attempts in research to differentiate between business innovation and social innovation by using the terms "radical and disruptive innovation" and "catalytic innovations" (McDermott and O'Connor 2002). Radical innovation is widely studied as it is considered the foundation for long-term survival and sustainable development of businesses (Chandy and Telli 1998; Geroski et al. 1993), representing promising ideas with unproven possibilities (Mulgan et al. 2007). However, managing social innovation requires specific requirements (Colarelli O'Connor and Demartino 2006; O'Connor and Ayers 2005). On the other hand, catalytic innovations can help businesses address insufficient social issues by providing friendly solutions. It involves completely changing traditional products or developing services based on specific needs. Therefore, it aligns more with the requirements of social innovation (Christensen et al. 2018). Enterprise social innovation implies generating systemic-level social impact through expanding business models. It is crucial for nationally driven catalytic innovations motivated by a societal mission (Mohan and Potnis 2010).

- **The Value creation of corporate social innovation**

The "non-economic" consequences of technological and economic innovation in business have long been a subject of concern, initially identified as institutional changes, dislocation effects, and depletion of the natural environment (Kuznets 1974). Later on, Emerson and Twersky (1996) introduced the concept of "double bottom line motivation" for social entrepreneurs, emphasizing their focus on financial performance and social impact. In Greg Dees's seminal article "The Meaning of 'Social Entrepreneurship'" (Dees 1998), he highlights that the key distinction between business and social entrepreneurs lies in their mission to create and sustain social value. Subsequently, Elkington et al. (2006) further proposed the "Triple Bottom Line" concept, which integrates the pursuit of creating social value within a company's social impact and sustainable profitability.

For enterprises, identifying business opportunities in complex social challenges with an innovative spirit and approach is an important way to achieve sustainable development and fulfill social responsibilities. In the current era, considering social

issues has become increasingly integrated into corporate strategies rather than just a peripheral agenda (Bode and Singh 2018). Therefore, businesses need to invest strategically in addressing and solving social problems, thereby creating an innovation ecosystem that generates both economic and social value (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017; van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016b; Shane 2000; Wilson and Millman 2003).

In corporate social innovation, the social value as an outcome of innovation is primarily manifested through 'non-commercial benefits' closely related to community development during the innovation process, focusing on actions based on and aimed at improving community quality of life (Dawson and Daniel 2010b). In this sense, enterprises create social value by innovating to achieve new or improved products and services. Secondly, innovations adopted by enterprises in response to significant societal challenges often require changes in social norms, values, and expectations. It means that enterprises shape informal institutions through innovation, and social value is reflected in different types of direct and indirect interactions between innovators and users during the innovation process (Purtik and Arenas 2019). Furthermore, according to (Phills Jr et al. 2008), innovation itself is something that creates social value. This fundamental reason underlies the multidimensional sources of social innovation because different institutions and organizations possess the potential to create value.

The study of social value in corporate social innovation cannot be separated from discussing its relationship with economic value. It mainly focuses on two crucial aspects: the creation of "dual value" and "shared value." Firstly, the concept of a "new dual institutional logic of social-economic value creation" (Weerawardena and Mort 2012) laid the foundation for analyzing 'dual value creation' in corporate social innovation. In this context, dual value is defined as both the social value of target communities and the economic value of current organizations (Mair and Martí 2006; Weerawardena et al. 2021). The business model refers to fundamentally rethinking transaction content, structure, governance, etc., to create value by leveraging business opportunities (Amit and Zott 2001; Bock et al. 2012).

Secondly, the concept of "shared value creation" developed by (Porter and Kramer 2006) has a significant impact on promoting the application of social innovation methods in various fields (Foroudi et al. 2021), because the process of corporate social innovation itself promotes the creation of more shared value and social welfare among different stakeholders (Popoli 2017). It is also the result of businesses pursuing synergy

between business value and social value, which fully reflects entrepreneurs' efforts to create "socially shared value" (Lumpkin et al. 2013).

Furthermore, numerous studies have confirmed that the outcome of creating social value is closely linked to meeting societal needs (or addressing social problems) - social innovation contributes to human and societal well-being by satisfying these needs or solving these problems, thus generating social value (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010; Moulaert et al. 2005b; Phills Jr et al. 2008). Therefore, corporate social innovation inherently includes creating social value as a responsibility and obligation of businesses (Auerswald 2009). Ultimately, they all point towards businesses' innovative potential and agency in addressing complex societal challenges within sustainable goals, as well as the responsibilities and obligations that businesses should assume as significant actors in society.

2.3.3 Mechanism of Corporate Social Innovation

How to manage and develop innovation is another critical topic in the research of corporate social innovation. Relevant studies discuss aspects such as the network of enterprises, business innovation, and collaboration between enterprises and non-enterprises in corporate social innovation. They mainly focus on knowledge transfer and social capital development in social innovation (Inkpen and Tsang 2005; Mowery et al. 1996; Reus et al. 2016; Sarala et al. 2016). Many companies' practices and results in social innovation driven by major societal, economic, and environmental issues have shown that knowledge exchange within and outside organizations and co-creation processes play a crucial role. Due to its robust interactivity and experiential characteristics, companies enhance their learning capabilities and increase social capital to facilitate knowledge transfer while establishing a virtuous cycle among these three factors for the effective development of social innovation (Mirvis et al. 2016).

Firstly, social innovation requires diverse knowledge and is a process of multiple knowledge coexistence and continuous interaction among different entities (Krlev et al. 2014). The importance of corporate social innovation as a strategic position for companies reflects in providing new solutions to social problems, which requires deep collaboration between departments through utilizing assets and expertise (Dionisio and de Vargas 2020). To develop and implement new ideas, companies need to actively

interact with their social environment in terms of knowledge exchange, absorption, and transformation (Tao and Gao 2019), promoting the development of social innovation through the exchange and application of knowledge and resources, especially by acquiring tacit knowledge from the external environment (Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Krlev et al. 2014). In globalization, where the information revolution has made the knowledge environment more fluid, "open innovation" demands that companies value and promote knowledge exchange (Chesbrough 2003). The continuous flow of knowledge and innovation among organizations, partners, individuals, and other entities is important for finding more effective solutions to societal issues (Murphy et al. 2013; Spila et al. 2016; Unceta et al. 2017).

Secondly, apart from facilitating the transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge among multiple entities and forming a shared knowledge network, cross-sector collaboration and promoting stakeholder co-innovation are another critical mechanism for achieving corporate social innovation (Drucker 1984; Herrera 2015; Auerswald 2009). Axelrod and Cohen (1999) emphasized the importance of reciprocity, trust, and information sharing in social networks in their theoretical framework of "cooperative evolution." As social capital is an important avenue for businesses to acquire resources, information, and technological support, it plays a positive role in fostering innovation activities within organizations as well as creating human capital at individual and organizational levels (Burt 1997; Coleman 1988; Putnam et al. 2003). The combination of cross-sector collaboration with innovation networks and public policies can effectively promote resource sharing, knowledge transfer, and technological exchange to drive the development of corporate social innovation. Simultaneously, promoting the participation of entrepreneurs, target beneficiaries, and various stakeholders in addressing societal issues through social innovation can effectively stimulate local entrepreneurs' foresightfulness and passion while encouraging proactive involvement from target beneficiaries. This approach is conducive to cultivating creativity within enterprises and enhancing their ability to transform knowledge into commercial practices/solutions. Ultimately, it facilitates the effective promotion of social innovation (Piore and Sabel 1984; Becker and Smith 2018; Ozkan-Canbolat and Beraha 2016).

Furthermore, strategic coordination, business structure and processes, organizational culture, network capabilities, and conflict resolution agents are fundamental to promoting corporate social innovation (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020;

Herrera 2015). Companies will use unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral approaches to promote the progress of social systems based on the size of user groups participating in social innovation (Purtik and Arenas 2019). They will also use internal or external driving paths to promote the development of social innovation (Andersen 2014). Small businesses can also promote the development of social innovation through strategies such as user interaction, trial-and-error learning, rapid iteration, cross-border integration, and single-point breakthroughs (Aliasghar et al. 2023). In addition, mechanisms for corporate social innovation include solving social problems by applying company business resources and management capabilities (Cohen and Muñoz 2017; Kao et al. 2016; Kaul and Luo 2018; Kramer and Pfitzer 2016), and effectively creating social value by implementing and expanding concepts of corporate responsibility (Fearne et al. 2012; Hillestad et al. 2010; Manz et al. 2011).

2.4 SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE CULTURE FIELD

Due to the transition from a post-industrial society to a symbol economy (Zukin 1995), there has been an acceleration in the repositioning of culture within the value chain. Cultural initiatives and actions are essential research directions within social innovation. In postmodern and post-industrial societies, cultural factors are widely recognized as critical drivers of change in social development. They focus on organizing and developing cultural initiatives (typically composed of diverse elements such as art projects, community participation in cultural activities, and cultural heritage preservation) closely related to sustainable issues. These initiatives aim to reshape social and economic structures, catalyze socio-economic transformation, improve residents' quality of life, and contribute to social sustainability.

2.4.1 Culture and Social Innovation

Culture is considered an essential element of innovation (Billi and Tricarico 2019). It is a platform for generating economic and social value through innovation (see, for example, Rausell-Köster et al. 2022; Sacco et al. 2012)), which also functions as

component of innovative outcomes due to its involvement in learning and developing new ideas (Jaskyte and Dressler 2004).

By inspiring creativity and innovation, culture brings about positive social impacts, including education, health, inclusivity, well-being, urban revitalization, and promoting cohesion and youth participation (Boix Domenech et al. 2022; Sacco and Segre 2009), influencing accessible communication and interaction among individuals within society (Brocchi 2008). Furthermore, it transforms organizations' abilities to handle change by creating human and social capital while fostering a sense of identity, motivating social actors to design sustainable actions and plans for societal welfare (Nadarajah and Yamamoto 2007).

Culture has the potential to enhance organizational capacity for managing and adapting to change through the cultivation of human capital and social capital, fostering a sense of collective identity (Tavano Blessi et al. 2012; Throsby 1999), and incentivizing social actors to develop sustainable strategies and plans for societal well-being (Duxbury et al. 2012; Nadarajah and Yamamoto 2007). Through the coordinated integration of horizontal soft innovation processes, cultural empowerment enhances people's life skills and territorial resilience (Sacco et al. 2012), enabling cities and regions to respond to competition and societal challenges from new perspectives.¹

This “horizontal impact” in promoting innovation across various sectors of society (economy, politics, education, etc.) makes culture and creativity the engine of social innovation (Abeledo and Rausell 2012; Go et al. 2014; Hall 2004; Lazzeretti 2004; Sacco et al. 2014; Scott 2010). On the one hand, cultural investment plays a leading role in fostering local knowledge production and circulation networks as well as sociality and identity formation (Sacco and Blessi 2009), benefiting meaningful dialogues among social actors and contributing to the cultivation of social innovation. On the other hand, culture serves as an important component of informal institutions by incentivizing individuals to create value systems and promoting the appreciation and preservation of cultural traditions. This transformation process makes culture a productive force for generating innovations with broader societal impacts (Tao and Gao 2019).

¹ For example, the World Cities Culture Forum 2019 report highlighted how 14 global cities have prioritized climate and environmental considerations in their cultural policies. (See http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/assets/others/WCCF_Report_June_28_FINAL_v4.pdf)

The diversity of cultural characteristics is another essential factor that stimulates innovation and holds significant meaning for diversification, systematization, and socialization in the innovation process (Rausell-Köster et al. 2013). Cultural diversity catalyzes social innovation because new ideas and creativity often emerge from the intersection and interaction of different cultures. It also facilitates social innovation by promoting openness to different perspectives and viewpoints. The inherent connection between cultural diversity and economic development indirectly reflects how cultural diversity provides a foundation for social innovation (Alesina and Ferrara 2005).

Charleys Landry's (2000, 2006) and Richard Florida's (2002) notable contributions lie in their promotion of the concept of the "creative class," which emphasizes the importance of exchange among creative workers in generating innovation. Multiculturalism and open societies attract creative talents whose innovative abilities drive urban development, prosperity, and progress. Furthermore, team diversity is important in solving complex problems and generating innovative solutions.

In addition, the cultural, artistic, and creative sectors play a crucial role in social innovation (see Vitale and Membretti, Chapter 13; André et al., Chapter 18 in (Moulaert, Leuven, et al. 2013)). They drive innovation by injecting creativity and knowledge into the local economy and its outputs effectively (KEA 2009, 2012), thus creating growth and employment opportunities (Billi and Tricarico 2019). The opportunities culture provides for innovative and sustainable entrepreneurial development are essential in addressing significant issues such as poverty, educational equity, and environmental health. Traditional economic policies alone cannot achieve this; innovative approaches are needed to break through traditional systems and policy models while fostering collective action, divergent thinking, and shared responsibility. In this process, culture can cultivate cognitive imagination, mobilize shared values, and overcome barriers to inspire creativity and innovation that lead to social change, which completes the social innovation process of "cultural inputs translate into social and economic outputs" (Florida 2002; Friedenwald-Fishman 2011).

2.4.2 Urban Cultural Regeneration and Social Innovation

In the context of urban development, culture and social innovation have a mutually reinforcing relationship that can lead to "new, unpredictable potential" (Ferilli et al. 2017; Macaione et al. 2018). On the one hand, culture and heritage contribute to the redevelopment of cities as essential sources for promoting sustainable social and environment development (Perry et al. 2020; Romanelli and Zbucha 2020; Sacco et al. 2013; Tremblay and Pilati 2013). On the other hand, social innovation emphasizes empowerment, aiming at activating local communities and marginalized groups and supporting for diverse expressions, which enhances social cohesion (Della Lucia and Trunfio 2018; Moulaert et al. 2004; Turrini et al. 2018).

Therefore, culture-based approaches to urban regeneration are considered innovative urban strategies (Go et al. 2014; Hutton 2004; Sacco et al. 2013). They are also widely recognized as concrete practices/models/tools of social innovation (see, for example, (Bontje and Musterd 2009; Jessop et al. 2013; Romanelli and Zbucha 2020; Turrini et al. 2018). Due to the contribution of culture and arts in promoting social innovation (André et al. 2013; Tremblay and Pilati 2013), cultural renewal in cities supports social innovation initiatives by formulating and implementing culture- and creativity-oriented urban policies and practices. It integrates economic and social logic within urban regeneration strategies to foster public-private collaboration. Establishing connections between social innovation, social cohesion, and the arts/culture sector provides solutions for pressing urban social issues.

In many European countries, there is a significant social background where cultural initiatives and/or actions are starting to connect with social innovation due to the substantial reduction in public budgets for arts and culture since the 21st century, which has forced them to seek involvement from other societal actors outside of the public sector. In order to integrate economic and social logic in urban cultural revitalization, it is necessary to bring together people as co-producers and co-decision makers, fostering collaboration among different stakeholders (Della Lucia et al. 2016; Moulaert and Van den Broeck 2018; Sacco et al. 2012; Saunders and Mulgan 2017; Tricarico et al. 2020). By harnessing culture as a catalyst for broader innovation, promoting the socialization of cultural arts, and facilitating community revitalization (Evers and Ewert 2015; Gerometta et al. 2005; Turrini et al. 2018).

In the urban development framework, the first topic that receives significant attention is cultural policy and social innovation. Generally, cultural policy is vital in promoting social innovation within urban renewal. As policymakers increasingly focus on utilizing cultural projects and policies to address societal issues, there is a need for cultural policy to foster a new model of innovation that connects with knowledge more broadly, which involves promoting the constructive use of knowledge and values, establishing dialogue between different cultures and collaborative forms, and supporting cooperative governance (Ansell and Gash 2008; European Union 2017; Willis et al. 2004). Therefore, in driving urban revitalization, cultural policy needs to support and promote cultural and artistic projects that enhance citizen participation and community engagement in democratic innovation (Mulcahy 2006), thereby fostering urban revitalization and promoting social cohesion (Belfiore 2002). In an era of "open innovation" networks (Chesbrough 2008), culture and art projects contribute to democratic innovation by incorporating social, cultural, and creative production into regional planning and policies (Tricarico et al. 2020). It facilitates transforming localized services based on local needs through collaboration through cultural, art, and creativity (Cerreto et al. 2018), promoting the impact of the cultural economy on social innovation within cultural policies (Heilbrun and Gray 2001), thus better driving economic, social, and cultural development at both city and local levels (Pratt 2005). Research in this field also explores how economic and political institutions influence decision-making processes and the effectiveness of urban cultural policies (Grodach and Silver 2012), as well as how cultural policies promote urban renewal, city branding and sustainable development in globalization context (Anheier et al. 2012).

Secondly, numerous studies have attempted to explore urban cultural renewal practices as tools for social innovation from the perspectives of cultural practices and societal changes. Many examples have already proven that developing innovative cultural and artistic activities at the community level can effectively promote social innovation by constructing and generating new lifestyles in currently challenging community systems with the achievement of social cohesion (García et al. 2015; Grodach 2011; Gorbis and Vian 2016). These studies have found that everyday cultural practices, such as artistic performances, literary creations, and public discussions, can provide a platform for experimentation and communication in social innovation. Combining cultural and artistic practices with social innovation improves societal and human capital (Tremblay and Pilati 2013), which helps address social disorder and

bridge societal divisions by improving social relationships (Goldbard 2006). Community capital can be promoted through the combination of community arts and social innovation to facilitate social interaction and achieve common goals (Putnam, 2000), influencing individual development and social structures (Certeau 1984; Matarasso 1997; Stern and Seifert 2009).

Furthermore, cultural participation and community empowerment are other important themes in urban cultural renewal and social innovation research. Due to the complex social challenges urban revitalization faces, such as social exclusion and inequality, it should be a comprehensive process that includes physical beautification and social empowerment (Moulaert et al. 2004). Citizens' cultural participation has significant value in inspiring social innovation and cultural diversity, and different forms of cultural participation combined with social innovation can significantly impact community development and societal transformation. In the network of urban cultural revival constructed by culture, creativity, and social innovation, promoting interaction and collaboration among different stakeholders is crucial for achieving innovative goals and revival objectives (Cerreta et al. 2021; Tricarico et al. 2020). This relates to providing socio-political capabilities for the participating groups and initiatives (Moulaert and Van den Broeck 2018), enhancing collective wisdom as a means to promote urban development (Saunders and Mulgan 2017), as well as strengthening individual and collective confidence through cultural participation to counteract and reverse the reproduction of inequalities and disadvantages in places (André and Abreu 2009).

Dawson and Daniel (2010) promotes a specific analytical framework to explore the role of cultural participation in addressing social issues and meeting societal needs, which has influenced research on cultural participation and social innovation. It is widely recognized that cultural participation promotes social innovation by enhancing individuals' and collectives' creative abilities, facilitating their accumulation of cultural and social capital, thus driving inclusive and sustainable social innovation (Rao and Walton 2004). Engaging in the active production of creative content through direct cultural participation helps individuals learn to construct new innovative meanings and practices by challenging their previous beliefs, biases, and attitudes (Gruenfeld 2010). The socio-cognitive effects related to innovation and change are closely associated with cultural participation, exerting significant influence on the direction of innovation, aligning with Sacco's discourse on the Culture 3.0 model (Sacco et al. 2012), which

suggests that inviting decision-makers and entrepreneurs to participate in challenges based on the fusion of cultural heritage and creativity can promote broader socio-cultural innovations, thereby fostering horizontal connections within the entire economy and society while encouraging culturally-led sustainable urban development models.

In addition, in the context of the macro background of cultural and creative economic development, this article explores how urban cultural initiatives can promote economic diversification, especially in cities experiencing a decline in traditional industries. The concept of cultural industry and creative economy is crucial for economic transformation and new growth points. Many studies have explored entrepreneurship and innovation from a cultural perspective (DiMaggio 1982; Gehman and Soublière 2017; Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; Peterson and Berger 1971), focusing on how culture and creative industries can bring about sustainable and balanced regional development.

The cultural and creative industries are considered key drivers of economic and social development, promoting the growth of other sectors through innovative means and generating inclusive and sustainable growth. Combining cultural creativity and production creates a new localized advantage for cities, significantly affecting employment and income (García Suárez and Pulido Fernández 2015; Scott 1997). The popularization of creative cities further enhances the role of cultural production in urban development by building vibrant creative industry ecosystems to shape a favorable creative environment and promote cooperation and communication between the creative industry and the market (Pratt 2008). The demand for supporting cultural-economic development requires policy innovation, where creativity needs to be a tool to accelerate social innovation (Billi and Tricarico 2019). By creatively recombining production elements in the cultural field, cities can effectively promote the integration of cultural assets with social innovation (Potts et al. 2008; Sacco et al. 2018; Throsby 2008). It can also achieve artistic, social, and economic value through cultural entrepreneurship, maintain autonomy and creativity among entrepreneurs or artists (Chang and Wyszomirski 2015), and meet individual and collective needs that the market cannot fulfill as well (Huggins and Clifton 2011).

The cultural and creative industries promote social innovation by introducing “elements of change” in the production, use, and related policies of cultural products and services, achieving economic and social value transformation. At the same time, it

develops creative and innovative projects and practices by promoting community utilization and development of cultural assets to meet community needs (Cerreta et al. 2021; Clement et al. 2018; Deliyannis and Papadopoulou 2016; European Commission 1995, 2018; Sung et al. 2019). This approach is defined as “diffused cultural innovation,” where communities gain creative allocation of local interests and financial resources through the cultural creative industry. It has created new hybrid organizations, including for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and public-private partnerships. These hybrid organizations create opportunities for further territorial development (Tricarico et al. 2020).

2.4.3 Spatial Practices of Strategic Cultural Planning and Social Innovation

Strategic cultural planning (Lysgård 2016; Sacco et al. 2009; Wekerle 2011) plays a crucial role in urban renewal as it relates to the long-term goals of the city and practically contributes to economic revitalization, social cohesion, and shaping the city's image. Due to the full integration of culture into urban development in societal, economic, and environmental dimensions (Markusen and Gadwa 2010; Tavano Blessi et al. 2012), culture-led urban renewal embodies a fundamental characteristic of comprehensive integration among social, economic, and cultural elements, as well as the synergistic interaction between these elements and innovation (Sacco et al. 2012), which directly promotes the exploration and implementation of new knowledge-intensive and experience-intensive socio-economic practices related to culture. Mainly driven by open innovation and co-creation, this exploration is prominently manifested in an increasing number of new cultural policies and planning efforts that aim to foster innovative combinations of space, innovation, culture, economy for promoting urban economic growth, cultural revitalization as well as social and environmentally sustainable development (Eriksson et al. 2018; Gerometta et al. 2005; Okano and Samson 2010; Sacco et al. 2008; Tremblay and Pilati 2013). Consequently, "cultural spaces" with different forms, functions, and positionings have become "experimental fields" driving urban regeneration and social innovation as a widespread "innovative phenomena" in urban cultural regeneration (Grenni et al. 2020; Tricarico et al. 2020).

At the macro (urban) level, the establishment of the "proactive cultural districts" (Tremblay and Pilati 2013), the "creative quarters" (Działek and Murzyn-Kupisz 2014; Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek 2017; Wood and Dovey 2015), the "socio-cultural trajectory" (Chapter 17 in Moulaert et al. 2014, P237), as well as the design and creation of "natural" cultural areas (Markusen and Gadwa 2010) and large-scale performance and visual arts spaces in cities have become typical and widespread spatial practices. In these place-based strategies of "Place-making" (or "Creative place-making") (see, for example, Project for Public Spaces 2014; Courage and McKeown 2018; Erickson 2014; Frenette 2017; Loh et al. 2022; Redaelli 2018), culture has emerged as a fundamental driving force that propels local systems towards innovation in terms of openness, sustainability, and inclusivity. Integrating urban heritage with creativity fosters the development of social, symbolic, and human capital in an urban context. Therefore, these spatial practices of strategic cultural planning have contributed to economic growth, community stability and vitality, preservation of traditions, and exchange and collaboration for creativity and innovation.

At the meso (community) level, diverse urban actors exhibit distinct characteristics in their cultural interventions within specific urban spaces. Successful practices of privately driven cultural space reproduction are observed, including space revitalization involving cultural artists (Ostanel 2017). Creative individuals achieve a mutually beneficial outcome by developing innovative thinking, methods, and organizational models to address challenges and foster market advancement in specific urban conditions (della Lucia and Trunfio 2018).

Meanwhile, the third sector centered on culture and arts plays a pivotal role in cultural regeneration for social cohesion as a social innovation stream (Commerciale et al. 2016). They foster collaboration and resilience attitudes to generate positive impacts, thereby expanding cooperation values of common interests into practical solutions during urban regeneration (Laudiero 2020). Furthermore, the combination of social entrepreneurship with spatial rejuvenation exemplifies how social enterprises utilize cultural capital and education to cultivate creativity, adventurous spirit, and collaboration as novel methods for community transformation and urban development (Fung and Wright 2001; Orueta 2007).

A clear trend indicates that spatial renewal projects incorporating cultural initiatives driven by public institutions, businesses, and non-profit organizations serve as tools for social innovation. These practices involve exploring how diverse

collaborative entities can leverage existing knowledge to generate new insights that enhance societal capacity for action in cultural space reproduction (Baker and Mehmood 2015c; Duxbury and Murray 2010; Murray et al. 2010), and different ways in which actors can join strategic networks while integrating into professional communities to build shared knowledge repositories that create conditions for innovative solutions in cultural space planning, developing relevant projects shaping cities/territories (Christmann et al. 2020b; Romanelli and Zbucnea 2020).

Creating novel cultural spaces entails a multifaceted amalgamation and intricate intersection of elements such as culture, society, economy, and innovation. Firstly, cultural spaces involve the innovative integration of cultural capital in cities. As accumulating individual and collective cultural capital provides a necessary knowledge foundation and impetus for urban innovation and social sustainability (Bourdieu 1986; Throsby 2001), cultural capital is fundamental for fostering innovation capacity and enhancing revitalization sustainability. It is pivotal in promoting social innovation (Bakhshi et al. 2008). The integration of cultural capital with urban regeneration exhibits various patterns (Evans and Shaw 2004), studying which can accurately identify new trajectories in the process of urban regeneration (Tavano Blessi et al. 2012) while providing crucial references for policymakers to develop means or strategies supporting spatial development (Power and Scott 2011).

As carriers and mediums for urban strategic cultural planning, cultural spaces are intricately linked to the integration of urban heritage and creativity. Cultural heritage deeply rooted in communities and regions serves as a wellspring of inspiration for creativity and innovation, encompassing the distinctiveness and locality of knowledge and cultural practices in spatial production (Cominelli and Greffe 2012). Moreover, urban heritage can stimulate culture-led creativity by integrating with other assets (particularly knowledge and tourism), contributing to urban regeneration (Della Lucia et al. 2016). Combining cultural heritage and creativity also significantly creates high-quality public spaces (Caulier-Grice et al. 2012) while enhancing clusters or cultural districts' capacity for content exploitation and creative connections with places (OECD 2014). In addition, it is essential to balance the stakeholders' local heritage interpretation and their perspectives on technological advancements, market dynamics, organizational changes, and innovation demands because it directly affects shared values in cultural spaces (Go and Trunfio 2011).

Regarding space outcomes, the spatial transformation exhibits significant socio-cultural heterogeneity (Xénia Havadi-Nagy 2017a, 2017b) for reflecting the change and development of urban history and social structure. It highlights the necessity of the connection of cultural, spatial strategies, and underlying governance. The emergence and development of social innovation provide an organized structure or an alternative sustainable governance arrangement for cultural space creation (Brandsen et al. 2016). Particularly, citizen and community empowerment (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015b) is emphasized for promoting innovative multi-level governance, then contributing to social cohesion and spatial equality within cultural spaces (Maccallum et al. 2009b; Ostanel 2017; Parra 2013; Swyngedouw 2005).

In addition, cultural spatial strategies also entail the strategic complementation between cultural production and other urban production chains (see, for example, Branzanti 2015; Martin and Grodach 2022; Shaw and Montana 2016), and the utilization of art investment and cultural programs at community-level (see, for example, Erickson 2014, 2019; National Endowment for the Arts 2009), etc. Given that social cohesion has emerged as a fundamental objective of local planning strategies for numerous knowledge and innovation spaces (Commerciale et al. 2016; Evers and Ewert 2015; Otte 2019; Pancholi et al. 2018; Turrini et al. 2018), these place-based cultural strategies assume significance as essential means and practices of social innovation, aiming at mobilizing non-traditional policy networks and empowering individuals and collectives effectively. Finally, they offer innovative solutions to urban societal problems by fostering social innovation with a sustainability orientation.

Existing research reveals that these cultural and artistic spaces significantly promote social innovation within urban frameworks in different dimensions. As hubs for knowledge and innovation, these spaces enhance urban and regional culture because of the gathering of cultural activities, creative business incubators, and the sharing economy (Tricarico et al. 2020). They also promote creativity and entrepreneurial spirit by fostering diversity and attentions to differentiated objectives (Eriksson et al. 2018). In these spaces, cultural participation and practices help to create environments that cultivate personal growth and social cohesion (Tavano Blessi et al. 2012). By offering places to meet and interact, they also promote the collective creation and community collaborative networks, facilitating social capital development (Castejón Ibáñez and Guirao Mirón 2018).

Furthermore, the convergence of knowledge and human capital, as the basis of innovation in a spatial context, benefits the complementarity, interaction, and sharing among various economic and societal sectors, ensuring the continuity of innovation (Sacco et al. 2012). Cultural spaces have become socially innovative ecosystems (Tremblay and Pilati 2013), which create opportunities for the community to engage with external entities to address citizen needs. Therefore, they stimulate the emergence of institutions with synergistic effects that assist the communities in problem-solving skills development (Choi and Lim 2013; Edwards-Schachter et al. 2012; Erickson 2019; Francis et al. 2012; Grodach 2011).

2.5 SOCIAL INNOVATION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Social innovation, as an interdisciplinary field of research and practice, has gained increasing global attention for its potential to address complex social challenges through novel and collaborative approaches. In the context of China, the concept of social innovation is closely intertwined with the country's rapid socio-economic transformation, urbanization, and policy reforms. Over the past two decades, China has witnessed significant progress in social innovation across various domains. It also exhibits characteristics that are distinctly different from those in the West. It is essential to examine the background, current situation, and key features of contemporary social innovation in China, as this will provide a necessary foundation for conducting more detailed empirical research with a focus on cultural spaces.

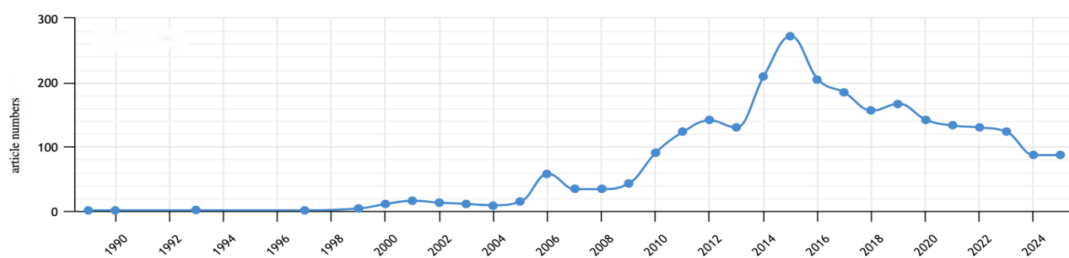
2.5.1 The Current Development of Social Innovation in China

Although in recent years, diverse social innovation practices have begun to flourish in China, the academic research on social innovation, especially the distinct characteristics, challenges, and opportunities associated with social innovation remain underexplored in the existing literature.

Through searching for the term "social innovation" in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, which is the largest Chinese literature database, a

total of 2,416 results were retrieved. These included 1,823 journal articles, 347 theses, 70 conference papers, 153 newspaper articles, and 23 books. From 1990 to 2024, the number of publications related to "social innovation" displayed a fluctuating upward trend followed by a gradual decline. Notably, the number of publications exceeded 200 articles for three consecutive years from 2014 to 2016. After 2018, the number of publications began to decline, dropping to around 80 articles by 2024 (see Figure X). This trend suggests that research on social innovation in China is still in its early stages. While it has attracted the attention of a certain number of scholars and prompted some research efforts, the overall output remains limited.

Figure 2 Schematic diagram of the results obtained by "social innovation" retrieval in the "topic" of China National Knowledge Infrastructure
(Source: the CNKI academic database) ¹

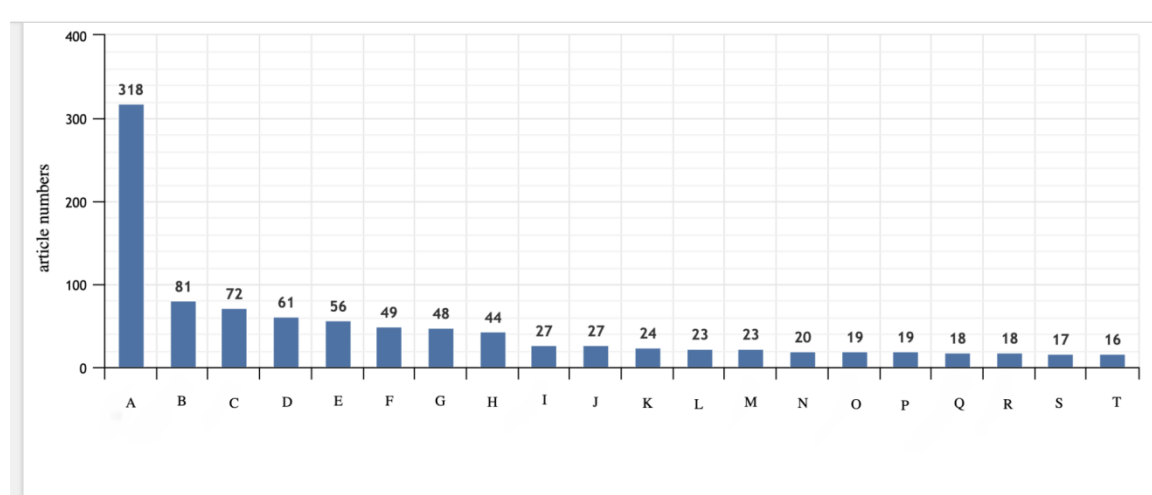


According to the search results, the distribution of research on "social innovation" in the CNKI database is evident. Among these, the field of "social governance innovation" has the largest number of literature reviews, totaling 318 articles. This indicates that this area has become one of the focal points of academic and societal attention in recent years. In addition to "social governance innovation," research in other related fields has also yielded significant results. For instance, literature reviews on "social enterprises," "social governance system innovation," and "service design" numbered 81, 72, and 61, respectively. These figures reflect the progress and level of attention in different fields regarding social innovation. Furthermore, there are some relatively less explored but still noteworthy research areas, such as "social organization management innovation," "social organizations," and "social innovation design," with 56, 49, and 48 literature reviews, respectively. Despite the smaller quantity, these fields

¹ <https://www.cnki.net/>

also provide important theoretical support and practical guidance for advancing social innovation.

Figure 3 The Thematic Distribution of Social Innovation Research Search Results
(Source: The CNKI database) ¹



Although the academic research on social innovation is currently limited, a great number of social innovation practice have developed with great impacts in different fields, within which there are four main advancements as community development, public service provision, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

- **Community development and urban governance**

Urbanization has been a major driver of social innovation in China, with cities serving as laboratories for new practices and solutions. Initiatives such as community-based urban renewal projects and participatory governance models have gained prominence in cities like Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen. In this cities, local governments, social organizations, and enterprises have collaborated to implement participatory urban renewal projects that prioritize inclusivity and sustainability.

Typical examples include the Community Micro-Renewal Program in Shanghai, initiated in 2016, illustrates how localized social innovation models can address urban

¹ Due to the limitation that the CKNi database system does not support English, the original Chinese themes in this chart are replaced with letters. The themes represented by letters A to T are as follows: A - Social Innovation, B - Social Enterprises, C - Social Governance, D - Social Governance System Innovation, E - Service Design, F - Social Organization Management Innovation, G - Social Organizations, H - Social Innovation Design, I - Innovation Design, J - Innovation Perspectives, K - Design Research, L - Innovation and Entrepreneurship, M - Strategy Research, N - Corporate Social Innovation, O - Social Governance System, P - Corporate Social Responsibility, Q - Social Governance Innovation, R - Innovation Vitality, S - Innovation Capacity, T - Sustainable Design. — Author's Note

challenges. Through this program, residents were directly involved in decision-making processes concerning the transformation of their living environments, including the upgrading of public spaces, infrastructure improvements, and cultural activities (Li et al. 2023). This participatory approach not only improved the physical environment but also strengthened social cohesion, fostering a sense of community ownership and belonging. Furthermore, cities like Shenzhen have piloted “social governance innovation zones”, where local governments partner with NGOs to address issues such as migrant integration and affordable housing. These initiatives exemplify how governance structures can be reconfigured to empower communities and leverage their knowledge in shaping urban policies and practices (Brubaker and Li 2016).

- **Public service innovation**

The provision of public services has been a key focus of social innovation in China, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and social welfare. The rise of digital platforms and smart technologies has enabled more efficient and inclusive service models, addressing the needs of marginalized populations and under-resourced regions.

One prominent example is Alibaba’s Ant Forest, a gamified platform where users reduce their carbon footprint by engaging in environmentally friendly actions. In turn, virtual points are converted into real trees planted in desertified areas. This model demonstrates how private enterprises can integrate social and environmental objectives into their business strategies while fostering public participation. Additionally, innovations in healthcare have targeted underserved rural communities. Mobile health clinics equipped with telemedicine technologies, such as the Healthy China Initiative, have brought essential medical services to remote areas, reducing healthcare disparities. Social enterprises like Adream Foundation have also redefined public education by providing “dream classrooms” that introduce modern teaching resources to schools in economically disadvantaged regions¹.

- **Cultural preservation and innovation**

Cultural preservation has increasingly been recognized as an integral component of social innovation, particularly in urban renewal and rural revitalization. Innovative approaches that integrate cultural heritage with economic and social development have created new opportunities for community engagement and identity reconstruction. Projects like the revitalization of historic districts and the promotion of intangible

¹ Detailed information shown in Adream’s official website at: <https://www.adream.org/>

cultural heritage in rural areas nation-widely have demonstrated how cultural enterprises can combine economic development with cultural preservation.

In rural areas, social enterprises such as China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center have worked to safeguard traditional crafts by combining them with contemporary design and marketing strategies. These initiatives not only provide livelihoods for rural artisans but also attract urban consumers, bridging rural-urban divides (Huang and Wang 2024), highlighting the potential of cultural innovation to create shared social value while addressing issues of identity, heritage, and community resilience. However, tensions often arise between commodifying cultural heritage for economic purposes and maintaining its authenticity and intrinsic social value (Hermann-Pillath and Feng 2017).

- **Environmental sustainability and green innovation**

China's ambitious environmental goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, have catalyzed a wave of social innovation aimed at addressing environmental challenges. Collaborative efforts among governments, enterprises, NGOs, and communities have led to transformative projects in renewable energy, waste reduction, and environmental awareness.

For instance, the development of green finance mechanisms, such as green bonds and impact investment funds, has facilitated the growth of sustainable infrastructure projects. The Guangzhou Green Finance Reform and Innovation Pilot Zone has become a model for leveraging financial instruments to support renewable energy, water conservation, and pollution control projects (Chen et al. 2022). Additionally, community-driven initiatives in this fihave also played a critical role. Programs like Trash Sorting in Shanghai have involved residents in waste management practices through education campaigns and incentive systems. These efforts have not only improved recycling rates but also enhanced public awareness of environmental issues. However, scholars argue that the success of such initiatives often depends on sustained public participation and robust enforcement mechanisms (Ye and Li 2022).

2.5.2 Opportunities and Motivations for Chinese Cultural Enterprises in Developing Social Innovation

As discussed in the previous section and in the research background in Chapter II, within the intersecting fields of cultural preservation and innovation, urban renewal, and rural sustainability, enterprises play a crucial role in the development of social innovation. This is influenced by opportunities at the macro level, shaped by the national economic, social, and policy context, as well as by the specific motivations driving cultural enterprises to engage in social innovation under the broader national strategy and agenda. A clear analysis of these opportunities and motivations will further contribute to understanding the unique relationship between cultural commercialization and social innovation in the Chinese context.

1) Opportunities analysis

Cultural enterprises in China operate in a dynamic environment shaped by rapid urban transformation, technological advancements, and national development priorities. These macro-level opportunities create fertile ground for enterprises to engage in social innovation, with the potential to redefine public spaces, foster digital inclusion, and align with state-driven development strategies. This section explores these opportunities with a focus on how they enable cultural enterprises to construct innovative spaces for social change.

- Alignment with state development priorities

China's government has placed significant emphasis on social and cultural innovation as key drivers of sustainable development. National strategies such as the "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)", "Rural Revitalization Strategy", and "Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation" policy provide a robust framework of opportunities for cultural enterprises to align their efforts with state-led objectives. This alignment not only facilitates access to financial and institutional resources but also enhances the legitimacy and scalability of socially innovative projects.

Leveraging national development agendas. The BRI, with its focus on cross-cultural collaboration and connectivity, has created a fertile ground for cultural enterprises to promote cultural exchange and innovation. For instance, enterprises focusing on cultural tourism or creative exports have benefited from state-sponsored

programs aimed at promoting Chinese cultural heritage abroad, fostering international partnerships, and generating economic opportunities¹.

Revitalizing rural areas. The “Rural Revitalization Strategy” emphasizes cultural preservation and rural development as critical components of national policy. Enterprises specializing in traditional crafts, local festivals, or rural tourism have been able to align their business models with these objectives, receiving policy support and funding for their efforts. Such initiatives not only drive economic growth in rural areas but also enhance community cohesion and cultural sustainability (Han et al. 2025).

Integration of cultural and technology in entrepreneurship. The government’s “Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation” initiative provides cultural enterprises with access to funding, mentorship, and collaborative networks. Incubators and innovation zones, often supported by local governments, have become hubs for experimentation, where enterprises can test innovative ideas that integrate cultural production with technological solutions. For instance, projects that combine virtual reality (VR) with cultural heritage experiences have received significant public and private support, demonstrating the potential of culture-tech integration in driving both economic and social impact world widely (European Commission 2024).

Opportunities through policy synergies. The alignment of enterprise-driven initiatives with government priorities often results in synergistic outcomes, as enterprises are able to draw on state resources while contributing to broader societal goals. However, scholars have noted that such alignment requires cultural enterprises to navigate complex regulatory environments and balance state expectations with independent innovation. This dynamic underscores the importance of adaptive strategies in leveraging state development agendas effectively (Shi et al. 2020).

- Urbanization as a catalyst for social innovation

China’s rapid urbanization has not only transformed the physical and demographic landscape but also created unprecedented opportunities for cultural enterprises to address emerging social challenges. Urbanization generates a demand for inclusive and multifunctional cultural spaces, as cities grapple with issues such as overcrowding, spatial inequality, and loss of community cohesion. These conditions offer a unique opportunity for cultural enterprises to play a transformative role in shaping urban spaces.

¹ More detailed information available at: https://www.vrinternational.com/en/the-cultural-and-creative-industries-market-in-china/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Expanding demand for “new public cultural spaces”. As cities grow, the demand for spaces that facilitate social interaction, cultural participation, and creative expression has increased significantly. This growing need provides cultural enterprises with opportunities to transform underutilized urban areas into vibrant hubs of social and cultural innovation. In recent years, the “new public cultural space strategy” emphasizes the creation of flexible, multifunctional cultural spaces that foster community engagement, innovation, and diverse operational and management partnerships with enterprises to inject creativity and inclusivity into urban planning and rural development (Cui 2022; Li et al. 2024). These partnerships enable enterprises to capitalize on government incentives and public interest, positioning themselves as critical agents in reshaping urban spaces.

Policy support for urban renewal. Urbanization is tightly linked to China’s government-led urban renewal programs, many of which emphasize cultural and social innovation. Policies promoting urban regeneration, such as “sponge cities” or “green cities”, provide funding, tax incentives, and regulatory support for enterprises engaged in innovative urban design and cultural projects. For example, urban renewal efforts in Shenzhen have included designated creative zones that attract cultural enterprises, providing them with a platform to design public spaces that prioritize inclusivity and sustainability (Gu et al. 2023).

- Digitalization and virtual spaces

The digital transformation of China’s economy and society has opened unprecedented opportunities for cultural enterprises to construct virtual spaces for social innovation. These digital platforms not only enhance accessibility but also enable collaboration, participation, and engagement on a scale previously unattainable in physical spaces.

Digital platforms as catalysts for funding and innovation. Crowd-sourcing and crowd-funding platforms such as Tencent’s “99 Charity Day” have empowered cultural enterprises to mobilize resources and engage the public in socially innovative projects¹. These platforms leverage gamification, social media integration, and AI-based analytics to maximize participation and impact, illustrating how digital tools can scale social innovation initiatives effectively.

¹ More detailed information about the project “The Transformative Power of 99 Giving Day” at Tencent website: https://www.tencent.com/en-us/articles/2201428.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Creating virtual communities and expanding participation. Virtual spaces created by cultural enterprises serve as platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and cultural exchange, breaking down geographical and social barriers. For example, livestreaming platforms such as Douyin have enabled cultural enterprises to showcase traditional crafts, allowing artisans to reach global audiences while preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage. These digital spaces create new opportunities for interaction between cultural producers and consumers, fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and innovation (Hua 2023).

Technology as a tool for inclusion and empowerment. Advanced technologies like AI, big data, and blockchain have enabled cultural enterprises to better understand and address social needs. For example, AI-driven cultural recommendation systems can personalize user experiences, encouraging greater engagement with cultural content. In several big cities, the blockchain has been used in cultural preservation projects to authenticate and trace the provenance of traditional crafts, ensuring fair compensation for artisans while promoting ethical consumption¹.

2) Motivation analysis

In China, cultural enterprises are increasingly participating in social innovation, driven by a unique blend of economic imperatives, sociopolitical conditions, and cultural norms. Unlike the binary motivations often depicted in Western contexts—where organizations are typically characterized as either profit-oriented or socially driven—Chinese cultural enterprises operate within a more hybrid and dynamic framework. Understanding the motivations and goals of cultural enterprises is critical for analyzing their strategies, practices, and broader societal impacts. Based on the current limited literature, the motivation of cultural enterprises to develop social innovation can be summarized as follow:

- **Profit-driven motivation**

Economic profit remains a significant driving force for many Chinese cultural enterprises engaging in social innovation, as the broader cultural sector in China is increasingly marketized. The rapid growth of the cultural economy, spurred by state policies such as the “Cultural Industry Promotion Plan (2008)” and the emphasis on creative industries in the “14th Five-Year Plan”, has created opportunities for cultural

¹ See the research report “Blockchain Technology Activates Digital Cultural Heritage” . Published by Central University of Finance and Economy (China), 2021.

enterprises to leverage social innovation for financial gain. In this condition, cultural enterprises function as a market player, aligning their social innovation efforts with market opportunities to enhance competitiveness and profitability.

Brand differentiation and customer loyalty. Social innovation practices such as organizing community arts festivals, supporting local artists, or providing cultural education programs help cultural enterprises differentiate themselves in the market. These initiatives create emotional bonds with consumers, especially in urban contexts where rising middle-class and youth demographics are drawn to brands that align with their social and cultural values (Keane 2020).

Urban gentrification and value capture. In cities undergoing rapid urbanization, cultural enterprises often participate in projects that revitalize public spaces, such as creative parks or cultural districts. These efforts not only attract foot traffic and boost local economies but also increase property values in surrounding areas. For instance, the conversion of abandoned industrial sites into cultural hubs—like the 798 Art District in Beijing—has been a key strategy for cultural enterprises to capitalize on cultural tourism and real estate development (O'Connor & Gu 2014).

Diversification of revenue streams. By incorporating social innovation into their business models, cultural enterprises can access new revenue streams, such as government subsidies, corporate sponsorships, and crowdfunding platforms. This hybrid funding approach reduces financial risks while maintaining the appearance of a socially responsible brand (Li and Zhang 2020).

- Social-impact driven motivation

Many cultural enterprises in China are also motivated by a genuine commitment to addressing social challenges and fostering community well-being. These motivations often stem from a recognition of the cultural sector's unique capacity to promote social cohesion, preserve cultural heritage, and empower marginalized communities. In this case, cultural enterprises play the role of agents of social change, participating in the social development.

Community empowerment and engagement. A growing number of cultural enterprises in China have adopted participatory approaches to social innovation, engaging local residents in the co-creation of cultural programs. For instance, some enterprises organize workshops or exhibitions that give voice to underrepresented groups, such as rural communities, migrant workers, or ethnic minorities (Chen & Sun

2020). These initiatives are not only socially impactful but also resonate with the government's agenda of promoting social harmony and reducing inequality.

Cultural preservation and identity building. Cultural enterprises often play a critical role in preserving intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional crafts, music, and rituals. By integrating these elements into their business models, they help sustain local traditions while providing economic opportunities for artisans and performers. For example, the cultural enterprise Handicrafts China has collaborated with local artisans to produce and market traditional handicrafts, combining social impact with cultural entrepreneurship (Zhang & Keane 2020).

Environmental sustainability. In China, socially motivated cultural enterprises are increasingly addressing environmental challenges through innovative practices (Zhang and Wang 2019). For instance, art installations and performances centered around environmental themes have been used to raise public awareness about sustainability issues. Such initiatives align with global trends in cultural activism and enhance the enterprises' reputations as socially responsible organizations.

- Hybrid motivation

In addition to the two aforementioned situations, in practice, the most common scenario observed is the hybrid motivation of cultural enterprises. They often reflect a blend of profit and social impact goals, creating a hybrid model of engagement. This hybridity is shaped by the unique sociopolitical and economic context of China, where cultural enterprises must navigate state directives, market demands, and societal expectations simultaneously.

Navigating state policies. In China, cultural enterprises often align their social innovation practices with government priorities, such as urban regeneration, rural revitalization, and the “common prosperity” agenda. By doing so, they gain access to policy support, funding opportunities, and favorable regulatory environments. For instance, enterprises involved in the development of creative parks or cultural heritage projects frequently collaborate with local governments to align economic development with cultural preservation (Gu & O’Connor 2019).

Balancing economic and social goals. Hybrid motivations drive cultural enterprises to adopt innovative business models that integrate profitability with social impact. For example, some enterprises have established social enterprises or corporate social responsibility (CSR) divisions to channel profits from commercial activities into community-based initiatives. Others use digital platforms to crowdfund socially

oriented projects, combining market mechanisms with grassroots participation (Zhao & Zhang 2022).

Cross-sector partnerships. The hybrid nature of their motivations also enables cultural enterprises to form partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and private companies. These partnerships allow them to leverage resources and expertise from multiple sectors, enhancing the scale and impact of their social innovation initiatives (Li and Zhang 2023). For instance, Tencent's Xplore initiative, which integrates technology, culture, and social innovation, exemplifies how cultural enterprises can collaborate with tech companies to address complex social issues.

In sum, the motivations of Chinese cultural enterprises engaging in social innovation are complex and multifaceted, reflecting a dynamic interplay of profit and social impact considerations. While profit-driven enterprises leverage market mechanisms to scale their initiatives, socially motivated enterprises prioritize community well-being and cultural preservation. Hybrid enterprises, which combine these motivations, represent a promising model for achieving both economic and social value in the Chinese context.

2.5.3 Creating Social Innovation Space by (Cultural) Enterprise in China

Social innovation spaces created by cultural enterprises in China embody a diverse set of forms and models, reflecting the interplay between local cultural contexts, political frameworks, and economic imperatives. Unlike their counterparts in Western contexts, which often emerge from grassroots initiatives or are driven by civic movements, social innovation spaces in China are frequently shaped by state-driven agendas and the commercial imperatives of cultural enterprises. Fundamentally, the commercialization of culture has emerged as a critical strategy for fostering social innovation, leveraging heritage preservation, rural revitalization, urban regeneration, and technology innovation as platforms for cultural and socio-economic development. These spaces within the three domains encompass creative clusters, cultural industry parks, maker spaces, and digital innovation platforms, etc., each with distinct roles in fostering social and economic transformation.

1) Heritage protection

Efforts to commercialize cultural heritage in China often serve dual objectives: safeguarding intangible and tangible heritage while driving economic growth. Cultural enterprises have played a key role in turning rural villages into “cultural tourism destinations” that generate economic opportunities while preserving local traditions. For example, in Guizhou's Zhenfeng County, cultural enterprises have collaborated with local communities to create artisan workshops and cultural tourism programs, blending heritage preservation with innovative forms of community participation (He and Qian 2022). However, critics argue that these projects often prioritize economic outputs over genuine social empowerment, reflecting a top-down commodification of rural culture (Liu and Tao 2020).

2) Rural revitalization

The commercialization of culture in rural China presents significant opportunities for addressing rural-urban disparities and fostering social innovation through place-based strategies. Cultural enterprises are integral to transforming rural areas through a combination of cultural heritage preservation, innovation, and the creation of new economic opportunities. For example, the transformation of traditional villages into cultural tourism destinations, such as in the case of the Xintiandi project in Hangzhou or the development of the "red tourism" sites in rural Shaanxi, showcases how cultural enterprises are using innovation to create spaces that blend tourism, culture, and social interaction. These projects not only help preserve the cultural identity of rural areas but also introduce new revenue streams, fostering local entrepreneurship and improving rural livelihoods (shanxi lvyou wenxian). However, scholars caution that the over-commercialization of rural cultural spaces can sometimes undermine local traditions and limit the inclusivity of social innovation efforts (Huang 2022; Li & Zhao 2023). The challenge remains in balancing economic development with cultural preservation to ensure that rural revitalization remains truly sustainable and inclusive.

3) Urban regeneration

Urban regeneration in China increasingly relies on the commercialization of cultural spaces as a means of revitalizing industrial or neglected urban areas. The most prominent forms of social innovation spaces in this process are “creative clusters” and “cultural industry parks”, which have become symbolic of the country's urban and cultural regeneration projects. Spaces like Beijing's 798 Art District and Shanghai's M50 Creative Park exemplify the adaptation of former industrial sites into hubs for

cultural enterprises, blending artistic production, commercial activity, and social engagement. Unlike Western creative clusters such as London's Shoreditch or Berlin's Kreuzberg, where grassroots initiatives often drive bottom-up innovation, these Chinese spaces are typically established through public-private partnerships (PPPs) or top-down urban planning efforts. Local governments, driven by the dual goals of economic development and cultural branding, frequently collaborate with private developers and cultural enterprises to repurpose abandoned spaces. Scholars argue that this process, while effective in creating vibrant cultural economies, risks over-commercialization and a dilution of grassroots social innovation (Keane 2020; Zheng et al. 2021).

4) Technology involvement in social innovation

The new form of “digital social innovation spaces”, which operate through virtual platforms and digital ecosystems. Unlike Western models, where innovation spaces are often tied to physical co-working or community hubs (e.g., Impact Hubs), China's digital spaces are deeply embedded within its platform economy, driven by tech giants like Tencent and Alibaba. Platforms such as WeChat, Taobao, and Douyin have been harnessed by cultural enterprises to create online communities that foster social interaction, cultural production, and resource mobilization. For example, the “Taobao Villages” initiative has enabled rural entrepreneurs to participate in e-commerce, thereby transforming the socioeconomic landscape of remote areas (Sun and Ding 2022). These digital spaces have the advantage of scalability, enabling them to reach large populations while bypassing the spatial and regulatory constraints of physical innovation hubs.

The following three tables list successful and less successful cases of cultural enterprises creating social innovation spaces in the fields of heritage protection, rural revitalization, and urban renewal. They also analyze the main successful factors/challenges of each case in order to better understand the coexistence of benefits and risks in social innovation fostered by cultural commercialization in contemporary China.

Table 2 Cases of cultural commercialization as a driver for social innovation in China (in heritage protection)
(Source: the author)

Case	Overview	Social innovation overview	Key successful factors/Challenges
+ Pingyao Ancient City (Shanxi Province)	A UNESCO World Heritage Site successfully commercialized its cultural heritage by transforming the ancient city into a cultural tourism hub. Preservation efforts have focused on restoring historical architecture, integrating cultural performances, and creating local crafts markets.	The project created sustainable economic opportunities for local residents, enhanced cultural identity, and attracted international tourism. The government's collaboration with local communities ensured the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as Shanxi shadow puppetry.	Effective government planning, public-private partnerships, and community involvement helped balance tourism development with heritage conservation.
+ Fujian Tulou (Fujian Province)	The traditional Hakka residential buildings and UNESCO World Heritage Sites were revitalized through heritage tourism. The project involved developing cultural tourism routes, home-stay programs, and showcasing traditional Hakka customs.	The initiative preserved the unique architectural style and cultural practices of the Hakka people while boosting the local economy. It also facilitated cross-cultural exchanges between visitors and local residents.	Strong international recognition, support from UNESCO, and adaptive reuse strategies that respected the cultural significance of the site.
- Lijiang Ancient Town (Yunnan Province)	As a world cultural heritage, Lijiang's transformation into a major tourism destination has led to significant over-commercialization, with an influx of chain stores and tourist facilities replacing traditional crafts and local businesses.	-	Loss of authenticity, displacement of local residents, and environmental degradation. The commodification of culture undermined the town's social and cultural fabric, alienating its original community.
- Fenghuang Ancient Town (Hunan Province)	Renowned for its well-preserved architecture and rich cultural heritage, underwent significant commercialization efforts to boost tourism and local economy. However, these efforts led to unintended consequences that undermined the town's cultural integrity and social fabric.	-	The overemphasis on profit prioritized external investors, sidelining local community involvement. Standardized tourist offerings diluted unique local traditions and cultural identity. Commercialization overshadowed traditional expressions, diminishing the town's authenticity. Entrance fees and lack of local participation sparked widespread social discontent.

Table 3 Cases of cultural commercialization as a driver for social innovation in China (in rural sustainability)
(Source: the author)

Case	Overview	Social innovation overview	Key successful factors/Challenges
+ Xidi and Hongcun Villages (Anhui Province)	These UNESCO-listed villages successfully integrated cultural tourism with rural development, focusing on the preservation of Hui-style architecture and traditional lifestyles.	The initiatives created job opportunities in tourism, reduced rural-to-urban migration, and reinvigorated interest in traditional agricultural practices. Local artisans and craftspeople benefited from increased exposure and income.	Government funding, strong community involvement, and the alignment of tourism strategies with cultural preservation.
+ Shaxi Ancient Tea and Horse Caravan Trail (Yunnan Province)	Shaxi was revitalised by restoring its historic market square, temples, and caravan inns, turning it into a rural cultural tourism destination. Local residents were trained in tourism services and cultural interpretation.	The project successfully preserved the historic trade route and cultural traditions while providing a sustainable livelihood for local communities.	International collaboration with NGOs like the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and community-based participatory approaches.
- Wukan Village (Guangdong Province)	Wukan attempted to commercialize its unique Lingnan-style culture through tourism, but poor planning and lack of community involvement hindered its success.	-	Conflicts over land ownership, lack of long-term funding, and insufficient preservation of traditional cultural practices.
- Zhouzhuang Water Town (Jiangsu Province)	Although marketed as a traditional water town, the excessive focus on commercial tourism led to the loss of authentic rural life.	-	Over-tourism, environmental damage to the water system, and the prioritization of profit over cultural preservation.

Table 4 Cases of cultural commercialization as a driver for social innovation in China (in urban regeneration)
(Source: the author)

Case	Overview	Social innovation overview	Key successful factors/Challenges
+ 798 Art District (Beijing City)	The 798 Art District, located in Beijing's Dashanzi area, transformed from a decommissioned military factory complex into a vibrant art and cultural hub.	The district's revitalization involved adaptive reuse of industrial spaces, fostering a community of artists, galleries, and cultural institutions. This transformation was driven by grassroots initiatives and later supported by local government policies promoting cultural industries.	The organic development led by artists, coupled with supportive policies, created a unique cultural ecosystem. The preservation of industrial architecture and the district's integration into the urban fabric attracted both tourists and locals, contributing to its sustainability.
+ OCT Loft Creative Culture Park (Shenzhen City)	OCT Loft, located in Shenzhen, is a cultural and creative park developed from repurposed industrial buildings, hosting art exhibitions, design studios, and cultural events.	The project repurposed old factory buildings into creative spaces, fostering a vibrant community of artists and designers. It emphasized sustainable urban development and the growth of the cultural and creative industries.	Government support, strategic location, and a focus on creative industries contributed to the park's success as a cultural hub and tourist attraction.
- Xintiandi (Shanghai City)	Xintiandi is a redevelopment project in Shanghai that transformed a traditional Shikumen neighborhood into a high-end commercial and entertainment district.	-	It involved demolishing existing structures and relocating residents to create a commercial area with reconstructed Shikumen-style buildings. It led to gentrification, displacement of local residents, and loss of authentic cultural heritage, resulting in a space that caters more to tourists and affluent consumers than the local community.
- Guangzhou Redtory Art and Design Factory (Guangdong Province)	It was an art and design district developed from a former canning factory, aiming to create a cultural and creative hub. The project sought to repurpose industrial heritage for cultural uses, hosting art galleries, studios, and cultural events to stimulate urban renewal and creative industry growth.	-	Despite initial success, issues such as unclear property rights, lack of long-term planning, and rising rents led to the displacement of artists and a decline in cultural activities, undermining the project's sustainability.

2.5.4 The Unique Challenges Faced by Cultural Enterprises in Creating Spaces for Social Innovation in China

Cultural enterprises in China face a complex interplay of challenges as they seek to create spaces for social innovation. These challenges arise from the nation's unique regulatory framework, deeply embedded cultural norms, and the evolving role of the state in shaping social innovation. Unlike Western contexts where cultural enterprises often emerge within relatively liberal regulatory environments and autonomous civic spaces, China's cultural enterprises operate in a context where state oversight, market dynamics, and cultural expectations converge to shape their activities.

- **Regulatory framework**

One of the most significant challenges for cultural enterprises in China is navigating a regulatory framework that is simultaneously supportive and restrictive. While the Chinese government has increasingly emphasized the importance of innovation, creativity, and culture in driving economic growth and social development, its policies often impose strict oversight and control over cultural expression and activities. For example, regulatory mechanisms such as content censorship and licensing requirements create significant barriers for cultural enterprises attempting to experiment with unconventional or politically sensitive projects (Keane, 2020). These restrictions are particularly pronounced in areas such as performing arts, digital media, and community-based cultural initiatives, where enterprises must align their work with the state's ideological and policy priorities. As a result, cultural enterprises often adopt strategies of adaptation and negotiation, working within state-sanctioned boundaries to achieve their goals. Some scholars argue that this creates a unique form of "adaptive creativity," where enterprises innovate within constraints by aligning their work with broader national priorities such as rural revitalization or urban regeneration (Zheng & Yu, 2022). However, this adaptive approach can also limit the scope and transformative potential of their social innovation efforts.

- **Cultural norms and societal expectations**

Cultural enterprises in China also face unique challenges related to deeply ingrained cultural norms and societal expectations. Unlike Western contexts, where social innovation often emerges from grassroots or community-driven initiatives, Chinese enterprises operate within a cultural framework that places a strong emphasis

on hierarchical structures, collective identity, and social harmony (Huang & Li, 2021). These cultural norms can both facilitate and hinder the development of social innovation spaces. On the one hand, the emphasis on collective values provides fertile ground for initiatives that promote community building and social cohesion. For instance, cultural enterprises engaged in rural revitalization projects often leverage traditional practices and communal values to foster participation and ownership among local residents (He & Qian, 2022). On the other hand, these same norms can stifle individual creativity and dissent, limiting the diversity of perspectives and approaches that are essential for meaningful social innovation. Additionally, enterprises must navigate societal expectations related to the commercialization of culture. While many cultural enterprises seek to balance profit-making with social impact, their commercialization efforts are often viewed with skepticism, particularly in rural or marginalized communities where cultural authenticity and local traditions hold significant value (Xu et al., 2020).

- **The dual role of the Chinese state**

The dual role of the Chinese state as both a facilitator and a constraint further complicate the landscape for cultural enterprises. On the one hand, the state plays a crucial role in enabling social innovation by providing funding, infrastructure, and policy support. For example, programs such as the National Cultural Industry Demonstration Zones and the Rural Revitalization Strategy have created opportunities for cultural enterprises to engage in large-scale projects that drive economic and social transformation (Wang & Zhang, 2021). On the other hand, the state's emphasis on control and stability often restricts the scope of these initiatives, particularly when they involve sensitive social issues or challenge existing power structures. For instance, enterprises that attempt to address systemic social inequalities or promote grassroots activism frequently encounter resistance from local authorities or are subject to increased scrutiny (Chen et al., 2021). This tension reflects the broader paradox of China's approach to social innovation: while the state recognizes the potential of cultural enterprises to contribute to societal development, it remains wary of their capacity to foster independent or critical forms of social engagement.

In sum, the challenges faced by cultural enterprises in creating spaces for social innovation in China are shaped by the country's unique regulatory, cultural, and institutional dynamics. While enterprises must navigate significant barriers related to state control, cultural norms, and societal expectations, they also benefit from

government support and a growing recognition of the value of cultural industries. By critically engaging with these dynamics, cultural enterprises have the potential to create innovative and impactful spaces that contribute to China's social and economic transformation. However, their success ultimately depends on their ability to balance competing priorities, foster genuine social engagement, and adapt to an ever-changing policy and market landscape.

2.6 CRITICAL CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation presents critical conclusions from a comprehensive review of relevant theories and concepts pertinent to the research.

2.6.1 Critical Discussion on Existing Social Innovation Theories and Research

1) Sociology's multifaceted contributions and limitation to social innovation

According to the literature review of current social innovation research, sociology has made significant contributions to the study of social innovation in multiple dimensions, offering a diverse and comprehensive analytical perspective and disciplinary tools for comprehending and promoting social innovation.

- a By examining individual and group behaviors within social structures, sociology uncovers the underlying social and cultural factors that propel social innovation, including social capital, group norms, culture, and values. These insights deepen our understanding of the driving forces behind social innovation.
- b Sociology not only focuses on the concept of innovation but also delves into how it occurs and evolves. It further elucidates the intricate dynamics of societal innovation by examining the diffusion and scale-up processes of innovations within society and exploring how social structures either facilitate or impede these processes.
- c It offers a range of analytical tools to evaluate the structural barriers associated with social innovation, such as policies, regulations, organizational

management practices, cultural norms, and market dynamics. These tools assist in analyzing the institutional challenges faced by specific instances of social innovation while paving the way for achieving scalable solutions.

- d Sociology also investigates the impact of social innovation on social welfare, inequality reduction, community development, quality of life, and social cohesion, providing a research avenue for assessing its effects.

In summary, sociology offers theoretical support for comprehending social innovation. Among these theories, systems theory, actor-network theory, and social constructivism can all serve as conceptual frameworks to elucidate the interaction between social innovation and societal factors. Additionally, sociology is a discipline that bridges the gap between macro-level social structures and individual micro-level behaviors while exploring the interplay between macro-level social changes and individual/group actions. It holds immense significance in developing sustainable mechanisms for social innovation, overcoming path dependence on structural issues, and promoting the scalable advancement of social innovation.

However, given the Western origins of social innovation and its predominant focus on socio-economic realities in Europe, much of the existing sociological research on this topic is rooted in Western countries. Consequently, this overview section primarily draws upon perspectives from the field of social sciences, particularly sociology, within a Western context. Social innovation exhibits distinctive textual characteristics both in practice and research. The advancement of social innovation thinking, and knowledge production continues to revolve around Western viewpoints.

On the one hand, there is a pressing need for a deeper comprehension of social innovation within non-capitalist political systems and diverse socio-economic contexts. On the other hand, conducting research or implementing practices related to social innovation outside Western countries presents challenges to theoretical application and method selection, as well as significant obstacles regarding the effective integration of diverse research findings into knowledge production. Therefore, an important future task for social innovation research lies in effectively leveraging theoretical frameworks, research methods, and universal conclusions derived from Western sociology to conduct empirical and theoretical studies on social innovation practices under various political systems and socio-economic conditions. The limitation of Western social innovation theory on China's experience research will be discussed in the next part of this section.

2) Social innovation in urban and regional development

Urban and regional development has emerged as a focal area of research on social innovation due to cities' pivotal role in human survival, well-being, and societal welfare. Within the framework of sustainable urban development, social innovation serves as a critical mechanism for addressing the coordination challenges between creativity and socially responsible urban growth, enabling cities to function as both engines of innovation and inclusive spaces for community development.

A review of the literature highlights four central perspectives for understanding social innovation in urban and regional contexts:

- a Process-oriented approaches: Social innovation encompasses not only the tangible outcomes of urban development but also the processes and strategies devised to achieve those outcomes. These processes often emphasize participatory approaches, stakeholder collaboration, and inclusive urban governance to ensure socially responsible outcomes. For example, community-led urban planning initiatives in European cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam highlight how participatory frameworks can integrate diverse interests into sustainable urban strategies.
- b Grassroots innovations: Many successful social innovations emerge from grassroots initiatives, where local communities and social movements drive change. These bottom-up approaches address specific local needs while fostering social capital and community resilience. Grassroots urban renewal projects, such as citizen-driven public space transformations in Lisbon or Berlin, demonstrate the power of collective action in addressing systemic urban challenges.
- c Systemic change through institutionalization: Social innovation practices often involve transferable and replicable models that drive systemic change by becoming institutionalized within broader urban governance structures. For instance, the adoption of community-based urban regeneration practices in multiple cities across Europe shows how local experiments can scale into citywide or regional policy frameworks, ensuring sustained impact over time.
- d Social learning in spatial development: Social innovation emphasizes the importance of social learning processes in spatial development. By fostering collaboration, building trust, and empowering individuals and communities, it enhances the social sustainability of urban areas. This process provides

resources for grassroots organizations, strengthens local governance structures, and facilitates innovation in public-private-citizen partnerships.

Within the field of spatial planning and development, extensive research underscores urban renewal (or urban regeneration) as a manifestation of social innovation. These studies highlight the critical role of citizen participation and social movements in offering innovative solutions to complex urban challenges. Such frameworks align with socio-economic realities in regions facing state and market failures, particularly in Western societies with a history of urban evolution and civic engagement. This focus has expanded our theoretical understanding of social innovation while offering diverse perspectives for its application in urban contexts.

However, it is important to recognize that social innovation relies on a wide array of resources and actors, allowing any sector—government, market, or community—to take the lead in driving urban innovation. While successful examples of community-led social innovation highlight the transformative power of grassroots efforts, they do not exclude the potential contributions of government and market sectors. Urban social innovation requires an open and inclusive approach that avoids rigid associations with specific organizational forms or sectors. Cities, as complex systems, demand the integration of diverse actors and innovation streams to tackle multifaceted challenges effectively. By fostering inclusivity and encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration, urban social innovation can replicate positive outcomes and address systemic urban issues in a sustainable manner.

3) Limitation of corporate social innovation research

Social innovation within the business domain has emerged as a prominent area of study, fueled by extensive discourse on corporate social responsibility (CSR), social enterprise, and social entrepreneurship. Existing research has substantiated the pivotal role of enterprises in driving social innovation, emphasizing their capacity to address societal challenges while simultaneously achieving commercial success. By leveraging innovative products, services, models, and strategies, enterprises can significantly contribute to societal well-being without compromising their profitability.

Corporate social innovation (CSI) is increasingly recognized as a transformative approach to tackling socio-environmental challenges. Studies reveal that such initiatives not only enhance enterprises' ability to manage risks and achieve long-term business interests but also foster brand equity, consumer loyalty, and employee engagement. Moreover, the implementation of CSI improves enterprises' resilience,

enabling them to align profit-driven goals with societal needs. Research also highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration in CSI, emphasizing partnerships among private enterprises, government entities, and non-governmental organizations as a means to amplify the impact and scalability of social innovation efforts.

A crucial dimension of corporate social innovation is the intersection between economic and social values. Initially viewed as mutually exclusive, these two dimensions are now seen as interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Recent studies underscore the creation of social value as a core component of CSI, advocating that economic profitability and social development are not contradictory but complementary. In fact, commercial value creation often serves as a vital driver for sustainable innovation, motivating enterprises to identify and address societal needs as viable business opportunities. This shift in perspective expands the potential for widespread corporate engagement in developmental innovation and societal transformation, positioning businesses as key players in fostering sustainable development.

However, existing research on corporate social innovation presents several limitations, requiring further exploration to advance both theory and practice:

- a Measurement challenges: A predominant reliance on qualitative analysis in existing studies limits the development of practical tools and standards for quantitatively assessing the specific outcomes and impact of corporate social innovation. Without standardized metrics, comparing and synthesizing research findings across different contexts remains challenging, hindering a comprehensive understanding of CSI's effectiveness.
- b Neglect of small and medium enterprises (SMEs): Current research often focuses on large and medium-sized enterprises or multinational corporations, neglecting the role of SMEs and industry-specific enterprises in driving social innovation. Given the diversity of industries and business models, further studies are needed to explore how innovative practices can be generated, implemented, and diffused in smaller-scale enterprises while accounting for their unique challenges and contexts.
- c Limited multi-level analysis: While most studies emphasize micro-level mechanisms of CSI—such as corporate social responsibility, stakeholder expectations, market opportunities, and technological advancement—there is a notable lack of research on the industry-level, national-level, and global-

level impacts of corporate social innovation. Exploring these broader scales is critical for understanding how corporate social innovation interacts with macro-level systems, addressing issues like policy integration, cross-border collaboration, and global sustainability challenges.

- d Contextual and cross-cultural gaps: Despite its growing prominence, corporate social innovation research often remains rooted in specific socio-economic and cultural contexts, predominantly focusing on Western-developed markets. To bridge this gap, future studies should investigate how corporate social innovation evolves and impacts diverse socio-cultural and political environments. This line of inquiry would enhance understanding of how contextual factors shape innovation practices and outcomes, contributing to a more inclusive and globally relevant framework for CSI.

In sum, while corporate social innovation represents a significant avenue for aligning economic and social goals, its theoretical and practical development still faces considerable challenges. Addressing these limitations will require integrating quantitative methodologies, expanding research beyond large enterprises, and exploring multi-level and cross-cultural dimensions. By doing so, future research can further elucidate the mechanisms, impacts, and trajectories of corporate social innovation, solidifying its role as a cornerstone of sustainable development and societal progress.

4) Social innovation in the cultural domain

It can be identified that in recent years, research on social innovation in the cultural domain has garnered extensive attention from Western social science scholars, reflecting a growing interest in the creative transformation of traditional cultural practices and forms of expression. Generally speaking, social innovation in the cultural domain refers to the behaviors and processes that drive social change through cultural activities and expressions. It focuses on exploring how culture and art can act as catalysts for social innovation, contributing to the construction of social capital, promoting community participation, enhancing social cohesion, and raising citizen awareness and engagement.

According to research objectives, this study specifically reviews relevant studies on the relationship between urban and regional development, culture, and social innovation. The overarching conclusions indicate that, within the framework of regional and urban development, social innovation in the cultural domain is critical to

societal progress, particularly during urban renewal processes that emphasize the sharing of diverse values. Cultural resurgence is viewed as a stream of social innovation whose fundamental purpose is to provide community members with rich and diverse social experiences through spatial reproduction centered on cultural activities and projects. This process aims to enhance individual and community identity, foster dialogue and understanding among different groups, address social conflicts and divisions, and advance social ideas and values.

However, studying the relationship between culture and social innovation presents several challenges:

- a The complexity of cultural dimensions: Culture itself is a multidimensional concept that holds different meanings across societies and groups. In the cultural domain, innovation often manifests in changes to social identities, values, and cultural diversity, which are difficult to measure using unified, simple indicators and standards. This creates significant challenges in evaluating the outcomes and impacts of cultural innovation.
- b The methodological limitations: Current research on social innovation in the cultural domain relies heavily on qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews, which restrict the understanding of broader patterns and principles of social innovation. Qualitative research in the cultural field is often limited by researchers' perspectives and sample selection, making it challenging to generalize findings from one specific cultural context to others. This limits the transferability and comparability of research results across different cultural and social environments.
- c Ethical and political considerations: Cultural innovation is often entangled with issues of inequality and cultural hegemony. Cultural innovation initiatives may be dominated by groups with greater resources and power, leading to assimilation into mainstream culture and marginalizing the cultural practices and expressions of less dominant communities. This can result in the loss of cultural diversity and reinforce existing social structures and cultural biases. As such, the selection and promotion of cultural innovation activities may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities and biases embedded in the existing social and cultural order.

These challenges highlight the complexities and ethical considerations involved in studying social innovation within the cultural domain, underscoring the need for more inclusive, context-sensitive, and interdisciplinary approaches.

2.6.2 Limitations of Western Theories in Studying Social Innovation in China

From a Western perspective, the development and diffusion of social innovation have historically been shaped by the broader sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts of Europe and North America. Social innovation, as a concept, gained prominence by aligning with policy discourses addressing welfare state retrenchment, neoliberal governance, and the increasing importance of civil society and private actors in tackling societal challenges. In this context, social innovation is often seen as a mechanism to fill the gaps left by traditional public-sector provisions, with an emphasis on empowerment, participation, and co-creation. These frameworks frequently assume normative conditions such as a highly autonomous civil society, minimal state intervention in social innovation processes, and a market-driven approach to economic development (Moulaert et al., 2013).

While Western theories of social innovation provide valuable frameworks for analyzing and fostering innovative solutions to complex societal challenges, they also exhibit significant limitations when applied to non-Western contexts:

First, much of the Western literature on social innovation tends to emphasize the role of civil society organizations and non-governmental actors while often underestimating or neglecting the roles of state and market actors in driving social change (Nicholls & Ziegler, 2019). This bias reflects the historical and institutional trajectories of European and North American welfare states, where the state has traditionally borne significant responsibility for social welfare, creating an environment in which social innovation often emerges in response to state retrenchment.

Second, the conceptual frameworks developed in Western contexts are often regarded as universal, overlooking the situated nature of social innovation under specific cultural, historical, and institutional conditions. For instance, theories emphasizing grassroots empowerment or decentralized governance may fail to adequately capture the dynamics of social innovation in contexts where the state plays

a central role in mediating social and economic relations, as is the case in many Asian or African countries (Montgomery, 2016).

Additionally, Western-centric social innovation theories have been critiqued for their neoliberal underpinnings. By framing social innovation as market-oriented solutions to social problems, these theories risk conflating innovation with entrepreneurship, reducing social innovation to a tool for enhancing efficiency or scaling solutions without addressing structural inequalities (Kip et al., 2015). Such frameworks may unintentionally prioritize innovations aligned with market logic while marginalizing those that challenge existing power structures or advocate for systemic change.

China's social, cultural, political, and economic contexts differ significantly from those of Western societies. As a result, applying Western social innovation theories to analyze and interpret Chinese social innovation practices faces considerable challenges. The existing social innovation frameworks often fall short in capturing the unique political, economic, cultural, and social dynamics of China. These theoretical limitations significantly diminish the explanatory power of Western frameworks when applied to Chinese social innovation practices, weakening their applicability in the Chinese context.

1) Differences in political systems and power structures: Authoritarianism vs. Democratic Frameworks

The political context in which social innovation occurs is a critical factor in studying its dynamics. As a socialist state, China's political system operates under the authoritarian framework of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), exhibiting significant differences from the democratic frameworks typical of Western societies. These differences are prominently reflected in institutions, ideologies, and power structures.

In China, the role of the state in shaping and guiding social innovation is far more pronounced. Social innovation is often initiated and supported by the state, leveraging top-down approaches to address societal issues such as poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and urban regeneration. By contrast, Western social innovation theories are rooted in democratic systems that emphasize grassroots initiatives and democratic governance (Mulgan, 2006). In these contexts, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and social enterprises are often regarded as key drivers of social change due to their capacity to challenge and reshape public policy. Within Western frameworks, independence and creativity are central to social

innovation models. However, such "non-state-driven" innovation must navigate the complex and often restrictive regulatory environment in China (Zhou, 2018), where the state is not only a central actor in innovation processes but also the key arbiter in determining priorities, allocating resources, and defining success (He & Wu, 2020).

In the Chinese context, the state's strategic direction is critical to the development of social innovation. Social innovation initiatives are often closely intertwined with state-led ideological projects and the construction of collective identity. For example, initiatives such as the "Beautiful China" campaign or efforts to promote "ecological civilization" illustrate how social innovation aligns with national development strategies and ideological goals (He & Wu, 2020). These projects are not merely aimed at addressing specific societal challenges but are deeply embedded in broader narratives of national and cultural rejuvenation. In contrast, Western social innovation frameworks tend to conceptualize social innovation as a practical means of addressing social challenges, typically framed in apolitical terms. Social innovation is often associated with fostering inclusion, enhancing well-being, and addressing market or government failures (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). Since Western theories largely downplay the role of ideology and do not explicitly link social innovation efforts to broader national goals, they struggle to account for how such collective identity objectives shape the design, implementation, and evaluation of social innovation in China.

This centralized political structure challenges the applicability of Western theories. The concept of "transformative social innovation" in Western theories, which is grounded in democratic and pluralistic governance systems, emphasizes the disruptive potential of social innovation to challenge entrenched power structures (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016). In China, however, social innovation operates less as a challenge to power and more as a negotiation within power structures, employing adaptive strategies that align with state priorities while pursuing localized goals. This dynamic calls for a more nuanced understanding of the distribution, negotiation, and exercise of power in non-democratic contexts—an area where Western theories remain underdeveloped.

2) Differences in economic systems and structures: Socialist market economy vs. Neoliberal capitalism

The contrasting roles and functions of the market in social innovation further challenge the applicability of Western theories to the Chinese context. China's distinctive economic structure, often described as "socialism with Chinese

characteristics," is marked by its hybrid nature, characterized by the prominence of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), public-private partnerships (PPPs), and the growing influence of social enterprises. This unique configuration creates specific dynamics for social innovation, highlighting a closer integration between state and market forces. In China, initiatives such as social enterprises, PPPs, and impact investment projects demonstrate how market forces are mobilized as tools for implementing national policy objectives (Wu & Wang, 2019). The Chinese government actively orchestrates these collaborations, embedding market logic within broader social and political agendas. Enterprises—especially SOEs—often function as instruments for advancing social innovation initiatives aligned with national development priorities, such as environmental sustainability and digital inclusion. These enterprises operate at the intersection of state and market, leveraging public resources while adopting market-based practices.

Western theories of social innovation typically draw clear distinctions between the public, private, and third sectors, assigning each a specific and relatively stable role. The market is often conceptualized as a sphere separate from civil society and the state (Phills et al., 2008). This perspective aligns with broader critiques of neoliberal capitalism, particularly its inability to address inequality or environmental degradation. Within this theoretical framework, corporations are generally viewed as profit-driven entities occupying a secondary role in social innovation, which is itself framed as a mechanism to address market failures (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). Such a framework fails to capture the central role of enterprises—especially SOEs—within China's innovation ecosystem. Furthermore, Western theories' normative skepticism toward market-driven innovation often struggles to explain the productive integration of market mechanisms into China's social innovation practices.

In China, economic development and social innovation are seen as complementary, rather than conflicting, agendas. The expansive space for market-driven innovation reflects the hybrid nature of socialist planning and market liberalization. However, existing social innovation theories have yet to adequately account for the emphasis on public-private partnerships in China's mixed economy. Nor have they developed mature models to explain the deeper reasons behind the state's proactive engagement in market-led initiatives. The Chinese approach, which leverages state resources and market dynamics to achieve social objectives, underscores the need for theoretical frameworks that better address the interplay between state involvement and market

innovation. Without such frameworks, the explanatory power of Western theories in the context of China remains limited.

3) Socio-cultural differences: Collectivism vs. Individualism

China's approach to social innovation is deeply embedded in cultural norms and collective values. Confucian ideals emphasizing harmony and collective welfare significantly shape the conception and practice of social innovation in the Chinese context. Innovation initiatives often prioritize social cohesion, moral responsibility, and long-term stability over short-term efficiency or individual achievement (Zhang & Keane, 2020). This cultural specificity is evident in community-based initiatives such as rural cooperatives and mutual aid groups, which focus on strengthening social bonds and preserving local traditions while addressing societal challenges. For instance, in the context of environmental protection, many Chinese social innovation projects integrate traditional ecological knowledge with modern practices, reflecting a culturally distinctive approach that values continuity and adaptability over radical disruption (Liu et al., 2018).

Western social innovation frameworks are often built upon values of individualism, egalitarianism, personal autonomy, and grassroots empowerment. Social innovation is typically defined through concepts such as novelty, efficiency, and impact, with a strong emphasis on measurable outcomes and replicability (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010). However, this focus on scalability and universal applicability contrasts sharply with China's emphasis on collective welfare, presenting significant challenges to the applicability of Western theories, as they may fail to account for culturally embedded practices specific to the Chinese context.

In the West, social innovation frequently highlights the role of individuals and small-scale, community-driven initiatives, emphasizing bottom-up approaches to social change as key mechanisms for fostering social capital and civic engagement. However, in China, where collective action and state-led initiatives are more common, collective interests often take precedence over individual autonomy. State involvement in addressing social issues is generally viewed as a necessary condition for maintaining social stability and progress (Yang, 2016). For example, community-based social enterprises in China are often required to align their efforts with national and local government priorities, reflecting the deep intertwining of state policies and social innovation initiatives (Chen & Lu, 2020).

The differing conceptions of community participation highlight a stark contrast between Chinese community practices and Western ideals of grassroots, self-organized movements. This divergence creates significant friction between Chinese practices and existing social innovation theories and frameworks, as Western paradigms are often ill-equipped to capture the nuances of collective, state-embedded practices prevalent in the Chinese context. The result is a theoretical gap that underscores the need for culturally sensitive frameworks capable of addressing the intersection of collective values, state involvement, and community dynamics in non-Western societies.

4) Different attitudes toward technological innovation

Another notable limitation of Western social innovation theories lies in their relatively underdeveloped attention to technological innovation as a transformative force within the social innovation process. While technology is recognized as a driver of social change, Western frameworks often regard it as a tool rather than a central driving force (Cajaiba Santana, 2014). In contrast, in China, technological innovation plays a pivotal role in shaping social innovation, driven by the state's strategic emphasis on "innovation-driven development" and the rapid integration of digital technologies into everyday life.

For instance, platforms such as Alibaba and Tencent have pioneered digital ecosystems that enable new forms of social entrepreneurship, resource mobilization, and public service delivery. These platforms have fostered innovation ranging from rural e-commerce initiatives that connect small-scale farmers to global markets to app-based philanthropic projects. This technology-driven approach to social innovation blurs the boundaries between market, state, and society, challenging Western theories that often conceptualize these domains as distinct and separate.

Furthermore, the scale and speed of technological diffusion in China far exceed the design parameters of most Western social innovation models. Western theories have not adequately accounted for this dynamic, highlighting the need to rethink how technology and social innovation interact in rapidly evolving and complex environments. China's rapid digital transformation and its role in fostering social innovation provide a unique context for understanding the intersections of technology, society, and innovation, which existing Western theories have yet to fully address.

Conclusion

In summary, the application of Western social innovation theories to the Chinese context faces significant challenges due to fundamental cultural, political, and

economic differences. Authoritarian political structures, a distinctive socialist market economy, and a collectivist culture collectively shape China's understanding and implementation of social innovation in ways that diverge from Western paradigms. Technological innovation, with its transformative role in Chinese social innovation, further underscores these differences, revealing gaps in Western theories that prioritize gradual and localized innovation processes over large-scale, state-led, and technology-driven transformations.

The differentiated experiences and practices emerging from China not only highlight the limitations of universalizing Western frameworks but also provide compelling evidence of alternative trajectories and mechanisms for social innovation. These insights offer valuable opportunities for expanding empirical research in diverse regional contexts, while also encouraging the development of new, context-sensitive theoretical frameworks that better account for the unique dynamics of social innovation in non-Western settings.

2.6.3 The Gap in Social Innovation Research in China's Cultural Sector

Another finding of this review is that a significant shortcoming in the existing literature is the lack of multidimensional studies on social innovation within China's cultural sector. It is evident that, within the Western theoretical and practical context, culture and social innovation have become important areas of focus, with cultural organizations and creative industries increasingly recognized as key drivers of social and economic transformation (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010; Howaldt & Schwarz, 2017). However, research specifically addressing the dynamics of China's cultural sector is noticeably lacking. Although cultural enterprises in China are increasingly seen as key drivers of urban transformation, studies have yet to sufficiently explore how they engage in social innovation and the unique challenges they face. The intersection of cultural enterprises and social innovation remains an underexplored area in both academic research and policy discussions. This gap in research limits our understanding of the unique ways in which Chinese cultural enterprises contribute to urban social innovation, despite the flourishing development of China's cultural

economy and the growing emphasis on integrating culture into urban development strategies.

The main reasons for this phenomenon can be outlined as follows:

1) The neglected role of cultural enterprises in Chinese social innovation research

Despite the growing recognition of social innovation as a critical tool in addressing urban challenges, the cultural sector in China remains largely absent from academic discourse on the topic. Much of the existing research has focused on other domains, such as technological innovation, rural revitalization, and public welfare (Liu, Wang, & Zhang, 2018). While these studies have contributed valuable insights into China's social innovation landscape, they often neglect the cultural sector's potential to address urban social challenges through creative practices, community engagement, and public space revitalization.

When cultural enterprises are discussed in relation to urban development, their contributions are often framed within an economic context, emphasizing their role in job creation, economic growth, or cultural tourism (O'Connor & Gu, 2014). However, their broader social impact—such as fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural diversity, or revitalizing neglected public spaces—is rarely analyzed in depth. This narrow economic focus limits the understanding of cultural enterprises as potential catalysts for social innovation, particularly in addressing pressing urban issues like inequality, gentrification, and environmental degradation.

Recent studies have begun to hint at the transformative potential of cultural enterprises in urban contexts. For instance, the integration of cultural activities into urban regeneration projects has shown promise in strengthening community ties and empowering marginalized groups (Keane, 2020). However, these examples remain isolated, and a systematic analysis of how cultural enterprises foster social innovation in China is still lacking.

2) Institutional barriers to research on the cultural sector and social innovation

The limited attention to cultural enterprises in the study of social innovation is also shaped by institutional and disciplinary constraints. Social innovation research in China is still in its early stages and is predominantly framed by economics, management studies, and public policy perspectives (Howaldt et al., 2015). These disciplines often prioritize measurable, policy-driven outcomes over qualitative, interdisciplinary

approaches, which are better suited to capturing the nuanced contributions of the cultural sector.

Moreover, the cultural sector in China is characterized by significant diversity and fragmentation, ranging from state-owned cultural institutions to private creative enterprises and informal community-based initiatives. This diversity poses methodological challenges for researchers, as there is no standardized framework or dataset capable of capturing the sector's full spectrum of activities. Many cultural enterprises operate in hybrid spaces, blending formal and informal economies, which further complicates efforts to evaluate their social impact systematically (Zhang & Keane, 2020).

Another critical barrier is the influence of state regulation on the cultural sector. Cultural enterprises in China must navigate a highly regulated environment where state policies shape funding opportunities, project priorities, and even the scope of permissible cultural activities. While state support can provide opportunities for innovation, it also imposes constraints that complicate independent, community-driven social innovation efforts.

3) The absence of context-specific theories and frameworks

A significant challenge in studying the role of cultural enterprises in social innovation lies in the reliance on Western-centric theories and frameworks. Much of the literature on cultural organizations and social innovation originates from contexts where civil society networks play a central role in fostering innovation, and cultural enterprises often function independently of state influence (Mulgan et al., 2007). These assumptions are not easily translatable to China's political and socio-economic context, where state-led development agendas and unique cultural factors significantly influence the cultural sector.

For example, the Chinese government's emphasis on "cultural soft power" and its integration of culture into broader urban development policies present both opportunities and constraints for cultural enterprises (Keane, 2020). Unlike their counterparts in the West, Chinese cultural enterprises must balance market pressures, state expectations, and societal needs. This distinct environment necessitates the development of context-specific frameworks that account for the interplay between state regulation, cultural policies, and the broader socio-political environment in which these enterprises operate.

Moreover, the central role of the Chinese state in shaping the cultural sector underscores the need for a re-examination of how social innovation is conceptualized in non-Western contexts. Theories that emphasize grassroots, community-driven innovation often overlook the ways in which state policies can shape, enable, or constrain social innovation practices in China. As a result, there is a pressing need for theoretical models that integrate the roles of state, market, and civil society actors in fostering social innovation within the cultural domain.

Conclusion

In summary, the current literature lacks a comprehensive, multi-perspective analysis of social innovation within China's cultural sector. This gap limits our understanding of how cultural enterprises can uniquely contribute to urban social innovation in China. It calls for future research to focus on developing theories and interdisciplinary methods tailored to specific contexts to explore this intersection, while considering the unique social and political landscape and the evolving role of cultural enterprises in the development of Chinese cities.

2.6.4 Contributions of Literature Review in Supporting the Empirical Research

This literature review offers a multifaceted exploration of social innovation, addressing its conceptual foundations, mechanisms, and applications across diverse domains, with a focus on culture, urban development, and enterprise-level practices. It synthesizes existing scholarship and critically examines the relevance of Western social innovation theories to the Chinese context. Through this approach, the review makes several key contributions that enrich the academic discourse and provide a solid basis for the future research.

1) Laying a theoretical foundation for exploring social innovation in cultural spaces

The review's integrated framework for social innovation—drawing from urban development, cultural studies, and enterprise social innovation—serves as a theoretical lens through which the case studies can be analyzed. By highlighting the transformative potential of cultural activities in fostering social cohesion, creating inclusive public spaces, and addressing urban challenges, the review provides conceptual clarity for

understanding the role of cultural spaces as sites of social innovation. This foundation ensures that the empirical study aligns with broader theoretical discussions and contributes new insights to ongoing debates about the interplay between culture and societal transformation.

2) Bridging theory and practice through corporate social innovation

The review's discussion of corporate social innovation, particularly its emphasis on the integration of economic and social objectives, provides a critical lens for analyzing the role of cultural enterprises in the case studies. By highlighting how enterprises can act as both economic drivers and agents of social transformation, the review positions cultural enterprises as key actors in the creation of cultural spaces. Therefore, the empirical study can build on this perspective by examining how cultural enterprises balance commercial goals with their commitment to fostering social innovation, and how this balance influences the design and function of the cultural spaces they create.

3) Providing context-specific insights for studying social innovation in China

The review's critique of Western social innovation theories and its emphasis on the unique characteristics of the Chinese socio-political and cultural context are particularly valuable for the empirical study. By acknowledging China's collectivist traditions, national embedded innovation mechanism, and the market as a strategic partner in social innovation, the review equips the research with context-sensitive lenses. This allows the empirical study to explore how Chinese cultural enterprises navigate these unique dynamics to create cultural spaces that address social challenges while aligning with state-led urban development agendas.

4) Framing the research contribution to global discourses

The literature review situates the empirical research within global discourses on social innovation, urban development, and culture. By addressing the limitations of Western theories and emphasizing the need for context-specific frameworks, the review ensures that the empirical study contributes not only to understanding social innovation in China but also to enriching global scholarship. The study's focus on Chinese case studies offers a unique opportunity to challenge existing paradigms and propose alternative models of cultural and social innovation that reflect the complexities of non-Western contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review provides a comprehensive theoretical and contextual framework that informs every aspect of the empirical research. From offering conceptual guidance to identifying the specific context of research object and its social condition, the review equips the study with the tools necessary to critically examine how cultural spaces in China function as sites of social innovation. This alignment ensures that the forthcoming empirical research will not only address pressing gaps in the literature but also generate insights that are both contextually grounded and globally relevant.

Chapter III

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION IN CHINA P. R.: HISTORY, IDEOLOGY, AND POLICIES

As habitats for humans to pursue sustainable development, cities serve as tangible reflections of social relations, activities, and status. The alterations in spatial structure, layout, form, and function resulting from urban space governance are specific manifestations of a country's political and social systems implemented through spatial strategies. These changes profoundly influence urban planning due to political and economic transformations (Mumford 1961). Therefore, comprehending the evolution of urban space necessitates an analysis of the series of political, economic, and social institutional contexts underlying it.

Innovation's occurrence and ultimate impact are contingent upon the local and global socio-economic context (Mikhailovich et al. 2017). Innovation invariably originates from the institutional framework, with institutions serving as crucial components in comprehending the trajectory of innovation and its realization, thereby delineating innovation's systematic and social nature. Understanding how the environment influences behavior and social systems is paramount in social innovation research (Cajaiba-Santana 2014), as innovation, being highly contextualized and interactive, is shaped by "the various components of a society's institutional structure and their interrelationships" (Howaldt Jügen and Schwarz Michael 2010) as prevailing conditions. Veblen's theory on innovation posits that technology is an ever-evolving reality while culture functions as an implicit institutional element within a society; thus, it becomes an important variable capable of either facilitating or impeding technological effectiveness and progress. Veblen's perspective underscores that a society's culture and institutional milieu will influence innovation and technology development, thereby establishing an interactive relationship between innovation and specific social contexts (Hulsbergen et al. 2008).

Generating and implementing novel concepts is imperative to achieve cities that align with sustainable objectives. In the present social context, urban renewal

transcends mere considerations of land, buildings, and housing; it encompasses the equitable distribution of social benefits among citizens. Innovation entails territorial development and societal construction since it is deeply embedded in society. Therefore, employing social innovation to address issues about urban renewal necessitates focusing on ensuring the "sustainable existence of society," thereby leading to institutional path-building of social innovation (Mikhailovich et al. 2017). From this perspective, the purpose of social innovation can be perceived as resolving specific challenges within the actual societal framework while infusing fresh vitality into the system (Guan 2018).

Therefore, gaining a profound understanding of and elucidating the specific social context underpinning the development and evolution of urban space in China is imperative. It is equally crucial to delineate the institutional disparities and consequent divergent socio-economic conditions, as these constitute indispensable prerequisites for the accurate and rational application of Western-originated social innovation theories.

3.1 THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA IN 1949-1978

According to institutional economics, institutions are regarded as rules governing human behavior and can be categorized into formal and informal systems (dominant and recessive). The formal (dominant) system encompasses laws, regulations, and policies formulated and implemented by authorities. It fundamentally determines resource allocation (Liu and Li 2006), exerting a profound impact on the evolution and development of cities. Moreover, it is a crucial factor influencing the realization of social innovation and specific outcomes. Following the establishment of New China in 1949, a fundamental economic system was established along with a socialist political system characterized by a public ownership economy as its core while multiple ownership economies developed concurrently. Within this socialist political context led by the Communist Party, essential institutional elements for comprehending China's urban development include land tenure, household registration, and unit-based organization.

3.1.1 Land System

The land system constitutes the fundamental cornerstone for comprehending the evolution of urban space in China, as it directly governs the ownership, allocation, and utilization of land resources. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the country adopted a system of public ownership of land as part of its broader socialist transformation. The 1982 Constitution explicitly stipulated that urban land belongs to the state, while rural and suburban land remains under collective ownership. This dual ownership framework not only reflects the broader socialist principles of the time but also provides the legal foundation for the state's ability to requisition rural land for urbanization based on the public interest, thereby formally enshrining the concept of socialist public ownership of land.

In the early years of New China, strict prohibitions on the sale of both urban and rural land were implemented. These measures ensured centralized state control over land resources, encompassing ownership and usage rights. This was critical to consolidating the socialist regime by curbing private land ownership, which was seen as a source of inequality and resistance to socialist reforms. However, this rigid system also constrained economic growth and urban expansion, as land remained underutilized and separated from market mechanisms. To address these limitations and adapt to the new economic realities, a landmark reform of the land system was introduced in 1988, which legally separated land ownership from land use rights. This reform marked the inception of a land market in China, enabling the commodification of land use rights while maintaining the socialist principle of state ownership. The separation of these two rights forms the institutional foundation for understanding the subsequent emergence of land transfer, land reserve, land leasing, and land finance systems, each of which has played a transformative role in shaping China's urban and spatial development.

- **Land transfer system**

The land transfer system emerged as a critical mechanism for allocating urban land use rights under market-oriented reforms. While the state retains ownership of all urban land, land use rights can be leased to developers, enterprises, and individuals for a fixed term (e.g., 40, 50, or 70 years depending on the type of use: commercial, industrial, or residential). This system allows local governments to generate substantial revenue through the sale of land use rights, often via public auctions or negotiated agreements. The commodification of land use rights introduced a market logic into urban

development, creating an economic incentive for local governments to convert rural land into urban land. However, this system has also fueled speculative activities, overdevelopment, and the loss of arable land, particularly in peri-urban areas. Meanwhile, the rapid monetization of land use rights has been both a driver of urban expansion and a source of social and environmental tensions (Lin 2009; Wu 2015).

- **Land reserve system**

The land reserve system was developed to facilitate urban planning and land supply management. Under this system, local governments establish land reserve centers to acquire, consolidate, and prepare land parcels for future development. This involves converting rural collective land into state-owned urban land through the process of land requisition, often at prices significantly lower than their eventual market value. The reserve centers then sell or lease the land use rights to developers, capturing the value-added gains from urbanization. While this system has enabled local governments to maintain control over the pace and direction of urban development, it has also been criticized for displacing rural communities and inadequately compensating farmers for their lost land, playing a dual role in balancing urban planning objectives with market demands, while also exacerbating social inequities (Yeh and Wu 1999).

- **Land leasing system**

The land leasing system is closely tied to the land transfer system, as it governs the terms under which land use rights are allocated to end-users. This system allows local governments to lease land use rights to enterprises and individuals for fixed terms, providing a recurring revenue stream. Unlike land transfers, where land use rights are sold upfront, land leasing involves periodic payments, which can help stabilize local government finances. However, the short duration of some leases, particularly for industrial land, has raised concerns about inefficiency and underinvestment, as enterprises may lack the long-term security needed to invest in infrastructure and development.

Together, these land systems—transfer, reserve, leasing, and finance—form the institutional foundation of China's urbanization process. They have enabled the state to retain control over land resources while leveraging market mechanisms to fuel economic growth and urban expansion. However, they have also introduced significant challenges, including spatial inequalities, social displacement, and environmental degradation. The commodification of land use rights has transformed land into both a

financial asset and a political tool, with profound implications for urban governance and spatial justice. The Chinese land system represents a hybrid model that combines socialist principles with capitalist practices, highlighting the state's active role in mediating market forces and directing urban development. This unique institutional arrangement underscores the need for localized theories and frameworks to analyze the dynamics of urbanization in China.

3.1.2 Hukou System

The “hukou” household registration system is a distinctive institutional framework in China, serving as a mechanism for population management and social control. Rooted in family and clan ties, the hukou system links individuals to specific geographic locations and assigns them a status—either “urban” or “rural.” Established in the early years of the People's Republic of China, this system formalized population management by using households as the fundamental unit of governance. In 1958 and 1959, the promulgation of the “Regulations on the Registration of Households in the People's Republic of China” institutionalized the hukou system and codified its functions (Chan 1994). This system has since played a dual role: facilitating resource allocation under a planned economy while also reinforcing social stratification along the urban-rural divide.

- **Urban-rural dichotomy and resource allocation**

At its core, the hukou system creates a structural divide between “urban” and “rural” populations, determining individuals' access to resources, services, and rights based on their registration status. This dichotomy governs critical aspects of life, such as employment opportunities, education, healthcare, housing, and social security (Chan and Zhang 1999). Urban residents, designated as “non-agricultural” under the system, enjoy privileged access to state-sponsored welfare and services, while rural residents, categorized as “agricultural,” are largely reliant on subsistence farming and village-based collectives for their livelihoods.

This division is deeply entrenched in people's residential locations and occupational classifications, effectively restricting mobility between urban and rural areas. During the planned economy era, the hukou system was instrumental in consolidating state control over resource allocation. By restricting rural-to-urban

migration, the state ensured the availability of agricultural labor in rural areas while prioritizing industrial development in cities (Cheng and Selden 1999). However, the rigid nature of this system soon became a significant institutional impediment, limiting labor mobility, suppressing productivity, and exacerbating social inequalities.

- **Hukou reform and urbanization**

Following the reform and opening-up policies initiated in 1978, China began a gradual overhaul of the household registration system to accommodate the demands of a transitioning economy and an increasingly mobile population. The reform process primarily aimed to relax restrictions on migration, facilitate labor mobility, and address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization. One significant focus has been the orderly integration of the "floating population"—rural migrant workers who have moved to cities for employment opportunities but lack urban hukou status (Chan 2010). The reform measures include adjusting household registration policies to allow rural migrants to settle in urban areas more easily, thereby enhancing urbanization levels. Demographic indicators such as the proportion of the urban population are widely recognized as tools for measuring the success of these reforms.

Demographic indicators are widely recognized as measurement tools for urbanization. China's household registration reform has directly facilitated the "population urbanization" process, significantly reducing barriers to population flow and migration between rural and urban areas. However, the rapid influx of rural populations into cities has resulted in a "separation of people and households," making it challenging for cities to effectively register and manage the large number of farmers seeking job opportunities promptly. Consequently, this group, which contributes tax revenues to cities, needs access to the public services and goods that should be available to urban residents due to restrictions imposed by household registration policies. This situation poses new social challenges for China's pursuit of sustainable urban development.

3.1.3 Unit System

After China's establishment, to expedite the realization of socialism, the Communist Party and the government actively facilitated a comprehensive societal reorganization, thereby fostering the emergence of a unit system through a top-down

approach. The unit system refers to the state dividing urban spaces into relatively enclosed, autonomous, and self-sufficient units. These units have varying administrative levels, corresponding powers, and resource allocations based on their respective administrative hierarchies, thus forming a "state-unit-individual" vertical organizational structure (Bo 2014).

The "unit system" was a fundamental tool for urban construction in China during the planned economy period, facilitating modernization. It not only functioned as an economic entity but also operated as a distinct form of social organization. The state exerted control over urban space and grassroots society through the unit system, effectively achieving spatial governance. As a representative spatial organization within cities, the "unit" assumed certain state functions, such as social reproduction and redistribution. It possessed authority and unlimited responsibility to manage its members and affairs (Jie 2000; Wang 2019). The relationships formed within each unit encompassed all production factors, from resources to individuals; these relationships were not contractual in the Western sense but lacked withdrawal rights.

Consequently, the state strictly regulated society through automated and formalized workplaces, resulting in a highly stable and governable society (Wu 2002). Each unit and social organization represented miniature societies wherein individuals' social rights and interests were closely intertwined with their respective units. This "unit-run society" mechanism created distinctive social spaces and shared ways of life in post-revolutionary Chinese cities.

3.1.4 The Institutional System and Key Characteristics of Urban Development in China during the Planned Economy Period

China soon established its industrialization strategy, incorporating the highly centralized planned economic system from the Soviet Union. The nation embarked on an accelerated drive for extensive urban construction and urbanization. Over a prolonged period, cities gradually evolved based on primitive capital accumulation derived from agriculture due to relatively limited industrialization and market foundation. With the continuously growing population, cities face severe challenges regarding their capacity to provide adequate resources. Consequently, the country-

initiated efforts to establish a dual urban-rural system by implementing household registration and unit systems while imposing restrictions on rural-urban migration.

During the planned economy period from 1949 to 1977, China established a relatively comprehensive urban development system. The core systems included the land and household registration systems while supporting systems mainly encompassed social security, education, employment, and urban construction. Other systems related to urban development comprised the industrial system, tax and fee system, administrative planning, etc., aiming to establish and consolidate public ownership and socialist governance under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (Chen 2005). These measures effectively addressed challenges in the process of urbanization development and enhanced overall efficiency within the urbanization system.

During this period, China's urban development was regulated by administrative orders issued by the national and local governments. The government exerted significant control over resource allocation and provided full financial support for urban construction by implementing development strategies focused on socialist industrialization and transforming consumer cities into production cities. The primary objective of urban construction was to govern the environment, enhance living conditions, and facilitate rapid production growth while establishing new industrial zones. Overall, the process of urbanization progressed at a relatively slow pace.

3.2 INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1978

3.2.1 Institutional Innovation after 1978

China's urbanization process, in its modern sense, officially commenced in 1978 with the initiation of Reform and Opening-up. This transformative era laid the foundation for the country's unprecedented economic growth, societal restructuring, and urban development. A series of institutional reforms, driven by the twin goals of economic liberalization and modernization, reshaped not only the urban-rural dynamics but also the mechanisms of governance and resource allocation. The interplay of

economic, agricultural, housing, land, and administrative reforms catalyzed the emergence of new urban forms and set the stage for China's rapid urbanization.

- **Economic reform: unlocking productivity and the rise of the private sector**

The comprehensive economic reforms launched during this period introduced a novel incentive mechanism nationwide, fundamentally altering the structure and dynamics of production. These reforms enhanced production efficiency and facilitated rapid progress in agricultural modernization and industrialization, driving significant changes in both urban and rural economies. The transformation of agriculture, for example, through the Household Responsibility System, not only improved rural productivity but also freed surplus labor, which migrated to urban centers and contributed to the growth of the urban labor force.

Simultaneously, economic reforms significantly relaxed state control over the private sector. This regulatory shift encouraged the emergence and swift growth of private enterprises, which became pivotal in driving urban industrialization, generating employment, and contributing to fiscal revenues. The rise of private enterprises also introduced new entrepreneurial dynamics into the urban economy, transforming cities into hubs of innovation and production.

- **Sector-specific reforms: reshaping spatial structures and urban-rural relations**

In addition to economic reforms, other sector-specific domestic reforms—such as those in agriculture, housing, land, household registration (*hukou*), and state-owned enterprises (SOEs)—played a fundamental role in reshaping China's urban-rural landscape.

- a Agricultural reform: The agricultural reforms not only increased productivity but also facilitated the transfer of rural surplus labor to urban areas, reducing the rural population and accelerating urban growth.
- b Housing reform: The transition from welfare-based housing distribution to a market-oriented system introduced housing as a key economic commodity. This reform not only addressed urban housing shortages but also incentivized real estate development, transforming the urban skyline.
- c Land reform: The introduction of a dual land system—where rural collective land and state-owned urban land coexist—enabled rural land to be converted

into urban land, laying the groundwork for land finance and land-centered urbanization.

- d Hukou reform: Changes to the household registration system began to erode the rigid urban-rural dualism, allowing greater labor mobility and increasing the fluidity of urbanization processes.
- e SOE reform: Restructuring state-owned enterprises enhanced urban industrial efficiency while simultaneously generating urban unemployment, requiring cities to adapt to a growing informal economy and new forms of employment.

The interplay of these reforms not only facilitated the rapid growth of urban areas, but also led to significant transformations urban development. Moreover, these reforms have decentralized state power by granting local governments greater discretion in resource allocation, investment arrangement, and urban and regional growth promotion. Localities have transformed into political-economic entities, leading to a significant shift in city governance approaches(Wu 2002), as well as the cities have become engines of modernization, fueled by market-oriented policies and entrepreneurial governance.

3.2.2 Marketization, Decentralization, and Globalization: The Fundamental Logics Guiding China's institutional Innovation

After the Initiative of Reform and opening up in 1978, China's economic system gradually transformed from a planned economy to a market economy. This economic metamorphosis and rapid development have profoundly impacted China's politics, society, and culture, leaving an indelible "market economy mark" on its social transformation (Liu 2010). It is widely recognized that marketization, decentralization, and globalization are considered the fundamental logical clues guiding China's Reform (Zhang et al. 2006). The resulting domestic institutional innovation, policy reform, and system reconstruction across political, economic, social, and cultural domains have played a decisive role in shaping China's urbanization process and the evolution of urban space.

- **Marketization**

After the official establishment of the socialist market economy system in 1992, a series of market-oriented reforms were implemented, primarily encompassing paid land

utilization, relaxation of household registration control, and housing commercialization. These reforms expedited China's economic and institutional transformation towards a market economy and fundamentally reshaped the dynamic foundation and allocation mode of urban space in China.

Since 1988, China has implemented land system reforms to enhance land use efficiency by introducing market principles for mediating and allocating land resources.

Firstly, the 1988 Constitution Amendment clarified that legal provisions could transfer land use rights. In the same year, the Land Management Law was enacted to establish a compensated land use system that was compliant with the law.

In 1990, the State Council promulgated the Provisional Regulations on the Assignment and Transfer of State-owned Land Use Rights in Urban Areas to specify that land users could assign their rights through means such as auction, bidding, or agreement. Consequently, there was an official separation between land ownership and land use rights.

Subsequently, in 1998, further revisions were made to the Land Management Law, which formally established a compensated land assignment system. Under this system, local governments could assign state-owned land use rights within a specified timeframe using legally approved methods (such as agreement, auction, or bidding) while obtaining corresponding fees for these assignments.

Based on this foundation, land reserves emerged as a new policy tool for local governments to strengthen their control over urban land supply monopoly and exercise more significant influence over urban development activities according to their intentions.

During this period, China witnessed a significant increase in its urbanization rate, which surged from 28.51% in 1994 to 51.27% in 2011. The rapid urban development has resulted in two significant consequences: firstly, the soaring demand for land and housing has created a thriving market for land transfer and auctions; secondly, pressing urban issues such as population explosion, traffic congestion, and inadequate infrastructure necessitate substantial capital investment that cannot be met solely by fiscal funds. These practical factors have directly led to the emergence of land finance whereby local governments rely on revenue generated from various land-related taxes and fees and land transfer fees to support local finances. This revenue is then utilized for investments in urban construction projects, enhancing the overall urban environment and addressing prevailing urban challenges. Consequently, apart from

local budgets, land transfer fees have become a primary financial component for many cities while granting local governments an authoritative position in urban planning and spatial governance.

- **Decentralization**

The influence of decentralization on urban development is primarily in two dimensions:

(1) With the continuous acceleration of urbanization, the national governance capacity has been significantly weakened, prompting the state to relinquish direct control over land, means of production, and capital in favor of strengthening regulatory power at a local level (See: Wu 2002). The City Planning Law promulgated in 1989 granted local governments greater independent development rights, including city planning preparation and issuance of land use certificates and building permits. It enabled local governments to obtain jurisdiction over urban geographical space and regulate all activities within their administrative areas. In 2004, the State Council issued Measures for Deepening Reform and Strict Land Management, which clarified that while central government retains power and responsibility for regulating newly added construction land amounts, local governments can revitalize existing construction lands and reap benefits from revitalization efforts. These measures further empower local governments with freedom in allocating land resources with hopes that they can effectively restrict excessive waste or sprawl through clarification of power responsibilities.

(2) The process of market economy transformation is also characterized by administrative decentralization from the central government to local governments. On one hand, local governments represent state power in managing economic and social activities within cities. On the other hand, the land leasing system further diminishes the role of the state in urban land management (Yeh and Wu 1996). As "quasi-market entities with independent interests and behavioral goals," local governments directly or indirectly engage in investment activities through land reserves, land finance, and other means, significantly expanding their sphere of influence. Under the premise of prioritizing economic development as a national goal, the devolution of administrative power from the state to local governments can be seen as an embodiment of "power marketization." This reform and delegation have greatly enhanced the enthusiasm of local governments for economic construction while simultaneously intensifying competition among cities (Liu and Li 2006).

- **From "Fiscal Responsibility System" to "Fiscal Tax Separation System"**

In the mid-1980s, the country implemented the "Fiscal Responsibility System" in finance, whereby the central government assumed control over provincial fiscal units' financial revenue and expenditure. Local governments were allowed to retain a certain proportion of revenue increase for their use, while no subsidies were provided for income inequality or decrease resulting from declining revenues. This system's direct consequence was establishing a link between local governments' economic development speed and their financial revenue, necessitating them to enhance local economic growth to augment their financial resources. Consequently, this led directly to the emergence of profit-seeking subject consciousness.

Therefore, there are two distinct patterns of government behavior: firstly, the government actively fosters the development of township enterprises, with Guangdong Province, in particular, emerging as the most financially prosperous province nationwide through its bundled system, thereby exerting a strong demonstration effect that prompts other provinces and cities to emulate this approach; secondly, owing to the close nexus between local governments and enterprises in terms of interests, a certain degree of interest community is formed. In order to facilitate enterprise expansion in terms of production scale, the government often employs various administrative means to secure financial and taxation benefits for these enterprises. However, this creates a significant disparity between enterprise production scale and economic growth (Chen 2014).

In 1994, China implemented the "Tax Separation Reform" and formally established the "Fiscal tax separation system," which marked a comprehensive departure from the previous fiscal responsibility system. During this reform, there was a shift in the distribution of VAT revenue between central and local governments, with the proportion changing from 30:70 to 75:25. However, despite achieving increased revenue for the state treasury through higher taxes, the central government did not assume its expected social welfare obligations as a solid fiscal authority should. Instead, policies aimed at "power separation" were introduced between 1994 and 2000 in areas such as housing, healthcare, and education. These policies transferred social welfare responsibilities to local governments to achieve their goal of reducing fiscal burden (Xiao and Cao 2015).

Simultaneously, the central government implemented budget system reforms to enhance transparency and standardize management of local government's revenue and

expenditure. In this context, local governments faced challenges as they could no longer rely solely on tax increases for financial revenue growth; thus, they urgently needed new avenues to generate funds for social welfare expenditures. Consequently, local governments turned towards vigorously developing sectors like construction and real estate by leveraging underutilized land resources - ultimately leading to what later became known as "the entrepreneurial efforts of China's urban development."

- **Globalization**

Another significant impact of China's reform and opening-up is its close integration with economic globalization. The private sector has experienced unprecedented growth in China, and new market practices have further facilitated the establishment of land prices (Wu 2002). In the process of market-oriented transformation and decentralization reform, local governments lost their original direct control over many resources. They faced a significant reduction in direct investment from the central government. With China's accession to the WTO, local governments faced dual challenges: urban competition caused by global capital flows and marketization of land and housing after domestic economic reforms.

Local governments must adopt urban policies to promote economic growth in this context. Land leases enable local governments to acquire land benefits from developers and reinvest these benefits in urban development (Wu 2001). Simultaneously, cities have established business development zones, special economic zones, or investment promotion service centers that offer various preferential treatments for foreign investments to attract more businesses and foster economic growth. However, to attract more enterprises to the local area, local governments often prioritize individual companies' interests over the city's overall interests (Wu, 2002). This deviation leads to a misalignment between the city's development goals and social equity objectives.

The core characteristics of China's first round of economic reform after 1978 (1978-1992) can be described as decentralization and economic redistribution, which resulted in the emergence of a "transitional economy" - a coexistence of a planned economy and market economy - through a gradual and partial reform process (Wu 2001). During this stage, numerous resources under direct state control and various functions and responsibilities previously held by the state were transferred to state units and local governments through land market and housing reforms. A smaller portion was also transferred to the private sector. Market factors experienced growth alongside increased private investment, with land income crucial in driving urban development.

Afterward, the second phase of economic reform (since 1992) aimed to facilitate a more market-oriented process, encompassing reforms in state-owned enterprises, housing, land, social welfare, banking, finance, etc., profoundly impacting China's socio-economic landscape and urban development. With the deepening of market transformation, decentralized reform efforts and intensified global competition have fundamentally altered China's urban spatial development's driving force and resource allocation mode - transitioning from centralized resource allocation during the planned economy era to market-based resource allocation. It has significantly propelled extensive transformations and reorganizations within urban internal spatial structures while instigating continuous changes in interconnected aspects such as urban functions, industrial structure, and social structure, as well as giving rise to diverse types of urban spaces.

3.2.3 The Entrepreneurial Efforts within Urban Governance

In the process of transitioning to a more market-oriented economy, China has consistently adjusted the "central-local power structure" as well as the interactive dynamics among government, market, and society through policy measures (Zhang and Gao 2022; Wu 2022). It has resulted in a fundamental transformation in the relationships between central and local governments and between the state, market, and society. The reform has primarily shifted the responsibility for social welfare provision onto enterprises and local governments, consequently leading to the emergence and strengthening of localism.

Due to the emphasis on economic development since China's Reform and Opening-up, coupled with changes in global production organization, capital mobility, and investment competition, urban cities have prioritized economic growth alongside their financial objectives. Consequently, city governments have been compelled to adopt more innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to foster urban growth (Marcuse & van Kempen 2000; Short and Kim 1999).

Because city governments focus on economic growth goals (also known as entrepreneurial efforts within urban governance), there has been gradual establishment and rapid development since the mid-to-late 1990s.

Firstly, it is imperative to establish a growth-promoting alliance characterized by enduring cooperative arrangements between the public and private sectors (Zhu 1999; Zhu 2002; Yang and Chang 2007). In the multifaceted social context resulting from economic reforms, city governments rely on garnering support from enterprises as an effective means to enhance their operational capacity. Simultaneously, enterprises actively explore diverse collaborative partnerships with city governments to secure local protection and exploit excess profits stemming from imperfect competition (Cao et al. 2016).

Since state-owned enterprises are responsible for social services and welfare, local governments must subsidize these projects by providing developers with inexpensive or free land (Yang and Chang 2007). Consequently, city governments negotiate constantly with developers while promoting urban development through various incentive plans and investor partnerships.

On the other hand, promoting localism provides a strong impetus for the government to develop commercial activities to augment local revenue sources. It facilitates collaborative partnerships between city governments and enterprises, significantly advancing corporate social responsibility and expanding social functions. Standard practices include establishing joint ventures or introducing commercial enterprises in specific areas within cities and encouraging enterprise growth to enhance their societal contributions. Another example involves allocating funds from increasing the non-budgetary income of enterprises towards subsidizing vulnerable groups and providing employment opportunities for residents within street communities.

Essentially, the public-private partnerships that form this growth alliance align with Western theories of "growth machine" and "urban regime" (Logan and Molotch 1988). It reflects an "informal local urban system" (Zhu 1999) developed by Chinese cities during their transition to a socialist market economy. The system leverages financial benefits from the urban land development market to promote local growth.

Secondly, globalization and marketization have directly contributed to formulating urban policies that prioritize business development. As market reforms have shifted local governments' regulation of urban economic activities from direct control to indirect oversight, urban space has emerged as a crucial competitive factor that allows local governments to intervene and effectively restructure actively. It has become a valuable resource for attracting foreign investment and promoting urban economic growth. Urban administrations have explored innovative governance

approaches by collaborating with enterprises in spatial development initiatives. These initiatives primarily involve establishing special economic zones, constructing new industrial parks, revitalizing old urban areas, and initiating new real estate projects. In these endeavors, urban governments stimulate land development and spatial regeneration through land transfers while implementing tax reductions and exemptions to encourage developers' participation in infrastructure construction, building maintenance and demolition, landscape transformation, and beautification (Wu 2002).

Therefore, China's market-oriented economic transformation has effectively stimulated cities' material development through commercializing and marketizing land use rights and construction (Zhu 2002). Simultaneously, it has provided opportunities for the state to innovate within its system by adopting more localized governance approaches and utilizing the market to enhance governance capacity. The active participation of enterprises in the market directly addresses the practical issue of local fiscal shortage while also exploring marketization to tackle significant social problems such as reemployment, medical insurance, and pensions.

3.2.4 The Impacts of National Institutional Innovation on Urban Development

The interplay between the key institutional mechanisms and modern entrepreneurial strategies in China's urban governance represents a critical analytical framework for understanding the country's unique developmental trajectory. While historical institutional mechanisms—such as land reforms, fiscal decentralization, and the restructuring of state-society relations—established the structural conditions for local experimentation and marketization, modern entrepreneurial strategies—such as urban space commodification, inter-urban competition, and public-private partnerships—emerged as adaptive responses to these structural conditions. It is important to integrate historical and spatial perspectives in the study of governance transformations, in order to obtain valuable insights for comparative analyses of China's urbanization and development in transitional economies.

- **Land finance as a mechanism of capital accumulation**

China's rapid urbanization following the 1978 reforms created immense funding pressures for local governments. In response, land finance emerged as a central

mechanism to address these challenges. Two major forces shaped the adoption of this model: the surging demand for urban land and housing, and the pressing need for large-scale investments to resolve urban issues such as population growth, infrastructure deficits, and congestion. Local governments increasingly relied on revenues from land transfers—such as land lease fees and related taxes—to fund infrastructure, public services, and urban expansion. This reliance on land as a financial resource culminated in the "land-centered urbanization model" (Hsing 2010; Chen et al. 2016), which sustained fiscal revenues and promoted rapid urban growth by continuously converting rural land into urban use.

At its core, land finance represents a system of capital generation in which land serves as a financial asset to fuel urbanization and economic development. Within the framework of China's market-oriented institutional reforms, land finance has played a pivotal role in facilitating the original accumulation of capital and meeting the growing capital demands of urbanization (Wu 2002). The model relies on the land transfer system, which leverages the future revenue potential of land as collateral to secure direct financing. By monetizing land through mechanisms such as the land lease system, local governments lease urban land to developers, who in turn invest in infrastructure projects, commercialize urban spaces, and generate additional tax revenues.

A distinctive feature of this system is the integration of market mechanisms into urban infrastructure construction. This process intertwines capital circulation with urban spatial transformation, effectively converting public service spaces, residential areas, and commercial zones into commodified assets. Land finance has enabled industrial and residential spaces within cities to enter the capital market as tradable commodities. Consequently, urban spaces have evolved into movable property, or real estate, driving economic growth while simultaneously reshaping China's urban landscape.

The financialization of land has profoundly reshaped China's urban landscape, driving unprecedented spatial transformations and embedding cities within the dynamics of capital accumulation. This model has fueled rapid urban modernization, positioning economic imperatives at the center of urban planning and governance. By intertwining capital flows with urban development, land finance has become a defining feature of China's urbanization, catalyzing large-scale infrastructure projects, reimagining urban spaces, and creating a uniquely growth-oriented urban trajectory. However, this transformation highlights the intricate complexities and far-reaching

consequences of a land-centered development approach, underscoring its pivotal role in the shaping of China's cities.

- **From decentralization to entrepreneurial governance**

The transition from decentralization to the entrepreneurial governance model in Chinese cities represents a critical and dynamic process in the evolution of China's urbanization and spatial transformation. While decentralization—marked by market reforms, fiscal restructuring, and political devolution—laid the institutional foundation for local governments to adopt entrepreneurial practices, the emergence of entrepreneurial governance was neither an inevitable nor uniform outcome. Instead, this shift reflects a complex interplay between structural constraints, state priorities, and local agency in navigating the post-reform political economy.

In a series of specific measures of decentralization reform, the introduction of the tax-sharing system in 1994 shifted significant fiscal responsibilities to local governments while reducing their share of central fiscal transfers, creating a "fiscal squeeze" (Wong 1997), compelling local governments to seek alternative revenue sources. Meanwhile, decentralization also granted local governments greater autonomy over planning and investment, enabling them to implement aggressive strategies to attract capital and promote local growth (Zhu 2004). Thus, decentralization established the structural conditions for entrepreneurial governance by creating fiscal and institutional incentives for local governments to act as economic agents.

Another critical consequence of decentralization was the intensification of intergovernmental competition. Decentralization fragmented the governance structure, fostering a quasi-market dynamic where cities competed for investment, resources, and political recognition (Chien 2008). This competition incentivized local governments to adopt entrepreneurial practices, including the active promotion of urban infrastructure projects, the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs), and the use of preferential policies to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Therefore, local governments in China began prioritizing economic growth and urban development as their core agendas, often sidelining social welfare in favor of investment-friendly policies. The pursuit of economic growth became a critical metric for evaluating local officials' performance within the cadre evaluation system, further embedding entrepreneurial practices into the governance framework (Li and Zhou 2005).

In addition, decentralization not only facilitated local governments' engagement in market-oriented practices but also enabled the commodification of urban space as a key

mechanism for economic growth. It allowed local governments to expropriate rural land, convert it into state-owned land, and lease it to developers and investors for profit (Hsing 2010). This process of land commodification became a central feature of entrepreneurial governance, as local governments leveraged land as a fiscal and developmental resource.

The commodification of urban space also fostered spatial strategies closely tied to entrepreneurial governance. Local governments increasingly adopted high-profile urban projects, including industrial parks, CBDs, and cultural landmarks, to signal their competitiveness and attract investment. These projects often involved extensive partnerships with private capital, further blurring the lines between public governance and private enterprise (Wu 2005). In this context, entrepreneurial governance can be understood as a spatially embodied practice, where urban space serves as both the object and the means of economic competition.

To conclude, the transformation from decentralization to entrepreneurial governance is best understood as a systemic shift in state-society relations. Decentralization fractured the centralized governance model of the Mao era, empowering local governments to experiment with market mechanisms and governance innovations. However, this autonomy also came with heightened responsibilities and pressures, particularly in the realms of fiscal management and economic performance. Entrepreneurial governance emerged as a rational response to these pressures, providing local governments with a framework to navigate the demands of economic growth, fiscal sustainability, and political accountability.

3.3 CULTURAL POLICIES AND INNOVATION

Cultural policy is a crucial aspect of national governance. The cultural policy system reflects a country's historical background, institutional structure, and unique government model. It serves as the foundation for specific practices, rationales, and organizational models in the cultural field based on the political and institutional framework of the country (Dubois 2015). In China, the political and economic system and national and urban cultural policies directly influence the development and evolution of urban space. Therefore, comprehending China's cultural policies and

innovative practices in managing mechanisms and systems is an essential prerequisite for accurately understanding the production and evolution of urban cultural space.

3.3.1 The Evolution and Transformations in Cultural Policies

The development of China's cultural policy has undergone three major stages and two significant transformations (Hu and Zhang 2014), all of which have taken place and evolved in the historical process of adapting to the reform of the national economic system and the demands of contemporary times. It also reflects the developmental trajectory of the nation's comprehension regarding culture's role and value in promoting sustainable human society. This process can be summarized as follows:

Phrase 1: 1949-1977. As the country implemented a highly centralized and comprehensively planned economic and management system, the cultural policy focused on exerting complete control over cultural production, circulation, consumption, and practice through reliance on a centralized system. The state allocated resources through top-down national directives. Culture and ideology closely intertwine with the Communist Party, providing leadership and the state exercising absolute authority. During this period, China's cultural policy can be characterized as a value-oriented centralized power consciousness, following politically driven technical approaches (Hu and Zhang 2014). The central government was the historical starting point for integrating cultural resources into the national planning system (Fu and Chen 2010).

Phrase 2: 1978-2000. In 1978, the institutional innovation centered around The Reform and opening up brought about a fundamental change in the social production relations of the entire country. The cultural policy was influenced by the first significant transformation, which involved shifting from a planned economy mode to a marketization mode, with the core objective being to address the alignment issue between cultural production and social productivity (Hu and Zhang 2014). During this stage, as the value orientation of cultural policy began to shift from "class struggle" to "economic construction," the state conducted various explorations and practices regarding cultural attributes, commodity production, and market management. More than 200 relevant documents were successively issued to implement the establishment, adjustment, and reform of policies related to cultural economics (Cai 2014).

The country further enhanced its understanding of culture's economic attributes through enterprise management of institutions, redefining government-enterprise relationships, and institutionalizing culture's economic aspects through marketization efforts. Consequently, cultural commodities, services, and consumption places thrived and rapidly developed nationwide. In 1992, the state officially introduced goals such as "building a socialist market economic system" and "reforming the cultural system." By 2002, it was explicitly proposed to vigorously develop the cultural industry based on distinguishing it from cultural undertakings. In 2003, the national cultural system reform pilot program was officially launched with the basic idea of "classification reform for both cultural undertakings and cultural industry," marking the beginning of transforming national culture from a single development mode to a combined model integrating undertakings and industries.

Phrase 3: the early 21st century to present. With the onset of the 21st century, the state's comprehension and emphasis on culture have been deepening. Building upon the establishment of two fundamental attributes (ideological and economic) and two benefits (social and economic), the state has formally proposed a strategy for fostering a robust socialist culture. The focal point of cultural policy is to enhance the protection of people's fundamental cultural rights and interests while comprehensively elevating culture's significant value and function in promoting sustainable social development by stimulating creativity and innovation among governmental entities and citizens. This transformation is also recognized as China's second shift in cultural policy, transitioning from "marketization" to "humanization".

At this stage, the core characteristic of cultural policy in China is the comprehensive deepening of cultural system reform. This reform aims to clarify further the relationship between the government and the market, as well as between the government and society. The main objectives include (Fu and Chen 2010):

Promoting "cultural system and mechanism innovation" and "improving cultural economic policy" as focal points for deepening reform. This involves shifting government departments from running culture to managing culture, facilitating transformation, and restructuring cultural institutions. The goal is to push most cultural entities into the market, transforming them into market subjects with legal person status. By doing so, we aim to eliminate institutional constraints that have long hindered the development of cultural economy/industry:

- Proposing establishment and enhancement of a modern cultural market system that encourages and promotes various cultural enterprises (non-public ones). It implements Primary reform measures to enhance scale, efficiency, and professionalism within the cultural industry. These efforts offer promising prospects for promoting prosperity and development in China's cultural industry.

- Strategically deploying a national public cultural service system has been formally proposed. This marks a transition from combining cultural undertakings and industries strategically to combining public cultural services with industries strategically. It also signifies a shift in focus from government regulation towards providing governmental services to foster overall growth in our country's culture.

3.3.2 The Two Primary Components of Cultural Policies

As mentioned, China's cultural system reform is transitioning from the centralized administrative command system within the enterprise framework to a diversified contract system under the market-oriented approach (Fu 2019). This transformation is driven by the new demands for redefining the relationship structure between government and market and government and society, resulting from China's shift from a planned economic system to a market-based economy. Consequently, two significant consequences have emerged:

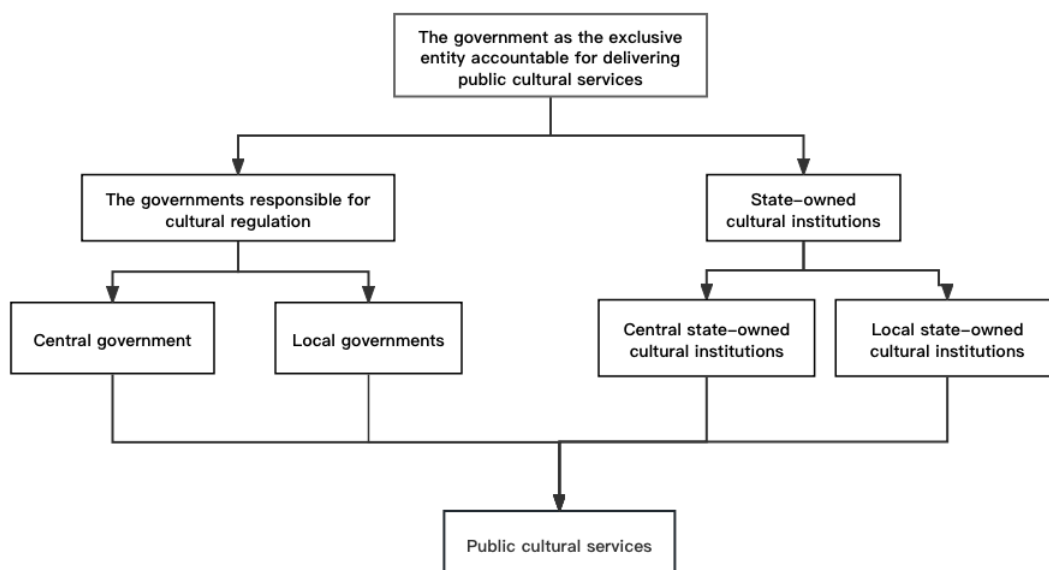
- 1) The previous inadequate provision of public cultural services can no longer keep pace with residents' rapidly growing cultural needs. The market-oriented transformation has brought about changes in the overall social structure and led to profound shifts in people's lifestyles and cultural perspectives. The rapid emergence of the cultural market and increased cultural consumption have provided individuals with novel avenues to access diverse cultural products and services.
- 2) The transition towards a market-oriented approach urgently necessitates that governments redefine their roles and functions beyond traditional planned management methods in cultural governance. It requires establishing new mechanisms for supplying and distributing culture based on principles derived from market economics while actively involving societal forces in constructing an inclusive public cultural service system.

To address the issues above, since 2006, the central government has been adhering to market economy and social development requirements, strategically promoting the "differentiated development" of public welfare cultural undertakings and commercial cultural industries. Presently, the two fundamental pillars of the national cultural policy system, namely the public cultural service system and the cultural industry system, have emerged as significant drivers for innovation in national cultural policies. Moreover, they have exerted profound influences on urban development and spatial governance.

- **Public cultural service system**

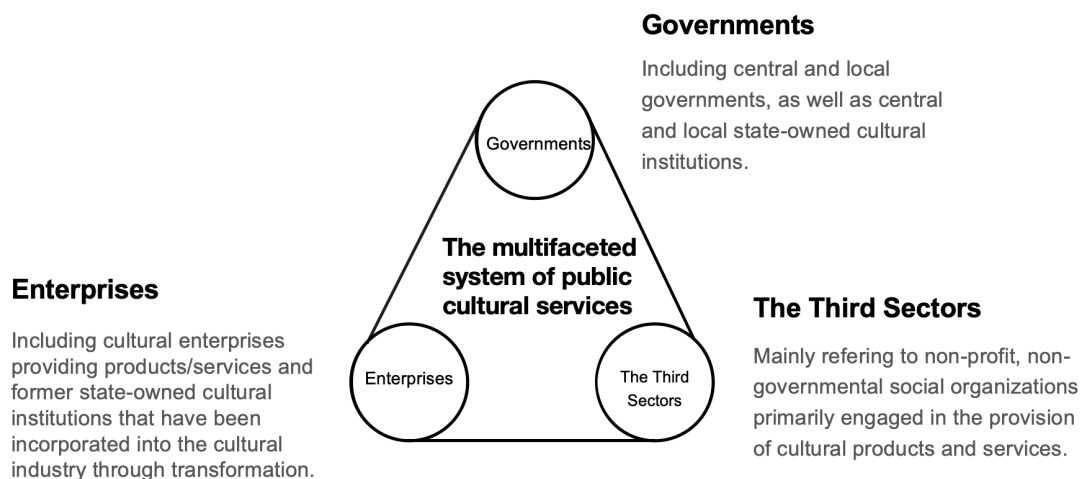
Public cultural services in China exhibit similarities with Western societies in terms of public welfare, equity, and universal benefits; however, their developmental trajectories diverge significantly. They are characterized by a vast cultural system that emerged under the state-planned economy by integrating social resources via highly organized institutions. In the planned economy era, the government provided public cultural services at both central and local levels, encompassing governmental, cultural authorities, and state-owned cultural institutions, each fulfilling distinct functions (refer to the table below). Based on a unified system of public cultural services, the cultural policy aims to undertake socialist ideological construction and ensure adequate provision of culture (Liu 2010).

Figure 4 China's public cultural service system in the planned economy era
(Source: Liu 2010)



After the implementation of The Reform and Opening-up, the marketization transformation process has significantly impacted national public cultural services. The previous centralized supply system has gradually given way to a diversified organizational system, wherein the government, enterprises, and the third sector jointly constitute the primary stakeholders in providing public cultural services. These entities complement each other within the cultural domain (refer to figure below). The principal objective of cultural policy is to cater to an increasingly diverse range of public cultural needs. Simultaneously, by establishing legal status for the cultural industry in social and cultural development, its function and value are continuously reinforced. Furthermore, through various policy incentives being introduced into circulation, the cultural industry is a beneficial supplement to enhance the national public cultural service system.

Figure 5 China's multi-faceted public cultural service system in the era of market economy
(Source: the author)



- **Cultural industries system**

Cultural industry legislation is a crucial aspect of China's cultural policy. In contrast to Western developed countries, China adopted a planned economic system in the early years of the People's Republic of China and underwent a "dual-track" period of planned economy and market economy for approximately 20 years after the implementation of reform and opening up. By the late 1990s, the cultural industry had become independent from cultural undertakings, yet it retained distinct characteristics from its early developmental stage. Therefore, within the framework of cultural system

reform that emphasizes separate development between cultural undertakings and cultural industries, there are instances where overall structural innovation is replaced by functional (mechanism) innovation and scattered innovation is substituted with structural innovation in the cultural system (Fu and Chen 2010).

The cultural industries encompass nine key sectors, which are shown in the following table.

Table 5 Statistics on the scale of China's cultural industry
(Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the P.R. China (2018))

Domains	Categories	Contents
The core of cultural industries	News and Information Services	Including journalism, newspapers, radio and television, Internet information, etc
	Content creation and production	Including the publication of various books, journals, electronic publications, production of radio and television programs, artistic and creative performances, anime, game digital content services, libraries, archives, museums, cultural heritage protection, arts and crafts, and art ceramic manufacturing, etc
	Creative design services	Including advertising services, architectural design, and other professional designs, etc
	Cultural dissemination channels	Including wholesale, retail and rental of books, newspapers, and video products, transmission of radio and television programs, film distribution and screening, art performances, Internet cultural entertainment platforms, sales of arts and crafts, etc
	Cultural investment and operation	Including cultural investment and asset management, cultural enterprise headquarters and cultural park management, etc
	Cultural, entertainment, and leisure services	Including indoor entertainment activities such as song and dance halls, game halls, internet cafes, amusement parks, parks, zoos, botanical gardens, scenic spots, farmhouse tourism, helicopters, hot air balloon flying tours, etc
The related fields of cultural industries	Cultural assisted production and intermediary services	Including cultural paper, ink, pigment manufacturing, packaging and decoration, photography and printing, cultural copyright, exhibition services, art auction and agency, ticketing agency, cultural and entertainment brokerage, wedding ceremony services, rental of cultural equipment, cultural and artistic training, social and humanities research, etc
	Cultural equipment production	Including printing and copying, broadcasting and film, filming and entertainment, amusement and other equipment, instrument manufacturing and sales, etc
	Cultural consumption terminal production	Including the manufacturing and sales of household audiovisual equipment such as stationery, pens and ink, toys, holiday supplies, televisions, and intelligent cultural equipment

China's cultural industry development exemplifies a distinct "government-driven" model. The state has formulated and issued a series of financial, fiscal, taxation, and management policies about the cultural industry. It considers promoting the cultural industry integral to its "cultural power" strategy. Through policy support, capital investment, and enhancement of the industrial chain, the government encourages and supports private capital to enter the cultural industry. It fosters the cultivation and strengthening of market players while transforming the development mode and optimizing the layout of this sector.

Additionally, it reinforces guidance in cultural product creation and production while expanding cultural consumption. Notably, there is a strong emphasis on encouraging cultural creativity and innovation. Innovative cultural enterprises are supported explicitly through government procurement initiatives that promote technological advancements within this domain. Furthermore, efforts concentrate on nurturing internationally influential brands associated with culture-related creative enterprises. Moreover, measures are taken to enhance protection for intellectual property rights in culture-related sectors while promoting strategies for global expansion within China's cultural industry landscape—comprehensively augmenting its innovative capacity and core competitiveness.

In recent years, in line with the practical requirements of social and economic development, the government has initiated policies to actively promote the integrated and innovative development of the cultural industry in collaboration with finance, science and technology, trade, tourism, and other sectors. Furthermore, a comprehensive support network for cultural industry policy connectivity has been established through coordination among multiple departments under the Party's and government's guidance.

3.3.3 The "Rationality of Market Economy" in Cultural Policies

The evolution of China's cultural policy is fundamentally intertwined with the transformation of its economic system. Based on a precise understanding of China's national situation, which entails a long-term primary stage of socialism, development has been identified as the top priority in national construction, with economic

development at its core. Consequently, "development is the only way" has become a crucial value concept guiding China's socio-economic progress.

In the comprehensive promotion of socialist economy, politics, society, and culture, the country has consistently embraced "development is the only way" as strategic national-level thinking and remained committed to deepening The Reforms and opening up while addressing challenges encountered during this developmental process. As China's economic system undergoes comprehensive transformation, market-driven instrumental rationality gradually permeates its cultural policy landscape, manifesting "the rationality of market economy has gradually emerged as the prevailing ideology and practical logic in China's cultural policy, evident in its value orientation towards instrumental rationality and the dominance of economic means in technological development. The market supersedes the complete hegemony of the state and governs culture with superior economic efficiency" (Hu and Zhang 2014).

The embodiment of market economy rationality in cultural policy directly results in the state's encouragement and promotion of cultural commercialization. The vigorous development of the cultural industry is recognized as a crucial means for promoting socialist culture's prosperity and growth under market economy conditions, an essential focus for advancing economic restructuring, transforming the mode of economic development, maintaining stable and rapid economic progress, and meeting diverse spiritual and cultural needs at multiple levels. The latter serves as a necessary "mirror" (Fu 2019) for developing public cultural services within the national cultural ecosystem established by the public cultural service and the cultural industry system. It facilitates an accurate understanding of culture's public welfare by both the state and society. It provides solutions to address deficiencies in public cultural services while reforming socialized supply modes and distribution efficiency.

In order to scientifically comprehend the relationship between the ideological attributes and industrial attributes of culture, China has issued policy documents, guidance opinions, and cultural development plans at the national level. These documents clearly define that prioritizing social benefits is the primary condition for adhering to the sustainable development of socialist culture. When faced with a conflict between two benefits or values, economic benefits should be subordinate to social benefits, and market values should be subordinate to social values. It establishes that the development of cultural industry must adhere to two fundamental principles: "placing social benefits first while integrating social and economic benefits" and

"promoting a better combination of an effective market and an effective government." By reshaping the way cultural production and dissemination occur and expanding the supply of high-quality culture, these principles aim to unleash the fundamental driving force behind cultural innovation fully. Consequently, they also seek to promote optimizing and upgrading economic structures and improve people's quality of life.

3.3.4 Cultural Industries and Cultural and Social Innovation

The cultural industry development mode of "national guidance, government drive, social innovation, and benefit guarantee" has placed innovation at its core, making it the focal point of cultural policies. Furthermore, the cultural industry has emerged as a primary catalyst for promoting cultural and social innovation, serving as one of the fundamental approaches to establishing a national cultural and social innovation system.

Firstly, the "national recognition" of protecting and developing traditional culture has been refined into a cultural innovation strategy of comprehensively promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese excellent traditional culture¹. Its core concept is to integrate Chinese excellent traditional culture into national education, moral construction, cultural creation, production, and life; to transform and innovate with openness and inclusivity to achieve comprehensive rejuvenation and sustainable development of the country.

The fundamental essence of this strategy includes:

- a Clarifying the fundamental position of Chinese excellent traditional culture as the foundation and spiritual home of the nation, emphasizing the importance of respecting tradition and inheriting culture to maintain continuity and stability in Chinese culture.
- b Highlighting the crucial value of innovation in promoting the development of Chinese culture while emphasizing that cultural innovation should align with contemporary background and practical needs.
- c Stressing further promoting diversity and inclusiveness as advantages inherent in Chinese excellent traditional culture, fostering cultural integration

¹ See Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, (2014). Guidelines for Improving the Education of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture.

and exchange while promoting cultural innovation to facilitate dialogue and understanding among different cultures.

It signifies an official establishment at a national level regarding the importance placed on innovation for realizing social-oriented policies centered around human-oriented cultural development in this new era. Stimulating broader creativity and innovation will enhance national confidence and identity while achieving stability, unity, and sustainability for social development.

Secondly, in the context of the new economic regular, information technology revolution, and market demand explosion, "Culture Plus" has emerged as a pivotal strategy within cultural innovation. "Culture Plus" denotes a novel form of cultural economy wherein culture serves as the central or core entity that integrates diverse industries. It fully harnesses the power of culture by incorporating innovative and creative achievements across various sectors of the economy and society, thereby establishing a fresh mode and format for industrial development driven intrinsically by culture. The essence of "Culture Plus" lies in achieving aggregation, interaction, integration, and innovation among critical elements such as content, market dynamics, capital infusion, and technological advancements within cultural industry development (Wang 2015). By generating new impetus for economic growth, it effectively contributes to national economic structural adjustments while facilitating industrial transformation and upgrading alongside enhancing people's living standards.

Under the strategic implementation of "Culture Plus," the government has effectively facilitated the rapid growth of the private cultural economy through policy guidance. It has enhanced cultural market players' dynamic in allocating resources through market mechanisms. Simultaneously, fostering innovation has encouraged diverse cultural market players to expand their presence across industries and regions. Consequently, this has directly contributed to the swift rise of cultural entrepreneurship and the rapid development of cultural innovation parks and creative spaces, showcasing a remarkable surge in social innovation within the cultural domain.

Scientists, engineers, painters, musicians, designers, and other innovative-minded individuals, alongside small and medium-sized enterprises with entrepreneurial spirit, have emerged as crucial sources and drivers of innovation. They have propelled an innovation wave throughout various aspects of the cultural industry, including content creation, production input, reproduction and trading processes, business models, and consumption methods. Moreover, this phenomenon has stimulated widespread

creativity within society while leading to new formats within the cultural economy. Furthermore, it has fostered a culturally aligned system for innovation that adheres to Chinese societal norms and values. In this system, the enterprises serve as the primary driving force, with the market providing guidance and industry-academia-research collaboration fostering cultural and social innovation.

3.3.5 The Innovation of Cultural Enterprises and Their Fulfillment of Social Responsibilities within the Socialist System

China's cultural enterprises consist of two main categories: private cultural enterprises and state-owned cultural enterprises, which emerged from transforming institutional cultural units into market-oriented entities during the reform of the cultural system. Operating as market players in a socialist economy, these enterprises are responsible for creating, producing, disseminating, and showcasing cultural products while upholding Chinese culture and promoting core socialist values. They must not only prioritize the preservation and protection of cultural heritage but also emphasize cultural innovation. By continuously fostering innovative development, they should comprehensively enhance the innovation of content and form, methods and approaches, channels for dissemination, systems, and mechanisms, as well as policies and regulations to enhance people's participation in culture and their sense of fulfillment¹.

In addition, the "one-party dictatorship" political system stipulates that cultural enterprises must adhere to the leadership of the Communist Party, which is prominently manifested in their regulation and supervision of business conduct and fulfillment of social responsibilities by the ruling party. The Communist Party establishes and consolidates its absolute leadership and oversight over state-owned cultural enterprises by establishing grassroots Party organizations within them. Non-public cultural enterprises employ innovative approaches to establish Party organizations based on each enterprise's nature and specific circumstances, striving to promote as many Party

¹ See General Office and Communist Party of China Central Committee, (2017). National 13th Five Year Plan for Cultural Development and Reform.

organizations as possible, thereby further realizing the ruling party's absolute leadership over cultural enterprises.

The top-down power structure dictates that cultural enterprises, apart from creating, producing, and providing healthy, high-quality, diverse cultural products and services, must also function as market entities to actively resolve comprehensive social development issues per the ruling party's national strategy. By implementing an enterprise development strategy focused on addressing social problems, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing the capacity for driving development through cultural innovation, these enterprises can meet the evolving demands of people's spiritual and cultural lives while fulfilling their social responsibilities. This approach will ultimately improve their competitiveness and enable sustainable development.

In order to promote and support the active participation of cultural enterprises in the socialist cultural innovation system, the government has introduced supportive policies encompassing fiscal taxation, investment and financing, asset management, land allocation, income distribution, social security, personnel placement, and business administration. The key measures primarily involve:

- Expanding the scope of special funds for cultural industry development.
- Further clarifying land transfer procedures and methods to increase state capital input.
- Encouraging the utilization of allocated stock land to initiate cultural industries.
- Promoting diverse social capital investment in cultural industries while fostering financial product innovation and service enhancement.

It is worth noting that despite the diversification of the public cultural service system under the influence of reform, opening up, and market economy, the government still plays a pivotal role in determining not only the scope and equal access to essential public cultural services for citizens but also policies related to cultural industry and third sector services. In China, due to the ideological solid attributes of culture and centralized systems, the development of the third sector has been limited; however, direct promotion by the market economy on the social economy has led to the sustainable growth of cultural enterprises.

On the one hand, due to the inherent "deficiency" of the government in supplying public cultural services, the government has consistently implemented various policies such as cultural industry policies, fiscal and tax policies for culture, cultural heritage protection policies, urban cultural policies, and other policy incentives to encourage

and stimulate enterprises to produce a more significant number of cultural products and provide more extensive public cultural services. It aims to safeguard citizens' fundamental rights and cultural interests.

On the other hand, a favorable economic development environment fosters sustainable enterprise growth by providing a robust financial foundation for enterprises to offer or support public cultural services directly. Simultaneously, due to the social value and effects generated by supplying public cultural services, corporate social responsibility's rapid development has been promoted. In China, through innovation implementation and promotion efforts, cultural enterprises fulfill their social responsibilities while expanding the societal benefits derived from their products and services. It not only represents an investment behavior based on the cultural industry's distinctiveness (social attributes) but also fulfills a fundamental requirement set forth by state authorities and ruling parties for enterprise survival and development within a socialist system.

3.4 THE CREATION OF URBAN CULTURAL SPACES

In the post-industrialization era, shaped by the pervasive influence of consumer society and globalization, China has adopted cultural intervention in spatial production as a distinctive and innovative urban strategy. This approach not only responds to economic and social transformations but also reflects a broader historical continuity in urban governance, where institutional mechanisms of state control and local experimentation have been instrumental in driving urban change. Rooted in earlier policy frameworks that emphasized cultural modernization and national identity construction, contemporary cultural spatial strategies integrate these institutional legacies with entrepreneurial urbanism, leveraging culture as both a resource and a tool for governance.

The production of cultural spaces exemplifies how urban space is reconfigured to address the challenges and opportunities of China's rapid urbanization. By reshaping urban space's form, structure, and function, cultural intervention contributes to the creation of multifunctional spaces that balance economic productivity with social inclusivity and aesthetic appeal. These spaces aim to serve as solutions for increasingly diverse urban needs, providing venues for leisure, creativity, and cultural expression

while simultaneously fostering economic growth through consumption, tourism, and the creative industries. This dual role of cultural space, as both a social and economic resource, reflects a broader ambition to enhance urban competitiveness on a global scale while ensuring high-quality urban life for residents.

At the same time, these practices signify a deeper transformation in governance. The integration of cultural policies into urban spatial production aligns with the broader transition toward entrepreneurial governance, where cities act as active agents of economic and social innovation. By leveraging the symbolic and material value of culture, urban governments pursue strategies that simultaneously attract capital, promote local identity, and address governance challenges such as social integration and community-building. This dynamic underscores the crucial role of cultural spatial production as a mechanism for fostering not only economic vitality but also governance flexibility and innovation.

In this way, the production of cultural spaces serves as a critical nexus where historical trajectories of state-led development intersect with contemporary strategies of entrepreneurial urbanism. It bridges institutional continuities with modern imperatives, providing a framework for addressing the complex demands of post-industrial urban life. By embracing cultural interventions in spatial production, Chinese cities are not only responding to the evolving demands of a consumer society but also positioning themselves as laboratories for innovative forms of urban governance, spatial reorganization, and cultural expression. Through this synthesis of historical foundations and modern practices, the cultural production of urban spaces emerges as a key driver of China's economic, social, and governance transformations.

3.4.1 The Fundamental Logic of Urban Space Production

From 1949 to the present, China has forged a distinct path of urbanization under the socialist system. The "institutional arrangements guided by governmental leadership" (Zong and Lin 2019; Zhang et al. 2006; Hu and Sun 2005) permeate the historical process of "institutional transformation" and "structural transformation" across Chinese society as it transitioned from a planned to a market economy and from traditional society to post-modern society (Wang 2019).

Before 1978, under a highly centralized planned economy and unified leadership system, the state publicly owned urban land in China. The government played a decisive role in urban development, with a centralized and unified unit system for spatial governance and regional balance policies under state management. The unit space based on this unit system was the primary carrier of urban spatial governance. Through a top-down approach on behalf of the state, the central government ensured unified resource allocation and spatial layout.

The Reform and Opening-up have facilitated fundamental policy shift and rational returns to cultural policies. The guiding principle of "economic construction as the center" and the marketization, decentralization, and globalization brought about by reform and opening up have profoundly impacted urban governance and spatial reconstruction. A series of reforms in the land system, unit system, and household registration system have stimulated the enthusiasm and initiative of local governments. Government revenue increased, and investment in urban construction was conducted through land requisition, development, and transfer. The reform of the market economy system has led to diversification in investment subjects and marketization in public goods supply, providing a new driving force for promoting urban spatial development. Urban governance is a process dominated by local governments under the leadership of state power with active participation from the market. The allocation of urban land and spatial resources has shifted towards being based on market principles. The model for urban spatial governance exhibits an inclination towards enterpriseism among local governments. As cities serve as economic hubs accommodating various activities, they are increasingly operated according to market mechanisms while emphasizing commercialized tendencies in urban spatial production that prioritize economic dimensions.

Therefore, urban space renewal and reuse are driven by the synergy of "power + capital" as the primary force behind space production, with government guidance and market operation serving as fundamental principles. On the one hand, local governments encourage and guide property owners of urban spaces (primarily state-owned enterprises) to proactively transform these spaces through specific planning and industrial policies. Simultaneously, they attract diverse investments into urban renewal by establishing special funds to promote space development and utilization (Yu 2023). On the other hand, local governments grant concessions to enterprises (primarily private companies) for the construction and operation of urban spaces that require

renewal within a specified time frame through agreements. Project companies responsible for space renewal utilize this arrangement as a credit basis to raise funds independently, promoting a basic operational model for space construction (Xiao and Cao 2015). The governance mode of "government-enterprise cooperation" ("public-private partnership") encourages diversification in investment subjects related to urban spaces while supporting collaboration between government entities and social capital operations in order to enhance efficiency in space renewal efforts while mitigating risks associated with sole government investment. It has become a familiar and typical approach towards urban space production in China.

3.4.2 Cultural Policies and Urban Development

The country's perception of the interplay between historical and cultural heritage and urban sustainable development has shifted fundamentally due to the transformation of cultural policy. This transformative process has profoundly impacted contemporary urban development in China, particularly in terms of spatial revitalization and production within the context of urban regeneration.

From 1949 to 1966, the government enacted laws and regulations to safeguard tangible cultural heritage, such as cultural relics, scenic spots, and traditional buildings. Additionally, administrative agencies responsible for cultural relics were established at both central and local levels. Furthermore, a system was devised to designate national critical cultural relic protection units and provincial ones that remain in effect today. These measures have significantly facilitated the harmonization of cultural relics and heritage preservation with national development (Yao 2014; Meng 2019).

In the following ten years, the movement to "eliminate outdated ideologies, traditional culture, customs, and habits" significantly impacted preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development in cities and society across the country. Throughout this historical period, numerous cultural relics, historic buildings, traditional streets, and time-honored businesses suffered severe damage or destruction as vestiges of feudalism, resulting in substantial loss and devastation to invaluable cultural heritages. It inflicted considerable harm upon the safeguarding and transmitting of traditional Chinese culture while directly contributing to the disappearance of urban cultural characteristics, extensive degradation of city image and environment, and

negative repercussions on urban residents' quality of life, urban economic growth, and social advancement.

From 1978 to 2010, with rational cultural policies, the state promptly rectified the logical orientation of historical traditions and cultural heritage protection and development. Expressly, in 1982, the Constitution stipulated that "the state shall protect scenic spots, precious cultural relics, and other important historical and cultural heritages," while the "Cultural Relics Protection Law of China" was promulgated in the same year (and amended in 2001), laying a solid foundation for sustainable cultural preservation. Simultaneously, legislation for intangible cultural heritage protection was launched by the state along with various laws and regulations being issued for traditional arts and crafts and ethnic folk culture, among other intangible cultural heritages, thus building a sound legal and administrative system for cultural protection at a national level.

In addition, as the understanding of urban development deepens, China has established a protection system for historical and cultural cities. This system has positively addressed the contradiction between large-scale demolition and construction in urban development mode and the preservation of urban cultural heritage during the rapid urbanization stage from 1990 to 2010. Subsequently, the state established the "National Expert Committee for Historical and Cultural Cities Protection" to clarify evaluation, management, and protection mechanisms for historical and cultural cities. It further strengthens the effectiveness of this system in safeguarding and inheriting urban culture. Moreover, in 2008, the "Urban and Rural Planning Law of the People's Republic of China" incorporated provisions that emphasize protecting urban historical/cultural heritage as a guiding principle for urban development.

After 2011, the state further clarified its commitment to enhancing the protection and preservation of historical culture in urban and rural development. It aims to prevent large-scale demolition and construction during urban renewal initiatives, safeguarding urban and rural historical and cultural heritages. Additionally, it actively explores relevant regulations on protecting and utilizing cultural and tourism resources to facilitate the high-quality advancement of urban renewal. Specific measures primarily encompass establishing a comprehensive system for multi-level and multi-factor preservation and inheritance of urban and rural historical culture. It includes promoting the identification and demarcation of historical, cultural blocks and historic buildings, connecting various levels and categories of heritage sites with contemporary urban

production and life, and intensifying efforts in promoting historical-cultural legacies through organizing diverse cultural theme activities. Moreover, it emphasizes effectively protecting existing structures that reflect specific developmental stages or significant historical events while fostering public emotions and memories by refraining from arbitrary demolitions of old buildings or ancient dwellings with valuable protective significance.

The current emphasis of cultural policy in promoting urban sustainable development encompasses:

- To fully leverage the cultural industry's pivotal role in facilitating the convergence of culture and technology, fostering creativity and innovation, driving urban economic development and cultural rejuvenation, and catering to the diverse cultural needs of urban residents.
- To foster the preservation and innovative utilization of historical and cultural heritage, to reinforce the city's historical and cultural characteristics, to establish a distinctive city brand, and to augment its allure.
- To highlight culture's significant function in promoting social integration and equity, advance the establishment of a comprehensive public cultural service system, safeguard citizens' fundamental cultural rights, and enhance inclusivity within the city.
- To explore effective integration between the cultural industry and urban renewal; to create multifunctional cultural spaces for leisure, consumption, and experiential purposes; to promote harmonious coexistence between traditional culture and modern lifestyles; and to drive urban revitalization.
- To strengthen intercity cooperation in culture exchange, elevate cities' internationalization level, and boost their competitiveness and influence.

3.4.3 The Socio-Spatial Outcomes of Cultural Policies

The interplay of various elements such as public cultural services, cultural industries, innovation in cultural enterprises, and corporate social responsibility constitutes a unique dynamic of social space within Chinese cities. The state-led socialist framework provides both ideological and institutional foundations for cultural policies. Furthermore, urban entrepreneurial governance models emphasize the spatial dimensions of corporate innovation and social responsibility. This outcome of national

cultural policy offers valuable insights for understanding the role of enterprises as key actors within the realm of cultural space.

- **Spatial redistribution of cultural resources**

One significant socio-spatial outcome of China's cultural policies is the spatial redistribution of cultural resources, aimed at reducing regional disparities in access to public cultural services. Historically, uneven economic and spatial development has left rural and underdeveloped areas with limited cultural infrastructure and services. To address this, the Chinese government has leveraged cultural enterprises as key actors in the redistribution process. Through fiscal incentives, targeted funding, and the establishment of cultural zones, enterprises are encouraged to extend their services and products beyond affluent urban centers to peripheral regions.

For instance, the introduction of initiatives like the "National Public Cultural Service System Demonstration Projects" reflects government efforts to close regional gaps in cultural resource allocation (Li and Zhang 2012). Similarly, cultural enterprises have played a pivotal role in rural cultural tourism, where local cultural heritage is revitalized to provide employment and enhance community well-being. These projects underscore the dual role of enterprises in profit-seeking and fulfilling social responsibility, producing socio-spatial outcomes that create new nodes of cultural and economic activity in previously marginalized areas. Such policies integrate economic objectives with spatial justice, realigning urban-rural dynamics in China's cultural geography (Zheng and Chan 2014).

- **Public spaces and creative clusters**

In urban contexts, cultural policies have reshaped the spatial logic of cities by fostering the development of creative clusters and multifunctional public spaces. These clusters, often established in former industrial zones or underutilized urban areas, are emblematic of China's entrepreneurial urbanism, where cultural enterprises are mobilized as agents of urban renewal and innovation. Policies such as tax incentives, subsidies, and infrastructure investment are designed to attract cultural enterprises to these spaces, enabling them to innovate while contributing to the spatial reorganization of cities (Wu 2015).

A prominent example is Beijing's 798 Art District (from 2005-2015), where the conversion of a former industrial zone into a cultural hub has produced both economic value and accessible cultural spaces for public engagement. The socio-spatial impact of such creative clusters, arguing that they are not merely sites of economic productivity

but also arenas for public cultural interaction and community building (Wang and Li 2020). These clusters illustrate the alignment between cultural policies and the production of socially inclusive urban spaces, highlighting the spatial logic underlying entrepreneurial governance in China.

- **Cultural enterprises as agents of spatial justice**

Another critical socio-spatial outcome of China's cultural policy is the role of cultural enterprises in promoting spatial justice. The inherent social attributes of the cultural industry position enterprises as mediators between state objectives and societal needs. Through the production and dissemination of cultural products, enterprises address issues of cultural inclusion and representation, ensuring that diverse voices and identities are reflected in the cultural landscape.

The successful examples include the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage—such as in the case of Kunqu Opera and Tibetan Thangka painting—demonstrates how cultural enterprises fulfill their social responsibility while advancing state-directed cultural objectives. Such initiatives are critical to spatial justice, as they integrate marginalized communities into the broader cultural economy while safeguarding cultural diversity (Chen 2016). These efforts highlight the socio-spatial implications of cultural enterprise practices, where innovation and CSR converge to produce equitable and inclusive cultural landscapes.

- **The spatialization of corporate social responsibility**

The relationship between cultural enterprise innovation and CSR in China is inherently spatial. The fulfillment of social responsibility by cultural enterprises often manifests in the creation and transformation of physical spaces. Whether through the construction of cultural infrastructure, the redevelopment of urban areas, or the revitalization of rural landscapes, CSR practices produce tangible spatial outcomes that align with the state's cultural policy objectives.

For instance, cultural enterprises have been instrumental in the development of urban public libraries and museums. The “Shenzhen Library Project” as an example illustrates how enterprises can innovate by designing interactive and inclusive cultural spaces. Such projects not only enhance urban cultural infrastructure but also demonstrate the practical application of CSR in improving public cultural services (Wu and Gao 2018). The resulting spatial outcomes—modern facilities that serve as educational and recreational hubs—highlight the socio-spatial dimensions of cultural enterprise innovation within China's governance framework.

Spatial commodification and the contradictions of entrepreneurial governance

While the socio-spatial outcomes of cultural policies often align with the state's goals of equity and inclusivity, they are not without contradictions. The commodification of urban space through cultural policies, driven by the entrepreneurial strategies of cultural enterprises, can exacerbate spatial inequalities and social exclusion. For instance, the redevelopment of urban cultural heritage sites for commercial purposes has sometimes led to the displacement of local communities and the erosion of cultural authenticity (He and Wu 2009).

These contradictions reveal the tension between the profit motives of cultural enterprises and the social objectives of state policy. Meanwhile, this tension reflects broader challenges in integrating CSR into the spatial logic of entrepreneurial governance, raising questions about the sustainability and inclusivity of current practices (Zhang and Xu 2022).

3.4.4. Urban Cultural Space Strategies

Based on the two core priorities of national cultural policy, urban cultural space can be divided into two main categories: cultural space centered in public cultural services and cultural space primarily influenced by cultural industry interventions. These correspond to the spatialization of the public cultural service system and the application of cultural industry methods in urban development.

- **Cultural space centered in public cultural services**

Basic cultural facilities and public service spaces aim to offer the general public free cultural products and services. These include museums, libraries, archives, theaters, art centers, concert halls, rural cultural facilities, urban community galleries, art museums, and handicraft museums. Such public cultural spaces represent a tangible implementation of integrating national cultural policy into urban space development strategies. Their fundamental rationale lies in the state and government's concerted efforts to consolidate resources to provide essential cultural products and services to address social inequality and promote broader participation in culture by bridging the gap in access to cultural resources between different urban and rural areas.

These spaces also include public areas that are open and accessible in urban or rural settings, primarily utilized for daily recreational and entertainment activities,

cultural performances, sports engagements, social gatherings, and learning and educational purposes. It predominantly encompasses urban parks, squares, traditional communities with distinctive regional cultural characteristics, and urban public art zones. This type of space is typically characterized by its multifunctionality, diversity, and adaptability, serving as a significant cultural hub that fosters community cohesion and facilitates social interaction.

The country has clearly defined the responsibilities of local governments at all levels in promoting the development of local cultural infrastructure through relevant policies, ensuring enhanced access to public cultural services for the general public. These public spaces include libraries, museums, cultural centers, art galleries, Internet public service information points, intangible cultural heritage exhibition halls, and comprehensive cultural centers. These facilities are guided and supervised by central and local governments at all levels to ensure their smooth operation and effective utilization of funding, facilities, venues, institutions, and personnel.

After 2016, the means to promote the development of public cultural spaces primarily encompass establishing a comprehensive, multi-tiered, convenient, and efficient public cultural service system. It involves fostering the sharing and popularization of digital cultural resources, enhancing the service capacity of public cultural facilities and venues, and elevating the overall quality of public cultural services. Simultaneously, the government will explore procuring public cultural services from social entities in various regions nationwide while actively engaging social resources to contribute products and services within these cultural spaces. It entails exploring diverse forms of collaboration, such as "hosting" and "packaging," thereby optimizing operational efficiency within these spaces.

- **Cultural space primarily influenced by cultural industry intervention**

These cultural spaces refer to a novel form of urban space characterized by culture-centric interventions that transform previously neglected areas (such as industrial zones, historic districts, waterfronts, etc.) into spaces with distinct cultural features and functions. It encompasses various manifestations, including heritage parks, historical communities, cultural and artistic quarters, hubs for cultural consumption, and creative industrial parks. These cultural spaces predominantly emerge from China's ongoing urbanization process, which has transitioned from a phase driven by investment and

incremental development to one focused on transformational ideas utilizing existing spatial resources.

The main features of these cultural spaces lie in enterprises taking the lead in transforming the physical environment and filling urban waste spaces. In contrast, cultural commerce integrates various forms and venues such as leisure and entertainment, art education, cultural fairs and exhibitions, catering and retail, and literary and artistic activities. This space encompasses both public culture and cultural consumption attributes, serving as a significant carrier to enhance the regional environment, community vitality, and cultural consumption dynamics, as well as promote the development of the cultural industry. Converting industrial sites, historical buildings, and old streets into spaces for cultural industry agglomeration or distribution of cultural consumption and integrating scenic spots with communities, parks, and streets into comprehensive cultural spaces contribute to sustainable urban-rural development.

After 2018, promoting synergistic development between culture and tourism has become integral to cultural policy in the new era. The cultural and tourism sectors are considered highly significant in the two major national urban renewal strategies and rural revitalization. Consequently, policy priorities encompass enhancing the innovative utilization of cultural and tourism resources, fostering integrated development between the cultural industry and tourism sector, integrating cultural and tourism products, formats, and services into transformative and innovative urban-rural spaces, and facilitating sustainable development for cities and villages. Amongst various measures actively promoting the expansion of cultural consumption, emphasis is placed on supporting large to medium-sized cities in establishing consumer-oriented cultural spaces such as entertainment complexes, art districts, specialty bookstores, small theaters, etc.

In order to incentivize enterprises to renovate and actively update underutilized urban spaces, governments at all levels, from central to local, have formulated specialized preferential policies for entities undertaking space construction. These policies primarily include reductions in rent and property taxes, varying degrees of value-added tax (VAT) preferences based on specific circumstances, corporate income tax incentives, financial subsidies, and low-interest loans. Simultaneously, governments at all levels will allocate special subsidies for cultural enterprises annually in the budget allocation process to foster innovative practices in urban space

development. These subsidies aim to recognize, and support enterprises engaged in revitalizing spaces through inventive approaches.

3.4.5 The General Mechanism of Cultural Space Creation

After entering the 21st century, the country's market-oriented transformation profoundly impacts the urban sphere. Globalization has compelled Chinese cities to confront challenges stemming from the post-industrial socio-economic structural shift. Particularly after four decades of rapid urbanization, Chinese cities generally struggle with transitioning from "incremental expansion" to "stock renewal." Urban development is now transforming the traditional unitary value system to a pluralistic one, shifting focus from solely pursuing economic efficiency and land growth towards achieving a balance between economic efficiency and giving more significant consideration to unified coordination across social, cultural, and ecological dimensions. As an instrumental medium for promoting urban renewal and fostering cultural innovation and development, cultural space is essential in providing spatial solutions while transforming the value orientation of urban renewal from monism to pluralism.

Therefore, based on the guidance of cultural policy and the basic logic of urban space production, the creation of cultural spaces is manifested as follows:

- In terms of cultural spaces for public services, the country actively promotes the establishment of corporate-governed public institutions such as cultural centers, libraries, museums, and art galleries while also deepening reforms and innovations in public welfare cultural institutions represented by these spaces. Additionally, the government encourages industrialization and marketization of cultural projects through cooperation between government and social capital, allowing social capital participation in the construction and operation of public cultural spaces like libraries, cultural centers, museums, and theaters.
- In terms of cultural spaces based on cultural commercialization, the "spatial production function of cultural industries" (Guo et al. 2021) is emphasized by local governments, who tries to attract and encourage cultural and creative enterprises as well as relevant institutions to participate in developing and activating urban space. They integrate cultural and creative products and

services into spatial reproduction, creating various cultural (consumption) spaces that achieve spatial regeneration's economic, social, and cultural functions.

In summary, the evolution of spatial planning and production mode during the three main stages of urban development in China (the planned economy era, market reform era, and culture-led urban regeneration era) is determined by the change of national institutions. For a considerable period, China has operated within a fundamental framework where the power center determines institutional arrangements. The deepening of reform and innovation in the process of top-down institutional change is influenced by institutional demands and the ability and willingness of the power center to establish new institutions (Liu 1999). Market-oriented reform has profoundly impacted China's economic, social, and cultural development, facilitating the transformation of the government's role. The market, primarily responsible for resource allocation, significantly influences urban development. Moreover, civil society's development space, along with that of the third sector, remains relatively limited in China, which results in urban governance following a basic logic characterized by "power + capital." Both government and enterprises play distinct roles and functions in spatial production while collectively exerting a key influence on urban spatial change.

Under the current cultural policy framework in China, the space production function of the cultural industry is endowed with a significant social mission. The recreated cultural space exhibits prominent cultural production and consumption characteristics by utilizing cultural methods based on urban waste spaces. It plays a crucial role in safeguarding urban heritage, preserving urban culture, enhancing cultural participation, and fostering urban economic growth. It forms the foundation for enterprises to undertake their social responsibility in constructing cultural spaces and addressing the above-mentioned issues. Moreover, it also presents opportunities for enterprises to identify innovative prospects during cultural space construction. This social reality provides a fundamental backdrop for examining both cultural space and social innovation by enterprises within this paper's context while ensuring practical significance is derived from its development and acquisition of results.

CHAPTER IV

CREATING CULTURAL SPACES AS SOCIAL INNOVATION

The significance of culture for the sustainable development of human society cannot be overstated. It is a repository of knowledge about specific communities' historical, societal, and environmental aspects, offering insights into diverse causal relationships, logical frameworks, practices, and processes. This comprehensive understanding enables us to gain deeper insights into cultural activities across different regions and comprehend the associated symbols, behaviors, and rituals (Cetina 2007). Moreover, culture is a unifying force that fosters connectivity among individuals from various disciplines while bolstering territorial resilience and adaptability (Rausell-Köster et al. 2013; Abeledo and Rausell 2012). The 2030 Agenda and SDGs underscore the importance of regional diversity alongside global and local cultural elements. Culture is recognized as an instrumental driver for sustainable development; it represents a pivotal resource in addressing poverty at both economic and social levels while providing innovative solutions to intricate challenges (García et al. 2015; United Nations 2016).

Cultural space, as an “urban landscape” in the process of macroeconomic transformation during post-industrialization, has emerged as a significant emblem of the “cultural turn” within global urban planning and regional design since the 1980s (Mommaas 2009). Throughout this transformative journey, cities have witnessed a growing prominence of commercial, retail, leisure, and entertainment functions. The historical and traditional essence of cities and their cultural ambiance and distinctive architectural environment have evolved into potential catalysts for regional development. Consequently, public-private partnerships in urban renewal have experienced rapid growth while facilitating diverse forms of cultural spaces encompassing various artistic expressions, media platforms, and multifunctional facilities. These revitalized spaces stand as triumphant symbols of urban rejuvenation.

Cultural space is increasingly recognized as a fundamental instrument for social and cultural development, assuming crucial responsibilities in human societal progress (Izadi and Mohammadi 2016). Consequently, there has been a surge in the

transformation of various locations into cultural spaces to foster their distinctive regional, cultural, and social values. As a result, the level of innovation in spatial creation, urban governance, and the interplay between culture and the social environment significantly influence attaining desired social spatial outcomes and realizing value within these cultural spaces.

4.1 CREATING CULTURAL SPACES AND INNOVATION

4.1.1 Understanding Cultural Space in Urban Cultural Regeneration

Understanding the concept of culture is an essential prerequisite for conducting comprehensive research on cultural space; however, it poses a formidable challenge. This difficulty arises from the inherent richness and complexity associated with the term "culture" and significant variations in its understanding and definition across different disciplines and researchers. In a broader sense, culture encompasses various aspects such as knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other acquired capabilities and habits (Tylor 1871). Tylor's scientific definition of culture has profoundly influenced subsequent humanities and social science research while establishing him as an exemplary figure in this field. The definitions of culture can be categorized into descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural, and genetic (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952), which aim to comprehend this concept from diverse perspectives, including attributes and functions of culture, revealing differentiated research approaches across disciplines such as anthropology, political science, philosophy, and psychology.

Although a universally applicable definition of culture still needs to be discovered, sociological research has achieved some consensus in comprehending this complex phenomenon. Scholars approach culture from a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective, particularly emphasizing its intricate relationship with society, history, and the environment. Thus, the understanding of culture primarily encompasses:

- 1) Culture is the learned behaviors and symbols that enable individuals to thrive within social groups. Culture is perceived as a symbolic system that expresses

and disseminates specific values, beliefs, and behavioral norms through language, symbols, and meanings. This understanding underscores culture as a shared framework of meaning that shapes individuals' perception of the world and their conduct.

- 2) Culture is the primary mechanism through which humans adapt to their surroundings and the distinctive way of life characteristic of specific human groups. Additionally, culture is regarded as a resource and practice intricately linked to power dynamics, identity formation, group affiliation, and social relationships within society. This perspective highlights viewing culture as a potent social force influencing people's actions, decisions, and interactions.
- 3) Culture is a set of ideas, values, and associated symbolic meanings. It also involves a set of universally accepted values and perspectives on life, society, and the world. This understanding focuses on culture's cognitive and emotional aspects and how they influence behavior and social order.
- 4) Culture is a way of collective memory and inheritance. Culture is composed of art, customs, traditions, and habits. Through the transmission of culture between generations, heritage, knowledge, experience, and collective memory are achieved. This understanding emphasizes culture's historicity and heritage nature, which serves as an essential foundation for cultural identity and continuity.

Due to the divergent interpretations of "culture" across various disciplinary backgrounds and research contexts, the perception of cultural space inherently encompasses multiple perspectives. These perspectives can be broadly classified as follows:

From an anthropological perspective, "culture" encompasses the collective term for "cultural heritage." Cultural space is regarded as a cultural heritage space primarily comprising historical buildings and their contemporary cultural significance (Pazder 2011). According to UNESCO's guidelines on preparing nomination files for intangible cultural heritage, culture can be defined as a concentrated area where folk or traditional cultural activities occur, or it can be determined by specific periods or events characterized by periodicity or event-based attributes. It serves as a traditional venue for expressing culture. In 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage officially included cultural space as one category of intangible cultural heritage (United Nations 2003). At this level, cultural space refers to physical

or symbolic spaces where individuals gather to create, share, or exchange social practices and ideas. It also represents a community encompassing the past, present, and future while embodying the integration and coexistence of old and new spaces and diverse cultures (Carp 2008). Based on urban memory, cultural space constitutes a distinct realm of historical, cultural heritage, and modern life scenes intertwined with their symbolic systems. It embodies a fusion of 'physical space + meaningful space' shaped by three temporal dimensions: present, past, and future (Fu 2021).

From a sociological perspective, cultural space embodies the intricate amalgamation of individuals, culture, and spatial collective phenomena. As social interactions transpire within the framework of society and culture epitomizes these interactions' meaning and value systems, cultural space delineates the positioning of individuals and groups within social structures (Ferdous and Nilufar 2008). Cultural space mirrors behavioral patterns and perceptions of a social group through extensive cultural activities, constituting an integral component of society (Rapoport 1977). Cultural space can be understood as a realm imbued with specific cultural significance and societal functions; it encompasses both tangible existence and serves as a conduit for cultural practices (Zukin 1995). Place and cultural activities intrinsically intertwine within this domain, perpetually generating and embracing culture (Choi and Lim 2013).

In the context of urban studies, urban space is perceived as a cultural realm intricately intertwined with the guiding principles and operational mechanisms of cultural systems. It represents an integrated entity encompassing material, spiritual, and social dimensions (Lefebvre 1991). The attributes of cultural space resemble those of urban space, comprising social factors, spatiality, physical aspects, neighborhood dimensions, and human perception (Lai et al. 2013) while intimately connected to knowledge and power dynamics (Foucault 1980). Within cities, cultural spaces emerge through social interactions and patterns of communal activities in specific locations. Since cities encapsulate a broad spectrum of societal engagements, urban spaces also function as cultural arenas where interpersonal interactions and expressions occur (Ferdous and Nilufar 2008).

From an economic perspective, cultural space is perceived as a geographic area characterized by the concentration of cultural and creative industries, reflecting the attributes of industry agglomeration and cluster development. Consequently, cultural space is also considered a strategic tool for leveraging culture to enhance the economic profile of cities or regions, serving as a predominant model for urban/regional cultural

and economic advancement (Mommaas 2009). Within this spatial context, diverse facets such as cultural creation, design, production, and sales converge. Cultural enterprises increasingly exhibit a propensity towards high-level proximity (Schoales 2006), thereby facilitating the upgrading of cultural and creative industry structure and fostering innovative development.

At the practical level, cultural space as a distinct spatial form has undergone an extensive historical process of development and evolution, with its roles in social progress constantly evolving. The pivotal turning point for transformative change lies in establishing modern cultural policies. Before this, cultural space primarily encompassed foundational infrastructure housing numerous cultural assets, spaces dedicated to artistic creation and training, and large-scale cultural institutions. With the emergence of modern cultural policies, cultural space predominantly assumes the shape of public spaces and institutionalized venues for culture, employing specific approaches for artistic creation and dissemination to the public. In a post-industrial society, traditional forms such as culture centers, libraries, and museums no longer confine cultural space; instead, they increasingly integrate with the creative economy and fields related to science and technology (see Murphy 2016).

In urban regeneration in post-industrial societies, cultural spaces have emerged as a prominent model for global cities and regional-level public policies on culture and economy. It implies that the definition of cultural space is contingent upon cultural definitions and their extensions. At the same time, the functions of cultural spaces are influenced by the spirit and purpose of managers and the specific ways in which users utilize them, thereby showcasing innovative characteristics. Simultaneously, cultural spaces increasingly exhibit hybridity and organizational flexibility, enabling them to accommodate diverse user groups and cultural activities with significant variations in spatial names, sizes, histories, local functions, etc. (Eriksson et al. 2018).

Despite the complexity and diversity inherent in defining and manifesting cultural space, we can still comprehend its close association with urban sustainable development within the current macro-social context from three perspectives:

- **Cultural space serves as the interface between cultural policy and cultural practice.**

One of cultural policy's primary objectives is to preserve cultural diversity and sustainability by fostering creative interactions. Consequently, it becomes imperative to allocate and manage cultural spaces to consider the diverse needs of various cultural

practices and groups, guaranteeing their harmonious development. Moreover, an essential aspect of cultural policy involves promoting opportunities and resources that encourage marginalized groups' participation in and development through their expression.

The practice of cultural spaces also aims to effectively bridge the local and global dimensions in the cultural sphere. In globalization, cultural exchange and interaction have gained increasing significance, necessitating harmonizing local community needs with global cultural trends for promoting cross-cultural dialogue, which implies that cultural policies should strive to strike a balance between local distinctiveness and global interconnectedness, thereby fostering coexistence between the uniqueness of local culture and its global influence. Consequently, configuring and managing cultural spaces always assume a pivotal role in shaping cultural policies (Murphy 2016).

- **Cultural space plays a crucial role as a node in the urban cultural ecosystem.**

Cultural space is a carrier for coordinating environmental improvement with historical context and cultural texture. It provides an adaptive environment that resonates with the city's history and cultural heritage and safeguards and revitalizes these cultural legacies and traditions. By harmonizing with the environment and historical context, the cultural space offers a natural integration of urban culture.

The cultural space is intricately intertwined with daily life, serving as a pivotal network node for the integration and connection of resources. Cultural space constructs urban cultural landscapes through the interdependence between individuals and their surroundings, thereby providing a platform for people to actively engage in cultural activities within their everyday lives while fostering experiences, sharing, and creation. Simultaneously, cultural space plays a vital role in promoting cultural diversity and facilitating cross-cultural communication by bridging diverse cultural groups and facilitating meaningful cross-cultural dialogues.

- **Cultural space as a spatial manifestation of culture, fostering creativity and innovation.**

The cultural space functions as a tangible medium for cultural activities and phenomena, providing a physical platform through which individuals can access cultural products and services, thereby facilitating the exhibition, dissemination, and experiential engagement with culture. Cultural spaces influence people's cognition,

comprehension, and attitudes toward culture while impacting the construction of cultural life, social structure, social interaction dynamics, and societal values.

Cultural space is essential for activating developmental potential by offering a diverse, inclusive, and innovative environment that fosters urban sustainability and creativity. Within this milieu, culture synergizes with spatial elements to dynamically stimulate innovation at various levels while promoting inclusivity and the realization of diverse values, thus playing a pivotal role in nurturing innovation and propelling urban development.

Based on the understanding above, this dissertation defines cultural spaces as urban areas that have undergone revitalization through a culture-oriented approach to urban regeneration. Examples include former industrial zones, historic centers, waterfront areas, and traditional commercial districts, which have transformed into city spaces with culture and art at their core. The characteristics of these cultural spaces can be summarized as:

- a) They serve as interactive spaces reflecting urban spatial transformation, industrial transition, and socio-cultural visions resulting from cultural policies and practices.
- b) They function as nodes in the urban cultural ecosystem by combining collective cultural creativity to inspire multidisciplinary artistic and cultural production while shaping urban cultural life. These innovative spaces generate social benefits for urban development.
- c) They act as spatial carriers for cultural and social processes, serving as active spaces where networks of associations, enterprises, and individuals collaborate on social and cultural innovation.

In the field of social sciences, spatial theory has emerged as a robust and increasingly prevalent perspective for analyzing and diagnosing urban issues since the 1970s. Despite variations in specific viewpoints among esteemed researchers such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and David Harvey, they all assert and unveil the social essence of space. They reject perceiving space merely as an objective physical entity or physical dimension. Instead, they argue that urban spatial structures inherently encompass diverse social processes across various categories and levels. Space is perceived as a product and container of social relationships and power dynamics rather than solely a location or orientation. Consequently, research on urban space must be grounded in understanding social relationships and processes.

The society plays a crucial role in comprehending and discussing the significance and value of cultural space, as well as understanding the processes and outcomes associated with it. Based on the definition and characteristics of cultural space outlined in this paper, the social aspect of cultural space can be outlined from three distinct perspectives.

- **The cultural space provides the context and setting for social actions.**

As a result of social construction and transmission, cultural space refers to the specific geographical and cultural environment in which human life and survival occur. As the backdrop for activities and behaviors, cultural space encompasses aspects such as ethnic identity (including population and ethnicity), activity patterns, and community involvement. Within this space, individuals engage in actions that attribute specific meanings and symbols through various means, endowing cultural space with functions related to daily life, social interaction, community participation, etc., thereby possessing significant social attributes (Ferdous 2008). The variations in people's utilization of and perception of cultural space reflect the diversity of their social backgrounds and cultural concepts. This also closely associates cultural space with individuals' activities, behaviors, spatial prototypes, and surrounding characteristics.

- **The cultural space is a conduit for social interactions and capital.**

The concept of cultural space encompasses diverse cultural practices and symbolic meanings, serving as a vital arena for daily life and social interaction. It serves as a platform for expressing social identity, cultural characteristics, and sense of belonging. Within these spaces, individuals enhance their understanding and trust through active participation in cultural activities, fostering social relationships, and sharing valuable cultural resources. They accumulate and exchange cultural capital by forming connections based on shared experiences and values, thereby cultivating close-knit social networks. Consequently, cultural space emerges as an essential conduit for developing social capital (Castejón Ibáñez and Guirao Mirón 2018). Moreover, it is intricately linked to significant societal issues such as promoting social cohesion while addressing potential conflicts arising from differing cultures, facilitating inclusion rather than exclusion, and balancing the freedom of artistic expression with political engagement, education, and knowledge dissemination, all within the broader context of societal structure, individual behavior patterns, and interpersonal dynamics.

- **The cultural space results from the intricate interplay between various social factors.**

The cultural space is intricately linked to the economic activities of cities, such as commerce, tourism, and cultural consumption. It also encompasses urban planning aspects like space renewal, community revitalization, and considerations for cultural diversity and urban governance. Furthermore, the impact of cultural spaces is determined by factors including accessibility and participation in the space, sponsorship from social capital (government and enterprises), technological innovation and support, overall societal ideology and awareness levels (including understanding core concepts such as social inclusivity, cultural rights, citizen participation), spatial governance and cooperation involving government bodies, enterprises, cultural institutions/organizations, communities within the cultural space), as well as contributions from educational institutions. Therefore, cultural spaces result from multifaceted interactions among various social factors that drive their development.

In summary, cultural space is a social phenomenon encompassing cultural practices, symbols, and meanings. It encompasses physical/geographical spaces within and outside specific social groups, relationships, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Cultural space reflects the specific cultural significances and symbolic meanings prevalent in society, where individuals express, disseminate, and uphold their cultural identities, values, and social norms. Therefore, cultural space represents a form of social space and an integrated domain involving local culture-related commodities, consumption patterns, work environments, social interactions, and entertainment activities. It mirrors the cultural phenomena observed within a community or city by encapsulating economic models and lifestyles while embodying the sociocultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the region.

4.1.2 Cultural Space Creation and Innovation

As discussed in this dissertation, the creation of cultural spaces aims to revitalizing urban areas such as old industrial zones, traditional commercial districts, and historical centers under China's macro cultural policy and urban governance model. In the spatial creation, enterprises in the cultural and creative industries utilize abandoned spaces to integrate economic, historical, and cultural resources; create new cultural industries and

projects; restore spatial and architectural landscapes; and provide residents and tourists with multifunctional spaces for cultural production, consumption, participation, leisure activities, etc. Within these cultural spaces, enterprises creatively combine cultural business with social interaction to improve/change the relationship between space and its surrounding community. They imbue new meanings into space so that it becomes an essential tool for revitalizing spatial communities while improving residents' quality of life satisfaction through fulfilling their needs while promoting regional economic development.

As a strategic approach to cultural planning for urban renewal driven by culture, creating cultural spaces is a crucial practice that employs culture as a catalyst for socio-economic development. By integrating elements such as spatial design, connectivity, environmental considerations, urban services, and social inclusivity through culture, art, and creativity, it stimulates the potential of both cultural heritage and contemporary expressions while addressing unsuitable functions within communities (including public, commercial, and culturally relevant ones). This process leads to inevitable innovation in spatial agglomeration in cultural creativity, which possesses interdisciplinary features across various departments (Currid 2007), necessitating collaboration among professionals from diverse fields with specialized knowledge and resources.

Creating culturally and artistically infused spaces in community or regional areas is an efficacious approach to revitalizing communities/regions, enhancing residents' quality of life, and fostering community vitality. Attaining superior spatial quality and a novel urban image necessitates reinforcing cultural functions within these spaces while promoting innovative amalgamations of culture and heritage. Sustainable community development requires fresh opportunities and channels for interaction between the community and external entities. This objective can be accomplished by prioritizing citizens' needs, exploring diverse strategies of citizens and communities, and cultivating synergistic institutions (Choi and Lim 2013).

Creating cultural spaces is frequently associated with the creative industry and cultural consumption, which can emerge as novel catalysts for economic growth while fostering innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. Incubating cultural and creative enterprises, nurturing experimentation, and developing cultural projects and practices within these spaces necessitate new equipment, technology, and knowledge support. These serve as vital prerequisites for meeting societal needs and provide crucial backing

to enhance creativity and innovation to achieve synergistic sustainable development of urban society, economy, and culture (Pultrone 2017).

The cultural activities and projects in the space also foster social interaction, engendering “unexpected encounters and cross-fertilization” (Murphy 2016) that contribute to generating novel ideas and stimulating innovation. It further enhances the value and significance of cultural spaces as social arenas, serving as a testing ground for technological, cultural, and social innovations across various scales. Consequently, it creates conditions conducive to the organic integration of diverse innovations, promoting a virtuous development cycle while facilitating urban renewal.

4.2 CREATING CULTURAL SPACE AS SOCIAL INNOVATION STREAM

The present study defines social innovation as novel concepts and/or practices of products, services, and models geared toward addressing social needs and/or resolving societal challenges (Moulaert et. al 2005; Phills Jr. et. al 2008; Howaldt and Schwarz 2010). These innovative approaches generate social value that contributes to sustainable development and well-being. Innovation can manifest in diverse dimensions such as product, service, pathway, or organization. It may also involve recombining existing resources, elements, and capabilities to create new functionalities and meanings that yield enhanced social outcomes for communities or stakeholders.

Urban regeneration is a multifaceted process that addresses intricate social challenges within the "social-space" framework. The crux of spatial planning lies in utilizing deteriorated or abandoned urban spaces as foundations, fostering novel creative initiatives and urban connections to imbue these areas with fresh significance. Consequently, they become pivotal sites for cohesion, social exchange, and individual and societal well-being (UN-Habitat 2016). Social innovation underscores the generation of innovative strategies, concepts, ideas, and organizations that contribute to the broader social interest (Murray et al. 2010). It responds to social needs and challenges through inventive solutions, collaboration, and interaction (Moulaert et al. 2005). Spatial planning and production embody social innovation (Christmann et al. 2020). In cultural space creation, diverse, innovative practices and their combinations

offer viable solutions for revitalizing disadvantaged urban spaces while accommodating varied claims for renewed spaces. This fosters inclusive growth by ensuring that all citizens—particularly marginalized groups—can partake in the benefits of urban development.

4.2.1 The “Novelty” in Cultural Space Creation

The “novelty” in spatial production (Dawson and Daniel 2010; Frank Moulaert et al. 2013; Mulgan 2006; Mumford 2002), is regarded as a fundamental catalyst for perceiving cultural space creation as a prototypical manifestation of social innovation. Cultural space creation necessitates imaginative planning, design, and construction, aiming to revitalize obsolete physical environments, reshape urban landscapes, and fortify both community and urban identities. Through the creation of novel spaces, these efforts address spatial functionalities and introduce innovative ways of utilizing space, reflecting its inherent sociality. This process fosters multicultural interaction and communication by establishing pioneering cultural space initiatives that enable mutual understanding, recognition, and broader interactions among diverse groups or community members on a deeper level.

In many cases, cultural space creation entails constructing new cultural facilities to meet the varied cultural needs of different populations, thereby revealing fresh opportunities for spatial development. These developments often lead to dynamic transformations within communities, positively impacting social cohesion and urban vitality. Through shared cultural symbols, activities, and experiences, individuals enhance their sense of identity and belonging while forging new connections between physical spaces and local identities.

From the perspective of urban space production within the cultural and creative industries, cultural space creation leverages innovative approaches to integrate urban cultural heritage and landscapes into the socio-economic fabric of cities. On a macro level, the rise of consumerism has elevated cultural consumption to a pivotal role in driving urban economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and addressing residents' cultural needs. The interpretation, marketing, and management of urban cultural heritage have emerged as effective strategies for balancing heritage protection and promoting its economic value.

On a micro level, cultural space creation must also foster new dynamic patterns of cultural production and acquisition (Ferilli et al. 2016). By forging connections among individuals, spaces, and communities, cultural space creation serves to develop innovative patterns that redefine relationships among these elements, contributing to the social and cultural appeal of the space.

To achieve these objectives, enterprises play a pivotal role in cultural space creation by aligning with urban development goals. Businesses are expected to offer innovative and creative solutions that address specific social, economic, and environmental challenges within diverse spatial contexts. Such solutions encompass new ideas, concepts, relationships, products, services, processes, and market domains (Canestrino et al. 2015; Michelini and Fiorentino 2012). This integration of entrepreneurial strategies with cultural space creation contributes to significant social and environmental benefits.

Enterprises, therefore, should integrate entrepreneurial mindsets, business strategies, and social value creation in their cultural space projects. By employing innovative practices—individually or in combination—enterprises can explore new approaches to products and services, establish new ventures, and revolutionize organizational methodologies. These efforts facilitate the harmonious coordination of multiple values within cultural spaces.

According to the above considerations, the specific manifestations of "novelty" in the cultural space creation can be identified as:

- **Product and service innovation and cultural space creation**

Product innovation addresses societal needs by developing or enhancing products that contribute to social well-being. It is critical for businesses in fulfilling their social responsibilities, implementing sustainable strategies, and creating social value (Ortiz-de-Mandojana and Bansal 2016). Similarly, service innovation involves introducing novel ideas and practices in service design and operational models, encompassing the creation of new services, the improvement of existing ones, and innovative service delivery methods in response to societal challenges (Osborn and Brown 2005).

In the context of cultural space creation, enterprises must integrate cultural and creative industries with space revitalization to introduce innovative products and services. These initiatives may include constructing new cultural institutions and facilities, planning innovative cultural activities, connecting related cultural consumption formats, and providing culture-oriented services. By innovating methods

for delivering cultural services, enterprises enhance the cultural functions of spaces, establish new relationships among spaces, communities, and cities, and augment the social and cultural appeal of these spaces.

- **Technological innovation and cultural space creation**

The application of technological advancements is essential in developing new products and services that address societal issues (Bergek 2019). Businesses must establish mechanisms for absorbing external knowledge and encouraging cross-departmental collaboration, particularly when dealing with disruptive technologies—innovations that fundamentally reshape societal structures. These technologies not only disrupt traditional business models but also assist in addressing deep-rooted social problems such as poverty, health, and education (Christensen et al. 2018). Moreover, leveraging big data technology to enhance operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness has been recognized as a significant approach to fostering social innovation by driving the development and advancement of new products and services (van den Broek and van Veenstra 2018).

In cultural space creation, technological innovation is evident in novel delivery methods that improve consumer accessibility to cultural products and services. These methods include exhibitions through Internet platforms, social media channels, and physical venues (Miles and Green 2008). By incorporating contemporary technologies into interactive channels and user interfaces, enterprises enhance the precision and efficacy of cultural product and service development, delivery, and dissemination. Cultural spaces serve as mediums that connect individuals with spaces, fostering active participation and feedback from cultural consumers while informing enterprises' spatial adjustment strategies.

- **Path innovation and cultural space creation**

Market-driven social approaches emphasize the role of market-based actors in driving social innovation (European Commission 2013). Corporate social innovation involves adopting new resource integration models and business strategies to foster mutual benefits for businesses and society (Eggers and Macmillan 2013). These innovations often include novel business models and integrated market and non-market approaches to address societal issues that purely commercial or charitable organizations may struggle to resolve (Phills Jr et al. 2008).

Under the framework of urban renewal, cultural space creation leverages resources such as urban historical heritage, traditional craftsmanship, intangible cultural heritage,

and social capital. Innovative approaches to reorganizing and integrating these resources are closely tied to achieving spatial revitalization objectives. Enterprises must identify the convergence point between commercial value—facilitating urban economic transformation—and social value—enhancing spatial vitality and cohesion. This balance fosters sustainable development for both enterprises and cultural spaces.

- **Organizational innovation and cultural space creation**

Organizational innovation involves adapting to external environmental changes and internal needs to achieve new goals and development trajectories. This process encompasses adjustments in functional systems, management structures, and operational methodologies. These structural changes within the organizational framework are pivotal for social innovation (Moulaert and Mehmood 2011) and for effectively integrating innovation with sustainable business growth.

Enterprises' strategic and/or operational entry into new markets is characterized by their active participation in the creation of urban cultural spaces through social innovation. This process introduces novel challenges for enterprises, including the need to establish a clear vision and strong values, effectively realign resources and capabilities, and ensure alignment between urban goals and corporate visions. Addressing these challenges often requires adjustments in business direction, organizational restructuring, and the optimization of management methods to navigate complex urban environments, diverse cultural and social needs, and ever-evolving market trends.

Adopting open innovation strategies is essential for enterprises seeking to align cultural industry strategies with spatial development initiatives. By incorporating diverse social actors, enterprises can better respond to the intricate and multifaceted demands of social and cultural contexts. This approach fosters a synergistic dynamic, balancing economic objectives with the creation of social value throughout the process of spatial revitalization.

In summary, the novelty in cultural space creation lies in its ability to integrate innovative practices across multiple dimensions—products, services, technology, pathways, and organizational structures. By bridging economic, social, and cultural objectives, cultural space creation emerges as a powerful mechanism for fostering sustainable urban development and revitalizing communities. Future research and practice should focus on exploring the synergies between these dimensions to unlock

the full potential of cultural spaces as engines of social innovation and urban transformation.

4.2.2 Creating Cultural Space as Practice of Urban Social Innovation

Creating cultural spaces represents a distinct manifestation and outcome of social innovation, reflecting transformations in the social structures of specific countries and cities. As a strategic approach, it aims to creatively address the challenges faced by disadvantaged areas or enhance their developmental opportunities. The innovation inherent in cultural space creation lies in the re-optimization and creative integration of resources, which leads to the emergence of novel models for social relationships through the innovative restructuring or reconstruction of physical spaces. This process not only catalyzes changes in social behavior and governance mechanisms but also fosters the emergence of new economic activities and cultural practices. Together, these transformations contribute to socio-cultural and economic development in the communities and cities where such spaces are created.

1) The social objective of cultural space creation

A fundamental criterion for evaluating social innovation lies in its ability to address social issues and meet societal needs. Social innovation requires the identification of specific social problems as the foundation for designing effective solutions. The attainment of social objectives serves as a driving force for enterprises and organizations, enabling them to identify opportunities for innovation, implement effective strategies, and develop corresponding solutions.

Within the framework of the cultural and creative industries, the challenge of creating cultural space lies in effectively balancing diverse value dimensions, encompassing society, economy, and culture, while striving toward sustainable development goals. This balance can be achieved by reshaping the physical, economic, and social characteristics of urban spaces, thereby fostering more dynamic and inclusive environments that support urban development.

- **Physical Dimension: Enhancing the Built Environment**

At the physical level, cultural space creation focuses on enhancing the built environment and spatial functionality, while ensuring the sustainable preservation of

historical and cultural values. This endeavor involves designing landscapes that embody and convey urban cultural imagery and heritage. Tangible elements such as form, style, and architecture are integrated to effectively reflect urban memory, identity, and historical culture. Through these physical transformations, cultural spaces serve as custodians of urban cultural heritage, ensuring its preservation while promoting its relevance in contemporary urban life.

- **Economic Dimension: Stimulating Cultural Capital and Local Economies**

At the economic level, cultural space creation seeks to attract cultural capital and foster environments conducive to creative individuals and enterprises. By nurturing cultural and creative industries, these spaces stimulate cultural consumption, which in turn encourages investment, tourism inflows, and economic revitalization. Additionally, cultural spaces play a critical role in strengthening local community and urban economies, positioning themselves as hubs of economic activity and innovation within the broader urban ecosystem.

- **Social Dimension: Fostering Inclusion and Engagement**

Cultural spaces act as potent catalysts for fostering creativity, community engagement, networking, entrepreneurship, and innovation in urban spaces (Eriksson et al. 2018). By transforming the inherent “fragility” of underutilized spaces into fundamental elements of “resilience”, these spaces enhance the "endurance" and "repositioning ability" of urban areas, enabling them to adapt to changing social and economic conditions (Murphy 2016).

From the perspective of spatial social goals, creating cultural spaces necessitates a focus on cultural diversity, accessibility, and participation. It emphasizes the restoration, reconstruction, and strengthening of the communal essence of existing spaces. By assigning dynamic cultural roles to these spaces, they become platforms for innovation and inclusivity, fostering intercultural exchanges, integration, and mutual understanding. This process not only enhances community cohesion and a sense of belonging but also solidifies the role of cultural spaces as pillars of urban social fabric.

Therefore, the social objectives of cultural space creation can be summarized as follows (as shown in Figure 5.):

- a **Revitalizing Dilapidated Urban Areas**

By infusing culture and art into neglected urban areas, cultural spaces establish venues for cultural engagement and social interaction. This process enhances the functionality of these spaces while bolstering the

cultural vibrancy of both the spaces themselves and the surrounding communities.

b Preserving Cultural Heritage through Innovation

Cultural spaces serve as experimental sites for exploring commercial strategies to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage. They facilitate the seamless integration of urban cultural heritage into the economic frameworks of cultural industries, fostering both cultural and social innovation.

c Facilitating Education and Development Opportunities

Cultural spaces improve access to educational resources and foster development opportunities for residents, individuals engaged in cultural pursuits, and organizations. This promotes knowledge acquisition, lifelong learning, and the growth of human capital, while simultaneously enhancing levels of social engagement and active participation within the community.

2) The social process of cultural space creation

The role of enterprises in cultural space creation is pivotal, yet their social impact is fundamentally contingent upon interactions with broader social factors. Innovative processes of organizational management and spatial development extend beyond enterprise efforts to include active participation, cooperation, and transparent communication among various stakeholders, including end-users (Voorberg et al. 2015). Furthermore, these processes necessitate collaboration across diverse groups, involving the sharing of resources and cooperative production.

- Transforming Social Relations and Promoting Social Capital

The processes of spatial production entail transformations in social relations, which, in turn, facilitate the promotion of social capital within local communities. Cultural spaces have the potential to establish innovative systems centered on the cultural and creative economy. Drawing from Veblen's theory of innovation, professional knowledge emerges as a key driver of innovation (Mikhailovich Vasin et al. 2017). Within this innovation system, knowledge exchange encompasses not only "practical knowledge" embedded in institutional networks and interactions (Granger, 2020) but also tacit knowledge, proprietary technologies, and expertise gleaned from publications and other sources (OECD 2005). The flow of knowledge is further supported by mechanisms such as institutional relationships (e.g., the triple helix and quadruple helix models), collaborative research, technology diffusion, and personnel mobility, etc.

- Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer at Multiple Levels

The creation of cultural spaces involves the integration of spatial planning, place-making, cultural production, and everyday experiences. Enterprises, as key actors, must engage actively with their social environments through processes of knowledge interaction, absorption, and transformation. This entails the exchange and application of community-based and urban resources to foster innovation and enhance operational capacity in cultural space creation.

The process of knowledge acquisition and transfer during cultural space creation operates at two distinct levels:

- a Enterprises as Drivers of Social Innovation

For enterprises, knowledge acquisition and production are central to driving social innovation, as they enable businesses to address societal challenges with novel solutions grounded in comprehensive local knowledge. By identifying social objectives for innovative practices and generating expertise in unfamiliar domains, such as spatial revitalization and cultural innovation, enterprises can establish collaborative partnerships and foster connections with local communities, thereby enhancing knowledge exchange and achieving impactful innovation outcomes.

- b The Role of Other Actors in Spatial Creation:

Beyond enterprises, other participants—such as cultural product providers, public institutions, artists, and creative communities—play an integral role in fostering innovation. The inclusive nature of cultural spaces creates opportunities for knowledge sharing and legitimizes alternative knowledge sources, including "informal" knowledge. This acknowledgment of diverse knowledge forms is essential for achieving "breakout innovation" (Cea and Rimington 2017). Through collaborative discussions, cultural practice plans, professional training, and learning, cultural spaces become platforms for multi-level knowledge exchange. This fosters conditions conducive to the generation of innovative spatial planning schemes (Christmann et al. 2020).

- Culture as a Networking Force and Capital Builder

Culture acts as a powerful force and networking factor in cultural space creation, significantly contributing to trust-building and the development of human and social capital. By enhancing the social fabric of spaces and communities (Tremblay and Pilati 2013), culture facilitates collaborative behaviors and organizational innovation within

spatial agglomerations. The establishment of collaborative networks allows for the continuous transfer of both explicit and implicit knowledge, promoting resource sharing, technology exchange, and stakeholder collaboration.

- Establishing Cooperative Knowledge Networks

The Role of Social Capital in Innovation and Development

Social capital plays a dual role: it facilitates enterprises' access to resources, information, and technological support while also enhancing human capital for individuals and organizations (Putnam 2001; Burt 1997). By combining interdepartmental collaboration, innovation networks, and supportive public policies, enterprises can promote resource sharing, knowledge transfer, and stakeholder engagement (Auerswald 2009; Stonemann 2010). This integration enables creativity to flourish within companies, translating knowledge into practical business solutions (Ozkan-Canbolat and Beraha 2016).

If social innovation is conceptualized as a city development process imbued with cultural and social value, then culture and social capital emerge as indispensable components for achieving this goal. As the tangible and intangible manifestations of social capital (Throsby 1999), cultural spaces become platforms for fostering human and social capital. Enterprises, by transforming their organizational approaches to change management, incentivize societal actors to contribute innovative and sustainable actions for spatial well-being. This interactive process strengthens stakeholder identity and cohesion, leading to culturally and socially relevant spatial practices and actions that support cultural revitalization and sustainable development.

Therefore, the establishment of cooperative networks during cultural space creation operates on two levels:

- a Inter-organizational collaboration

Enterprises collaborate with a diverse array of public institutions, private organizations, and individuals (e.g., local governments, research institutions, and cultural entrepreneurs). These collaborations provide enterprises with access to resources such as reputation, technology, funding, and services (Turrini et al. 2016). Such networks facilitate the conceptualization and implementation of cultural spatial plans while emphasizing the societal benefits of enterprise innovation.

- b Social relationship networks within spatial contexts

Social relationship networks are formed within spatial environments through the interplay of emotions, cultural themes, artistic expressions, and community interactions. Enterprises play an active role in mediating and guiding stakeholders—including space operators, cultural entrepreneurs, and artists—toward achieving consensus on shared social objectives. This collective effort fosters socially beneficial outcomes for both local communities and broader societal contexts.

In summary, the process of cultural space creation is inherently multifaceted, involving the interplay of enterprises, cultural actors, and communities. By leveraging social capital and professional knowledge, enterprises can drive cultural innovation and contribute to sustainable spatial revitalization. The collaborative networks established during this process enhance resource-sharing and knowledge transfer while fostering stakeholder engagement and creativity. Ultimately, cultural space creation represents a dynamic process that merges social innovation, cultural revitalization, and sustainable urban development, transforming cultural spaces into vital platforms for societal progress (as shown in Figure 5.).

3) The social value creation in cultural spaces

Values fundamentally shape individuals' beliefs regarding the ideals, significance, and priorities of life (CCF 2016). At the societal level, value systems function as guiding principles for the actions of individuals, organizations, and communities. They are central to understanding how human groups and societies operate and evolve (Granger Rachel 2020). Consequently, the analysis of social innovation must inherently address the concept of social value creation, as it is this dimension that determines whether an innovation can generate impacts beyond the individual level (Baker and Mehmood 2015). Social value creation promotes collective interests and public welfare (Phills Jr et al. 2008; Howaldt Jürgen and Schwarz Michael 2010), positioning itself as a vital component in fostering equitable and sustainable social progress.

Culture, as a core element of social existence, profoundly shapes cognitive frameworks, behavioral patterns, and shared principles within communities. By facilitating dialogue and exchange, cultural processes promote the integration of value systems across diverse social groups, thereby enabling the resolution of social barriers and conflicts. Through symbols, rituals, and shared memories, culture also plays a crucial role in shaping normative behaviors and collective identities. As such, cultural spaces, which encompass material, financial, and symbolic capital (Murphy 2016), hold

unique significance as sites where cultural resources are produced, shared, and regenerated. These spaces not only provide the physical and financial infrastructure needed for cultural activities but also act as platforms where stakeholders interact, creativity flourishes, and new cultural forms emerge. By blending diverse symbolic elements, cultural spaces become hubs for innovation that generate economic, social, and political value.

The cultural and creative economy underpins the broader socio-economic innovation system, driving advancements across technological, scientific, social, institutional, and cultural dimensions (Rausell-Köster et al. 2013). The fusion of cultural creativity with production processes enables the restructuring of cultural assets in innovative ways, facilitating a closer integration between urban cultural resources and social innovation (Sacco et al. 2018; Throsby 2008). Cultural entrepreneurship, which lies at the intersection of artistic, social, and economic value creation, allows individuals such as artists and entrepreneurs to maintain their autonomy while addressing both individual and collective needs. Furthermore, the cultural and creative industries offer communities opportunities to creatively manage local resources and interests, often resulting in the formation of hybrid organizations that bridge profit-making, non-profit, and public-private partnerships. These developments not only foster cultural innovation but also contribute to territorial development and urban renewal.

Henceforth, the creation of cultural spaces serves a dual purpose: the generation of symbolic content and the cultivation of shared perspectives. These spaces derive their social value from the networks they foster and the social interactions they facilitate. By intertwining cultural production with predominantly commercial endeavors, cultural spaces create mutually beneficial outcomes for individuals and communities alike. They facilitate multi-directional communication, collective identification, and the reinforcement of shared values, while simultaneously addressing emotional and social needs such as belonging, mutual understanding, and consensus-building.

From the perspective of corporate social innovation, social value creation in cultural spaces encompasses both "benefits" and "capabilities." On one hand, social value is understood as the aggregate benefit derived by all stakeholders, including future generations. This entails efforts by businesses to address societal needs and problems beyond the confines of market-driven activities, resulting in societal benefits or cost reductions (Phills Jr et al. 2008). On the other hand, social value represents the

ability of businesses or systems to sustainably access diverse and necessary resources (Moskalev and Torras 2010). Additionally, non-financial forms of value, such as societal welfare and cultural enrichment, are integral to social innovation, as they often drive businesses to create meaningful impacts through problem-solving, welfare improvement, and societal transformation (Auerswald 2009).

In the context of cultural spaces, enterprises often act as primary innovators by implementing revitalization strategies that aim to create vibrant, attractive urban spaces through cultural and creative industries. Such efforts not only stimulate urban economic transformation but also preserve historical and cultural heritage, aligning with comprehensive urban development policies. Consequently, the social value derived from cultural spaces manifests in two primary dimensions: the "benefits" realized through space revitalization and the "capabilities" acquired by the various stakeholders involved. Individuals, communities, and cities all benefit from the revitalization of cultural spaces by experiencing positive changes in their social and cultural lives, while enterprises contribute to broader societal transformation.

From the perspective of physical spaces and their surrounding communities, cultural spaces and public facilities play a pivotal role in constructing urban collective memory and fostering social integration. On one hand, revitalizing cultural spaces imbues them with a "humanized quality" (Whyte 2001) that fosters social interactions and dialogue, thereby facilitating a sense of belonging and cohesion. On the other hand, cultural spaces serve as hubs of artistic and creative vitality, attracting talent and promoting innovation within communities and cities for the "social sustainability dimension of cultural activities" (European Union 2017). Investments in cultural spaces not only enhance aesthetic and artistic value but also empower communities by fostering creative expression and strengthening the connection between individuals and their surroundings. As sites of collective meaning-making, cultural spaces enhance residents' sense of purpose and belonging while contributing to the broader public significance of urban life.

From the perspective of "social value beneficiaries" (Lepak et al. 2007), cultural spaces provide significant opportunities for career development, social engagement, and the cultivation of human capital. Through cultural institutions, networks, and activities, stakeholders—including cultural entrepreneurs, artists, urban residents, and young professionals—can integrate themselves into the labor markets of the cultural and creative economy while sustaining their artistic and entrepreneurial endeavors.

These spaces also enable collective actions that generate shared cultural and social benefits within communities (D'Ovidio and Pradel 2013), enhancing cultural participation, social networks, and educational opportunities (Tavano Blessi et al. 2012). In doing so, cultural spaces strengthen individuals' self-confidence, professional pride, and sense of belonging, while simultaneously fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity.

In sum, the creation of cultural spaces is not merely an aesthetic or economic endeavor but a deeply social process that addresses collective needs, strengthens community ties, and promotes shared values. By intertwining cultural creativity with social innovation, these spaces serve as powerful catalysts for urban renewal, societal transformation, and the enrichment of public life (as shown in Figure 5.).

4.2.3 Cultural Space as a Medium for Cultural and Social innovation

As a tangible practice of social innovation, the creation of cultural spaces holds profound value in fostering novel social ecosystems centered around culture. These spaces serve as platforms that facilitate the establishment of extensive networks and systems of innovation among diverse actors within the cultural domain. By leveraging the cultural industry as a core strategy, enterprises play a pivotal role in promoting the formation of spatial "clusters." These clusters encompass a wide range of stakeholders, including communities, youth groups, cultural institutions, artistic organizations, and small-scale cultural enterprises. The entities responsible for creating and managing these spaces act as key facilitators, providing essential infrastructure and fostering meaningful connections between these clusters. The dynamic interactions among actors—predominantly engaged in cultural production and entrepreneurship—form an interactive network. This network promotes the exchange, absorption, and dissemination of creative capital while catalyzing bottom-up innovations at varying levels within these spaces.

In the process of spatial reproduction, enterprises frequently establish collaborative networks that bridge diverse social sectors. These networks seek support from actors across various disciplines and industries, fostering cross-sector partnerships that enhance the exchange and development of knowledge. By promoting the practical

application of social capital, these collaborations enable the sharing of resources and expertise between governments, businesses, and cultural entities. The convergence of perspectives and ideas generated through such interactions facilitates the development of innovative spatial solutions. Enterprises, in turn, adopt a “common good” perspective, implementing user-centered spatial practices that align with the needs of local residents. This approach not only enhances the functionality of urban spaces but also generates significant social value.

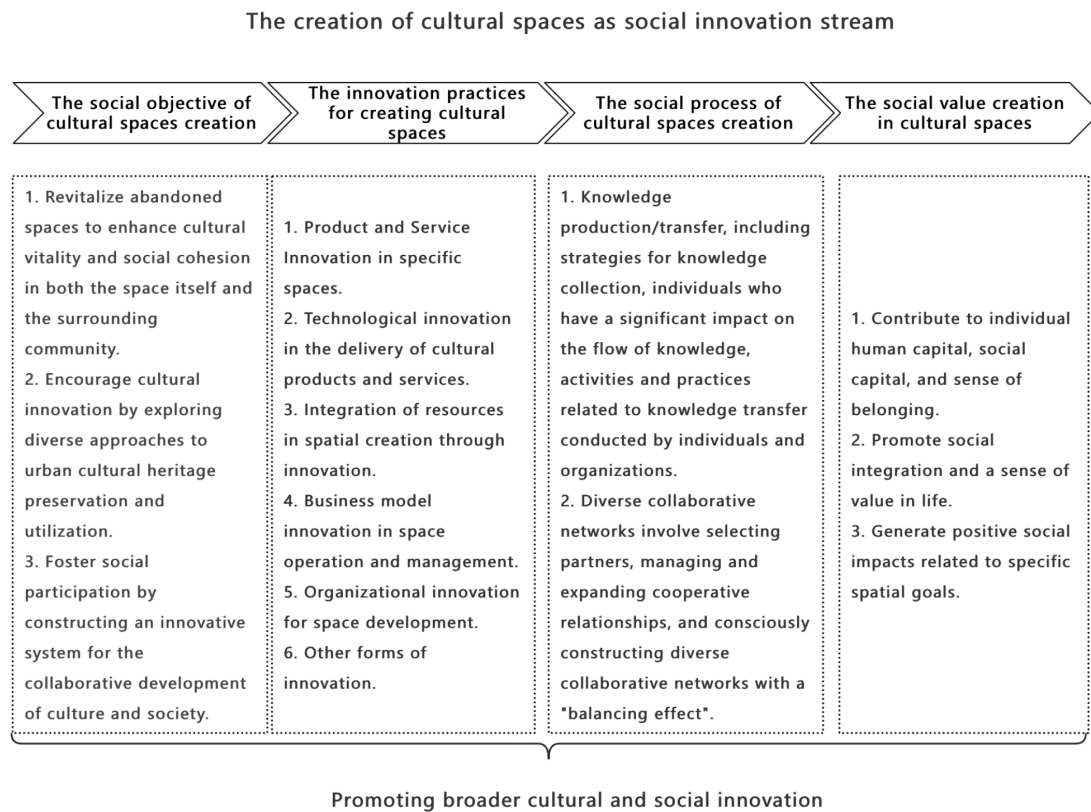
Within the urban innovation ecosystem, enterprises often act as primary drivers, while individuals, cultural institutions, creative industries, and other related organizations constitute essential collaborators. These diverse actors engage in multidimensional interactions that integrate human capital, social capital, professional expertise, and collaborative networks. The artistic and cultural sectors, in particular, actively collaborate with public and private entities to foster joint innovation. Entrepreneurs, space creators, and beneficiaries collectively participate in these spatial processes, working toward the creation of inclusive, open environments that address social challenges associated with urban revitalization while generating innovative solutions.

Culturally inclusive and diverse environments cultivated within these spaces provide individuals with opportunities for personal and professional development. When individuals and communities participate in the co-creation of cultural spaces, they unleash their innovative potential and creativity. This process fosters the dissemination, sharing, and advancement of knowledge, information, and technology. By actively engaging in specific cultural projects and practices, participants become collaborative contributors to the generation of social value. As socially-oriented urban spaces, cultural spaces continuously stimulate creativity throughout their formation and evolution. They serve as catalysts for the emergence of novel sociocultural practices, the formation of new sociocultural relationships, and the production of transformative outcomes across various societal dimensions.

Therefore, the influence of cultural spaces extends beyond their physical and material dimensions. Their impact spans social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental domains, positioning them as broad-based mediums for socio-cultural innovation. Through these multifaceted contributions, cultural spaces play a vital role in community revitalization and the advancement of cultural development, forging pathways for long-term social and cultural transformation.

Overall, the understanding of “the creation of cultural space as a social innovation stream” is approached from four dimensions: the goals, practices, processes, and value creation involved in cultural space construction. This perspective, grounded in the "process-perspective" of social innovation, illustrates how diverse innovative practices, rooted in the social objectives of cultural space creation, lead to the production of social value through a socio-spatial process driven by knowledge production/transfer and network building. Furthermore, once new cultural spaces are created, their inherent characteristics of innovative clusters enable the development of a multidimensional, interactive social capital network, which in turn serves as a catalyst for broader cultural and social innovation (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 The creation of cultural spaces as social innovation stream
(Source: the author)



4.2.4 Innovation and the Social Production of Cultural Space

In analyzing the social process of spatial production (and its resulting spatial outcomes), Lefebvre (1991) innovatively and developmentally builds upon the

phenomenological foundation proposed by French scholars, emphasizing the significance and necessity of a multidimensional comprehension of space. He introduces a triad comprising "perceived space," "conceived space," and "lived space" to analyze the process of spatial production. According to this theory, spatial production is grounded in a three-dimensional realm that can be discerned within every social process. Each "space" or "element" represents an aspect of spatial social production, unveiling insights into how individuals generate spaces in their everyday lives and are influenced by them.

As sites for social innovation, cultural spaces provide material and technological resources and shape individuals' behavior, values, and cultural expressions. Creating cultural space encompasses the physical environment, architectural style, planning, utilization, and experiential aspects that contribute to its perception, imagination, and lived experience. This sociocultural dimension of spaces is closely intertwined with culture. Innovative cultural products and practices imbue cultural spaces with a distinct sense of place. The outcomes derived from establishing cultural spaces are manifested not only in their physical dimensions (such as architecture, symbols, and content) but also in facets like historical-cultural significance and artistic connotations exhibited within the space, urban planning and envisioning, urban lifestyles, social interaction, and relationships. Consequently, cultural spaces have evolved into multidimensional entities encompassing society's fabric, culture, and politics.

Therefore, "perceived space," "conceived space," and "lived space" can be regarded as three dimensions of the social production process of cultural space or as three distinct levels of cultural spatial outcomes. They possess equal intrinsic value (Fuchs 2019). Innovative participation occurs across multiple dimensions and levels in the cultural space creation process. At the same time, innovation results are also realized and transformed in diverse dimensions and levels. The relationship between this type of innovation and the social production of cultural space renders innovation a fundamental driving force for the construction thereof, with cultural spaces serving as innovative outcomes and becoming motivating mediums and venues for broader social innovations to transpire.

- **Cultural space as perceived space**

In a general context, the term 'perceived space' pertains to the spatial perception and direct sensory experience of individuals or groups. It is closely related to subjective emotions, experiences, and perceptual abilities, which manifest in the physical

attributes of space, environmental ambiance, and the orderliness, customs, and behavioral patterns within that space. The significance of perceptive space as an analytical category lies in its role as a collection of tangible entities and as the material foundation for social production and reproduction of spatiality. People's comprehension of space is rooted in their perception and utilization, so perceptive space provides material conditions for social spaces. It is the basis for people's knowledge and experiential understanding of social spaces.

The manifestation of creating a cultural space is evident in the physical changes that occur at the primary level, encompassing the new space's architectural form and functional layout. Additionally, it encompasses the cultural ambiance, environment, and cultural activities and practices conducted within this novel space. These physical transformations further influence individuals' emotions and experiences concerning the space, altering their perception and comprehension.

On the one hand, innovative approaches to updating the spatial material level encompass the design of the spatial form, visual imagery, architectural landscapes, and aesthetic strategies. These pioneering endeavors shape a novel spatial image while conveying an altered ambiance and style to individuals. On the other hand, revitalizing spatial content involves the implementation of creative public art installations and offering diverse cultural activities for space users. By engaging in visits to art exhibitions and participating in handicraft workshops, festivals, etc., people establish direct contact and interaction with space, thereby affirming its role in fostering cultural participation and fulfilling cultural needs.

As perceived space, the newly formed cultural spaces have effectively shed the previous connotations of dilapidation and decadence, emerging as prominent cultural landmarks that embody the new essence of communities and cities. These spaces possess robust cultural attributes that epitomize the vibrancy and dynamism of communities and cities, rendering them pivotal venues for individuals to immerse themselves in cultural experiences. The successful establishment of perceptual spaces establishes a solid foundation for cultural spaces to contribute towards urban sustainability, quality of life, and social well-being.

- **Cultural space as conceived space**

In a broader context, 'conceived space' refers to the conceptualization and symbolization of space, which arises from cultural, knowledge-based, symbolic, planning, and ideological constructions. The imagined space is an outcome of power

dynamics and capital operations encompassing space's design, planning, and organization, reflecting the intentions of ruling classes and societal ideologies (Lefebvre 1991). Moreover, it encompasses many culturally significant symbols and symbolic meanings that reflect and shape collective cognition and understanding of spatial aspects within society. As an integral component in the production outcomes of social spaces, the imagined space exhibits spatial characteristics of social relationships and modes of production while exerting substantial influence on individuals' social behaviors and lifestyles.

At the secondary level, the outcomes of cultural space creation manifest as comprehensive spatial practices encompassing urban industrial transformation, spatial revitalization, and social-cultural visions. These newly acquired cultural spaces have become the primary tools for urban renewal and a tangible embodiment of cultural policies and development strategies. By reconstructing and reinterpreting symbols, representations, memories, meanings, cultural concepts, and ideologies within these spaces, cultural spaces achieve the reproduction (or reshaping) of urban identity and collective memory. They also serve as shapers and conveyors of social norms and values. All new cultural creations, productions, and consumptions within these spaces reflect the construction and interpretation of symbolic meaning by power structures such as authority figures or capital holders in society to varying degrees. Consequently, cultural spaces play distinct roles and influence these levels differently.

The new cultural spaces, as conceived spatial entities, embody the realization of urban design and planning ideas. They encapsulate the technological and functional attributes associated with distinct paths of urban renewal in specific temporal and social contexts while also reflecting the ideological dynamics and socio-cultural objectives underlying these renewal concepts. Furthermore, they exemplify how cities foster cultural innovation and diversity by strategically implementing cultural policies and projects.

- **Cultural space as lived space**

Generally, "lived space" pertains to the pragmatic and experiential aspects of spatial environments, encompassing individuals' daily life practices. It encompasses various activities such as communication and consumption, fostering interaction between individuals and society. Living spaces are regarded as arenas where collective and individual experiences unfold, owing to their association with lived experiences and practical behaviors. As embodiments of everyday life practices, living spaces

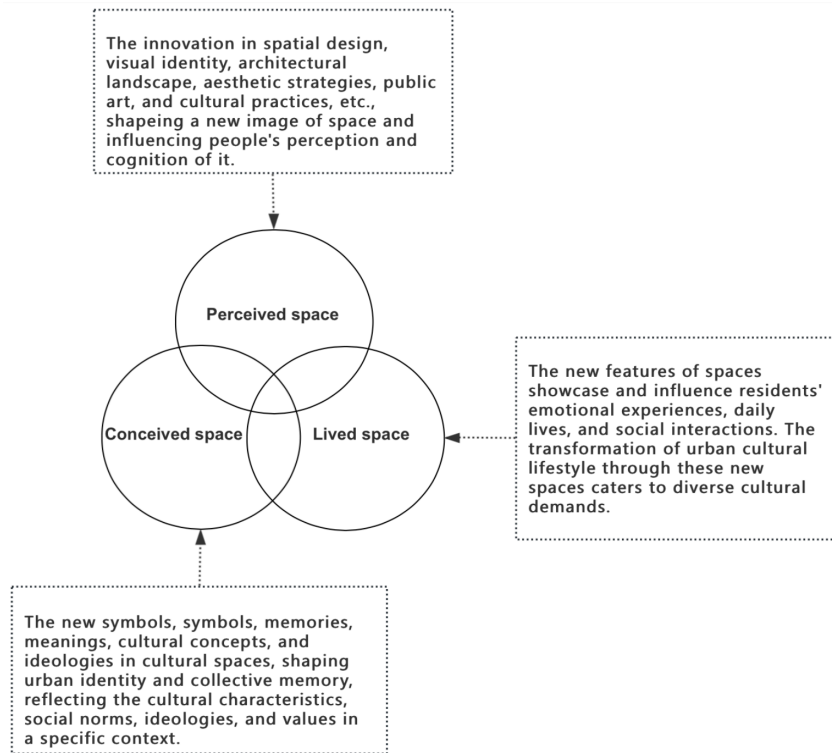
become catalysts for innovation and imagination by facilitating dynamic and multifaceted social interactions. These interactions manifest individuals' social status, identity recognition, and social relationships. Spaces undergo continuous production, reshaping, and reproduction through people's social interactions and practices.

The third outcome of cultural space creation is the realization of cultural spaces as venues for residents to engage in cultural practices and participate in social interactions actively. Through innovative solutions closely intertwined with culture, these spaces enhance the aggregating effect of culture as a network medium and foster social engagement. By establishing novel models for cultural production and acquisition, cultural spaces expand and enrich the availability of culture, influencing individual and societal patterns and habits of cultural consumption, thus shaping the city's cultural lifestyle. Cultural spaces become embedded within individuals' daily lives, rendering culture an integral component of everyday existence. Individuals enhance their cultural experiences through active participation and consumption, fostering emotional identification and a sense of belonging to living environments characterized by their predominant focus on culture while meeting diverse, multicultural needs.

As embodiments of lived space, the new cultural spaces signify the progression and evolution of urban lifestyles, reflecting residents' quest for meaning and value in their communal and city living. The configuration of experiential spaces encapsulates the humanizing attributes and diverse choices bestowed upon spaces by culture, which is pivotal in enhancing the urban quality of life and fostering cultural space diversification.

In summary, the examination of the socio-spatial outcomes of cultural space creation can be informed by Lefebvre's triadic understanding of social space. At the "perceived" level, innovative practices related to space creation shape new spatial identities, influencing individuals' perceptions and cognitions of space. At the "conceived" level, the creation of space reflects social norms, ideologies, and values, thereby shaping urban identity and collective memory. At the "lived" level, new spaces contribute to the formation of urban cultural lifestyles, fulfilling diverse cultural needs (See Figure 7).

Figure 7 The socio-spatial outcomes of cultural space creation
(Source: the author)



In conclusion, within the context of urban regeneration, creating cultural spaces in cities represents a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic socio-cultural process. The development of creative and innovative spatial solutions is not merely a technical or aesthetic pursuit but a critical practice for achieving effective space revitalization, generating broad social value, and realizing positive social and spatial outcomes. By employing targeted creative strategies and innovative practices, the generation and operation of cultural spaces prioritize the optimized allocation and reconfiguration of urban resources. This process fosters the emergence of new economic activities, cultural practices, and socio-cultural relationships, thereby partially fulfilling the broader goal of cultural space revitalization. As such, it exemplifies socially innovative spatial practices embedded within the framework of urban development.

The socio-cultural production of cultural spaces highlights the multifaceted role of innovation across different dimensions, producing diverse outcomes that extend

beyond physical space. These outcomes span material, spiritual, and social domains, ultimately integrating into a cohesive entity that profoundly shapes urban social life. Cultural spaces become more than their physical structures; they transform into vibrant ecosystems that drive social interaction, cultural exchange, and collective creativity, reinforcing their role as key catalysts for urban transformation.

Understanding the intricate relationship between space and factors such as society, culture, and economy during the creation and evolution of cultural spaces is central to appreciating their broader impact. Equally important is examining how innovation interacts with culture, as well as how these interactions influence the symbolic meanings embedded in spatial representations, societal integration, and the practices of everyday life. These processes reveal the dynamic interplay between the material and the symbolic, the structural and the experiential, offering significant theoretical insights for advancing our understanding of cultural space creation as a flow for social innovation.

By bridging cultural and social dimensions, cultural spaces act as transformative platforms where innovation and culture converge, creating opportunities to reimagine urban life and address pressing social challenges. Through their ability to foster inclusion, participation, and creativity, cultural spaces contribute to shaping not only the physical environment but also the social fabric of cities, offering valuable lessons for urban regeneration and the continuous evolution of urban society.

4.3 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the precise implementation and utilization processes of cultural creativity, cultural production, and spatial revitalization within enterprises. It seeks to identify specific pathways and critical mechanisms for knowledge production/transfer that facilitate innovative development during the creation of cultural spaces. Additionally, it analyzes how innovation relates to creating social value through spatial reproduction while elucidating the societal outcomes resulting from culturally-driven practices grounded in social innovation.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the process involved in implementing innovation within enterprises to create cultural spaces, this paper identifies five key themes that structure the investigation into the creation of cultural spaces as:

Theme 1. Space objective

Theme 2. Space practices

Theme 3. Space process

Theme 4. Space value

Theme 5. Space outcome

Each theme highlights vital concepts and essential stages that require focused research on cultural space creation (as shown in Table 4.1). The first theme tries to identify the historical and current situation of each space and the responsible enterprise within a specific circumstance and the responsible enterprise. The last four themes correspond to the crucial questions related to identifying innovative practices, specific processes for creating cultural spaces and their socio-spatial impacts, as outlined in the introduction.

This approach is advantageous as it clarifies the main content that each theme should concentrate on while maintaining systematic thinking throughout the research process. By exploring interconnections and mappings among these four themes, this study aims to objectively and comprehensively present the complete process and inherent logical structure of cultural space creation. Furthermore, analyzing each cultural space using the same thematic framework facilitates horizontal comparative studies between cases after obtaining specific spatial results. This approach also allows for further analysis and discussion of the connection between social innovation and urban revitalization, serving as a foundation for reflexive thinking based on the research findings.

Theme 1. Space objective (code T.1)

In the contemporary era and its specific social context, while the overarching objective of creating cultural spaces remains consistent—promoting cultural participation, enhancing community cohesion, and fostering socio-spatial revitalization—the specific goals for individual spaces may differ based on their distinct circumstances. Clearly defining the objectives of each case study is therefore crucial to comprehensively analyzing the processes involved in cultural space creation. This analysis is inherently tied to the particular contextual conditions, innovative practices adopted during revitalization efforts, and the tangible social and spatial outcomes that cultural spaces generate.

The exploration of spatial objectives can be approached through two key dimensions: the space portrait and the company profile.

Space portrait (code T.1.1)

The historical and current dimensions of a specific space form the foundational knowledge required to understand its transformation. The historical dimension provides essential insights into the origins, original functions, and evolutionary trajectory of the space prior to its revitalization. This knowledge is indispensable for identifying the specific catalysts and motivations that prompted its transformation. Meanwhile, the current dimension captures the space's present state, including its physical attributes post-transformation, spatial layout, defining characteristics, primary functions, cultural elements, and the overall community atmosphere it fosters.

Although cultural space creation is a widely recognized practice within urban renewal—aimed at improving physical infrastructure, enhancing economic potential, and fostering cultural vitality and social integration—each cultural space encounters unique challenges during its revitalization. These challenges are intricately linked to factors such as the space's geographical location, historical legacy, and the socio-cultural environment of its surrounding community.

The interplay of these conditions shapes the innovative practices and revitalization strategies employed by enterprises or organizations involved in the creation of cultural spaces. These practices, in turn, determine the extent to which a space can achieve specific socio-cultural outcomes, such as:

- Cultural Participation: Encouraging active engagement from residents and fostering cultural expression.
- Community Revitalization: Strengthening community bonds and fostering social cohesion.
- Inclusiveness: Ensuring that the space is accessible and meaningful to diverse social groups.
- Cohesion and Identity: Promoting a shared sense of belonging and cultural identity.
- Meaningful Living: Enhancing the quality of life for residents by creating spaces that resonate with their needs and aspirations.

Ultimately, the unique conditions of each cultural space—historical, social, cultural, and geographic—directly influence both the methods of revitalization adopted and the broader impact that these spaces have on the communities they serve. The

analysis of these factors underscores the importance of context-specific approaches in the design and management of cultural spaces, revealing their potential to foster innovative practices and generate significant social and cultural value.

Company profile (code T.1.2)

A thorough understanding of the responsible enterprise's profile is essential for capturing its foundational characteristics, which include its organizational scale, structure, development history, business model, market positioning, and other critical attributes. This comprehensive evaluation provides a foundation for assessing the company's capacity and preparedness for engaging in cultural space creation and innovative development. By analyzing the company's developmental trajectory and guiding ideologies, we can gain valuable insights into its approach to social responsibility and sustainable development, as well as identify potential challenges or limitations that may arise during the process of cultural space revitalization.

Understanding the organizational vision and decision-making processes of businesses involved in urban development is equally critical. Collecting information on their strategic planning, operational goals, and guiding principles helps identify the internal driving forces and innovative potential embedded in their cultural space creation practices. This analysis enables us to assess whether the company has the requisite resources, expertise, and values necessary to devise spatial revitalization solutions that align with social spatial objectives. Furthermore, it allows us to evaluate whether the company's distinctive vision and resource capabilities complement the broader goals of cultural space innovation and urban regeneration.

The evaluation of a company's background also facilitates a comparative analysis of its social innovation practices in creating cultural spaces. By systematically comparing the approaches of different enterprises, it becomes possible to uncover both commonalities and variations in their strategies for developing cultural spaces. These comparisons provide insights into how different organizational structures, priorities, and resources influence the outcomes of their efforts. Meanwhile, these differences, in turn, shape the social innovation outcomes and the societal impact of the cultural spaces created. Some companies may prioritize cultural participation and inclusiveness, while others focus more on economic development or spatial branding. Such variations highlight the diverse possibilities of cultural space innovation while offering opportunities to identify best practices and potential shortcomings.

Comparative research also contributes to a broader synthesis of intermediate-level experiences and patterns observed across enterprises engaged in cultural space creation. It enables the identification of recurring strategies, innovative frameworks, and challenges that businesses encounter during their attempts to cultivate cultural spaces through social innovation. By identifying these risks, we can propose targeted recommendations for addressing challenges in cultural space development.

Theme 2. Space practices (code T.2)

This subject aims to address the research sub-question 1) “What innovative solutions and strategies do cultural enterprises implement to promote social innovation in cultural spaces?” (as explicated in Chapter I) The objective is to identify specific innovative practices implemented by cultural enterprises while establishing cultural spaces and explore their alignment with organizational vision, resource foundation, and cultural concepts.

Innovation practice constitutes a fundamental component of social innovation and is a pivotal driving force in cultivating cultural spaces. By identifying specific innovative practices employed by enterprises in creating cultural spaces, we can acquire a more profound comprehension of how innovation influences the formation of cultural spaces and how these spaces are enhanced and upgraded through innovative practices. Furthermore, innovation is closely intertwined with resource optimization and integration, and diverse, innovative practices directly affect developmental changes within cultural spaces at physical, social, economic, and symbolic levels. These practices also determine factors regarding improvements in spatial forms and functions, alterations in sociocultural relationships within these spaces, reconstruction of symbols and symbolic meanings within them, and whether the outcomes derived from these spaces positively influence broader scales.

The innovation practices of enterprises in the research provide ample materials and empirical data, facilitating a more specific and vivid exploration of the relationship between innovation and cultural space creation. These cases and data reveal the particular ways, effects, and influences of innovative practices adopted in spatial production, thereby aiding us in constructing and refining theoretical models and analytical frameworks for analyzing cultural space creation as a social innovation flow. Moreover, comprehending the specific innovation practices (and their combinations) employed by enterprises also enables identifying challenges and issues when utilizing

culture-oriented approaches to create cultural spaces through research. It allows the proposal of targeted solutions during reflexive discussions, promoting continuous innovative practices in cultural space creation that involve participation from the cultural creative economy.

Based on the discussion of innovative practices in the preceding section, this study posits the subsequent categories of innovative practices in cultural space creation for case study reference and guidance:

Innovation of products and services in cultural spaces (code T.2.1)

To better cater to the cultural needs of residents and enhance their cultural participation and interaction within the community, it is imperative to establish cultural facilities, develop innovative cultural products, and offer novel public culture and cultural entrepreneurship services within the given space.

Technological innovation in the delivery of cultural products and services (code T.2.2)

In order to enhance accessibility for residents and cultural consumers, as well as optimize spatial layout, facilities, and functions, novel interactive channels leveraging internet technologies, big data analytics, social media platforms, etc., are being developed. These endeavors aim to foster new avenues and methodologies for cultural users' active engagement in cultural innovation.

Integration of resources and innovation in the creation of cultural spaces (code T.2.3)

A novel approach is employed to facilitate the integration of resources, aiming to establish culturally diverse and multifunctional cultural spaces through innovative amalgamation of cultural creativity and production derived from traditional arts, local culture, handicrafts, intangible cultural heritage, and other related domains.

Innovation of business models in the operation and management of cultural spaces (code T.2.4)

In order to enhance the positive societal impact of cultural spaces, enterprises are redefining cultural productivity, developing novel models for cultural production and acquisition, and integrating cultural production with innovative financial instruments to effectively amalgamate their commercial and social value.

Organizational innovation of space operation enterprises (code T.2.5)

Reputable enterprises respond to the cultural transformation of old spaces by adjusting and modifying their organizational goals, structure, business areas, and

development strategies, which is achieved through a comprehensive analysis and control of internal and external environmental requirements and demands (such as entering new markets or adapting to industry adjustments or competition).

Other innovations (code T.2.6)

The innovations may encompass conceptual advancements in the positioning and objectives of cultural spaces, marketing breakthroughs in promoting cultural spaces, and innovative incentive mechanisms implemented within organizations to foster the development of innovative corporate capabilities.

Theme 3. Space process (code T.3)

This subject aims to address the research sub-question No. 2) “How do cultural enterprises manage and sustain social innovations within the context of cultural space creation?” It endeavors to discern the underlying social processes in creating cultural spaces while exploring how knowledge production/transfer and collaborative networks are pivotal mechanisms for fostering innovation within cultural enterprises.

After identifying the innovative practices and solutions implemented by companies to cultivate a culture space centered on specific social objectives, it is imperative to elucidate further the methods and strategies employed by these companies in managing and fostering such innovations. This endeavor ensures that innovative actions can yield the desired and optimal social outcomes, enabling innovation practices and experiences to inform strategies for innovation management effectively. This alignment between spatial outcomes and the company's positioning and vision establishes a novel spatial foundation for its sustainable development process.

The analysis of spatial processes is accomplished through two aspects as knowledge acquisition/transfer and a diversified collaborative network building.

Knowledge acquisition/transfer (code T.3.1)

Knowledge acquisition/transfer is a key mechanism driving innovation and development. The diversity of specific goal spaces determines enterprises' distinct strategies in strategic planning and innovative practices. Professional knowledge constitutes a critical element for fostering innovative capabilities in transforming novel ideas, concepts, and methods regarding cultural space creation into tangible spatial actions. By focusing on the flow of knowledge, we can unveil the intrinsic mechanisms underlying cultural space creation and comprehend how enterprise-based spatial participants foster cultural space development through knowledge sharing and

transmission. Henceforth, it is imperative to pay heed to how enterprises gather, organize, and apply pertinent knowledge resources of innovation and facilitate effective internal and external knowledge transfer.

It is essential to identify critical individuals or components within the knowledge flow. Leaders, experts, innovators, and cultural entrepreneurs frequently assume an indispensable role in offering inventive resolutions for establishing a cultural sphere. Their reservoirs of expertise, along with their social networks, significantly influence their conduct, decision-making procedures, and engagements throughout corporate innovation endeavors. Research and development undertakings conducted by organizations alongside educational training schemes, promotion of cultural activities, and community engagement act as pivotal catalysts that enable the generation/transmission of knowledge. These factors aid in comprehending how information about innovative spatial solutions circulates and evolves across diverse domains and stakeholders.

A diversified collaborative network building (code T.3.2)

The formation process of a diversified collaborative network is directly related to knowledge flow and how companies overcome the limitations of unilateral actions and leverage their resource integration capabilities, stimulating and harnessing the creativity and innovation of different social actors, thereby contributing to spatial revitalization in cultural spaces. In creating cultural spaces, collaborative relationships established by companies with governments, communities, artists, and other businesses differ in knowledge contribution and play varying roles in new knowledge production and collaboration building. To identify specific processes, companies must manage and expand their collaborative networks with social actors, using criteria for partner selection and strategies for cooperative relationships.

The essence of spatial production is a social process, which necessitates attention to whether enterprises have effectively harnessed the societal impacts of culture in managing and developing innovative practices. It entails establishing an extensive network of actors and diverse mechanisms for coordinating spatial production and leveraging knowledge resources and cooperation networks to amplify the influence of innovation. It also involves creating opportunities for cultural development, expanding cultural capital, and involving more social capital in creating cultural spaces. Simultaneously, it is crucial to consider how enterprises construct spatial networks that possess a "balancing effect," encompassing individuals, communities, and cultural

creative enterprises. It pertains to coordinating cultural space production's economic and social effects while ensuring equitable distribution among disadvantaged groups or communities.

Theme 4. Space value (code T.4)

This subject is the first response to research sub-question No. 3) “What socio-spatial impacts arise from the creation of cultural spaces by enterprises, and how do these outcomes balance economic and social values?” It aims to investigate the specific circumstances surrounding the generation of social value, which constitutes a significant outcome in establishing cultural spaces as social arenas.

Cultural spaces encompass not only physical environments but also the reconfiguration of social dynamics and the embodiment of cultural values within them. As facilitators of social activities, cultural spaces primarily generate and actualize their societal worth by cultivating cultural relationships within these spaces. It encompasses interactions, exchanges, and collaborations between individuals mediated by culture and the diverse cultural influences and resulting social impacts that emerge from such engagements. These factors shape the ambiance and distinctive characteristics of cultural spaces and determine their tangible cultural and societal functions.

Social value (code T.4.1)

The analysis and discussion of the creation of social value resulting from cultural space construction is a pivotal determinant in assessing a company's success and extent of achievement in cultural space development. From the perspective of companies as primary agents in cultural space construction, it is imperative to examine their implementation (or reinforcement) of public cultural services, including establishing or enhancing public cultural facilities. Additionally, they should provide open, convenient, accessible, and inclusive spaces for cultural and social interaction by shaping the physical environment and cultivating the atmosphere. Furthermore, crucial considerations include enriching residents' daily lives through diverse cultural projects and activities while offering necessary conditions and services for cultural entrepreneurship, talent aggregation, and various forms of innovation. Moreover, evaluating how innovative changes in the physical nature of these spaces contribute to fostering a sense of belongingness and identity within them, how investments in culture reshape their economic value, as well as how economic value can be reinvested into projects aimed at creating social value are all essential aspects closely intertwined with spatial cultures' vitality and cohesion that serve as social values.

The creation of social value is generated through the interaction between cultural and social spaces, and it often manifests in different specific forms at various levels. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the social value created by creating cultural spaces from individual, organizational, community, and other levels. It is necessary to focus on individuals' cognition, experience, and evaluation of cultural spaces to assess their impact on personal emotions, values, professional abilities, etc., as well as to examine the frequency of social interactions within cultural spaces and the degree of social participation. All includes analyzing the frequency and modes of interaction among people in cultural spaces, the demographic characteristics of participants, and diversity in cultural projects and activities. These assessments help determine specific changes in cultural vitality and social cohesion after spatial transformations and their extent.

Economic value (code T.4.2)

In creating cultural spaces within the cultural and creative industries, it is imperative to identify and analyze the economic value generated by these spaces. Firstly, as responsible entities involved in creating cultural spaces, enterprises must acquire stable economic benefits as a prerequisite for sustainable development. It will further stimulate continuous innovation practices, strengthen and develop innovative mechanisms, ensure effective implementation of spatial plans, and achieve positive spatial outcomes. Secondly, based on existing research and analysis on social innovation, it can be observed that the economic value created by enterprises in promoting social innovation development can serve as a valuable complement to varying degrees of social value through diverse means for different stakeholders. Therefore, when examining case studies of spatial projects, it is crucial to explore whether there exists a correlation between the economic value generated by enterprises through cultural space construction and social value; if so, how does this economic value contribute to social value creation or generate societal effects.

Theme 5. Space outcome (code T.5)

This subject is the second response to research sub-question No. 3) “What socio-spatial impacts arise from the creation of cultural spaces by enterprises, and how do these outcomes balance economic and social values?” Based on the social production of cultural spaces, this subject aims to identify the outcomes of cultural space construction and further comprehend the relationship between innovation and the social-spatial consequences of cultural space.

The examination of spatial outcomes is accomplished by analyzing cultural space as three dimensions of social space.

The cultural space as a perceived space (code T.5.1)

The study of cultural spaces as perceived spaces necessitates the analysis of individuals' subjective perceptions, experiences, and understandings of these spaces, alongside examining how innovative practices and activities influence and shape these perceptions and experiences. This discussion focuses on how companies can reshape physical spaces through innovative facilities, layout design, architectural updates, and landscape design while reimagining spatial imagery by fostering innovative thinking and actions to promote cultural participation. These efforts aim to transform the space's form, nature, and function to alter residents' perception, experience, and utilization. Furthermore, technological innovations have expanded the boundaries of experiential aspects within cultural spaces.

The cultural space as a conceived space (code T.5.2)

In order to examine cultural spaces as conceived spaces, it is imperative to analyze the construction process of symbols, symbolism, and meaning in cultural spaces, as well as the role and impact of innovative activities in this process. The discussion primarily focuses on how innovative activities reconstruct the symbolic language and visual imagery of cultural spaces through cultural creativity, artistic practices, etc.; how the symbol system comprising symbolic language and visual imagery guides individuals' cognition and understanding of space; how specific contexts, orders, behavioral patterns formed in cultural spaces serve as mediums for expressing meaning and conveying specific social concepts, values, and norms; the contribution of innovation in business formats and content within a space to urban image building and brand construction; how a space becomes a new cultural landmark and symbol for a city; how cultural spaces express corporate values while promoting positive impacts on broader societal levels through different innovative approaches.

The cultural space as a lived space (code T.5.3)

The study investigates cultural spaces as lived environments, analyzing their functions as everyday living spaces. It explores the interaction between individuals and cultural spaces and the impact of innovative activities on urban residents' lifestyles, social experiences, and cultural needs. The discussion primarily focuses on how cultural spaces influence individuals' social behaviors and identity through cultural production, consumption, and participation. It also examines how these spaces'

functional layout and development strategies shape urban socio-cultural development. Additionally, it investigates how residents satisfy their cultural preferences and engage in consumer behavior and social interactions within these spaces to meet their cultural demands and enhance their quality of life. Furthermore, it examines how innovative approaches to creating cultural spaces promote diversified development by enhancing social interaction and participation in urban culture.

In conclusion, this research framework integrates the theories of social innovation and socio-spatial production within the context of urban renewal driven by cultural industries. It not only examines the process of cultural space creation but also emphasizes the spatial outcomes and their broader social impacts. The research design is visually represented in Table 6, which outlines the specific analytical processes, key discussion themes, their corresponding dimensions, and the critical issues addressed within each dimension. As detailed in the earlier sections of this chapter, the five themes are analyzed in a logical sequence, with each dimension explicitly oriented toward its corresponding research questions to ensure analytical precision, thematic relevance, and methodological rigor. This structured approach not only provides a comprehensive framework for investigating cultural space creation but also ensures that the study maintains theoretical depth and practical applicability, contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on urban renewal and social innovation.

Table 6 Analysis Framework for Creating Cultural Spaces as Social Innovation Stream
(Source: the authore)

Themes	Specific dimensions	Problems to be solved
T.1 Space Objective	T.1.1 Space portraits	a. The specific objective of cultural space creation. b. The characteristics, purpose, arrangement, surroundings, and community dynamics before and after spatial transformation.
	T.1.2 Company profile	c. The fundamental attributes of an enterprise, including its inherent characteristics, organizational structure, and business scope. d. The decision-making process employed by the given enterprise in relation to establishing a cultural space.
↓		
T.2 Space Practices	T.2.1 Product and service innovation	a. The primary innovative practices implemented by the given corporation to establish a cultural environment. b. The correlation between innovative practices and the organizational vision, resource foundation, and cultural convictions of the specific company.
	T.2.2 Technological innovation	
	T.2.3 Resouces and innovation integration	
	T.2.4 Business model innovation	
	T.2.5 Organizational innovation	
	T.2.6 Other innovation	
↓		
T.3 Space Process	T.3.1 Knowledge acquisition/transfer	a. How do enterprises collect, organize, and apply knowledge resources pertaining to innovation? b. How do enterprises translate new ideas, concepts, and methods regarding the creation of cultural spaces into practical spatial actions?

		c. Identifying key individuals and critical stages in the flow of knowledge concerning innovation.
	T.3.2 Diverse collaborative networks	d. How do enterprises effectively manage and expand their collaborative networks with other social actors? e. How can enterprises strategically leverage cultural, intellectual, and knowledge resources along with cooperative networks to enhance the impact of spatial innovation practices on spatial creation? Additionally, how can they amplify the influence of new cultural spaces at various levels?
		
T.4 Space Value	T.4.1 Social value	a. To what extent have the cultural spaces achieved their specific spatial revitalization goals? b. Individual-level social value created in cultural spaces c. Spatial/organizational-level social value created in cultural spaces d. Community/urban-level social value created in cultural spaces.
	T.4.2 Economic value	e. What is the economic value in cultural spaces creation? f. Is there a correlation between the economic value and social value of cultural spaces?
		
T.5 Space Outcome	T.5.1 Perceived space	a. Innovative solutions driving the reconfiguration of physical spaces. b. Realization of imaginary spaces facilitated by innovative solutions. c. Technological innovation transforming citizens' perception and experience of spaces.
	T.5.2 Conceived space	d. Innovative activities reconstruct the symbolic language and visual imagery of cultural spaces through cultural creativity and artistic practice, while the symbolic language, visual imagery, and other constituent elements of a symbolic system guide individuals' comprehension and perception of space. e. The specific context, order, behavioral patterns, and expressions within cultural spaces convey and transmit distinct social values, norms, and beliefs.

		f. The contribution of innovative spatial solutions to urban image construction and branding is significant. Cultural spaces have evolved into iconic landmarks and symbols of cities that reflect the production logic of "capital + power".
	T.5.3 Lived space	g. The spatial configuration influences individuals' social behavior and identity by shaping novel patterns of cultural production and acquisition. h. The innovative initiatives cater to the diverse cultural needs of residents, thereby enhancing their quality of life. i. The implementation of an innovative spatial plan fosters social interaction and cultural participation, thus shaping the urban cultural lifestyle and promoting diversified development of urban cultural spaces.

4.4 RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

Social science research necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of observed phenomena and situating them within a specific context, considering the historical and spatial dimensions of said context, to construct and elucidate the object of exploration. Given that social innovation emerges as a knowledge synthesis resulting from novel social practices in Western societies aimed at addressing pressing challenges rather than being solely derived from academic discourse (The Young Foundation 2012), it inherently possesses practicality and empiricism as its defining characteristics. Consequently, empirical research approaches are imperative for investigating social innovation by comprehending its contextual process, discerning underlying influences, and understanding the interrelationships between social innovation and other societal elements to acquire precise and tangible insights into this phenomenon.

This dissertation adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the creation of cultural spaces as a social innovation process. Multiple case studies and inductive analysis are integrated as specific research strategies to analyze and discuss the process of cultural space creation and its socio-spatial outcomes. Additionally, this paper designs and employs various data collection methods to ensure diverse data sources, providing empirical support for the analysis conducted in this study.

4.4.1 Multi-Case Study

This dissertation employs a multiple case study approach (Thomas 2011; Gustafsson 2017), adhering strictly to the three fundamental principles of representativeness, matching, and data availability in case selection. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring the complex and dynamic interactions between cultural spaces, social innovation, and urban regeneration, as it enables an in-depth analysis of multiple contextual factors and diverse practices across different cases (Yin 1989).

Three cultural spaces in Kunming (with more detailed information shown in Table 4) were purposefully selected as representative samples based on existing research and preliminary fieldwork. The representativeness principle ensures that the selected cases

collectively embody key characteristics of cultural spaces in Kunming, such as diverse operational models, varying degrees of public-private collaboration, and differing levels of integration into the city's cultural and economic systems. The matching principle emphasizes that the cases align with the research objectives, particularly in terms of their capacity to illustrate how cultural enterprises implement innovative practices to promote social innovation. Finally, the data availability principle ensures that sufficient and reliable data, including interviews, archival records, and on-site observations, can be collected to facilitate robust analysis.

By adhering to these principles, the selected cases not only provide a solid empirical foundation for addressing the research questions but also ensure the generalizability of the findings to similar cultural spaces in other urban contexts. This multiple case study approach thus allows for a nuanced understanding of the processes and outcomes of cultural space creation, while also enabling a comparative analysis that uncovers both commonalities and contextual differences among the cases.

- **Case selection and justification**

these three cultural spaces were chosen for their significant contributions to the overall development of urban cultural revitalization in Kunming City. Their innovative and transformative endeavors have been widely recognized, receiving numerous accolades at both national and local levels for advancing urban cultural spaces. Moreover, the local government has acknowledged them as pivotal agents in promoting the integration of the cultural industry and urban renewal in Kunming City, further reinforcing their status as institutionally and practically exemplary cases of culturally vibrant spaces within China's current urban development landscape.

However, the selection of these cases was not solely based on their achievements. While Cases of Yunfang cultural and artistic space and Shicui Minyi park have demonstrated considerable success in fostering social innovation and achieving positive societal impacts, Case of Wenming historic block presents a different perspective, exhibiting more pronounced tendencies toward spatial gentrification and commercialization at a certain level, although it should be examined more precisely in a larger historical context. This deliberate inclusion of a less successful case ensures that the research critically engages with the diverse trajectories and outcomes of cultural space creation. By examining both successful and less successful cases, the analysis provides a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the complexities, challenges, and unintended consequences inherent in cultural space revitalization.

This approach underscores the methodological rigor of the study, as it avoids a one-sided emphasis on success stories and instead embraces the full spectrum of outcomes, thereby enhancing the validity and robustness of the research findings.

- **Alignment with the research definition and practical accessibility**

The selection of these three cultural spaces aligns closely with the definition of "cultural space" as established in this study, which focuses on urban abandoned spaces and the enterprises responsible for their renewal, management, and development. These spaces have effectively integrated historical, cultural, and economic resources to create new cultural industries and projects that merge cultural commerce with social interaction (shown in Table 4). Through this process, they have successfully transformed into urban spaces characterized by cultural production, consumption, and participation. Specifically, the Yunfang case represents a subversive transformation of traditional commercial districts; the Shicui case involves the revitalization of urban industrial heritage; and Kunming Old Street emphasizes the revival and preservation of urban historic communities. These cases align with the core themes of this study and reflect diverse types of urban abandoned spaces, thus enhancing the representativeness and diversity of the research sample and ensuring a balanced and critical examination of the varied trajectories of cultural space revitalization.

- **Collaborative partnerships and data accessibility**

The selection of these cases is supported by the author's expertise and research background in urban and cultural development in China, as well as the reputable research institution to which they are affiliated. A solid collaborative relationship has been established between the institution, the author, and these three cultural spaces, facilitating the acquisition of comprehensive survey materials. Each space actively participated in interviews, document collection, spatial statistics gathering, and consultation of both enterprise and spatial historical archives. This collaboration ensures the availability of sufficient data for all three research samples, thereby enhancing the methodological rigor and validity of the study.

Table 7 Basic information of the targeted spaces
(Source: the author)

Targeted Spaces	Corporate Name/Type	Original Spaces	Current Situations
Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space	Yunnan Textile Factory / Traditional Manufacturing Enterprise	Wholesale market	A metropolitan cultural space that seamlessly integrates cultural production and consumption, public cultural services, as well as tourism and leisure activities.
Shicui Minyi Park	Shichui Cultural Co., Ltd. / Cultural Entrepreneurship	Oxygen Plant	A space for the agglomeration of innovative design and creative production in Yunnan Province, dedicated to the preservation and advancement of traditional handicrafts.
Wenming Historic Block	Kunming Zhijiang Real Estate/Real Estate Enterprise	Historical District	A cultural commercial space that epitomizes the city's historical heritage and contemporary lifestyle.

The method of multiple case studies is highly persuasive and provides more reliable confirmation of research results, ensuring the derivation of valid conclusions from empirical experiences of different research subjects. This study selected three cultural spaces to validate the research hypotheses by comparing similarities and differences in social innovation within these spaces. The analysis of the three samples adopts a unified research analysis framework proposed by the author, encompassing four specific analytical units: spatial objectives, innovative practices, innovative development, and social value creation. Each distinct process of cultural space creation is individually analyzed to further elucidate the multidimensional dynamic process of cultural space formation as a form of urban practice with characteristics related to social innovation. Based on this foundation, a comparative analysis is conducted on each sample's specific socio-spatial outcomes, delving into practicality, societal impact, and symbolism to explore the relationship between cultural space as a form of social space and social innovation. Additionally, it aims to analyze how enterprises participate in urban renewal processes under China's socio-cultural context while promoting and developing social innovation, simultaneously examining their processes' features, advantages, and limitations.

4.4.2 Data Collection

Given the challenges encountered in collecting data for social innovation research within the cultural domain, this paper adopts a diversified approach to data collection (Yin 1989) as a crucial method to address this challenge. The objective is to provide comprehensive and practical reference information for case studies by gathering data from various credible sources. Simultaneously, diversifying data collection also adheres to the fundamental principle of conducting case studies. These pieces of information and data serve as vital support for constructing research databases, ensuring the chain of evidence, and enhancing the credibility and reliability of case studies.

The data collection methods employed in this study are as follows:

- **Semi-structured interview**

This study employed semi-structured interviews as a primary method to collect qualitative data, focusing on understanding the practices, motivations, and impacts of cultural space creation from the perspective of stakeholders directly involved in the three selected cultural spaces. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility, allowing for in-depth exploration of pre-determined topics while accommodating emerging themes during the conversations (Bryman, 2012).

Interview design and participants

This study conducted face-to-face interviews (shown in the Appendix A) with key individuals, including business leaders (decision-makers) of three cultural spaces, members of their operations and management departments, operators or managers of sub-spaces within these cultural spaces, artists and cultural entrepreneurs within the spaces, as well as initiators and participants from related cultural communities. A total of 18 interviews were conducted between February 2023 and November 2023, covering the three selected cultural spaces in Kunming. For each cultural space, six interviewees were selected, comprising:

- a Three representatives from the enterprises responsible for the spaces, including a senior leader, a project manager, and an operations manager.
- b Three sub-space leaders** who were responsible for managing specific areas or projects within the cultural spaces.

This sampling strategy was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the decision-making, operational strategies, and on-the-ground practices involved in the creation and management of cultural spaces. The inclusion of both enterprise

representatives and sub-space managers ensured that diverse perspectives—ranging from strategic planning to operational execution—were captured.

Interview process and challenges

In order to guarantee the quality and efficiency of the interviews, three preliminary interview experiments were conducted using a pre-designed questionnaire. These experiments aimed to assess the questions' clarity, content's comprehensiveness, and reasonableness of interview duration. Based on participant feedback and experimental results, appropriate modifications and adjustments were made to both the questionnaire content and interview strategies after each experiment. This iterative process ensured smooth progress throughout the entire interview process while maintaining data validity.

The interviews were conducted over an extended period due to practical constraints such as the availability of participants and changes in personnel within the responsible enterprises. Notably, some senior leaders experienced position changes or transfers during the research period, which necessitated conducting their interviews in multiple sessions. This fragmented scheduling posed logistical challenges but ultimately allowed for richer and more detailed data collection.

Each interview lasted between 120 and 180 minutes and followed an interview guide structured around the research themes. The guide included open-ended questions covering topics such as the strategic goals of cultural space creation, the innovative practices implemented, the challenges encountered, and the perceived outcomes. However, flexibility was maintained to encourage interviewees to share unanticipated insights or perspectives.

Data obtained and analytical focus

The semi-structured interviews generated a wealth of qualitative data, including detailed accounts of:

- Organizational motivations and strategies: Insights into how the enterprises conceptualized and approached cultural space revitalization projects.
- Innovative practices: Descriptions of specific methods and initiatives used to integrate cultural, historical, and economic resources.
- Challenges and constraints: Narratives highlighting operational difficulties, resource limitations, and external factors influencing the projects.
- Perceived outcomes and impacts: Reflections on how the spaces have influenced urban revitalization, community engagement, and cultural production.

Additionally, these interviews examined individual entrepreneurs' roles and organizations in establishing social innovation networks and promoting the co-creation of social values.

- **Archived records and documentation**

To comprehensively and accurately comprehend the overall background and developmental history of each cultural space sample and its operating company and conduct reasonable comparative research with newly innovated spaces, this study collected pertinent archival records and document materials from various departments as crucial supplementary data for semi-structured interviews. The primary approach employed for collecting records and documents is outlined below.

- Policy documents obtained from the Kunming Municipal Government are utilized to elucidate the research subject's specific social context and spatial conditions to facilitate a comprehensive analysis.

- Historical archives of the research subject, including textual records and visual materials sourced from institutions such as Kunming City Library, Archives, Museums, etc., are utilized to elucidate the historical origins of specific spatial entities under investigation and establish a chronological overview of their developmental processes.

- Enterprise archives obtained from cultural enterprises responsible for spatial creation provide insights into their historical and developmental trajectories, their strategic planning for space creation, and the specific measures implemented. They facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the enterprise's development and management processes in relation to social innovation.

- Relevant statistical data on cultural facilities and artistic activities obtained from operational departments of cultural enterprises are utilized to conduct statistical analysis, provide a comprehensive description of cultural participation within spaces, and identify incentives and developments associated with cultural innovation.

- Relevant reports on cultural spaces sourced from reputable internet and media channels are analyzed to gain comprehensive insights into their practical implications, their alignment with current urban trends, and their resonance with societal values.

- The social science literature and publications retrieved from the "China National Knowledge Infrastructure" database serve as empirical research references, supplementary data materials, and information for the target cultural space in this study. This translation is tailored for an SSCI English paper scenario, adhering to a language style appropriate for such an application.

Analyzing the textual and cultural aspects of these documents enables a comprehensive understanding of the presentation of cultural content, dissemination of values, and expression of spiritual themes through varied means. This analysis provides empirical evidence for examining the social function and impact of cultural space, as well as evaluating its societal significance.

- **Participatory observation**

In order to acquire a practical comprehension and grasp the genuine impact of cultural spaces on cultural vitality, social interaction, and citizen participation in urban communities, this study also gathered information and data through participatory observation. The author's participatory observation encompassed active involvement in cultural arts activities hosted within the space, attendance at academic seminars related to sustainable development themes via work opportunities and engaging in informal conversations with staff members of operating enterprises regarding innovation, transformation, and development of the space. The information collected through participatory observation primarily encompasses the day-to-day operations of cultural spaces, usage patterns of public cultural spaces, types and essential characteristics of cultural activities and projects, composition and features of participants, and interactions and performances among individuals involved in these activities and projects. These abundant intuitive perceptions and experiential materials contribute to comprehending the cultural and social functions and impacts of cultural spaces while providing references for evaluating interview validity and providing data information.

- **Questionnaire survey**

In order to gain a deeper understanding the cultural spaces' impact on individuals and assess the overall effectiveness and satisfaction of these spaces among urban residents, tourists, etc., this study has developed a space visitor survey questionnaire (as shown in the “Appendix B Semi-structured questionnaire”). The questionnaire is designed in strict accordance with the relevant requirements of social science research and is divided into three major sections, corresponding to the respondent's basic information, the respondent's cultural life, and the respondent's specific responses regarding the perception, experience, and evaluation of the case space.

Part A consists of five multiple-choice questions designed to collect basic demographic information from respondents, including gender, age, occupation, education level, and place of residence. Part B adopts a combination of single-choice and multiple-choice questions, containing seven questions, with the aim of

understanding the respondent's daily life in relation to cultural spaces. Part C "Perception, Experience, and Attitude towards Cultural Space" aims to collect information from respondents regarding the effectiveness and satisfaction with cultural spaces, specifically through questions addressing the following aspects:

- Respondents' evaluations of aesthetic appeal, accessibility, comfort, and inclusivity within the target space.
- Respondents' assessments of activity performance, service quality, and educational functions present in the target space.
- Respondents' feedback on social experiences and psychological perceptions derived from interactions with the cultural space.
- Identification by respondents of existing issues within the cultural space along with suggestions for improvement strategies and methods.
- Evaluations and recommendations from respondents concerning operational approaches to managing cultural spaces.

To convert respondents' answers regarding the effectiveness and satisfaction with the target cultural space into analyzable data, this study employs the Likert scale as a robust measurement tool to accurately evaluate respondents' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward cultural space. The respondents were randomly selected during on-site visits to ensure diverse representation across age groups, education levels, cognitive abilities, etc. The design and utilization of the Likert scale effectively facilitate respondents' comprehension of the questions and precise completion of their responses. Moreover, the five-level options enable a more nuanced reflection of respondents' varying attitudes or opinions on corresponding issues. This approach proves advantageous for researchers in capturing richer and more detailed information while comprehending overall tendencies among respondents based on subsequent data analysis results. Furthermore, it aids in identifying disparities or changes among specific groups concerning similar issues. Overall, this methodology plays a constructive role in comprehending the social impact generated by cultural space.

The survey for the three case spaces was conducted from September 1 to October 31, 2023, over a period of two months. The distribution of the questionnaires was coordinated within the respective cultural spaces and was carried out through random distribution at the event venues by the organizers, as well as through participatory observation by the author. A total of 318 questionnaires were collected (105 for Case A, 96 for Case B, and 117 for Case C), of which 296 were valid, resulting in a response

rate of 93.08%. Through the analysis of valid questionnaires, the gender ratio of respondents was 40.2% male to 59.8% female. The age distribution was primarily concentrated in two groups: 19-30 years old and 31-40 years old, accounting for 40.2% and 29.4% of the total respondents, respectively. In terms of occupational distribution, the top three categories were students (32.6%), professionals and technical personnel (18.4%), and private business owners (12.7%).

4.3.3 Data Analysis

In the process of conducting the case study, data collected through various methods such as semi-structured interviews, archival records, document collection, and participatory observation predominantly possess qualitative characteristics that cannot be quantitatively processed and analyzed. Therefore, the data analysis in this study primarily adopts an inductive approach. Specifically, the information and materials gathered from semi-structured interviews, archival records, document data, and participatory observation are systematically designed and coded according to the five analytical themes proposed in the research framework (T.1 spatial objectives, T.2 spatial practices, T.3 spatial processes, T.4 spatial values, T.5 spatial outcomes), as well as addressing specific questions associated with each unit. Consistent data units are established within each analytical unit of the research framework for analyzing cultural space creation as a social innovation flow by describing and summarizing its fundamental processes and outcomes by condensing and transforming a substantial amount of textual data into concise summaries and codes.

The statistical data on cultural activities and participation, collected from three sample spaces, and the survey questionnaire data on the validity and satisfaction of cultural spaces have been systematically classified and organized based on research objectives and specific requirements. The selected data in this study is visually presented through tables and charts, thereby providing robust empirical support for intra-case analysis and inter-case comparisons (with more detailed statistical information is given in the Appendix A and B).

CHAPTER V

THREE CASE STUDIES IN THE CITY OF KUNMING

Based on the research framework discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter conducts a multi-case study on three cultural spaces in Kunming City, Yunnan Province of China. The research consists of two main steps. Firstly, it comprehensively examines the spatial objectives, innovative practices, spatial processes, and values of each case space according to the social innovation process of spatial construction. Subsequently, the resulting social spaces formed by each case space are analyzed and discussed at three different levels.

5.1 KUNMING IN THE CONTEXT

5.1.1 Portraits of Kunming City

Kunming is located in the southwestern of China, in the central part of the Yungui Plateau. The city has an average elevation of 1500 to 2800 meters and belongs to a subtropical highland monsoon climate. Kunming was first established as "Tuodong City" during the period of the Nanzhao Kingdom and has a history of over 2200 years. In the early 20th century, Kunming opened up as a commercial port and saw the emergence of numerous commercial enterprises. After completing the Dian-Vietnam Railway (1910) and Wujiaaba Airport (1923), Kunming became a hub for trade, transportation, and economic activities in Yunnan Province, beginning its modern urban development process.

Figure 8 Location of the city of Kunming
(Source: BingMap)



Since 1949, significantly since the reform and opening up in 1978, Kunming's modernization and urbanization level has been constantly enhanced, with the city's economy, society, culture, science, and technology continuously developing. According to statistics, as of 2021, the city is divided into seven districts, three counties, and one county-level city, with jurisdiction over three autonomous counties. The total urban area is 21012.54 square kilometers¹, with a permanent population of 8.6 million people, an urbanization rate of 81.1%, and a total regional GDP of 722.50 billion yuan. The ratio of the three-sector structure in Kunming is 4.6% for the primary sector, 31.7% for the secondary sector, and 63.7% for the tertiary sector², reflecting a shift towards a service-oriented economy and highlighting the growing importance of knowledge-based industries and urbanization in shaping social and economic dynamics.

Compared to other representative cities in China, Kunming's multicultural composition and cultural heritage reflect distinct regional characteristics. Unlike many cities in the eastern and central regions, which often have more homogeneous populations, Kunming's significant ethnic diversity—comprising 26 ethnic groups—has contributed to its unique cultural identity and multicultural structure, encompassing a rich heritage of traditional customs, lifestyles, folk traditions, and cultural arts. Kunming is recognized by the State Council of China as one of the first 24 national

¹ Data source: Kunming Municipal Government

² Data source: Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Statistics

historical and cultural cities¹ and is renowned for its cultural and historical significance. The city is home to 703 intangible cultural heritage items, 667 protected cultural relics, and more than 100 scenic spots², placing it on par with other major cultural cities in China, such as Xi'an. Additionally, Kunming serves as a commercial and tourism hub in Southwest China, with its role as a gateway to South and Southeast Asia adding a unique geopolitical dimension, making it an important representative case in the urban development of China

5.1.2 Innovation-Driven Urban Development

Kunming, as a typical city in central and western China, has undergone a significant transformation since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, evolving from a traditional agricultural city into a modern metropolis. Since the reform and opening-up period, the city has experienced rapid economic growth and social transformation, facing multiple pressures in the social, cultural, and environmental realms (Fingerhuth and Joos 2002). Since the 21st century, Kunming has adhered to innovation as its core driving force, advancing sustainable development through technological innovation and industrial upgrading, while making significant progress in cultural and social innovation. By actively fostering an innovation-driven culture, Kunming has not only achieved notable accomplishments in the field of technology but has also demonstrated its innovative vitality in education, the arts, and urban planning. These efforts have not only enhanced Kunming's competitiveness but have also laid a solid foundation for the city's long-term development.

- **Innovation in the urban development**

From the perspective of urban history, innovation has gone through four main stages in its involvement in urban development.

1949-1978: Kunming's urban development could have been faster during this period, and there were fewer technological innovation activities. The city's development mainly relied on resource allocation under the national planned economic system, focusing on agriculture and light industry. Despite having a weak economic

¹ See the State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2019). "National Historical and Cultural Cities in China."

² Data source: Kunming Municipal Government

foundation, Kunming had abundant natural resources, which laid the groundwork for future development.

1979-2000: Implementing the reform and opening-up policy has brought unprecedented development opportunities to Kunming. The city began actively exploring new development paths under institutional innovation (market economy system reform) and started to pay attention to technological innovation. Infrastructure construction has significantly strengthened, with continuous improvements in transportation, communication, energy, etc., providing a solid material foundation for innovation and industrial development. At the same time, relying on abundant natural resources and location advantages, the tourism and light industries have started to develop, leading to initial adjustments in the urban economic structure. The government began introducing foreign investment, establishing economic zones, attracting foreign investments, and promoting diversified economic development.

2001-2012: At the turn of the 21st century, Kunming capitalized on the opportunities presented by globalization and informatization, accelerating its pace of technological innovation and industrial upgrading. The city made significant efforts to develop high-tech industries, establishing several technology parks and innovation platforms that attracted numerous tech companies and skilled professionals. During this period, Kunming's transportation network was progressively enhanced, which greatly facilitated the rapid movement of people and goods, injecting new vitality into the city's economic development. The improvement of infrastructure also significantly boosted the city's overall capacity and service capabilities. As a result, the city's economic strength increased notably, and its urban landscape underwent substantial transformation.

2013-present: Kunming has adopted an innovation-driven development strategy, positioning innovation as the core driving force behind industrial transformation, upgrading, and the exploration of sustainable urban development. The local government has explicitly emphasized innovation in key policy measures across technology, industry, governance, and other sectors. A series of strategic policies (outlined in Table 5) have been introduced to accelerate the integration of innovation into urban development, marking a significant shift toward a knowledge-based, sustainable economy.

Two main aspects of this strategy are particularly evident:

First, the Kunming Municipal Government introduced the “17 Measures for Innovation-driven High-quality Development” (Kunming Municipal Government 2013), which aim to attract resources to high-tech industries and cultural and creative industries. These measures include a range of supports, such as tax incentives, funding subsidies, talent recruitment, and market development, with the goal of fostering a deep integration of innovation and urban industrial chains. In particular, the cultural and creative industries are viewed as key drivers for urban development. Kunming has implemented a culture-led development strategy, which seeks to promote the cultural and creative sector as a new engine for economic growth and urban transformation.

Second, Kunming’s innovation policies are aligned with the broader national framework of "Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation" (also known as "Double Creation") (State Council of the People's Republic of China 2015). These efforts focus on continuously improving policies related to entrepreneurship and innovation, lowering the barriers to entry for new businesses, and optimizing the entrepreneurial environment. In this regard, the government aims to stimulate the vitality of entrepreneurship across various sectors of the city by cultivating a culture of innovation and providing necessary policy support. These measures not only enhance the city’s entrepreneurial ecosystem but also lay the groundwork for broader social innovations in the economy, society, and culture.

Technological innovation plays a crucial role in driving Kunming's economic and social development. The city has established a city-level technological innovation system, spearheaded by the government and driven by enterprises (Zhang 2020). Key policy documents have been issued, focusing on spatial layout, core tasks, key projects, and supportive measures to construct a robust innovation system. In line with these efforts, Kunming has prioritized the development of science and technology parks, innovation platforms, and research institutions. Moreover, the city fosters collaboration between universities, research institutions, and enterprises to promote the commercialization of scientific and technological achievements. Additionally, Kunming has worked to integrate innovation with other key sectors, such as ecology, tourism, healthcare, and cultural creativity, thereby fostering an innovative ecosystem conducive to sustainable growth.

Table 8 Main contents of Kunming's innovation-driven strategy
(Source: "Notice of Kunming Municipal Government on Issuing the Kunming City's 14th Five-Year Plan for Science and Technology Innovation")¹

Strategies	Contents
Space layout	Based on the urban administrative divisions, science and technology innovation cores, demonstration areas, and collaborative zones for science and technology innovation are respectively established and developed.
Building a high-quality regional international science and innovation center	To promote the enhancement of functions in scientific research, technological innovation, industry-driven development, and cultural leadership through institutional and mechanism innovation. To further facilitate the aggregation of innovative elements, optimize platform organization, deepen open cooperation, and drive expansion.
Strengthening the construction of innovative entities	Highlighting the position of enterprises as the main force of innovation, stimulating the innovative vitality of universities and research institutes, and achieving a leap in scientific and technological innovation capabilities.
Facilitating the transfer of technology and the conversion of research findings into practical applications	To leverage the guiding role of the government, innovate institutional supply, accelerate the transformation of scientific research results from samples to products and then to commodities, strengthen collaborative application within the province and international cooperation in technology transfer. Focusing on meeting the needs of industrial development, with an emphasis on breakthroughs in common key technologies.
Accelerating high-tech industries development	Efforts are being made to accelerate the transformation and commercialization of scientific and technological achievements, while using technological innovation as a guide to build a modern industrial system.
Promoting ethnic unity and ecological sustainability	To enhance the ecosystem and improve environmental quality, achieve carbon peak and carbon neutrality, accelerate the green transformation of development mode, and promote technological innovation to empower rural revitalization and citizen welfare.
Stepping up efforts to cultivate and attract innovative talents	To Build a more competitive talent attraction and cultivation mechanism, and to optimize and to improve the mechanism for talent mobility and evaluation.
Expanding domestic and international exchanges and cooperation.	To promote the concentration and efficient flow of innovative resources in domestic and international markets, and to enhance regional collaboration in scientific and technological innovation along with international cooperation.

• Cultural industries and urban regeneration

Like many cities in China, Kunming faced the challenges of rapid urbanization in the 1990s, often characterized by large-scale demolition and real estate-driven growth. This development model led to the destruction of many historical buildings and cultural heritage sites, posing a significant threat to the sustainability of the city's cultural

¹ The contents of the table are edited and organized based on the "Notice of Kunming Municipal People's Government on Issuing the Kunming City '14th Five-Year Plan' for Science and Technology Innovation" (Kunzhengfa [2022] No. 16)

landscape. In response, urban planning and socio-cultural policies have evolved continuously since the turn of the 21st century, under the guidance of national institutional and policy frameworks. The concept of urban development in Kunming has gradually shifted, incorporating more sustainable approaches that emphasize cultural preservation and urban regeneration.

Since 2010, local governments have taken the lead in comprehensive urban renewal efforts, focusing particularly on old industrial areas and residential districts. The primary objective of these renewal projects is to enhance the urban environment, improve infrastructure, and elevate the quality of urban life by promoting land, energy, and resource conservation, as well as fostering innovation in their use. In this context, Kunming's identity as a historical and cultural city has been redefined, and culture has become a central driver of urban construction and socio-economic development.

Thus, the guiding principles of Kunming's urban renewal have shifted towards an "integration of industry and city, cultural leadership, and innovation-driven" approach (Kunming Municipal Government 2014)). This model can be summarized by the four key pillars of "planning guidance, policy support, spatial construction, and project promotion," with investment attraction serving as a primary mechanism. The city's urban renewal strategy centers on creating an industrial development pattern that is built around cultural and creative industries. This not only serves as a foundation for the growth of the cultural sector but also fosters the integration of economic, social, and cultural aspects of urban life.

Under the guidance of urban policies, Kunming has established multiple national, provincial, and municipal-level cultural and creative industry parks. These parks have become crucial platforms for cultural and creative enterprises, providing physical spaces and a range of support services, including policy consultation, market promotion, and talent training. These initiatives have significantly facilitated the growth of cultural and creative industries, fostering a vibrant ecosystem for innovation. In particular, Kunming has seen the revitalization of underutilized urban spaces, such as old factory areas, warehouses, historical buildings, and traditional courtyards, through protective development measures. This process of adaptive reuse is central to the city's urban regeneration strategy (Bullen and Love 2011; Yung and Chan 2015), breathing new life into historical assets and encouraging the creation of innovative cultural products and services.

The integration of cultural and creative industries with urban renewal (Li 2018) is also evident in the development of new cultural spaces. Increasingly, Kunming's cultural sector has embraced technological innovation, particularly in spaces such as museums, exhibition halls, and cultural districts. The application of digital platforms, 5G technology, and virtual reality (VR) has revolutionized the way cultural spaces operate, enabling innovative services and products while simultaneously preserving the city's cultural heritage. These technologies are also being used to create digital databases of cultural resources, further enriching Kunming's cultural ecosystem.

By fostering the deep integration of "culture + technology," Kunming's urban regeneration efforts have positioned the city at the forefront of the intersection between heritage conservation and innovative urban development. As the city continues to develop, its approach to cultural industries and urban regeneration offers valuable insights into how cities can balance growth with the preservation of cultural heritage, creating a dynamic and sustainable urban future.

5.1.3 Cultural Spaces in the Central City of Kunming

Based on a correct understanding of the critical value and status of a "Historic and Cultural City" in the sustainable development of Kunming City, Kunming has started with sorting out and identifying urban historical and cultural resources from the perspective of the city as a whole space. The city has conducted a comprehensive survey of historical and cultural resources, established the Geographic Information System for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Cities in Kunming using modern science and technology, and constructed policy systems and technical systems for protecting historical and cultural resources in famous cities. Based on this, local policies and special planning identify various types of historical and cultural spatial heritage to ensure adequate protection of various carriers in urban renewal processes. These recognized cultural spaces mainly include historical-cultural blocks, historic towns, historic villages, traditional village roads, historic buildings, etc. Comprehensively promoting the protection and utilization of urban historical-cultural sites enhances the urban cultural image. It becomes a critical resource foundation for promoting modern urban construction by achieving an organic combination of "Historic-Cultural City" and "International Central City" construction.

Meanwhile, combining the laws and practical needs of urban industry and urban life development at present, we promote the concept of urban development of "telling good stories about Kunming with culture," with cultural industry as the primary method, comprehensively promoting the organic renewal of the city to meet people's demand for high-quality urban life. On the one hand, we continue to play the role of cultural industry in the spatial revitalization and production in urban development, using diversified cultural and commercial formats as means to create cultural, industrial parks, historical and cultural blocks, comprehensive cultural tourism commercial spaces, and other cultural and lifestyle consumption spaces. On the other hand, utilizing urban spatial resources through channels such as absorbing social forces for co-construction and promoting deep integration of culture, tourism, public culture services etc., we provide spatial carriers and service facilities for constructing a "15-minute Cultural Circle" in urban life.

Based on statistical data up until the year 2023 in Kunming City, there are 15 public libraries, 10 large theaters, 37 registered museums, and 156 cultural centers at both the city and county levels. Thirty-four cultural creative industry parks have been awarded licenses from various levels of government, including national, provincial, and municipal. Moreover, more than 300 new cultural spaces exist that combine innovative integration between public culture service attributes, tourism leisure attributes, and cultural life consumption attributes¹. In addition to these facilities mentioned above, numerous small micro-performance spaces have been established by individual artists, private entrepreneurs, and personal fans who love arts, such as cultural exhibition spaces, traditional culture displays, heritage spaces, etc.

Table 10 presents the major influential cultural spaces in Kunming, categorized into public cultural spaces and culture industry-oriented spaces based on their responsible entities—namely, spaces managed by local government and those driven by cultural enterprises. Public cultural spaces primarily include libraries, museums, theaters, and cultural centers, while culture industry-oriented spaces are further showcased through examples such as cultural and creative industries park, cultural space based on industrial heritage, cultural space based on urban historical district, and small-scale cultural space established/run by artists and (or) cultural entrepreneurs.

¹ Data source: Kunming Municipal Government

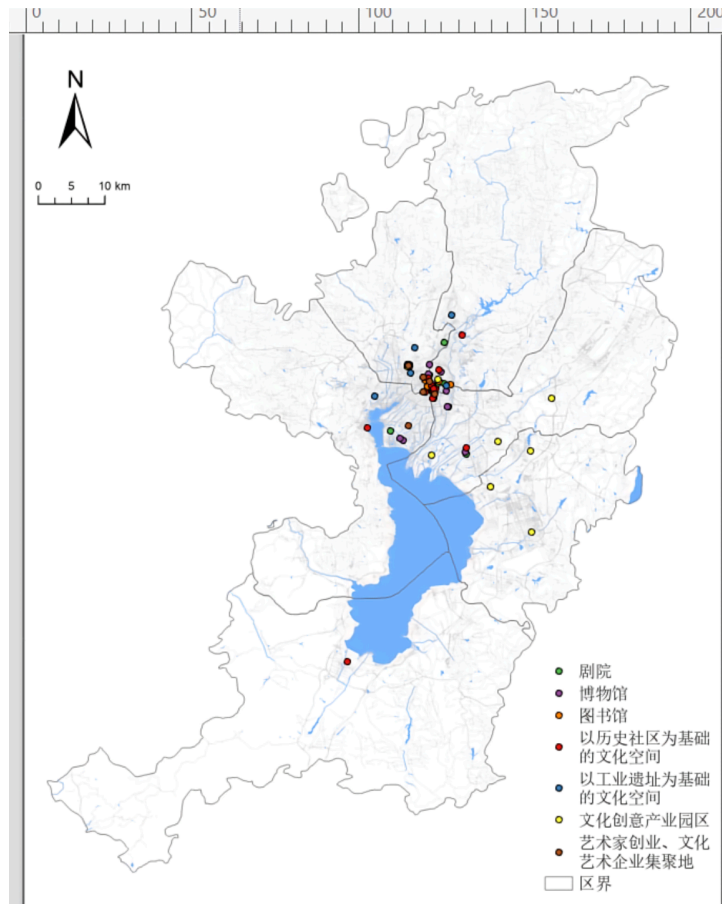
Figure 9 illustrates the specific locations of the cultural spaces listed in Table 10 on the administrative map of Kunming City. It can be observed that nearly all of these spaces are concentrated in the urban core; however, the map points are not displayed with sufficient clarity. To address this, Figure 10 focuses on a detailed map of Kunming's urban core area, providing a clearer depiction of the distribution of major cultural spaces.

Table 9 The main cultural spaces in Kunming City (parts listed)
(Source: the author)

Categories	Sub-categories	Spaces
Public cultural space	Museum	Yunnan Provincial Museum
		Yunnan Ethnic Museum
		Yunnan Army General Staff College Historical Museum
		Yunnan Railway Museum
		Yunnan Tea Culture Museum
		Yunnan Folk Museum
		Yunnan University Anthropology Museum
		Kunming Municipal Museum
		Kunming Municipal Zoological Museum
		Yunnan Provincial Library
	Library	Kunming Municipal Library
		Kunming Children's Library
		Libraries at district and county levels
		Yunnan Grand Theater
		Yunnan Art Theatre
Cultural spaces with cultural industry at its core	Theater	Yunnan Song and Dance Theater
		Yunnan Provincial Peking Opera Theatre
		Yunnan Provincial Dian Opera Theatre
		Kunming Theatre
		Kunming Spring City Theatre
	Cultural Center	Nie Er Music and Drama Theater
		Kunming Municipality Ethnic Song and Dance Theater
		Victory Hall Cultural and Art Theater
		Cultural centers at provincial, municipal, district, and county levels
		Jin Ding 1919 Cultural and Creative Industry Park
	Cultural and Creative Industry Park	Zi Yun Qing Niao Yunnan Cultural and Creativity Expo Park
		Kunming Dianchi Lake International Convention and Exhibition Center
		Panlong District E-commerce Entrepreneurship Park
		Inspiration K Incubation Space
		Colorful Yunnan – Flower City
		Dounan International Floriculture Industrial Park
		Kunming International Printing and Packaging City

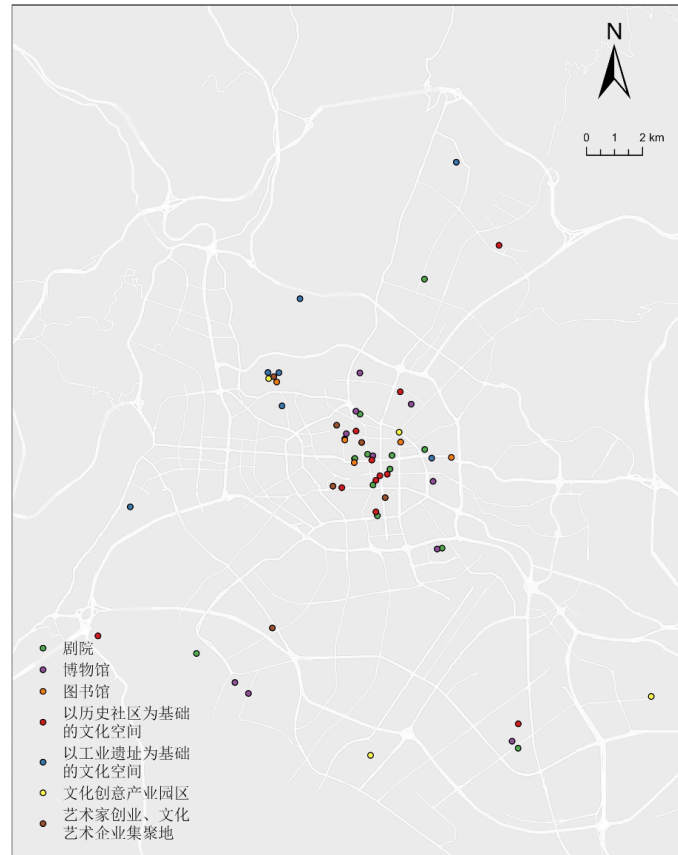
	Guo Lin Incubation Space
	Yunnan Exhibition Industrial Park
	M60 Cultural and Creative Park (formerly the Kunming Battery Factory)
	C86 Cultural and Creative Park (formerly Yunnan Television Factory)
	871 Cultural and Creative Park (formerly the Kunming Heavy Machinery Factory)
Cultural Space based on Industrial Heritage	Shicui Minyi Park (formerly Kunming Oxygen Factory) Tongjing 108 Think Tank Space (formerly Yunnan Yuanzheng Bearing Factory) Yunfang Cultural Center (formerly Yunnan Textile Factory) Chun Yu 937 Cultural and Creativity Park (formerly Kunming Smelting Plant) Creative Hub (formerly Kunming Machine Model Factory) Wenming Street Historic Cultural District Naqiang Street Historic Cultural District The French-Style Street of the 100-Year-Old Yunnan-Vietnam Railway
Cultural Space based on Urban Historical District	Santaishan cultural tourism block Jinmafang traditional cultural tourism block The Green Lake District of Museums Longquan Ancient Town Museums Complex Guandu Ancient Town Fengjia Ancient Town Jincheng Ancient Town
Small-scale Cultural Spaces established/run by artists or (and) cultural entrepreneurs	Representative areas include Wenlin Street, Zhuantang Park, Chunyu Road Community, Jin Dingshan, and Xunjin Street Community (covering a variety of categories such as coffee, tea, books, education, traditional handicrafts, modern art, fashionable life, and popular culture).

Figure 9 Locations of the cultural spaces listed in Table 10 on the administrative map of Kunming
(Source: the author)¹



¹ The Chinese legends in the figure, from top to bottom, are as follows: Theatre, Museum, Library, Cultural space based on urban historical district, Cultural space based on industrial heritage, Cultural and creative industry park, Cultural spaces established/run by artists/cultural entrepreneurs, and Kunming administrative district boundaries. – Author' s note.

Figure 10 Locations of the main cultural spaces listed in Table 6 in the core area of Kunming City
(Source: the author)¹



5.2 THREE CASE STUDIES

This case study examines three representative cultural spaces in Kunming: Yunfang Culture and Art Space, Shicui Minyi Park, and Wenming Historical Block. These three spaces are geographically distributed across the southern, northwestern, and central areas of Kunming's main urban region. Each site was transformed from distinct types of urban abandoned spaces—old markets, disused factories, and historic neighborhoods, respectively—into thriving cultural spaces primarily centered around cultural and creative industries. These cases exemplify Kunming's strategic approach

¹ The Chinese legends in the figure, from top to bottom, are as follows: Theatre, Museum, Library, Cultural space based on urban historical district, Cultural space based on industrial heritage, Cultural and creative industry park, Cultural spaces established/run by artists/cultural entrepreneurs, and Kunming administrative district boundaries. – Author's note.

to urban renewal, characterized by the overarching principles of "integrating production with cities, leading by culture, and driving innovation."

The selection of these three cases was guided by three primary considerations: representativeness, diversity, and relevance to the research objectives.

First, these spaces represent typical models of cultural space revitalization in Kunming, serving as prominent examples of the city's efforts to leverage cultural and creative industries for urban regeneration. These sites have achieved varying degrees of recognition and success, both institutionally and socially, demonstrating their value as illustrative cases.

Second, the selection aims to capture diversity in strategies and contexts for cultural space creation. Yunfang represents a subversive transformation of a traditional commercial district, adopting a model of cultural-commercial integration to create a multifunctional cultural hub. Shicui focuses on the revitalization of industrial heritage, transforming abandoned factory spaces into a site that emphasizes cultural creativity and community participation. Meanwhile, Wenming Historical Block adopts a heritage preservation approach, revitalizing a historic urban community by balancing tourism, commerce, and cultural conservation. This diversity not only reflects the multiplicity of approaches taken to cultural space revitalization but also allows for an examination of how different strategies interact with the specific urban, social, and historical contexts in which these spaces are embedded.

Moreover, the inclusion of these cases ensures relevance to the research objectives by considering their alignment with the study's analytical framework. These spaces embody the characteristics of cultural spaces as defined in this study: they are urban spaces shaped through the integration of historical, cultural, and economic resources, where cultural production, consumption, and participation converge. Furthermore, the selected cases represent both successful examples of cultural spaces (e.g., Yunfang and Shicui, which have demonstrated significant social and cultural impacts) and spaces where challenges such as spatial gentrification and excessive commercialization are apparent (e.g., Wenming Historical Block). This balanced selection facilitates a critical analysis of both positive outcomes and potential tensions in the development of cultural spaces, offering insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with these processes.

Finally, the analysis of the three cases follows the research framework established in Chapter IV (outlined in Table 6), ensuring a systematic and consistent approach. The

application of a standardized framework across all three case studies is particularly important for maintaining balance and comparability between the cases. Accordingly, each case is first examined in detail through the first four themes—space objectives (T.1), space practices (T.2), space processes (T3), and space values (T.4). After clarifying the research findings, the study further explores the socio-spatial outcomes of each case under the fifth theme, space outcomes (T.5). This structured approach ensures that the findings across cases can be analyzed and compared within a unified analytical framework, thereby enhancing the rigor and reliability of the research.

By employing a comparative approach across these three cases, this research seeks to summarize the essential characteristics and general patterns of cultural space creation within the broader context of Chinese urban development. The analysis will explore how innovation participates in and influences the socio-spatial production processes of cultural spaces, while also identifying how these spaces serve as mediums for broader social innovation. Through this investigation, the study aims to generate practical knowledge and theoretical insights into the mechanisms through which cultural spaces can function as platforms for both urban revitalization and social innovation.

Case 1. Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space

Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space exemplifies Kunming's broader urban strategy of integrating cultural production, urban renewal, and public engagement into the city's developmental agenda. As part of Kunming's efforts to transition from a historically industrial and commercial city to a hub of innovation-driven urbanism, Yunfang represents a deliberate attempt to merge economic restructuring with cultural revitalization. In line with Kunming's overarching strategy of "integrating production with cities, leading by culture, and driving innovation," this space leverages its past as a wholesale market to create a vibrant site where cultural production and consumption converge. By transforming a declining industrial-commercial legacy into a public cultural hub, Yunfang embodies Kunming's strategic focus on creating multifunctional urban spaces that align cultural vibrancy with economic diversification.

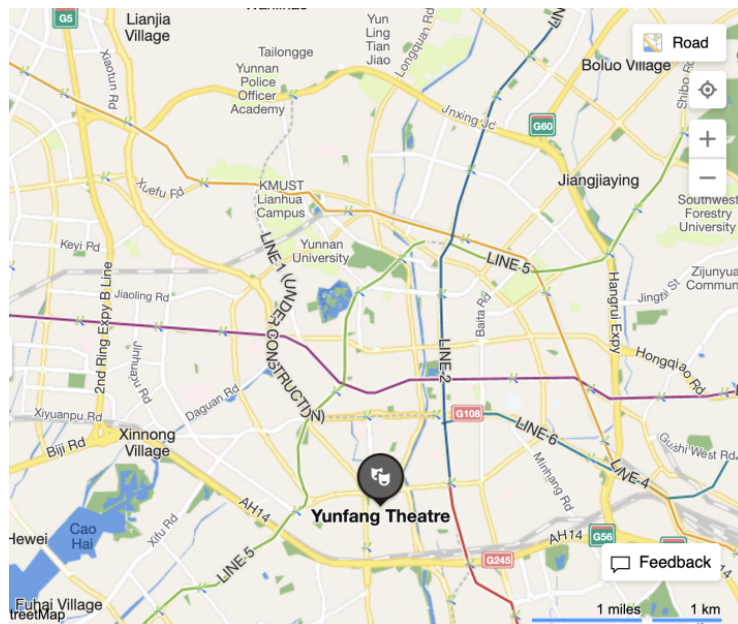
T.1 Space Objectives

The spatial transformation and change carried out in response to organizational innovation needs aim to provide spatial conditions for the new cultural and creative industry formats. It fulfills the social responsibility of cultural and creative enterprises by providing public cultural facilities, products, and services.

T.1.1 Space portraits

The predecessor of Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space (The following text refers to "Yunfang space" in short) was called "Luoshiwan". It is located in the southern part of the main urban area of Kunming City and was transformed from the original textile production workshop by Yunnan Textile Factory into a wholesale market. For more than 20 years, it has been an essential traditional wholesale commercial market in the main urban area of Kunming City. Since 2016, against Yunnan Textile Factory's transformation and development, this space has also transformed from a traditional commercial space that aggregates traditional wholesale retail to a comprehensive cultural production and consumption space integrating culture and tourism innovation. The name of the space comes from the abbreviation of "Yunnan Textile Factory".

Figure 11 The location of Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space in the central city of Kunming (Source: BingMap)



The Yunfang Space currently covers an area of 120,000 square meters and has a total construction area of 500,000 square meters. It adheres to the development concept

of "making urban life better through space" to transform the original spatial image and function. By planning and investing in various cultural facilities and organizing innovative cultural activities, it has become a comprehensive urban cultural space integrating cultural creativity, cultural consumption, leisure entertainment, tourism, sightseeing, etc., within the main urban area of Kunming City.

The primary cultural facilities within Yunfang Space are:

Yunfang Museum. It covers an area of 2,140 square meters and opened to the public in 2018. The museum includes the Yunfang historical and cultural exhibition area, art exhibition hall, academic lecture hall, local culture experience area, etc., showcasing a series of production machinery and historical relics from Yunnan textile factories in the 1930s and 1940s. It also records the overall process of the Yunnan textile factory's construction, production circulation, and cultural creative business development. The museum is essential for spreading Yunnan textile factory's corporate culture and relationship with the city. The establishment of this museum has significant implications for innovative development in Yunfang's cultural space and marks an essential milestone for traditional commercial spaces transitioning into cultural creativity.

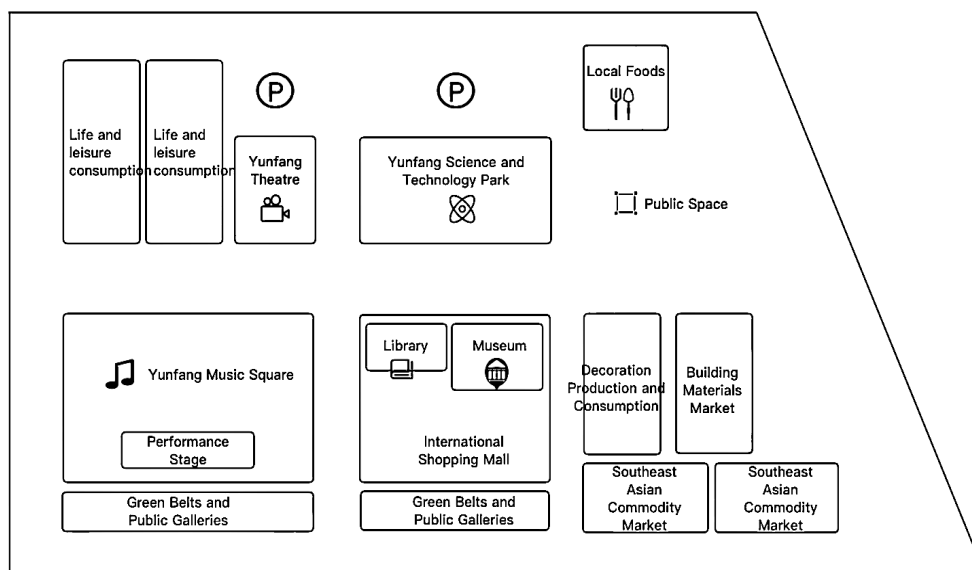
Yunfang Theater. It was initially built in the early 1980s as the "Cloud Weaving Workers' Grand Hall" and served as a performance venue for the drama, Peking Opera, dance, and other art groups organized by the textile factory. It was also an important place for the factory workers to engage in amateur cultural activities. This space reflects the critical role of a "unit-run society" and corporate fulfillment of social value during China's planned economy era. After undergoing renovations in 2018, the theater reopened with professional sound equipment and stage design, capable of accommodating up to 260 spectators. The theater provides (almost free) access for local art groups and independent artists in Kunming to create and perform their works while regularly showcasing local artistic productions from Yunnan province, including plays, musicals, contemporary dance performances, and concerts.

Yunfang Music Square (including a music stage). A public space hosting street culture and folk-art exhibitions. The performance stage is free for citizens, local communities, performance groups, and artistic communities. It hosts small concerts, folk art performances, reading-sharing sessions, cultural art exhibitions, auctions, and promotional activities for related cultural creative enterprises. It is a common gathering place for young people and cultural enthusiasts in Kunming.

Yunfang 24-Hour Smart Library. This reading space was established in 2022 and is the first public reading space jointly built by the local government and enterprises in Kunming City. The library covers an area of 300 square meters with a collection of over 5,000 books, including children's literature, popular science books, literary works, social science documents, and art appreciation materials. The library contains diverse areas such as reading, activities, and exhibitions. It is equipped with coffee machines and tea brewing facilities. This library stands out because it uses advanced technology to operate 24/7 without any staff. People can come in and read or learn for free by scanning their ID cards or undergoing facial recognition on the machines provided.

Other privately-owned small art galleries and studios, including tea spaces, coffee spaces, art auctions, art galleries, designer studios, etc., have formed a commercial space matrix with an artistic atmosphere and cultural heritage. They are also important places for cultural life consumption.

Figure 12 Layout of Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space
(Source: Drawn by the author based on information provided by Yunfang Company)



T.1.2 Company profile

- **Basic information**

As mentioned earlier, the predecessor of Yunfang Space was a wholesale and retail market established by Yunnan Textile Factory in the southern part of Kunming city. The transformation from a traditional commercial market to a disruptive new

cultural and creative space for "Yunfang Textile" is an inevitable result of the transformation and development of its parent company, Yunnan Textile Factory.

"Yunfang," short for Yunnan Textile Factory, was established in 1937 and became the first modern machine textile enterprise in Yunnan province. During its construction, which coincided with the comprehensive resistance against Japan during World War II, Yunfang was crucial in supplying materials for the war effort. After the founding of New China in 1949, it became the largest cotton textile enterprise in Yunnan province. From 1949 to 1992, Yunfang consistently ranked among the top 40 large-scale cotton textile enterprises nationwide in terms of economic benefits, making significant contributions to the development of modern industry in Yunnan. According to statistics from the early 20th century, with a population of approximately 42 million people in Yunnan province¹, each person had about 300 grams of cotton yarn produced by Yunfang². It highlights the critical role that this factory played in the economic development of Yunnan."

In the early 1990s, Yunfang embarked on corporate transformation and innovative development. Firstly, in response to the macro background of China's reform and opening up and the new market situation it brought about, the original textile factory was restructured into Yunnan Honghua Industrial (Group) Co., Ltd. in 1996 and renamed Yunnan Textile (Group) Co., Ltd. in 2003. Rapid social and economic structure changes posed significant challenges to traditional production-oriented enterprises in the following decade or so of the development processes.

In 2016, Yunfang decided to transform from a traditional textile enterprise to a cultural, commercial enterprise, initiating an innovative exploration with the format and organizational innovation as its core content. Yunfang has successfully transformed into a cultural, commercial enterprise with business operations covering music, design, cultural products, leisure entertainment, cultural tourism, and other areas.

- **Decision-making process**

As China's reform and opening-up progress and the country's urbanization process moves forward, Yunfang, a local traditional production-oriented enterprise in Yunnan Province, has faced dual challenges of corporate restructuring and practical production difficulties. These have posed a severe crisis to Yunfang's sustainable development. As

¹ Data source: Yunnan Statistical Yearbook, 2000.

² Data source: Research interview.

a local state-owned enterprise, Yunfang relates to the stability and development of Yunnan Province's economy. It affects its employees' interests and social welfare because Chinese state-owned enterprises must fulfill their social responsibilities.

The core leadership of Yunfang accurately grasped the characteristics and trends of overall social and economic development in the local area, making decisions that conform to the macro trend of third industry development. They transformed their business operations from a production-oriented enterprise to a service-oriented one. At the same time, given the momentum and importance of cultural industries in China's current economic and social development, Yunfang ultimately decided on cultural creativity as its target direction for transformational development.

As a space carrier for the survival and development of enterprises, the original wholesale market inevitably needs to be updated and changed by the transformation requirements. As an essential place condition for cultural production and business enterprises, the new space must transform its single market function and increase its characteristics in the cultural field. At the same time, the requirements at the national institutional level also determine the expansion of space's public cultural service attributes. It can be seen that for Yunfang, innovation, and transformation of both enterprise and space are inevitably linked together. The leadership team makes the decision-making process for enterprise and spatial transformation when Yunfang faces difficulties with sustainable development. This decision directly changes the company's development trajectory, enabling Yunfang to embark on an innovative path to create cultural and artistic space.

T.2 Space Practices

In creating a cultural and artistic space, the innovative practices implemented by the company mainly include innovation in industrial forms and structures, product/service innovation, organizational innovation, and exploration of culture and technology innovation. Additionally, emerging technologies have played an essential role in space operations and public services.

- **Industrial forms and structures innovation that emphasize product attributes and service quality.**

While exploring corporate transformation, Yunfang has set cultural service as its new development goal. Based on the enterprise's existing spatial resources, it has replaced the traditional operating mode as a traditional production-oriented company

by adopting new business methods and means. It has adjusted and created various forms, styles, and types of business formats to complete the transformation from traditional wholesale retail commerce to cultural creative commerce. At the same time, it also provides urban residents with a brand-new space for cultural participation and consumption.

The cultural and consumer spaces in Yunfang include dining, leisure, weddings, and the flower and bird market. The cultural production and business space covers music, arts and crafts, and home design industries. The public cultural space consists of two major sections: the Yunfang Cultural Space and the Yunfang Digital Humanities Community. Through the creation of public cultural spaces such as the Yunfang Museum, theater, city library, music square, etc., it provides exhibitions of culture and art, literary performances, urban festivals, nationwide reading activities, education training programs, and community cultural events. On the other hand, the digital humanities community refers to Yunfang's innovative path in using digital technology to empower cultural development. Through technological innovation, Yunfang is exploring and designing a new digital cultural space that integrates commercial districts, cultural creative parks, scientific research parks, and tourist attractions. Newly added formats also include Southeast Asian shopping malls and international business centers. These together constitute a comprehensive consumption space in Yunfang.

Table 10 The main business formats and corresponding sub-spaces formed within Yunfang Space
(Source: the author)

Categories	Business formats	Contents	Sub-spaces
Life and leisure	Leisure consumption	Including bars, cafes, and themed hotels, making it a trendy district.	Spaces for living and leisure
	Food and beverage consumption	A variety of dining formats and has become a popular social space.	
	Wedding expenditure	Wedding dresses, photography, wedding planning, and wedding banquet services, etc.	
	Flower and bird market	The renovation of the Yunfang Group's Atom Brother School site which includes a variety of floral plants, pets, aquatic life, ornamental birds, fishing equipment, antiques and calligraphy, galleries and frames, and design studios.	
Cultural production and management	Music	Instrument sales, music composition, music education, performance of musical works, and mass public performances.	Spaces for cultural production and consumption
	Fine arts	Craft art design/production/operation, artwork exhibition/auction/sales, and small art spaces, etc.	
	Decoration	The creation, production, and sale of creative home furnishings, decorative design, galleries, etc.	
	Yunfang cultural and artistic spaces	Museum, library, music square, theatre, etc.	
Cultural participation and social interaction	Digital humanistic community	Explore innovative paths for the integration of digital technology and cultural development, proposing a new concept of building a new type of digital humanistic community that combines commercial districts, cultural and creative parks, science and technology innovation parks, and tourist attractions.	Public cultural spaces
Comprehensive consumption	Southeast Asian commodity markets	Specialty foods, home decorations, trendy clothing, bags and leather goods, jewelry and jade ornaments from various Southeast Asian countries.	Spaces for various consumption
	International shopping mall	Photography equipment, educational supplies, clothing and accessories, etc.	

- **Technological innovation empowers space management**

The exploration and experimentation of modern science and technology in empowering space operations and management is an essential aspect of innovation in Yunfang. It includes:

Enabling public cultural spaces with science and technology: Targeted utilization of science and technology in public cultural spaces such as Yunfang Museum and 24-hour Smart Library, aiming to upgrade space management intelligently. Improving the efficiency of managing and using public spaces while enhancing cultural participation experiences is the primary purpose of utilizing technological innovation. For example, the 24-hour Smart Library is constructed and managed according to "smart library" standards, with identity verification and facial recognition systems, along with water, electricity, heating networks, and remote-control systems based on spatial functional attributes. Additionally, RFID technology is used for business management in the library, including self-service book borrowing devices that enable seamless borrowing between privately operated libraries like this one and local government-owned public libraries. Similarly, the Yunfang Museum adopts 'intelligent guidance' technology to improve museum tours' efficiency while providing an immersive exhibition experience through 'cloud exhibitions,' enhancing interactivity during visits. According to statistics, after adopting 'intelligent guidance' technology, restaurant attendance at museums has increased by approximately 10% compared to previous years.

The construction of a new digital humanistic community: Yunfang actively responds to the national "digital economy" strategy, explores the development path of "culture + technology," and uses cutting-edge technologies to build a "Smart Yunfang" digital cultural and commercial integration platform. Yunfang has become a new digital humanistic community integrating business districts, cultural and creative parks, science and technology parks, and tourist attractions. In 2018, the "Yunfang Science and Technology Park" was established based on the "Yunfang Commercial District" core business district". It is jointly built by dozens of leading domestic companies in science and technology, Internet, e-commerce, etc., creating an ecological model for culture entrepreneurship incubation, scientific innovation transformation, public services for e-commerce, intellectual property rights services, etc. At the same time, profoundly integrating with 5G-based "Smart Yun Fang" construction in terms of smart+, technological services, ubiquitous IoT (Internet of Things), e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce aspects fully supports product innovation, service innovation, industry chain extension for cultural enterprises & creative talents within the space area. It provides citizens, tourists, and advanced fashion consumers with a cultural consumption experience through innovative products and services.

- **Organizational innovation implemented under market and environmental conditions**

The birth of Yunfang Space is not only the result of Yunfang's transformation and development as a traditional textile production enterprise but also an important spatial carrier to promote the company's sustainable development. In order to achieve effective management and operation of the enterprise and space, Yunfang proposes a development concept that deeply integrates culture, commerce, and technology and has carried out organizational innovation. The main measures include:

a. Some of the intermediate management layers have been reduced and compressed by adopting a flat management model and adjusting the management team, functional departments, and relevant institutions. It enables the decision-making process during the company's transformation to quickly and directly reach the market, improving decision execution and overall efficiency. Additionally, Yunfang has established cross-department collaboration mechanisms within the organization, breaking down administrative barriers between departments. It facilitates resource sharing and work coordination during the transformational development process.

b. Leveraging the "Digital Yunfang" technology platform, project management principles have been introduced to coordinate and allocate resources and work on a project basis. It significantly enhances organizational efficiency and quality of work.

c. In response to the demand for new knowledge and skills in enterprise transformation, Yunfang insists on building a learning-oriented workforce and management team. Emphasis is placed on attracting talent from diverse fields and nurturing their growth through exposure to different positions for learning opportunities. This approach aims to enhance overall team competence and innovation capabilities. Simultaneously, an equal, trusting, supportive corporate culture is fostered within institutional framework processes that effectively aggregate talent resources.

T.3 Space Process

In Yunfang, cultural spaces can be divided into two types: cultural consumption spaces and public cultural spaces. Cultural consumption spaces are closely related to residents' daily lives, and leisure activities are mainly achieved through adjustments, layouts, and the introduction of various commercial formats with cultural attributes. Cultural production and operation are also significant components in such spaces, including small-scale cultural spaces leased by enterprises or privately operated ones,

such as designer studios and galleries, which also possess attributes of cultural consumption.

Designing and constructing new public cultural spaces poses a considerable challenge for traditional production-oriented enterprises. It includes relying on these public spaces to provide diverse cultural products and services for city residents and tourists, an important aspect of the operation and management of the entire Yunfang cultural space. For Yunfang, expanding its business operations to include public cultural services is a social responsibility that all current cultural commercial enterprises must undertake. It is essential to soften traditional commercial formats through culture and public space, increasing Yunfang's business appeal and social effects.

T.3.1 Knowledge acquisition/transfer

Acquiring knowledge is the core support element for Yunfang's transformation of its business direction and creation of a cultural space. It primarily occurs within the company's leadership and core management levels. As decision-makers, knowledge acquisition at the leadership level begins with understanding cultural industries. The learning content for the leadership and management levels includes cultural theory and policies, creative planning in cultural industries, cultural art markets, preservation and inheritance of cultural heritage, and cultural tourism management.

Yunfang obtains professional knowledge through the following main channels:

a. Regularly participating in cultural enterprise training sessions organized by Kunming's municipal and district governments, promptly and fully acquiring information on local government policies regarding culture and urban development, market potential, cooperation intentions, etc.

b. Engaging in formal and informal exchanges and discussions with professional researchers from Yunnan University's Cultural Industry Research Institute, Kunming Cultural Creative Industry Association, other schools, research institutions, and cultural entrepreneurs in the same field during thematic seminars and collaborative projects.

c. Organizing regular visits to renowned cultural creative industry parks and commercial-cultural-tourism spaces in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, etc., to conduct investigations and exchanges and learn advanced experiences in space management and operation.

d. Absorbing knowledge through cultural project planning, cultural activity design, and conducting practical innovation practices while also gaining compelling

experiences more aligned with the reality of Kunming's urban development and the laws of cultural development based on first-hand experience.

Meanwhile, Yunfang continues to conduct knowledge and business training closely related to enterprise transformation and operation at the level of ordinary employees. This training covers post-transformation development strategy, corporate vision, culture, market prospects, and adjusted employee job responsibilities. Yunfang has also established a cross-departmental employee practical training system to enhance employees' professional skills and business capabilities through multi-position assignments and exercises.

T.3.2 Collaborative networks

As a transitional enterprise, Yunfang has built a diverse network of collaborations with local governments, higher education institutions, cultural organizations, performance units, and technology companies to create a cultural space. These collaborative relationships have provided workforce and intellectual support for Yunfang to expand its professional knowledge in cultural business, manage and develop various innovations, and construct new cultural spaces. Some critical and typical partners include:

(1) Local Governments

The Cultural and Tourism Bureau of Xishan District, Kunming City, as the superior management unit of Yunfang Space, is responsible for providing business guidance, personnel training, supervision, and management for Yunfang Public Culture Center. Based on this foundation, through a collaborative operation model between the government and enterprises, the Yunfang Urban Library was jointly planned and constructed. It is the first 24-hour public reading space open to the public in the main urban area of Kunming. The entire investment and construction of the library are entirely undertaken by enterprises, creating a community library in Kunming that is fully funded and operated by an enterprise.

(2) Universities and research institutions

a. the Culture Development Research Institute of Yunnan University and Yunfang jointly established the "Cultural Industry Training and Research Base," providing first-hand empirical materials on the development path and model of Yunnan's cultural industry through the case of Yunfang for the research institute to summarize.

b. Yunfang Museum collaborates with the China Ethnic Minority Accounting Museum at Yunnan University of Finance and Economics to jointly build the "Cultural

Heritage Protection and Collaborative Innovation Center." They have carried out a series of in-depth collaborations in cultural digitization, historical-cultural research, talent cultivation, continuing education, and cultural art activities, effectively helping Yunfang explore its corporate history, inherit and promote the pioneering spirit of modern e-commerce, and promote innovative development.

c. Cooperating with Yunnan Arts Institute and other colleges to hold multiple art training sessions and performance competitions, promoting the development of local arts careers.

d. In 2020, they hosted a themed seminar on "The Role of Enterprises in Protecting Historical Culture in Urban Development," discussing topics such as how local enterprises like Yunfang can play an active role in protecting urban historical culture and urban renewal in the new era to promote sustainable development.

(3) Cultural Institutions

a. Established a long-term cooperative relationship with the Yunnan Provincial Museum and organized multiple themed exhibition activities jointly.

b. Signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Yunnan Performing Arts Group, relying on Yunnan's textile industry's cultural heritage and history. With young artists as the primary creative team, we collaborated to create an original play titled "Our Journey" for long-term performances at the Yunfang Theater.

c. Collaborated with other cultural institutions to organize lectures and workshops on intangible cultural heritage and Kunming urban culture, providing opportunities for residents to gain in-depth understanding and experience local culture.

(4) Technology Enterprises

Co-founded with Tiandu Group and Liehu Technology, Cloudfang Science and Technology Park was established to build an internet technology ecological service operation system based on the collaborative efforts of government, enterprises, and service providers. Through a joint model of "enterprise incubation + technology mining + data collection + project operation + digital empowerment for innovative ecosystem," Cloudfang aims to expand its brand influence as a comprehensive cultural, commercial, and tourism space.

T.4 Space value

The creation of Yunfang Space has undergone significant transformations in terms of its attributes, functions, and social relationships, from the past textile industry to the

subsequent wholesale and retail markets and now to the comprehensive cultural and commercial space. This transformation aligns with the current needs of urban and socio-economic development (promoting urban renewal and cultural industry development), which has positively impacted both cultural vitality and economic vitality in cities.

T.4.1 Social value creation

The transformation of Yunfang from an industrial production-oriented enterprise to a cultural and creative enterprise has driven positive change in corporate social responsibility by creating cultural spaces. The expansion into public cultural services provides spatial conditions for industrial transformation. It plays an active role in enriching the cultural life of surrounding communities and improving the cultural vitality of the old market's community.

a. Symbolizing and showcasing the spirit of local corporate culture, inheriting urban historical heritage.

As Yunnan's first modern textile enterprise, Yunfang was at the same level as its contemporaries in terms of advanced organizational management, production technology, and financial management. In addition to its critical historical events, Yunfang carries many valuable historical materials for Yunnan, making it a milestone in modern industrial civilization and local economic and social development in Yunnan. Relying on enterprise transformation, the innovative development of Yunfang Cultural Space (typified by the construction and operation of Yunfang Museum and Yunfang Theater) not only achieves adequate inheritance of urban industrial civilization heritage but also symbolizes and demonstrates the corporate spirit of cultural inheritance and pioneering spirit as representatives of Dian merchants. Under the background of a new era, it realizes the resilience and quality of sustainable development through innovation. As one of Kunming's influential cultural and commercial spaces, it shapes its image as an advocate and leader for trendy and youth culture, representing a fashionable lifestyle and modern cultural consumption while showcasing Kunming's cultural and artistic life.

b. Enhancing the cultural vitality of spaces and communities

The exploration in the field of public cultural services has made Cloud Spinning a vibrant and lively public cultural space, providing a place for the public to participate in culture and interact with society. Through continuous hosting of various cultural activities such as exhibitions, performances, workshops, and festivals, combined with diverse cultural industries, the space has successfully attracted young people and

creative individuals, enriching the cultural life of the public and enhancing the cultural vitality of both the space itself and its surrounding community. According to statistics, in 2022, Yunfang received 20 million visitors (50 thousand per day); in 2023, it received 30 million visitors with an average daily attendance of 80 thousand. Among them, nighttime visitors account for 70% of the total number.¹

Table 11 Cultural vitality statistics of Yunfang Space (2023)
(Source: Yunfang Company)

Cultural facilities	Number of Events Held in 2023	Number of Participants and Visitors in 2023	Number of Events Held between 2018 and 2023	Number of Participants and Visitors between 2018 and 2023
Yunfang Museum	Over 200 events have been organized, including 13 themed exhibitions, 52 special lectures, 86 art workshops, and 8 art auctions.	80,000	10,000 (60% of them being related to public welfare, culture, and art activities)	500,000
Yunfang Theatre	150 performances, including concerts, dance performances, and theatrical productions.	70,000	1,500	300,000
Yunfang Musica Square	80	150,000	2000 (with cultural and artistic activities accounting for over 80%)	60,000
Yunfang 24-hour Smart Library	—	100,000	—	—

c. Providing the public with extensive opportunities for cultural participation

Based on public cultural spaces and various cultural facilities, Yunfang continues to hold various cultural and artistic activities and urban festivals, such as popular music festivals, cultural arts festivals, university student music festivals, original music seasons, young artist exhibition seasons, modern dance competitions, etc. At the same time, Yunfang collaborates with relevant cultural institutions and art centers to regularly organize various art training and exchange activities, providing opportunities for the public to meet their spiritual and cultural needs while improving their cultural literacy and artistic level. Particularly noteworthy is that many organizers and initiators

¹ Data source: Yunfang company

of these cultural and artistic activities are art enthusiasts and young culture entrepreneurs from different communities. Various performance events are fully organized by young people in the city who plan, perform, and execute them. This proactive participation in culture goes beyond passive absorption of cultural stimuli; it encourages individuals to contribute to the narrative of the cultural space using their skills. In this process, the individual achieves self-challenging and improving expressive abilities while strengthening or reshaping their social identity. At the same time, this actively engaged culture creates a solid, motivating social environment within the space, which further inspires more people to participate positively in culture.

d. Facilitating local cultural and artistic creations materially, professionally, and technically

After the renovation of Yunfang Theater, one of the critical tasks was to utilize space, workforce, and equipment resources to support local original artworks, art groups, and art education in Yunnan. It provides various assistance, such as venues, stage equipment, and staff for local cultural and artistic creations. At the same time, it integrates the resources and functions of the Yunfang Museum. With Yunnan's profound cultural history as its foundation and aiming to create original dramas based on Yunnan stories, it actively explores and expands local cultural artistic elements and characteristic resources. It encourages and promotes avant-garde theater troupes from both within and outside the province and young artists to engage in resident theater creation and new play rehearsals.

Yunfang Theater fully utilizes its diverse performing arts functions as a "small theater" to explore innovative development in theatrical culture. It nurtures young artists, gathers premiere plays, incubates original works, and creates an experimental theater. In addition, Yunfang Theater also focuses on gathering high-quality theatrical productions and cultural art education resources while conducting diversified drama culture education activities. It is committed to cultivating drama cultures represented by local genres such as Huadeng Opera (a traditional Chinese opera form) and Dianju Opera (a type of Chinese opera popular in Yunnan), supporting the development of local cultural arts. According to statistics, since its operation began, Yunfang Theater has successfully incubated 12 original plays, which have received positive feedback from the public.

T.4.2 Economic Value Creation

Organizational innovation and industrial forms and structures innovation have transformed Yunfang, a traditional wholesale and retail market, into a cultural tourism commercial complex with four types of spatial forms. It has created significant economic value for both enterprises and cities. Yunfang demonstrates the economic effectiveness of spatial renewal.

a. Yunfang Space has become an effective force for "stable employment" and driving economic vitality. According to statistics, 70% of the business formats in Cloud Textile have already surpassed time constraints, achieving 24/7 operation. The cultural and creative enterprises within this space cover various fields such as art, design, multimedia, and technology, providing over 15,000 job positions with an annual transaction volume exceeding 4 billion RMB.

b. The spatial agglomeration effect has driven the development of related cultural industries in Yunfang. Currently, various industry chains have been formed, including music creation, production, and dissemination chains driven by musical instruments (including music composition, production, rehearsal, performance, engineering sound system, and audiovisual equipment), artist decoration chains driven by galleries, cultural product production, and sales chain driven by cultural supplies, as well as internet technology industry chain driven by information technology consulting services, software development, and e-commerce live streaming. These have become critical spatial carriers for the development of cultural industries in Kunming.

c. Spatial factors facilitate the development of e-commerce services in urban and county areas. According to statistics, by 2121, there were 350 e-commerce enterprises settled in the Yunfang Science and Technology Park, which has created employment opportunities for more than 4,000 people. Moreover, over 2,000 individuals have received professional training in e-commerce through the park. The cumulative transaction volume generated by service providers within the park has exceeded one billion RMB. Additionally, Yunfang Science and Technology Park has contributed to developing rural e-commerce platforms in more than ten counties in Yunnan Province. These efforts have made a significant contribution to local economic growth.

Case 2. Shicui Minyi Park¹

Shicui Minyi Park exemplifies Kunming's urban strategy of revitalizing traditional industries through innovative design and cultural entrepreneurship, while simultaneously addressing the integration of rural and urban spaces. Located in Kunming's northwest, this site represents a critical facet of the city's approach to urban renewal: using cultural and creative industries as a vehicle for economic transformation and social cohesion. Shicui Minyi Park not only embodies Kunming's strategy of "integrating production with cities, leading by culture, and driving innovation," but also extends it by bridging the gap between urban cultural consumption and rural cultural production. As such, the park is an important case for understanding how traditional industries—particularly Yunnan's rich heritage of ethnic handicrafts—can be revitalized to participate in modern cultural and economic systems.

T.1 Space Objectives

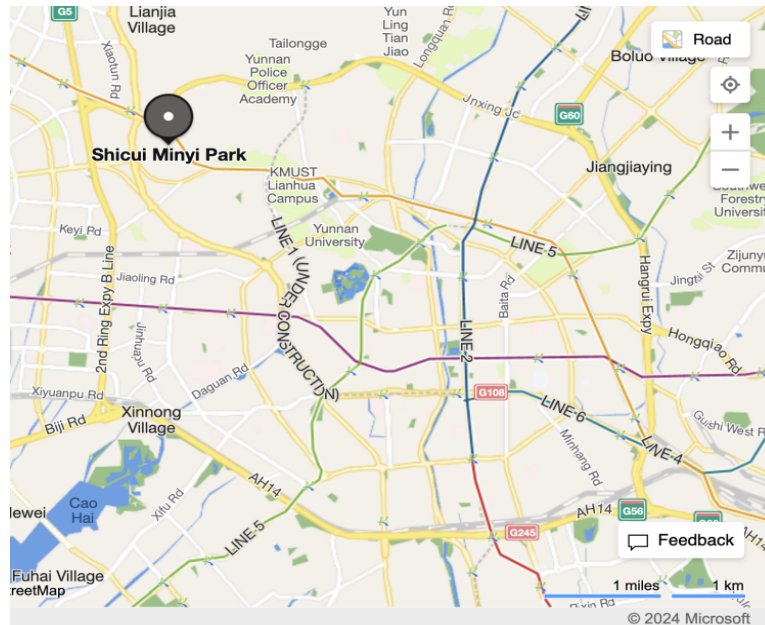
The revitalization of abandoned factory sites aims to provide incubation and exhibition spaces for the innovative development of local traditional arts and crafts industries, promoting the integration of traditional handicraft innovation with contemporary life.

T.1.1 Space portraits

The predecessor of the Shicui Minyi Park (The following text refers to "Minyi Park" in short) was the acetylene workshop of Kunming Oxygen Plant, located at No. 14 Jindingshan North Road, Wuhua District, Kunming City. It covers an area of over 21,000 square meters as a total construction area and consists of 32 old factory buildings of different sizes. After being idle for more than ten years, in 2018, the old factory buildings were publicly recruited by enterprises for the overall renovation and transformation of the space.

¹ Minyi in Chinese refers to folk arts. —Noted by the author

Figure 13 The location of Shicui Minyi Park in the central city of Kunming
(Source: BingMap)



The renovated old factory has been transformed into a comprehensive urban cultural and artistic park, integrating the display/production/sales of traditional handicrafts, folk art performances, and community cultural activities. Many folk artists and artisans create and produce their works here, allowing the public to understand and experience intangible cultural heritage through design studios, craft workshops, etcetera. Additionally, the organization of cultural events, handicraft courses, and themed social activities has made the park an important cultural and artistic venue in the community, enriching the urban life of nearby residents.

Figure 14 Layout of Shicui Minyi Park
(Source: Shicui Company)



The Shicui Minyi Park is not only the first aggregation platform for Yunnan's ethnic and folk handicrafts but also China's first comprehensive cultural and creative industry park with craft art, intangible cultural heritage, and innovative design as its core. The park focuses on Yunnan's folk handicrafts while incorporating international creative concepts. By connecting the entire traditional handicraft industry chain, including creative research and development, production manufacturing, customer experience, exhibition marketing, R&D, and other multiple links, it has improved the application field of folk handicraft industries and innovatively constructed a cultural-creative industry chain ecological model that aggregates culture with consumption. It has promoted the adequate inheritance and innovative development of traditional handicrafts in modern society.

Currently, the park is centered around Yunnan's intangible cultural heritage and folk traditional handicrafts, forming six categories of industries. These industries cover various aspects of the handicraft industry, including materials, design, craftsmanship, production, marketing, and research and development. Correspondingly, six sub-spaces have been formed.

Table 12 The main business formats and corresponding sub-spaces formed within Shicui Minyi Park
(Source: the author)

Categories	Contents	Sub-spaces
Yunnan's local distinctive cultural features	Tea, coffee, and fresh flowers in Yunnan Province and their commercial brands	Consumption and experiential spaces for local specialty products.
Traditional Handicrafts in Yunnan Province	Tinware, silverware, woodcarving, traditional papermaking, batik printing, embroidery, ethnic clothing, etc.	Spaces for production, consumption, and dissemination of intangible cultural heritages
Cultural, artistic and aesthetic education	Art museums, lifestyle art galleries, guqin societies, growth academies, psychological counseling, children's reading, etc.	Public cultural spaces and cultural arts training and education spaces
Cultural and artistic collection	Vintage furniture, lifestyle collectibles, and exhibitions of old objects.	Spaces for antiques exhibition and consumption
Catering and Accommodation	Theme bars, guesthouses, cafes, private kitchens, local snacks, etc.	Spaces for daily life
Business	Brand planning agencies, event planning agencies, cultural communication companies, new media operation companies, photography agencies, packaging design and production companies, etc.	Business spaces

T.1.2 Company profile

- **Basic information**

The operating entity of Shicui Minyi Park is Yunnan Shicui Tourism and Culture Development Co., Ltd. (Brand "Shicui"), established in 2013. The company is dedicated to leveraging local cultural resources in Yunnan, including intangible cultural heritage, traditional handicrafts, products, and cuisine, as the core elements for developing cultural products and managing cultural assets with a modern and international approach. Its goal is to protect and innovate the production of Yunnan's intangible cultural heritage projects and traditional arts and crafts through creativity, design, modern aesthetics, contemporary techniques, internet digital technology, etcetera. After ten years of development, Shicui has become a platform for creative cultural business operations. Its primary businesses include cultural space operation, development of local characteristic culture products, and comprehensive services for cultural creative enterprises (including enterprise registration, intellectual property rights protection, taxation services, professional technical support, conference exhibition management, online sales, property management, etcetera).

- **Decision-making process**

The establishment of the Shicui brand originated from personal motivation. Around 2010, one of the principal founders of Shicui, Chen Lu, visited some remote villages in Yunnan due to her profession (media). During these visits, Chen discovered that these villages had many traditional handicrafts passed down through generations, with rich local cultural characteristics and aesthetic value. However, due to these villages' social, economic, and transportation limitations, these traditional handicrafts faced risks in preservation and inheritance. Additionally, there were significant challenges in connecting traditional handicraft products with the modern consumer market. Therefore, after reaching a consensus with several other partners, they decided to start a business venture to put their initiative for inheriting and protecting Yunnan's intangible cultural heritage into practice. They aimed to create a new cultural business model that effectively links Yunnan's distinctive local culture and craftsmanship with modern commerce. Their goal was to make intangible heritage products more youthful and integrated into daily life for contemporary people while achieving productive protection for traditional culture.

The shared entrepreneurial intention among the co-founders from different fields and their interest and sense of mission towards Yunnan's distinctive local culture has endowed the enterprise with a strong sense of social responsibility and outstanding innovative drive since its inception. They named their brand "Shicui," derived from a line in an ancient Chinese poem meaning "picking up emerald feathers as decoration." It has come to symbolize the act of picking up beautiful things, expressing their appreciation for the value of traditional craftsmanship in modern society and the original intentions and goals behind their business practices.

Therefore, the positioning of Shicui Minyi Park is as follows:

- Young and vibrant;
- A comprehensive cultural space centered around traditional arts and crafts, intangible cultural heritage, and innovative design;
- A cultural creative industry park that integrates traditional handicraft research and development, production, sales, and experience to achieve an effective industrial chain ecological model within the space.

Meanwhile, the goal of creating Minyi Park is to:

- Activate, lead, and transmit the cultural value and humanistic spirit of Yunnan's characteristic handicraft products through product innovation and brand creation, shaping the park's unique artistic tone and cultural temperament. It aims to make it a

culturally diverse space in Kunming with multiple functions such as exhibition, sales, and experience;

- Adhering to an artistic and cultural creative orientation, it aims to construct a complete industrial chain for traditional handicrafts by recruiting entrepreneurs, artists, and craftsmen who share the same values as the "Jade Picking" brand spirit. Together, they will build the folk-art park into a modern cultural business community with an innovative spirit.

T.2 Space Practices

In the process of comprehensively renovating the oxygen plant's production space and operating the new park, Shicui's innovative practices mainly include physical environment renovation, business model innovation, and operational model innovation. At the same time, its concept of 'community co-construction' in spatial operation distinguishes it from other cultural and commercial spaces in terms of management mode, forming its characteristics.

- **Innovations in the design of spatial physical environments**

After obtaining the overall right to use the oxygen plant, Shicui established its own design and construction team to repair and renovate 32 old buildings in the production space. The layout, environmental atmosphere, and architectural functions were creatively redesigned to meet the positioning and operational needs of Minyi Park. They transformed a dilapidated urban industrial site that had been idle for more than ten years into a comprehensive cultural space with modern commercial, cultural consumption, traditional exhibitions, and educational functions. Due to its fashionable environment and vibrant atmosphere after revitalization, Minyi Park has become particularly popular among young people in Kunming. It has become a popular destination for people to take life and wedding photos and a hot spot for many young people to spend leisure time and engage in social activities.

Image 1 Original spatial environment of Kunming Oxygen Plant
(Source: Shicui Company)



Image 2 Updated Shicui Minyi Park
(Source: Shicui Company)



- **Business Model Innovation of the Traditional Handicraft Industry**

In order to integrate the industrial chain centered around traditional handicrafts, Shicui relies on the spatial carrier of the Shicui Park and modern internet technology. It connects the scattered traditional handicraft products in rural areas, exhibition and consumption centers in central cities (Shicui Cultural Space in Kunming), product creativity and design ends (small-scale cultural and creative enterprises), as well as remote market ends (global online and offline sales) through building the Shicui Cloud platform. It aims to promote product innovation and brand incubation.

- **Product Innovation.**

Shicui categorizes its innovative products into three main categories:

Traditional handicrafts such as Yunnan tinware, silverware, fabric dyeing, and wood carving are expanded through creative design empowerment. By integrating traditional techniques with modern aesthetics, these crafts enrich the forms, types, and functions to address their transformation from crafts to daily necessities.

It collaborates with nationally recognized inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to create "collectible-grade" handicrafts crafted by master artisans, enhancing the reputation of intangible cultural heritage.

Shicui introduces an original design section under its brand by recruiting and forming its team of designers to create a series of cultural and creative products that form a matrix for handmade craft products.

The positioning of the product can be described as follows:

- It is derived from the materials and craftsmanship of intangible cultural heritage in Yunnan.

- It incorporates cultural symbols and artistic graphics of Yunnan's ethnic minorities.

- It conforms to modern industrial design and ergonomics.

- It meets the corresponding attributes and functions of the product.

- It combines traditional and fashionable aesthetic concepts for daily life.

- The pricing method used complies with basic market rules.

- **Brand Incubation.**

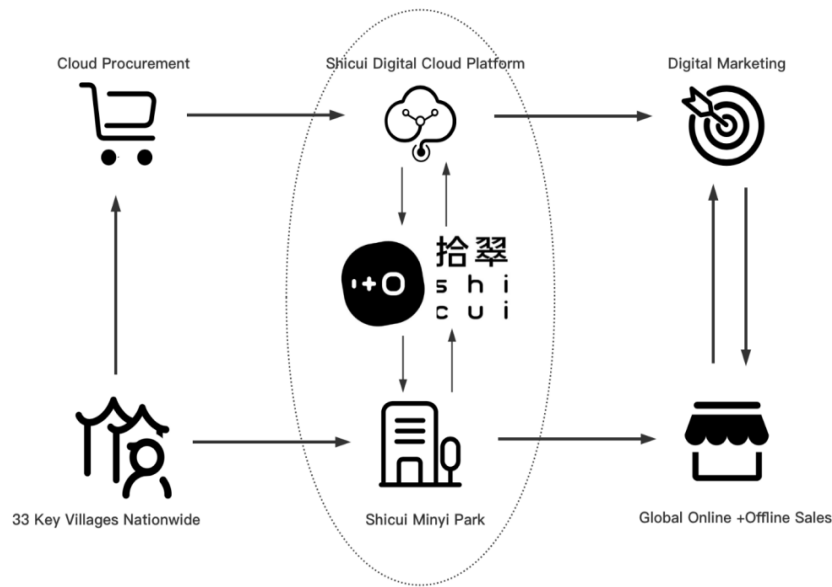
Regarding brand incubation, Shicui targets three types of people and provides them with differentiated services through Shicui Park's physical space and the cloud platform's internet space.

- **Creators:** Shicui provides young people with innovative ideas and motivations with basic conditions for connecting to the market, enabling their creative products to be directly linked to consumers.

- **Entrepreneurs** are individuals or small micro-enterprises with specific product innovation and development capabilities and whose innovative products already have a specific market supply capacity. Shicui helps them expand their product sales channels.

- **Brand operators** refer to cultural and creative enterprises with a fixed product supply chain and product line. Shicui provides them with a targeted series of brand incubation services.

Figure 15 Shicui's core business model
(Source: Drawn by the author based on information provided by Shicui Company)



The Shicui Minyi Park holds significant importance in the overall business model as it serves as a crucial showcase space for innovative products and an essential component of the Shicui brand's spirit and image. Here, Shicui provides creators and entrepreneurs with supportive development spaces and market opportunities, brand incubation services and exhibition spaces for brand operators, and workspaces for artists, designers, and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, through continuous collaboration with national-level arts and crafts masters, inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, cultural creative enterprises, etc., various themed cultural exhibitions, traditional craftsmanship classes, and Chinese lifestyle aesthetics education activities are organized. This park allows the public to engage with Chinese traditional culture and intangible heritage projects while playing a vital role in cultivating public attention towards the protection and innovative development of traditional culture.

- **Innovation of operational models (settlement system)**

In response to the above business model, Shicui has also carried out a series of space and platform operations innovations, fully utilizing internet technology. It has established China's first "cultural business + technology" data management service center specifically for traditional handicrafts. The introduction of the "N+" service system, starting from company management, finance and taxation, and credit, helps

folk art enterprises transform to promote the modernization and industrialization process of Yunnan's handicraft industry.

In order to timely protect the rightful interests of dozens of rural areas and scattered artisans, inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, designers, small and micro creative enterprises, etc., who serve as the source of products and craftsmanship, Shicui has collaborated with China Construction Bank to develop a profit-sharing system based on folk art parks and digital cloud platforms. Electronic contracts are formed for each product's specific partnership structure and proportion (such as craftsmen in villages and salespersons in folk art parks), clarifying the profit distribution plan for product sales. The accounting system is responsible for recording the bank account information of each partner as well as the allocation ratio determined by the contract. Whenever a product is sold by a folk-art park or digital platform, the system automatically distributes profits according to the set information. It transfers them to respective bank accounts within specified timeframes. This innovative settlement terminal achieves a unified connection between artisans, designers, home workshops, suppliers, and markets while expanding the influence of handicrafts and local culture through commercial methods. It also provides an essential pathway for expanding market boundaries for local cultural products.

- **Innovation in spatial operation and management concepts**

As a themed cultural space in the city, Shicui Minyi Park adheres to the concept of a user-centered spatial spirit while planning and operating various public cultural activities with traditional handicrafts as the core. It stimulates space users' innovative potential and sense of ownership through community building and aesthetic scenes. To this end, Shicui has specially launched the "Shicui International Folk Art Park Civilization Convention," actively shaping the organic concept of the folk art park as a "community," advocating for tenants and users of each sub-space to participate in the management and operation of the park as members of the community, promoting a neighborhood spirit that helps each other, jointly shaping a safe, innovative, vibrant, and individualistic place spirit. At the same time, this convention also calls on urban residents and tourists to advocate for green consumption, reduce carbon emissions, encourage space sharing, promote harmonious coexistence between humans and pets, maintain the public environment, etc., demonstrating contemporary cultural enterprises' vision and efforts in shaping and conveying positive values.

T.3 Space Process

As an important platform for enterprises to explore the integration of local traditional culture and modern business, Shicui International Folk Art Park's innovative vitality relies on investment from social capital and the collaborative network built through Shicui as a medium. For enterprises, the knowledge required for innovation is mainly obtained through consulting professionals, practical experience, and peer exchanges.

T.3.1 Knowledge acquisition/transfer

Shicui, as a company, has maintained close ties with the modern financial market throughout its development process. In the early stages of entrepreneurship, crowdfunding laid the foundation for the company's development by providing the necessary funds. The phased injection of funds further facilitated effective stage control and progress in the company's development. It can be attributed to one of the founders' years of experience and professional sensitivity in the financial field, which enabled Shicui to establish a connection between project progress and the financial market, thus obtaining stable capital support.

Higher education institutions and research units provide necessary intellectual support in creating space. The founder of Shicui has obtained much professional knowledge from experts and scholars in urban research and cultural industries through private visits, academic visits, and hiring academic consultants. It has greatly helped the company fully understand the development laws of cultural industries, grasp the main characteristics of traditional handicrafts in Yunnan, accurately understand the current situation and trends of cultural industry development in Yunnan, and timely grasp national and local urban and cultural policies. Due to Shicui's innovative business model, the knowledge system related to specific business development and spatial operation has been gradually summarized through its practice. The knowledge and experience of professionals within the team have provided critical support for environmental design, functional layout, etc., regarding space.

Like other operators of cultural spaces in cities, visiting and studying excellent cultural spaces both domestically and internationally and learning from and reflecting on successful cases are essential ways for Shicui to enhance its professional level and business capabilities. As a typical outstanding case in promoting urban renewal through the cultural industry in Kunming City, Shicui has been invited (or required) by local governments multiple times to share its experiences at various thematic seminars and

creative enterprise training activities. This communication mechanism established with other spaces and enterprises also somewhat promotes the company's knowledge production.

T.3.2 Collaborative networks

In Minyi Park, a physical space encompasses a collaborative network of cultural industries consisting of multiple commercial institutions. This network includes artisans, designers, and cultural creative enterprises forming a community for traditional cultural innovation. There is also a social network within the space composed of residents, art and culture enthusiasts, and business professionals. Together, they continuously provide Shicui with creative ideas and innovative drive, making this cultural space a multidimensional ecosystem for cultural creativity.

(1) Cultural business network

Shicui has established cooperative relationships with well-known domestic and foreign enterprises such as MUJI from Japan, IKEA from Sweden, Wangfujing Department Store from China, and Fosun Group. They have provided a commercial channel for the global promotion and sales of Yunnan folk handicrafts, expanding the market boundaries to promote the productive protection and development of local traditional culture in Yunnan.

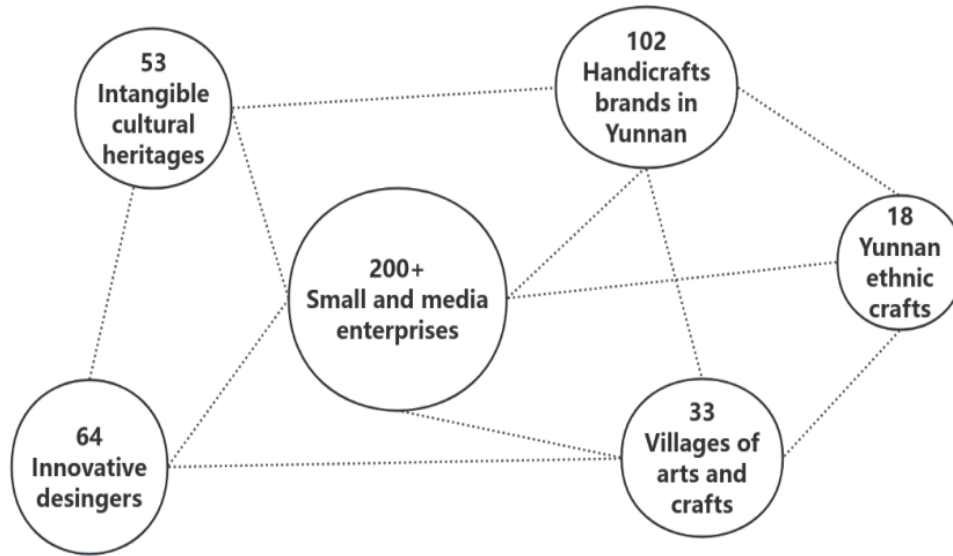
(2) Cultural innovation community network

In the existing cultural business model, Minyi Park brings together members from tangible and intangible aspects, including Yunnan's intangible cultural heritage projects, folk traditional handicraft projects, emerging designers, handicraft creative enterprises, and handicraft brand institutions. They share common development goals and provide inspiration and assistance to each other, forming a cultural innovation community network with traditional handicrafts as its core theme.

(3) Urban spatial theme community network

Due to the gathering of residents, art and cultural enthusiasts, and business people in Minyi Park, it has become a cross-border integrated living space that combines production, life, business, and ecology. The "residents" include independent brand owners, designers, photographers, folk collectors, self-media practitioners, and handicraft creators. The "art and cultural enthusiasts" include urban residents interested in literature and art and those who practice aesthetic lifestyles. In addition to community residents and nearby business people often gathering here for leisure activities, the cultural experience and life service functions of Minyi Park have been demonstrated.

Figure 16 Cultural and social innovation network of Shicui Minyi Park
(Source: Drawn by the author based on information provided by Shicui Company)



T.4 Space Value

From the abandoned oxygen plant that had been idle for more than ten years to the vibrant Shicui Minyi Park, the revival of space is not only an achievement made by young people with a solid cultural mission and sense of social responsibility through innovation and entrepreneurship, but also a typical case of cultural industry playing a role in spatial production and shaping the spirit of place, creating significant spatial value.

T.4.1 Social value creation

The Minyi Park integrates the protection and inheritance of traditional culture, urban space regeneration, and cultural entrepreneurship, creating a place where innovation breathes new life into traditional culture. It has become an inclusive, open, and mutually supportive urban cultural creative community and one of the origins of urban culture and social innovation. The Park also allows artisans in remote rural areas to envision a new life and explore a broader world. It effectively explores the use of commercial means to create social value.

a. Stimulating the innovative potential and entrepreneurial ability of individuals in spatial contexts and disseminating the concept of sustainable value

Individual participants in the space, represented by artisans, designers, and cultural entrepreneurs, have developed a strong sense of community belonging at Minyi Park.

The ways of 'meeting friends with tea' and 'meeting friends with culture' further stimulate their innovative drive. Their recognition of the values and achievements of the Park has dramatically strengthened their entrepreneurial confidence. The concept of green consumption is reflected in their daily lifestyle and integrated into their entrepreneurial practices (such as dried flower processing and reuse, using traditional handicrafts to replace modern industrial-made daily necessities).

b. Extending social space through business innovation, contributing to developing rural areas and artisans.

By designing a business model that aligns with the local social, cultural, and industrial development laws of Yunnan Province, Shicui provides commercial support for remote villages, artisans, inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, as well as small and medium-sized cultural enterprises, creators, and designers in urban areas. It enables traditional handicrafts to achieve brand development through design innovation. As an essential spatial carrier, Shicui Folk Art Park helps artisans scattered in the community and their villages connect with the urban economy, modern culture, and consumer market. Shicui provides a space for exploring social innovation and cultural entrepreneurship. In this space, cultural participation and production play a crucial role in innovation and entrepreneurship at economic, social, and cultural levels because it provides not only cultural and material resources but also builds new handicraft industry chains that allow for the continuous growth of sustainable audience markets for cultural production (especially rural areas outside cities). It allows people from ethnic minority groups to move from geographically marginalized positions to mainstream markets by offering innovations that transform creative expressions using specific ethnic minority cultures as mediums into multiple values that can be shared and disseminated.

c. Promoting community engagement, as well as shaping a high-quality community life

The Jin Ding community where Minyi Park is located is a modern living space that combines dining, shopping, entertainment, and leisure. The construction and opening of the Park have effectively enhanced the innovative atmosphere and cultural vitality of the Jin Ding community. The theme cultural activities and community cultural activities organized by Shicui Planning in the Park, as well as various cultural experiences and interactive projects organized by sub-space managers in their respective fields, have all increased opportunities for residents to participate in culture

and social interaction, improving the quality of life in the community. In particular, enhancing urban residents' understanding of traditional culture helps promote public recognition and participation in local culture while strengthening their sense of cultural responsibility and pride.

Table 13 Main cultural activities in Shicui Minyi Park in the year of 2023
(Source: Shicui Company)

Cultural Activities	Main contents
Coffee Life Festival	Coffee serving and tasting. Spreading and sharing coffee culture.
Public Art Exhibition on Paper-making Techniques	Collaborating with IKEA, an art installation using handmade paper and renewable materials as raw materials.
Themed Markets	Pottery making, flower arrangement experience, knitting, decorative painting, cake making, etc.
Rural Life Images Exhibition	Collaborating with Yunnan University, organizing multiple rural image exhibitions and academic forums on rural social and cultural life.
Shicui markets	The cultural and creative market related to Yunnan's unique handicrafts and intangible cultural heritage projects.
Pets Parties	Bringing together pet lovers and industry professionals in Kunming in order to promote the right values for pets, to advocate for the rescue of stray animals, and to build pet-friendly communities.
Tea in Life	The on-site tea art exhibition and experience aims to promote tea culture, share the aesthetics of a tea-infused lifestyle.
Other public cultural activities	Respectively organized by various independent sub-spaces in the park, featuring activities such as children's reading, handicraft experiences, and themed social interactions, etc.

T.4.2 Economic Value Creation

According to statistics, as of December 2023, 95 companies settled in Minyi Park and its branch parks, with 85% being cultural and creative industry enterprises. The Shicui Cloud Platform has connected with 513 intangible cultural heritage and other handicraft institutions, developing and innovating over 3000 handmade craft cultural products, with a total sales revenue exceeding RMB 30 million. The park's operating company has driven a total investment of RMB 130 million in the industrial chain, with an annual output value of approximately RMB 200 million.¹

Case 3. Wenming Historic Block

Wenming Historic Block represents Kunming's deliberate effort to blend heritage conservation with urban renewal by creating multifunctional spaces that embody the

¹ Data source: Shicui company.

city's historical identity while meeting modern urban needs. Located in the central area of Kunming, this site serves as a critical component of the city's broader urban strategy, which emphasizes integrating cultural production, historical preservation, and economic innovation. The revitalization of Wenming Historic Block aligns closely with Kunming's urban policy goals of preserving cultural heritage, enhancing urban livability, and fostering cultural and economic vibrancy in core city areas. By restoring and repurposing its historic structures, the block exemplifies how heritage sites can be adapted to contemporary use while maintaining their historical and cultural significance.

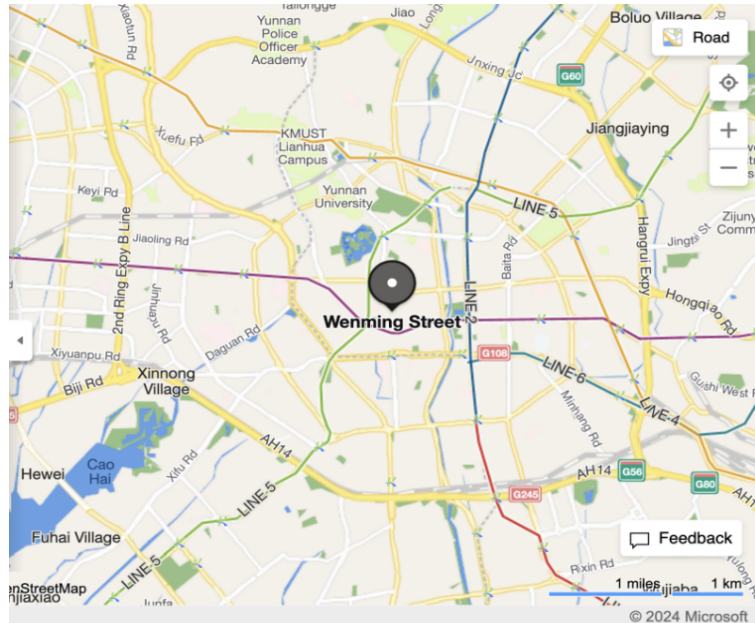
T.1. Space Objectives

The adequate protection and rational utilization of the city's only well-preserved historic block will shape the urban brand and stimulate the economic and social functions of historical and cultural spaces.

T.1.1 Space portraits

The Wenming Historical Block (the following text refers to "Wenming Block" in short) is located in the central area of Kunming's urban core. It has been within Kunming's boundaries since the Tang Dynasty under the Southern Kingdom of Nanzhao. Throughout history, from the Song and Yuan dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties, it developed into Kunming's political, economic, and cultural center. The entire historical district covers an area of approximately 21 hectares and comprises six main streets and twelve alleys. Over centuries, it has preserved 116 cultural relics from the late Qing Dynasty and Republican era, including various architectural styles (including 15 protected cultural heritage sites, 30 listed historical buildings, 27 third-level national cultural relics sites, and 44 recommended historical buildings). These structures collectively reflect Kunming's historical culture, architectural characteristics, and local customs and traditions.

Figure 17 The location of Wenming Historic Block in the central city of Kunming
(Source: BingMap)



In history, the Wenming Block has gathered many famous businesses and private enterprises, among which 'Tongqingfeng' from Yunnan's business elite and 'Zhengyifang' from Zhejiang's business elite are the most well-known. These private businesses have played an essential role in the commercial development of Kunming. After the mid-Qing Dynasty, this area became the most prosperous street in Kunming city, with a thriving commercial culture. It was a significant financial and trade hub for Kunming and even Yunnan province, profoundly influencing the city's commercial development, positioning, and direction. To this day, it remains the location of Kunming's central business area.

In the 1980s, the first flea market in Kunming was established in this neighborhood. Until around 2005, it was the liveliest and most bustling street market in Kunming, mainly selling traditional local products such as flowers, birds and insects, antiques, wood carvings and jade ornaments, ceramics, ivory root carvings, copper products, batik and tie-dyeing fabrics, embroidered handicrafts with raised patterns and ethnic jewelry. It had a solid commercial atmosphere and was part of the local culture of downtown Kunming.

2003, rapid urbanization intensified the contradiction between historical and cultural preservation and urban development. Kunming proposed a significant decision to implement protective demolition and reconstruction in the civilized street area.

Through the "Kunming (China) Import and Export Commodity Fair,"¹ Kunming introduced Zhejiang Real Estate Co., Ltd. and implemented the "Wenming Historic Block Protection" Project following the principles of "government guidance, policy support, corporate entity, market operation." The project aimed to create a vibrant commercial core area while preserving the historical district's original style and existing local business formats.

Currently, as the only remaining intact historical block in Kunming city, the Wenming Block has achieved positive results in restoring and protecting historical buildings. Nearly 100 traditional courtyards and local residences in the block were physically restored, preserving their authenticity, integrity, and sustainability. The preservation of the urban architectural landscape has been accomplished as a result. At the same time, historic buildings and residential courtyards have undergone functional transformations. By restoring traditional businesses, constructing modern shopping centers, designing distinctive commercial districts, creating small cultural spaces closely related to local history and culture, introducing themed guesthouses and specialty restaurants etc., the civilized historical block has gathered various cultural industries. It has transformed from a traditional commercial community in history into a cultural and consumer space of modern cities.

¹ The Kunming (China) Import and Export Commodities Fair, jointly organized by the Ministry of Commerce of China, Yunnan, Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Tibet provinces (regions), as well as the Chengdu Municipal People's Government, with the participation of numerous domestic and international institutions as co-organizers. It is a regional import and export commodities fair focusing on Southeast and South Asian countries. Since its first edition in 1993, the Kunming Fair has successfully held 27 sessions. It is an important international business platform for economic and trade negotiations, product exhibitions, investment promotion, and economic cooperation in western China. It plays an active role in expanding the opening-up policy to foreign countries in southwestern China and deepening exchanges and cooperation with Southeast and South Asia. From the 1990s to around 2010, the Kunming Fair was an important channel for renowned Chinese real estate enterprises to participate in renovating old cities in Kunming city and constructing new cities. It also played a crucial role in promoting Kunming's real estate development into a new stage of urban operation history. -Author's note..

Figure 18 Layout of Wenming Hitoric Blcok
(Source: Zhijiang Company)¹

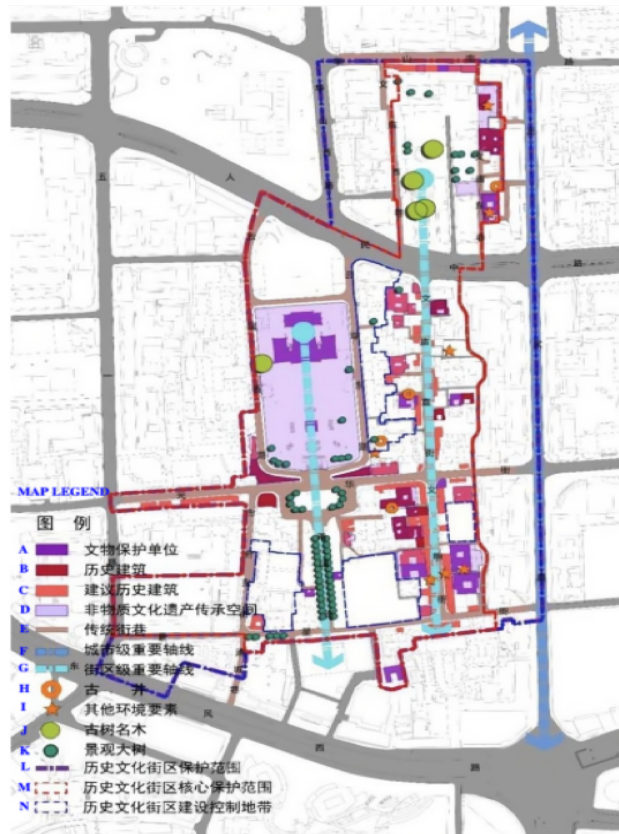


Table 14 Historical buildings in Wenming Historic Block
(Source: Zhijiang Company)²

Categories	Number
Cultural Heritage Conservation Sites	15
Registered Cultural Relics	27
Listed Historical Buildings	26
Suggested Historical Buildings	44
In total	112

¹ The map legend in Figure 19 from A to N are: A-Cultural Heritage Conservation Sites, B-Historical building, C-Suggested historical building, D-Intangible cultural heritage inheritance space, E-Traditional streets, F-Urban-level important axis, G-Block-level important axis, H-Ancient wells, I-Other environmental elements, J-Ancient trees, K-Landscape trees, L-Historical and cultural street protection area, M-Core protection area of historical and cultural streets, and N-Construction control zone of historical and cultural streets.-Author's note.

² Explanations: "Cultural Heritage Conservation Sites" refers to the collective designation for immovable cultural relics that have been identified as being included in the category of protected objects, encompassing the surrounding areas of cultural relic protection units where focused conservation measures are implemented. "Registered Cultural Relics" refers to the cultural relics registered in a nationwide survey from April 2007 to December 2011. "Listed Historical Buildings" refers to the ones categorized by the local governments that have not yet been designated as cultural heritage protection units or registered as immovable cultural relics based on their architectural form, historical functional use, construction period, etc., and establish a protective mechanism by granting them signage. "Suggested Historical Buildings" refers to Other historical buildings of cultural significance that have yet to be included in the 'list of designated historical buildings. -Author's note.

T.1.2 Company profile

- **Basic information**

"In the early 20th century, under the 'urban renewal + commercial operation' model widely adopted in Chinese cities, Kunming Municipal Government introduced Zhijiang Group from Zhejiang Province through the 'Kunming Import and Export Commodity Fair' in 2003 to participate in the renovation project of Kunming's old city. After signing a cooperation agreement, Zhijiang Group established Kunming Zhijiang Real Estate Co., Ltd. (a real estate subsidiary responsible for investment and construction of overall protection and renovation projects in Wenming Block). At the same time, it set up a commercial management limited company and a property management limited company to manage and operate Wenming Block and scenic areas, respectively, and provide property management services. At that time, as an important tourist and commercial city in China and a core gateway to South Asia and Southeast Asia, Kunming became one of the critical cities for Zhijiang Group's western strategic layout. The revival project of Wenming Block also became their first development project after entering Kunming.

- **Decision-making process**

As a real estate enterprise, Zhejiang Group has successfully developed numerous wholesale markets, specialty markets, pedestrian streets, and other commercial projects nationwide before undertaking the renovation project of Wenming Street. The company has also accumulated abundant land resources and rich experience in commercial development and urban land and space operation. Considering the historical and cultural value of Wenming Block and its significance to Kunming City, the company is grounded in reality and first establishes the basic principle of "protective development." It recognizes the necessity to effectively protect historical buildings, cultural relics, and other heritage within the block according to relevant policies and professional standards to maintain the historical cultural charm of Wenming Block. Based on this foundation, it can then utilize the historic street as a spatial carrier to integrate elements such as commerce, culture, tourism, etc., transforming Wenming Block into an urban cultural landmark with diverse formats that align with its functions.

Therefore, properly handling the relationship between protection and development is a critical challenge that Zhejiang Company faces in revitalizing Wenming Block. It directly relates to how the company can effectively balance fulfilling social responsibility (protecting urban heritage) and achieving its own development (creating

commercial profits). After research and deployment, the company has divided the Wenming historical block renovation project into three phases, using the returns from commercial investment in the first phase as funding support for historical building and cultural relic preservation in the second and third phases. It achieves a virtuous cycle of input and output, providing sustainable financial support for spatial creation, thus initiating innovative exploration in spatial revitalization.

T.2 Space Practices

The revitalization of the Wenming Block began in the initial stage of urban renewal in Kunming. To eliminate various problems that occurred in past urban construction, a series of innovative practices have been implemented by both the government and enterprises to coordinate the protection and development conflicts of historical and cultural spaces. Although the creation of the entire space has undergone a lengthy process and is still under continuous development, these explorations have played a positive role in realizing the unified diversity value of historical and cultural spaces.

- **Innovation in the fundraising model (contributing to the sustainable economic investment of historical and cultural preservation)**

As mentioned earlier, unlike Western countries, where the government provides funding, tax incentives, and donations from charitable organizations, China's urban governance system is based on public ownership of land. As a result, the government bears numerous public expenditure burdens for urban development and often faces severe financial constraints. In the 21st century, Chinese cities entered a new phase of urban renewal after experiencing rapid expansion in the 1990s. At that time, the typical approach to renovating old towns, old districts, and historical and cultural communities was through a land compensation mechanism known as "demolish high-rise buildings while preserving low-rise buildings." It involved the government using income generated from approving real estate projects to invest in renovating and revitalizing older areas. However, the Wenming Block project deviated from this standard model by adopting a market-oriented fundraising approach for a single project. Enterprises independently operated it and demonstrated significant innovation within its contemporary context. The project received high recognition from China's Ministry of Construction.

The revitalization project of Wenming Block contains three phases:

a. In the first stage, a modern shopping center will be planned and constructed on Justice Road, a core commercial street in the city, helping to establish a profitable model and generate returns. At the same time, following the approach of "unified relocation, unified planning, unified construction, and unified operation," the original residents in the original Wenming Block will be relocated to prepare for the overall restoration of the area.

b. In the second and third stages, the profits obtained from the first stage will be reinvested to support the inventory, documentation, and restoration of all historical buildings and cultural relics within the block. Additionally, necessary reconstruction or new construction of historical buildings will be carried out based on specific circumstances. Subsequently, newly restored sub-spaces and sub-blocks will undergo phased commercial development.

c. After completing all three phases, the projects in the second and third phases will focus on historical and cultural resources to obtain new economic benefits. These benefits will be reinvested into upgrading and renovating the shopping center and related facilities in the first phase. It will create a virtuous investment cycle and return within the overall space, ensuring effective fulfillment of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

Table 15 Three phases of Wenming Block Project
(Source: Zhijiang Company)

Stages	Time	Areas protected and revitalized	Construction area (in square meters)	Main targets
1	2003-2009	Constructing a modern shopping center (east side of Qianwang Street)	100,000	Enhancement of the economic function
2	2010 - 2018	Areas including Qianwang Street, Wenming Street, Wenhao Direct Street, Jingxing Jewelry Market, and Yongdao Street.	63,000	The preservation of the overall appearance and functional replacement of the neighborhood
3	Not yet launched	Areas on the west side of Wenmiao Street and the east side of Shifu Street	57,000	The preservation of the overall appearance and functional replacement of the neighborhood

Figure 19 The layout of Wenming Historic Block Project three stages
(Source: Zhijiang Company)¹



- **Technological and craft innovation in the conservation and restoration of historic buildings**

In order to maintain the authenticity, integrity, readability, and sustainability of the Wenming Block, Zhejiang Group adheres to the basic principle of "using original materials and craftsmanship as much as possible, preserving their original style and structure, and respecting the original environment" in the protection and restoration of historical buildings and cultural heritage within the district. It has prompted innovative approaches to address architectural style and characteristics issues during repair projects. In addition, the various protected buildings within the Wenming Block are typical representatives of modern residences in Kunming. They encompass diverse courtyard forms and predominantly utilize materials such as wood, stone, brick, and tiles. Most structures exhibit traditional column-style or beam-style designs.

Therefore, during preservation and restoration efforts, on the one hand, when repairing damaged or reconstructing missing parts of traditional buildings, it is essential

¹ The red, yellow, blue, and green area in the figure stand for: Stage 1, Part 1 of Stage 2, Part 2 of Stage 2, and Stage 3 respectively. – Author' s note.

to ensure that these repairs or reconstructions do not disturb or confuse the historical value of existing structures while meeting current urban architectural requirements for functionality, safety, hygiene, and environmental protection. On the other hand, in constructing necessary new spaces, it is essential to respect the original texture and scale of the block and to achieve consistency and coordination between the newly built structures in terms of volume, size, outward appearance, and style without compromising the general structure and aesthetic presentation of the block.

In order to achieve adequate protection and restoration, Zhijiang Group first utilizes modern technology to accurately survey the historical buildings and components within the entire block using 3D imaging technology. They provide fundamental data and information for adopting scientific and reasonable restoration techniques and methods. Secondly, for reinforcing and repairing old houses, steel structure reinforcement is employed along with introducing unique new materials to add necessary infrastructure, such as elevator equipment installation and expansion of basement space. Additionally, to preserve historical buildings and cultural relics that require protection, German-imported chemical solutions are used to protect weathered brick masonry and deteriorated brick carvings to ensure the authenticity and integrity of architectural style to the greatest extent possible.

- **Innovation in spatial layout and functionality design**

Since the initial purpose of revitalizing and developing the Wenming Block was to provide economic value to the historic community and achieve harmonious coordination between the protection and utilization of urban historical buildings and cultural relics, the overall revitalization of the space must also consider the coordination and consistency in layout and function between the space and the urban district in which it is located.

Wenming Block has been the administrative center of Yunnan Province since the Ming and Qing dynasties. After 1910, its administrative functions gradually declined, and it evolved into a gathering place for residential homes and businesses, with social and economic functions becoming increasingly prominent. Today, the area where Wenming Block is located is the central business district of Kunming City. Therefore, during its revitalization process, the block must adapt to the modern urban economic core area's pattern and functional requirements. At the same time, as a traditional commercial community, many of its original buildings have a spatial structure emphasizing production and living spaces for residents behind shops or courtyards in

front of them; upper floors were used for living while lower floors were for business purposes. Social functions are relatively weak compared to modern cities' public space needs.

Therefore, in the revitalization project, Zhejiang Gourp has carried out a new design and layout for the spatial arrangement and functions within the block as follows:

a. Respecting the historical commercial characteristics and economic functions since ancient times, more than 20 old brands and local enterprises from Kunming have been introduced to recreate the historical commercial culture. Based on the differences in patterns and spatial features of different historical buildings such as terraces, lobbies, courtyards, etc., hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes, and handicraft shops are arranged accordingly to enhance the block's modern cultural life service function.

b. Emphasizing the block's historical features and cultural functions by setting up dedicated spaces for intangible cultural heritage inheritance, performance arts spaces, and cultural exhibition spaces to showcase and inherit local traditional culture and tell stories about urban cultural events and important historical figures.

c. Expanding public features and social functions of Wenming Block by re-planning and designing existing alleys, open spaces, etc., and optimizing micro-landscapes in the block while adding public service facilities.

Table 16 Sub-spaces in Wenming Historic Block after revitalization
(Source: the author)

Categories	Sub-spaces
Gathering space for local historical commercial brands	"Fulin Tang"(Chinese herbal medicine store),"Jiqingxiang"(traditional pastries),"Jianxin Yuan"(local specialty cuisine),"Sibei Jia"(local snacks),"Li Ji Gu Zhuang"(tea house),"Wengu Tang"(design and decoration services) and "Kongque Yinlou"(silver jewelry) , etc.
Spaces for Yunnan intangible cultural heritages	"Weiqi" (Chinese Chess), "Yi embroidery"(Ethnic handicraft), Yunnan Baiyao (Traditonal Chinese herbal medicin), etc.
Spaces for exhibitions	Tea culture museum, historical museum, intangible cultural heritage museum, local celebrity museum, etc.
Spaces for performances	"Majiangdayuan theatre", "Qiangui theatre" (showcasing a variety of artistic forms including music, drama, local opera, Peking Opera, and stand-up comedy, etc.)
Public spaces	Yunrui Park, various small and mini public squares.
Spaces for cultural and living consumption	"Zhengyi" shopping center, flea market, jewelry market, local foods,etc.

T.3 Space Process

T.3.1 Knowledge acquisition/transfer

The Protection and Revitalization Project of Wenming Block has completed the second stage, which has been underway for 20 years. The entire project has experienced a relatively tortuous process due to factors such as policies and investment. During this period, Zhijiang Group has relied on its sustainable learning and innovation ability to transform from a pure "real estate" to a "cultural industry company," thereby maintaining the sustainable development of the block at the same time.

a. Professional knowledge and experience of business decision-makers

From 2004 to 2022, Mr. Shen Haihong served as the Deputy General Manager of Kunming Zhijiang Real Estate Co., Ltd. He was entirely responsible for developing, managing, and operating the Wenming block project. Shen holds a Ph.D. in Architecture from Tongji University and has conducted in-depth research on urban heritage conservation during his studies. As the main person in charge of the project, Shen's professional knowledge and previous practical experience in real estate projects, as well as his judgment and decision-making skills as a leader at critical moments, have had a direct and significant impact on Zhijiang Real Estate's correct understanding of the historical, cultural value of Wenming block, accurate grasp of urban characteristics and project relationships, proper handling of the relationship between historical cultural preservation and commercial development, innovative financial models, and firm confidence in project development. It has contributed to improving the professional capabilities of Zhijiang Real Estate.

b. "Exploring by trial and error"

Although the Civilization Street project has a substantial social reputation, it has been significantly affected by national and local policy changes during its development and construction. This has forced Zhijiang Real Estate to repeatedly explore new paths and methods based on the changing reality.

Firstly, in 2004, due to the administrative division adjustment of Kunming City's main urban area, the jurisdiction of Wenming block was changed from Panlong District to Wuhua District. However, it resulted in the failure of the Panlong District government's promised allocation of 67,000 square meters of land for resettling relocated residents. In the same year, the national "Urban Purple Line Management Measures" was explicitly introduced to delineate the protection scope of historical and cultural blocks within national and cultural cities. It established fundamental principles and responsible entities for protecting historical and cultural blocks at a national level. However, specific implementation details, protection plans, and regulations were not

issued until 2009 by Kunming City. The five-year gap created significant risks for project advancement due to policy and regulatory gaps. As a result, enterprises had to tackle practical difficulties through step-by-step approaches, phased actions, and an exploratory manner using a trial-and-error method.

Secondly, in 2008, the National Property Rights Law was officially promulgated. The principle of equal protection in this law elevated the protection of citizens' property rights in the housing demolition system to its rightful place, rendering the previously adopted "demolition" approach no longer compliant with legal provisions. It led to a complete halt of the planned "unified relocation" work for the Wenming block and forced the Zhijiang Group to restart project research and demonstration. Ultimately, they adopted the approach of "relocating residents while freeing up houses" to bring the project back on track. These practical challenges faced by projects have posed significant obstacles for the company in promoting sustainable development but have also become a driving force for continuous innovation.

c. Conducting research in urban planning, architecture, sociology, and other related fields

Zhi Jiang Real Estate established a Research Association to systematically study and excavate the overall background of Kunming's historical and cultural heritage and the Wenming block from perspectives such as architecture, anthropology, folk customs, commerce, sociology, and historical and literary classics. It provides critical historical and knowledge support for achieving the scientific and practical protection of historical and cultural street districts. The focus of research includes:

a. They researched the physical properties of all buildings within the district and categorized courtyards into four categories based on heritage buildings, historical buildings, traditional architectural groups, and inharmonious architectural groups. They then clearly defined the craft configurations according to the courtyard grades. Subsequently, they arranged specialized personnel to form work teams. They traveled to Jianchuan County, Huize County, and Jianning County (all traditional craft origin and concentration sites in Yunnan Province) to unearth and train skilled craftspeople for restoration work. They also purchased old components from local markets in each of the three counties and transported them to Kunming for use as raw materials in the restoration project.

Table 17 Classification of courtyard grades in Wenming Historic Block
(Source: the author)

Graphic legend	Courtyard grade	Numbers
●	A	13
●	B	50
○	C	7

Figure 20 The layout of courtyard classification in Wenming Historic Block
(Source: Zhijiang Company)

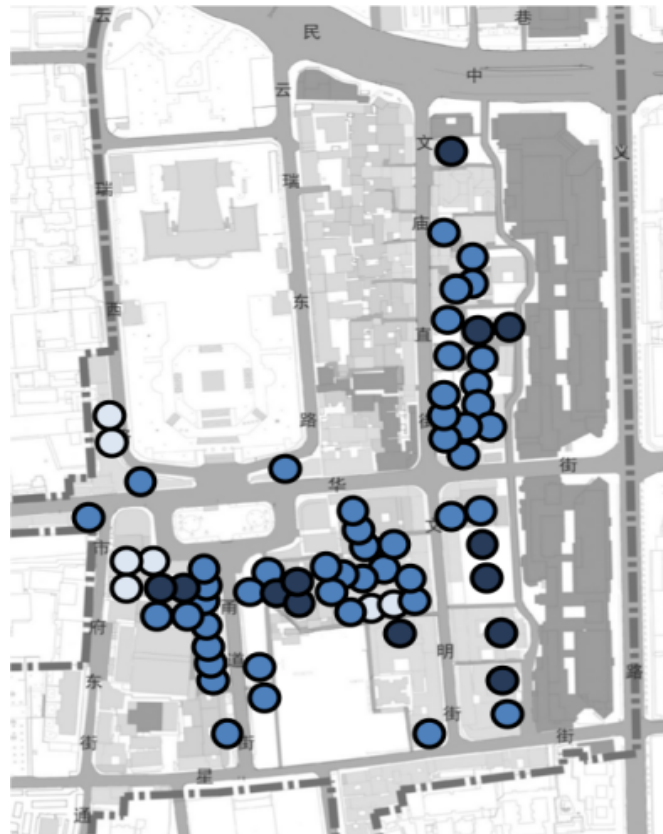


Table 18 Process configuration of each courtyard grade in Wenming Historic Block
(Source: Zhijiang Company)

Courtyard grade	Timber	Detailed Brickwork	Stone Material	Oil Painting
A	Camphor, red fir, etc., with local carvings and decorative painting, and gold leaf applied.	Customized blue bricks with highlighted relief or line engravings.	Blue stone or sandstone, with relief or line carvings of birds, fish, and insects on the focal points.	Polyester paint, with local gold leaf application or gold-leaf gilding technique.
B	Red camphorwood, chestnut wood, etc., with intricate carvings and gold inlay decoration.	Customized blue bricks with highlighted relief or line engravings.	Blue stone or sandstone, with relief or line carvings of birds, fish, and insects on the focal points.	Polyester paint, with local gold leaf application
C	“Hesong”, with intricate carvings and decorative patterns	Customized blue bricks with highlighted relief or line engravings.	Blue stone or sandstone	Polyester paint

Table 19 Collection of antique construction elements for block revitalization
(Source: Zhijiang Company)

Antique construction element	Numbers
Ancient bricks	1150000
Antique doors and windows	47
Other antique elements	168

b. From November 2012 to April 18, 2018, Zhijiang Group conducted salvage oral history research in the historical block. The project focused on the original residents and included external business tenants, renovation artisans, cultural scholars, and others as subjects. Multiple revisits were made through dialogue, note-taking, drawing, and recording audio and video. One hundred eight households of original residents received interviews, and oral history materials totaling 460 thousand words were archived and organized. Yunnan People's Publishing House will officially publish these materials under the leadership of Zhejiang Group. This oral history research organized by Zhejiang Group is the earliest and so far the only one in China's historical blocks, and it has received high recognition from the central government of China.

Table 20 Spatial distribution of interviewees in oral history research in Wenming Historic Block

(Source: Zhijiang Company)

Street	Numbers of households surveyed and interviewed	Proportion
Wenming Street	13	12%
Wenmiao Street	9	8.3%
Yongdao Street	13	12%
Qianwang Street	12	11.1%
Zhengyi Road	6	5.6%
Guanghua Street	15	13.9%
Jingxing Street	18	16.7%
Areas around Shenglitang	3	2.8%
Areas around Wenmiao	7	6.5%
Others	12	11.1%
Total	108	

Table 21 Empirical materials obtained from oral history research

(Source: Zhijiang Company)

Materials	Numbers
Oral records	108
Written materials	460,000 words in total
Valuable preserved notes	15
Photos	1585
Audio materials	14

c. Relying on oral history research, this study explored and organized traditional commercial businesses' historical and related information in the Wenming block. It included data on porcelain, leather trunks, medicine, hairdressing, calligraphy supplies, helmet manufacturing, mirror frame manufacturing, tea houses, and other relevant business types in the original street area. The study revealed three hundred and eighty-three commercial establishments in the block and reproduced the distribution of old businesses centered around this region. It provided crucial historical support for reviving urban historical commercial culture within the block in the later stages of the project.

T.3.2 Collaborative networks

The revival of the Wenming Block has been carried out through a responsible company's approach of "unified planning, construction, and operation." In spatial revitalization, innovation management and development are primarily led by Zhijiang Real Estate. The company collaborates with other social sectors at different levels and fields to complement and improve its human resources, team building, professional knowledge, and skills.

(1) The professional technical team and artisans of the birthplace and distribution center of traditional architectural craftsmanship

According to a systematic investigation of the block buildings, Zhejiang Company has successively visited Jianchuan County, Jianshui County, Huize County, and other places in Yunnan Province to see local traditional craftsmanship masters and related ancient architectural restoration technical teams. With the help of local professionals and institutions, they have explored and recorded the professional skills required to renovate each building in the block. Based on this foundation, they have hired renowned masters proficient in traditional architectural techniques and cultivated a team of technicians and craftsmen with expertise in conventional architecture. It has laid a talent and technical foundation for achieving high-level protection and construction of the block.

(2) Universities and research institutions

In the project implementation, Zhejiang Company has signed cooperation agreements with Yunnan University's National Cultural Industry Research Center and other higher education institutions and research units to jointly establish the "Kunming Old Street Training and Research Base." The aim was to conduct long-term tracking research on urban renewal, preservation and utilization of urban historical culture, cultural industry development, and urban cultural brand construction by establishing a school-enterprise cooperation channel. This collaboration aims to promote the output of scientific research results, talent cultivation in universities, and the construction of enterprise think tanks. After establishing this cooperative relationship, both parties have maintained an excellent interactive mechanism. Yunnan University's research team has participated in historical-cultural research projects organized by enterprises. Undergraduate students, master's students, and doctoral students from Yunnan University, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming University of Science and Technology, Yunnan Arts Institute, Zhejiang University, and Beijing Architecture University have chosen Civilized Street Historical District as their observation and research object during their studies, resulting in several graduation papers, which has expanded the influence of Wenming Block Project in academic research field at different levels.

(3) Competent domestic cultural and tourism enterprises

In the process of spatial functional transformation, Zhijiang Company has effectively enhanced the cultural service function of the historical block through

cooperation with well-known domestic cultural and tourism enterprises. As the most well-preserved Bai ethnic residential classic architecture in the block, "Ma Courtyard"¹ has transitioned from a private residence to a tea house to a performance venue. The distinct contrast between traditional architectural style and modern performances has made it one of Kunming's most popular courtyard theaters. Since 2019, Zhijiang Real Estate has signed a cooperation agreement with "Huaqiaocheng" Co., Ltd.² to carry out deep, multi-level cooperation in cultural tourism. Huaqiaocheng operates the "Ma Courtyard" and regularly organizes renowned domestic and international theatrical plays, music performances, etc., making it an important cultural and artistic center within the block.

(4) Local artists and cultural celebrities

To maintain the original overall atmosphere of the Wenming Block and enhance its cultural connotation and artistic ambiance, Zhijiang Real Estate has collaborated with influential artists and local cultural celebrities in Yunnan province. They have tailored distinctive cultural landscapes such as plaques, couplets, inscriptions, and sculptures for the block. For example, Mr. Zhao Haoru, a renowned calligrapher from Yunnan, inscribed the plaque for Qianwang Street. Mr. Wang Wenxiang, a famous sculptor, carved stones for the block's landscape. Mr. Yuan Xiaocen, a well-known Chinese sculptor, created landscape sculptures for the block. These efforts have strengthened and showcased the historical-cultural imprint of Wenming Block as a prominent symbol of Kunming City.

T.4 Space Value

As one of the only well-preserved historic districts in Kunming's modern urban layout, the space itself has surpassed the historical value of the old buildings, including the overall cultural, social, economic, and commercial value that needed to be realized in the current urban development.

¹ The building was established in 1923 and is located on Qianwang Street. It was initially a private residence of Ma Zhen, a prominent figure in the National Protection Movement and a skilled craftsman of the Yunnan Army. Mr. Ma served as the first mayor of Kunming City. —Noted by the author.

² Huaqiaocheng Co., Ltd, founded in 1985, is a prominent central enterprise under the direct management of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council. Headquartered in Shenzhen, it stands among the top three global theme park groups and holds Asia's leading position in the cultural tourism sector. With its operation and management spanning over 100 scenic spots and open tourist areas, this enterprise has emerged as China's most influential investment and operational entity, primarily engaged in culture, tourism, real estate, and electronic technology industries. —Noted by the author.

T.4.1 Social value creation

In the overall urban development process of Kunming, the Wenming block area, as a historic district that has survived the "demolition and construction" policy since Kunming became a self-built city, holds significant theoretical and practical significance in reflecting on the urban renewal model of "demolishing old buildings and constructing new ones" in the 1990s. The protection and revitalization of the Wenming Block have essential value in preserving urban collective memory and architectural heritage, as well as shaping and enhancing residents' sense of belonging to and identification with the city.

a. The sustainability of the heritage value of urban historical buildings

The historical district embodies the spirit of a place and is an important carrier of urban memory and cultural identity. The Wenming Historical Block includes the former Yunnan Governor's Office (now Shengli Hall) and the Cultural Center Wenmiao, as well as the area with the highest concentration of traditional businesses. Within this space, there are historical buildings that represent Yunnan's traditional residential architecture and architectural features. The layout of these buildings and road systems also showcase Kunming's overall urban pattern and traditional craftsmanship style, encompassing nearly a thousand years of urban history and memory.

A correct understanding of the district's value has allowed for thorough preservation efforts in implementing district protection and development projects. Through district planning, renovation, and restoration work on ancient buildings, historical cultural landscapes within this space have been well-preserved. It provides necessary spatial carriers for maintaining historical memory in modern cities, strengthening urban identity and emotions, and continuing cultural characteristics.

It has also become one of Kunming's few spaces that serve as evidence for its status as a national-level historic city. It tells vivid stories about Kunming's architectural history and reminds people to continuously contemplate the interrelationships between individuals and spaces in cities, tradition and modernity, history and future perspectives.

b. The survey of Wenming block provides essential data and materials for urban history research

The comprehensive restoration of the urban streetscape has strengthened its role as a reflection of the city's memory and identity. The architectural and landscape elements have become tangible means for residents and tourists to understand the city's history and culture. Several investigations, particularly oral histories conducted in the

neighborhood, have provided valuable research materials for documenting Kunming's urban history. These materials possess significant historical value and are essential for social science research.

c. Cultural innovation stimulates cultural identity and a sense of belonging to the city

The setting of service and experience spaces that are closely integrated with local culture (such as Yunnan Tea Culture Museum, Non-Heritage Inheritance Museum, and courtyard theater) not only expands the cultural service functions of the street district but also stimulates innovation in cultural creation and production centered on local culture (such as the development of local cultural and creative products, competitions for traditional crafts and skills, social scientific research activities centered on local culture, and community welfare activities using culture as a medium). It enables cultural producers and consumers to have a continuous and in-depth understanding of urban culture and then form identification and belonging to the city through product and service provision, consumption, experience, and volunteer activities.

c. Strengthening the urban spirit and enhancing the social responsibility of local traditional enterprises

The inventory and layout of traditional businesses have strengthened the sense of belonging and identity of local-brand enterprises to the city, affirming their value and confidence. Brand enterprises can achieve sustainable profits by relying on an excellent commercial atmosphere in the neighborhood, motivating them to explore and promote local culture further, and launching characteristic products with local cultural attributes. The participation of more consumers has posed challenges to innovation in old-brand products and services while creating new opportunities for innovation. The reconstruction of the “Oriental Bookstore”¹ at its original location on Wenming Block reinforces urban stories, making it an essential symbol of the Kunming spirit even in a new era, carrying people's love and cherish for this city from the past to modern times.

T.4.2 Economic Value Creation

¹ The Oriental Bookstore, established in 1926, was the first bookstore in Kunming. Following the establishment of Southwest United University in Kunming in 1938, the Oriental Bookstore became an important venue for scholars, literati, and young students to foster academic discourses and exchange ideas. —Author's note.

The economic value of the Wenming Block revitalization needs to be discussed from different perspectives.

First, as the project management and operation entity of Zhijiang Company, the cultural and commercial layout is not only the primary way for it to create business profits but also the most critical source of investment for the protection and renovation of historical buildings. According to statistics, the total investment in the district's overall development has already reached RMB five billion (with an estimated total investment of RMB six billion after the completion of the third stage)¹, of which the subsidies and grants from the local government account for only a tiny part. In the middle of the project, due to national policies and changes in investors, the company was loss-making for a long time, and the financial situation began to improve only after the completion of Stage II. Therefore, compared with the investment amount, the profitable part that Zhijiang Company has gained from the project is still relatively small.

Second, in the case of Kunming City, the coexistence of modern CBD and traditional commercial blocks further strengthens the economic function of the Central Business District, where the Wenming Block is located. With over one hundred and forty businesses entering, the block's economic vitality has been enhanced. The restoration of Jingxing Flower and Bird Market, the Jade and Jewelry Market², and the development of the Flea Market have formed an interactive exchange between players and consumers of old books, old items, antiques, calligraphy and paintings, and jade and stone appreciation in Kunming, creating a solid market atmosphere. It has also become one of the most popular tourist destinations. At the same time, the introduction of traditional business houses and the creation of "Old Brand Street" have provided spatial conditions for protecting and developing local traditional commercial brands, restoring its commercial and economic functions as a traditional commercial district, and achieving sustainable development of urban industrial and commercial civilization.

In summary, all the above discussions of each cultural space can be outlined in Table 19 as below. The table presented summarizes the historical background, current

¹ Data source: Zhijiang Real Estate

² Yunnan, as one of the primary jade-producing regions in China, plays a pivotal role as a trading hub for jade between China and Southeast Asia due to its geographical proximity to Myanmar. —Noted by the author.

state, innovation practices, management strategies, and socio-spatial outcomes of three selected cultural spaces in Kunming: Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space, Shicui Minyi Park, and Wenming Historic Block. These spaces represent distinct typologies of cultural space development, characterized by transformations of wholesale markets, industrial sites, and historical districts, respectively. The table reflects an internal logic that connects each space's historical and institutional context to its innovation practices and subsequent socio-spatial outcomes. By examining the processes of transformation and the strategies employed, the cases reveal how these spaces align with broader urban renewal initiatives while addressing specific socio-cultural and economic needs.

The cases demonstrate a shared trajectory of transitioning from historical legacies to contemporary cultural spaces, yet their approaches to space-making diverge significantly. Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space emphasizes the integration of cultural production, public cultural services, and tourism through innovations in organizational structure, service delivery models, and cultural facility construction. This approach is rooted in the legacy of its original function as a wholesale market, with a clear focus on urban industrial heritage and the enhancement of public participation in cultural activities. In contrast, Shicui Minyi Park builds on the legacy of an industrial oxygen plant, transforming it into a creative hub for traditional handicrafts. Through innovations in spatial design, product development, and business models, this space bridges traditional cultural practices with modern cultural consumption, fostering sustainability in intangible cultural heritage and social interactions. Meanwhile, Wenming Historic Block adopts a mixed-use strategy by leveraging its historical and commercial significance. The space combines technical and financial innovations with adaptive reuse of historical buildings, creating a modern cultural-commercial environment that highlights urban memory and fosters a renewed sense of identity among residents.

From a comparative perspective, the three cases illustrate both convergences and divergences in their processes and outcomes. A key convergence lies in their shared emphasis on innovation as a driving force for revitalization, whether through cultural production, traditional craftsmanship, or historical preservation. All three spaces successfully enhance socio-spatial dynamics, including community engagement, cultural sustainability, and urban identity formation. However, the divergences in their approaches highlight the flexibility of cultural space-making in responding to specific urban contexts and socio-economic imperatives. Yunfang prioritizes public cultural

participation and industrial restructuring, aligning with a broader agenda of urban cultural service provision. Shicui's focus on traditional handicrafts reflects its niche in cultural entrepreneurship and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, while Wenming integrates heritage preservation with commercial strategies to sustain its economic viability.

The socio-spatial outcomes of these cases further underline their contributions to urban renewal and social innovation. Yunfang revitalizes urban industrial symbols and fosters a creative community; Shicui ensures the sustainability of traditional crafts while integrating rural cultural products into the urban market; and Wenming bridges past and present by preserving the city's historical memory while creating vibrant modern living spaces. Collectively, these cases exemplify how diverse strategies for cultural space-making can contribute to broader socio-economic transformations and enrich the urban fabric. This comparative analysis thus reinforces the argument that cultural spaces, as platforms of social innovation, not only fulfill cultural and economic functions but also serve as mediators of identity, tradition, and modernity in rapidly transforming urban contexts.

Table 22 Creating cultural space as social innovation stream
(Source: the author)

Spaces & Subjects	Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space	Shicui Minyi Park	Wenming Historic Block
History	Wholesale market	Oxygen Plant	Historical Block
Current State	An urban cultural space that integrates cultural production and consumption, public cultural services, and tourism and leisure.	An agglomeration space for innovative design and creative production of traditional handicrafts in Yunnan Province	A cultural commercial space that showcases the city's historical memory and modern lifestyle.
Responsible Company	Yunnan Textile Manufacturing	Shichui Cultural Co., Ltd.	Kunming Zhijiang Real Estate
Nature	Traditional Manufacturing Enterprise	Cultural Entrepreneurship	Real Estate Enterprise
Innovation Practices	Building and restoring public cultural facilities, Innovation in industrial forms and structures, Innovation in cultural services, Innovation in service delivery models, and Organizational innovation.	Spatial Environment Design Innovation, Product Innovation, Business Model Innovation, Operational Model Innovation, and Innovation in space management and operation.	Innovations in fundraising models, Technical and craft innovations in the restoration of historic buildings, and Innovations in spatial layout and functional design.
Innovation Management and Development	Leadership decision-making, systematic learning for entering new markets, and support from research institutions as a think tank. A diversified cooperation network established with local governments, universities, research institutions, cultural institutions, and technology enterprises.	The expert financial knowledge of the co-founders, the intellectual support of professional scholars and research teams, and the exchange of ideas with peers in the industry. Cultural business networks, cultural innovation communities, and social networks within the space.	The expertise and work experience of business decision-makers, the development of new methods, oral history and other specialized research. Effective collaboration with traditional craftsmen, ancient building restoration technical teams, universities, well-known domestic tourism investment enterprises, renowned cultural and artistic professionals nationwide.
Socio-spatial Outcomes	Urban industrial civilization spatial symbol sustainability, enhancement of spatial and community cultural vitality, greater opportunities for public cultural participation, support and incubation for local cultural and artistic creation.	Sustainability of traditional handicrafts, Entries to the modern cultural consumption market for rural areas, cultural innovation and social interaction, public identification with traditional culture, and personal enhancement of innovative ability. Development of intangible cultural heritages and ethnic communities through design and business model innovation of traditional handicrafts industry.	The continuation and enhancement of urban spirit, the enhancement of residents' sense of identity and belonging to the city, the creation of modern living spaces with the spirit of the city market, and the incentives for the innovation of traditional culture and local brand.
Characteristics of Social Innovation	Wholesale market transformation through organizational innovation with cultural services and public spaces.		Sustainability of urban heritage through historical areas renovation for mixed-use purpose.

5.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.3.1 Findings from Three Case Studies

According to the research design, this thesis conducted a qualitative study on three selected cultural spaces based on the framework of the social innovation process in spatial creation from a micro perspective. The three research subjects are analyzed and discussed as specific outcomes of spatial production functions in the cultural and creative industries within the dual framework of sustainable spatial heritage and urban cultural vitality. They can be regarded as innovative spatial practices that create new cultural projects and redefine old urban spaces with new meanings. As responsible entities for space revitalization, enterprises have implemented and developed innovations in resources, products, services, formats, user interfaces, social interactions, and business models. These innovative approaches are combined and applied across various spaces to promote the cross-fusion of economic and non-economic forms of culture and creativity with material assets. The newly acquired cultural spaces exhibit characteristics of "diversity" and "mixed-use," becoming places for cultural participation and social interaction. Various stakeholders, such as cultural producers, consumers, artists, small-scale creative enterprises, and residents, participate in creating space regarding its formality, functionality, symbolism, and perception, resulting in shared understanding. By implementing innovative solutions that balance social and commercial objectives, the enterprises have created spaces that inspire more cultural creation and sharing. They play an essential role in shaping vibrant, inclusive communities and urban life and thus directly relate to individual and societal well-being.

a. The new image of the space has been shaped through the creation of a new environment and the design of fresh content

The practice in three different spaces has shown that under innovative thinking, new functions can indeed be introduced into urban buildings or spaces that have weakened due to historical reasons. By changing the environment and layout of existing spaces, companies implement new cultural and social practices, effectively filling the gaps in the original community's urban landscape with new cultural spaces. These spaces have become new cultural landmarks and symbols for the city, playing an

important role in enhancing its image (Peris-Ortiz et. al 2017; Bonet and Fernández Compañ 2023).

By transforming old and inactive commercial and industrial spaces (Yunfang Space and Minyi Park) into cultural and artistic venues, planning and utilizing cultural and artistic projects allow for the display and dissemination of specific commercial and industrial history belonging to the city. The new spatial image plays a positive role in preserving urban space heritage. It shapes a new concept of heritage for residents, enabling communities and cities to reuse these spatial resources (Wenming Block).

Developing new active uses for these spaces allows them to transcend their previous limitations imposed by industry, history, or location. They gain interaction with communities on a broader level. Attracting more talents, businesses, and investments (such as music creation at Yunfang or home decoration art at Shicui) brings fresh vitality and economic opportunities to communities and cities.

b. The creation and presentation of novel public spaces offer opportunities for fostering social capital

The study of three cases also found that each company emphasizes the design and supply of public spaces in their spatial planning. This reflects some research views on the importance of "the sufficient existence of public space in promoting experimental social and cultural innovation practices" (Okano and Samson 2010; Phelps 2012). At Yunfang Space, the design and construction of Music Square, the support and incubation provided by Cloud Spinning Theater for artistic creation and performance activities, as well as the organization of civic cultural festivals all provide people with opportunities for informal interaction, which is conducive to creativity generation and innovation incubation (Cohendet et al. 2010; Hutton 2004; Della Lucia and Trunfio 2018; Tavano Blessi et al. 2012).

Meanwhile, in Wenming Block, the setting and layout of museums focusing on local culture and Shicui's planning and organization of traditional handicrafts and intangible cultural heritage experiences in Yunnan province have shaped a vibrant scene within the space. They promote local and ethnic cultures while providing participants a shared language and narrative. It stimulates learning, knowledge exchange, and experience sharing. All three spaces encompass individuals and groups engaged in cultural production innovation, cultural service innovation, and cultural art creation to varying degrees. They facilitate connections between different innovative

actors. As a result, these cultural spaces play an actual role in promoting personal well-being, developing capabilities, and building social capital.

c. The creative integration of spatial usages contributes to reshaping the relationship between individuals and space

The common feature of the three case spaces is that in order to better integrate into the urban environment, the space planning and design emphasize creative mixing of multiple functions, shaping a multi-purpose environment for cultural space that includes both cultural production and work environments as well as cultural, leisure, and consumer spaces. It creates attractiveness for audiences and groups with different interests and needs. The diversity of space usage and the space itself are essential for promoting urban vitality and meeting diverse daily life needs (Jacobs 1961; Tremblay and Pilati 2013), which is vital in shaping a creative city environment.

As for the cities where these case spaces are located, the Yunfang Space, the Shicui Park, and the Wenming Block have all shed their identities as chaotic wholesale markets, abandoned production workshops, or declining historical communities, respectively; they have become "representative spaces" for fashionable living, innovative design, and Kunming's image. Residents and tourists choose these spaces based on cultural preferences or consumption needs. At the same time, artists or entrepreneurs seek specific professional empowerment or homogeneous communities according to their respective fields of action or development requirements. The social-economic production modes within these three spaces have undergone fundamental changes; cultural-social relationships present new qualities such as diversity, inclusiveness, openness, and vibrancy; opportunities for social activities and personal participation increase significantly within these new spaces. Cultural activities can help establish social networks among urban residents, especially by building shared communities under specific cultural themes, helping people deepen mutual understanding, strengthening relationships between individuals and community members, expand opportunities to construct relationship frameworks and social networks in this context.

d. Technological innovation and business innovation play a significant role in generating positive spatial outcomes and societal effects

The case studies show that both technological and business innovations play a crucial role in creating cultural spaces, particularly in generating significant social value for new spaces. They expand the boundaries of socially constructed spaces and are

essential for companies to fulfill their social responsibilities and achieve their social goals.

All three case study spaces rely on the WeChat platform¹ to create their own public accounts, mini-programs, and online communities to improve information dissemination efficiency and the directness and effectiveness of target audience and space-related community management. It promotes space publicity and enhances residents' access to space information efficiency while increasing cultural and social participation in related activities. The Yunfang Museum, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition, and the Inheritance Center in Wenming Block both use AR/VR/multimedia interactive display technology to launch a series of immersive exhibition experience activities that improve users' cultural experience boundaries. Shicui Park and Wenming Block innovate in business models, operation modes, and fundraising models, which turn innovative results into creating social values favorable for the development of marginal areas and economic value creation used for social value investment, thus promoting spatial social influence at different levels.

e. Key features and actors have become crucial elements and support for the implementation and development of innovation conducted by enterprises

The three cases demonstrate that key features with enterprises and certain actors in diverse collaborative networks are crucial for innovative practices related to enterprise management, development, and spatial creation. These individuals include leaders with decision-making power in enterprise development, middle-level executives with professional knowledge backgrounds, local governments, higher education institutions, cultural and creative enterprises, and local cultural organizations.

Firstly, the leadership team with decision-making authority and middle-level managers with professional expertise (such as the General Manager responsible for

¹ WeChat, a free application launched by Tencent in 2011, offers instant messaging services for smart devices. It facilitates fast and cost-free exchange of voice messages, videos, images, and text across diverse communication carriers and operating systems via the internet. Moreover, it provides additional features such as sharing streaming media content and location-based social plugins. WeChat also empowers enterprises and organizations with robust business services and user management capabilities through its distinctive functionalities like "Official Accounts," "Subscription Accounts," and "Mini Programs." These innovative features enable businesses, organizations, media outlets, and individuals to establish efficient communication channels and effective management models with their users or readers promptly and conveniently. Consequently, nearly all companies, organizations, institutions, and local governments possess official WeChat accounts to disseminate information effectively while engaging with users efficiently within their communities. Presently dominating the mobile application landscape in China, the company has an impressive smartphone coverage rate exceeding 94%, along with over 800 million monthly active users. —Author's note.

overall operations after the business transformation at Yunfang, co-founders of Shicui, and project managers at Zhijiang Real Estate) often have a decisive impact on corporate positioning, strategic adjustments, problem-solving, and crisis management. Their entrepreneurial spirit, business capabilities, knowledge in relevant fields, and experience are all critical factors for implementing and developing innovation within the company.

Secondly, the three responsible companies have established suitable cooperation mechanisms with local universities and research institutions while creating cultural spaces. They have provided professional knowledge, technology, training programs, and intellectual resources for planning and implementing specific spatial schemes. At the same time, universities and research institutions are also responsible for providing guidance and opinions to local governments to help them develop more reasonable spatial planning or urban cultural development strategies. Cultural space can be regarded as an R&D laboratory for universities and research institutions in their relevant fields, providing them with the latest and fresh empirical experience for conducting related research (the oral history study of Wenming Block conducted by Zhijiang Company).

Thirdly, local governments play a crucial role in better managing and operating cultural spaces for businesses. They are responsible for providing diverse policies and financial support to enterprises' spaces and cultural projects (such as funding or subsidies for cultural innovation projects, tax reductions for space-based cultural entrepreneurship plans, and endorsement and promotion of culturally significant or exemplary spaces).

Among the three case studies mentioned, Yunfang Space and Shicui Park have successively obtained national-level and provincial-level recognition as creative cultural parks and cultural spaces, respectively. Similarly, Wenming Block has also received recognition as an excellent demonstration space that integrates culture with tourism at both provincial and municipal levels. Furthermore, each space has specific collaborative projects between enterprises and local governments (such as the 24-hour smart library jointly built by Yunfang and Panlong District Government, intangible heritage experiences organized in collaboration with other relevant departments in Wenming Block, local opera performances, etc.). These collaborations significantly contribute to maintaining the spaces' development momentum while increasing the

attention of local governments. Consequently, it creates better conditions and environments for their further growth.

Additionally, the implementation and innovation of public cultural service functions are the social responsibilities that cultural and creative industries must undertake. Therefore, seeking cooperation with relevant cultural institutions and organizations is also an important way for enterprises to explore cultural spaces' broader cultural and social impact beyond economic effects (Rausell-Köster 2022). In Yunfang Space and Wenming Block, new exhibition activities have been jointly conducted by neighborhood museums, intangible heritage exhibition halls, Yunnan Provincial Museum, related art centers, and several artist studios. It has resulted in positive effects such as experience sharing, mutual attraction of visitors, and exploration of new forms of collaborative development in public cultural services. Meanwhile, Shicui has integrated its strong resource integration capabilities to collaborate with national-level arts and crafts masters and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage at various levels. They have designed and planned exhibition activities focusing on traditional culture and local arts and crafts, non-heritage lectures for the masses, craft workshops, etc., enriching the content of public cultural services in the spaces.

f. Cultural spaces serve as catalysts for broader cultural and social innovation

The cultural and creative sector is a powerful incubator for new forms of entrepreneurship (Scott 2006; Eikhof and Haunschild 2006), providing space and environment for the next generation of cultural and creative enterprises. This new form of entrepreneurship, closely integrated with urban renewal and spatial regeneration, is conducive to cities playing a pivotal role in innovation when facing new social challenges. It contributes to more targeted and practical solutions to social problems. Cultural spaces focusing on the cultural and creative industries possess considerable technological and cultural levels, social inclusiveness, and respectability. They have become essential places attracting talented individuals with innovative and creative abilities (Naylor and Florida 2003), facilitating continuous creativity exchange and idea development within their physical settings, creating vibrant spatial dynamics that serve as sources for broader societal innovation.

In the three case study spaces mentioned above, various individuals, communities, and start-ups actively produce creative content related to culture while exploring collaboration based on cultural content in these spaces. As facilitators of open

innovation and co-creation, these cultural spaces are closely associated with culturally-led urban renewal. These new cultural spaces provide residents with employment opportunities and educational prospects due to their close connection with culture-driven urban renewal efforts. The positioning requirements of these cultural spaces stimulate participants' ability to express themselves creatively while promoting their learning about combining spatial creation with innovative meaning-making practices (Gruenfeld 2010). It facilitates the aggregation of professional knowledge required for innovation and encourages people to share their understanding of urban issues and perspectives while attempting consensus-building. Generally, the supportive network constructed to achieve socio-spatial outcomes includes collaborations between the public and private sectors and between the private sector and other social organizations and institutions. They promote innovation that is conducive to achieving broader social values in spatial reproduction implementation and development.

5.3.2 Space Outcomes and Discussions on the Results

Case 1-T.5 Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space

The transformation of Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space in Kunming represents a landmark example of integrating organizational transformation with urban renewal. Originating from a large state-owned enterprise facing economic pressure, the initiative responded to the dual imperatives of modernizing production-oriented enterprises and revitalizing traditional commercial areas. This transition reflects broader trends in urban regeneration, where the adaptive reuse of industrial spaces is increasingly aligned with cultural, social, and economic goals (Evans 2009). Yunfang's case exemplifies how cultural spaces can act as intermediaries between industrial heritage and contemporary urban aspirations, achieving a harmonious balance between organizational transformation and the public good.

- Key challenges: organizational transformation meets urban renewal

Yunfang Company, driven by the survival pressures of a declining textile industry, identified the need to enter new markets, specifically cultural and creative industries. The creation of Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space was not merely a spatial redevelopment effort but a strategic response to changing economic conditions and societal demands. The principal challenge lay in balancing the organization's economic

imperatives with the broader social values required of a public-facing cultural space. This approach aligns with the “creative city” paradigm, which emphasizes the role of culture in fostering urban competitiveness and social inclusion (Landry 2000).

To address these challenges, Yunfang adopted a dual-value strategy, integrating organizational and social values into the design and operation of the space. This duality underpins Yunfang’s ability to support both cultural participation and economic sustainability while fostering a symbiotic relationship between spatial production and urban development.

- Transformative urban spaces: redefining cultural and public life

The redevelopment of Yunfang transformed a noisy and chaotic wholesale market into a multifunctional cultural hub with an artistic and fashionable atmosphere. The architectural renovation prioritized people-friendly design, creating open public spaces that encourage social interaction, leisure, and cultural participation. The spatial layout was meticulously planned, incorporating zones for living and leisure, cultural production, and industry services. This comprehensive design not only improved the urban landscape but also enhanced residents’ quality of life, aligning with global urbanization policies that prioritize inclusive urban development and public cultural services (UNESCO 2016).

Yunfang’s cultural activities—ranging from exhibitions and performances to community-driven projects like nationwide reading events and avant-garde drama performances—further enriched the space’s cultural and social value. Importantly, the integration of advanced technologies, such as digital libraries and virtual exhibitions, enhanced accessibility and broadened cultural participation. This fusion of cultural innovation and technological advancement reflects a broader trend in modern urban renewal, where digital tools expand the possibilities for public engagement in culture (McKinsey 2020).

- Organizational innovation: a catalyst for cultural ecosystems

What distinguishes Yunfang from traditional urban renewal projects is its emphasis on organizational innovation as a driver of cultural and economic ecosystems. By leveraging its legacy as a state-owned enterprise, Yunfang transitioned from a commercial brand to a cultural leader. The space has become a magnet for cultural enterprises, creative talents, and diverse audiences, supported by innovative practices in content production, service delivery, and spatial design.

The creation of partnerships with local governments, universities, cultural organizations, and technology companies has further reinforced Yunfang's role as an incubator for cultural and creative industries. Projects such as drama incubators and experiential education programs not only contribute to local cultural vitality but also position Yunfang as a regional leader in the creative economy. These practices reflect the principles of the "quadruple helix" model of innovation, where collaboration between academia, industry, government, and civil society fosters sustainable development (Carayannis and Campbell 2009).

- Cultural Space as mediator of urban transition

Yunfang's transformation offers insights into how cultural spaces can mediate urban transitions by bridging the past and the future, as well as local needs and global trends. Its adaptive reuse of industrial-era infrastructure preserves elements of Kunming's industrial heritage while embedding contemporary cultural and social values. This dual-purpose approach resonates with theories of public space regeneration, which emphasize the redefinition of urban spaces to serve diverse community needs and aspirations (Whyte 2001).

By integrating cultural production and consumption within a single ecosystem, Yunfang demonstrates the potential of cultural spaces to address multiple urban challenges. Its success aligns with Kunming's broader urban strategy of fostering a participatory urban culture, promoting public access to creative opportunities, and positioning the city as a cultural leader in southwestern China. Moreover, Yunfang's model has implications for national urbanization policies, offering a replicable framework for enhancing public cultural services, supporting innovation industries, and improving residents' quality of life.

- Broader implication: a model for sustainable urban development

Yunfang's trajectory highlights the broader potential of cultural spaces to contribute to sustainable urban development. By aligning cultural aspirations with economic imperatives, Yunfang has created a self-sustaining ecosystem where cultural, social, and economic values reinforce one another. The decision to transform its original textile factory into a new cultural space for experiential education further underscores Yunfang's commitment to exploring innovative approaches to industrial heritage reuse.

The planned textile art museum, sports park, and public cultural areas represent a forward-looking strategy that integrates industrial preservation with cultural innovation.

This approach not only addresses local needs but also contributes to global discussions on the role of culture in urban sustainability (UN-Habitat 2020). Yunfang's success demonstrates how cultural spaces can serve as platforms for creative experimentation, community building, and inclusive urban development.

- Conclusion: advancing cultural leadership in urban renewal

Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space stands as a compelling example of how cultural spaces can drive urban renewal while addressing organizational transformation. Its innovative practices in spatial design, cultural production, and public engagement offer valuable lessons for cities seeking to balance heritage preservation with contemporary urban demands. By fostering a participatory urban culture and supporting the creative economy, Yunfang has positioned itself as a leader in Kunming's urban transition.

At a conceptual level, Yunfang exemplifies the potential of cultural spaces to mediate urban change, addressing local, national, and global aspirations simultaneously. As cities worldwide grapple with the challenges of urbanization, Yunfang's case underscores the transformative power of culture to shape inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable urban futures.

Case 2-T.5 Shicui Minyi Park

In Yunnan Province, China., with the rapid development of modern tourism and mass cultural consumption has significantly reshaped the region's traditional handicrafts. Once rooted in daily utility and cultural significance, these crafts are increasingly commodified as tourist souvenirs, prioritizing symbolic value over functionality. This shift has led to the erosion of their original purposes, resulting in a pressing need to reconcile the demands of cultural preservation with the dynamics of modern consumerism.

At the same time, evolving lifestyles and heightened aesthetic sensibilities have prompted consumers to seek daily necessities that embody a unified value of culture, art, aesthetics, and practicality. This transition presents both challenges and opportunities for traditional crafts. The demand for innovative production, circulation, and distribution mechanisms compels us to explore new models that integrate heritage preservation with economic sustainability.

- A new paradigm for cultural spaces

Shicui Minyi Park offers an innovative response to these challenges by reimagining traditional handicrafts as part of Kunming's broader urban renewal strategy. The park integrates traditional cultural preservation with modern urban revitalization through spatial rejuvenation and cultural entrepreneurship. By empowering cultural creators—such as rural artisans, designers, and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage—Shicui employs a creative business model that emphasizes inclusivity, community building, and economic sustainability.

Through a combination of physical and digital platforms, the park addresses the temporal and geographical limitations of traditional commerce. Its online and offline integration not only expands market boundaries but also fosters dynamic interactions among artisans, designers, and consumers. By bridging the gap between rural producers and urban audiences, Shicui Minyi Park positions itself as a critical node in the cultural and creative economy.

- Cultural preservation and economic empowerment

Shicui Minyi Park actively promotes the economic empowerment of artisans while preserving the cultural integrity of their crafts. By fostering connections within the traditional handicraft industry, the park facilitates the development of a "value chain of cultural production" (Grönroos 2012). This co-creation platform encourages collaboration among stakeholders—artisans, designers, and consumers—to generate innovative products and services.

Economic empowerment serves as both a goal and a mechanism for cultural preservation. For example, by creating sustainable income streams for artisans, the park ensures that rural craftsmen are not forced to migrate to urban centers under economic pressure. This stability allows artisans to dedicate themselves to the intergenerational transmission of their skills, fostering the continuity of intangible cultural heritage.

Moreover, the park's approach addresses the often-neglected socio-economic marginalization of rural communities. By integrating traditional crafts into urban cultural markets, it not only creates economic opportunities but also elevates the cultural and social significance of handicrafts in contemporary life. This dual function underscores the importance of linking cultural preservation with market-based mechanisms to achieve long-term sustainability.

- Cultural innovation and community integration

One of the park's key contributions lies in its ability to modernize traditional crafts while maintaining their cultural essence. Through innovative spatial design and creative

branding, Shicui integrates traditional industrial elements with modern aesthetics, meeting the evolving needs of urban audiences while preserving the historical memory of Kunming as a city with industrial heritage. This transformation positions the park as a multidimensional space that bridges tradition and modernity, local and global, and individual and community.

The park also fosters public awareness and responsibility toward traditional culture. Through workshops, exhibitions, and collaborative design processes, it creates opportunities for public engagement and participatory learning. This aligns with the principle of "learning by doing," which emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders in cultural production and consumption.

By creating such interactive spaces, Shicui Minyi Park functions as a "social and cultural ecosystem" (van Wijk et al. 2019), where artisans, designers, and consumers collectively redefine the cultural and economic value of traditional crafts. This ecosystem encourages the development of products that integrate into daily life, ensuring that traditional crafts remain relevant in contemporary society.

- Rural-urban integration and policy implications

As Kunming seeks to position itself as a leading cultural and creative hub in Southwest China, Shicui Minyi Park exemplifies how urban renewal initiatives can also strengthen rural-urban linkages. The park serves as a conduit for the migration of rural skills and practices into urban economic circuits, addressing the cultural and economic marginalization often experienced by rural communities.

This rural-urban integration aligns with China's national urbanization policies, which emphasize balanced development and the inclusion of rural areas in urban economic frameworks. By facilitating the exchange of cultural knowledge and economic resources, Shicui Minyi Park demonstrates how urban renewal can be leveraged to reconfigure rural-urban relationships in culturally sensitive and economically sustainable ways.

At a policy level, the park offers a blueprint for integrating intangible cultural heritage into broader urban strategies. Its success highlights the importance of creating platforms for collaboration among local governments, research institutions, and cultural organizations. Such partnerships ensure that cultural spaces like Shicui Minyi Park function not only as physical entities but also as catalysts for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and social innovation.

- Broader implications: cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable development

From a theoretical perspective, Shicui Minyi Park underscores the critical role of cultural entrepreneurship in achieving sustainability within heritage industries. By transforming traditional crafts into contemporary cultural products, the park illustrates how economically static industries can adapt to modern demands while preserving their cultural integrity. This approach aligns with broader frameworks of open innovation and participatory urbanism, where cultural spaces serve as platforms for experimentation and co-creation.

The park also exemplifies the potential of cultural spaces to mediate rural-urban transitions. By connecting local cultural practices with global markets, it positions Kunming as a leader in cultural innovation and sustainable development. This dual focus on local identity and global relevance makes Shicui Minyi Park an important case for understanding how cities can leverage cultural spaces to achieve socio-economic and cultural objectives.

- Conclusion: A blueprint for integrating tradition and modernity

Shicui Minyi Park represents a visionary model for integrating traditional crafts into modern urban contexts. By combining cultural preservation with economic innovation, it addresses the dual challenges of sustaining intangible cultural heritage and fostering urban renewal. Its emphasis on rural-urban integration, community participation, and cultural entrepreneurship offers valuable lessons for other cities seeking to use cultural spaces as drivers of social and economic development.

As Kunming continues its journey toward becoming a cultural and creative hub, Shicui Minyi Park serves as both a symbol of the city's rich cultural heritage and a blueprint for its innovative future. By linking tradition with modernity, local with global, and individuals with communities, the park demonstrates the transformative potential of cultural spaces in shaping more inclusive and sustainable urban landscapes.

Case 3 S5. Wenming Historic Block

The historic centers of cities serve as both physical repositories of urban history and cultural touchpoints that reflect the complexities of socio-spatial relationships. The Wenming Historic Block holds substantial historical and cultural importance for Kunming, symbolizing the city's efforts to reconcile its past with the demands of urban growth. The revitalization of the block in Kunming, recognized as a national historical and cultural city, plays a critical role in preserving historical narratives while adapting to contemporary urban functions.

- An urban innovation practice at the “moment”

As a key investment project initiated by the municipal government over 20 years ago, the block's renovation aimed to preserve its architectural heritage while transforming the area into a vibrant cultural and commercial hub. By adopting a mixed-use strategy of "recreating historical-cultural spaces + fostering economic growth," the project sought to enhance the urban brand and strengthen Kunming's cultural identity. However, it is important to recognize that innovation, particularly in urban regeneration, must be understood in the context of its specific historical and social circumstances. As Schumpeter (1934) argued, innovation involves not merely new technologies or solutions, but the ability to transcend existing boundaries and envision progress beyond "the moment"—a reflection of the particular time and societal needs in which it occurs. Therefore, the innovative strategies employed in Kunming's urban renewal must be interpreted within the broader historical transformation of the city and its shifting social and cultural contexts.

The Ma Family Courtyard restoration project, completed in collaboration with Zurich experts and recognized by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards in 2001, exemplifies Wenming Block's innovative approach. This effort not only safeguarded the courtyard's historical authenticity but also transformed it into a dynamic social space, the "Jinlan Tea Garden," thereby integrating heritage preservation into everyday life. This model laid the groundwork for subsequent revitalization efforts, emphasizing the role of cultural industries in urban renewal as catalysts for both economic development and social innovation.

- Socio-spatial innovations: a model of heritage-driven urban renewal

Zhijiang Real Estate, the principal entity behind the Wenming Block revitalization, implemented a multifaceted strategy that combined cultural business networks, public cultural services, and innovative funding mechanisms. The company's approach to adaptive reuse reflects the broader theoretical claim that the production of urban space is both a material and social process (Lefebvre 1991). By integrating cultural and commercial activities into the block's historical fabric, the project created new opportunities for social interaction, cultural consumption, and economic vitality, transforming Wenming into a model for heritage-driven urban renewal.

Through targeted oral history research and collaboration with cultural heritage professionals, the restoration process maintained the authenticity of historic buildings while aligning with modern urban needs. This “trinity” model of operation—combining

government oversight, private investment, and localized management—enabled a synergetic relationship between stakeholders. As a result, Wenming Block illustrates how urban heritage sites can serve as platforms for social innovation, where cultural and economic imperatives converge to generate public value.

- Positive outcomes: social innovation and urban modernization

From a social innovation perspective, the Wenming Block renewal demonstrates the potential for historical spaces to foster community engagement and cultural vitality. The integration of creative industries, such as art studios, cultural festivals, and local entrepreneurship, has reinvigorated the block's identity, positioning it as a hub for cultural exchange and social cohesion. These activities align with Kunming's broader urban renewal strategy, which emphasizes adaptive reuse as a means of enhancing urban livability and sustainability.

Economically, the revitalization has stimulated tourism and the cultural economy, creating new revenue streams while preserving the block's historical essence. The use of innovative funding models by Zhijiang Real Estate ensured the long-term viability of the project, providing a blueprint for balancing corporate social responsibility with profitability. This approach underscores the theoretical argument that urban renewal projects must address both economic and social goals to achieve sustainable outcomes (Moulaert et al. 2005).

- Challenges: spatial gentrification and cultural commercialization

Despite its successes, the Wenming Block renewal also highlights inherent tensions in the urban renewal process, which reveal the limitations of current practices and offer critical insights for future urban development.

The adaptive reuse of Wenming Historic Block has led to significant spatial gentrification, resulting in the displacement of its original residents (Smith 1996). The introduction of high-end commercial activities and cultural enterprises has elevated property values, attracting wealthier populations with greater consumption power. However, this shift has marginalized the original community, eroding the social fabric and authenticity of the historic neighborhood. This outcome reflects Lefebvre's (1991) critique of urban space as a commodity, where economic priorities often override social equity. While the revitalization has created visually appealing and economically vibrant spaces, it raises critical questions about whose interests are prioritized and whether such efforts genuinely align with the goals of social innovation.

Cultural commercialization has also posed challenges for Wenming Historic Block, as the commodification of historical and cultural elements has diluted its authenticity. The proliferation of tourism-oriented businesses has shifted the focus toward mass appeal, reflecting broader critiques of heritage renewal projects that sanitize and homogenize urban spaces to attract tourists (Zukin 1995). While cultural institutions within the district host participatory artistic and cultural activities, their impact on fostering meaningful community engagement remains limited. During major festivals, the neighborhood still takes on the characteristics of an “urban spectacle,” revealing a tension between cultural preservation and commercial interests. This dynamic underscores the need for strategies that balance economic vitality with the preservation of cultural and community identity.

- Broader Implications

Wenming Historic Block offers valuable lessons for understanding the role of historical spaces in urban renewal. Its successes demonstrate how cultural industries can drive social innovation, transforming heritage sites into dynamic urban spaces that integrate historical memory with modern functions. However, its challenges underscore the need to address the social inequities and cultural compromises that often accompany such projects.

From a theoretical standpoint, the Wenming Block renewal exemplifies Lefebvre’s (1991) concept of the production of space, where urban development is shaped by the interplay of social, economic, and cultural forces. It also highlights the importance of “adaptive reuse” as a strategy for sustainable urban development, consistent with national policies emphasizing inclusivity and innovation.

- Conclusion: social innovation toward inclusive urban renewal

The revitalization of Wenming Historic Block reflects Kunming's strategic vision of integrating historical preservation with cultural and economic innovation. While the project has achieved notable successes in enhancing urban identity and cultural vitality, it also underscores the tensions inherent in balancing social equity with economic development. By critically examining these outcomes, future urban renewal efforts can strive for a more inclusive and sustainable approach that respects the needs of diverse stakeholders while preserving the historical and cultural essence of urban spaces.

CHAPTER VI

REFLEXIVE THINKING AND DISCUSSION IN KUNMING'S CASES

Conducting empirical research on social innovation aligns with the social phenomenon's practical and experiential nature. In order to achieve a "profound understanding of specific phenomena," it is essential to explain how and why particular social phenomena operate within specific contexts, as this provides valuable knowledge about our world and its significance (Polkinghorne 2005). However, it is important to acknowledge that this experiential knowledge has limitations due to individual social backgrounds, research methods employed, and the subjectivity of interpreters. Therefore, it becomes necessary to reflect on the creation of cultural space as a continuous process of social innovation. It not only enables an objective examination of practice processes and outcomes within specific case spaces but also facilitates the synthesis and generalization of experiences related to social innovation that are relevant within Chinese societal contexts.

6.1 CORPORATE SOCIAL INNOVATION PARTICIPATE IN URBAN CULTURAL REGENERATION: THE ADVANTAGES, RISKS, AND CHALLENGES

Innovatively exploring business opportunities arising from social problems while simultaneously generating both social and economic value in addressing these issues (Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Mirvis et al. 2016) represents a strategic approach for enterprises to contribute to urban development through social innovation. Concrete examples of socially innovative urban practices implemented by enterprises include promoting cross-sector revitalization of cultural industries, facilitating the regeneration of urban spaces, and providing creative spatial solutions for urban renewal. However, this poses a significant challenge to their innovation capabilities. On the one hand, enterprises need to develop new cultural industry formats with cultural connotations

and qualities that stimulate and lead cultural activities within spaces, thereby expanding cultural participation and extending cultural services. On the other hand, they must integrate diverse cultural formats and facilities with innovative modern lifestyles to foster multidimensional prosperity encompassing culture, society, economy, and other dimensions within spaces and communities.

The three case studies conducted in Chapter V collectively demonstrate how businesses actively transform and revitalize urban spaces. Through targeted and diverse innovative practices, they have achieved varying degrees of success in industrial development, employment opportunities, social participation, and cultural vibrancy within these spaces. These positive social outcomes have significantly reinforced the commitment of these businesses to the city and local community, further inspiring their sense of responsibility and value in addressing the social challenges faced by the urban environment.

The cultural space that aims to harmonize and unify diverse values holds significant implications for businesses as a "learning laboratory" (Kanter 1999). By integrating and advancing innovations in products, services, technology, organization, and business aspects, companies can achieve comprehensive enhancements in the physical environment, social outcomes, and economic benefits of their target spaces. This process not only showcases the potential and advantages of businesses in driving and fostering social innovation through urban renewal (which provides crucial support to ensure and promote the broad positive impact of cultural space outcomes at the societal level) but also underscores key factors influencing the "sociality" of innovative results.

6.1.1 The Advantages of Enterprise Involvement in Driving Social Innovation for Urban Spaces Revitalization

The case study of Kunming's cultural spaces and social innovation reveals that cultural enterprises are uniquely positioned to drive urban regeneration through their financial expertise, entrepreneurial mindset, and collaborative networks as advantages in the China's socio-economic context. Urban regeneration demands innovative approaches to address the complex challenges of spatial renewal, particularly in culturally significant areas. This transformation is critical in converting economic

constraints and cultural diversity into new opportunities for spatial development (Daldanise and Cerreta 2019). Enterprises, with their focus on creative problem-solving and adaptability, serve as key innovators in this process. They implement novel strategies to manage resources, stimulate creativity, and establish partnerships, ensuring that cultural production and urban renewal practices are deeply interconnected.

- **Financial resource mobilization**

The successful implementation of urban regeneration projects hinges on the ability to mobilize financial resources effectively. Enterprises, as key economic actors, possess distinct advantages in accessing and managing diverse funding sources, including public-private partnerships, government subsidies, and market investments. These financial strategies not only support the physical transformation of spaces but also enable the integration of social and cultural dimensions into urban renewal practices.

In the context of China, national and regional policies such as the “Cultural Industry Revitalization Plan (2009)”, the “14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development (2021)”, and the “Opinions of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the China Development Bank on Further Increasing Developmental Financial Support for the High-Quality Development of the Cultural and Tourism Industries(2021)” have established robust mechanisms for financing cultural and creative industries. These include loan interest subsidies, risk compensation funds, and developmental finance products, which provide enterprises with unparalleled access to capital. Such policies create a favorable financial environment for enterprises to innovate in urban regeneration, supporting projects that would otherwise face economic constraints.

As shown in the case studies, Shicui Company leveraged government subsidies and risk-compensation funds to repair urban industrial space and construct public cultural facilities, linking the site’s transformation to community development goals. Meanwhile, the Wenming Historic Block provides a compelling example, where a real state enterprise conducted extensive market analysis before committing to the adaptive reuse of historical neighbourhood. By analyzing investment risks and potential returns, they were able to allocate resources efficiently while preserving the block’s historical architectures. The combination of financial strength and market insight ensures that enterprises can execute innovative projects while maintaining long-term economic sustainability.

The ability to manage and allocate these resources effectively is another critical strength of enterprises. Their expertise in market research, risk management, and investment analysis enables them to navigate the complexities of urban regeneration projects. As financial sustainability is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving material and cultural sustainability in urban regeneration (d'Ovidio and Pradel 2013), based on their financial capabilities, enterprises provide the foundation for transforming underutilized spaces into vibrant urban centers that balance economic growth with cultural preservation.

- **Entrepreneurial spirit**

Entrepreneurial spirit underpins the capacity of enterprises to innovate and adapt in the face of evolving urban challenges. This mindset enables them to identify and exploit opportunities for integrating cultural production with urban regeneration, creating solutions that are tailored to specific social, cultural, and economic contexts.

The entrepreneurial approach to urban regeneration is characterized by continuous experimentation and innovation. Enterprises develop new technologies, products, and services that enhance the functionality and appeal of urban spaces. These innovations are not limited to physical transformations; they also encompass the redefinition of space as a site for cultural participation, community engagement, and economic activity. By aligning cultural production with urban renewal, enterprises foster a multidimensional transformation that addresses the physical, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

In Kunming's cases, the Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space exemplifies how entrepreneurial practices aligned with organizational transformation can drive cultural and social innovation. The responsible enterprise has established new cultural facilities, incorporating experiential and participatory elements, transforming the space into a vibrant hub for creative production. Meanwhile, The Shicui Minyi Park has developed innovative business models that integrate traditional and contemporary lifestyles, combining cultural consumption with the preservation of traditional crafts. This approach has created opportunities for economic development and fostered community engagement extending to more remote areas.

The practices above improved that the entrepreneurial spirit has the potential to drive enterprises to explore novel business models that balance commercial objectives with social impact. These models often integrate local cultural resources and market conditions, creating localized supply chains and community-based initiatives. This dual

focus on business and social value enhances the inclusivity and resilience of urban regeneration projects, ensuring that they benefit diverse stakeholders. Particularly, it is deeply embedded in the operations of cultural enterprises to generate social value through entrepreneurship in fostering innovative practices (Choi and Majumdar 2015).

- **Multidimensional networking**

The creation of cultural spaces is inherently a collaborative endeavor, requiring the active participation of diverse stakeholders, including public institutions, private enterprises, and local communities. Enterprises play a central role in building and sustaining these collaborative networks, leveraging their organizational capabilities and market insight to facilitate effective partnerships.

All the three cases in Kunming demonstrate the unique advantages of enterprises in building collaborative networks to promote social innovation and spatial regeneration. At Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space, the responsible company have cultivated a creative ecosystem by collaborating with local artists, cultural institutions, and academic organizations. The Shicui Minyi Park showcases how enterprise serves as contact between rural cultural holders, urban cultural innovators, and global cultural consumers, promoting cultural inheritance and innovation through a broader social network. Similarly, the Wenming Historic Block emphasizes how enterprise led partnerships with local cultural celebrities, sociological research institutions, tourism operators, and individual entrepreneurs can integrate cultural and commercial elements, enhance the cultural vitality and economic value of urban historical neighborhood.

These collaborative networks serve as platforms for co-creation, enabling stakeholders to exchange knowledge, share resources, and coordinate efforts. Enterprises act as mediators, connecting public sector goals with private sector innovation and community needs. Meanwhile, cultural production innovation, as facilitated by enterprises, also contributes to the establishment of social capital networks. This collaborative approach ensures that urban regeneration projects are inclusive and responsive to the diverse interests of stakeholders. Such networks are essential for creating sustainable urban spaces that balance cultural, social, and economic objectives (Evans 2017). They enhance the sustainability of urban regeneration projects by fostering trust, cooperation, and mutual support among stakeholders. Therefore, the enterprises play a a pivotal role in constructing these networks and ensuring their effectiveness through their ability to integrate and coordinate diverse resources.

6.1.2 The Negative Impacts of Cultural Industry Innovation on the Reproduction of Space

While enterprises play an increasingly pivotal role in urban spatial revitalization through their financial strength, entrepreneurial spirit, and capacity to develop innovation networks, these very strengths can also give rise to unintended consequences in the socio-spatial outcomes of cultural industry innovation. This duality underscores the complex interplay between the positive potential of enterprise-led innovation and its potential negative externalities within the framework of urban space production.

On the one hand, the diversity of financing channels and policy-driven incentives empower enterprises to engage in large-scale cultural industry projects, enabling the preservation of heritage sites, the construction of cultural spaces, and the development of inclusive social programs. Similarly, the entrepreneurial drive of these enterprises fosters the flexibility, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities necessary to adapt to rapidly changing urban dynamics and experiment with innovative models of cultural production. Furthermore, the current logic of spatial production, which positions enterprises as key actors in urban renewal, allows them to leverage their economic power and social influence to establish cross-sector innovation networks that connect local communities, cultural institutions, and global markets.

However, it is precisely these strengths that can lead to the commodification and gentrification of urban spaces when unchecked. The ability of enterprises to access diverse financing channels, for instance, often leads to prioritizing profit-driven strategies that may inadvertently overshadow social objectives. While the entrepreneurial mindset fosters creativity, it may also introduce market-oriented logics that commodify culture, transforming it into a consumable product rather than a means of community building or cultural preservation. Furthermore, the enhanced social and economic status of enterprises in urban renewal processes sometimes positions them as dominant actors, potentially marginalizing local communities and traditional cultural practices in the name of innovation.

This dual dynamic is evident in the cultural industry's role as both a driver of social innovation and a contributor to socio-spatial inequalities. For example, the commercialization of cultural heritage sites—often a result of enterprise-led initiatives to revitalize historic areas—can result in the exclusion of original residents, the erosion

of cultural authenticity, and the transformation of heritage into a symbolic commodity. Similarly, the focus on building innovation networks may unintentionally reinforce socio-economic divides, as these networks often cater to cultural producers and creative entrepreneurs while neglecting the broader needs of local residents.

Based on the case study, the negative impacts of cultural industry intervention in spatial regeneration can be summarized as: heritage symbolization, space gentrification, cultural commodification and the loss of authenticity, and the conflicts between economic and social objectives.

- **The symbolization of urban heritage in cultural space production**

The commercialization of cultural heritage spaces, while enabling economic revitalization and infrastructure investment, often leads to the symbolization of urban heritage, where cultural elements are detached from their original historical and social contexts to serve as commodified symbols for consumption. This process is evident in the case of the Wenming Historic Block, where the responsible enterprise has restored historic buildings, organized cultural events, and established cultural facilities such as museums and intangible heritage exhibition halls. While these initiatives have enhanced public participation and cultural visibility, they also illustrate the paradox of heritage commodification.

Drawing on Harvey's (1989) critique of spatial commodification, it becomes apparent that the revitalization of Wenming Block reflects a broader tendency in urban redevelopment projects to prioritize economic gains over the preservation of social and cultural authenticity. Enterprise's innovative business models, aimed at generating sustainable funding for restoration efforts, have inadvertently transformed Wenming neighbourhood into a "consumable space". For example, the influx of upscale businesses, such as boutique hotels and themed restaurants, has fundamentally altered the block's population structure and displaced original residents. This echoes Smith's (1996) argument about gentrification as a process where spaces of historical and cultural significance are appropriated for new rounds of capital accumulation.

Although the Wenming Block now attracts urban tourists and middle-class consumers, its transformation into a heritage-themed consumption district undermines the block's original cultural and social dynamics. Such transformations often render cultural spaces as aestheticized, exclusive venues for affluent groups, thereby marginalizing long-term residents and weakening community cohesion (Zukin 1995). Consequently, while the economic objectives of revitalization are achieved, the socio-

spatial outcomes—such as cultural diversity and community sustainability—remain compromised.

- **The gentrification of cultural spaces through innovation**

Cultural industry innovation frequently facilitates gentrification, displacing original communities and transforming spaces into hubs of high-end consumption. This phenomenon is demonstrated at different levels in the Yunfang Cultural and Artistic Space, Shicui Minyi Park, and especially apparent in Wenming Historic Block, where cultural production has restructured the local commercial landscape. These spaces, designed to incubate cultural entrepreneurs and creative workers, have introduced technology-driven platforms and networks. While fostering professional development and enhancing creative output, these initiatives have also catalyzed the replacement of traditional markets and small businesses with cafes, bars, and art galleries tailored to urban cultural consumers tastes.

This process of gentrification restructures urban space that prioritizes market-oriented activities over local needs (Lees et al. 2008). For example, at Yunfang Cultural Space, the influx of cultural production businesses has contributed to rising property values, making it increasingly difficult for traditional shops to sustain operations. Similarly, Wenming Historic Block has transformed into the “second” CBD of Kunming city with the disappearance of traditional neighbourhood life-style.

Moreover, the aestheticization of cultural spaces through innovation can create a disconnect between these spaces and their surrounding communities. According to (D'Ovidio and Pradel 2013), cultural spaces are often marketed as “creative enclaves”, attracting tourists and creative-class professionals but failing to address the socio-economic challenges faced by local residents. This is particularly evident in the case of Shicui Minyi Park, where the transformation of traditional handicrafts into high-priced commodities has shifted the focus from local cultural preservation to global market competitiveness, thereby limiting accessibility for the very communities these initiatives were meant to serve.

- **The commodification of cultural practices and the loss of authenticity**

The commodification of cultural practices is another significant challenge posed by cultural industry innovation in urban regeneration. While innovative practices often succeed in expanding the market for cultural products, they may also detach these products from their original social and cultural contexts. In Shicui Minyi Park, the branding of traditional handicrafts through modern design and marketing strategies

exemplifies this tension. While these efforts have enhanced the visibility of local crafts, they have also resulted in a significant shift in production priorities, driven by market demand rather than cultural authenticity.

This dynamic aligns with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural production, which highlights the tensions between commercial imperatives and cultural authenticity. For instance, traditional artisans in Shicui Park increasingly rely on market trends and consumer preferences to shape their products, leading to a standardization of design that undermines the diversity and uniqueness of traditional crafts. This phenomenon also argues that the integration of traditional cultural practices into global markets often strips them of their original meanings, reducing them to decorative items for consumption (Chen 2011).

Furthermore, the economic pressures faced by artisans in Shicui Park reveal the vulnerabilities of cultural producers in the context of market-driven innovation. As the viability of cultural spaces depends not only on their ability to generate economic value but also on their capacity to sustain social and cultural networks (Sacco et al. 2019), the focus on profit-oriented production in spaces like Shicui Park risks marginalizing traditional craftsmen and eroding the social fabric of local communities, thereby limiting the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.

- **The conflicts between economic and social objectives in urban cultural innovation**

The negative impacts discussed above highlight a fundamental contradiction in cultural industry innovation within the urban renewal: the tension between economic objectives and social outcomes. While enterprises excel at mobilizing resources and implementing innovative practices, their emphasis on market-oriented strategies often undermines the broader socio-spatial significance of cultural spaces. This contradiction is particularly pronounced in urban renewal projects, where the commodification of cultural assets frequently takes precedence over community engagement and cultural sustainability.

The emphasis on market efficiency often leads to the privatization and commodification of public spaces, reducing their potential as platforms for social interaction and community building (Harvey 2000). This dynamic is evident in the three cases. For example, Shicui Minyi Park's integration of intangible heritage projects with contemporary design and branding has inadvertently commodified traditional crafts, driving up the cost of goods and alienating local consumers. The Wenming Historic

Block underscores this conflict further. While economic revitalization through tourism and heritage commodification brought financial benefits, the focus on profitability overshadowed efforts to foster genuine community involvement at some levels.

It can be seen that the tense relationship between economic needs and social objectives limits the long-term sustainability of urban cultural spaces, as their broader role in promoting social cohesion and cultural continuity is weakened. In the process of creating cultural spaces, enterprises should align their strategies with the needs and values of local communities, fostering a more inclusive and participatory model of urban cultural development (Davies and Ford 1998), or urban cultural innovation may perpetuate social spatial inequality and undermine the inclusive potential of regenerative spaces.

6.1.3 The Factors Influencing the Cultural Space Creation through Social Innovation Methods

The intricate process of cultural space creation, especially when guided by social innovation methodologies, is shaped by a constellation of interrelated factors spanning political, economic, social, cultural, and technological domains. These factors collectively influence the pathways, strategies, and outcomes of spatial production within specific socio-economic and political contexts. Understanding these dimensions not only deepens our comprehension of urban cultural space production but also highlights key principles such as inclusiveness, sustainability, and fairness in shaping urban life. Below is an expanded and theoretically nuanced analysis of the primary factors influencing cultural space creation in China's urban contexts.

- **Political factors**

Political factors play a pivotal role in shaping the frameworks and dynamics of cultural space production. Urban governance, policy decision-making, and city planning act as the overarching structures that dictate the trajectory of spatial practices. In China, where the state wields significant influence over land use and urban development, the government's dual role as policymaker and resource allocator is critical in determining the quality, scope, and sustainability of cultural spaces. Policies regarding land use, urban renewal, and cultural industries have a direct impact on

resource allocation, the involvement of corporate actors, and the degree of public participation.

The coherence, stability, and adaptability of these policies significantly influence the long-term success of cultural space projects. For instance, stable urban planning frameworks can ensure project sustainability and compliance, while poorly designed or profit-driven policies can lead to inequitable outcomes. China's "power + capital" logic, where state power and market forces often converge, shapes the processes of spatial production. However, this model risks sidelining public interests if decisions prioritize profitability over social welfare (He and Wu 2009).

To optimize the cultural space production process, it is crucial to embed social participation into urban governance frameworks. Transparent policymaking processes, inclusive planning mechanisms, and community involvement can help mitigate potential risks, ensure broader societal buy-in, and balance state, corporate, and public interests (Bai et al. 2020). Such approaches would not only enhance the quality of cultural spaces but also foster a more equitable and participatory urban renewal process.

- **Economic factors**

Economic dynamics, including market forces, resource allocation, and the broader development level of the economy, shape the methods and outcomes of cultural space creation. In the Chinese context, the participation of cultural industries in urban renewal has linked spatial production closely to market demand and capital flows. On the one hand, cultural space projects often rely on significant investments, making their success contingent on financial viability. On the other hand, the commodification of cultural spaces—where cultural resources are transformed into marketable assets—risks reinforcing socio-economic inequalities (Zukin 1995).

This tension between economic opportunity and equity underscores the need for critical cross-sector collaboration. While market-driven approaches can attract investment and stimulate innovation, they must be balanced with broader social objectives. For example, cultural spaces should not only serve as economic engines but also contribute to redefining spatial values in ways that prioritize collective well-being. Addressing this dual objective requires rethinking how cultural spaces can foster both economic growth and societal inclusion, with a focus on mitigating the risk of cultural gentrification and exclusionary spatial practices (Harvey 1989).

- **Social structural factors**

Social structures, including demographic patterns, social mobility, and cultural preferences, profoundly influence the form, function, and accessibility of cultural spaces. Urban renewal processes often cater to shifting social needs and demands, which vary across age, gender, income level, and cultural background. Recognizing this diversity is crucial for the inclusive design and functionality of cultural spaces.

In practice, social innovation in cultural space creation must address the cultural and recreational needs of different population groups. For example, providing multi-functional venues and programming tailored to diverse demographics ensures that cultural spaces remain relevant and accessible. However, the commodification of urban space risks exacerbating social stratification by catering disproportionately to affluent populations, potentially displacing marginalized groups (Smith 1996).

To counteract such dynamics, cultural space producers must prioritize public cultural services, creating spaces that serve as inclusive social platforms rather than exclusive commercial hubs. This aligns with the broader goals of social innovation, which emphasize equity, participation, and collective benefit in urban development (Moulaert et al. 2005).

- **Cultural and social values factors**

Cultural and social values are foundational in shaping how urban spaces are perceived, used, and contested. In the Chinese context, historical traditions, local identities, and collective memory deeply influence spatial practices. As such, cultural space projects must reflect and respect local cultural specificities while promoting dialogue among diverse cultural groups.

Social innovation in this domain involves balancing preservation with creativity. While protecting cultural heritage and local traditions is essential, these efforts must be integrated with innovative practices that foster cultural diversity and inclusivity. For instance, cultural spaces that reinterpret traditional heritage in contemporary forms can serve as platforms for cross-cultural exchange and collective identity formation (Zhang and Zhao 2019).

Moreover, the alignment of social values with corporate social responsibility and community engagement strategies is critical. Enterprises involved in cultural space creation must prioritize public interest by designing spaces that resonate with local communities. This approach not only enhances social acceptance but also ensures the longevity and relevance of cultural spaces in an evolving urban context.

- **Technological factors**

Technological advancements have revolutionized the creation and management of cultural spaces, providing new tools for innovation and engagement. In particular, digital technologies, virtual reality, and internet-based platforms have transformed how cultural content is produced, distributed, and experienced.

These innovations have expanded the possibilities for interaction within cultural spaces. For instance, virtual reality can enable immersive heritage experiences, while social media platforms can facilitate real-time dialogue and knowledge sharing among diverse stakeholders. Such technologies also extend cultural spaces beyond their physical boundaries, creating hybrid "social spaces" that integrate physical and digital dimensions (Castells 2010).

The application of these technologies must be strategic, with a focus on enhancing accessibility, engagement, and inclusion. For example, leveraging digital tools to involve underrepresented groups in cultural programming can help democratize access to cultural resources. Additionally, the integration of technology into cultural spaces can strengthen their economic sustainability by attracting new audiences and generating additional revenue streams (Evans 2009).

In summary, the creation of cultural spaces through social innovation methods is a multi-dimensional process influenced by political, economic, social, cultural, and technological factors. These factors not only shape the strategies and outcomes of spatial production but also highlight the importance of fairness, inclusiveness, and sustainability in urban renewal processes. Understanding these dynamics provides a foundation for developing innovative approaches to cultural space production that align with broader societal goals. Future research and practice should continue to explore how these factors intersect, offering insights into the evolving nature of cultural spaces in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

Table 23 The influencing factors of creating cultural space through social innovation methods (Source: the author)

Factor	Core content
Political factors	Government policies, urban governance, and planning shape the frameworks and sustainability of cultural space production, influencing public participation and resource allocation. Balancing state power and market forces is essential to ensuring fairness and inclusivity.
Economic factors	Market demand, capital flow, and economic development determine the viability and scale of cultural space creation. Managing the tension between commodification and societal value is crucial to prevent inequality and prioritize public benefit.
Social structure factors	Demographic diversity, social needs, and mobility influence the design and accessibility of cultural spaces. Inclusive spatial practices should address the needs of various groups while preventing stratification or exclusion caused by commercialization.
Cultural and social value factors	Local traditions, cultural heritage, and societal values shape perceptions of space. Projects should balance heritage preservation with innovation, fostering inclusivity and cultural diversity to maximize public acceptance.
Technological factors	Technological advancements, such as digital tools and virtual reality, enhance cultural space interaction, accessibility, and stakeholder engagement. Strategic integration of technology can democratize participation and expand spatial possibilities.

6.2 REEXAMING CORPORATE SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH A VALUE-BASED PERSPECTIVE

The case study on the creation of corporate-led cultural space in this research also unveils the nexus between innovation practices and value creation. Specifically, the economic value derived from the characteristics of cultural industries plays a supportive role in fulfilling social responsibilities, addressing societal issues, and generating social value for enterprises. It offers empirical evidence further to explore the relationship between cultural production and marketization.

In the existing discourse on social innovation, many studies have substantiated that "value" constitutes a significant shared core element across diverse forms of social innovation and can serve as a novel foundation for theorizing social innovation (van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016). Particularly in business-driven social innovation, the attainment of social value creation through innovative practices is regarded as a pivotal

dimension and criterion for evaluating social innovation. Moreover, discussions about social value creation are frequently juxtaposed with enterprises' commercial value generation. The concept of "dual value" (e.g., Weerawardena and Mort 2012; Mair and Martí 2006; Dembek et al. 2016; Emerson 2003; Porter and Kramer 2011) underscores the parallel relationship between commercial value generated by businesses and societal value. Conversely, the perspective of "shared value," grounded in common values (e.g., Foroudi et al. 2021; Porter and Kramer 2006; Lumpkin et al. 2013), refutes unilaterally negating economic worth by highlighting that the societal benefits engendered by corporate innovations outweigh private gains for innovators themselves. This perspective encourages enterprises to make proactive endeavors to foster socially shared values.

The cultural and creative industries significantly contribute to the generation of social value primarily by enhancing the role of culture in promoting economic growth and fostering creativity and innovation, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life. The spillover effects from these industries play a crucial role in driving social innovation. Within this domain, cultural products offer services encompassing aesthetics, experiential elements, metaphors, and social status. Individuals engage in diverse cultural consumption activities within this sphere, acquiring traditional handicrafts that embody cultural significance and value while seeking brands or experiences from anthropological and cultural perspectives. This interplay among culture, art, aesthetics, design, and entertainment fosters innovation (Anon 2014).

In the case studies, three companies have achieved varying degrees of improvement in cultural vitality and enhanced social interaction within the context of 'cultural industry + public cultural services.' They have accomplished this through a combination of innovative products, activities, and services. The newly established cultural spaces contribute significantly to social cohesion, cultural innovation, and urban quality of life. These cultural spaces organize educational and cultural activities with diverse themes and content involving residents, facilitating the growth of the companies and the spaces alongside the local community. The social value generated by businesses through their culturally-driven commercial methods in space creation is reflected as 'non-commercial benefits' closely associated with community development during innovation (Dawson and Daniel 2010). These benefits primarily manifest as actions to improve spatial vitality and enhance quality of life.

However, a meticulous examination of the three cases reveals that the social value attained by each space is somewhat interconnected with the economic value generated by enterprises through innovation. In Yunfang, the concentration of music and art production and operation within the space enhances Yunfang Theater's role as a local cultural incubator. A significant portion of the economic benefits obtained by enterprises invest in constructing, managing, and operating cultural service facilities such as museums and urban libraries. It enables enterprises to transform a 5,000-square-meter former textile factory production space into a comprehensive cultural hub. In Shicui, successful business model innovation has resulted in positive economic benefits for participants across the spatial network. It allows small creative enterprises and designers to enhance their capabilities at various levels while creating new income sources for traditional villages and artisans outside physical spaces but within social network spaces. This improvement contributes to their economic well-being. In Wenming Block, substantial investment is required to restore and maintain large-scale historical buildings. Despite facing long-term challenges where profits are lower than investments and temporary "cultural commercialization" phenomena exist during this period, responsible enterprises overseeing this space achieve sustainable investment in protecting urban historical-cultural heritage through innovative business models.

In the cultural space creation driven by enterprises, the economic value generated by these entities serves as a crucial source of social value investment, an economic foundation for enhancing well-being among other societal actors, and a financial guarantee for enterprises to undertake significant social responsibilities and address pressing social issues. Previously, the commercialization of creativity and cultural activities was predominantly viewed as "creative products" prioritized from a production standpoint in cultural and creative discourse (Granger 2020). However, in the post-industrial economy, ensuring "financial sustainability" (Sacco et al. 2018) while creating social value through cultural production becomes essential for enterprises to employ commercial means in addressing social challenges. It is particularly relevant within China's current urban governance model and spatial reproduction framework, where the limited availability of government public funds necessitates enterprises to secure funding sources for space creation through diverse methods and channels. Apart from the aforementioned financial measures, implementing entrepreneurial practices and business innovations guided by or embedded with social goals are vital strategies.

The emergence of enterprise-driven cultural spaces encompasses various cultural-entrepreneurial practices. When these activities, including cultural production, consumption, and participation, align with relevant social objectives, they catalyze businesses and entrepreneurs to explore and implement entrepreneurial practices that generate social impact and financial sustainability (Bolis and West 2017). Business practices infused with social value often adopt a combination of market-based and non-market-based approaches (as exemplified by the "cultural industry + public cultural services" spatial development path), employing strategies such as developing products and services tailored to societal needs or establishing local supply chains. This integration enables the synergistic fusion of social and business values (Porter and Kramer 2011). Innovative business models and practices prioritize the quality of cultural products and services and consider their broader societal and environmental impacts (Haigh and Hoffman 2012).

The innovation practices of Shicui exemplify the innovation of the business model that benefits marginalized areas. By redesigning products, brands, technologies, and operational models, stakeholders in the social sphere established under cultural connections can collectively share economic value. The practices and outcomes observed in Yunfang and Wenming Street further demonstrate that when companies integrate social value into their organizational vision, production processes, product features, cultural production, and consumption, they can effectively foster the creation of shared economic value through positive interactions with other cultural entrepreneurs (stakeholders) within a space guided by sustainable development values. Moreover, this approach ensures the sustainable investment of profits into social value outcomes by transforming them into cost inputs for new facilities or actions that generate cultural and/or social value.

Three spatial enterprises have successfully undergone a corporate transformation in the cross-border integration of cultural industries and urban revitalization. Yunfang has transitioned from a production-oriented enterprise to a cultural creative enterprise, while Zhiye has transformed from a real estate enterprise to a cultural commercial enterprise. Additionally, Shicui's entrepreneurial practice revolves around traditional craftsmanship and design innovation. These transformations have endowed these enterprises with "social value-based enterprises" characteristics in their engagement with urban development. By deeply integrating the mission of creating social value into

their organizational culture and development strategies, they have respectively generated social values that benefit the spatial, community, and urban levels.

Moreover, they have surpassed mere profit-making by sharing economic values with other societal actors. While creating cultural spaces as social innovation flows, these enterprises have effectively converted innovative business methods and economic outcomes into fundamental pillars and essential guarantees for generating and realizing social value. It highlights the pivotal role of economic value in corporate social innovation and its intricate relationship with social value creation.

Therefore, it is imperative to comprehensively examine and evaluate the interplay between corporate innovation's economic and social value from a value-oriented perspective, considering spatial conditions, specific contexts, and community needs. Based on the findings of this study, we can infer that these two values are not merely parallel or contradictory. By actively engaging in cultural space creation and fulfilling their social responsibilities, companies bear the responsibility of addressing intricate societal challenges encountered during urban development. The economic value generated through such endeavors plays a pivotal role in ensuring their sustainable growth. For communities/cities and other stakeholders with vested interests in spatial matters, economic value can serve as both a funding source and an economic foundation for attaining well-being along with associated cultural and social values.

In addition, the social value achieved through corporate innovation may be a multidimensional concept, as spatial evolution entails changes in the social environment, relationships, and personnel within that space. The actions of spatial reproduction that span long historical periods are influenced by the overall social structure, development ideas, and conditions of social production that underpin them. These factors continuously evolve and significantly impact these actions' objectives, practices, and spatial outcomes. At different stages of development, a city's space may need to assume diverse spatial functions based on specific circumstances related to transportation, location, and community connections during urban expansion or morphological evolution. All these factors contribute to shaping the societal effects generated by specific spatial outcomes. Therefore, discussions about value must connect to a historical and dialectical perspective.

6.3 THE “CONTEXTUALITY” OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN CHIA VS. THE “OPPORTUNISM” OF WESTERN THEORIES: DISCUSSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

“Each society generates its own distinctive spatial configuration,” (Liu 2022) which is intricately related to its specific mode of production and the various production relationships it encompasses. Research from China highlights the importance of contextual embeddedness and path dependency in shaping the trajectories of social innovation (Cajaiba Santana, 2014). The case of Kunming’s cultural spaces, by focusing on the dynamics of cultural production, cultural commercialization, and spatial development within China’s urban context—especially the interactions among the state, market, and society in driving spatial transformation—demonstrates how social innovation can be understood in alternative ways within non-Western settings. It highlights the contextuality and hybridity of social innovation in China. This empirical evidence validates the critical issue raised in Chapter Two—Western theories and frameworks on social innovation, which are largely derived from specific cultural and historical experiences (primarily empirical studies from Europe and North America), often struggle to align with the unique social, economic, and political realities of China. This reveals the opportunistic limitations of these theoretical explanations, thereby challenging existing paradigms in social innovation studies.

By deeply analyzing the contradictions and tensions between the contextual practices in China and the opportunistic nature of existing theories—through perspectives such as the role of the state, informal relationships, socio-cultural values, governance structures, and the transformative potential of innovation—we can better understand the underlying factors that influence the emergence, development, and scaling of social innovation in China. Furthermore, such an analysis offers valuable insights for the development of social innovation theories grounded in non-Western experiences.

6.3.1 The Dynamics of “State-Embedded” Social Innovation in China

In China, social innovation often stems from state-led initiatives designed to address pressing social challenges such as urbanization, poverty alleviation, and rural revitalization. The “Targeted Poverty Alleviation” policy launched in 2014 exemplifies this dynamic. This top-down approach integrates government agencies, public resources, and local communities to implement innovative poverty reduction measures. Similarly, the “Internet+” strategy introduced by the Chinese government in 2015 explicitly seeks to incorporate digital technologies into various social and economic domains, driving innovation in fields such as healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation (Li, 2018). The Chinese government plays a centralized and directive role in social innovation, often shaping its goals, processes, and outcomes. The state is not only a facilitator but also frequently the primary initiator, driver, and manager of social innovation efforts (Yu & Huang, 2018). This reflects China’s “State-led innovation model”, where the government actively identifies social challenges, mobilizes resources, and coordinates cross-sectoral efforts.

China’s top-down administrative system ensures that urban spatial planning and replication are driven by a task-oriented approach. In the context of cultural space creation, the government’s role is evident in the policy and institutional innovations under the framework of public cultural services. For instance, in heritage preservation and urban regeneration, government plans provide policy signals, while businesses interpret these signals and act to explore innovative practices. These practices often address urgent social issues, such as enhancing cultural vibrancy, promoting social inclusion, and fostering community cohesion. The case studies from Kunming illustrate how the state actively supports social innovation through strategic interventions and resource allocation. Local governments, while guiding the development of cultural industries, act as both resource distributors and agents reshaping the network of social relationships within urban spaces through policies and administrative means (Wong, 2021). Within this structure, businesses are motivated to pursue innovation, but their actions are bounded and directed by institutional constraints. As a result, social innovation in China often manifests as “institutional social innovation”, with pathways and outcomes deeply embedded in institutional structures.

In contrast, Western social innovation theories often view the state as a constraining force, emphasizing the need for bottom-up, community-driven initiatives to counter bureaucratic rigidity and hierarchical control (Nicholls et al., 2015; Moulaert et al., 2010). In these theories, the state is typically positioned as a regulator, enabler, or provider of conditions for social innovation. It creates a conducive environment by establishing legal and institutional frameworks (Mulgan et al., 2007) or by funding pilot projects, reducing bureaucratic barriers, or fostering public-private partnerships (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). Within such frameworks, the pathways of innovation are assumed to be decentralized, driven by diverse and layered collaboration among multiple stakeholders, reflecting the individualistic and pluralistic traditions of Western social innovation theory, which are rooted in civil society, grassroots initiatives, and the autonomy of non-state actors.

Thus, the dynamics of “State-embedded” social innovation in China limit the explanatory power of Western frameworks in the Chinese context. The dual role of the Chinese government as both promoter and regulator of social innovation complicates the applicability of Western theories. On the one hand, in Western contexts, governments may fund or regulate social innovation projects initiated by other actors. In China, however, the government often designs and directly implements such projects. This centralized approach allows for large-scale resource mobilization, which is critical for addressing systemic challenges such as poverty or urban inequality. However, this model restricts the autonomy of other stakeholders and reduces opportunities for grassroots experimentation and local adaptation—elements often celebrated in Western frameworks. On the other hand, the Chinese government frequently uses its authority to shape the parameters within which social innovation occurs, ensuring alignment with national development goals such as social stability and economic growth (Chen et al., 2020). This contrasts sharply with Western contexts, where innovation often arises from debates or negotiations between civil society and the state.

Moreover, unlike the adversarial or independent relationships often assumed in Western frameworks, the state-society relationship in China is characterized by “negotiated interdependence”. Non-state actors align their activities with state priorities while exercising agency within those frameworks (Chan et al., 2020). The state is no longer seen as a singular or coercive actor but as a “facilitator of negotiated innovation”, collaborating with other stakeholders to address complex urban challenges. This model challenges the binary opposition between state-led and grassroots-led innovation

prevalent in Western theories, emphasizing the potential for collaborative synergy between the state and other actors. Such dynamics urge a reconsideration of the role of the state in Western social innovation theories—not merely as a backdrop for innovation but as an indispensable participant in the innovation process.

6.3.2 Value Orientations and National Strategies in Cultural Commercialization

In China, cultural commercialization has become both a widespread phenomenon and a state-led strategic initiative. This trend is deeply rooted in China's unique cultural values and social norms, which highlight critical differences from Western perspectives on social innovation.

Firstly, the rise of cultural commercialization in China is closely tied to its distinctive cultural values and historical traditions. Under the enduring influence of Confucianism, culture in traditional Chinese society is seen as the core of social ethics and spiritual heritage, while also holding significant practical utility. Li Zehou (2010) emphasized the Confucian dialectical view of “Yili” (righteousness and profit), arguing that the pursuit of economic profit does not necessarily conflict with social ethics and can achieve harmony through “righteousness guiding profit.” This perspective legitimizes cultural commercialization, enabling economic interests and cultural heritage to coexist harmoniously. Moreover, cultural commercialization can be traced back to historical cultural-economic practices, such as the vibrant markets for arts, porcelain, and handicrafts in Jiangnan during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Brook, 1998). These activities were not only economic in nature but also served as vehicles for cultural dissemination and innovation. Such traditions provide historical legitimacy for cultural commercialization, making it more acceptable in Chinese society.

Secondly, the widespread adoption of cultural commercialization in China is also closely tied to national strategies. In 2009, the Chinese government issued the “Cultural Industry Revitalization Plan”, formally designating the cultural industry as a pillar of the national economy and introducing the “Culture Going Global” strategy (Keane, 2013). This was not only aimed at economic development but also reflected the need to enhance China’s cultural soft power in the context of globalization. Cultural commercialization is seen as a tool for achieving dual objectives: cultural preservation

and economic prosperity, as well as a means of constructing national identity. In 2017, the Chinese government explicitly outlined the principle of prioritizing social benefits while balancing economic and social outcomes in the “13th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development and Reform”. This plan emphasized that cultural industries should pursue economic efficiency while promoting positive societal values, ensuring that cultural products and services meet market demands while fostering social progress and spreading "positive energy." These national strategies reflect China's expectations for the cultural industry and provide modern legitimacy for cultural commercialization.

Thus, compared to the Western cultural industry model, which emphasizes individualism and market autonomy, China's approach to cultural commercialization is characterized by collectivism and state-oriented strategies. This is rooted in the socialist model of cultural governance, where cultural policies combine government leadership with market forces to create a “policy-driven cultural market” that promotes cultural industry development while aligning with national interests (Zhang, 2020). Unlike Western frameworks, which view cultural innovation as an independent process, Chinese cultural commercialization is often embedded within national development agendas, as evidenced by cross-cultural exchange projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (Hong, 2016).

Western perspectives on the value of cultural commercialization and corresponding theories tend to emphasize individual-driven, market-oriented dynamics, focusing on how innovative cultural products succeed in capital markets (Throsby, 2010). These perspectives often assume a tension between cultural production and economic value. Particularly in Europe, the success of cultural industries remains less tied to market dynamics; traditional cultural domains (e.g., visual arts, performing arts, and heritage) are more socially recognized. For cultural producers, excessive market success and recognition may even be perceived as compromising the integrity of cultural arts. In much Western literature, the marketization of cultural spaces is often criticized for undermining their social and artistic missions, with scholars arguing that an overemphasis on profit can harm the participatory and emancipatory goals of social innovation (Sacco et al., 2018). This prevailing view was echoed during the author's participation in the 2016 ASEF international exchange program, where some European participants expressed reservations about Kunming's market-driven cultural space initiatives and their perceived lack of citizen participation and leadership. This criticism

highlights the tension between Western evaluation standards and China's integrated model of cultural commercialization.

It is evident that cultural social innovation, closely tied to the values of cultural commercialization, exhibits significant differences between China and the West. Unlike the Western emphasis on individualism and market-driven frameworks, China's cultural commercialization and social innovation create a unique hybrid model that integrates economic, social, and cultural objectives. This model is deeply rooted in its collectivist values and state-led development approach. The challenges faced by Western theories and frameworks in capturing the complexity of China's cultural commercialization highlight the need for a more context-sensitive perspective—one that acknowledges China's unique cultural, political, and economic conditions to bridge theoretical gaps.

Additionally, Western concepts like shared value, co-creation, and inclusive development can provide useful frameworks for addressing the risks of cultural commercialization while maximizing its potential for social innovation. However, these frameworks must be adapted to China's context, recognizing the central role of the state and the collective spirit that underpins China's cultural commercialization.

6.3.3 The Critical Role of Informal Relationships in China's Socio-Cultural Structure

Cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping the scope and impact of social innovation, underscoring the need for innovation to be embedded within specific cultural and social frameworks. This is particularly evident in China, where deeply rooted cultural and social values shape the practice of social innovation. Informality, as both a resource and a resilience mechanism, enables social innovation to emerge in spaces where formal institutions may be absent, insufficient, or restrictive. The concept of “*guanxi*”—the system of social relationships and obligations that underpins Chinese society—becomes especially significant in this context. *Guanxi* networks serve as informal mechanisms for resource exchange, problem-solving, and collaboration, often bypassing or complementing formal institutional structures (Yang, 1994). As a result, informal social networks based on personal connections, trust, and reciprocity—embodied in the concept of “*guanxi*” (personal networks)—often play a more

significant role than political organizations in driving innovation (Yang, 2002). For example, grassroots social innovation projects in rural China often rely on *guanxi* networks to mobilize community members, negotiate with local authorities, and secure resources. These networks are not only more flexible than formal structures but also culturally resonant, reflecting long-standing traditions of mutual assistance and collective responsibility. Broadly speaking, grassroots participants frequently use informal networks to mobilize resources, circumvent bureaucratic constraints, and build trust among diverse stakeholders (Liu et al., 2018).

This reliance on informal relationships is also evident in the practice of fostering cultural spaces in Kunming. For instance, during Yunfang Company's critical decision-making phase—transitioning from a manufacturing enterprise to a cultural and creative enterprise—it received professional academic and experiential support from authoritative cultural industry research institutions and think tank experts in Yunnan. This key expertise, which significantly influenced the company's strategic transformation, was acquired through private relationships between the company's leadership and think tank researchers. Similarly, Shicui Company benefited substantially from informal relationships prior to taking on the creation of Shicui Folk Art Park. These informal connections provided the company with invaluable support in enhancing its professional capabilities within the cultural industry, broadening its development vision, and keeping abreast of Kunming's urban development trends and policy directions.

Western theoretical frameworks tend to prioritize formal institutional mechanisms—such as legal frameworks, structured organizations, and transparent governance—as key drivers of social innovation (Cajaiba Santana, 2014). Formal structures like civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and public-private partnerships are often foregrounded as primary agents of social innovation (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). For example, Mulgan et al. (2007) argue that social innovation flourishes in ecosystems where formal actors are well-coordinated and operate within an enabling policy environment. This perspective largely reflects the institutionalized nature of innovation ecosystems in Western democratic nations. However, when applied to the Chinese context, such Western theories—owing to their emphasis on formalization—overlook how innovation is negotiated, improvised, and adapted within less structured environments. As a result,

they struggle to theorize the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Chinese social innovation, limiting their ability to capture its nuanced processes.

A related but distinct issue is how informal networks and specific cultural practices enable social innovation to thrive in environments where formal institutions are weak, rigid, or inaccessible. In China, where bureaucratic structures are both hierarchical and opaque, informal relationships often serve as workarounds to overcome institutional barriers. Fei Xiaotong's concept of the "differential mode of association" ("chaxu geju", Fei, 1947) provides crucial insights into understanding the flow of power and resources within China's socio-cultural networks. Social innovation in China often manifests as being embedded within these "chaxu geju" power networks. For instance, urban renewal projects are frequently driven by collaborations between local governments and enterprises (government-business partnerships). Grassroots social governance innovations are often promoted through cultural bonds at the family or community level. Similarly, social entrepreneurs and business operators engaging in innovative practices often leverage their personal relationships with individuals in various institutions to build collaborative networks. This reliance on informal mechanisms reflects a pragmatic adaptation to institutional constraints.

While Western theories typically consider robust institutions as prerequisites for social innovation, China's experience demonstrates that informality can be an asset rather than a liability. This insight challenges mainstream paradigms and highlights the need for sociological inquiry to recognize the role of informal dynamics in fostering innovation under varying conditions.

6.3.4 Hybrid and Context-Sensitive Governance Models

A prominent characteristic of social innovation in China is that, despite the dominant role of the state, these innovative practices do not strictly follow a "single-center" governance logic. In recent years, a "nested governance" model has emerged, characterized by cross-sectoral collaboration among local governments, markets, and social organizations (or grassroots communities), forming governance networks through a division of labor (Liu, 2026). This model is evident in various urban renewal projects across the country, where local governments provide initial momentum through policy support, enterprises integrate resources through market mechanisms,

and community organizations participate in space management and cultural activities in later stages of the projects.

The Kunming case further validates this collaborative governance model. The operation and management of its three cultural spaces involve multiple stakeholders, including state actors, private enterprises, cultural groups, art institutions, individual artists and entrepreneurs, and grassroots communities. Each stakeholder contributes at different stages of space creation in various capacities, resulting in multi-sector partnerships. These partnerships pool resources and expertise, enabling innovation to develop within the constraints of top-down governance frameworks while promoting positive social outcomes grounded in innovation.

Western theories of social innovation typically categorize participants into relatively clear groups, distinguishing the roles of governments, civil society, and private-sector organizations. This classification aligns with governance systems in liberal democracies, where each sector has distinct functions and boundaries (Phills et al., 2008). These frameworks are often based on theories of decentralization and multi-stakeholder collaboration (Mulgan, 2006), emphasizing the critical role of grassroots organizations and community groups in innovation processes. However, this decentralized innovation model may fail to capture the dual nature of state leadership and multi-stakeholder collaboration in China's "collaborative governance model." China's practices challenge the foundational assumptions of Western theories, which often rely on binary frameworks of state versus society or market versus community (Polanyi, 1944; Moulaert et al., 2010).

In China's collaborative governance model, stakeholders' roles in social innovation are far more flexible and require negotiation, resulting in hybrid and context-sensitive characteristics. For instance, the concept of "government-organized non-governmental organizations" (GONGOs) highlights this complexity. In China, the widespread presence of GONGOs blurs the boundaries between the state and civil society, serving as intermediaries that execute state directives while engaging with local communities (Teets, 2014). Similarly, the rise of "China-specific social enterprises" exemplifies how hybrid organizations operate at the intersections of the state, market, and civil society. These entities often receive funding and policy support from the government while adopting market-based approaches to address social issues such as poverty alleviation and education access (Yu, 2020). This hybridity facilitates cross-sector resource sharing and collaboration. Likewise, private enterprises in China often

act not only as market players but also as collaborators in state-led initiatives, aligning their activities with broader policy objectives, such as poverty alleviation, digital strategies, or rural revitalization.

The adaptive institutional hybridity showcased by China poses challenges to social innovation theory, complicating the binary distinctions between the state and civil society in Western frameworks. Existing theoretical models struggle to interpret this hybrid governance model, as they are built on rigid institutional boundaries and clear sectoral differentiation. In contrast, the Chinese context—characterized by institutional complexity and multi-centered governance—demonstrates how blurred and fluid institutional boundaries enhance flexibility and the capacity to address complex societal challenges. Western theories' insistence on strict institutional demarcations and sectoral distinctions often fails to capture how flexible institutional arrangements create new opportunities for innovation. The Chinese experience illustrates that institutional hybridity is not a constraint but a source of creativity and resilience. This insight invites a rethinking of rigid sectoral models in social innovation theory and encourages the exploration of more flexible, context-sensitive innovation frameworks that account for the fluidity and negotiated nature of innovation processes in non-Western contexts.

Additionally, the Kunming case highlights the critical role of enterprises in the development of cultural spaces. However, these enterprises do not act as autonomous agents but rather as collaborators within the state's regulatory framework. This observation challenges the Western assumption that market-driven initiatives inherently conflict with social innovation goals. Instead, the Kunming case illustrates how the motivations of the state and the market in social innovation are integrated and how market mechanisms can be leveraged to achieve broader social goals, provided these mechanisms are embedded within a supportive and hybrid institutional framework.

6.3.5 The Spatial Forms and Functions of Complementary Social Innovation

The concept of “social” in social innovation—encompassing social goals, values, and processes—has been widely discussed in Western academia as a form of “radical innovation practice” aimed at challenging existing power dynamics (Moulaert et al.,

2007; Nicholls et al., 2015). This framework is built on the central role of civil society in Western values and academic theories, where empowered civil society actors are seen as critical drivers of transformative change. Consequently, social innovation in Western contexts often emphasizes citizen empowerment to achieve goals such as enhancing community autonomy and addressing power imbalances (Moulaert et al., 2007).

In Europe, cultural spaces often serve as grassroots and bottom-up platforms for social initiatives. By their nature and orientation, these spaces are viewed as sites of resistance against state or market dominance (Moulaert et al., 2007; Nicholls et al., 2015). They are imbued with the function of fostering active citizenship and challenging existing power structures. Additionally, bottom-up cultural activities within these spaces are considered instrumental in breaking traditional thought patterns and fostering inclusive innovation (Eriksson et al., 2017).

In contrast to Europe's emphasis on cultural democratization and active citizenship, the case of Kunming reveals a different dynamic: cultural spaces in China are primarily shaped by state and market forces, with varying levels of grassroots participation at both cultural and political levels. As a typical manifestation of social innovation in China, the creation of cultural spaces prioritizes economic sustainability and urban revitalization, serving as hybrid venues that integrate cultural, artistic, commercial, and social objectives. This model may lack the radical transformative potential championed in Western theories, but it demonstrates a pragmatic form of innovation aligned with China's socio-political realities. It corresponds more closely to Ayob et al.'s (2016) notion of "complementary social innovation", where innovation operates within existing power structures to meet social needs without challenging the dominant political or economic systems.

This model of complementary social innovation is shaped by China's political and social structures, where collective interests are prioritized over individual agency, the development space for civil society and the third sector is limited, and state-led governance plays a central role in shaping urban development. In the Chinese context, cultural spaces represent the spatial forms of urban strategies that combine state-led planning, market-driven initiatives, and community participation. These spaces act as "mediating structures" that balance competing priorities—aligning with state development goals, leveraging market mechanisms to promote financial sustainability, and incorporating community-oriented programs to revitalize underutilized areas or

advance urban sustainability. They often grow through partnerships among local governments, private enterprises, and cultural practitioners, with each actor contributing unique resources and expertise. Consequently, cultural spaces are not positioned as adversaries to state or market forces but instead function as “integrated platforms” fostering collaboration among various stakeholders.

The integration of cultural and commercial activities within urban spaces reflects a pragmatic approach to urban development in China. This approach places less emphasis on radical social transformation and instead adopts “incremental” and “adaptive” practices under the dual dominance of “power + capital”. Innovation operates within established power structures rather than opposing them, ensuring the realization of social goals. This spatial collaboration model challenges the Western paradigm’s emphasis on civil society as the primary driver of social innovation and creates significant friction with the concept of “radical” social innovation.

Thus, a key issue for Western theories is whether the existing focus on “radical” social innovation is universally applicable or whether it overlooks more incremental and context-specific forms of innovation. The assumption that civil society serves as the primary locus of social innovation faces serious challenges in the Chinese context, not only because civil society operates in a more constrained and state-embedded manner but also due to the “state-market-community trinity” structural characteristics of social innovation in China. This underscores the need to develop related theories that emphasize a more nuanced understanding of social innovation in non-Western contexts, providing theoretical tools to better comprehend and explain the diversity of actor roles and power dynamics across different settings.

In conclusion, by taking cultural space development as an entry point, this thesis provides empirical evidence from China at the intersection of cultural industries and urban development, offering a compelling and thought-provoking case for reconsidering and expanding the predominantly Western-dominated theoretical frameworks of social innovation. This study challenges the prevailing paradigms in social innovation research, revealing their limitations when applied to contexts characterized by strong state intervention, hybrid economic structures and governance models, and deeply rooted cultural and social values. The challenges faced by mainstream social innovation theories in adapting to non-Western contexts are thus brought to light.

The study of practices in China, as exemplified by the case of Kunming, enriches existing Western frameworks by offering alternative pathways and mechanisms for achieving social innovation. It contributes to a broader and more nuanced understanding of the textual and path-dependent characteristics of social innovation as shaped by varying social, economic, and political contexts.

6.4 FUTURE CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL INNOVATION RESEARCH: BRIDGING CONTEXTS AND FRAMEWORKS

The study of social innovation across different socio-political and cultural contexts reveals the challenges and opportunities associated with reconciling Western-centric theoretical paradigms and frameworks with non-Western empirical realities. This section highlights two interrelated challenges: the difficulties Western theories face in understanding and adapting to non-Western contexts, and the tensions in applying Western-originated frameworks to study social innovation within the unique Chinese socio-political and cultural landscape. These challenges, while distinct, are interconnected and point to the need for a more nuanced, context-sensitive, and globally inclusive approach to social innovation research.

6.4.1 Challenges for Western Perspectives: Expanding Beyond Contextual Bias

Western theoretical frameworks often dominate global discourse on social innovation, framing it as a vehicle for addressing societal challenges through transformative and often grassroots-driven processes. These frameworks emphasize concepts such as citizen empowerment, democratic participation, and the decentralization of decision-making, reflecting the socio-political contexts in which they were developed (Moulaert et al., 2007; Nicholls et al., 2015). However, as social innovation research increasingly engages with non-Western contexts, these frameworks encounter significant limitations.

First, the concept of "contextuality" in social innovation—already acknowledged in Western scholarship—gains greater significance in non-Western settings, where political, cultural, and economic conditions diverge considerably from the contexts in which Western theories originated. Empirical studies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America underscore the necessity of grounding social innovation research in localized conditions, including governance structures, societal needs, and cultural norms. For instance, the role of the state as a central actor in social innovation—a common feature in many non-Western countries—complicates the Western narrative that prioritizes grassroots and civil society-driven initiatives. These localized dynamics challenge the applicability of Western theories and necessitate theoretical adaptations that account for diverse institutional and cultural contexts.

Second, Western-centric social innovation research risks perpetuating epistemological biases that prioritize Western experiences and values as universal benchmarks. This “opportunity bias” limits the scope of theoretical innovation by overlooking the unique practices, mechanisms, and outcomes emerging from non-Western contexts. Addressing this issue requires a deliberate effort to integrate non-Western empirical findings into theoretical development, ensuring that social innovation research reflects a genuinely global perspective. Researchers must critically examine the interplay between language, politics, and theory in knowledge production, developing more inclusive frameworks that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries.

Finally, the challenge lies in balancing localized insights with global theory-building. Non-Western cases, such as those in Asia, not only contribute to refining existing theories but also open avenues for conceptual breakthroughs. These cases serve as “boundary-pushing” opportunities for Western research to explore alternative trajectories of social innovation, thereby enriching the theoretical discourse with pluralistic perspectives.

6.4.2 Challenges for Research in China: Localizing Theory without Isolating Practice

Social innovation research in China presents unique challenges that stem from the dual imperatives of leveraging Western theoretical tools and fostering localized

theoretical innovation. Since the late 20th century, China has extensively imported Western social science theories, disciplines, and methodologies to analyze its rapid social and economic transformations. While this has provided valuable analytical frameworks, it has also given rise to a “modernization paradigm” that prioritizes Western-centric approaches, sometimes at the expense of understanding China's unique social, political, and cultural contexts.

On the one hand, Western theories have equipped Chinese researchers with essential tools to examine institutional dynamics, societal structures, and developmental trajectories. These frameworks have facilitated a deeper understanding of China's modernization process, offering insights into governance, social relations, and economic development. However, the dominance of Western paradigms has also fostered a tendency toward “Westernization” in Chinese social science research, resulting in theoretical and methodological misalignments when addressing localized phenomena. This tension highlights the urgent need for localized theoretical innovation that can bridge the gap between Western frameworks and Chinese realities.

A related challenge is the “knowledge risk” associated with selectively applying Western theories to Chinese contexts. Social innovation, as a concept largely imported from the West, carries implicit assumptions about institutional arrangements, societal dynamics, and cultural values that may not align with China's socio-political realities. Addressing this challenge requires a dual approach: first, avoiding the uncritical adoption of Western paradigms by tailoring them to China's unique institutional and cultural contexts; second, ensuring that localized research does not become isolated or overly exceptionalist, thus limiting its contribution to global theoretical development. Striking this balance involves placing Chinese cases within an international comparative perspective, allowing for the identification of both universal principles and context-specific variations in social innovation.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of social innovation research presents an additional challenge in China. Effective knowledge production requires collaboration across academic disciplines and practical fields, breaking down silos to enable the integration of diverse methodologies, perspectives, and resources. This approach facilitates a more holistic understanding of the interplay between local and global dimensions of social innovation, advancing both theoretical and practical insights.

6.4.3 Toward a Balanced Global Framework: A Synthesis

The analysis of Western and Chinese perspectives on social innovation underscores the importance of bridging localized practices with global theoretical frameworks. Western theories must evolve to account for the complex, context-dependent dynamics observed in non-Western settings, moving beyond their traditional emphasis on grassroots empowerment and civil society. At the same time, Chinese research must navigate the tension between adopting Western frameworks and fostering localized theoretical innovation, contributing to the development of a more inclusive, globally relevant body of knowledge.

Ultimately, future social innovation research must embrace a pluralistic approach that values contextual diversity while seeking universal principles. This requires a commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, cross-cultural dialogue, and the integration of diverse empirical insights. By addressing the challenges outlined above, social innovation research can advance toward a more comprehensive and equitable understanding of its processes and outcomes, contributing to the development of theories that reflect the complexities of a globally interconnected world.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

This doctoral dissertation aims to explore how enterprises participate in the reproduction of urban spaces through the development of social innovation. The research is contextualized within the urban cultural revival strategies that have gained both theoretical and practical consensus in various countries and regions across Asia and Europe. Among these strategies, initiatives aimed at revitalizing abandoned buildings and declining communities through cultural revival—thereby redefining urban spaces and their values—are regarded as socially innovative. Cultural spaces are seen as powerful tools for social innovation, contributing to urban regeneration and sustainability.

In China, the development of innovation through cultural commercialization has strong value-based foundations and historical legitimacy. The cross-sectoral innovation of the cultural industries, particularly their involvement in urban spatial planning and reproduction, is one of the main approaches to culture-led urban regeneration. This approach has been recognized and supported at the national institutional and policy levels. The strategic emphasis on the social effects of the cultural industries has reinforced the necessity for cultural enterprises to fulfill their social responsibilities. This creates policy and environmental conditions for cultural enterprises to identify urban and social problems and develop creative and innovative business solutions, positioning them as core drivers of social innovation within the urban framework.

This dissertation understands social innovation as innovations implemented to address social, environmental, and spatial challenges associated with urban regeneration and sustainable development. These innovations include not only new ideas and concepts but also new products, services, activities, processes, and market spaces. They generate significant social benefits and/or create positive social value. The creation of cultural spaces within cities is a specific form of social innovation practice, which simultaneously meets the dual demands for novel spatial solutions and new spatial values (unity in diversity). The combination of innovative business methods and social value within the cultural industries constitutes the primary feature of enterprise

innovation. It also provides theoretical and practical connections for enterprises to advance social innovation within cultural spaces.

This dissertation focuses on urban spaces revitalized through cultural methods within the framework of cultural renewal (cultural spaces) as the research object. It adopts the innovative combination of social innovation theory and the theory of the production of space within the social sciences as the main theoretical approach. The research aims to identify the processes and outcomes of cultural space creation as a stream of social innovation, analyze the relationship between enterprise-led spatial innovation strategies and specific socio-spatial outcomes, understand the role and function of enterprises in cultural space creation and social innovation, summarize the fundamental characteristics and general pathways of cultural industries participating in the reproduction of urban spaces in China, and engage in reflective discussions on social innovation research.

To better understand how enterprises promote social innovation by creating cultural spaces, this study selected three cultural spaces located in the city of Kunming in Southwest China as specific research objects and conducted case studies and empirical analyses. Semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires were the primary methods of data collection, supplemented by participant observation and archival documentation as important additional methods for gathering data. Following the basic requirements of the inductive analysis method, information and data collected from various channels were categorized and analyzed according to the established research framework.

The specific research in this dissertation revolves around addressing three key questions:

- a The creative approaches that cultural enterprises adopt to foster urban revitalization.
- b The management processes and strategies cultural enterprises employ to nurture social innovation.
- c The tangible and intangible outcomes of cultural space creation, and the balance between these outcomes and economic and social value.

The research process also focuses on several critical issues, including the extent to which enterprises develop or stimulate new social and cultural innovations during the promotion of cultural space creation; how different enterprises use differentiated innovative strategies and practices to create and deliver social value; and how cultural

entrepreneurship integrates into urban development through building collaborative relationships with other social sectors and actors. These questions aim to comprehensively and deeply understand the roles and functions of enterprises in the process of participating in the reproduction of urban spaces.

Through research and analysis, this dissertation has yielded several important research findings:

First, *to achieve the predetermined spatial objectives, enterprises have implemented a diverse range of innovative practices.* These include innovation in products, services, processes, markets, and business formats as spatial content, as well as innovation in organizations, networks, technology, and business models that shape the spatial environment. These innovations exhibit characteristics of hybrid distribution and combined application, resulting in the formation of mixed-use cultural spaces. This reflects the multifaceted innovation phenomenon arising from the cross-sector integration of cultural industries and urban space reproduction. It also demonstrates how micro-level spatial objectives are tightly embedded within meso-level urban strategies and macro-level national goals.

Second, *the commercialization of culture to drive social innovation reveals a close interconnection between spatial economic value and social value.* Economic benefits can act both as inputs in the form of spatially related social value investments made by enterprises and as outputs that serve as key conditions for achieving social welfare for specific societal groups. These two dimensions of value are interconvertible in the process of spatial reproduction. Social value is manifested through the "non-commercial benefits" obtained by enterprises during their innovative actions. This close relationship between economic and social value motivates enterprises to explore "commercial practices embedded with social value."

Third, *the innovation actions led by cultural enterprises can entail risks of producing negative socio-spatial outcomes,* including varying degrees of heritage symbolization, spatial gentrification, and the loss of cultural authenticity. These risks highlight the tension between "financial sustainability" and "authenticity sustainability" in cultural production. In the process of spatial creation, responsible enterprises are influenced by a multitude of factors at the macro level (e.g., national institutions, policy environments, local planning) and the micro level (e.g., corporate vision, strategic decision-making, corporate values). This poses challenges to how enterprises can skillfully balance "commercialized practices" with their "social consequences."

Fourth, in cultural space creation, *there is a coexistence of top-down relationships between the government and the private sector and bottom-up innovations within the space*. As a strategic initiative for urban development, local governments play roles as leaders, coordinators, and providers of financial and policy resources in spatial processes. Meanwhile, grassroots creativity, inspiration, ideas, and practices emerge as critical "alternative solutions," playing a pivotal role in the actual spatial transformation and value creation. This reflects the collaborative and negotiated processes between the government and various social actors in the course of innovation.

7.1 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Based on above research design, process, and findings, this dissertation draws the following six conclusions:

Conclusion 1. Cultural enterprises are active drivers of social innovation, contributing to urban regeneration guided by the coordination of diverse values.

The potential of cultural enterprises in financing, creativity and innovation, and networking and connectivity enables them to act as intermediaries between cultural creative scenes and urban services. Their innovative actions lead to transformations in urban organizational forms and spatial structures. On the one hand, cultural spaces showcase and provide new economic models and lifestyles; on the other hand, they articulate a vision of urban well-being based on cultural participation and social inclusion, constructing narratives and expressions of the meaning of space and the city itself.

In the creation of cultural spaces, the capacity of enterprises to implement and develop social innovation is demonstrated through several aspects, including innovation motivation, driving forces, practices, and management. Innovation motivation depends on enterprises' understanding and judgment of problems (e.g., environmental and contextual issues) and opportunities (e.g., policies and trends), while the driving force for innovation is closely related to organizational vision and spatial objectives. Enterprises often exhibit stronger innovation driving forces when faced with limitations and challenges or when their vision and values align with the goals of spatial value creation.

This research indicates that cultural enterprises adopt interdisciplinary approaches to implement spatial creation, with the acquisition of knowledge from related fields becoming a core mechanism for managing and advancing innovation. Together with social capital, the unique values of culture and art, these three factors form the core characteristics of corporate social innovation. Both formal and informal knowledge play equally critical roles, flowing and exchanging within the multi-stakeholder collaborative networks constructed based on the cohesive and networking influence of culture. These knowledge exchanges provide crucial support for enterprise-led innovation.

Conclusion 2. Cultural spaces as urban "social innovation laboratories", catalyzing the linkage and flow of innovation elements.

The “novelty” of actions (ideas, measures, methods) and the “sociality” of outcomes (relationships, values, benefits, objectives) can serve as fundamental criteria for assessing social innovation. The creation of cultural spaces as streams of social innovation reflects how enterprises actively respond to socially oriented cultural planning through the strategic integration or complementation of heritage, creativity, cultural production, and other urban production chains. This underscores enterprises’ contributions to spatial reproduction and provides academic insights into their expanding responsibilities for social innovation in the cultural sector.

The interplay between cultural entrepreneurship and spatial reproduction reveals the complex, dynamic “socio-spatial” mechanisms of innovation processes. Interwoven social systems within cultural spaces reshape human-space relationships, fostering the development of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. These spaces act as hubs for social innovation systems that aggregate diverse stakeholders, facilitating inclusive, open, and cross-boundary cooperation and innovation flows. By employing commercial strategies, enterprises not only engage in the practice of aligning diverse values within spaces but also assume the critical role of agents connecting cultural spaces to other social actors, thus bridging a broader spectrum of innovation elements.

As social innovation laboratories, cultural spaces exert spillover effects on broader social systems, transmitting innovative practices and social values to other domains. Through imitation and diffusion mechanisms, these spaces encourage actors across sectors to explore similar social innovation pathways, enabling multi-layered sharing and large-scale replication of innovative outcomes. Moreover, cultural spaces serve as windows for observing the dynamics and effectiveness of social innovation. They

provide policymakers, enterprises, and other actors with valuable insights to adapt to rapidly changing needs and refine innovation strategies and actions accordingly.

Conclusion 3. Culture plays dual role in social innovation and the innovation is embedded in broader cultural practices.

Implicit social structures and their cultural factors are pivotal to innovation, as culture provides the context, lifestyle, and practical logic of a specific society (Cetina 2007). In the Chinese context, relational networks, the differential mode of association, and the tradition of cultural commercialization offer critical perspectives for understanding social dynamics and network-based innovation processes. These elements affirm the potential of culture to foster profound connectivity (Russell-Koster et al. 2013) and highlight its essential role in shaping the perception, practice, and institutionalization of innovation.

The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) is particularly relevant in this study. Cultural activities such as festivals, exhibitions, and performances within urban spaces enhance collective identity and public participation. These activities not only generate economic value but also establish new forms of social identity and public value. In urban revitalization projects, the cultural industries serve as critical platforms for innovation by leveraging symbolic and semiotic resources to reimagine public spaces and cultivate new forms of social cohesion. In this process, the creative reorganization of productive elements in the cultural field expands the integration of cultural assets with social innovation (Sacco et al. 2018).

Space-creating reflects how innovative actions are embedded in broader cultural practices, where social innovation involves the dual processes of cultural adaptation and cultural creation. Culture serves not only as the environment, context, and condition for innovation but also as a continuously created and reproduced resource. Cultural adaptation demonstrates how innovative practices respond to and internalize cultural traditions and values specific to a given social context. Conversely, cultural creation showcases how innovative agents generate new cultural symbols and systems of meaning through their actions. This bidirectional interaction underscores culture's dual role as both a constraint and a driving force. By shaping the frameworks of social behavior, culture provides inspiration, legitimization, and strategic direction for innovation, enabling it to thrive within and beyond its originating context.

Conclusion 4. Commercialization as a key driver of social innovation that needs integrate with broader development agendas.

Commercialized innovation initiatives can coexist with social innovation, providing a powerful driving force. The market-oriented production of cultural products and services expands possibilities for diverse social participation. By ensuring financial sustainability, market-driven interventions in spatial production demonstrate how economic value can directly facilitate the creation of social value. This process reflects the deep compatibility between commercial practices and social innovation in terms of objectives and methods, highlighting the core features of hybrid innovation models.

The dynamic interweaving of economic and social objectives in innovation underscores an alternative potential for social innovation: the effective integration of economic benefits with social goals as a feasible and synergistic mechanism. Cultural spaces, with their dual economic and social functions, illustrate that social innovation should not be simplistically categorized as "nonprofit" activities. Instead, emphasis should be placed on the dynamic balance and interaction between economic and social benefits within spatial practices, particularly evident in mixed commercial models involving cultural sectors. Hence, social innovation must shift from fixed paradigms to flexible frameworks capable of adapting to diverse societal needs.

Commercialization-driven social innovation reveals a new discourse in this field, marked by a transition from "public good" to "common good." Social innovation must align with broader development agendas, emphasizing a "dual-track" and "dynamic symbiosis" of economic and social benefits. This discourse also considers the "tensions" and "contradictions" inherent in balancing these two dimensions. Within a sustainable framework, such a narrative holds significant importance, contributing to the expansion of both theoretical boundaries and practical paradigms of social innovation.

Conclusion 5. Social innovation as institutionally and culturally embedded—localized knowledge production and expression in China.

The institutional and cultural embeddedness of social innovation in different countries underscores its inherently "institutionally adaptive" and "value-oriented" nature. In China, social innovation in the reproduction of urban spaces is deeply influenced by historical factors such as land policies and market reforms. It exhibits a "top-down" approach characteristic of state-led innovation strategies, with a primary focus on optimizing resource allocation and enhancing production efficiency while beginning to explore new governance models and participatory mechanisms. This

embeddedness reveals the intrinsic logic of social innovation as an institutional practice: it serves macro-level policy objectives while simultaneously addressing micro-level social needs.

Chinese practices demonstrate that successful social innovation outcomes are often the product of dynamic and multidimensional networks of social relationships rather than the efforts of individual actors. As key agents of innovation, enterprises are shaped by institutional factors within hybrid innovation networks. They adopt a path of "pursuing public good through commerce," reflecting the value-driven nature of social innovation. This innovation logic, rooted in state-led initiatives and value integration, highlights the unique advantages of implementing innovation within a framework of shared objectives. It not only facilitates the efficient allocation of resources but also promotes the wide dissemination of innovative outcomes.

China's top-down power structure and resource allocation logic shape social innovation as an optimization and supplementation of existing solutions, prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness in addressing social issues rather than radical transformations. This reveals the multidimensional and complex context of innovation in China, shaped by the interplay of economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Consequently, social innovation in China is not only a process of localized knowledge production but also an act of imagining, expressing, and debating this specific and intricate context.

Conclusion 6. Social innovation requires global experience and inclusive frameworks, enabling theoretical constructs beyond "contextual adaptation".

China's experience demonstrates that social innovation in non-Western contexts should not be viewed merely as localized adaptations of Western models. Western-centric perspectives face inherent limitations in deeply understanding innovation practices in other regions. Building a broader discourse on social innovation necessitates a shift toward more diverse and inclusive theoretical frameworks, premised on recognizing the diversity of social innovation practices and the distinct sociocultural factors and political-economic conditions that shape them.

Research on cultural spaces illustrates that in an interconnected world, social innovation often emerges through interactions between local and global actors, creating hybrid forms that combine elements from different traditions and practices. A reflexive approach is essential, enabling a critical examination of the assumptions underlying theoretical frameworks and facilitating observations of the relational and co-

constitutive aspects of social innovation across varied contexts. Such an approach can elucidate the dynamic interplay of local and global forces in shaping social innovation, driving the production of knowledge from "localization" to "global collaboration."

China's emphasis on state-society collaboration and cultural creativity offers an alternative pathway to achieve social transformation through innovation. This cannot be simplistically interpreted as mere "contextual adaptation" of Western theories. Instead, it signals the potential to construct a "Southern Theory" (Connell, 2007) of social innovation that transcends the constraints of theoretical contextual adaptation. By integrating China's practices into a broader framework, this approach moves beyond the Western-centric origins of social innovation theory and contributes to the development of a diversified theoretical system that resonates with the complexities of global innovation.

7.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMICS, PRACTICE, AND POLICY-MAKING

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from sociology, urban planning, and cultural industry research. It integrates key concepts from social innovation theory and spatial production theory to empirically examine how enterprises in the cultural sector foster social innovation and contribute to urban development through the creation of cultural spaces. By analyzing the innovative spatial practices of these enterprises and the socio-spatial outcomes they generate, this study provides valuable data and perspectives on the role and impact of businesses in shaping cultural spaces. Additionally, it offers both theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of social innovation within urban contexts.

1) Academic Implication

Inspiration of this empirical study for academic research are summarized as follows:

- Advancing scholarly investigation of cultural spaces and social innovation

This study contributes a novel perspective and empirical evidence to enhance scholarly understanding of cultural spaces within the framework of social innovation. As reviewed in Chapter II, existing research in the domain of social innovation has

primarily emphasized "community empowerment" and "citizen participation" within urban cultural spaces. Cultural-led urban renewal, aimed at fostering social inclusion and cohesion, has been celebrated as an innovative practice integrating culture and art with active citizenship and community development. This approach not only highlights the transformative potential of culture but also underscores its capacity to propose inventive and effective spatial solutions for achieving sustainable urban development.

However, while the profound influence of cultural and creative industries on urban transformation is acknowledged—illustrated by the "creative cities" paradigm—there remains insufficient exploration of their potential to inspire social innovation. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth research on managing and cultivating such innovations effectively to enhance spatial values and socio-spatial outcomes.

This dissertation addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between cultural industries and urban spatial reproduction through the lens of social innovation. The analysis focuses on innovative practices adopted by enterprises as key actors in transforming urban spaces. By presenting spatial cases, this study illustrates the dynamic interplay between cultural production, creative industries, and social innovation. It demonstrates that when cultural entrepreneurship aligns closely with urban themes, it generates broader social value, influencing and reshaping spatial forms, structures, and functions. This research provides a differentiated lens and empirical insights for advancing scholarly discourse on social innovation in the cultural field. It also opens avenues for critical reflection on the commercialization of culture within urban frameworks, offering a deeper understanding of its implications for sustainable urban development.

- Exploring new pathways for corporate social innovation

This study introduces fresh dimensions to the academic discourse on corporate social innovation, particularly in the context of the cultural and creative industries. Although corporate social innovation has been extensively studied in mainstream business sectors, multinational corporations, and entrepreneurial ventures, relatively limited attention has been paid to the cultural industry. By examining how companies combine cultural industries with urban renewal—such as through the development of novel business models, promotion of art and cultural exchanges, and support for cultural industry cultivation—this research sheds light on the mechanisms driving corporate social innovation within this sector.

The knowledge-intensive, regionally embedded, and locally oriented nature of the cultural industry distinguishes it from other sectors, particularly in its value orientation, social benefits, and reliance on innovation. This dissertation explores how enterprises engaged in urban development through social innovation can enhance their social and economic contributions. By highlighting specific mechanisms such as organizational innovation, knowledge acquisition, talent development, incentive structures, and the use of social capital, it provides valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners.

Additionally, the study investigates how enterprises integrate corporate social responsibility with innovative practices to address societal challenges. This analysis informs cultural enterprises about strategies to align their creative endeavors with broader societal objectives, fostering both cultural and economic value. The findings further extend the conceptual understanding of corporate social innovation, offering a framework applicable across diverse business sectors and emphasizing the transformative potential of cultural industries within urban contexts.

- Expanding frameworks for understanding urban spatial production

By integrating social innovation theory with the concept of the "trinity" in spatial social production, this dissertation provides an expanded theoretical framework for investigating urban spaces. The interdisciplinary approach, drawing from sociology, urban planning, and cultural industry research, enables a nuanced exploration of the innovative processes underlying the creation of cultural spaces and their socio-spatial outcomes.

Social innovation theory emphasizes dynamic and systematic processes, focusing on novel methodologies, strategies, and models that address societal needs and resolve social challenges. Spatial production theory, on the other hand, explores how spaces are transformed through social relationships and cultural activities. By combining these frameworks, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how innovation-driven practices reshape urban spatial structures, influencing perceptions, experiences, and conceptualizations of space.

This integrated theoretical approach equips researchers with tools to observe innovative spatial practices, analyze their socio-spatial outcomes, and uncover the underlying societal mechanisms and cultural logics. The insights generated from this study not only deepen the understanding of positive spatial value creation but also provide a critical lens for evaluating the role of innovation in sustainable urban development. Through this enriched framework, the study facilitates further

exploration into the complex interrelations between cultural entrepreneurship, spatial innovation, and societal progress.

- Redefining global narratives of social innovation with China's experience

China's approach to balancing commercialization and cultural preservation offers profound insights into redefining global social innovation discourse. By demonstrating the dynamic interplay between state intervention, market forces, and community participation, Chinese cases challenge the Western-centric assumption that decentralized governance is the primary driver of social innovation. This dynamic reveals how tailored governance models can achieve broader inclusivity and adaptability, expanding the theoretical boundaries of social innovation to accommodate diverse socio-political and economic contexts.

These practices also underscore the central role of cultural values in shaping innovation processes. In China, collective ethos, the pursuit of harmony, and an emphasis on long-term development underpin social innovation practices, influencing not only their implementation but also their outcomes. Such culturally embedded approaches highlight the need for global social innovation theories to move beyond universalist frameworks and incorporate localized cultural logics, fostering a richer understanding of how innovation emerges and thrives in varying cultural environments.

Furthermore, China's experience with cultural commercialization demonstrates its systemic potential to address complex societal challenges while driving economic growth. By positioning culture as a core platform for innovation, these practices showcase how cultural industries can simultaneously generate economic and social value, offering a blueprint for integrating cultural production into broader social innovation strategies. This dual potential not only enriches the cultural dimension of social innovation but also emphasizes its capacity to navigate and resolve pressing global issues, creating a compelling reference point for scholars and practitioners worldwide.

2) Practical Implication

In-depth research on the cultural spaces created by enterprises can enhance understanding of the challenges associated with integrating cultural industry innovation into urban renewal. This not only benefits businesses but also other urban stakeholders.

First, this study provides practical insights and foundational principles regarding how enterprises can create cultural spaces through innovative cultural approaches. These findings are of significant practical value for enterprises engaged in urban

development, particularly those within the cultural sector. From the perspectives of organizational transformation and innovation management, the study offers a valuable reference for businesses, helping them stimulate employee creativity, strengthen organizational innovation capabilities, and more effectively engage with social resources during urban spatial transformations. This, in turn, enhances their ability to fulfill corporate social responsibilities and create sustainable, positive social impacts through innovative actions.

The study's exploration of the core mechanisms and influencing factors of corporate social innovation, along with the insights derived from the three case studies on spatial projects, offers valuable guidance for enterprise decision-makers and practitioners. These insights will help improve the quality and attractiveness of cultural space projects, ensuring positive socio-spatial outcomes. Additionally, the study encourages businesses to prioritize the integration of societal needs into innovation development and management processes, thereby enhancing the social impact of their innovations.

Second, from an urban development perspective, cultural space as a manifestation of cultural revitalization must transcend the limitations inherent in spatial subjects and methodologies. It should foster and explore diverse, innovative solutions by considering a broader perspective that includes social entities, networks, and influences. This approach will allow cultural space production to achieve sustainability-oriented spatial goals by leveraging synergistic, multifaceted values.

On the one hand, the concept of social innovation demands attention to issues related to social participation and collaboration in spatial production. Positive outcomes of social spaces are contingent on establishing innovative networks involving diverse participants and collaborations. On the other hand, within China's current paradigm of spatial production—characterized by the interplay of "power + capital"—applying a social innovation lens allows enterprises to better align their social responsibilities with societal concerns. This also emphasizes the continuous creation of societal value and the attainment of social benefits through innovation, thus promoting equitable, inclusive, and sustainable spatial outcomes.

Therefore, the main specific recommendations for the cultural enterprises and other private business participated in cultural industries may include:

Organizational innovation. Enterprises can apply the findings to stimulate creativity within their teams and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. For example,

adopting inclusive decision-making processes that prioritize community input can lead to innovative solutions better aligned with societal needs.

Project design and implementation. By drawing on the case studies analyzed in this research, enterprises can refine their approach to cultural space projects. Practical measures include integrating diverse cultural elements to enhance space appeal, leveraging technology to improve accessibility, and building partnerships with local communities to ensure relevance and inclusivity.

Enhancing enterprise role in policy-making. By aligning their initiatives with urban cultural policy goals, enterprises can serve as valuable collaborators for local governments. This symbiotic relationship not only advances urban objectives but also helps enterprises fulfill their social responsibilities while creating long-term economic value.

Moreover, the research findings can inform *cultural enterprises' strategic planning and investment decisions*. For instance:

- Identifying underutilized urban spaces as potential sites for cultural innovation.
- Developing metrics to evaluate the socio-spatial impact of cultural projects.
- Exploring new business models that integrate cultural production with sustainable urban development.

3) Policy Implication

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for local governments regarding the production of urban cultural spaces, providing novel ideas and approaches for urban planning and management. Additionally, the research contributes to the recognition of the importance of stimulating and nurturing social innovation, leading to the formulation of policies and measures that support and facilitate cultural and social innovation, while encouraging business participation in urban development. This, in turn, injects innovative drive and vitality into sustainable urban development.

By conducting an in-depth investigation of the innovative behaviors of enterprises, government entities, and relevant stakeholders, the study sheds light on the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities involved in leveraging cultural industry innovation to empower urban renewal. It emphasizes the critical role of enterprises in creating cultural spaces for urban innovation practices. Consequently, the study suggests that specific policies—such as incentivizing cultural industry innovation, optimizing financial support mechanisms, and offering tax incentives and financial services—

should be implemented to foster a favorable policy environment that encourages enterprise investment in urban development.

Furthermore, the study's focus on enterprise participation in creating cultural spaces can stimulate the government to learn from innovative practices within the private sector. This learning process can lead to the diversified and specialized development of public cultural services and spaces that effectively address the needs of urban populations.

The findings also hold significant reference value for advancing social innovation policies in China, particularly in light of the growing emphasis on the societal impacts of cultural industries. There is a clear need to formulate more favorable policies for cultural innovation and encourage greater participation from enterprises, institutions, and individuals in cultural innovation initiatives. Such measures will collectively foster social progress and development.

However, while the successful experiences of businesses in promoting social innovation through cultural space creation are noteworthy, they do not fully counterbalance the negative consequences that can arise when economic sectors engage in urban renewal. From this perspective, viewing urban areas as comprehensive value systems through the lens of social innovation can help local governments and society reassess current urban renewal strategies. This approach can drive innovative reforms in urban governance models, empowering various societal sectors, institutions, communities, and citizens to have greater agency and autonomy. Ultimately, this will enhance cooperation and dialogue between enterprises and urban actors, encouraging bottom-up innovative practices. These efforts will contribute to the sustainable development of cities and society.

Therefore, the main specific recommendations for urban policies in this domain may include:

Policy design. Actionable insights into the mechanisms and effects of cultural industry innovation in urban contexts provided by the research can guide the development of targeted policies that:

- Encourage enterprise investment in urban renewal through financial incentives, tax benefits, and funding programs.
- Support the establishment of public-private partnerships that leverage enterprise expertise in cultural production for urban development.

- Promote cultural innovation as a pillar of urban planning, ensuring that cultural spaces address both communities needs and urban sustainability goals.

Cultural and urban planning strategies. Urban planners can apply the findings to design cultural spaces that serve as hubs for social innovation such as:

- Using the study's case analyses to identify best practices for integrating cultural activities into urban spaces.

- Incorporating community-led initiatives into cultural policy frameworks to ensure inclusivity and relevance.

- Developing evaluation frameworks to measure the effectiveness of cultural policies and their socio-spatial impact.

Bridging the gap between policy and practice. The need for adaptive governance models that align cultural policies with on-the-ground practices was emphasized in this study. Policymakers can draw on the research findings to:

- Facilitate dialogue between cultural enterprises, urban communities, and governmental bodies.

- Support bottom-up innovation by creating platforms for community participation in cultural space development.

- Address challenges such as gentrification and social displacement through equitable and inclusive policy measures.

Fostering a collaborative ecosystem. The findings also encourage policymakers to foster ecosystems that promote collaboration among diverse stakeholders. By integrating cultural enterprises into urban renewal projects, governments can create vibrant cultural spaces that enhance urban resilience and community well-being. Specific measures include:

- Establishing innovation hubs that bring together enterprises, local artists, and community organizations.

- Offering training programs to equip cultural enterprises with skills for engaging in urban development.

- Developing long-term strategies for monitoring and sustaining the impact of cultural spaces.

7.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research presented in this paper explores cultural spaces as a social innovation stream, offering significant innovative insights and enlightening perspectives, particularly with regard to the research approach and theoretical framework. However, the study also has certain limitations that affect both the credibility and generalizability of its findings. These limitations primarily manifest in the following areas:

- **Limitations in research methodology and sample selection**

This dissertation focuses on an empirical study of urban cultural spaces to identify innovative strategies and methods employed by enterprises in creating these spaces. The study aims to summarize the key mechanisms through which enterprises promote social innovation via space reproduction and to elucidate the causal relationships between enterprise innovation actions and spatial outcomes. To achieve this, the study utilized qualitative research and case study methodologies. While case studies enable in-depth, detailed, and context-specific analyses of individual cases, the multiple-case study approach adopted in this research also facilitates a comparative analysis across cases. This approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences in social innovation patterns across various spatial instances, providing a foundation for recognizing more generalizable and consistent trends in cultural space-driven social innovation.

However, overall, this study has limitations in terms of sample selection and the number of cases. The limited number of cases (three) does not cover a broader range of cultural spaces in cities across other regions of China. Although the general production mechanism of cultural spaces exhibits notable universality nationwide, significant variations exist between different regions and cities in terms of urban conditions, innovation environments, the level of cultural industry development, flexibility of local policies, and the potential and capacity for enterprise innovation. As a result, the limited sample from Kunming cannot fully represent the specific circumstances and potential diversity of other cultural spaces, thereby restricting the generalizability of the research findings and affecting the broader applicability of the study's conclusions.

On the one hand, as a provincial capital in southwestern China, Kunming presents a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities for cultural enterprises. Its geographical location, cultural heritage, and historical significance influence the development of

cultural spaces in ways that may not be representative of other regions in China. For instance, Kunming's proximity to Southeast Asia contributes to a unique cultural exchange, which fosters a more diverse, cosmopolitan cultural environment compared to cities in central or eastern China. This cultural diversity may encourage a different approach to cultural innovation, one that is heavily influenced by cross-border interactions and a rich tapestry of local ethnic groups, such as the Yi and Bai communities. As a result, cultural enterprises in Kunming may be more inclined to integrate indigenous cultural practices, which could differ significantly from the more standardized cultural production mechanisms seen in larger metropolises like Beijing or Shanghai.

On the other hand, the urban conditions in Kunming, such as its smaller size, relatively lower level of economic development, and different policy landscape, create a distinct innovation environment. The flexibility of local government policies, the level of support for cultural industries, and the scale of urbanization all influence the capacity for social innovation. Kunming's cultural industry, while growing, is not as mature or diversified as those in major urban centers. Therefore, the drivers of cultural innovation in Kunming may not reflect the broader trends in other cities, especially those with more developed cultural infrastructures.

Another important factor is the level of state involvement in Kunming's cultural projects, which may differ from policies in more economically advanced regions. Local government priorities, such as promoting tourism, local heritage, or regional economic growth, could lead to cultural innovation practices that are tightly intertwined with government objectives. This public-private relationship may limit the autonomy of cultural enterprises, a dynamic that might not be as pronounced in other urban settings where the state plays a more passive role in cultural sector development.

In light of these regional variations, the findings from Kunming-based case studies may not fully reflect the diversity and complexity of cultural enterprises in other regions.

Additionally, the small sample size limits the broad applicability of the research findings. The case selection process involves a certain degree of bias, which may influence the results by inadvertently highlighting successful patterns that align with the researcher's hypothesis, while neglecting other potential cases that could reveal different trends or challenges. Moreover, selecting only successful or relatively successful cases does not address the challenges and obstacles encountered by failed projects, which are equally crucial for understanding the dynamics of cultural

innovation and social impact. Therefore, expanding the sample to include cities with diverse economic, political, and cultural contexts in future research is essential, as it would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing social innovation within China's diverse cultural landscape.

- **Challenges in data collection and quantification**

The use of qualitative research methods presents significant challenges related to data collection and quantification in this study. The primary method employed for data gathering is semi-structured interviews with participants from the selected case spaces, supplemented by data from relevant statistical institutions and participatory observation. These methods aim to enhance the diversification and reliability of the empirical data on cultural spaces while compensating for the absence of quantitative data.

However, semi-structured interviews are subject to several limitations. Firstly, they are vulnerable to the researchers' subjective biases, which may influence data selection and interpretation. The effectiveness of these interviews relies heavily on the dynamic interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. Despite the researcher's proficiency in field research techniques, the results can still be affected by the researcher's perspectives and questioning style during the interview process. These factors can introduce subjective bias into the collected data.

Additionally, the involvement of company representatives, including leadership, core managers, and key stakeholders in the space industry, also introduces challenges in the data collection process:

- Interviewees may be reluctant to disclose sensitive information due to concerns about business confidentiality, privacy protection, and corporate reputation. This limits the researcher's ability to gather comprehensive, objective, and accurate insights regarding the companies' involvement in the space sector.

- Factors such as interviewees' memory, communication skills, and interpretation of questions may also contribute to incomplete or inaccurate data collection during interviews.

- Given the considerable time and resource requirements of semi-structured interviews, the study was restricted to a limited number of participants, thereby limiting access to a wider range of perspectives and information.

Furthermore, the lack of a standardized statistical indicator system presents significant challenges in the quantitative analysis and discussion of social innovation within the urban context. While economic value derived from cultural spaces can be

captured through relevant data, it is more difficult to effectively quantify and describe other crucial aspects, such as innovative practices, innovation management, and the social value created by newly established cultural spaces, using straightforward quantitative measures. The quantitative data used in this study is drawn from two primary sources: self-reported statistics from the companies and data obtained from relevant institutions. However, because there is no unified statistical methodology, considerable variability exists in the indicators related to cultural activities or participant numbers across different companies, spaces, and institutions. This lack of standardization, coupled with the incomplete nature of the available data, creates substantial challenges in employing, integrating, and analyzing the research data. As a result, the comparability and statistical significance of the findings are significantly limited.

- **Constraints on the scope and comprehensiveness of the research**

The diversity and dynamism of social innovation theory present practical challenges for this empirical study. Specifically, the author sought to employ interdisciplinary methodologies to analyze the creation of cultural spaces, which posed significant obstacles in terms of scientific rigor, methodological applicability, and the comprehensiveness of the research content. A central aspect of social innovation research involves scaling innovation, particularly its sustainability, replicability, and the extent to which specific innovative behaviors and solutions can generate broader societal impacts. In this study, however, several key elements remain insufficiently addressed, including evaluating the long-term social impacts of enterprise-led cultural space creation, assessing whether the experiences, pathways, and models identified can be successfully replicated or adapted in other cities or regions, and exploring the relationship between enterprise innovation outcomes and institutional or social environmental differences across different cities. These gaps limit the overall completeness and generalizability of the research findings.

In addition, while the research framework innovatively integrates social innovation theory and spatial production theory, the analysis that treats cultural space construction as a linear process of social innovation somewhat diminishes the role of "structural elements" in the socio-spatial production process. The identification and analysis of enterprise-led innovative practices primarily focus on the one-way impact of innovation, without adequately addressing the counteracting forces that may arise from these outcomes. These forces influence enterprise strategies and actions, as well as their

specific manifestations in spatial outcomes. Moreover, spatial production theory serves as a theoretical tool for discussing cultural-spatial outcomes, yet it does not delve into deeper analysis of critical relationships such as the dynamics of innovation and power, social change, or the conflicts of interest that may emerge during the cultural space construction process. These factors substantially affect the depth and analytical rigor of the study.

- **Inherent limitations of the researcher**

Cultural and social innovation inherently involve subjectivity and value judgments, which inevitably influence the perspectives, viewpoints, and expertise of the researcher. Personal theoretical backgrounds, life experiences, and values can introduce biases or preferences that may affect various stages of the research process, including problem formulation, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results.

As a social science researcher from China, the author's background may unintentionally introduce personal values into the research. The commercialization of culture has been one of the most extensively debated topics in cultural studies in both Eastern and Western contexts. The author's "Eastern experience" lends credibility to their involvement in the cultural industry's intersection with urban space reproduction. This, in turn, influences the formulation of hypotheses regarding the ability of enterprises to promote social innovation through spatial transformation and their subsequent validation through rigorous research. However, it is important to recognize that this may lead to subjectivity and bias, particularly during the stages of data collection, interpretation, and the formulation of research conclusions, potentially affecting the presentation of objective findings.

Furthermore, despite possessing substantial professional theoretical knowledge and research expertise, the author acknowledges a limitation in fully comprehending the breadth of social innovation. The diversity of achievements, key perspectives, and primary methodologies related to social innovation across multiple disciplines presents challenges in grasping the full complexity of the field. This limitation may impact the depth and accuracy of the study's analysis.

7.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

The research process and findings of this study reveal significant potential for further, more in-depth exploration into cultural space creation and social innovation. Several critical questions remain to be addressed in this area, such as how cultural commercialization can successfully balance economic objectives with social responsibilities during urban spatial transformation, how institutions and policies can facilitate the effective integration of cultural industries with social innovation, and how social innovation can contribute to the sustainable development of urban spaces. These issues open up promising avenues for future research, offering valuable directions and insights for advancing knowledge in this field.

- **Theoretical framework for social innovation in the Chinese context**

The limitations of current social innovation theories in capturing the intricate socio-political, cultural, and economic dynamics of China underscore the importance of developing context-sensitive theoretical frameworks that incorporate the diversity of Chinese social innovation practices. Future research directions could include:

Revisiting the role of the state: Examining the multifaceted roles of the state in social innovation, analyzing its functions as a facilitator, supporter, and regulator. Research should explore how the state balances these roles and the ways in which it influences resource allocation and policy interventions.

Analyzing the embeddedness of civil society: Delving into the role of civil society within China's state structures and cultural norms, focusing on how it both supports and constrains social innovation practices. Particular attention could be given to how civil society, characterized by a blend of Western notions of social participation and Chinese collectivist traditions, redefines its operational logic within a state-dominated environment.

Exploring the complexity of hybrid economic systems: Investigating the interactions and collaborations among China's economic actors, including state-owned enterprises, private companies, and third-sector organizations. Future studies could analyze how these actors integrate resources, reconcile interests, and create value, as well as the ways in which hybrid systems collectively shape social innovation processes.

- **Theoretical perspectives on structures and actor interactions in social innovation**

The social innovation practices observed in China's cultural spaces reveal a highly complex scenario of multi-actor collaboration. This intricate cooperative process highlights the impact of structural constraints on actors' capacity for innovation, an area that warrants further exploration. Possible research directions include:

Dynamic balance between structure and agency: The relationship between structure and agency in social innovation often manifests as an interplay of power and conflict. Future studies could explore how state institutions shape actors' operational spaces and how actors, including governments, enterprises, and grassroots organizations, creatively reconfigure resources and pathways within institutional constraints.

The role of informal networks and cultural embeddedness: Investigating how informal networks interact with formal institutions to adapt and optimize innovation pathways. Research could focus on how the strength of network relationships influences innovation outcomes and how cultural embeddedness affects both the practice and results of innovation.

The dynamics of innovation in hybrid systems: Social innovation requires cross-sectoral collaboration. Future research could examine the synergistic patterns between formal mechanisms, such as policy guidance, and informal mechanisms, such as interpersonal relationships. Identifying the factors that drive the overall dynamics of social innovation would provide valuable insights into fostering effective multi-sectoral cooperation.

- **Social Innovation Practices of Cultural Enterprises in China**

The role of cultural enterprises in China's social innovation remains underexplored, particularly in light of the substantial challenges these enterprises face in balancing commercialization with social responsibility. There is a significant gap in understanding the strategies and mechanisms these enterprises employ to reconcile their social and economic objectives. Future research directions may include:

Examining the ecosystem of cultural enterprises: Conducting comprehensive analyses of the goals, strategies, and impacts of cultural enterprises in social innovation. Studies could investigate how these enterprises build ecosystems for social innovation through their practices and explore how they navigate the balance between economic rationality and value rationality to reveal their roles in urban renewal and community development.

Exploring the intersection of community and culture: The effectiveness of integrating creative practices with community needs is critical to the success of cultural enterprises in social innovation. Future research could examine strategies these enterprises use to foster social engagement, such as inclusive public space design, as a means of addressing social challenges.

Analyzing state-market relationships: Investigating how cultural enterprises interact with state policies, including the formation of public-private partnerships and the utilization of policy incentives. Research should also explore how these enterprises mitigate potential constraints and the impact of such strategies on consolidating and scaling their innovative outcomes.

Assessing socioeconomic impacts: A systematic evaluation of the contributions of cultural enterprises to social innovation is necessary, particularly regarding their long-term effects on social inclusivity and sustainability. Future studies could adopt interdisciplinary approaches, combining sociology and economics, to quantify their effects on reducing inequality, enhancing cultural diversity, and promoting urban renewal.

- **Chinese Experiences in a Global Context**

China's social innovation practices, exemplified by cultural spaces, provide valuable lessons for global theory and practice. These practices highlight a unique combination of state leadership, market-driven dynamics, and community participation while embodying the intricate balance between cultural commercialization and social responsibility. However, effectively integrating these localized experiences into global theoretical frameworks and reflecting on their challenges to existing Western theories remain critical unresolved issues. Future research directions may include:

Global integration of local practices: Exploring how China's social innovation practices can contribute to global innovation networks through international cooperation and knowledge sharing. This could involve analyzing the global competitiveness of Chinese cultural enterprises and their potential influence on international social innovation practices, fostering hybrid models that merge local and global perspectives.

Challenging and complementing western theories: Reevaluating, validating, and expanding Western-centric theories of participatory governance and inclusive innovation through the lens of Chinese experiences. For instance, analyzing how China's social innovation models challenge the decentralization paradigm central to

Western theories could uncover alternative and diversified pathways for social innovation.

CLOSING REMARKS

This study has consistently sought to balance "objective" and "subjective" analytical approaches, recognizing that social innovation emerges from within the social sphere itself. In exploring its specific phenomena and experiences, and in extracting and generalizing its characteristics, essence, and patterns, it is crucial to consider the objective social context and conditions in which these innovations occur. However, at the same time, the researcher's cultural background, perspective, values, and emotions inevitably influence the research process, including data selection and interpretation. Therefore, this paper also integrates reflexive methods in the study of social innovation to better understand the challenges posed by globalization, particularly the impact of global economic production models on knowledge production. By establishing an equal relationship between concrete phenomena and scientific research outcomes, this approach aims to enhance the effectiveness and validity of the research findings.

This dissertation also represents a thoughtful reflection and response to the author's inquiries following her participation in the 2016 ASEF International Exchange Project "Eurasian Creaspace Networking". Against the backdrop of an era and paradigm shift, the social sciences must recognize the discrepancies in social phenomena and actions arising from diverse societal contexts, while also acknowledging the importance of fostering the development of diversified knowledge production. Urban cultural spaces emerge as compelling and dynamic entry points that stimulate innovative potential at both the practical and theoretical levels, thereby contributing to human welfare through various perspectives within the field of social innovation.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Interviewees: Relevant personnel from the leadership and management of cultural space operating enterprises, including key decision-makers, core managers, and essential stakeholders.

Interview design: Based on the main research questions and research framework, the interview content is divided into five parts to precisely understand the background and basic situation of the enterprise and space, innovative actions taken by the enterprise in creating cultural spaces, management and development of innovation by the enterprise, results and impacts of cultural spaces, sustainability of cultural spaces, etc. Each part consists of questions researchers want to know and additional content that interviewees believe needs to be supplemented. The supplementary content is crucial in filling gaps or deficiencies in research design. It helps researchers overcome subjectivity in research hypotheses and predictions by providing more practical information and data for specific research questions.

Interview duration: Approximately 2 hours.

The interview questions mainly include (but are not limited to) the following contents.

1. Background and basic information about cultural spaces and responsible enterprises

- Please briefly introduce the historical background and basic information of your company or institution.
- Please introduce your specific position and primary responsibilities within your organization.
- Please introduce the vision and mission of your company or institution.
- Currently, what are your company/institution's main business areas, products, and services? What is the situation of the target audience?
- What motivated your company/institution to participate in creating cultural spaces?

2. Innovation solutions and practices for creating cultural spaces

- What is the role of innovation in corporate development, especially in corporate participation in urban spatial transformation?
- Please explain the process your company/institution follows to discover and choose innovative concepts for spatial regeneration schemes.
- What strategies and actions has your company taken to create cultural spaces? How are these integrated with spatial renewal, company competitiveness, and market demand?
- What are the sources of funding for investment in cultural spaces? What is the composition of these funds? Does the company finance the investment in space through financing?
- What is the significance of important events (or major breakthroughs) in creating cultural spaces for the company?
- Does your organization utilize unique, innovative strategies for various projects and practices in cultural spaces? How will these strategies impact the long-term development of the space and the organization?

3. The management and development of innovation in enterprises

- What challenges did your enterprise/institution face while developing innovative ideas and methods, and how were they resolved?
- What are the key factors that contribute to developing and improving the ability of businesses to innovate?"
- How does your company or institution foster innovation capacity to create an environment that encourages innovation? What specific actions does your enterprise take to support the advancement of innovative practices (including the design and implementation of institutional innovation, management mechanism innovation, and organizational learning mechanism innovation)?
- How does your company collaborate with cultural entrepreneurs, policymakers, educational institutions, and research organizations? What are your specific modes of cooperation?
- How do cooperative relationships impact innovation and promote cultural integration in urban development?
- How should organizations build relationships with government, community, and cultural institutions during space creation? How is your company approaching this?

4. Results and Influence of Targeted Cultural Space

- What are the social values and beliefs of the enterprise/institution where you work? Is this belief integrated into the enterprise's overall strategy? If so, how is it integrated?

- What specific outcomes have your innovative actions yielded in the current cultural space? How do you assess these results? Have they met the company's initial expectations? If not, why not?

-Please provide specific examples of the impacts that the cultural spaces created by your company have had on the enterprise itself, the community, and Kunming.

-How did your company balance commercial interests and social values when creating this space? What innovative actions and strategies conveyed cultural concepts and social values?

- Have you noticed if your enterprise or institution has contributed to developing new cultural or social innovation strategies by promoting the creation of cultural spaces? If yes, please provide specific examples of these strategies and their impacts. Also, how can these strategies further drive social and cultural innovation?

- Has your company or institution engaged community residents or other stakeholders in participatory design to create cultural spaces? If so, please provide a specific example that illustrates how this participatory approach has impacted the cultural space's outcome.

- How does your cultural space serve the cultural and social needs of the surrounding community?

- How do you evaluate the impact of your cultural space on culture, society, and the economy?

- What innovative solutions and practices related to cultural spaces are replicable, learnable, and sustainable in your organization and other enterprises involved in urban renewal?

- What role can cultural entrepreneurs play in creating cultural spaces? Also, what role should enterprises play in urban renewal?

- How do you evaluate the personal benefits achieved through participation in cultural space creation? (This may include educational opportunities and personal abilities such as innovation, employability, networking skills, a sense of belonging to specific social groups, and prospects for professional development.)

5. Sustainability and others

- What is the relationship between corporate social responsibility and innovation?
How does your company consider corporate social responsibility when creating a cultural space?

-Did your company take steps to ensure environmental and social sustainability when creating a cultural space?

- What are your expectations for the future development of your company/institution in creating cultural spaces?

-What new innovative solutions or projects does your company plan to implement in the next few years?

-Is promoting integration between cultural industry and urban space creation important through formulating and implementing effective cultural policies and urban planning?

- How do current policies and regulations impact the development of cultural spaces and innovation in this field?

6. Other topics raised form the conversation or the information provided by the interviewees.

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire on the efficacy and satisfaction of cultural space in Kunming City

Dear Ms/Mr.,

This questionnaire survey is carried out to better understand the actual effectiveness of Kunming cultural space in protecting and inheritance traditional culture, shaping urban life, meeting people's cultural needs, and other aspects, accurately grasp the relevant evaluation of people's satisfaction with cultural space, and promote the better development of urban cultural space.

We promise that this survey will be set up and carried out strictly with the relevant requirements of social science research and will be collected anonymously. All results will be used only for academic research, and we will keep them strictly confidential.

Filling in the questionnaire will take about 3-5 minutes. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Please feel free to fill out the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your help and support!

A Basic Information

A1 Your gender

☐ male

☐ female

A2 Your age

- ☐ 0-18 years old
- ☐ Ages 18-35
- ☐ Ages 35-60
- ☐ >60 years old

A3 You are

- ☐ Resident
- ☐ Tourist

A4 Your occupation

- ☐ Civil servant/public sector personnel
- ☐ Business managers
- ☐ Company rank-and-file
- ☐ Technical professionals (researchers, doctors, teachers, engineers, etc.)
- ☐ Private owners
- ☐ Migrant workers
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Retirees
- ☐ Freelancers
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

A5 Your academic qualifications

- ☐ Primary and below
- ☐ Middle school
- ☐ High school or technical secondary school
- ☐ Bachelor's or junior college
- ☐ Master's degree or above

B Basic information about cultural life

B1 Do you understand what cultural space is

- ☐ Very much so
- ☐ Relatively
- ☐ Basic understanding
- ☐ Not much understanding

B2 Which of the following places do you think can be called cultural Spaces?

(Multiple options are available)

- ☐ Museum/Library
- ☐ Cultural house/art exhibition center
- ☐ Cinema/Theatre
- ☐ Sports venues
- ☐ Community cultural center
- ☐ Parks of all kinds
- ☐ Historical and cultural districts
- ☐ Cultural and creative industry park
- ☐ City Square
- ☐ A place of living and leisure with a strong cultural atmosphere
- ☐ Others (please be specific) _____

B3 What cultural Spaces do you frequently visit? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Museum/Library
- ☐ Cultural house/art exhibition center
- ☐ Cinema/Theatre
- ☐ Sports venues
- ☐ Community cultural centers
- ☐ Parks of all kinds
- ☐ Historical and cultural districts
- ☐ Cultural and creative industry park
- ☐ Town square
- ☐ A place of living and leisure with a strong cultural atmosphere
- ☐ Others (please be specific) _____

B4 How often do you visit these cultural Spaces on average?

- ☐ Hardly ever.
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a week
- ☐ Go almost every day

B5 The amount of time you spend each time in a public cultural place is approximately

- ☐ Within 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes to an hour
- ☐ 1 hour to 2 hours
- ☐ 2 hours and up

B6 What cultural projects/activities do you enjoy? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Cultural lecture
- ☐ Cultural and art exhibitions
- ☐ Intangible cultural heritage and other traditional cultural experience
- ☐ Artistic performances (music, opera, drama, etc.)
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ New fashion items (skateboarding, Frisbee, etc.)
- ☐ Other projects (please specify) _____

B7 What cultural services do you hope the cultural space can provide? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Cultural literacy (e.g. lectures, exhibitions, etc.)
- ☐ Inheritance of traditional Chinese culture (e.g. calligraphy, tea ceremony, etc.)
- ☐ Arts training (art, music, dance, etc.)
- ☐ Home skills (cooking, floriculture, tidying, etc.)
- ☐ Daily leisure (festivals, creative fairs, etc.)
- ☐ Other programs (please specify) _____

C Perception, experience and evaluation of the case space

C1 How do you know this cultural space (referring to the interviewee's current location)? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Recommended
- ☐ News
- ☐ The space organization's publicity campaign
- ☐ By participating in other events
- ☐ Internet/Multimedia
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

C2 (for Internet/Multimedia selection) From which specific source did you get this information? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Wechat
- ☐ Tiktok
- ☐ Little Red Hands
- ☐ Quick Hands
- ☐ Space official website
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

C3 What are the main reasons for you to come to this cultural space? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Killing time
- ☐ Shopping
- ☐ Watching a show
- ☐ Friends Party
- ☐ Family gatherings
- ☐ Visit the museum/exhibition gallery within the space
- ☐ Participating in space organization culture and art training
- ☐ Participating in the cultural experience of space organization (intangible cultural heritage)
- ☐ Visit as a tourist
- ☐ Getting to know the history/culture of the city/communities
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

C4 How would you evaluate the watchability of this space

	5	4	3	2	1
I like the overall atmosphere and style of the space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like the exterior landscape design of the space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like the internal structure of the space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think the space is a good representation of the city/local culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 5 = Totally agree
 4 = Agree
 3 = Neutral
 2 = Disagree
 1 = Totally disagree

C5 How would you evaluate the accessibility of the space

	5	4	3	2	1
Very free in and out of space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The opening hours of the space are reasonable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The traffic accessibility of the space is very high.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 5 = Totally agree
 4 = Agree
 3 = Neutral
 2 = Disagree
 1 = Totally disagree

C6 How would you evaluate the comfortability of this space

	5	4	3	2	1
The sanitary condition of the space is clean and tidy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The facilities in the space are easy to use.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are enough places and facilities for people to rest in the space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The layout and setting of the space are pedestrian-friendly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 5 = Totally agree
 4 = Agree
 3 = Neutral
 2 = Disagree
 1 = Totally disagree

C7 How would you evaluate the inclusivity of this space

	5	4	3	2	1
Space does not exclude a particular group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can carry out various activities in the public space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I don't have to worry about my privacy being invaded in the space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are good barrier-free facilities in the space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The space is elderly friendly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The space is friendly to teenagers and children.					

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C8 How would you evaluate the performance of the activities in this space

	5	4	3	2	1
Space carries out a wide variety of activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The content of activities carried out in space is interesting.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Space will provide venues and conditions for the masses to hold mass cultural activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Space will carry out youth cultural activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The space will carry out cultural activities related to local traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C9 How do you evaluate the service capability and level of this space?

	5	4	3	2	1
The facilities in the space are in good hardware condition.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The comprehensive management level of the space is higher.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The staff in the space has high comprehensive quality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The public cultural facilities in the space are rich in content and are often changed and new.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C10 How do you evaluate the social experience you get in this space?

	5	4	3	2	1
Space provides great places to socialize.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am willing to communicate with others by participating in various activities in the space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can make new friends by participating in various activities in space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can find a community with the same interests by participating in space activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C11 How do you evaluate the psychological feeling you get in this space?

	5	4	3	2	1
Taking part in space activities can help me relax myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking part in space activities can help me relieve the pressure.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking part in space activities can help me feel happy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking part in space activities can help me gain a sense of belonging.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C12 How do you evaluate the educational function of this space?

	5	4	3	2	1
It provides me with the opportunity to learn new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It increases my knowledge of local culture and city history.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helps me to know more about myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helps me understand people and things around me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helps me to know more about the society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 = Totally agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral

2 = Disagree

1 = Totally disagree

C13 What is your satisfaction with the cultural space (compared to your expectations before visiting/using it)?

- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ discontented
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied

C14 Please list the top three reasons that you are most satisfied with the cultural space.

C15 Please list the top three reasons that you are most dissatisfied with the cultural space.

C16 In your opinion, what could be improved in this cultural space? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Add cultural facilities
- ☐ Increase cultural activities
- ☐ Increased publicity
- ☐ Improve the level of service
- ☐ More cultural products for public benefit
- ☐ Increase interaction with the community
- ☐ Increase dining (or other consumption) venues
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

C18 Are you willing to contribute to the cultural space?

- ☐ No.
- ☐ Less willing
- ☐ Average
- ☐ More willing
- ☐ Very willing

C19 (Continued) If so, in what way would you like to participate in the cultural space? (Multiple options are available)

- ☐ Provide funds or materials
- ☐ Provide classes or training projects (as talent)
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Being a participator
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

C20 Which group/institution do you think would be better suited to operate the cultural space?

- ☐ Government agencies
- ☐ Social groups
- ☐ Business organizations
- ☐ Individuals
- ☐ Volunteer groups
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

C21 Why do you think it would be better for the cultural space management and operation?

C22 What do you think are the main problems existing in cultural spaces currently? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Overall planning for urban development is inadequate
- ☐ Professional and distinctive concrete plans are lacking
- ☐ There is a phenomenon of multi-management
- ☐ The space or activity is not attractive
- ☐ Not enough publicity and promotion
- ☐ The operation team has frequent turnover and lack of professionalism
- ☐ Lack of continuous operation ability
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Irregular daily management
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

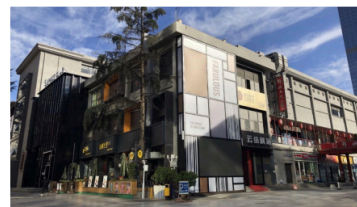
C23 What are your suggestions for cultural spaces to achieve better development? (Multiple options available)

- ☐ Strengthen the integrity and specificity of the plan
- ☐ Clarify management ownership
- ☐ Increase financial input
- ☐ Attracting private investment
- ☐ Bring in professional social forces
- ☐ To increase the initiative of citizens, communities and other arts and cultural institutions
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

Thank you for your participation and support!

APPENDIX C

IMAGES OF YUNFANG CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC SPACES



A	C
A	C
B	D
	D

A: Yunfang Museum

B: Yunfang Musica Square

C: Yunfang 24-Hour Smart Library

D: Yunfang Theatre

Images source: Yunfang Company

APPENDIX D

IMAGES OF SHICUI MINYI PARK



A	B	E
A	C	
D		F

A: Public areas

B: Yunnan handicrafts studios

C: Art museum of metal (the tinware)

D: Exhibition hall

E: Gallery

F: Yunnan flower studio collaborated with Kunming City College

Image source:

C: Shicui Compnay

A/B/C/E/F: Photographed by the author.

APPENDIX D

IMAGES OF WENMING HISTORIC BLOCK



A	B	C
D	E	
F	G	H

A: Aerial view of the Wenming Historic Block

B and C: Historical buildings in the block

D: Old photo of Wenming street

E: The rebuilt Oriental Bookstore

F: The Pu'er tea museum

G: The Ma family Courtyard (Theatre)

H: The public square with dancing people.

Image source:

A/B/C/D: Zhijing Company

E/F/G/H: Photographed by the author.