

# **Holistic Spatial Perspective on Cultural Empowerment for Urban Quality Upgrading in Shenyang: A Pathway Study**

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## **Abstract**

**Under the national holistic spatial development strategy and the people-centered urban development concept, urban quality upgrading has become a core task of high-quality new-type urbanization, with culture serving as a key empowering force. As a core city in the Northeast old industrial base, Shenyang possesses abundant historical and revolutionary cultural resources. In promoting holistic spatial development, it urgently needs cultural empowerment to break through bottlenecks in quality improvement. From a holistic spatial perspective, this study defines concepts, reviews theories, applies SWOT analysis to Shenyang's current situation, draws on domestic and international experience, and constructs pathways and safeguard measures for cultural empowerment to upgrade urban quality. The research shows that Shenyang has prominent advantages but faces problems such as inefficient resource transformation, uneven spatial distribution, and weak industrial competitiveness. Accordingly, a four-dimensional optimization pathway is proposed to provide a reference for Shenyang's high-quality development.**

## **Keywords**

**Holistic Space; Cultural Empowerment; Shenyang; Urban Quality Upgrading; Pathway Study.**

## **1. Related Concepts and Theoretical Foundations**

### **1.1. Definition of Core Concepts**

Holistic space refers to a spatial system that breaks down administrative and urban-rural boundaries, takes the holistic development of a city as its goal, and coordinates various spatial resources in urban areas, counties, and villages to achieve optimized spatial layout, efficient resource utilization, and coordinated regional development. Based on Shenyang's actual holistic spatial planning, the holistic space in this study covers all administrative areas of Shenyang, including the main urban area, Xinmin City, Liaozhong District, Kangping County, Faku County, etc., with the core being coordinated use of holistic resources.

Cultural empowerment refers to fully exploring and integrating regional cultural resources through means such as active utilization of cultural resources, cultural industry development, cultural atmosphere creation, and cultural service improvement, thereby transforming cultural advantages into development advantages, empowering urban development, and promoting urban quality upgrading. Its core is deep integration of culture with various fields of urban development.

Urban quality upgrading refers to achieving high-quality urban development by optimizing urban spatial layout, improving urban functions, enhancing cultural connotation, improving living environment, and ensuring people's wellbeing. It covers four core dimensions: spatial quality, functional quality, cultural quality, and livelihood quality, with the ultimate goal of meeting citizens' needs for a better life.

## **1.2. Theoretical Foundations**

The people-centered urban concept is the fundamental guideline of this study. This concept emphasizes that urban development should take meeting people's needs for a better life as its fundamental goal, providing value orientation for cultural empowerment in Shenyang's urban quality upgrading. It requires that cultural empowerment practices always focus on citizens' needs and enhance their sense of cultural gain and happiness [1].

Holistic spatial planning theory provides the core theoretical support for this study. This theory breaks down administrative and urban-rural boundaries, emphasizes coordinated allocation of holistic resources and synergistic development, and provides a theoretical basis for optimizing Shenyang's cultural spatial layout and promoting coordinated urban-rural cultural development.

Cultural and creative industry theory points out that cultural and creative industries can transform cultural resources into economic and social value. It provides theoretical support for Shenyang to promote the activation of cultural resources and strengthen the empowering role of cultural industries, guiding Shenyang to improve the efficiency of cultural resource transformation by cultivating new cultural formats and creating distinctive cultural IPs [2].

Urban renewal theory offers practical guidance for the cultural activation and spatial quality improvement of Shenyang's old urban areas. This theory emphasizes achieving an organic combination of historical and cultural preservation with urban renewal through cultural embedding and function optimization, thereby facilitating urban quality upgrading.

## **2. Current Situation and Problem Analysis of Cultural Empowerment for Urban Quality Upgrading in Shenyang from a Holistic Spatial Perspective**

### **2.1. Foundation of Urban Quality and Holistic Spatial Development in Shenyang**

In recent years, Shenyang has attached great importance to urban quality upgrading and has achieved phased results in urban function improvement, living environment enhancement, and cultural atmosphere creation. Projects such as main urban road renovation, park construction, and old community renewal have progressed in an orderly manner, significantly improving the city's overall appearance. However, there are still obvious shortcomings: first, uneven holistic spatial distribution – the main urban area concentrates most cultural and public service resources, while county-level urban quality lags significantly, resulting in a large urban-rural development gap; second, insufficient integration of cultural quality with functional quality and livelihood quality, so the comprehensive effect of cultural empowerment is not fully realized; third, unclear urban characteristics – historical and cultural resources are insufficiently explored and activated, and the city's cultural identity is low.

Shenyang's holistic spatial layout is characterized by “main urban area leading, county-level coordination, urban-rural integration.” The main urban area, as the core development region, is a hub for culture, economy, and public services. Counties, as important supporting regions, possess rich distinctive cultural and ecological resources and are an important supplement to holistic spatial development. Shenyang's holistic cultural resources are abundant and diverse, mainly divided into three categories: historical cultural resources (Shenyang Imperial Palace, Beiling Park, etc.), revolutionary cultural resources (the Cemetery of the Martyrs of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, etc.), and modern cultural resources (cultural venues, cultural and creative parks, etc.). They are distributed mainly concentrated in the main urban area and scattered in counties, with insufficient holistic utilization and no coordinated development pattern.

## **2.2. Existing Practices of Cultural Empowerment for Urban Quality Upgrading in Shenyang**

In terms of cultural resource activation, Shenyang has taken a series of measures: upgrading historic districts such as Zhongjie and Taiyuanjie, preserving historical features while introducing cultural, creative, tourism, and commercial elements to create distinctive cultural blocks; building modern cultural venues such as Shenyang Museum and Liaoning Grand Theater to improve the public cultural service system; creating distinctive cultural IPs such as “Shengjing Cultural Festival” and “Manchu Cultural Tourism Festival” to enhance the city’s cultural influence.

In terms of cultural industry empowerment, Shenyang has built distinctive parks such as 1905 Cultural and Creative Park and Hongmei Cultural and Creative Park, gathering cultural and creative enterprises and talents, and cultivating new formats such as cultural creativity and film and television. Based on historical and cultural resources, it has developed distinctive products like Imperial Palace cultural and creative products and Marshal’s Mansion cultural and creative products to promote cultural resource transformation. It has integrated cultural and tourism resources to create Shengjing cultural tourism routes and revolutionary tourism routes, promoting deep integration of culture and tourism and driving urban quality improvement.

In terms of holistic spatial cultural layout, Shenyang has carried out activities such as “culture going to the countryside” and “rural cultural revitalization” to extend high-quality urban cultural resources to counties. It has strengthened cultural cooperation with surrounding cities in the Shenyang metropolitan area to promote regional cultural synergy. It has gradually improved holistic cultural infrastructure, achieving full coverage of cultural venues and farm bookstores. However, the holistic cultural layout is still at a preliminary stage, and urban-rural and regional cultural coordination is insufficient.

## **2.3. SWOT Analysis of Cultural Empowerment for Urban Quality Upgrading in Shenyang from a Holistic Spatial Perspective**

**Strengths:** Shenyang has abundant and distinctive cultural resources, including a World Cultural Heritage site and various characteristic cultures, providing a solid foundation for cultural empowerment. Its location advantage is obvious; as a central city in Northeast China, it can radiate and drive surrounding cultural development. Holistic spatial planning is gradually advancing, and policy support is increasing, providing guarantees for cultural empowerment.

**Weaknesses:** The efficiency of cultural resource transformation is low, with most resources under extensive use and insufficiently integrated with industry and markets. The holistic cultural spatial layout is unbalanced, with weak county-level cultural infrastructure. The cultural industry is small in scale, has an incomplete industrial chain, and lacks core competitiveness. There is a shortage of cultural talents, restricting cultural empowerment development.

**Opportunities:** The national strategy of building a strong cultural country is being deeply implemented; Shenyang’s urban renewal continues to advance; policy dividends from holistic spatial development are released, providing a favorable environment for cultural empowerment. The rapid development of digital cultural industries offers new paths for cultural resource activation and industrial upgrading.

**Threats:** Domestic peer cities such as Hangzhou and Xi’an have created distinctive cultural brands that pose competitive pressure on Shenyang. The integration of cultural empowerment with urban functions is not deep enough, so the comprehensive effect is not

fully realized. The policy, talent, and funding guarantee systems for pathway implementation are insufficient.

### **3. Pathway Design for Cultural Empowerment of Urban Quality Upgrading in Shenyang from a Holistic Spatial Perspective**

#### **3.1. Constructing a Holistic Collaborative Cultural Spatial Layout System**

Optimize urban cultural space: Centered on historical and cultural resources such as Shenyang Imperial Palace and Beiling Park, build a Shengjing cultural core area to enhance the cultural influence of the core area. Upgrade historic districts such as Zhongjie and Taiyuanjie to create characteristic blocks with both cultural connotation and commercial value. Improve urban cultural infrastructure by building and renovating a number of cultural venues and pocket parks, forming a collaborative pattern of “core cultural area – characteristic cultural block – community cultural position.” [3]

Activate county-level cultural space: Based on the cultural characteristics of each county, explore folk culture, ceramic culture and other resources to create distinctive county-level cultural brands. Improve county-level cultural infrastructure, extend high-quality urban cultural resources to counties, carry out urban-rural cultural exchange activities, and promote coordinated urban-rural cultural development. Relying on county-level cultural and ecological resources, develop rural cultural tourism projects to support rural cultural revitalization.

Build cross-regional cultural corridors: Connect Shenyang’s holistic cultural resources to create three characteristic corridors: Shengjing culture, revolutionary culture, and ecological culture. Strengthen cultural cooperation with surrounding cities in the Shenyang metropolitan area, promote regional cultural resource sharing and industrial coordinated development, integrate into the Northeast regional cultural development pattern, and enhance Shenyang’s regional cultural influence.

#### **3.2. Strengthening Cultural Industry Empowerment to Improve Resource Transformation Efficiency**

Cultivate new cultural industry formats: Promote deep integration of cultural creativity, cultural tourism, digital culture, and revolutionary culture to create distinctive industrial clusters such as Shengjing cultural creativity and revolutionary culture. Upgrade existing cultural parks, build new characteristic cultural and creative parks, improve park supporting facilities, gather cultural and creative enterprises and talents, and enhance industrial agglomeration effects.

Improve the activation level of cultural resources: Deeply explore local cultural resources to create distinctive cultural IPs such as “Shengjing Imperial Palace” and “War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea Revolutionary Culture.” Develop high-quality cultural and creative products, expand sales channels, and promote the transformation of cultural resources into economic value. Integrate cultural and tourism resources, optimize characteristic tourism routes, improve the quality of cultural tourism products, and promote deep integration of culture and tourism.

Strengthen industrial support guarantees: Issue targeted cultural industry support policies, provide financial subsidies and tax incentives, and encourage enterprises to innovate. Establish a special fund for cultural industry development, guide social capital participation, and broaden funding channels. Attract high-quality cultural enterprises to settle in, improve the industrial chain, and enhance the core competitiveness of the cultural industry.

### **3.3. Promoting Deep Integration of Culture with Urban Function and Quality**

Culture empowering spatial quality: Integrate local elements such as Shengjing culture and Manchu culture into urban planning, architectural design, and public space creation, preserve historical architectural features, and create an urban landscape with Shenyang characteristics. Strengthen urban greening and environmental sanitation to create a “culture + ecology” urban space and enhance spatial aesthetic value. [4]

Culture empowering functional quality: Improve the holistic public cultural service system, achieve full coverage of cultural infrastructure in the main urban area and counties, and promote free opening of cultural venues. Promote the integration of culture with public services such as education, healthcare, sports, and elderly care, carry out activities such as culture entering campuses and communities, and improve the quality of public services.

Culture empowering livelihood quality: Carry out nationwide cultural activities such as “Shengjing Cultural Festival” and “National Reading Festival” to enrich citizens’ spiritual and cultural life. Pay attention to special groups, provide personalized cultural services, and promote equal access to public cultural services. Strengthen cultural publicity and popularization, enhance citizens’ sense of cultural identity and pride, and create a strong cultural atmosphere.

### **3.4. Improving Safeguard Mechanisms to Ensure Pathway Implementation**

Improve policy guarantees: Formulate a dedicated holistic cultural development plan, clarifying the goals and tasks of cultural empowerment. Issue supporting policies for cultural resource activation and cultural industry development to enhance policy specificity and operability. Clarify the division of responsibilities among departments, establish a collaborative promotion mechanism, and form a joint force.

Strengthen talent guarantees: Build a talent system of “recruitment + cultivation.” Recruit high-quality talents in cultural creativity, planning, and operation management, providing talent subsidies and housing security. Cooperate with universities and research institutes to cultivate local professional talents. Establish talent training and incentive mechanisms to enhance professional competence and stimulate innovation vitality.

Broaden funding channels: Form a diversified investment mechanism of “government guidance, enterprise leadership, social participation.” Increase government financial input, guide enterprises and social capital to participate in cultural empowerment practices. Strengthen fund management and supervision to ensure funds are used for designated purposes and improve efficiency. [5]

Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism: Construct an evaluation indicator system covering cultural spatial layout, industrial development, public services, etc. Conduct regular evaluations to identify problems and adjust pathways in a timely manner. Link evaluation results with performance assessment to promote effective implementation of various measures.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study shows that from a holistic spatial perspective, cultural empowerment is an important driving force for urban quality upgrading in Shenyang, which can optimize spatial layout, enhance cultural connotation, and improve people’s wellbeing. Shenyang has advantages such as abundant cultural resources and strong policy support, but faces problems such as low efficiency of resource transformation, uneven cultural spatial distribution, and imperfect guarantee systems, which are closely related to planning coordination, industrial level, and talent shortages. Drawing on domestic and international experience, planning guidance, deep exploration of local culture, improved guarantees, and broad participation are

effective pathways. The four-in-one empowerment system constructed in this paper has strong pertinence and operability. In the future, Shenyang can achieve refined development relying on digital technology, regional coordination, and brand building. Further research can deepen digital empowerment and differentiation strategies to provide more detailed support for urban quality improvement.

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