

# Art Community Enabling Rural Revitalisation: An Exploration of a Symbiosis Model Based on Liuyang Xiaohe

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**Abstract:** Based on the symbiosis theory, this paper takes Liuyang Xiaohe Township as a typical research object, and makes comprehensive use of field research, case analysis and multidisciplinary theories to analyse the role of art communities in the process of rural revitalization and the intrinsic connection between the two. From a regional perspective, Liuyang Xiaohe is selected as a typical rural sample to explore the unique mode of symbiotic development between art community and rural revitalisation, not only exploring the interaction mechanism between the two at the macro level, but also analysing the coupling relationship between various elements at the micro level. The study shows that the symbiotic relationship between art community and rural revitalisation in Liuyang Xiaohe Township is remarkable, and the model provides valuable reference experience for other rural areas, which is expected to promote the innovative development of rural revitalisation theory and practice.

**Keywords:** Liuyang Xiaohe; art community; rural revitalisation; symbiotic relationship.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background to the study

Since the 19th National Congress of the CPC formally put forward the strategy of rural revitalisation, this strategy has rapidly become the core initiative for solving China's "Three Rural Issues" and promoting the integrated development of urban and rural areas. The Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on the Implementation of the Rural Revitalisation Strategy, as well as a series of policy documents such as the Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalisation (2018-2022), have pointed out a clear direction for rural revitalisation, and put forward systematic construction goals in a number of dimensions, such as industry, talent, culture, ecology and organisation. Against this background, governments around the world have responded positively and launched various forms of rural revitalisation practices<sup>[1]</sup>.

In the diversified exploration of rural revitalisation, art communities have gradually become a new engine for rural development by virtue of their unique ability to integrate cultural resources and industry-driven effect. This innovative model, which integrates artistic creation, cultural heritage, industrial development and community building, has broken the single pattern of traditional rural development and injected new vitality into the countryside. From Zhejiang's "art empowers the countryside" initiative to Yunnan's "art + culture and tourism" practice, art communities in different regions are tailored to the local conditions, giving rise to a variety of successful paradigms.

Liuyang Xiaohe Township in this wave of early and pilot, to "the world outside the original township, painting Xiaohe" as the positioning<sup>[2]</sup>, its own rich natural and human resources and art community construction closely integrated, not only effectively activate the endogenous development of the countryside power, but also in the integration of art and rural development has accumulated valuable experience, for similar rural areas provide valuable reference samples. It not only effectively activates the dynamics of endogenous

development of the countryside, but also accumulates valuable experience in the integrated development of art and the countryside, providing a valuable reference sample for similar rural areas, which is worthy of in-depth research and analysis.

### 1.2. Purpose and significance of the study

This study aims to apply symbiosis theory to deeply analyse the symbiotic relationship between the art community and rural revitalisation in Liuyang Xiaoxiang Township, covering mutually beneficial cooperation in four dimensions: economic, social, cultural and ecological. At the same time, it explores the challenges that may be faced in this process, such as the conflict of vernacular culture, unequal distribution of benefits, and sustainability.

From the theoretical level, the study of this symbiotic relationship can help enrich the theoretical system of rural revitalisation, expand the research horizons of art and rural development, and provide new ideas and methods for academic research in related fields. From the practical level, this study can provide practical references for other rural areas, promote the deep integration of art and the countryside, and help the implementation of the strategy of rural revitalisation. In addition, this study is of great significance in promoting cultural exchanges between urban and rural areas, as well as the inheritance and innovation of rural culture.

### 1.3. Research methodology

This study adopts a multidisciplinary cross research method, integrating the field research method, literature research method, and case study method to explore the symbiotic relationship between art communities and rural revitalisation in a multi-dimensional way. In terms of field research, the author went deep into Liuyang Xiaohe Township and conducted on-site observations and interviews. Through exchanges with different groups such as local government officials, artists, and villagers, rich first-hand information was obtained, providing empirical evidence for the study. In terms of literature research, the research team reviewed relevant

literature on art communities and rural revitalisation at home and abroad, including academic papers, research reports, policy documents, etc., and sorted out the current status and development trend of research in this field, which provided theoretical support for the study. In terms of case study, the author compares Liuyang Xiaohe Township with other similar cases of art communities promoting rural revitalisation, analyses the characteristics and successful experiences of different cases, and provides a reference for summarising the symbiotic model of art communities and rural revitalisation.

## **2. Concepts and Theoretical Foundations**

### **2.1. Connotation and Characteristics of an Arts Community**

As a special form of community, art community integrates various functions such as art creation, cultural heritage, industrial development and community building. Some scholars suggest that "community art practice can be an important measure in cultural strategy to reshape the public concept of the community, turn the community into a warm community, and turn it into the residents' own community, so as to create a kind of more viscous link between the community and the residents". Art communities should not be limited to the city, but should be creatively integrated into the countryside. Liuyang Xiaoxiang art community has established a close connection with the local people, and its relevant stakeholders include the people, artists, government and related institutions. Through artistic means, it optimises the regional structure, rationally allocates community resources, maintains the interests of all stakeholders, and realises the sustainable development of the community. The art community of Xiaohe Township consists of elements such as artist groups, art activity venues, and art work display spaces, and has a strong art atmosphere, active art creation and exchange activities, and unique cultural value compared with ordinary communities<sup>[3]</sup>.

Specifically, the group of artists in the Xiaohe Township Art Community covers a wide range of artistic fields such as painting, sculpture, photography, etc. Their creations not only enrich the artistic connotation of the community, but also provide impetus for the inheritance and innovation of local culture. Art activity venues include artists' studios, art exhibition venues, art training institutions, etc., which provide a platform for art creation, display and exchange. By holding various art exhibitions, the art work exhibition space shows the artistic charm of Xiaohe Township to the public and enhances the visibility and influence of the community<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **2.2. Objectives and requirements of rural revitalisation**

The National Rural Revitalisation Strategy puts forward the overall goal of "prosperous industries, ecological livability, civilised rural customs, effective governance and affluent living". This target system provides a reference standard for measuring the role of art communities in rural revitalisation. Art communities promote rural development by accumulating and transforming cultural capital. In terms of industry, art communities can promote the development of cultural and creative industries, drive the prosperity of rural cultural tourism industry, and promote the transformation and upgrading of traditional agriculture. In terms of culture, the

art community can excavate and inherit the local culture of Xiaohe Township, integrate traditional cultural elements into modern art works, and realise cultural inheritance and innovation. In terms of ecology, the art community can integrate art and natural landscape, and promote the protection and improvement of rural ecological environment. In the social aspect, the art community can provide employment opportunities for villagers, increase their income and improve their quality of life.

## **3. Overview of the Development of The Art Community in Liuyang Xiaohe Township**

### **3.1. Basic information on Liuyang Xiaohe Township**

Liuyang Xiaohe Township is located in the southeastern mountainous area of Liuyang City on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi, surrounded by mountains, with a narrow valley plain in the centre, and a tributary of the Liuyang River, the Xiaoxi River, running through the whole area. Due to the limitation of the terrain, the traffic is relatively closed, but it also retains a relatively primitive natural landscape and peaceful atmosphere. The local forest coverage is as high as 87%, with fresh air and high negative oxygen ion content, enjoying the reputation of "natural oxygen bar". The rich natural ecological resources, such as mountains, rivers, forests, etc., provide a rich source of natural materials and inspiration for artistic creation.

The population of Xiaohe Township is relatively small, with mainly local household residents. In the early years, affected by economic development opportunities, some of the young labour force went out to work, leaving behind more women, children and the elderly. In recent years, with the rise of rural tourism and other industries, some young people have begun to return to their hometowns to start their own businesses. According to statistics, as of 2023, more than 200 young people have returned to their hometowns to start businesses and take up employment, injecting new vitality into rural development.

In terms of industrial development, Xiaohe Township relies on beautiful natural scenery and unique rural culture to vigorously develop rural tourism. It has created a number of tourist attractions such as the net red fish scale dam, "small shop on the clouds" and Star River Observatory, which has driven the development of the local service industry. At the same time, Xiaohe Township also actively develops speciality agriculture, planting "three blacks" speciality agricultural products such as black rabbits, black ducks, black goats, etc., laying the foundation for the diversified development of rural industries. In addition, Xiaohe Township also vigorously develop studio industry, through the village enterprise cooperation mode unified training, unified orders, unified sales, has developed farmers craft painting, oil painting, creative painting and other types of paintings, to promote the farmers studio industry to specialisation, large-scale development.

In addition, Xiaoxiang Township has a rich intangible cultural heritage, such as Liuyang summer cloth production techniques and Xiaoxiang Bamboo Horse Dance, which provides a deep cultural soil for the art community to land.

## 3.2. History of the formation and development of arts communities

### 3.2.1. Budding period

At first, Liuyang Xiaohe Township had a single mode of economic development, with agriculture as its main industry. However, its unique natural landscape and rich folk culture attracted the attention of artists, and in 2015, the completion and opening of the Zhangxiao Highway improved access to Xiaohe Township, and more and more artists rented unused farmhouses in the area and transformed them into studios and residences. Although only a handful of artists gathered at this stage, their arrival planted the seeds for the development of the art community. In the process of creation, these artists incorporated the natural and humanistic landscapes of Xiaohe Township into their works, gradually forming an artistic style with regional characteristics.

### 3.2.2. Developmental period

As the works of the early resident artists attracted attention in the art circle, the unique art creation environment of Xiaohe Township attracted more artists. Keenly aware of the potential of art development for rural revitalisation, the local government has actively intervened and provided support. The government has formulated a series of preferential policies, such as providing artists with rent subsidies, free creative venues and tax exemptions, etc., which reduces the cost of living and creation for artists. At the same time, the government has increased investment in infrastructure development, widened and hardened roads, improved water and electricity supply, and enhanced network communications, which has improved the overall quality of life in Xiaohe Township.

With the support of the Government, the art community in Xiaohe Township has gradually taken shape. Artists have organised various art activities on their own initiative, such as art salons and creative workshops, which have promoted art

creation and exchange. In addition, the art community has attracted the attention of some cultural enterprises, which have begun to invest in Xiaohe Township to build art venues, cultural and creative industry parks and other projects, laying the foundation for the further development of the art community. For example, in 2018, a Hunan cultural enterprise invested 5 million yuan to build a modern art exhibition venue in Xiaohe Township, providing a platform for artists to display their works.

### 3.2.3. Growth period

With the support of the government and the joint efforts of the artist community, the Xiaohe rural art community has gradually developed and grown. The community regularly holds various cultural and artistic activities, such as rural art exhibitions, folk culture festivals, art creation workshops, etc., and participates in Hunan's rural revitalisation variety show "Xiaodian on the Clouds". These activities not only provide a platform for artists to display their work, attracting a large number of tourists and cultural enthusiasts, but also enhance the popularity and influence of Xiaohe Township.

As its popularity climbs, the commercial value of the art community is becoming more and more prominent, and diversified business forms have been formed around the art industry. Art B&Bs provide visitors with an immersive art experience, and cultural and creative product shops combine local folk culture with modern art design to develop a series of cultural and creative products with commemorative significance and practical value. These industries not only create jobs and increase income for local residents, but also promote the economic development of Xiaohe Township. According to statistics, by 2024, the art community in Xiaoxiang Township has driven the employment of more than 500 local residents, and the annual per capita income has increased by 15,000 yuan.

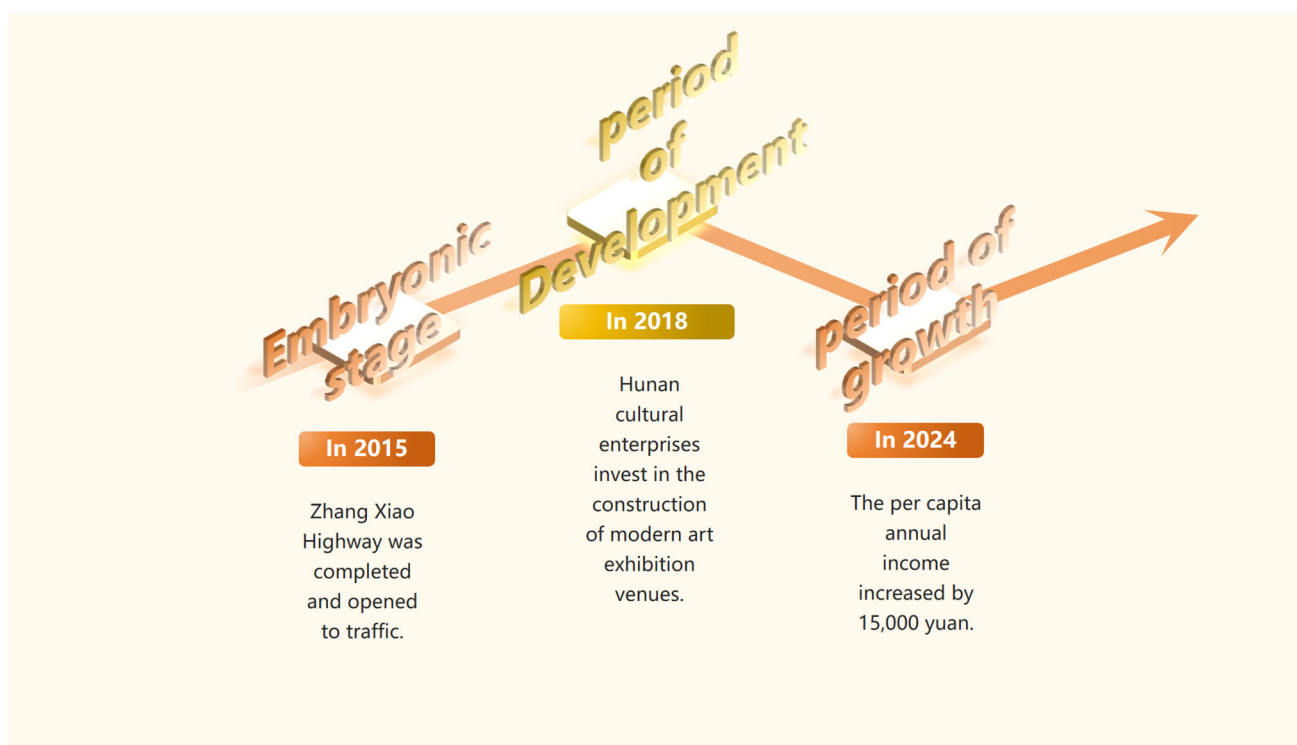


Figure 1. Roadmap for the development of Xiaohe Village

### 3.3. Main components and activities of the arts community

The composition of the community usually includes the population, geographic location, culture, facilities, economic,<sup>[7]</sup> And Xiaohe rural art community also have to consider the art industry cultural resources educational projects . Detailed description of the core constituents of the art community include the population group peasant painters, art industry such as painting studio cultural and creative products, natural resources ecological advantages, community facilities B&B and the observatory, cultural environment of the Hakka culture non-heritage culture. It is in the collision of these core components that the vitality and characteristics of the art community continue to burst forth. Such as artists' studios, art exhibition venues, and art training institutions. The various activities carried out by the art community, such as painting exhibitions, art lectures, handicraft workshops and village art performances, as well as the founding of artists' studios, art exhibition venues and art training organisations, all help to create a good artistic atmosphere, allowing local villagers to pick up brushes and become village painters, and injecting new vitality into the Xiaoxi River art community.

## 4. Promoting Rural Revitalisation Through Art Communities in Liuyang Xiaoxiang Township

### 4.1. Economic dimension

Industrial integration and upgrading: Analyze how the art community drives the development of the rural cultural tourism industry through regular grand folklore festivals centered on Xiaoxiang Township's traditional folklore culture, featuring dragon and lion dances and flower-drum opera performances where actors tell rural stories through vivid singing and acting. Set up on-site display areas for traditional handicrafts such as paper-cutting and embroidery, with artisans demonstrating exquisite skills and guiding tourists to participate in hands-on experiences, attracting visitors through these art activities to promote the prosperity of related industries like catering, accommodation, and handicraft sales. In terms of art design empowering traditional agriculture, Xiaoxiang has developed a series of agricultural products with creative and cultural connotations, such as dry goods packaged in bamboo weaving, honey labeled with handmade wood carvings, folk-culture-themed pastries, and rice wine, enhancing the added value of agricultural products. Increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities: The construction and operation of the Liuyang Xiaohe Art Community have created direct employment opportunities for local villagers, including art venue staff and tour guides, and transformed "hoe-touching" peasants into "brush-touching" painters; <sup>[7]</sup> the community has stimulated villagers' enthusiasm for creation, with their paintings sold far and wide.

### 4.2. Cultural dimensions

The Liuyang Xiaohe Township Art Community engages in the excavation and collation of local culture, integrating traditional cultural elements into modern artworks through creative artistic processes. This approach not only realizes cultural inheritance but also drives innovation. As noted, "The creative process involves interaction with residents and

integration into local life, imbuing each work with a sense of lived experience, regional identity, and narrative, thus blending rural life with art." <sup>[8]</sup> For instance, artists depict local temple fairs and wedding customs, drawing on the vivid hues of traditional folk art and translating them into folk-themed oil paintings. Others use the township's natural scenery as inspiration for innovative ink paintings, craft large-scale sculptures based on local ancient myths, and create iron reliefs in the Cultural Gallery that chronicle the township's historical evolution. Such endeavors by numerous creators exemplify the successful fusion of tradition and modern art<sup>[9]</sup>.

To foster a rich cultural atmosphere and elevate villagers' cultural literacy, the art community regularly organizes diverse art exhibitions featuring painting, photography, and sculpture. These exhibitions enable villagers to appreciate a wide range of artistic masterpieces locally, expanding their artistic perspectives, enhancing aesthetic sensibilities, and enriching their spiritual and cultural worlds. The community also hosts various art workshops, inviting professional artists for on-site guidance to encourage villagers' active participation in artistic creation. Additionally, public-space art installations bridge the gap between art and daily life by displaying artworks along community streets<sup>[10]</sup>. This integration increases residents' engagement with their neighborhood, reduces the perceived distance between them and art, and subtly influences their thinking patterns and life outlooks.

### 4.3. Social dimension

The art community has played an active and significant role in the improvement and beautification of the rural environment. It utilizes artistic design thinking to transform the facades of rural buildings, endowing the countryside with a unique aesthetic charm. In the process of artistic creation, the art community adheres to the concept of ecological and environmental protection, making use of environmentally friendly recycled wood and environmentally friendly paints, which not only reduces the environmental burden but also showcases the harmony between art and nature. The iconic architectural shapes created by the art community have become the image "business card" of the countryside, attracting more attention and resources.

With the growing appeal of the Xiaohe Art Community, the township government—aiming to further promote rural revitalization in Xiaohe Township—has improved local infrastructure, enhancing the livability of the countryside. These infrastructure upgrades provide a more convenient and comfortable living environment for villagers while creating better conditions for the development of rural tourism and related industries, thus driving the overall growth of the rural economy.

## 5. Strategies for Promoting the Synergistic Development of Art Communities and Rural Revitalisation in Liuyang Xiaohe Township

During the collaborative promotion of art community construction and rural revitalization in Xiaohe Township, Liuyang, development bottlenecks such as talent shortages, funding scarcity, and insufficient cultural integration have

been encountered. To break through these dilemmas and promote their deep integration and sustainable development, this study systematically plans and implements precise strategies from multiple dimensions including talent, finance, and culture, based on multidisciplinary theories such as human capital theory, financial innovation theory, and cultural integration theory, so as to construct a scientific and reasonable collaborative development strategy system.

### **5.1. Construction of value-added mechanism based on human capital theory**

According to the theory of human capital, talent is a key element in promoting economic and social development. This study proposes the implementation of "three-dimensional" talent strategy, aiming to optimise the talent cultivation and introduction system and enhance the value of human capital. Firstly, we build a "government-school-enterprise" collaborative cultivation system. By cooperating with the Central Academy of Fine Arts and other professional colleges and organisations to build a workstation for vernacular art, a high-quality platform for talent cultivation has been established. On this basis, six modular training courses covering the fields of art creation, business management and cultural inheritance are developed, which are dedicated to cultivating composite professionals for the villages and upgrading the knowledge and skill reserves of rural talents. Secondly, it innovates the "flexible introduction" system, establishes the Artist-in-Residence Fund, the first phase of which amounts to RMB 5 million, and supports preferential policies such as the replacement of creative space and tax rebates, so as to attract domestic and foreign excellent artistic talents to reside in the area, and injects fresh blood into the development of the countryside. Finally, the "New Generation of Intangible Heritage" programme was launched to inject new forces into the inheritance of intangible heritage through the construction of demonstration bases for productive protection, with the aim of increasing the proportion of young inheritors to more than 30%. We will promote talent optimisation and industrial inheritance through multi-party synergy.

### **5.2. Innovations in capital factor allocation models with the help of financial innovation theory**

Aiming at the financial difficulties in the construction of rural art communities and the process of rural revitalisation, a "four-wheel-drive" financing system has been established. First, actively seeking special support from the National Art Fund and other special funds, establishing a priority assessment channel for cultural projects, providing funding for high-quality cultural projects, and playing a guiding role for government funds. Secondly, issuing art bonds for rural revitalisation and piloting securitisation products for cultural and creative assets with an expected annualised return of 5.5%, so as to transform cultural assets into tradable financial products, broaden financing channels and attract the input of

idle social capital. Thirdly, creating a PPP model for cultural tourism integration, introducing social capital at eight key nodes in the construction and operation of art communities, and giving full play to the professional advantages and innovative vitality of social capital in project construction and operation. Fourthly, it establishes a revenue-sharing mechanism for art derivatives, and feeds 20% of the revenue from copyrights back into the community construction, so as to realise a virtuous cycle of funds.

### **5.3. Construction of experimental zones for cultural integration innovation based on the theory of cultural integration**

The theory of cultural integration holds that communication and integration between different cultures can create new cultural values. In Xiaoxiang Township, the integration of traditional culture and modern art is still in the initial stage, in order to promote the deep integration of the two, this study implements the "double helix" cultural integration strategy. On the one hand, a cross-cultural creative alliance is established, adopting the collaborative creative mode of "1 artist + 2 inheritors". Artists rely on their professional artistic qualities and innovative thinking, while inheritors rely on their in-depth understanding of local culture and exquisite skills. They collide with each other, inspire each other, and create cultural works with regional characteristics and the atmosphere of the times. On the other hand, the digital twin system is developed to digitally transform the traditional cultural elements of Xiaoxiang Township, such as ancient buildings, folk activities and non-heritage skills, and realize their display and dissemination in the meta-universe space through 3D modelling, virtual reality and other technologies. This breaks the time and space limitations of cultural dissemination, and allows users around the world to enjoy the cultural charm of Xiaohe Township through the Internet.

In addition, a three-tier cultural interpretation system has been constructed. At the first level, a village guide system is established, and local villagers are selected and trained as cultural guides, who tell visitors the history, culture and life stories of Xiaoxiang Township with their personal experience and simple language; at the second level, an AR-enhanced interpretation system is developed, and tourists can scan specific signs through mobile phone APPs to obtain rich cultural information and virtual displays; at the third level, an academic interpretation platform is built, and experts and scholars are invited to The third level is to build an academic interpretation platform, invite experts and scholars to carry out in-depth research and interpretation of the culture of Xiaoxiang Township, and enhance the academic influence of the culture. The implementation of the synergistic design strategy based on multidisciplinary theories is expected to provide a model for the development of art community and rural revitalisation in Liuyang Xiaohe Township, promote the in-depth implementation of China's rural revitalisation strategy, and provide a useful reference for rural development in other regions.

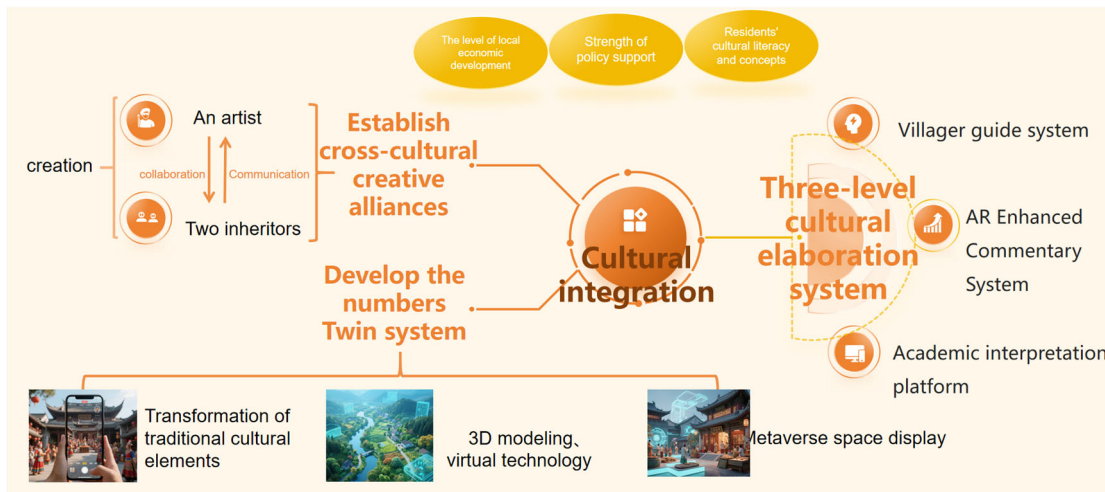


Figure 2. Schematic of Smart Governance in the Experimental Zone of Cultural Integration and Innovation

## 6. Conclusion and Outlook

Art communities and rural revitalisation in Liuyang Xiaoxiang Township promote each other, with art communities injecting new vitality into rural revitalisation, promoting the optimisation of the tourism industry and industrial structure, and facilitating the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. Rural revitalisation provides creative resources, infrastructure and market space for art communities. However, in the process of development, cultural, economic, social and environmental contradictions have gradually come to the fore, which will affect the synergistic development of the two if not effectively resolved. In the future, it is necessary to build a cultural exchange platform, cultivate local cultural inheritors, create special cultural brands and deepen cultural construction. Broaden the channels for raising funds, promote industrial diversification and optimise the mode of economic development. Attract and cultivate all kinds of professionals and strengthen talent support. Establish the concept of green development, reasonably control the intensity of tourism development, and strengthen ecological protection. Through these initiatives, it is expected to achieve the deep integration and sustainable development of the art community and rural revitalisation in Xiaoxiang Township, Liuyang, providing a reference for other regions and helping the implementation of the rural revitalisation strategy.

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