

Echoes of Folk Culture: an Ethnographic Analysis of Local Narratives in Zhanjiang Communities

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Abstract: *This study explores the revival of folk culture in Zhanjiang communities in Guangdong Province, China, through the lens of local narratives. It examines how local narratives, deeply woven into community practices, traditional rituals, dialects, arts and moral values, can shape cultural identity and foster community cohesion. Adopting an ethnographic approach, collecting data from participatory observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, the research highlights the innovative use of local narratives in community-based legal education, ritual practices, art-inspired activities and a tourism heritage site. The findings suggest that local narratives not only preserve cultural heritage but also empower communities by enhancing social bonds and encouraging greater participation in cultural revival efforts. The study also reveals the role of local norms and customs in making these narratives resonate more deeply with the community members, thereby taming complexity in the constantly-changing society. The research contributes to the understanding of local narratives as a dynamic process, which helps adapt and re-interpret traditions to address contemporary needs while maintaining a connection to the past. By focusing on the specific case of Zhanjiang, this study offers insights into the broader implications of cultural revival in other regions facing similar challenges of globalization and modernization.*

Keywords: Folk culture, Local narratives, Communities, Ethnographic analysis.

1. Introduction

China boasts its centuries of time-honored cultural heritage in the world and the rich folk culture shines like a gem in Chinese civilization since it is intricately woven into local people's day-to-day life, practice, rituals, morals, ethics, and norms. Folk culture, in a sense, serves as a collective cultural memory that binds national sentiment and cultural identity, and it acts as a "living relic" reflecting the cultural depth of an ethnic or regional group [1]. As globalization and modernization increasingly influence local ways of life, folk traditions and narratives provide a sense of continuity and connection to the past. Reviving these cultural practices helps communities maintain their unique identities amidst rapid changes. For many, engaging in traditional festivals, crafts, arts, music and oral storytelling fosters a deep sense of belonging and pride in their heritage. In addition, the revival of folk culture is highly relevant to local communities as it enhances social cohesion, provides economic opportunities, and offers educational benefits. It acts as a bridge between the past and the present, helping communities navigate the complexities of modern life while remaining rooted in their cultural heritage. As such, folk culture revival is not merely about maintaining traditions but is a dynamic process that creates sustainable communities for local people in multiple ways [2].

Historically, the study of folk culture has its roots in early ethnographic work that sought to document and preserve disappearing traditions. In recent years, research has increasingly prioritized specific case studies and regional analyses. For example, in the context of Chinese folk culture, scholars have investigated the role of local government policies and community initiatives in the preservation and transformation of traditional practices [3] [4]. Their work underscores the complex interplay between national and local actors in shaping cultural revival efforts as well as injecting innovation to promote local tourism. Furthermore, studies such as those by Martinez highlight how local narratives and rituals are repurposed to reaffirm cultural identity amidst

urbanization. While these studies provide valuable insights into the identity aspects of cultural revival, they often focus on general trends and may lack detailed analysis of how specific local narratives are adapted in practice [5].

Despite the extensive research on folk culture and its revival, several gaps remain, particularly in the context of Zhanjiang's local communities. While much of the existing literature focuses on a specific genre or subject, like folk songs, dances or buildings etc., there is a need for more localized, integrated, ethnographic studies that capture the specific dynamics of cultural revival in particular regions. This research aims to address these gaps by providing a detailed ethnographic analysis of folk culture revival in Zhanjiang communities, with a focus on local narratives and their role in shaping cultural identity.

One notable gap in current research is the insufficient exploration of how local narratives contribute to cultural revival and community building. While previous studies have addressed the role of state and global influences, they may overlook the nuanced ways in which local communities actively engage with and reinterpret their traditions. This research will explore how local narratives—such as ritual storytelling, moral values, and community legends—are employed by residents to reconnect with their cultural heritage and adapt traditional practices for contemporary relevance. By examining these processes, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how local narratives contribute to cultural preservation and evolution. In light of this focus, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How are specific local narratives utilized and adapted in cultural revival?
- 2) What role do local narratives play in shaping community identity and cohesion during the revival process?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Folk Culture

Folk culture is a significant aspect of cultural heritage that holds rich moral values, local wisdom, and educational messages. Various studies have explored the value of folklore in different contexts [6]. This rich repository of cultural narratives and practices provides significant insights into the values and beliefs of different communities. Scholarly contributions from researchers have contributed understanding and insights folklore and its societal implications. Their research lays stress on the importance of folklore as a lens through which cultural practices and values are examined and interpreted [7].

Folklore trans-media storytelling is invaluable in qualitative research methodologies, which include data collection, presentation, and analysis. Various storytelling forms offer a unique perspective on the lived experiences and cultural practices of different groups. They serve as primary sources that help researchers draw insights into traditional culture [8]. This perspective is also supported by research into visual transformations and the evolution of folklore, social media offers the dynamic interplay between cultural inheritance, innovation, and visual representation, demonstrating how folklore evolves while retaining core cultural elements. [9].

Moreover, folk culture is a repository of moral values, local wisdom, and educational messages that act as important pedagogical tools, imparting life values to communities, reinforcing its role as a vital educational resource [10]. Consequently, folklore can serve as a literary genre that conveys philosophical, educational, and ethical values, which are crucial for national development, whose function not only as a reflection of cultural identity but also as a medium for promoting societal values and ethical standards.

The diversity and richness of folklore traditions across different cultural contexts are evident in various studies. It is also noted that folklore takes on importance in shaping cultural identities and expressions since it reveals how practices vary across regions, reflecting the unique historical and social contexts of each community and helps foster a sense of belonging among members of different cultural groups.

In addition to its cultural and educational roles, folklore is increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for promoting tourism and sustainable development. Diko explores the sociological implications of folklore in enhancing South Africa's tourism industry. The study argues that folklore can contribute to the country's socioeconomic development by attracting tourists and showcasing South Africa's rich cultural heritage. This perspective highlights the potential of folklore to drive economic growth while preserving cultural traditions. [11].

On top of that, folk culture can be deemed as a crucial reservoir of cultural heritage, values, and traditions that significantly impact various aspects of society. Its role in shaping identities, promoting education, and fostering socio-economic development indicates its importance in contemporary contexts. As scholars continue to explore the multifaceted nature of folklore, their research contributes to

preserving and promoting cultural diversity and heritage. Folklore not only reflects the complexities of cultural practices but also offers valuable insights into the ways in which societies adapt and evolve while maintaining connections to their historical and cultural roots.

2.2 Local Narratives and Community Building

Local narratives can empower community building and heritage conservation by shaping collective identities and promoting the well-being of residents. The exploration of these narratives across various contexts illustrates their crucial role in both preserving cultural heritage and fostering community empowerment.

In her 2020 study, Sass explores the intricate relationship between urban health and happiness within the contrasting environments of hutongs (traditional Beijing alleyways) and high-rise buildings. Sass's research highlights how local narratives embedded in these urban settings contribute significantly to the well-being of residents. The traditional hutongs, with their rich historical and cultural backgrounds, provide a sense of community and continuity, which contrasts sharply with the more impersonal and transient nature of high-rise living. Sass argues that the narratives associated with these environments—whether rooted in history, tradition, or modernity—help the experiences and satisfaction of urban dwellers [12].

Similarly, more research on different local narratives is also done to the empower community building, including community-led heritage conservation triggered by museums, activities of community-driven literacy groups and the publicity of indigenous knowledge, showcasing how local narratives can transcend time and geographical boundaries to develop sustainable communities [13] [14] [15]. Furthermore, narratives emphasizing contextualization, empowerment and partnership may lead to more positive and effective participation of more shareholders in the local communities, so more thoughtful and well-conceived narrative construction efforts and strategies are called for by practitioner [16]. More importantly, cultural values embedded in local narrative, related to buildings, crafts, music or dances and so on, can extend beyond mere folk culture itself to raise the awareness of local people and allow more active engagement and participation since these values would encourage more people to assume their social responsibility in revitalizing communities and restoring vitality, rendering stronger social bonds and shaping collective identities and empowering communities to take control of their history and heritage[17] [18].

The above studies indicate the significance of local narratives in various aspects of community building, heritage conservation, and urban regeneration. From enhancing urban well-being and empowering communities to creating more meaningful cultural activities and generating more social bonds, local narratives play a central role in shaping collective identities and fostering a deeper connection to heritage. To preserve and revitalize cultural heritage, it is of importance to utilize narrative in various form creatively and integrate local perspectives into community building efforts.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Context

This research is conducted in Zhanjiang, a south western coastal district in Guangdong Province. Zhanjiang sits along the South China Sea, offering beautiful beaches and a pleasant subtropical climate. Zhanjiang is renowned for its rich cultural heritage with a mix of traditional and modern influences. The scenic spots, including the Leizhou Peninsula and various nature reserves, attract both domestic and international tourists seeking to explore its natural beauty and cultural offerings.

3.2 Data Collection

To collect comprehensive data, the study employed a multi-faceted approach that included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and document analysis. Each of these methods contributed to a nuanced understanding of the community and its socio-economic dynamics.

Participatory observation was a fundamental technique in this research. This method involves immersing oneself in the community to observe various social interactions, behaviors, and symbolic practices. The goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of the community's sociological landscape. By engaging directly with the community members, researchers could observe and document daily activities, social norms, and cultural practices. This approach provides a rich, qualitative insight into how people interact within their environment and how they perceive their own social realities. The data gathered through participatory observation is invaluable for constructing a more complete sociological picture of the community.

In-depth interviews were another critical data collection method used in this study. These interviews aimed to gather detailed information from various stakeholders within Zhanjiang. The interviews were conducted in both structured and semi-structured formats, allowing for a combination of guided questions and open-ended discussions. This flexibility enabled researchers to explore specific topics in detail while also allowing participants to share their perspectives freely. The interview subjects included a diverse range of individuals such as local residents, traditional elders, officials, and entrepreneurs involved in the private museum. This diversity ensured a well-rounded collection of viewpoints and experiences, contributing to a richer understanding of local folk culture.

To support the primary data collected through interviews and FGDs, document analysis was used as an additional data collection method. This involved reviewing various documents, such as online newspapers, government reports, and other relevant materials. The purpose of this analysis was to contextualize the primary data within a broader framework and to verify the information obtained from other sources. By examining official and unofficial documents, researchers could cross-check facts, understand historical and policy contexts, and gain insights into the external factors influencing the community.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study employed an interactive methodology. This approach starts with recognizing patterns within the data, organizing it into relevant categories and themes, and examining the relationships between various concepts. It involves a repetitive cycle of reviewing, interpreting, and refining the data. By iterating through these stages, researchers can develop insightful interpretations and reach well-rounded conclusions. This dynamic and responsive method ensures a thorough analysis of the intricate interplay between folk culture and community revitalization in Zhanjiang.

Overall, the combination of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, FGDs, and document analysis provided a thorough and multi-dimensional understanding of the community in Zhanjiang. Each method complemented the others, contributing to a comprehensive and reliable analysis of the village's social and economic dynamics. This methodological approach not only enriched the data collected but also ensured that the findings were grounded in both empirical evidence and community perspectives. Additionally, to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, all the authors were invited to analyze the data independently and engaged in further discussions with the first author to reach 'inter-coder agreement'. The participants were also invited to comment on the data interpretation results, and their comments were taken into consideration to refine the final analysis results.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Innovative Community-based Legal Narratives

In recent decades, there has been a growing emphasis on community-based approaches as a valuable strategy for taming complex social and legal challenges affecting local residents. These approaches focus on mobilizing both cultural and community assets to enable people to have greater control over their work and live, and are underpinned by core values of power, trust and relationships.

The "Safe Family" Community Legal Education Theater Program, hosted by the Zhanjiang Women's Federation and the Guangdong Women's Rights and Information Service Station (Zhanjiang Station) since 2018, conducted family theater performances in dozens of communities across 10 counties (cities, districts) in Zhanjiang. The project is geared towards theatrical performances to portray family and community life, promoting legal knowledge and raising awareness about the protection of women's and children's rights. It also introduces methods and techniques for managing family and neighbor relationships.

The program integrates legal knowledge with applied drama, tailoring scripts to local dialects, customs, cultural resources, and prominent community figures. The scripts focus on themes such as spousal relationships, marriage law, and anti-domestic violence law, using local-specific stories from women's and families' daily lives as narrative material, covering themes from addressing domestic violence, managing mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships, children's self-protection to women's rights protection.

These creative local activities are featured by integration of local daily life into storylines, using theatrical performances to convey legal knowledge and family ethics. The program recruits university student volunteers from various regions to incorporate local cultural customs and languages. Scripts are crafted with regional characteristics in mind, based on surveys of local community conditions and typical cases, and written in local dialects. The theater tours provide performances tailored to local language, primarily using Zhanjiang dialect with Mandarin as a supplement across different districts and counties in Zhanjiang. In areas where Leizhou dialect is prevalent, hosts use Leizhou dialect to vividly convey the performance content to the audience. By presenting the theater in a real-life-like and everyday manner, the program resonates and engages with the audience successfully, effectively raising awareness about women's rights protection. One of the local participants expressed:

“I was impressed by the drama about how to deal with the relationship with mother-in-law. The actors and actress use Lei dialect, making the story very real and giving me a different way to tackle the complicated family relationship and communicate with my mother-in-law, husband and kids, which I have never thought of. And I like the legal Q&A activities where the legal experts provide us some answers to our queries and relevant legal information. That helps a lot! (Participant 2)”

Another senior villager also responded that: “My son and his wife are working in Guangzhou, so I have to take care of my grandchildren. I haven't received a lot of education and sometimes worried about the bad influence of the society. I just told my grandkids to be safe and careful. Today, my grandkids I participated in the drug prevention education activities and I enjoyed Lei drama and know more about how to warn my grandkids against the drug. My grandkids had fun too and they are so happy to get gifts in ‘Drug Quiz Challenge’. I can take part in too and I have got some eggs and can use them to cook a tomato-fried-egg, haha... Participant 7)”

Therefore, this Community Legal Education Theater program rooted legal education within the fabric of local folk culture and narratives, creating dialogue and cooperation among community members, local organizations, and authorities, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive environment. The use of locally relevant stories and scenarios in the scripts allows the program to address specific community issues and concerns. This method helps participants see the direct application of legal principles in their daily lives, making the education more practical and engaging.

4.2 Ritual Narratives

Yangqiyong Village in Zhanjiang rolls out a grand annual festival annually on the Winter Solstice, complying with the village's unique Winter Solstice customs. This tradition is closely tied to the village's family structure and traditional ritual narrative, dating back to over 200 years ago when their ancestors fled from Fujian, settling in this village and holding grand ceremonies by integrating some local customs on the Winter Solstice yearly, such as worshiping deities, ancestral rituals, feasts, and performances.

The annual Winter Solstice festival passes down from generation to generation by the ancestors' legends. On this important festival each year, villagers take turns hosting these events, with each household participating. Saying no to the participation of the grand annual festival is merely impossible, which can be considered as irreverence to the ancestors. Not hosting or attending these festivals would draw disapproval from villagers in other areas. The grand festival is generally organized by the village committee, who are mainly responsible for raising funds from the villagers, decorating public areas in the village, coordinating and inviting performance groups, setting up the stage and altar in the cultural square, transporting the deity statues from the village temple to the temporary altar in the cultural square, and maintaining public order. Each household in the village also would engage in other activities, primarily including preparing banquets, worshiping deities, and honoring ancestors, which would last the entire day.

The worship and ancestor rituals usually perform in the early morning, while preparing the banquet begins at noon and continues until dinner time. Some families hire specialized local chefs to cater the banquet, while others prepare the feast themselves. The banquet is primarily attended by invited relatives and friends, making it a rare opportunity for a family reunion. Elderly members, children and those less occupied, can go to the cultural square to watch lion dances. After the dinner, all villagers can take a break from their busy day to enjoy the Cantonese opera with family.

Watching performances, locally known as “Ti Niánli” can be said as perks for Villagers in Yangqiyong. The performance troupes give daytime shows featuring modern songs, dances, or lion and dragon dances, starting around 2 or 3 PM. Evening performances are dedicated to Cantonese opera, running from 7 PM to around 11 PM. During the day, the cultural square is bustling with small vendors who come from various places to sell snacks and toys. Children, in particular, enjoy the shows while indulging in their favorite treats or buying small toys. The evening sees villagers bringing their stools to the stage area, eagerly awaiting the performance. The lively atmosphere continues until after 11 PM, with the end of the Cantonese opera marking the conclusion of the day's Winter Solstice celebrations. This blend of cultural performances, community gatherings, and traditional rituals highlights the importance of the Winter Solstice in Yangqiyong Village, making it a day of both reverence and festivity.

The elder villagers are well used to this festival since they consider it well-established tradition that should be continued:

“I feel so lucky that we can have the Winter Solstice festival each year to worship our ancestors and pray for good fortune. This is the legacy of our village. Besides, all the villagers would work together and everyone can enjoy the big feast or the performances. It is good to meet more people and catch up (Participant 8).”

For younger villagers, who seek fortune outside the village, would also reap benefits on this festival:

“Normally, I would ask for a leave on the festival. For one, my

parents would urge me to do that and I cannot forget my roots here; for another, in some sense, I think the “village talk” with peers on the festival is not bad since I got to know an vacancy position from my village fellow once. More importantly, it is an opportunity to have fun and connect with relatives they may not see often. (Participant 10)”

Apparently, as the above case indicated, Yangqiyong Village runs a grand annual festival on the Winter Solstice primarily to continue the traditions passed down by their ancestors and to uphold the customs established long ago. Through this ritual narrative, villagers gain a deeper understanding of the shared beliefs left by their forebears, further strengthening their sense of family identity and regional belonging. The festival allows villagers to enjoy the festive joy through delicious food and to relive the harmony and happiness of family and neighborly relationships in familiar surroundings. The village committee plays an active role in this process, taking on many public tasks, thereby integrating individual household activities with village-wide affairs. This involvement enhances the communal and collective nature of the Winter Solstice celebrations.

4.3 Art-inspired Narratives

The potential of art narratives in shaping identities and community engagement is grabbing people’s attention as it can be presented in various forms, such as written descriptions, spoken word, or even through the artwork itself.

In Chikan District of Zhanjiang City, there is an old neighborhood that was once a bustling commercial hub in pre-modern times, rich in history and cultural resources. Although the old buildings still stand, they are now in a state of disrepair, with most residents being elderly people and out-of-town renters. A social organization called X Art Gallery on this old street, with college student volunteers majoring in social work and art, dedicated to overall community development and community art and design. This gallery has undertaken some initiatives to re-live the community, such as “revitalizing the historical and cultural heritage of the old street” and “rebuilding neighborly relations,” achieving notable success and attracting considerable participation from the local residents. The gallery has become the most vibrant activity hub in the old street.

The artwork created by X Art Gallery aims to the value and significance of the relationships between community residents, as well as the connection between the residents and the community itself. The “Gifts for Neighbors” involves volunteers and residents to co-create practical, everyday old items, which are then given as gifts to their neighbors. For example, they turned an old coat from a resident into arm warmers for a snack vendor on the old street, made a cushion from coarse fabric for an elderly woman, and fashioned a shoulder bag from old denim for a neighborly aunt. The meaning beneath these gifts stands out distinctly: first, they are not expensive, so they do not impose any burden on the recipients; second, they are made from the residents’ own items with personal stories, symbolizing mutual exchange. This approach fosters connections and builds emotional bonds among neighbors.

Notably, the artwork, titled “The Story of the Chair,” uses an old chair discarded by an elderly woman and another old chair from a teahouse that had been in use for over 20 years. The elderly woman used to sit on her chair at her doorstep, watching the bustling street, while the teahouse chair witnessed decades of customers. With the help of a carpenter, the volunteers repaired and combined these two old chairs into a new, usable one. They also installed an MP3 player with headphones under the chair, which plays recordings of street noises and the busy sounds of the teahouse. Sitting in the chair and listening to these sounds allows one to experience the scene as if the elderly woman were still sitting at her door, or as if one were in the lively teahouse. The creators sought to encapsulate the old street’s history in this chair, using the daily experiences of ordinary residents to interpret the significance of life on the old street.

Another piece, “The Walking Map,” also aims to re-capture the daily life on the old street. The artist recorded their observations while walking through the old street from the perspective of an ordinary resident, without any specific purpose, narration, or deliberate editing. The raw audiovisual material is presented as-is, capturing the daily sights and sounds experienced by someone living in the community. The artist intended this “living” map to replace abstract coordinate maps, telling people that the everyday details of life on the old street hold deep meaning for those who live there.

By digging deep in the local history and stories, the gallery has positively influenced local life and contributed to the community’s cultural and social fabric. Here are the voices both from the volunteer and resident:

“As a volunteer, I am so proud of my tiny contribution to the local community. We are impressed by the local history, stories and the touching stories from local people. I feel so rewarding that we make use of the old items creatively and feel that we are creating stories for the old street too. (Participant 13)”

“The gallery has become a cultural cornerstone for our community. Its art beatifies our living environment. It’s not just a place to feel art; it’s a social space where we neighbors can meet, share ideas, and engage in cultural events. It attracts visitors who spend time in the neighborhood, which helps support shops and cafes. Our old street has become a hot spot for tourists. (Participant 14)”

Consequently, the transformative power of art narrative demonstrated by X Art Gallery offers insights. The initiatives run by the gallery not only celebrate local heritage but also enhance community engagement. By focusing on the historical and cultural heritage of the old street, the gallery has succeeded in reconnecting residents with their past and fostering a renewed sense of belonging, rebuilding a vibrant and cohesive community space.

4.4 Moral Value Narratives

Lianjiang Heritage Hall in Zhanjiang, located within the Xianren Cave Scenic Area in Hechun Town, is built around a water buffalo legend with 500-year history. It is said that two divine buffaloes were sent by Gods to save people in

plague-stricken so local people always bear in mind that they should embrace and practice moral values like gratitude, filial piety and benevolence if they want to live a better life.

Currently, this Heritage Hall is a venue themed around promoting the outstanding traditional Chinese culture, cultivating traditional Chinese virtues and contributing to the construction of a harmonious society. This hall is like a folk museum to serving as “Zhanjiang City Science Education Base.” The venue includes several areas, such as the “Agricultural Culture Exhibition Zone”, “Taoist Cixiao Culture Exhibition Hall”, “Taoist Classical Culture Hall” “Water Culture Hall”, “Cultural Lecture Hall”, and “Cultural Experience and Exchange Zone”. The exhibition hall showcases, analyzes, and discusses famous stories, classic works, and excellent family traditions, all of which are rich in the characteristics of traditional culture in the modern era.

The Heritage Hall is surrounded by beautiful scenery and farms, making it a must-go destination for tourists. It is also an excellent destination for agricultural leisure sightseeing and experiencing traditional farming practices, integrating tourism, traditional culture education and patriotic education. Moreover, the hall preaches traditional values such as self-cultivation, doing good deeds, gratitude, and altruism, guiding the public to foster good family traditions. The cultural cite contributes to the implementation of the Central Committee's rural revitalization strategy and the promotion of social harmony.

The couplet on either side of the entrance encapsulates the mission and aspirations of the Heritage Hall. The first line reads, "Compassion and benevolence connect the way between heaven and earth," to encourage people to help others with kindness and compassion, a noble path that links heaven and earth. The second line reads, "Filial piety and benevolence engraved in the heart transcend time and space," indicating the values of filial piety and benevolence will be deeply ingrained in everyone's hearts, with the culture here forming a perfect whole, encompassing everything from ancient to modern times.

One of the local teachers praised the Heritage Hall greatly:

“This Heritage Hall is a perfect study camp for students, providing rich educational content and resources. The hall's emphasis on traditional virtues like gratitude, filial piety, and benevolence can help build students' moral and character. I feel grateful that this cultural experience and intriguing historical stories would offer hands-on activities that can make learning more engaging and memorable for students (Participant 15).”

The student visiting the Heritage Hall also expressed his new discoveries: “The exhibition and stories make me feel a stronger connection to our Chinese cultural heritage. Especially, I am inspired by the man-made reservoir construction near here. The construction workers in the 1950s were so persistent and hard-working and completed the reservoir project merely by hand to provide enough water for the local people. They are miracle-makers and worth my learning (Participant 16).”

As is stated above, Lianjiang Heritage Hall marks its feats in fostering local community development through a blend of cultural preservation, educational outreach, and moral guidance. It is a cultural and educational hub, offering a diverse range of exhibits and activities that celebrate traditional Chinese culture and virtues. The moral value narratives integrate tourism with cultural education, consistent with broader strategies for rural revitalization and social harmony, reinforcing the hall's role in community building.

5. Conclusion

Within the discussed research trajectory, we approached local narratives as a connected, symmetrical and dialogical dynamics to interact with folk culture, cultural identity, and community cohesion. The study highlights three primary domains where these narratives exert significant influence: community-based legal education, ritual practices, art-inspired initiatives and moral value narratives.

Firstly, the community-based Legal Education Theater Program exemplifies how local narratives can be effectively utilized to disseminate legal knowledge and promote social cohesion. By integrating local dialects, customs, and everyday life stories into the performances, the program not only educates the community about legal rights and responsibilities but also strengthens communal ties. The participatory nature of these performances, which include Q&A sessions and interactive activities, further engages community members, making legal education accessible and relevant to their daily lives. This approach not only enhances legal awareness but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective action in addressing social issues.

Secondly, the ritual narratives associated with the Winter Solstice festival in Yangqiyong Village demonstrate the enduring power of traditional practices in reinforcing cultural identity and community bonds. The festival, deeply rooted in the village's history and family structures, serves as a communal event that brings together all villagers, including those who have migrated elsewhere. The rituals, including ancestor worship and communal feasting, not only honor the past but also provide a platform for reinforcing social ties and cultural continuity. The active involvement of the village committee in organizing these events ensures that the festival remains a collective endeavor, thereby strengthening the village's social fabric.

Thirdly, the art-inspired narrative initiatives in Chikan District highlight the potential of cultural and artistic expressions in community revitalization. The transformation of this once-thriving commercial hub into a center for cultural activities, wield the power of art to reimagine and rebuilt urban spaces. By engaging local artists, residents, and social organizations, the project breathes new life into the district, making it a vibrant space for cultural exchange and community building. The art-inspired narrative not only preserves the district's historical legacy but also fosters a renewed sense of pride and belonging among the residents.

Fourthly, the moral value narratives provided by Lianjiang Heritage Hall feature stories of local heroes, sacrifices and

achievements of previous generations, and highly preach Chinese traditional moral values, such as gratitude, filial piety and benevolence. These narratives can provide tangible examples of character traits that are essential for personal development and inspire young people to pursue their own goals with determination and a sense of purpose, contributing positively to society and the nation as a whole.

To conclude, echoing folk culture, this study presents some compelling cases to unlock the value of folk culture in community building. It offers a robust empirical foundation for understanding the complex interplay between local narratives, cultural heritage, community identity, and social change. The findings not only generate further academic discussions but also provide some feasible strategies for tapping into folk culture and local narratives to foster community resilience and vitality.

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