

Scene-Driven Spatial Production: Constructing a Theoretical Framework for Scene Innovation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Homestays

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Abstract

This study integrates spatial production theory and scene theory to develop a “four-dimensional–three-element” analytical framework for scene innovation within intangible cultural heritage (ICH) homestay contexts. The core research findings are summarized as follows: first, the ICH homestay scene is constituted by four interrelated dimensions, including spatial experience, temporal rhythm, emotional connection, and behavioral interaction. Second, scene-driven spatial production operates through three intrinsic mechanisms of symbolic implantation, emotional resonance, and meaning co-creation, progresses sequentially across three developmental stages of scene implantation, scene activation, and scene iteration, and is moderated by three contextual factors: subjective, cultural, and institutional elements. Third, dominant correspondences exist between the four-dimensional scene elements and Lefebvre’s tripartite spatial production processes, namely spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. This theoretical construction provides a systematic and testable analytical model for advancing scholarly research on ICH homestay development.

Keywords

Intangible Cultural Heritage Homestay; Scene Theory; Spatial Production; Scene Driving; Theoretical Framework.

1. Introduction

In 2025, China’s central government issued targeted policies to promote nationwide scene innovation, accelerating the fundamental transformation of the tourism industry toward a scene-oriented development paradigm. As a quintessential format of cultural-tourism integration, ICH homestays have flourished in practical development. Such practices transform intangible cultural heritage from static cultural symbols into dynamic living scenarios and reconstruct traditional homestay accommodations into new venues for immersive cultural experience. Despite the prosperity of practical exploration, existing academic research on ICH homestays remains predominantly confined to empirical descriptions of integration models, case analyses of product design, and investigations of tourist satisfaction. Scholarly literature lacks systematic theoretical explanations for fundamental research questions, including how ICH homestay scenes are formed and what intrinsic logic underpins scene-related spatial production. Against this research gap, this study integrates spatial production theory and scene theory to construct a “four-dimensional–three-element” theoretical framework for ICH homestay scene innovation, addressing three core research questions: what constitutes the core elemental system of ICH homestay scenes? How do scene elements drive the spatial production of ICH homestays? What theoretical mechanisms and process logic govern scene-driven spatial production? This research theoretically contributes to expanding the micro-

spatial application boundary of scene theory. By incorporating interpersonal interaction and emotional dimensions, the study remedies the neglect of host-guest interaction and emotional resonance in prior literature, enhances the explanatory power of spatial production theory in tourism research, and provides a standardized theoretical model for subsequent studies on ICH homestays and broader cultural tourism spaces. It also promotes the research paradigm of ICH accommodation studies from empirical description to systematic theoretical construction.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Scene Theory

Represented by Terry Clark and Daniel Silver, the New Chicago School established foundational scene theory, defining scene as an integrated cultural symbol system and social organizational form composed of neighborhoods, physical structures, diverse social groups, and their daily practical activities[1]. Relevant research focuses on how urban cultural styles and aesthetic characteristics drive socioeconomic transformation in the post-industrial era. With the gradual introduction of scene theory into tourism academia, scholarly achievements have continued to accumulate. Among them, Chen proposes that a scene represents a composite system deeply integrated by four core dimensions: spatial experience, temporal rhythm, emotional connection, and behavioral interaction, encompassing specific time and space contexts, practical activities, participating subjects, and cultural symbols[2]. A scene refers not merely to physical geographic space, but to a contextual framework for meaning construction, which shapes tourist experience perception and cultural value identification. Compared with “environment”, which emphasizes static physical conditions, and “atmosphere”, which focuses on instantaneous emotional affection, scene possesses three unique attributes: holism, co-constructed by physical space and symbolic meaning; interactivity, activated through tourist participation and behavioral engagement; and meaning-generating nature, functioning as a potential pathway for tourist meaning construction and self-actualization. Based on the above theoretical elaboration, this study defines a scene as a composite experiential field integrated by spatial configuration, temporal rhythm, emotional connection, and behavioral interaction, aiming to provide feasible paths for tourists to realize cultural meaning construction and self-value perception.

2.2. Spatial Production Theory

Henri Lefebvre systematically elaborated spatial production theory in his seminal work *The Production of Space*[3]. The theory argues that space is not a static preset entity or a neutral empty container, but a dynamic social product continuously shaped by social practices and social relations. Its core theoretical framework, the spatial triad dialectic, consists of three interrelated and mutually constitutive dimensions. First, spatial practice, defined as perceived space, refers to the construction, renovation, and daily utilization of physical space, corresponding to the material configuration of ICH homestays in tourism contexts. Second, representations of space, defined as conceived space, involves spatial planning and ideological imagination dominated by power and knowledge systems, corresponding to the design concepts and cultural intentions of homestay developers and operators. Third, representational spaces, defined as lived space, encompasses daily practices and subjective meaning endowment by space users, corresponding to tourists’ emotional experience and spatial meaning reproduction in ICH homestays. Lefebvre emphasizes that the three dimensions are not independent entities, but collectively construct a dynamic field of spatial relations. In tourism research, spatial production theory has been widely applied to analyze the construction and evolution logic of rural tourism destinations[4] and ethnic villages[5]. Nevertheless, while spatial production theory excels at analyzing capital-power dominated spatial reproduction processes, it pays insufficient attention to the micro-level mechanisms of interpersonal

communication and emotional interaction in spatial production. This theoretical deficiency creates a necessary theoretical dialogue opportunity for this study to incorporate the emotional connection and behavioral interaction dimensions derived from scene theory.

3. The “Four-Dimensional-Three-Element” Model of Scene-Driven Spatial Production

Although spatial production theory and scene theory originate from different academic traditions, they present strong complementary advantages in analyzing ICH homestay scene innovation. Spatial production theory provides a complete process framework for explaining how space is produced through the spatial triad dialectic, while scene theory focuses on exploring the core driving forces behind spatial meaning production and refines four pivotal dynamic elements: spatial experience, temporal rhythm, emotional connection, and behavioral interaction. The integrated analytical paradigm effectively remedies the limitations of spatial production theory’s neglect of micro driving factors and scene theory’s lack of systematic process analysis, thereby enabling a comprehensive interpretation of the complex mechanisms underlying ICH homestay spatial production.

3.1. Four Core Dimensions of ICH Homestay Scenes

3.1.1. Spatial Experience

Spatial experience refers to the physical configuration and cultural symbol system of ICH homestays, including architectural morphology, spatial layout, decorative styles, and implantation approaches of ICH symbols. The theoretical connotation derives from the scenographic translation of Lefebvre’s spatial practice, exploring how physical space is transformed into an effective carrier of cultural meaning. Typical cases include the implantation of Chaozhou embroidery and wood carving in Chaozhou homestays, the display of Thangka and ritual instruments in Tibetan homestays, and the application of tie-dye decorations in Yunnan Bai nationality homestays. As the foundational dimension of scene construction, spatial experience forms the initial perceptual impression of scene driving and directly shapes tourists’ primary cognition of the cultural characteristics of ICH homestays.

3.1.2. Temporal Rhythm

Temporal rhythm denotes the time arrangement, activity sequence, and temporal logic of cultural experience activities in ICH homestays, covering activity duration, frequency, order, and coordination with local daily life and traditional folk rhythms. Its theoretical basis integrates the temporal rhythm dimension of scene theory and the time system concept of folklore studies. In practical operations, it is embodied in daily activities such as butter tea making in the early morning, Thangka painting in the afternoon, and shadow puppetry performances in the evening, as well as seasonal traditional festival activities including Spring Festival paper-cutting and Dragon Boat Festival zongzi making. Temporal rhythm organizes tourists’ behavioral flow, affects their emotional fluctuation and immersion depth through well-designed rhythmic changes, and serves as the core organizational thread transforming scenes from static physical existence to dynamic cultural experience.

3.1.3. Emotional Connection

Emotional connection refers to the emotional resonance and cultural value identification formed between hosts and tourists, among tourists, and between humans and ICH culture within homestay spaces, manifested through warm host reception, heritage inheritor narrative sharing, and tourist emotional empathy. Its theoretical support originates from emotional geography and emotional resonance theory in tourism experience research. In ICH homestay contexts, emotional connection is reflected in in-depth dialogues between homestay owners and tourists on ICH inheritance, tourists’ admiration for ICH cultural connotations, and

collective emotional bonds formed through joint participation in ICH activities. Acting as the adhesive of scene-driven spatial production, emotional connection transforms neutral physical configurations into meaningful and emotionally valuable cultural experiences.

3.1.4. Behavioral Interaction

Behavioral interaction refers to participatory activities and corresponding design logic arranged for tourists in homestays, including hands-on practice, role-playing, and collaborative cultural creation, grounded in embodied cognition theory and interaction ritual chain theory. In ICH homestays, such interactions include tourist tie-dye making, Thangka drawing, handicraft cooperation with inheritors, and folk performance participation. As the most active dimension within the four-element system, behavioral interaction transforms tourists from passive spectators to active participants, strengthens cultural memory through embodied experience, and facilitates the realization of host-guest meaning co-creation.

3.2. Three Analytical Dimensions of Spatial Production

3.2.1. Spatial Practice

Corresponding to Lefebvre's perceived space, spatial practice refers to the physical construction and functional configuration of ICH homestays, including architectural renovation, functional zoning, streamline design, and spatial implantation of ICH symbols. In the integrated framework, spatial practice is positioned as the material foundation layer of scene-driven spatial production. As the most intuitive and perceptible component of spatial production, it determines tourists' initial impressions and behavioral possibilities upon arrival. Typical practices include renovating traditional main halls into ICH exhibition areas, embedding craft illustrations in corridor spaces, and constructing experiential workshops in homestay courtyards.

3.2.2. Representations of Space

Corresponding to Lefebvre's conceived space, representations of space refer to spatial imagination, planning, and cultural meaning endowment by homestay owners, designers, and ICH inheritors, embodied in design concepts, cultural narratives, and brand storytelling. Positioned as the meaning endowment layer of scene-driven spatial production, this dimension constitutes the core script of spatial production and defines the cultural stories and values conveyed by ICH homestays. For instance, homestay owners integrate family ICH inheritance experiences into spatial design to form a unique "family and inheritance" narrative; designers extract aesthetic elements from ICH crafts and apply them throughout the entire space, endowing physical space with profound cultural essence.

3.2.3. Representational Spaces

Corresponding to Lefebvre's lived space, representational spaces refer to the daily practices, emotional experiences, and meaning reproduction of space users including tourists and community residents, representing the lived dimension of space. As the final outcome of spatial production, both physical spatial practice and conceived spatial design must be tested and realized through tourists' embodied experience, thus positioned as the value realization layer of scene-driven spatial production. For example, after making tie-dye crafts and sharing experiential perceptions on social media, tourists personally construct unique cultural meanings within the homestay space. Representational spaces present prominent dynamic and subjective characteristics, enabling different tourists to produce diverse spatial meanings within the same physical environment.

4. Theoretical Mechanisms of Scene-Driven Spatial Production

4.1. Core Operating Mechanisms

4.1.1. Symbolic Implantation Mechanism

The symbolic implantation mechanism explains how ICH elements are symbolically translated and integrated into inherent components of spatial narratives. Its theoretical path follows the logical sequence of cultural symbol formation, spatial symbolic coding, tourist symbolic decoding, and cultural meaning generation. In this process, intangible cultural heritage initially exists as cultural symbols, such as Chaozhou embroidery patterns and Tibetan incense ritual connotations. Homestay operators and designers conduct spatial symbolic coding by embedding ICH symbols into architectural forms, decorative details, and functional layouts, converting abstract cultural connotations into perceptible spatial language. Tourists complete symbolic decoding during experiential participation, reconstructing physical ICH symbols into profound cultural implications and ultimately forming personalized spatial narrative experiences.

4.1.2. Emotional Resonance Mechanism

The emotional resonance mechanism reveals the psychological path through which behavioral interaction triggers emotional resonance and transforms into cultural value identification. The mechanism operates sequentially through interactive participation, embodied experience, emotional arousal, and value identification. Tourists form embodied cognition through participating in ICH experiential activities, are emotionally touched by embedded cultural narratives, craftsman spirit, and cultural connotations, and ultimately elevate perceptual emotions into rational recognition and respect for ICH cultural value.

4.1.3. Meaning Co-Creation Mechanism

The meaning co-creation mechanism illustrates how tourists transform from passive spatial consumers to active co-creators of spatial cultural meaning. Its operational path follows participatory experience, meaning endowment, spatial rewriting, and value co-creation. During ICH experience participation, tourists are no longer passive recipients of preset spatial meanings but endow personalized individual meanings to spaces based on personal understanding and emotional perception. Furthermore, tourists rewrite homestay spaces through social media sharing, word-of-mouth communication, and repeated visits, ultimately co-constructing homestay cultural value with operators and ICH inheritors.

4.2. Process Logic of Scene-Driven Spatial Production

4.2.1. Stage 1: Scene Implantation – Cultural Coding of Physical Space

Scene implantation constitutes the initial stage of scene-driven spatial production. At this stage, ICH symbols are implanted into homestay physical spaces through spatial experience element configuration, shaping the fundamental structure of spatial practice. The effectiveness of scene implantation depends on three core variables: symbol selection, requiring selected ICH symbols to possess both cultural representativeness and spatial translatability; symbol density, maintaining appropriate implantation intensity to avoid cultural overload or insufficient atmospheric construction; and symbol presentation, where implicit cultural infiltration generally creates better immersion than explicit cultural display.

4.2.2. Stage 2: Scene Activation – Emotional Arousal of Meaningful Space

Scene activation represents the second stage of scene-driven spatial production. At this stage, implanted static scenes are activated through temporal rhythm and emotional connection design, transforming physical spaces into meaningful carriers and completing the construction of representations of space. Temporal rhythm shapes experiential emotional fluctuation through scheduled cultural activities, including morning tranquility, afternoon concentration,

evening gathering, and night reflection. Emotional connection injects emotional warmth into physical spaces through sincere host hospitality, inheritor story narration, and tourist empathy sharing. The keys to scene activation lie in reasonable rhythmic arrangement to avoid tourist fatigue and exquisite emotional contact design to trigger cultural empathy.

4.2.3. Stage 3: Scene Iteration – Dynamic Generation of Lived Space

Scene iteration serves as the third and dynamic evolutionary stage of scene-driven spatial production. At this stage, tourist behavioral interaction and experiential feedback become the core driving forces for scene optimization and regeneration, realizing the dynamic reproduction of representational spaces. Tourists feedback experiential perceptions through on-site evaluation and social media sharing, while operators adjust scene configurations accordingly, including optimizing activity procedures, upgrading experiential projects, and renewing spatial furnishings. This process follows a cyclic iterative logic of design, experience, feedback, and redesign. Scene iteration is driven by host-guest interaction and tourist feedback, with evolutionary direction determined by operators' feedback response capacity and the flexible boundary of ICH inheritance protection.

4.3. Influencing Factors of Scene-Driven Spatial Production

4.3.1. Subjective Factors: Roles of Homestay Owners, ICH Inheritors and Tourists

Homestay owners act as life curators and scene directors in spatial production, whose cultural capital and aesthetic capability jointly determine the upper limit of scene construction quality. Owners with profound ICH cognition can make precise decisions in symbol selection and scene presentation. ICH inheritors function as cultural gatekeepers and living cultural carriers, whose participation depth directly determines scene authenticity. In-depth inheritor participation significantly enhances scene originality, while superficial utilization leads to performative and superficial scenes. As scene consumers and meaning co-creators, tourists' cultural demands and experiential feedback dominate the overall iterative direction of scene development throughout all production stages.

4.3.2. Cultural Factors: ICH Types and Regional Cultural Endowments

Different types of ICH present distinct applicability in homestay scene configuration. Craft-based ICH such as tie-dye and pottery is suitable for interactive behavioral experience projects; performance-based ICH including shadow puppetry and folk songs serves as emotional climax nodes in temporal rhythm arrangement; festival-based ICH injects periodic temporal rhythm and emotional atmosphere into scenes. In addition, regional cultural endowments, including local cultural atmosphere and community cultural identity, provide crucial support for scene authenticity. Scenes rooted in living community culture demonstrate stronger appeal than artificially transplanted cultural scenarios.

4.3.3. Institutional Factors: Policy Support and Industrial Norms

The institutional environment exerts both incentive and constraint effects on scene-driven spatial production. Incentive policies and homestay development regulations provide institutional guarantees and resource support for ICH homestay scene innovation. Meanwhile, ICH protection policies and industrial norms set clear boundaries for standardized ICH utilization, including inheritor authorization, cultural rights protection, and accurate symbolic application. Balancing policy incentives and institutional constraints becomes an essential institutional challenge for ICH homestay operators in scene innovation practices.

5. Theoretical Model of ICH Homestay Scene Innovation from a Scene-Driven Spatial Production Perspective

Based on the above theoretical deduction, this study constructs a theoretical model of ICH homestay scene innovation within the scene-driven spatial production framework (see Figure 1). The core model logic demonstrates that scene-driven spatial production is a dynamic developmental process. Taking four-dimensional scene elements as dynamic input, tripartite spatial processes as action channels, three developmental stages as evolutionary pathways, and three categories of factors as moderating variables, the model ultimately achieves the dual goals of ICH living inheritance and tourists' in-depth cultural experience.

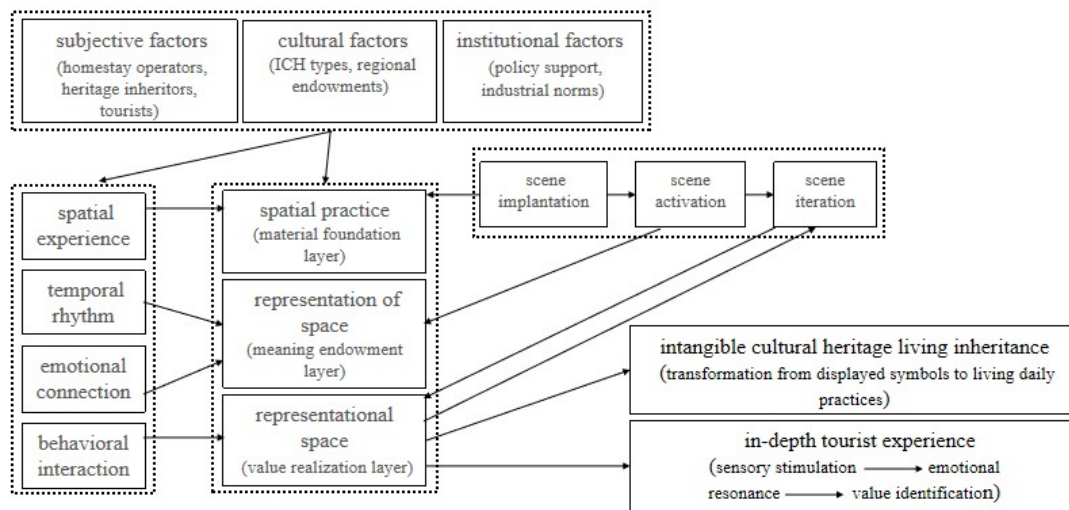


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for ICH Homestay Scene Innovation from a Scene-Driven Spatial Production Perspective

6. Conclusion

By integrating spatial production theory and scene theory, this study constructs a systematic “four-dimensional–three-element” theoretical framework for ICH homestay scene innovation. First, this research establishes a four-dimensional element system for ICH homestay scenes and clarifies the dominant corresponding relationships between four-dimensional scene elements and tripartite spatial production processes. Second, this study identifies three core mechanisms of symbolic implantation, emotional resonance, and meaning co-creation, reveals the three-stage process logic of scene implantation, scene activation, and scene iteration, and recognizes three moderating factors including subject, culture, and institution. This research provides a communicable and empirically testable theoretical model for ICH homestay and cultural tourism spatial research, laying a foundation for future empirical verification and model optimization.

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