

Exploring Pathways for Rural Revitalization through Multi-Party Synergistic Participation: A Case Study of YY Company's Involvement in W District, S City



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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the in-depth advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, a single actor can no longer meet the diversified development needs of rural areas, making it urgent to establish a pluralistic co-governance pattern of “government guidance, corporate collaboration, and villager participation.” Using the case of YY Company’s participation in the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” project in Xihe Town, W District, S City, this paper, grounded in collaborative governance theory, constructs a “driving force–structure–process” analytical framework to systematically explore how enterprises, through cultural heritage excavation, resource integration, market linkage, and organizational mobilization, work in synergy with governments, village collectives, and villagers to jointly promote the revitalization of rural industry, ecology, culture, and governance. The findings reveal that enterprises, acting as hub-type actors, can not only stimulate the endogenous cultural dynamism of rural communities, facilitate factor reorganization and market transformation, but also enhance villagers’ organizational capacity and participation in public affairs through institutionalized collaborative mechanisms. Based on these findings, the paper proposes pathways such as establishing a tripartite collaborative mechanism among “government–enterprise–village collective,” institutionalizing collaborative governance processes, and strengthening bidirectional empowerment, offering a replicable and scalable model for enterprise participation in rural revitalization.

Keywords: rural revitalization, collaborative governance, corporate participation, multi-actor engagement

Introduction

Comprehensively advancing rural revitalization is an important strategic deployment in China and constitutes a systematic project that requires the concerted efforts of governments at all levels, markets, and various sectors of society. The three main domains of rural revitalization are the foundational domain, the intermediate domain, and the top-level domain. The foundational domain is led by the government, the top-level domain is driven by the market, and the intermediate domain is most characterized by the participation of social

organizations. However, rural revitalization currently faces structural constraints such as weak grassroots capacity, shortage of professional talent, and insufficient embedding of social organizations (Song, 2020). Sole reliance on government fiscal input cannot meet the diverse needs of rural development. The introduction of enterprises, social organizations, and other multiple actors can activate endogenous drivers through industrial innovation, enhance farmers’ organizational capacity through contractual cooperation, and optimize factor allocation through market-oriented mechanisms. To implement the national strategy, Guangdong Province launched the “High-Quality Development Project for Hundreds of Counties, Thousands of Towns, and Tens of

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Thousands of Villages” in December 2022, adhering to the principle of “government guidance, market-driven, and social collaboration,” setting differentiated goals, allocating resources precisely, and building a new pattern of pluralistic co-governance.

In light of this, this paper adopts the lens of collaborative governance to examine the overall logic and model of enterprise participation in rural revitalization, and, through an analysis of the practical experience of W District, S City in Guangdong Province, seeks to optimize the pathways for enterprise engagement in the collaborative governance of rural revitalization.

1. Framework Analysis: Multi-Actor Participation in Rural Revitalization from the Perspective of Collaborative Governance Theory

1.1 Collaborative governance theory

The concept of “synergy” was first proposed in 1971 by the renowned physicist Hermann Haken, emphasizing that in an open system, subsystems of completely different natures operate independently while also being influenced by each other, and develop toward a unified system goal. This theory has had a wide-ranging impact across various academic disciplines. Philippe (2005) contends that synergy theory is used to determine the optimal collaboration model for social groups in a given period, to examine the relationships between these models, and to seek effective approaches for managing such relationships. As a widely applied modern interdisciplinary theory, collaborative governance theory offers strong explanatory power for public-private cooperation in achieving collaborative governance in rural areas (Philippe, 2025). It highlights a governance model of public-private collaboration formed by multiple actors in the process of rural revitalization, whereby the overall system—comprising government, enterprises, villages, and villagers—reaches consensus on commonly recognized rules and engages in cooperative governance (Zheng & Xiao, 2008).

1.2 Theoretical analytical model

Building on the preceding analysis, exploring enterprise participation in rural revitalization from the perspective of collaborative participation requires attention to three aspects: participation drivers, participation structure, and participation process. These elements form the “driver-structure-process” analytical model (Figure 1). First, the drivers for enterprise participation stem from policy support, internal demand, and opportunities for collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008). When government administrative absorption responds precisely to enterprise needs, opportunities for collaboration emerge. The heterogeneity and complementarity of resources, information, and technology among actors generate surplus collaborative benefits, making multi-actor cooperation a rational choice for interest coupling, while also strengthening participation enthusiasm and diffusion effects. Second, in collaboration, the participation structure serves as a key bridging mechanism. The core lies in accurately defining roles, coordinating relationship networks through institutionalized arrangements, and designing sustainable incentive mechanisms to maximize the effectiveness of collaborative governance and realize benefit-sharing. Third, enterprise participation evolves in stages, with progressive goals set at different nodes. The accumulation of incremental achievements at each stage leads to qualitative transformation in rural revitalization.

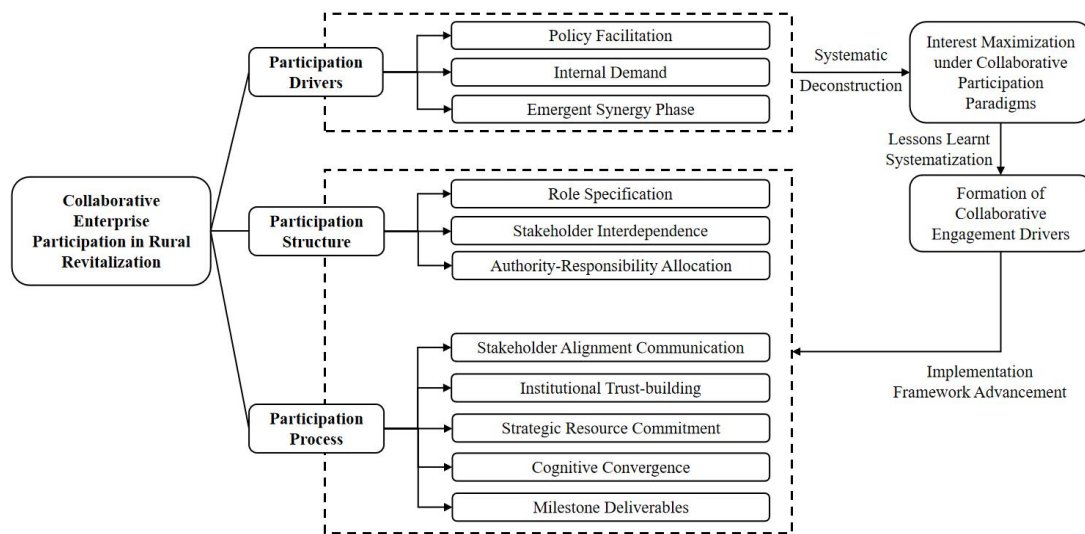


Figure 1: Enterprise collaborative participation model for rural revitalization

2. Case Study: YY Company's Practical Logic in Participating in Rural Revitalization in W District, S City

In order to better analyze the synergistic role that enterprises play in promoting rural development and to seek a feasible and exemplary path for enterprise participation in governance, this paper selects the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” project in Xihe Town, W District, S City, in which YY Company participated, as a typical case study to promote the integrated development of the three industries in rural areas.

2.1 Basic Information about the Case

2.1.1 Basic Information on YY Company

YY Company is a media enterprise focused on cultural arts. Since 2020, its cultural and creative team has deeply integrated into W District's rural revitalization efforts: it has successively renovated the outdated Guangming Alley district, developed agricultural tourism projects such as Longgui Waterfront and Shanjiao Village Youth Commune, used cultural and creative upgrades to enhance agricultural products, expanded sales channels through live streaming, and attracted young people to return to their hometowns. The project is operated by

the Economic Cooperative and the Strong Town Prosperous Village Company, with the village committee, town enterprises, and villagers engaging in democratic consultation for joint construction and shared benefits. This has formed a demonstration zone characterized by thriving industries, a beautiful environment, good governance, and prosperous living conditions, providing a model for cultural enterprises to participate in rural revitalization.

2.1.2 Basic Situation of W District, S City

S City is located in northern Guangdong Province, with a rich historical and cultural heritage. However, due to its remote location, poor transportation, and geographical constraints, its economic development has lagged behind. Its subordinate W District (commonly known as Xihe) comprises 5 towns and 51 administrative villages, rich in natural resources and boasting beautiful ecology; however, due to its overall low development level, the villages and towns within the district still face multiple challenges such as weak infrastructure, a single-industry economy, and severe talent outflow. Therefore, relying solely on the existing talent and material resources at the district, town, and village levels is insufficient to achieve rural development

(Statistics Bureau of W District, S City, 2024).

The “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” in Xihe Town takes central villages as nodes and towns as hubs, integrating resources along the route to build a pioneering region integrating “environment, landscape, industry, culture, and income growth,” driving the coordinated upgrading of county-level economy and the “Five Revitalizations.” YY Company adheres to the concept of “poetic and picturesque Xihe River, urban integration and shared prosperity.” The company cooperates with the government and village committees to connect core attractions such as the Mountain and Water Reservoir, Youth Volunteer Culture Park, Jiuling Garden, Pier Park, and Bidao Campground through road corridors. This initiative has created diverse themed tourist routes and differentiated rural tourism experience areas, promoting the upgrading of W District's characteristic industries and enhancing the value of its industrial chain.

2.2 Case Presentation: YY Company's Collaborative Participation in the Construction of the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” in Xihe Town, W District, S City

In YY Company's participation in the construction of the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” in Xihe Town, it can be seen that various levels of government, village and town committees, villagers, and other social enterprises are working together to promote rural construction and rural development. Resource integration is the essence of collaborative governance. YY Company played a significant collaborative role by integrating internal and external resources within the company, as well as internal and external resources from other entities (Chen & Huang, 2018). It established effective communication channels among all parties, serving as a coordinating and catalytic force to help all parties achieve consensus and collaboration in terms of values, goals, and actions. Below, we will analyze the participation drivers, participation structure, participation process, and participation outcomes.

2.2.1 Participation Drivers: Building Momentum

and Seizing Opportunities

To actively promote rural development, City S established a rural revitalization platform, allowing counties (cities, districts) to showcase the beauty of their rural areas through a competitive platform. Additionally, since March 2020, W District's finance department has allocated a special subsidy fund of tens of millions of yuan. By creating a “competition platform” for villages to “compete,” it has stimulated rural internal motivation, sparking a district-wide enthusiasm for improving village appearance and striving to achieve rural revitalization (Office of the CPC W District Committee, S City, 2020).

From the perspective of government needs, the motivation for local governments to actively engage enterprises in rural development is twofold: first, to leverage corporate resources to expand governance channels and policy tools; second, in the context of insufficient human, material, and financial resources, to adopt a governance strategy that balances innovation and efficiency to achieve the goals and performance targets set by higher authorities.

From the perspective of corporate needs, the motivations for YY Company's participation in rural revitalization can be summarized in three points: first, through project implementation, to establish a responsible private enterprise image and accumulate reputational capital; second, to leverage the rural revitalization platform to access government and public institution procurement systems, achieving diversification of customer structure and sustained growth in market share; third, while achieving its own development through collaborative participation in rural revitalization, the company assumes relative social responsibility, giving back to society and driving the progress of rural development (Interview with the head of YY Company, n.d.).

The “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” project in Xihe Town serves as a platform for YY Company to align its corporate development needs with government strategic objectives. Through this initiative, YY Company has been empowered to participate in the project.

2.2.2 Participation Structure: Forming a Core

Structure Centered on YY Company

YY Company has played the following structural roles in the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” project:

1 Government-Enterprise Collaboration: The W District Government provides policy guidance and project contracting to ensure support; YY Company responds to governance objectives through project planning, forming a “government-led + enterprise-executed” structure.

2 Enterprise-Village Committee Collaboration: YY Company establishes a routine communication mechanism with the village committee, jointly developing plans based on village characteristics, resources, and villagers' preferences to ensure the project aligns with reality.

3 Collaboration between enterprises and cooperatives: The project utilizes economic cooperatives and

strong township-rich village companies as platforms to assist in establishing interest linkage mechanisms, promoting the “company + cooperative + farmer” model to achieve resource sharing, risk sharing, and mutual benefits.

4 Collaboration between enterprises and villagers: Through household visits and village meetings, villagers' enthusiasm is mobilized to enhance their sense of ownership and fulfillment, constructing a “company-led + villager-participation” co-governance structure.

2.2.3 Participation Process: Five-Stage Collaborative Promotion Mechanism

YY Company's collaborative participation in the rural revitalization of Xihe Town exhibits the typical characteristics of the “five stages of collaborative governance”:

Phase	Practical Content
Stakeholder Alignment Communication	YY Company has conducted multiple rounds of discussions, visits, and investigations with the government, village committees (two committees), cooperatives, and villagers to clarify the development demands and resource bases of the village.
Institutional Trust-building	Trust among all parties was gradually established through early-stage small-scale pilot projects (such as the renovation of Guangming Alley), an open and transparent cooperation mechanism, and a profit distribution scheme.
Strategic Resource Commitment	YY Company has invested in design teams, cultural and creative resources, and marketing channels; the government has provided policies and funds; and the village collective has offered land and labor.
Cognitive Convergence	A unified vision of "Poetic and Pictorial Xihe: Integrating with the City for Common Prosperity" has been formulated, and the spatial layout and industrial logic of "taking roads as lines and connecting pearls into a chain" have been clarified.
Milestone Deliverables	The construction of such nodes as Guangming Alley, the Educated Youth Cultural Park, and Jiuling Park has been completed, driving a 300% growth in tourist arrivals in the villages along the route and an increase of over 2,000 yuan in per capita income of villagers (Government of Xihe Town, 2024).

Figure 2: Five Stages of Collaborative Governance

2.2.4 Participation Outcomes: Building a Collaborative Governance Community for Rural Revitalization

YY Company participated in the construction of the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” in Xihe Town, achieving the following three significant outcomes:

1. **Thriving Industries:** Developing a diversified industrial chain integrating agriculture, culture, and tourism, promoting the cultural creativity of agricultural products, the IP-ization of tourism nodes, and the diversification of villagers' income, achieving a transition from “blood transfusion” to “blood production.”
2. **Ecological Livability:** Through landscape improvement, scenic spot beautification, and cultural integration, the overall environment and living quality of the village have been enhanced. Xihe Town has been awarded the title of “Guangdong Province Beautiful Rural Demonstration Town.”
3. **Effective Governance:** A collaborative governance mechanism has been established with YY Company as the hub, government guidance, village collective implementation, and villager participation. The participation rate in village public affairs has significantly increased, and self-governance organizations such as the villagers' deliberative assembly and cooperative council have achieved standardized and routine operations.

3. Case Summary: The Role of Corporate Collaboration in Rural Revitalization

3.1 Discovering the Value of Rural Culture and Activating Internal Motivation

YY Company, with cultural arts as its core competency, tapped into the unique resources of Xihe Town, including the culture of educated youth, Hakka culture, and mountain and water culture, and transformed them into cultural and tourism products that can be experienced, disseminated, and monetized. This helped to reshape rural cultural identity and stimulate villagers' sense of pride and enthusiasm for participation.

3.2 Integrating Rural Resources and Promoting

Factor Reallocation

By integrating idle homestead land, abandoned farmland, and surplus labor resources, YY Company has facilitated the transformation of “resources into assets and villagers into shareholders,” achieving optimized allocation and efficient utilization of factors such as land, capital, labor, and technology.

3.3 Connecting external markets and establishing conversion channels

YY Company leverages its cultural and creative brand and internet platform to establish a conversion chain linking “agricultural products—cultural and creative products—tourism products,” assisting local agricultural specialty products in entering higher-tier markets and achieving “mountain products going out, culture breaking through.”

3.4 Promoting farmer organization and enhancing governance capabilities

Assisting in the establishment of economic cooperatives and strong township-rich village companies, YY Company has facilitated the transformation of villagers from “dispersed individuals” to “interest communities,” enhancing their negotiation capabilities, market bargaining power, and collective action capabilities.

3.5 Drive regional cooperation and create a demonstration effect

Taking the “demonstration belt” as the axis, we are driving collaborative development among towns such as Xilian, Chongyang, and Longgui in W District, forming a new rural revitalization pattern of “leveraging points to cover areas and linking pearls into a chain,” providing an enterprise-driven collaborative governance model for rural revitalization in the mountainous areas of northern Guangdong.

4. Feasible Pathways for Corporate Participation in Rural Revitalization

Based on YY Company's practical experience in District W, the following optimized pathways for corporate collaboration in rural revitalization are proposed:

4.1 Policy Guidance: Establish a Three-Party

Collaborative Mechanism Involving the Government, Enterprises, and Village Collectives

First, clarify the role of enterprises in rural revitalization, establish a list of projects for their participation, and set evaluation criteria; second, establish a special fund to encourage enterprises to participate in village planning, construction, and operations through a “project-based” approach; third, establish an “enterprise residency in villages” system to promote the formation of long-term stable cooperative relationships between enterprises and villages.

4.2 Structural Optimization: Construct a collaborative network with “enterprises as hubs, village collectives as carriers, and villagers as the main body”

Encourage enterprises to participate in industrial development through the “company + cooperative + farmer” model, support their involvement in village public affairs deliberations, promote the standardized development of self-governance organizations such as village deliberative assemblies, and establish a three-party interest linkage mechanism among enterprises, village collectives, and villagers to ensure shared benefits and shared risks.

4.3 Process Mechanism: Institutionalizing a “Five-Stage” Collaborative Governance Process

Before project initiation, establish a “village needs list + enterprise capability list” two-way matching mechanism; during project implementation, establish a “collaborative governance deliberation council” to regularly negotiate and resolve issues arising during project advancement; during project evaluation, introduce third-party assessment institutions to conduct quantitative evaluations and feedback optimization of enterprise participation outcomes.

4.4 Capacity Building: Enhancing Mutual Empowerment Between Enterprises and Villages

First, encourage enterprises to establish “rural revitalization workstations” to provide villages with professional services such as design, marketing, and operations; second, support villages in establishing

an “enterprise liaison officer” system to enhance the collective's negotiation, collaboration, and supervision capabilities with enterprises; third, promote cooperation between universities, research institutions, and enterprises to conduct talent cultivation and case studies on collaborative governance for rural revitalization.

Conclusion

As an important collaborative entity in rural revitalization, enterprises play an irreplaceable role in rural development through their professional capabilities, resource integration capabilities, and market linkage capabilities. This paper takes YY Company's participation in the construction of the “Rural Revitalization Demonstration Belt” in Xihe Town, W District, S City as an example to systematically analyze the driving forces, structure, and process of corporate collaborative participation in rural revitalization, and proposes optimization pathways. In the future, efforts should be made to further promote policy innovation, institutional improvement, and capacity building to establish a multi-stakeholder governance framework characterized by “government guidance, corporate collaboration, village collective implementation, and villager participation,” thereby providing a sustainable governance model for achieving comprehensive rural revitalization and common prosperity.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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