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From Art Intervention to Livelihood Transformation: How Rural Homestays Reshape Local Livelihoods in the Art Tourism Village

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Abstract

As rural tourism in China shifts from resource exploitation toward cultural experiences, art intervention has emerged as an important driver of rural development. However, its implications for livelihood capital and livelihood strategies remain insufficiently understood. The study selected Qingshan Village in Hangzhou as the study site and drew on semi-structured interviews with 18 homestay operators. Drawing on grounded theory analysis, the study constructed an analytical framework linking art intervention, homestay development, livelihood capital, and livelihood strategies. The findings show that art intervention reshapes rural space and local image, enhances tourism attractiveness, and creates market opportunities for homestays by transforming underutilized residential properties into tourism-oriented business spaces. Homestay development facilitates the reconfiguration of livelihood capital by mobilizing housing, labor, social relationships, and rural resources for tourism operations. The livelihood strategies of participating residents have shifted from a single mode to diversified modes, primarily comprising homestay-dominated, catering-dominated, and part-time homestay patterns. These findings highlight the role of rural homestay development in translating opportunities created by art intervention into livelihood benefits for local residents and promoting sustainable rural development.

Keywords: art intervention; rural homestay; livelihood capital; livelihood strategies; sustainable livelihoods theory; rural tourism

Academic Editor: Harry Coccossis

Received: 6 October 2026
Revised: 29 October 2026
Accepted: 30 October 2026
Published: 31 October 2026

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1. Introduction

As rural tourism enters a new stage of transition from scale expansion to quality improvement, the driving forces behind its development are changing. Natural landscapes, agricultural production, and rural life remain the foundations of rural tourism, but resource-based sightseeing alone no longer satisfies tourists' demands for cultural, aesthetic, and individualized experiences. In recent years, art intervention has gained increasing recognition as an innovative approach to cultural preservation and community development in historic villages. Art-based rural construction is a locally grounded form of social action that employs artistic practices to reshape rural spaces, activate local cultural resources, and foster community development, thereby contributing to rural revitalization

[1,2]. Art-based rural construction revitalizes rural areas through aesthetic practices and encourages collective participation through co-creation, connecting tradition with modernity and external support with endogenous development. Art interventions take various forms, including installations, murals, sculptures, and performance art, to transform and enhance public spaces, although they are not limited to these forms. Through public art projects, artist residencies, art festivals, and the revitalization of traditional crafts, artists and cultural practitioners seek to enrich the cultural atmosphere and visual identity of villages [3]. Artistic practices can contribute to rural community development by fostering community vitality, strengthening social connections, and enhancing rural resilience through art activities and creative initiatives [4,5].

Recent national policies have emphasized the integration of rural culture and tourism and encouraged the development of rural homestays according to local conditions, positioning homestays as an important component of rural industries with local characteristics. Rural homestays have become an important vehicle for translating opportunities created by art intervention into tourism development. These are small-scale businesses that rely on rural landscapes, local culture, and idle farmhouse resources to provide distinctive accommodation and experiences of everyday rural life. Compared with standardized accommodation facilities, rural homestays are typically operated in villagers' homes or other rural buildings and draw on the surrounding living environment. Their development is therefore closely tied to residents' housing, labor, social relations, and local knowledge. Existing studies have found that the development of rural homestays not only changes the spatial structure and functions of rural settlements but also affects villagers' livelihoods and daily lives [6]. However, art intervention extends beyond the incorporation of art into individual tourism businesses. Through artistic practices such as public art installations, art events, and the design of public spaces, it can reshape the village environment and image, enhance tourism attractiveness, and create opportunities for local tourism entrepreneurship. These characteristics make rural homestays a useful lens through which to examine how development opportunities associated with art intervention become linked to household livelihood activities.

The development of rural tourism activities can reshape rural industrial structures and spatial forms, while also changing how rural residents make a living. Tourism can become an important component of diversified rural livelihoods, but it should not be understood merely as a single source of income; rather, it may complement residents' existing livelihood activities [7,8]. Iorio and Corsale [9] showed that rural households' participation in tourism can contribute to livelihood diversification, although the outcomes vary across locations. Participation in tourism also reshapes household livelihood capital and the strategies built on it, while tourism households routinely adjust their activities as the seasons change [10]. As an important component of community tourism, rural homestays create income-generating and employment opportunities for households, but their effects are not confined to economic returns. Examining community homestays from the perspective of sustainable livelihoods, Pasanchay and Schott [11] found that homestay operation provided livelihood opportunities for households and communities. At the same time, it entailed challenges related to time input, labor costs, and resource management, which highlights the need to examine its effects from an integrated livelihood perspective. However, existing research still largely treats tourism development as a relatively uniform external environment and pays insufficient attention to how different drivers of tourism development generate different outcomes. In particular, when art becomes an important intervening force in rural tourism development, how art intervention shapes homestay development and how homestays, in turn, influence residents' livelihood capital still warrants in-depth discussion.

https://doi.org/10.3390/su182111120

This study examines how art intervention shapes livelihood transformation through homestay development in Qingshan Village, Hangzhou, China. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) How has art intervention shaped the emergence and evolution of homestays in Qingshan Village? (2) How has the development of homestays reshaped residents' livelihood capital and livelihood strategies, and what livelihood changes have resulted? The study aims to construct an analytical framework linking art intervention, homestay development, livelihood capital, and livelihood strategies through grounded theory analysis of semi-structured interviews with 18 homestay operators. The findings show that art intervention reshapes rural space and creates market opportunities for homestays, while homestay development facilitates the reconfiguration of livelihood capital and the diversification of livelihood strategies. By elucidating the mechanisms through which art intervention influences homestay development and, in turn, reshapes livelihood capital and livelihood strategies, this study contributes to a better understanding of how the livelihood opportunities generated by art-led tourism development can be translated into household benefits, and it provides practical insights for sustainable rural development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainable Livelihoods Theory

The concept of livelihood was first systematically defined by Chambers and Conway [12], who described it as the capabilities, assets (stores and resources), and activities that people draw on to make a living. They emphasized that a livelihood is sustainable only when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets without undermining the natural resource base. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has been particularly influential. The DFID framework emphasizes the use of sustainable livelihood assets to build resilience, reduce vulnerability, and pursue activities that improve livelihood outcomes [13]. It comprises five key components: livelihood capital, vulnerability context, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes. Livelihood capital can be understood as an umbrella term for the various assets associated with households' survival and development. In the DFID framework, livelihood capital comprises five forms of capital: human, natural, financial, physical, and social capital [13]. Specifically, human capital refers to people's knowledge, skills, creativity, health, labor capacity, and education [14]. Financial capital includes savings, cash flows, and access to credit [13]. Natural capital comprises the natural resources that support livelihoods. Physical capital encompasses private and public infrastructure, as well as goods and services [15]. Social capital refers to social networks, group membership, trust, and reciprocal relationships that facilitate the pursuit of livelihood goals [16]. Livelihood strategies refer to the set of activities and choices that individuals or households adopt to sustain or improve their livelihoods [17,18]. From the perspective of capital and capabilities, Bebbington [19] pointed out that the five capitals are not mutually independent, static stocks but provide the basis for rural households to access opportunities, combine resources, and develop the capacity to act. On this basis, Scoones [20] framed sustainable livelihood analysis as a system composed of livelihood capital, livelihood strategies, the institutional and organizational environment, and livelihood outcomes, treating livelihood capital as the central link connecting resource endowments, strategy choice, and outcome generation. Scoones [21] further noted that early livelihood frameworks focused excessively on capital and economic dimensions and treated institutions, power, and politics as external contextual factors. This resulted in an inadequate account of structural inequality, and he argued for bringing politics, scale, and dynamic processes back into the analysis.

https://doi.org/10.3390/su182111120

The sustainable livelihoods framework has been widely used to examine the effects of tourism development on rural households. Among rural tourism households, both livelihood capital and livelihood strategies shift markedly between the peak and off seasons, which makes seasonal adjustment a routine part of household decision-making [10]. The framework has also been applied at the destination level to examine how household livelihood capital relates to livelihood strategy choices. Different combinations of capital correspond to different types of livelihood strategies [22]. Pasanchay and Schott [11] systematically applied the five-capital framework and pointed out that homestays bring not only cash income, women's empowerment, and improved waste management but also hidden costs such as opportunity costs, cultural shock, and community conflict. They argued for supplementing Scoones's framework with "cultural capital" in the Bourdieusian sense. Ellis's [23] classic discussion of livelihood diversification likewise suggests that peasant households often diversify risk through combinations of multiple activities rather than by transforming their livelihoods within a single sector. The livelihood pathways of peasant households can be characterized as "hanging in", "stepping up", and "stepping out" [24]. Sustainable livelihood theory provides a systematic analytical tool for understanding the relationship between tourism development and rural residents' livelihoods. Its core contribution lies in extending the analysis of livelihood change beyond income to the broader processes of livelihood capital configuration, strategy choice, and outcome generation. However, the application of the sustainable livelihoods framework in tourism research requires further attention to the contextual factors shaping livelihood change.

2.2. Art Intervention and Rural Tourism

Art intervention has gradually become an important mode of rural tourism development, contributing through spatial creation, cultural expression, and tourism activities. Artistic practices have brought art from a relatively independent cultural activity into the rural tourism scene, connecting it with local culture, rural space, and tourism development. The combination of art and tourism can enrich tourism products and experiences and respond to the homogenization of traditional tourism products by creating new cultural experiences. Richards and Wilson [25] pointed out that creative activities can develop new products and experiences for cultural tourism and provide destinations with a new path for responding to the "serial reproduction" of culture. Creativity has become an important driver of tourism development, with its role reflected not only in tourism product innovation but also in place-making and changes in the ways tourists participate [26]. In recent years, research has begun to pay closer attention to the role of art in shaping rural tourism spaces. Art intervention in rural cultural tourism spaces can enrich their cultural and aesthetic value and enhance the image of rural tourism destinations and the tourist experience [27]. Art intervention therefore extends beyond the beautification of rural space, contributing to rural tourism development through the integration of spatial, cultural, and tourism-related resources. Art interventions are defined as intentional creative acts, ranging from temporary installations and performances to permanent public artworks, that aim to transform the physical or social dynamics of a space [28].

In the rural context, art intervention is regarded as a neo-endogenous development path. Qu and Zollet [5] pointed out that combining art tourism with rural entrepreneurship can enhance community resilience, but its effectiveness depends on coordination between external resources and local actors rather than on the mere input of resources. The sustained community benefits of art tourism projects depend on residents' capacity to mobilize community resources through collective action and foster effective multi-stakeholder collaboration [29]. Residents' localized interpretation of artworks is a key mechanism connecting art and community, while the sharing of local knowledge can improve the sociocultural benefits of art festivals [30]. At the spatial level, the conversion of

villagers' residences into consumption spaces through capital circulation can reshape rural spatial order, supported by institutional, organizational, and interest-absorption mechanisms [31]. Although art intervention can enhance the aesthetic and symbolic value of rural space, the process of spatial renovation may also be accompanied by an uneven distribution of power and capital. Regarding tourism attractiveness, art intervention works through spatial beautification, cultural transformation, and event dissemination. By reshaping rural spaces and creating new cultural and tourism resources, art intervention may generate opportunities for the development of rural homestays. Homestays provide an important link between art-led tourism development and local livelihoods. By converting residential spaces into accommodation facilities and combining housing, labor, and local resources with tourism demand, homestays create opportunities for residents to participate in tourism and reorganize their livelihood resources. Homestays may evolve from tourism-supporting facilities into tourism attractions, particularly when artistic spaces and experiences become integral to their offerings [32,33]. However, existing research has focused primarily on the effects of art intervention on rural space, cultural production, and tourism development, with limited attention to how art intervention affects residents' livelihood capital and livelihood strategies through homestay development.

In this study, art intervention in rural tourism development refers to the integration of artistic practices and creative initiatives into rural spaces, cultural activities, and everyday life, rather than the application of any single art form. Such interventions may include artist residencies, art spaces, public art, and cultural events. In Qingshan Village, these practices are reflected in the development of public buildings and spaces with the involvement of architects, including the visitor center, cultural hall, and ecological lawn park, as well as the creation of art installations and the organization of art festivals. By integrating artistic expression into the rural landscape and public life, these initiatives have created distinctive visitor attractions and contributed to the village's development as an art tourism destination.

2.3. Rural Homestays and Residents' Livelihoods

Homestays have been defined differently across academic, industry, and regulatory contexts. Bed-and-breakfast establishments, homestays, farm-stays, and home-lodges are used side by side, and their specific connotations vary with the development background of different countries and regions [34,35]. Homestay is a form of accommodation that combines bed-and-breakfast services with a welcoming, family-like atmosphere [36]. Existing research mainly understands homestays in terms of resource integration, multiparty cooperation, cultural experience, and family life, emphasizing that they not only provide accommodation but also perform functions such as displaying local culture and offering rural life experiences [37,38]. In 2001, the "Regulations for the Administration of Homestays" in the Taiwan region of China defined them as places that use spare rooms in owner-occupied residences, combine local resources, operate as a family side business, and provide tourists with accommodation for rural living [39,40]. With the development of the homestay industry in the mainland, the "Basic Requirements and Evaluation for Homestay Inns" [41] further defined tourism homestay inns as small-scale accommodation facilities. These facilities use idle local resources such as local residences, involve hosts in receiving guests, and provide tourists with experiences of local nature, culture, and modes of production and life [41]. Homestay development refers to the process through which homestay businesses emerge, expand, and become more established. Rural homestays are small-scale business formats that rely on rural natural landscapes, local culture, and idle farmhouse resources to provide tourists with distinctive accommodation and in situ living experiences; they are both a key link in the rural tourism industry chain and an important vehicle for residents' participation in tourism development. Homestay

research has gradually moved beyond its early focus on operation and marketing to examine issues such as community impacts, relational governance, and rural sustainability. Studies of family guesthouses had already considered the livelihoods of their owners, yet the social structures and livelihood effects associated with homestay development remain insufficiently explored [32]. Janjua et al. [42] conducted a systematic review of 94 studies published between 2010 and 2020 and found that only about half focused specifically on homestays, with sociocultural sustainability receiving substantially more attention than economic and environmental dimensions. This imbalance suggests that the livelihood and environmental impacts of homestay development remain underexamined.

Homestays have become a widely used instrument of community-based tourism (CBT) in developing countries, where they support the sustainable development of community tourism [43,44]. Their contribution runs in two directions: tourists gain access to authentic local culture and everyday life, while residents gain new livelihood options [45,46]. The development of rural community tourism and homestays should therefore take the principles of sustainable livelihoods as an important guide. In terms of effects, homestay operation can increase households' opportunities to participate in economic activities, generate income, and improve long-term livelihood conditions such as health care and education [47]. It can also promote cultural exchange between residents and tourists, deepen tourists' understanding of local culture and lifestyles, and generate environmental benefits through waste management and natural resource conservation [48–50]. However, existing research pays more attention to the economic returns of homestays to operating households and to the cultural experiences of tourists. The overall effects of homestay operation on the sustainable livelihoods of operators, and on the wider community once residents invest time and labor in running homestays, remain insufficiently discussed. In the Chinese context, the relationship between rural homestays and residents' livelihoods is shaped jointly by the institutional environment, household capital, and intergenerational division of labor. Based on the sustainable livelihoods framework, homestay entrepreneurship can be understood through the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation, livelihood capital, and livelihood strategies. Entrepreneurial motivation follows a "dual-generation mechanism" involving endogenous and exogenous motives, giving rise to three business models: extensive self-operation, entrepreneurial sentiment, and model boutique [51]. Wu et al. [52] classify homestay entrepreneurs as lifestyle-oriented, idealistic, or profit-oriented. Lifestyle-oriented operators are the predominant group in China. This lifestyle orientation suggests that homestay entrepreneurship is not solely driven by economic returns but also reflects entrepreneurs' pursuit of preferred lifestyles and continued engagement with the business [53].

Research has established the multiple effects of rural homestays on residents' incomes, employment, social relations, and community development, and it now pays close attention to operators' motivations, capabilities, and social networks. However, existing studies rarely distinguish how different development drivers, such as the resource-development type and the art-driven type, affect the livelihood outcomes associated with homestay development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Grounded Theory

This study adopts the grounded theory method. Grounded theory emphasizes developing concepts and categories inductively from empirical data and constructing theoretical explanations through constant comparison [54]. Grounded theory is particularly suitable for exploratory research aimed at understanding social processes that are not yet adequately explained by existing theories [55]. How art intervention affects residents' livelihoods through homestays involves interactions across several levels, including space,

culture, markets, and household livelihoods. Because the relationships among these processes cannot be fully specified in advance, grounded theory provides an appropriate approach to examining these relationships empirically and developing an explanatory framework. Recent research has also employed grounded theory to develop conceptual frameworks for context-dependent social processes [56].

The grounded theory analysis involved the following procedures in this study. (1) Inductive discovery was achieved by coding the transcripts rather than applying a predetermined coding framework. The researchers read all transcripts line by line and assigned conceptual labels to meaningful segments of text. These labels were progressively organized into 20 initial categories and five main categories. The categories emerged from engagement with the data rather than being defined in advance. This process followed the grounded theory principle of developing analytical categories through systematic engagement with empirical data [54,55]. (2) Constant comparison was conducted throughout the analysis, drawing on established grounded theory procedures. The analysis compared incidents within and across interviews, incidents against emerging categories, and categories with one another to refine their properties and relationships. When an incident did not fit an existing category, the relevant category definition was reconsidered, and earlier transcripts were revisited to assess the revised interpretation [54]. (3) Theoretical saturation was assessed using three transcripts set aside before formal coding. After the analytical framework had been developed from the remaining 15 transcripts, the three reserved transcripts were analyzed against the emerging framework. No new substantive concepts or categories emerged, and no new relationships among the existing categories were identified [57]. The framework was therefore considered theoretically saturated. (4) The analysis focused on process and interaction by examining the sequence of changes associated with art intervention, homestay development, and livelihood transformation, as well as the relationships among actors. This enabled the analysis to explore how interactions among these actors shaped homestay development and the use of livelihood resources, thereby informing the development of the theoretical framework. The resulting theoretical framework is therefore grounded in the empirical experiences of the interviewees and provides an explanatory basis for understanding the livelihood effects of art intervention.

3.2. Study Sites, Participants, and Data Collection

This study selected Qingshan Village, Huanghu Town, Yuhang District, Hangzhou, as the research case. Qingshan Village is located on the northwestern outskirts of Hangzhou, about an hour's drive from the main urban area, and contains natural ecological resources such as the Longwu Reservoir. Around 2015, prompted by water source protection and ecological restoration, a group of designers, artists, and public-interest practitioners successively entered the village and carried out activities related to water source protection, nature education, architectural design, public art, and craft revival, gradually forming a development path of "art-based rural construction". These newcomers needed somewhere to live, and villagers' willingness to rent out spare rooms laid the foundation for the village's early homestay development. Since then, Qingshan Village has developed public spaces such as a visitor center, a nature school, the Rong Design Library, a large lawn, and an auditorium and has regularly organized cultural activities such as the "Qingshan Village Art Festival". In this process, artists, designers, and public-interest practitioners initiated artistic interventions, while the village committee and local governments supported public infrastructure and related programs. Households independently decided whether and how to operate homestays. As a result, Qingshan Village has emerged as a rural community shaped by ecological conservation and art-led rural revitalization. Qingshan Village was chosen as the case site because it has a relatively clear background of art intervention, its homestay development is relatively prominent, and

residents participate widely in tourism businesses, providing a typical case for examining homestay development and its effects on residents' livelihoods under art intervention.

This study collected data through semi-structured interviews. Initial fieldwork in Qingshan Village began in July 2023, when we conducted informal interviews with homestay operators. The semi-structured interview guide was subsequently refined through discussions with two professors and two doctoral students. Some questions were merged or removed to reduce overlap and improve their relevance to the research objectives. The final interview outline covered three main aspects. First, it explored the development and operation of homestays, including the motivations for starting a homestay, the timing and initial conditions of operation, government support and training, household occupational backgrounds, current management practices, and the main challenges faced by operators. Second, it examined changes in household livelihoods, focusing on changes in income sources, livelihood strategies, family roles, and daily life before and after the commencement of homestay operations. Third, it addressed the role of art intervention in homestay development and residents' livelihoods, including changes in the village and homestays following art intervention, its effects on household livelihoods, and participants' views on the conditions and support needed for the future development of homestays and tourism in Qingshan Village. The final interview outline is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview outline.

Numbers	Questions
Q1	Why did you choose to operate a homestay? When did it begin operating, and what were the initial investment and policy support like?
Q2	Have you received relevant training from the government or the village, or have you had the experience of going out to study and observe? What help have these experiences provided for homestay operation?
Q3	Before operating the homestay, what were the main occupations and sources of income of you and your family? Did the household have cultural production activities such as handicrafts or traditional food?
Q4	After operating the homestay, what changes occurred in your household's sources of income, ways of making a living, and daily life?
Q5	How do you currently operate the homestay? How are family members' roles divided? What main difficulties do you face during operation?
Q6	What connections and interactions do you have with other homestays in the village, tourism organizations, and guests? Are there competition and cooperation among homestays?
Q7	After art intervention, what changes occurred in the village and the homestays? What effects did these changes have on your and your family's livelihood?
Q8	What conditions do you think are needed to develop rural homestays? What help can the government, the village, and artists or other professionals provide? What suggestions do you have for the future development of tourism and homestays in Qingshan Village?

Source: own elaboration.

The study was conducted by three researchers in Qingshan Village in October 2023. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit homestay operators in Qingshan Village. Recruitment was facilitated by referrals from homestay operators and direct visits to local homestays. According to one interviewee (V01), there were approximately 20 to 30 homestay businesses in the village. This study interviewed 18 homestay operators, including local homestay operators and external homestay investors, who were coded as V01–V18. External investors were included to provide insights into business establishment and tourism development, while the analysis of local household

livelihood strategies focused on evidence from local operators and their households. Given the estimated number of homestays in the village, considerable efforts were made to reach as many operators as possible and achieve broad coverage of local homestay businesses. The interviews covered operational backgrounds, investment and income, training, platform participation, perceptions of village change, and the role of art. Each interview lasted between 10 and 65 min, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim. This study strictly protected the personal information and identities of the interviewees and ensured that no privacy-related information beyond the scope of the study was collected. Throughout the interviews, the researchers respected the participants' wishes and rights, avoided exerting undue pressure, and took measures to protect their dignity and autonomy [58]. The basic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample.

Numbers	Homestay Name	Gender	Scale	Opening Year
V01	Qingpu Yangshe	Female	7 rooms	2020
V02	Taoli	Female	7 rooms	2021
V03	Guiyuan Tianju	Female	5 rooms	2019
V04	Xiangwoli	Female	7 rooms	2020
V05	Juanjie	Female	7 rooms	2017
V06	Cunlijian	Female	6 rooms	2019
V07	Jingxin Mushe	Female	8 rooms	2020
V08	Yingshahong	Female	6 rooms	2016
V09	Linshan Xiaoshe	Female	6 rooms	2020
V10	Jiulin Jingshe	Female	28 rooms	2021
V11	Qinghe Farmhouse Restaurant	Female	4 rooms	2019
V12	Wenzhu Qingju	Male	9 rooms	2022
V13	Laoyangjia	Female	5 rooms	2019
V14	Yinghuochong	Female	4 rooms	2020
V15	Qingxi Bieyuan	Female	8 rooms	2020
V16	Qiaopan Qingshe	Female	17 rooms	2022
V17	Lin Huiyin Yu	Male	5 rooms	2019
V18	Qingshan Youth Community Longwuli	Female	14 rooms	2023

Source: own elaboration.

3.3. Data Analysis

Following the grounded theory coding procedure, this study conducted three stages of coding on the transcribed interview recordings—namely, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding [54].

(1) Open coding involves analyzing the original data sentence by sentence, assigning conceptual labels, and grouping related concepts. The researchers read the interview transcripts repeatedly, removed content unrelated to the research topic, and extracted statements related to art intervention, homestay operation, and livelihood change. This process yielded 20 initial categories. Some of the results of open coding are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of open coding.

Category	Conceptualization	Representative Interview Statement
Artist residency	Artists reside in the village long-term and participate in rural design	"Mr. Zhang Lei, founder of the Rong Design Library, participates in the design of some large buildings in Qingshan Village" (V18).
Art spaces	Creation of public spaces	"The big stage and the big lawn over there have all been built" (V09).
Art events	Art festivals, exhibitions, and craft experience activities	"This year our art festival runs from June to July; the festival lasts a month" (V01).
Everyday aesthetics	Excavation of local crafts and enhancement of the village's aesthetic atmosphere	"The whole village feels different from other villages … the overall artistic tone is a bit higher" (V18).
Number and scale of homestays	Operator growth and room differentiation	"In our place there are about 20 to 30 homestays and farmhouse restaurants" (V01).
Business model	Diversified business models	"Our family mainly does exclusive bookings, and there are also individual guests" (V12).
Guest source structure	Diversified guest sources	"Most people come to Qingshan Village because of the art, and then they come here attracted by its reputation" (V06).
Product characteristics	Artistic atmosphere, distinctive breakfast, and craft experiences	"We have karaoke and entertainment … it has to keep up" (V15).
Human capital	Skill conversion	"It is hard to operate on the phone, orders and so on … you have to register and use a computer, and we are not very good at it" (V01).
	Intergenerational division of labor	"She is the one who takes the orders, so she handles all the bookings" (V03).
	Training and learning	"There is training in cooking, in bed-making, in everything" (V03).
Physical capital	Housing transformation	"We live here ourselves, and we take out the spare rooms to run a homestay" (V13).
	Renovation investment	"The house cost 1.7 million yuan in total, all in cash" (V02).
Financial capital	Income diversification	"More than 200,000 yuan this year; during the art season from June to July this year it was 130,000 to 140,000" (V02).
	Unequal access to subsidies	"Subsidies, we did not get a single cent" (V02).
Social capital	Organizational platforms	"They have a platform that helps us; when guests come … they recommend your place" (V01).
	Intra-village mutual assistance	"When they cannot accommodate their guests, they send them to our place" (V14).
	External networks	"Mr. Zhang Lei also brings guest sources … some schools also bring guests over" (V15).
Natural capital	Natural resources	"This place is in the mountains; the air is certainly better than outside" (V11).
	Local product	"I dug up the sweet potatoes and made them myself, and there were extra dried bamboo shoots we could not finish, so they took them back" (V01).
Homestay-dominated pattern	Primary income from homestays	"Our main business is still accommodation. We used to cook a few dishes from time to time, but

		now I must help look after the grandchildren, and it has become too tiring." (V01).
Catering-dominated pattern	Catering as the primary business	"During the one month of the art festival I was fully booked, with catering full" (V04).
Part-time homestay pattern	Homestay as a supplementary income source	"I also have a shop over there … the homestay is just something I do on the side" (V13).
Increased income	Increased household income and disposable income	"The more tourists there are, the more income I have, and the more people there are, the happier I am" (V02).
Improved quality of life	Greater happiness, fulfilment, and improved family life	"I feel my happiness index has gone up; it is quite fulfilling" (V04).
Stay/return intention	Return and local retention	"Running a homestay … we have retired, and then we will come back to look after the children" (V01).
Improved livelihood stability	Local employment and risk resilience	"Being able to work at your own doorstep beats having to go out as in previous years" (V06).

Source: own elaboration.

(2) Axial coding builds on open coding by establishing relationships among categories based on their logical relations, and it groups related categories into broader subcategories and main categories. Clustering and relational analysis of the 20 categories produced five main categories, namely "modes of art intervention", "homestay development", "reconstruction of livelihood capital", "livelihood strategies", and "livelihood outcomes". These results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of axial coding.

Principal Category	Category	Conceptual Definition
Modes of art intervention	Artist residency, Art spaces, Art events, Everyday aesthetics	The forms of artistic practices introduced into rural development in Qingshan Village.
Homestay development	Number and scale of homestays, Business model, Guest source structure, Product characteristics	The emergence, expansion, and consolidation of homestay businesses in Qingshan Village.
Reconstruction of livelihood capital	Human capital, Social capital, Financial capital, Physical capital, Natural capital	Changes in the five types of livelihood capital associated with homestay development.
Livelihood strategies	Homestay-dominated pattern, Catering-dominated pattern, Part-time homestay pattern	The livelihood activities and choices regarding resource use of homestay operators and their households.
Livelihood outcomes	Increased income, Improved quality of life, Stay/return intention, Improved livelihood stability	Changes in household income, quality of life, residential intentions, and livelihood stability.

Source: own elaboration.

(3) Selective coding identifies a core category from the discovered conceptual categories and links the categories into a complete explanatory framework in the form of a storyline. The core category identified in this study is "rural homestay development and the reconstruction of residents' livelihood capital driven by art intervention". Around this core category, the following storyline can be developed. Art intervention, as a contextual condition, changes the village's spatial image, cultural meaning, and tourism attractiveness through artist residencies and talent agglomeration, the creation of art spaces, the organization of art events, artistic renovation, and the exploration of everyday aesthetics

and local culture. Homestays, as a key medium, convert the image enhancement and changes in tourist structure brought by art into an operable tourism business format. This format exhibits a development path different from that of traditional tourism villages in terms of number and scale, business model, guest source structure, and product characteristics. During homestay operation, residents' human, physical, financial, social, and natural capital are recombined, and livelihood capital is thereby reconstructed. This reconstruction constitutes the core mechanism through which art intervention affects residents' livelihoods. Capital reconstruction further drives residents' livelihood strategies, such as homestay-dominated, catering-dominated, and part-time homestay patterns, ultimately leading to changes in livelihood outcomes such as income level, quality of life, willingness to remain in the village, and livelihood stability. The distinctive feature of Qingshan Village lies in how art intervention reshapes homestay development. However, residents' differing capital endowments shape how they participate in this process, resulting in varied livelihood outcomes. Based on the grounded theory, this study constructed an analytical framework illustrating how art intervention, through rural homestay development, reshapes residents' livelihoods, as shown in Figure 1.

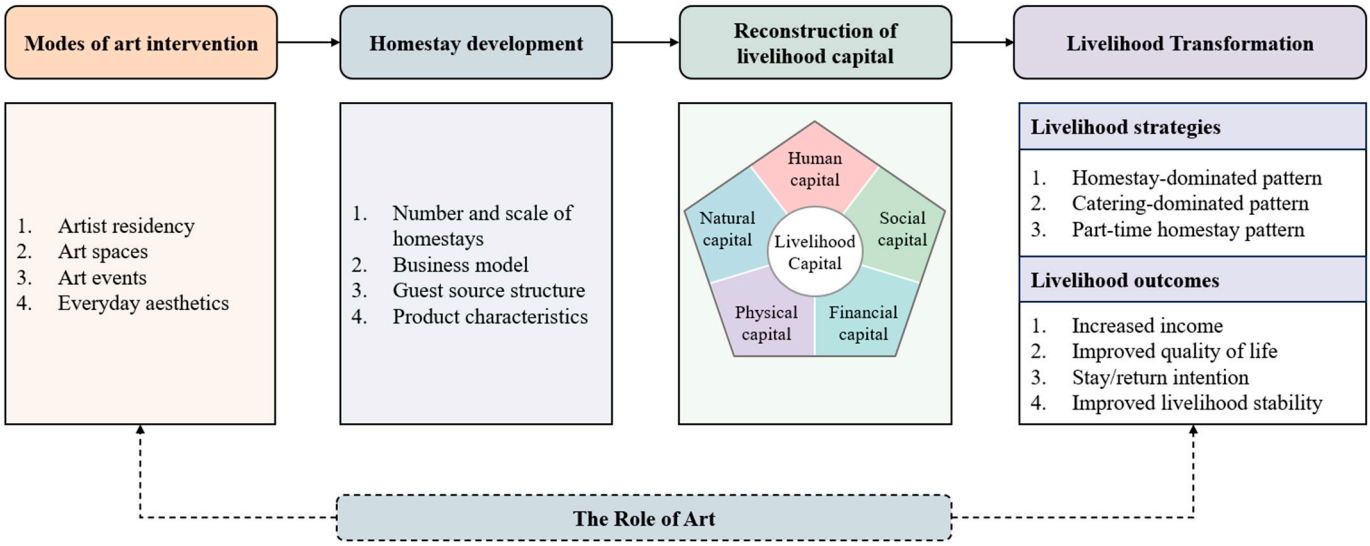


Figure 1. Analytical framework of art intervention and residents' livelihoods. Source: own elaboration based on the coding results.

4. Results

4.1. Homestay Development Through Art Intervention

The development of homestays in Qingshan Village has progressed from initial emergence to expansion and, more recently, sustained development (see Figure 2). During the initial stage from 2016 to 2017, homestays mainly took the form of farmhouse accommodation, with limited specialization and relatively simple business models. Meanwhile, external initiatives began to introduce new ideas and resources into the village, laying the foundation for subsequent tourism development. From 2017 to 2022, the homestay sector entered a period of gradual expansion and professionalization. The involvement of external designers and the implementation of initiatives such as "Nature Good Neighbor" increased the visibility of Qingshan Village and promoted improvements in its spatial environment and tourism conditions. These interventions also created new opportunities for accommodation businesses. Since 2022, the village has entered a stage of sustained development, characterized by continued growth in homestay businesses, more diversified operating models, and the emergence of new entrepreneurial actors. The launch of the art

festival in 2023 further connected artistic creation with local spaces and tourism activities. The development of homestays in Qingshan Village has increasingly moved beyond accommodation provision toward greater integration with rural tourism, artistic activities, and local development. This evolution suggests that homestays serve as an important link between art intervention, rural tourism development, and changes in residents' livelihood opportunities.

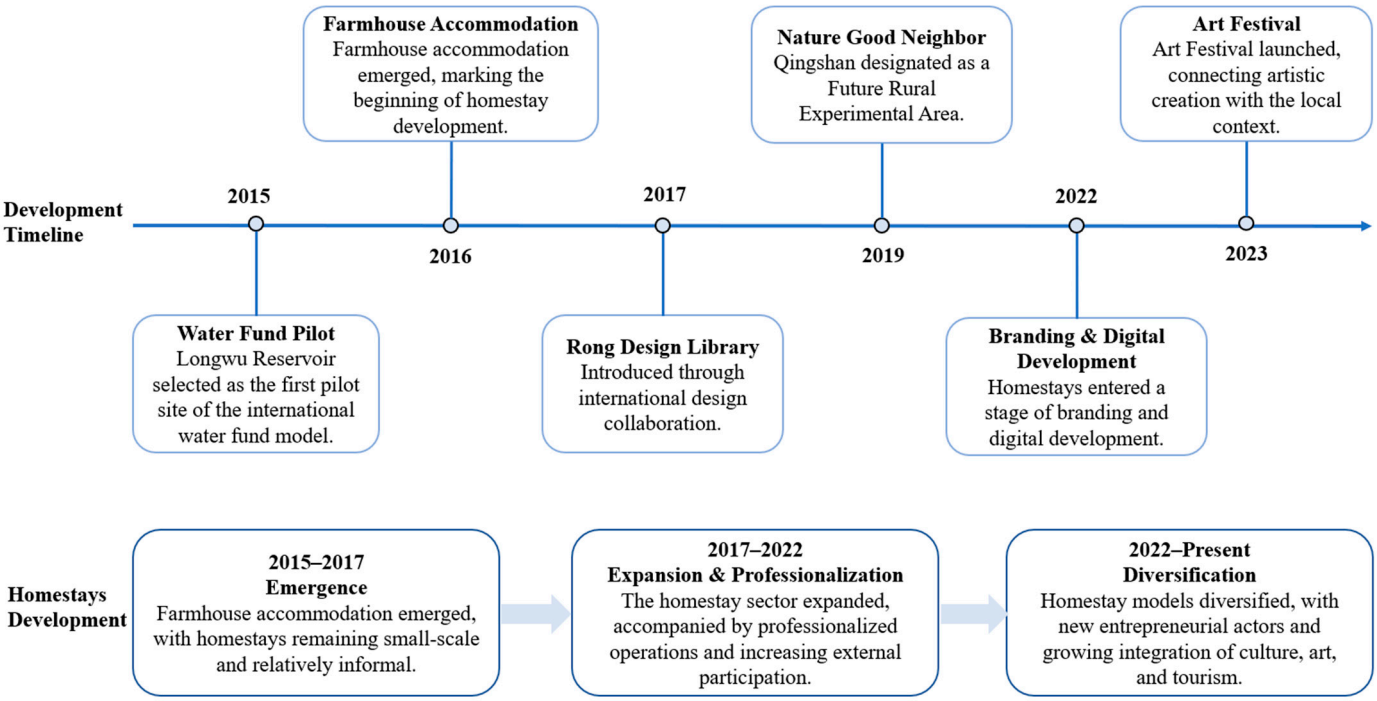


Figure 2. Homestay development in Qingshan Village. Source: own elaboration based on the interview data.

Following the introduction of art into Qingshan Village, the most immediate change occurred in the way rural space was presented and experienced. The village gradually evolved from an ordinary rural living space into a more distinctive tourism space that attracted visitors. Traditional rural space performs the functions of residence, production, and everyday interaction, and its value lies mainly in residents' own lives. Through spatial renovation, artworks, public activities, and the creation of a visual environment, art intervention gives ordinary rural space new aesthetic meaning and cultural expression. In Qingshan Village this is manifested in public spaces such as the visitor center, the Rong Design Library, the large lawn, and the auditorium, which serve villagers' daily lives and have become markers by which tourists identify the village. As one homestay operator said, "*The whole village feels different from other villages. The overall artistic tone is a bit higher. From a tourist's point of view, they would feel this place is quite nice and the overall aesthetic is relatively good* (V18)". It is worth noting that art intervention does not directly create homestays; rather, it creates the conditions for homestays to enter the tourism market by changing the village image and enhancing its tourism appeal. Several operators mentioned that the completion of art spaces was an important trigger for their decision to operate a homestay: "*Later I also saw that more and more people were coming here to visit and the environment was getting better and better, so I felt there was hope here, and that is why I did it* (V15)". As the village image improved, living spaces such as residences, lanes, and courtyards also acquired new tourism value. However, the effects of art intervention on different villagers were not the same. One homestay operator mentioned: "*They made a lot of*

noise and it looked quite nice. But to us ordinary villagers, art feels a bit far away. They put on activities and played music, and some older people found it annoying and noisy (V01)". Some villagers capitalized on the tourists and market opportunities generated by art intervention to start businesses, while others felt that art activities had little connection with their daily lives.

The increase in the number of tourists and the improvement in the village's image brought about by art intervention further promoted the touristification of housing resources. For villagers, housing originally mainly served a residential function, but once tourism demand emerged, some residences began to acquire new economic value. This shift reflects a change in how physical capital is used. Villagers' existing housing did not become capital because it was built as a homestay. Its use value changed against the background of tourism development. Idle residences, vacant rooms, and traditional buildings can be brought into tourism operations after renovation. As one homestay operator put it, "*Anyway, the house is empty whether I use it or not, and I have nothing much to do at home, so I just did it* (V14)". Homestay development has in effect changed the way villagers' housing resources are used, gradually turning housing that was originally for daily living into tourism business space and further into an important source of household income. This process also explains why homestays have a relatively low entry threshold for ordinary villagers. Compared with building large new tourism projects, villagers can use existing housing to participate in tourism operations. The interview data show that the initial investment in Qingshan Village homestays varies enormously. Some operations are "incidental", relying on owned housing and adding little more than beds and air conditioners. Others involve "asset-heavy" investment, with demolition, reconstruction, and the hiring of designers. This difference in investment itself constitutes the starting point of subsequent livelihood differentiation.

Art intervention has also changed the way homestays themselves operate. Traditional rural homestays mainly provide accommodation and catering services, whereas homestays in the context of art tourism place greater emphasis on spatial design, cultural atmosphere, and the expression of lifestyle. Homestays thus evolve from mere accommodation facilities into spaces where tourists can experience rural culture. House design, courtyard arrangement, artworks, local food, and villagers' daily life may all become part of the tourist experience. In Qingshan Village, some homestays embed craft experiences into their operation. For example, one operator's household has "*handmade aromatherapy made by your daughter herself. If anyone wants it, we sell it* (V03)". Another operator cooperates with village craftspeople to display products such as bamboo weaving. Some operators explicitly expressed the significance of an artistic atmosphere for homestay quality: "*Hanging it there makes it a bit livelier and gives it more of a feeling* (V15)". The development of homestays in Qingshan Village has been shaped by the reshaping of the village's spatial image, the growth of its tourism appeal, the transformation of housing resources, and the upgrading of homestay offerings.

4.2. Homestay Development and Livelihood Capital Reconstruction

Homestay development has driven the reallocation of residents' human capital, gradually shifting their existing labor capacity towards the knowledge, skills, and service capabilities required for tourism operations. Villagers' labor had been concentrated on agricultural production, work outside the village, and household affairs. After homestay development, they needed new skills in room management, hygiene, food preparation, reception, online marketing, order management, and cultural interpretation. This shift in skill requirements posed considerable challenges to middle-aged and older operators. One homestay operator admitted: "*For those of us who are older, it is hard to operate on the phone, orders, booking rooms, invoices, and you have to register and use a computer, and we are*

not very good at it (V01)". Similar difficulties recurred repeatedly in the interviews: "*In the past we always asked them to do it for us. Now, we have to close rooms on the phone ourselves* (V04)". Homestay operation in Qingshan Village shows a clear characteristic of intergenerational division of labor. Middle-aged and older operators are responsible for offline reception, cooking, and hygiene, while online platform operation and order management are often taken on by their children. One operator said, "*She is the one who takes the orders, so she handles all the bookings* (V03)". This collaboration helps alleviate the human capital constraints faced by older operators and provides a new channel for skill transmission within the household. Meanwhile, some operators accumulated new capabilities by participating in training; one homestay operator said, "*The village also organized training in cooking, bed-making, fire safety, and even English* (V03)". For some older villagers the advantage lies not in modern operation skills but in familiarity with the local environment, lifestyle, and culture. This knowledge was once part of everyday experience, but has now become a resource in art tourism and homestay development.

Physical capital is the most intuitive change in the process of homestay development in Qingshan Village. Homestay operation usually relies on villagers' existing housing, making housing an important form of capital for households entering the tourism market. For households with idle housing, traditional buildings, or larger courtyards, these housing resources represent a potential business opportunity. One homestay operator said, "*We live here ourselves, and we take out the spare rooms to run a homestay* (V13)". Art intervention has further raised the tourism value of housing; after design renovation, an originally ordinary residence can become accommodation space with artistic characteristics. However, this change does not have the same meaning for all residents. Households with better housing conditions, those located in the tourism core area, and those with the financial capacity to renovate their properties are more likely to mobilize their physical capital for tourism operations. In the interviews, one operator mentioned having "*put in more than 1 million yuan over these three or four years* (V03)", and another had invested "*three to four million, counting the house and the renovation together* (V17)". Conversely, households with poorer housing conditions and lacking funds for renovation may be unable to enter homestay operation directly. Therefore, art intervention and homestay development not only activate existing physical capital in the village but may also amplify disparities in households' physical capital endowments.

Financial capital was reshaped less by increases in household income than by changes in the sources of that income. Before tourism developed, household income came mainly from bamboo forestry, out-migration work, and small-scale farming. Homestay operation added tourism income to this mix and made the household income structure more diversified, with the peak of tourism demand concentrated in a short season. As one operator put it, "*More than 200,000 yuan this year* (V02)". Access to this income, however, depended on capital that households already held. Renovation investment among the 18 interviewed operators ranged from tens of thousands to more than ten million yuan, and some operators carried substantial loan pressure, whereas others had renovated gradually out of retained earnings. Public support was also unevenly distributed: one operator reported that "*Subsidies, we did not get a single cent* (V02)". Financial capital therefore functioned less as a benefit generated by tourism than as a prerequisite for entering the homestay sector. Households lacking sufficient financial resources were more likely to rely on wage employment or the sale of agricultural products. A distinctive feature of the art-led pathway was the rental income generated by artists and designers who moved into the village. By renting villagers' houses, they provided some households with a source of cash income before homestay operations began.

Compared with changes in income, changes in social capital may be more easily overlooked, but they are particularly important for villages undergoing art intervention. Art

intervention brings in new external actors, including artists, designers, cultural institutions, tourists, the media, and tourism enterprises; residents' social networks, originally built on kinship, neighborhood, and acquaintance, begin to extend to include these external relations. In Qingshan Village, the connections formed between villagers and artists serve as channels for resource exchange. One operator mentioned, "*Mr. Zhang Lei also brings in guests, and other people, as well as some schools, also bring guests to the village* (V15)". Artists who eat and stay in villagers' homes for long periods during residencies also constitute new networks of everyday interaction. At the same time, a relatively stable mutual-assistance network has formed among operating entities within the village. When guest demand exceeds their own room capacity, operators generally refer guests to one another: "*For example, when they cannot accommodate their guests, they send them to our place. If we cannot accommodate them, we also send them to their place* (V14)". This mechanism helps mitigate the effects of the loss of guest sources caused by the limited capacity of individual operators. It shows that mutual assistance is not simply a generalized cooperative relationship. Rather, it is based on operators' mutual recognition of service quality. Social capital serves both as a channel for sharing guest sources and as a reputation-based screening mechanism. However, the role of social capital also has boundaries. One operator stressed that referring guests requires responsibility towards regular customers, so "*We do not dare refer others. If the guests stay unhappily, then we are responsible too* (V16)". Platforms such as "Nature Good Neighbor" and "Future Village" use guest allocation, rating assessments, and training activities to connect otherwise dispersed operating households within a broader organizational network. Through these connections, residents' social capital extends beyond village-internal ties to encompass both internal and external relations.

Natural capital supports homestay operation through the rural environment and landscape. The natural environment and landscape of Qingshan Village provide the resource base for homestay development and attract tourists to stay and relax. Art intervention does not necessarily directly increase the amount of natural capital, but it may change the way the value of natural capital is realized. Forests, farmland, water bodies, and landscapes once served agricultural production and residents' daily lives. With the development of tourism, they have increasingly become resources for tourists' sightseeing, leisure, and recreational experiences. Thus, natural capital shifted from a production resource to a landscape resource, then to a tourism experience resource. Several interviewees repeatedly emphasized that the air quality and natural environment are the core advantages attracting tourists: "*This place is in the mountains; the air is certainly better than outside* (V11)". In addition, the economic value of bamboo forest resources has been extended by tourism; digging bamboo shoots in spring and making dried bamboo shoots have become supplementary income sources for some households. One operator mentioned that this year dried bamboo shoots "*sold for 30,000 yuan* (V02)". The livelihood capital of Qingshan Village residents has been reshaped not only through changes in individual capital assets but also through the recombination of different forms of capital.

4.3. Art Intervention and the Diversification of Residents' Livelihood Strategies

Compared with ordinary rural tourism development, art intervention has changed the basis of value creation for homestays. Traditional rural tourism mainly relies on resources to attract tourists and drives homestay development as accommodation demand grows, so homestay value derives mainly from the accommodation function. Through art intervention, Qingshan Village has become not only a place where tourists stay but also a destination for cultural experience and aesthetic consumption. The value of homestays is therefore no longer built entirely on "accommodation", and it increasingly incorporates local culture, spatial aesthetics, and lifestyle. This change is reflected in operators'

descriptions of their guest profiles and booking patterns. Tourists in Qingshan Village tend to be younger and more interested in aesthetics and experience: "*People who come here on holiday are generally newly married, or looking for a partner, or bringing children* (V04)" and "*Most people come to Qingshan Village because of the art, and then they come here attracted by its reputation* (V06)". During the art festival, tourist numbers and accommodation demand rise significantly: "*During the one month of the art festival I was fully booked, with both accommodation and catering full* (V04)". This means that art's influence on homestays is manifested in two aspects: the village image and homestay products. Art raises the village's recognizability, enabling Qingshan Village to form a relatively distinct image among numerous ordinary rural tourism destinations. On the other hand, art also enriches the content of homestay products so that homestays are no longer merely spaces providing accommodation but gradually become important places for tourists to experience rural culture, participate in local life, and engage with an artistic atmosphere. However, the benefits of art intervention are not equally significant for all operators. Operators located in the tourism core area benefit more obviously, whereas those in more peripheral locations with different customer positioning perceive limited effects. One operator located beside the reservoir said, "*Those homestays originally down there near the visitor center probably have been affected a bit; on our side there is not much effect, it has always been fine* (V10)". Another operator running a high-end homestay also noted that "*After the art festival opened, there was not really much benefit for us. It is just like usual* (V12)". The market opportunities created by art intervention are unevenly distributed across locations and business formats [59].

Homestay development has reshaped the livelihood arrangements of homestay operators and their households by creating new income-generating opportunities alongside existing activities. Before tourism development, many local households relied primarily on migrant work and small-scale farming. As homestay businesses developed, operators adopted different livelihood strategies according to the contribution of tourism-related income to household livelihoods and the extent to which homestay operation was combined with other economic activities. Based on the interview data, three patterns can be identified. The first is the homestay-dominated pattern, in which homestay operation constitutes the principal source of household income and family labor is primarily devoted to the business. One operator reported investing more than 1 million yuan over three to four years (V03) and described the business as the household's principal occupation. This account illustrates the central role of homestay operation in the economic activities of these households. The second is the catering-dominated pattern, in which restaurant operations constitute the principal business and accommodation serves as a supplementary activity. These operators primarily organize their businesses around food preparation, restaurant management, and catering services, with guest rooms providing an additional source of income. For example, one operator had previously operated a restaurant outside the village before returning to the local area to continue the catering business and add accommodation services. The operator reported that during the month-long art festival, catering was fully booked (V04). The third is the part-time homestay pattern, in which operators run homestays alongside their principal occupations or businesses. These operators do not rely solely on homestay income but combine it with income from other activities, such as factory employment or shop ownership. One operator mentioned having another shop and described the homestay as "*just something I do on the side* (V13)". These patterns show that tourism development does not lead all households to adopt the same livelihood strategy. Their choices are closely related to household resources, including housing, financial capital, skills, social relations, and labor availability.

Art intervention may also shift residents' participation in tourism from general forms of involvement towards more direct engagement in tourism operations. In the general process of tourism development, residents may participate in tourism mainly by renting

out housing or providing labor, and this mode of participation has a relatively indirect relationship with the tourism industry [60]. However, residents may participate more directly in homestay spatial design, cultural activities, local experiences, and tourist interaction in art tourism villages. Residents are no longer merely labor in the tourism industry but may also become producers of local culture and tourism experiences. In Qingshan Village, this appears in several forms. Some operators actively learn art-related skills, such as weaving, tie-dyeing, and postcard making, and integrate them into homestay services and experiences. Other operators renovate their own residences into spaces with a clear design style and hire professional designers for the overall design. Villagers thereby change from ordinary laborers in the tourism industry chain into tourism operators. This is also how art intervention not only expands the tourism market but may also change the way residents participate in tourism. Meanwhile, art intervention does not necessarily bring equal livelihood improvement. The livelihood capital held by different residents differs. Households with larger housing, stronger economic capacity, and richer social relations are more likely to enter homestay operation. Younger residents with online marketing capabilities may also find it easier to obtain new business opportunities, whereas residents with poorer housing conditions and lacking funds and tourism skills may only be able to participate in low-return service work. The large-scale entry of external capital has also changed the village's business landscape to a certain extent. Some operators were reserved about asset-heavy investment, believing that it "*involves very large investment, and the design and renovation are very good, but it is not combined particularly well with the village's actual situation* (V17)". Some operators expressed cautious observations about the actual effects of art intervention and the sustainability of village development: "*Right now it looks quite lively, and the government has invested a lot of money, but if the funding cannot keep up later, everyone might just disperse. A landscape in the true sense has not formed. I think the whole village has the possibility of gradually sinking* (V17)". These voices indicate that art intervention changes the opportunity structure of rural development, but whether residents can convert these opportunities into actual livelihood returns still depends on their capital base. Without effective organization and distribution mechanisms, the tourism resources brought by art intervention may not be widely shared among community residents [61].

5. Discussion

The study clarifies the role of homestay development in connecting art intervention with household livelihood transformation. Art intervention does not change residents' livelihoods directly. Instead, the development of homestays provides a channel through which changes in space, culture, and the market are translated into livelihood opportunities for residents. This process-oriented finding complements recent studies of rural tourism participation, which have identified market conditions and household characteristics as important factors influencing rural residents' engagement in tourism [62]. By linking art intervention, homestay development, livelihood capital, and livelihood strategies, this study extends research on art intervention from destination-level changes to household-level livelihood transformation and responds to Scoones's call to examine livelihood dynamics across different scales and move beyond descriptions of capital stocks [21].

Art intervention drives rural spatial transformation and the reconstruction of the rural image. Through spatial renovation, the reshaping of local image, and the production of cultural value, art enhances the attractiveness of rural tourism, gradually bringing rural space that originally mainly performed a residential function into the process of tourism consumption. By introducing new cultural meanings and modes of spatial expression, art activities raise the tourism value of the countryside and create conditions for rural tourism development. The four modes of art intervention identified in this study are broadly consistent with previous research on art-based rural development, which has examined artist

residencies, art spaces, and art events as ways of enriching village culture and creating tourism opportunities [3]. This study further identifies everyday aesthetics, highlighting how artistic elements become integrated into the ordinary rural environment and residents' daily lives, beyond designated art projects and spaces. Art intervention creates new market conditions for homestay development, and homestays therefore develop from mere accommodation facilities into important vehicles connecting tourists, rural space, and local culture. The finding resonates with Wang [63], who showed that guesthouses can become important spaces for the production and consumption of local cultural authenticity, extending their role beyond the provision of accommodation. This study also complements Bi and Yang [6], who found that rural homestay development can transform the spatial structure and functions of rural settlements and substantially affect villagers' livelihoods and everyday lives. While their study focuses on the spatial and social consequences of homestay development, the present study highlights the preceding role of art intervention in reshaping rural space and local image, thereby creating conditions for homestay development.

Rural homestays convert tourism demand into livelihood opportunities at the household level. Household livelihood transformation involves five types of capital in this study: human, social, financial, physical, and natural capital, consistent with the sustainable livelihoods framework proposed by Scoones [20]. Pasanchay and Schott [11] also applied this framework to community-based homestays, examining the livelihood benefits and costs associated with homestay operation. Building on the framework, this study shows how residents' existing housing, household labor, local knowledge, social relations, and rural resources are incorporated into the tourism production process, thereby reshaping their livelihood capital. Housing is converted into business space, household labor develops new tourism-related skills, homestay income strengthens financial capital, and interactions with tourists, artists, and other tourism actors expand social capital. At the same time, natural and local resources acquire new value through their integration into tourism. Overall, homestay operation enables residents to transform existing resources into new livelihood opportunities and strengthens their capacity to participate in and benefit from tourism development. This finding aligns with Wei et al. [64], who frame livelihood capital as a set of multifaceted assets that may be transformed and recombined across diverse livelihood contexts.

The reconstruction of livelihood capital drives homestay operators and their households to adjust their livelihood strategies. Some operators make homestay or catering businesses their primary livelihood activity, while others combine homestay operation with other employment or income-generating activities. Rather than completely abandoning their original livelihoods, many households combine tourism-related activities with existing livelihood activities. Previous research on agro-tourism integration in ethnic villages identified specialized, dominant, and balanced livelihood patterns [65]. Another study classified rural household livelihood strategies into agricultural, balanced, tourism-oriented, and labor-oriented patterns [66]. Although these studies used different classification systems, they generally categorized rural households according to broad livelihood sectors or combinations of agricultural, tourism, and off-farm activities. The livelihood strategies of participating residents in this study primarily comprise homestay-dominated, catering-dominated, and part-time homestay patterns. This classification highlights how these households combine homestay operation, catering, and other employment or business activities, providing a more activity-specific understanding of livelihood strategies within an art-based rural tourism context. This finding complements Huang et al.'s [66] argument that household capital endowments are associated with different livelihood choices and that diversified livelihood activities may offer advantages over exclusive dependence on tourism. It further situates these livelihood choices within the context of art-

based rural development, showing how homestay development provides a channel through which tourism value generated by art intervention can be translated into household livelihood opportunities.

However, the livelihood outcomes of art intervention are not uniform across homestay operators. Most interviewees held positive attitudes toward art intervention. Some, however, viewed artistic activities as disconnected from their daily lives, and others questioned the long-term sustainability of this development model in the absence of ongoing financial support. Previous research has found that homestay operation can increase household income and improve long-term livelihood opportunities, including access to healthcare and education [49]. Similarly, this study identifies increased income, improved quality of life, and improved livelihood stability as livelihood outcomes of homestay development. It further highlights stay/return intention, extending the analysis of livelihood outcomes to households' future residential choices. Meanwhile, previous research suggests that the outcomes of art-led rural revitalization are shaped by local resources and community characteristics [5]. This study further demonstrates that art-led development does not generate equal livelihood benefits for all households. The extent to which households benefit depends partly on their opportunities to participate in tourism businesses and the continuity of external financial support.

The findings also have practical implications for rural development planning. (1) Art intervention should not be regarded merely as a project to beautify rural space but should be integrated with local tourism development, resident participation, and sustainable development. In designing and implementing art projects, tourism business formats and participation mechanisms should be considered simultaneously so that the value created by art can be translated into livelihood opportunities. Attention should also be paid to the long-term operation of projects and the maintenance of public space, promoting the shift in art intervention from short-term spatial creation to long-term, sustainable rural development [67]. (2) The development of rural homestays should make fuller use of existing local resources and focus on improving operators' capabilities. Rural housing, landscape, local food, agricultural products, cultural traditions, and everyday lifestyles can all become important components of homestay products. This study finds that the initial investment and operating capabilities of homestays vary considerably, which may affect operating performance. Therefore, homestay operation training should be expanded from general service skills to capabilities such as product design, online operations, cultural interpretation, and experience planning. Particular attention should be paid to the practical difficulties that middle-aged and older operators face in digital operations. Intergenerational collaboration, platform agency services, and skills coaching may help address these challenges. (3) Tourism policy should provide differentiated support according to the livelihood capital conditions of different households. This study shows that households with different capital endowments adopt different livelihood strategies and achieve different livelihood outcomes under the same development context. Operators and households with relatively limited capital should be supported through skills training, financial assistance, market promotion, and cooperative platforms. Meanwhile, cooperative associations, collective operation, and benefit-sharing mechanisms could help residents who do not directly operate homestays share in tourism returns through the supply of goods, employment, and service provision, thereby reducing the risks of uneven benefit distribution and excessive dependence on tourism.

6. Conclusions

This study examined how art intervention shapes rural homestay development and household livelihood transformation in Qingshan Village, Hangzhou, from a sustainable livelihoods perspective. Drawing on grounded theory analysis, the study constructed an

analytical framework linking art intervention, homestay development, livelihood capital, and livelihood strategies. The findings show that art intervention creates favorable conditions for homestay development by reshaping rural space and local image and creating new cultural and market opportunities, rather than directly transforming household livelihoods. Rural homestays translate these changes into livelihood opportunities by incorporating existing housing, household labor, local knowledge, social relations, and rural resources into tourism production. In this process, participating residents develop different livelihood strategies, including homestay-dominated, catering-dominated, and part-time homestay patterns. However, the resulting livelihood benefits vary according to households' opportunities to participate in tourism businesses, their existing capital endowments, and the continuity of external financial support.

The findings also reveal that livelihood transformation involves changes in the composition, value, and combination of livelihood capital, rather than income changes alone. Housing acquires tourism-related value beyond its residential function; social capital expands through connections with artists, designers, and tourists; and natural capital gains value through landscape-based tourism experiences. Cultural meaning and aesthetic value also become resources that households can mobilize in art-oriented rural tourism. These changes illustrate how art intervention reshapes the value of existing rural resources and how homestay development enables households to incorporate these resources into their livelihood activities. The resulting transformation involves not only the development of new income sources but also the reorganization of household livelihood resources and strategies, reflecting the dynamic nature of livelihood change. Thus, rural homestays serve as a link between the spatial and cultural changes associated with art intervention and the ways households organize their livelihoods [68,69].

This study has several limitations that also point to directions for future research. (1) The study adopts a single-case research design. Although Qingshan Village offers a suitable context for examining art intervention and livelihood transformation, the findings cannot be directly generalized to all rural tourism destinations. Nevertheless, the findings may offer useful insights for other rural tourism destinations seeking to integrate art intervention into rural development and improve local livelihood opportunities. (2) The study primarily examines the experiences of local residents engaged in homestay businesses and does not capture the perspectives of residents who are not involved in tourism. Future research could include residents who are not involved in homestay businesses to explore how art intervention and tourism development affect their livelihoods. (3) The study is also qualitative and does not measure livelihood capital quantitatively. Future research could combine qualitative data with household surveys and test the relationships among livelihood capital, tourism participation, and livelihood outcomes using quantitative methods. (4) The long-term effects of art intervention also warrant further investigation. Whether art intervention can continue to improve residents' livelihoods after the initial rise in tourism attention remains an open question. Despite these limitations, this study highlights the role of rural homestays in translating the spatial and cultural changes associated with art intervention into household livelihood opportunities. The findings offer a useful perspective for understanding the relationship between rural tourism and household livelihood transformation.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.X. and J.Z.; methodology, C.X.; formal analysis, C.X.; investigation, C.X. and X.Z.; data curation, C.X. and X.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, C.X.; writing—review and editing, C.X., J.Z. and X.Z.; supervision, J.Z.; funding acquisition, J.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, grant number 42371264.

https://doi.org/10.3390/su182111120

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to Article 32 of the Measures for the Ethical Review of Life Science and Medical Research Involving Humans issued by the National Health Commission of China. This study constitutes a non-interventional social science investigation involving semi-structured interviews with 18 adult homestay operators. All interviews were conducted anonymously, and no personally identifiable or sensitive information was collected.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent for participation was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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