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**Organisational sensemaking through the sustainable  
management of Fujian opera troupes in the urban-rural  
reconstruction**

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of Doctor of Business Administration**

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## DECLARATION

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## Abstract

Based on the urban-rural reconstruction in China, the Fujian Opera Troupe is experiencing profound changes in the external environment and internal management. This thesis investigates organisational sensemaking in the sustainable management of Fujian Opera Troupes from pluralistic stakeholders based on the theoretical framework in applied ethnomusicology and business administration. The sustainable development of Fujian Opera Troupes has been studied in many fields, but few reflect the sensemaking perspective nor use quantitative methods. To fill this research gap, this study embraced the pragmatism philosophy, and utilised mixed methods to make sense of the adaptive process for sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupe during the period from 2013 to 2023. The qualitative phase used two case studies to investigate the adaptive changes of two troupes separately. Data analysis of cross-case studies enabled refine cues embedded in two separate case reports and explaining equivocality in sustainable management from three data sources. The findings of case studies show that facing changes inside and outside organisations, practitioners need effective policy support and organisational support to motivate positive emotions at work, sequentially impacting sustainability. The quantitative phase examined the influence of key factors on sustainability. A questionnaire was developed by combining cues from the case study and validated items/variables from past literature. Structural equation modelling was then used to test the hypotheses through path analysis. The results of the quantitative phase show that policy support and organisational support significantly impact practitioners' emotions at work positively but do not have a direct effect on sustainability. Emotion at work plays a mediating role between policy support and sustainability, as well as between organisational support and sustainability. Therefore, the sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupe should focus on the positive interaction between organisational support, policy support, and practitioners' emotion at work to adapt to changes within and outside organisations.



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## Abbreviations

Fujian Opera Troupe	FOT
Fujian Opera	FO
Intangible Cultural Heritage	ICH
Intangible Cultural Heritage Management	ICHM
Cultural Heritage Management	CHM
Community Involvement	CI
The People's Republic of China	PRC
Mixed Methods	MM
Validity Framework	VF
Corporate Sustainability	CS
Shun Troupe	ST
Fujian Min Troupe	FMT
China Association of Performing Art	CAPA
State-owned troupe	SOT
Sustainable Management	SM
Policy Support	PS
Organisational Support	OS
Sustainability Performance	SP
Structural Equation Model	SEM
Confirmatory Factor Analyses	CFA

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Background: Changes of Fujian Opera Troupes

*Last year at the Monkey God's birthday celebration, an old woman attended this local ritual. Like many low-income young people in the village, her grandson embarked on the mission of going abroad for work. Due to the challenges encountered in the journey, she made a wish before the Monkey God, hoping for her grandson's safe journey and a successful career. Now, her grandson has safely arrived in a foreign land, reunited with his father, and started his job. Filled with gratitude, she is fulfilling the promise she made a year ago by inviting a private Fujian Opera troupe to perform at the Monkey God's birthday celebration this year.*

*Another scene is described as follows. Today is the birthday of the Communist Party of China. A state-owned Fujian Opera performance supported by the National Art Fund is established at the Opera Theater in the center of the city. The audience gathered here consists mostly of employees from the public sector who received complimentary tickets. They have organised a themed party event centered around watching revolutionary operas and celebrating the Party's birthday by waving the party flag.*

The two scenarios described above show the traditional and modern activities of Fujian Opera (FO) performance drawn from my observation: the first one could be set in almost any village in current Fuzhou city although their gods may be different; the second scene portrays a significant political function of state-owned theater troupes when removed from ceremonial contexts. These scenes evoke contemplation on the adaptability of Fujian Opera Troupes (FOTs) within the process of Chinese modernisation (Lu, 2020, p.1). Over the past four decades, China has continuously deepened its cultural institutional reform, leading to institutional, structural, and societal transformations in the cities and villages depicted in the story, as well as in the

surrounding communities (Fu and He, 2019). The politics, economy, and culture of local society have been influenced by these socialist reforms (Sun, 2020, p. 115), leading to shifts in popular religion and folk beliefs, the fading of numerous folk customs, and the loss of associated ritual opera (Zheng and Huang, 2023).

In order to adapt to the reforms, FOTs mainly experienced changes in the following two aspects. The first refers to the changes in cultural ecology. It is a contradiction that many practitioners do not live on the soil of the village anymore (Fei, 1992) but try to revive and sustain “village tradition” (Ingram, 2012, p. 74). FOTs also need to redefine their cultural cognition to adapt to the demands of the contemporary rural ecology (Smith, 2006, p. 4). Therefore, an increasing number of scholars consider the issues of ongoing changes in cultural ecology in ICH (Su, 2018). It is not surprising therefore that, with the engagement of FOTs in cultural tourism<sup>1</sup>, pluralistic stakeholders get onto the bandwagon to provide multiple cultural experiences in villages, communities, teahouses, old-style theatres, and other cultural spaces (du Cros and McKercher, 2015, p. 3). Due to the engagement of outsiders who are unfamiliar with local culture, the regional cultural ecology has undergone diverse changes (Timothy, Wu, and Luvsandavaajav, 2009, p. 96). Beyond that, impacted by Western music, the inheritance way, notation, and musical creation of FO also began to subvert tradition and present the characteristics of contemporary drama (Lau, 2008, pp. 91-93). Furthermore, the changes impact the talent cultivation of FO (Xu, 2003, p. 67).

Second, is the aspect of management system changes. Before the founding of new China<sup>2</sup>, FOTs operated by the modes of family troupes usually performing their operas

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural Tourism: The UNWTO (2006a) suggests cultural tourism represents movements of people motivated by cultural intents such as study tours, performing arts, festivals, cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, as well as travel for pilgrimages.

<sup>2</sup> New China: China is an ancient country with a history of more than five thousand years. The founding of New China refers to the founding of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China on first October, 1949. After that, China ended its history of being invaded and enslaved for more than one hundred years and became an independent country.

for festivals and folk activities in villages of northeast Fujian (Wang, 2015, p. 46). The administrative mechanism of modern FOT has however changed to adapt to the urban-rural culture reconstruction. Two management systems are significant for the sustainability of FOT: the business management models in the art performing industry and the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) system (DeVereaux, 2019, p. 11; Zhu and Li, 2013, p. 51). Based on these two systems, the sustainable development of state-owned and private troupes is in different situations. The private FOTs in villages maintain the management modes of family troupes to perform operas in rural cultural spaces, such as streets, ancestral halls, and temples (Wang, 2015, p. 16). They are more likely to selectively continue the cultural memory of the old living in the countryside (Oxford, 2020, p. 183), to maintain the original aesthetic they cannot change. On the other hand, the state-owned troupe (SOT) tends to focus on the social responsibility of inheriting ICH and innovating traditional operas (Wang, 2012, p. 174). Although these two types of FOTs meet different social demands, they tend to be complementary in this industry as well as have similar stakeholders and long-term goals. Further, the development of FOTs is a part of the national cultural strategies for sustainable development, especially linking with comprehensive industries, for instance, tourism, education, and public service (Lee, et al., 2007, pp. 3-4). Therefore, to secure Sustainable Management (SM) for FOTs, the interaction of pluralistic stakeholders should also be considered.

It is important to consider pluralistic stakeholders' engagement in the whole FO ecosystem. From the perspective of internal constituents, two aspects change greatly. With regard to organisational bureaucracy, differing from the ambiguous division of work in the family troupe, many FOTs have professional leaders and managers who are able to find a balance between stringent administrative mechanisms and freeform in art performance (Byrnes, 2009, p. 273). The leader generally is the outstanding inheritor of FO, while the managers attend to administrative affairs (Wang, 2015, p. 28). On the other hand, the actors are the inevitable stakeholders in an FOT, but the government

involvement in the management is the outcome of socialism with Chinese characteristics. From the external environment, FOTs become a part of the industrial chain of cultural tourism, education, and communities, hence the pluralistic stakeholders engage in this industry (Du Cros and McKercher, 2015, p.14), including the community, media, local scenic areas, and other relevant participants, even though some of them have no strong connection to FOTs.

From the point of the music ecosystem, it is a complex and cross-multidisciplinary issue when considering the SM of traditional organisations in modern society (Zhang, Chen, and Zhou, 2017). FO is a major ritual music in the folk religious activities of the Fuzhou area, and its ecological changes will be discussed from an ecologic perspective of pluralistic alliance inside and outside troupes (Wu, 2013).

## **1.2 External Ecologic Environment of FOTs**

This section introduces the cultural ecosystem, focusing on the regional characteristics. It elaborates on the regional differences in the development of FOTs from the perspectives of socio-cultural dynamics and the patterns of regional economic growth. Furthermore, this section highlights the construction of the ICH system and its position within the cultural industry in Fuzhou.

### **1.2.1 The FO Setting for this Study**

Embracing the abbreviated name for Fujian “Mǐn”, Wang (2015) published a book, *a brief history of Fujian Opera*, and FO was used for the translation of Min Opera. In another publication, Liu (2010) clarified the performance venues of FO, and also used the Fujian Opera as the English translation. Drawing from the precedence in aforementioned studies, this thesis adopted this nomenclature, referring to this Min opera as “Fujian Opera.” Any significant investigation of traditional opera must consider its regional features (Lau, 2008, p. 27). Considering the regional features of FO, this research was undertaken in the northeast of Fujian with Fuzhou as its primary



area based on the division of dialect areas. Therefore, before considering urban-rural reconstruction, the study area (Fuzhou City) is briefly introduced. Fuzhou City is situated along the southeastern coastal region of China, which is at the lower reaches of the Min River in the eastern part of Fujian province and faces Taiwan province across the sea. This city is the provincial capital of Fujian, a famous trading center and hometown of overseas China, which owns more than twenty traditional operas (Bai and Li, 2010), such as Nanguan, Putian opera, and FO (Lau, 2008, p. 74). As a city of exceptional historical and cultural significance, Fuzhou has a history spanning over 2200 years since its establishment (Lin, 2013, p. 6). For over a millennium, Fuzhou has served as a political center in Fujian, and the local populace employs the Fuzhou dialect of Eastern Min as the representative vernacular across various districts and counties. It is one of the renowned overseas Chinese communities, which not only facilitated the dissemination of FO but also propelled the growth of the local FO performance industry through its economic prosperity. As noted by Lin (2013), Fuzhou boasts a diverse religious culture, with a prevailing Buddhist influence, earning it the distinction of having the highest concentration of key Buddhist temples in China (p. 7). The amalgamation of orthodox religions like Buddhism and Taoism with folk beliefs has given rise to an increasingly intricate system of popular beliefs. Among the most common are “Chenguang worship” 城隍信仰 and “Chen Jingju worship” 陈靖姑信仰. As an integral component of Fuzhou's religious activities, FO has flourished in tandem with thriving folk beliefs. The special regional environment provides good conditions for the development of FOTs. In the next part, I will further elaborate on the external ecologic environment of Fuzhou in urban-rural relations, religious embedded folk activities, the system, and cultural industry development.

### **1.2.2 Urban-rural Reconstruction**

Being a complex subject spanning various disciplines, rural-urban relations are subject to diverse interpretations from different academic perspectives. However, in general, the core problem is “understanding modernity from development” (Hettner, 1983). Ye

(2021) emphasised that culture, socio-economy, and geography had interplayed significantly with urban-rural relations (pp. 10-13). Therefore, this section will discuss these aspects in China and Fuzhou.

The urban-rural relations have a profound impact on culture, and within the interplay of ideology, policies, and institutions with culture, culture can be seen as the residue of thoughts, social policies, or systems left in social life (Wang, 2010; Harrison and Huntington, 2000). In the context of socialism with Chinese characteristics, institutional reforms obviously play a major role in reconstructing urban-rural relations and improving cultural development. Chinese scholars are more likely to focus on social resource allocation and cultural transformation by perceiving changes in urban-rural relationships (Zhang and Wang, 2022; Li and Hu, 2015). Regarding the different urban-rural relations, the impact of the institutional reforms on social culture is discussed in three stages. From the 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century, this was the stage of urban-rural separation, although the resource allocation flowed slightly<sup>3</sup>. During that period, the Report of The Third Plenary Session of the 12th CPC Central Committee (1984) indicated the market played a fundamental role in resource allocation to varying degrees, which meant macroscopic readjustment and control from the government played a major role in resource allocation. Relevant policies, for example, the household registration system, divided the urban-rural relations (Ness, 2015). With the rapid development of urban areas, rural culture, and folk customs experienced significant impacts. For instance, I experienced during my primary school that students were not allowed to use the Fuzhou dialect while they were in school because speaking in the dialect was viewed as uncivilised behavior. The ultimate consequence of this phenomenon is that majority of the younger generation in Fuzhou could no longer understand the language used in FO. In another case I experienced during that period

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<sup>3</sup> The Third Plenum of the 12th CPC Central Committee (1984) adopted the decision on the economic system reform, emphasizing the focus of reform transferred from rural to urban areas. Chinese society started the progress of urbanization.

when I was a child, my parents commonly referred to folk rituals, such as the celebration of the god's birthday, as superstitious practices. For those born after the 1960s in China, urban civilisation appeared to triumph over rural customs, becoming a new culture that many of us valued.

Mainstream understanding of this issue emphasises the impact of dualistic urban-rural structure (Li and Hu, 2015; Lu and Chen, 2006; Zweig, 1987). To break up the urban-rural dichotomy, the Chinese government deployed a range of up-bottom institutional changes compulsively and inductively (Sun, 2018; Li and Hu, 2015). From 2003 to 2012, the Third Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee emphasised balancing urban-rural development. In the next decade, the local government relaxed control over market access to improve the efficiency of resource allocation. During this period, a dualistic framework emerged within China's cultural system, characterized by a combination of planned regulation and market-driven dynamics, coexisting in parallel tracks (Ma and Fang, 2008). The relaxation of market policies has provided better developmental conditions in geographic restrictions and admittance for both internal and external professional troupes within the system. As documented by Lin (2013), between 2003 and 2010, the number of FOTs in Fuzhou demonstrated a consistent upward trend, with the number of registered troupes increasing from approximately 95 to 150 (p. 11). According to a survey on the survival status of private troupes in Fujian Province, due to disparities in urban and rural economies, cultures, and folk customs, the folk culture market of FOTs has an uneven distribution within. Approximately two-thirds of this market share is dominated by the areas of Fuqing 福清 and Changle 长乐, while the majority of the remaining one-third is held by villages along the coastal regions (Lin, 2013, p. 15).

Since 2013, urban-rural integration has become a new trend. According to the report of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC, based on the resources and products exchange between urban-rural areas, the market played a decisive role in resource allocation. During this period, the cultural system reform

entered the comprehensive deepening phase, thus further accelerating the transformation of operating cultural institutions into enterprises (Fu and He, 2019). With more digital cultural enterprises in Fuzhou, the FO market began to shrink. This shrinking market situation, along with the changeless management model, and the loss of talent led to many troupes facing the survival dilemma (Chen, 2013; Chen, 2007).

On the other hand, the connection between socio-economy and geography adds to the uniqueness of urban-rural relations in Fuzhou. As mentioned previously (section 1.2.1), Fuzhou stands as a southeastern coastal city in China and one of the major overseas Chinese communities in China. Ye (2021) indicated that the urban-rural economy in coastal areas influenced by the advantages of transportation, climate, and informatization, presented higher GDP density compared to inland areas (p. 12). In addition, overseas compatriots, through transnational activities like remittances and investments, have played a crucial role in contributing to the economic development of their hometowns. Also, they often actively sponsor traditional cultural events and the construction of cultural public facilities in their ancestral hometowns (Zeng and Li, 2016; Yang, 2007). This dynamic involvement, especially in the coastal rural areas, provides a positive environment for performances of FO and enriches the local people's lives (Lin, 2013). Therefore, the culture of urban-rural differences in Fuzhou also adds to the density of folk activities.

Reconstruction for Chinese rural society refers to the process of social transformation and humans' adaptation to social changes, emphasizing the changes from agricultural civilisation to industrial civilisation (Fei, 2018). Furthermore, reconstruction is also defined as the cultivated process of the new culture with distinctive communicative and cultural memory (Ma, 2022). The concept of rural-urban reconstruction, as embraced in this thesis, primarily refers to the reconfiguration of social order and cultural demands impacted by changes in rural-urban relations. Although the illustration of urban-rural reconstruction is beyond the scope of SM, it is a helpful context to understand the key challenges and changes in FOT. Especially in a developing country,

urban-rural reconstruction impacts the sustainability issues of local culture (Lynch, 2005, p. 4; Avorgbedor, 1992). Considering the traditional FO performance is a critical part of ritual events. Equally important in the sustainability of FO is the understanding of the religious and ritual environment and that premise is introduced in the next section.

### **1.2.3 Folk Belief and Ritual Opera**

As discussed in the last section (1.2.2), the changes in urban-rural relations that were influenced by national development strategies led to the reconstruction of urban-rural socio-economy, culture, and order. Even so, for most FOTs, FO performance is still one of the important ritual procedures embedded in the local beliefs. Among all performance genres of FOTs, Lin (2013) indicated more than 70% of performances were related to religion and folk beliefs, and approximately 80% aimed to secure the safety and success of overseas immigrants (p. 53). Although this is a dynamic and ballpark figure, the phenomenon implies that folk beliefs will significantly influence the FO performance market, including the frequency, contents, scope of areas, and fees (Yan, 2019). However, with the decline in foreign employment and preference for engaging in business, the demand for folk activities also obviously decreases. The ritual environment of FO performances in contemporary China is the focus here while specific situations of the FO performance market will be elaborated in section 1.3.2.

There are four motives for inviting FOTs in line with the demands of folk beliefs: ceremonies of a god's birthday, praying for God's blessing, redeeming a vow to a god, and other sacrificial rituals (Lin, 2013; Lin, 2006). In the villages of Fuzhou, the folk demands of inviting FOTs are typically organised at the household level (Yan, 2019). This means that there is a need for institutions within rural areas to assist villagers in arranging various ritual procedures to meet the folkloric needs of each household. As a result, this type of Fujian opera performance has given rise to a ritual alliance system

composed of the local Elder Association<sup>4</sup>, the Board of Governors in temples or shrines, grassroots intermediaries, and FOTs working together (Lin, 2013).

The folk activities usually happened in a temple or shrine that was donated by overseas immigrants and local villagers. In Fuzhou, almost every village has at least one temple or shrine to serve godlet (local deity - the regional guardian spirit). According to literature, the worship of God in Fuzhou generally stems from four main aspects. At first, according to the record of Chronicles of Minqing County, the people's religious beliefs in Fuzhou generally presented a devotion to protective deities that served different strata, which were full of utilitarian purposes (Huang, 1967). For example, Mazu 妈祖, the god of wealth 财神, and Wenchang Wang 文昌帝君 separately were the gods to bless fishermen, businessmen, and literati. Second is the worship of natural gods, for example, the most special zoolatry in Fuzhou is the worship of the Monkey King, the Dragon King 龙王, God in Heaven 老天爷 and Earth God 土地爷 (Lin and Peng, 1993, p. 62-88). Third is goddess worship, such as Chen Jingu 陈靖姑, who protects pregnant women and enable them give birth smoothly (Lin, et al., 1997). Fourth, secular gods of Taoists and Buddhism in Fuzhou generally have the function of curing disease, for instance, the Erxu immortal 二徐真人 in the ancestor temple of Linji 灵济祖庙 (Editorial committee of Minhou chronicles, 2001).

In the ritual alliance system of FOTs, actors generally put on facial masks in ritual operas to play the role of communicating with these gods at special festivals or events. Inviting FOTs based on the family unit improves cultural prosperity among the villages in Fuzhou. The specific situations of the ritual alliance system will be surveyed in data collection.

#### **1.2.4 Intangible Cultural Heritage System**

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<sup>4</sup> The Elder Association: the elderly mutual aid organizations in Chinese villages and communities. Every village in Fuzhou has a Elder Association to take care the ritual and folk affairs for villagers.

Due to rapid urbanisation, as noted on the official website of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in China (2022), FO was listed in the first national-level list of representative works of intangible cultural heritage in 2006. This section introduces the intangible cultural heritage system in China and Table 1.1 highlights UNESCO's core efforts in ICH.

UNESCO has held a series of conferences related to the protection of ICH since 1972 (UNESCO, 2022). However, the 2003 UNESCO Conference adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which truly began to influence the construction of the ICH system in China (UNESCO, 2003; Melis and Chambers, 2021). As Table 1.1 shows, the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples aim to safeguard and promote cultural expressions, recognising the rights of indigenous peoples to protect their intangible cultural heritage. China became one of only four countries to attain recognition in all three rounds of proclamations, underscoring its commitment to this cause. China participated in UNESCO's initiatives and conventions since 2004 (Ree, 2012, p. 26). To realise the sustainable development of FOTs, the Chinese government established a comprehensive national system of heritage management to improve the contribution of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to the regional economy (Blumenfield and Silverman, 2013, p. 6). The Chinese government established the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre in 2006 which included the Chinese Academy of Arts, to be responsible for protecting the nation's intangible cultural heritage and coordinating various related activities (Ree, 2012, p. 28). Within a short time, the government at the national, municipal, and county levels developed a series of plans to raise awareness about maintaining traditional arts and skills (Rees, 2012, p. 24). Currently, the comprehensive administrative system in China includes the National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA), the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of PRC, and Major Heritage Protection Units at the national, provincial, municipal, and county levels

(Blumenfield and Silverman, 2013, p. 6).

As countries around the world respond to the protection of ICH, a network for safeguarding ICH with the basic unit of the village or county level was gradually formulated. Therefore, UNESCO gradually began to focus on the profound impact of urban-rural differences on traditional culture. For instance, growing a creative network by utilising the cultural heritage of historical villages or cities (UNESCO, 2011). Due to the huge rural population, regional governments in China actively engaged in creating the Creative City Network. The Hangzhou Declaration (2013) pointed out that prioritising culture in sustainable development policies and all development programs would become the tool for poverty alleviation and economic growth (UNESCO, 2013). Based on prior established practices, UNESCO (2016) emphasised building a positive partnership between urban and rural areas in the process of protecting ICH, thereby increasing the focus not only on social benefits but also on economic benefits. Therefore, relationships between the urban-rural construction, cultural sustainability, and economic benefits were initiated.

Following these initiatives, in 2018, the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture and the National Tourism Administration in China were integrated into the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. China provided fruitful cases of cultural sustainability for the world in the background of rural revitalisation (Rural Working Group of PRC, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). In Fuzhou, the FO is one of the most representative ICHs. The relevant programmes of art performance mainly refer to the field of cultural tourism, ritual activities, and cultural transmission. Indeed, the research not only adds a case about FOT on this basis but also explores the conflicts and cooperation in the changes of FOTs.



<b>Year</b>	<b>UNESCO's Convention and Initiative</b>	<b>Key Points</b>
2003	The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	Promoting cultural diversity and sustainable development;
2005	The Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	Promoting diversity of cultural expressions
2007	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Recognising the rights of indigenous peoples
2011	Recommendation on the History Urban Landscape	Growing Creative City Network
2013	The Hangzhou Declaration	Prioritising culture in sustainable development policies;
2016	The UNESCO Global Report 'Culture: Urban Future'	Considering the unique contribution of small settlements; Enhancing economic and social benefits; Building a positive partnership between urban and rural areas.
2018	The PRC's National Rural Revitalisation Plan (2018-2022)	Relevant policies to overcome dilemmas of the top-down reforms.
2019	Culture 2030: rural-urban development	Rural revitalisation and cultural sustainable development in China
2022	The 50 <sup>th</sup> -anniversary celebration of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention	Improving representativeness, ensuring accessibility to all, and addressing sustainability issues.

**Table 1. 1: UNESCO's Convention and Initiative**

### **1.2.5 Cultural Industry in Fuzhou**

The building of the ICH system connects regional development strategies of the cultural industry with UNESCO's initiatives. FOT is viewed as the industry of traditional art performance and is one type of culture industry. With the continuous deepening of socialist reform, the structure of cultural industries is also reconstructed in different stages. Table 1.2 illustrates the relevant strategies and key points of the cultural industry development in different stages. Cultural departments in various provinces and cities formulate corresponding reform plans based on their economic development and cultural characteristics. From the Tenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development in 2000 to the current Fourteenth Five-Year Plan, the cultural industry has progressively evolved into a pivotal sector in economic growth. In the subsequent phase, the mainstream ideology for the SM of the cultural industry is centered around the concept of high-quality development (Huang and Fu, 2023).

<b>Years</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Strategic Changes</b>
2000	The state council's recommendation on the tenth five-year plan for economic and social development of the People's Republic of China	The Cultural industry first entered the national strategies.
2002	Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress	Pointed out the basic scheme of cultural restructure.
2007	Hu's Report at 17th Party Congress	"Cultural restructuring made important progress, cultural programs, and the cultural industry developed rapidly."
2012	Plan to multiply Cultural Industries during the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foster and strengthen market entities;</li> <li>2. Change and develop the patterns of cultural industry;</li> <li>3. Optimise the distribution of cultural industries;</li> <li>4. Strengthen guidance for the creation of cultural products;</li> <li>5. Expand cultural consumption</li> <li>6. Improve innovation in cultural science...</li> </ol>
2012	Hu's report at the 18th Party Congress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a Strong Socialist Culture in China;</li> <li>2. Increase China's cultural soft power, and enable the culture to guide social trends, educate the people, serve society, and boost development.</li> </ol>
2017	The development and plan of the cultural industry during the 13th five-year plan (2016-2020)	Develop its cultural industry into a pillar of the national economy by 2020 by upgrading its industrial structure, fostering major brands, and boosting consumption.
2021	The development and plan of the cultural industry during the 14th five-year plan (2021-2025)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve upgrade of traditional culture;</li> <li>2. Upgrade the supply and demand structure;</li> <li>3. Integrating cultural agriculture into new urban and rural development;</li> <li>4. Develop cultural industries with rural characteristics...</li> </ol>

Table 1.2: National Policy of Cultural Industry in China (Source: The State Council of PRC, 2022)

The cultural industry in Fuzhou follows the national strategies approach. Based on the development plan outlined in the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for the cultural industry from the municipal government of Fuzhou, as of 2019, the overall output value of the cultural industry has grown stably. Some cultural enterprises have also maintained robust developmental trends, particularly within the sectors of arts and crafts as well as

digital content services (Fuzhou Municipal Government, 2021). However, different categories of the cultural industry have significant differences in the scale of development (Fuzhou Municipal Government, 2021). Furthermore, a majority of the growing cultural resources tend to be concentrated in urban areas, exacerbating the disparity in the cultural industry between urban and rural regions (Municipal Government of Fuzhou, 2021). Although FOTs are not the major growth drivers in the cultural economy, its importance in furthering the market-oriented reform of SOTs towards sustainable development within the cultural tourism arena is emphasised in the forthcoming development phase (Municipal Government of Fuzhou, 2021).

### **1.3 Internal Ecological Environment of FOTs**

This section focuses on the evolving history of FOTs and provides insight into the initial formation of their organisational management. By integrating an understanding of the external environment, the aim here is to enhance the understanding of the challenges in achieving SM for FOTs.

#### **1.3.1 Brief History of FOTs**

FO is a regional traditional opera performed in the Fuzhou dialect that mainly prevails in the Fuzhou area and northeast Fujian, as well as extended areas in Taiwan and various overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia (Editorial Committee of CTOMI, 1991, P. 12). In this research, FO is defined as the Fuzhou regional opera, also called the Fuzhou opera 福州戏, or Min opera 闽剧. FO, originating as a form of amateur theatrical entertainment within the households of Fujian literati, was initially known as “The Confucianist Opera” 儒林戏<sup>5</sup>. It was influenced by the interplay of extraneous “Wandering Opera” 江湖戏 and the “Pinjiang Opera” 平讲戏 rooted in local agrarian life (Wang, 2015, p. 9). The story of FO began with the Wangli 万历 era of the Ming

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<sup>5</sup> The Confucianist Opera (儒林戏): In China, the Confucian literati culture was shaped during the Ming and Qing dynasties, emerged as a scholarly culture influenced by the culture of Confucian scholar-officials (儒家文官文化) and the civil service examination system (科举制度).

Dynasty, when Cao Xueshuan 曹学桢, a literatus from Hongtang Township in Fuzhou, established the “Confucianist Troupe” 儒林班 at his residence, focusing on performing the "Dou Tune" 逗腔 (Editorial Committee of Chronicles of Chinese Opera: Fujian Volume, 1993). This troupe ingeniously melded the Kunshan 昆山腔 and Yiyang vocal styles 弋阳腔 into the local popular songs and folk tunes of Fuzhou. This innovation effectively addressed the linguistic barrier that had prevented Kunqu opera from spreading among the local populace of Fuzhou (Editorial Committee of CTOMI, 1991, P. 12).

Around the period from Jiaqing 嘉庆 to Xianfeng 咸丰 of the Qing Dynasty, these forms of opera interacted with each other, further impacted by the Huizhou opera elements (Wang, 2015, p. 9). This fusion culminated in Fuzhou, where the predominant vocal style became “Rong Tune,” 榕腔 a harmonious blend incorporating elements from Kunqu opera, and Huizhou tonalities. This genre is also known as "Fuzhou Opera," and in 1924, Fuzhou Opera was officially designated as "Min Opera" 闽剧. By the Xuantong 宣统 era of the end of the Qing Dynasty, the commercial performance of Min Opera began to take shape in local villages around Fuzhou (Editorial Committee of Annals of Fujian, 2000, p. 38). Until the early years of the Republic of China, Min Opera experienced a period of remarkable prosperity. However, with the outbreak of World War II, the Min Opera troupes disbanded.

Table 1.3 reports the development and reorganisation of FOTs from the Ming Dynasty to after the reform and opening up. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Min troupes experienced multiple reorganisations among urban and rural areas to adapt to the cultural institutional reforms with Chinese characteristics. In 2006, the FO was categorised in the “First list of national-level intangible cultural heritage” which is relevant to traditional opera. According to the Cultural and Related Industries Classification (2018) published by the National Bureau of Statistics, FO is a kind of traditional opera that belongs to the industrial type of Literary Creation and

Performance. Based on the historical development, the sustainable development of FOTs in current society refers not only to cultural sustainability but also to the adaptive process of cultural organisations. In the next section, organisational management of FOTs is introduced.

Period	Representative Troupe	Organisational Development
The Wangli era of the Ming Dynasty	Confucianist Troupe	1. A familial opera troupe without any commercial performance; 2. Only perform for the officials and literatus.
The end of the Qing Dynasty	Min Troupe 闽班	1. Integrating Confucianist Troupe, Wandering Opera, and Rural Opera; 2. Performing for plain folk; 3. Famous Min troupes: Saiyuetian 赛乐天
The Republic of China	Min Troupe	Famous troupes: 1. Old Saiyue 旧赛乐, New Saiyue 新赛乐, and Three Saiyue 三赛乐; 2. Shanchuanqi 善传奇; 3. Saitianrang 赛天然 and Qintianrang 庆天然.
1952-1979	Experiential Min Troupe of Fujian 福建省实验闽剧院	1. In 1953, the Old Saiyue Troupe was organised into Experiential Min Troupe; 2. In 1958, Fuzhou Min Theatre (Troupe One); 3. From 1958 to 1979, reorganised with several Min troupes several times;
1958-1972	Fuzhou Min Theatre 福州市闽剧院	1. In 1953, the Experiential Min Troupe of Fujian was renamed as Fuzhou Min Theatre; 2. In 1953, several famous troupes were reorganised as the Fuzhou Min Theatre (Troupe 2, 3, and 4); 3. Part employees of these troupes established the Fuzhou Min Troupe.
1958-1959	Other professional troupes	Select actors from the famous troupes to support the reorganisation of local troupes.

**Table 1. 3: Organisational Development of FOTs (Sources: A Brief History of Fujian Opera; Annals of Fujian; and Chinese Traditional Opera Music Integration)**

### 1.3.2 Initial Shaping of Organisational Management

As Chinese Modernisation progressed, FOTs also formulated their own management models. This section mainly introduces the background of the organisational management of FOTs.

For SOTs, the organisational formation is a result of talent identification and restructuring that emerged around the ICH system, as well as a response to the continuous reshaping of cultural resources between urban and rural areas. These troupes are recognised by the national ICH system to undertake the social responsibility of FO

protection, transmission, and innovation supported by national funds. Then the employees who worked in these troupes or had mentoring relationships with the inheritor became members of this system (Lin, 2015). In the current situation, these FOTs are mainly concentrated in downtown areas. In this section, the focus is on the initial shaping of organisational management in private FOTs.

According to Lin (2013), the investment of private troupes was primarily of three types: contracting, sole proprietorship, and partnership (p. 23). Contracting primarily occurs at some SOTs of the county level. Due to insufficient differential subsidies, these troupes are unable to hire an adequate number of actors to sustain their operations and, as a result, choose to contract the troupe to individuals, such as the Lianjiang FOT. However, the primary investing model for private FOTs is the sole proprietorship, which is a phenomenon independently invested by the successors from a family, intermediaries, or actors. Finally, partnerships usually involve several individuals with familial ties to establish a troupe together. This method reduces risks and obtains more startup capital effectively. Regarding the three investing methods, the existing data shows that from 2000 to 2010, although FOTs were examined by the local government strictly, the number of new troupes accounted for about 20% of the total, and approximately 80% of troupes realised stable development (Cultural Department of Fuzhou, 2008; Lin, 2013, p. 13). After 2010, the number of FOTs presented a declining trend.

In the organisational structure, typically, an FOT has approximately 55 staff, including around thirty actors, a 10-member musical band, and several logistics and management personnel (Wang, 2007). The actors mainly come from graduates of art schools, actors recruited from SOTs, and recruiters among fellow villagers and friends (Cai, 2020). They will be trained through rehearsing an opera and taking experienced actors as their masters (Zhi and Yang, 2008). According to Lin (2013), the compensation system for employees is mainly divided into three categories: per performance, monthly, and

annual salaries. Generally, in regions with more numbers of FOTs, many troupes adopt a monthly payment system, while in other areas, annual salaries are the primary payment method of compensation for troupes. Interestingly, the standard practice is that the actors are more inclined to sign short-term contracts rather than obtain a long-term stable guarantee (Zhao and Wang, 2022).

Marketing is also an important part of the management in FOTs. According to the evaluation report of the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Troupe in Fuzhou (2007), the FOTs were divided into three types: first-class, second-class, and third-class. The managers of the Elder Association can book the appropriate troupes based on the believers' budget or contribution situation from villages by the Intermediary agent. With the decrease in government supervision, the pluralistic management alliance in the relevant industries of FO faced dynamic reconstruction (Zhi and Yang, 2008; Fu, 2019).

### **1.3.3 Conclusion**

A noteworthy phenomenon is that in the past decade, the market of FO has been steadily shrinking, yet surprisingly, research on how to enhance organisational management has not seen an increase. As the cultural market competition intensifies, FOTs face numerous challenges in management impacted by market contraction, talent flow, and outdated management practices. In the process of Chinese modernisation, it has become crucial for these pluralistic stakeholders to find a path toward high-quality development. This is a pressing issue that theatre troupes need to prioritise in the current landscape.

### **1.4 Research Aims and Objectives**

Thus far in this chapter, I have illustrated how the urban-rural relationship in China is reconstructed due to rapid modernisation which threatened the cultural ecology of FO and brought new challenges for FOTs. Especially, with the decisive role of the market in China (Xi, 2017), the marketisation of FOTs becoming the inevitable trend, and more policies contributed to FOTs need to be self-reliant. Only a few FOTs could obtain

financial support as protected sites of ICH. Given these, the government, scholars, and relevant organisations participate in the sustainability issues of traditional operas. With urbanisation peaking up, the external cultural ecosystem for FOTs has stabilised. This implies that in the next stage, the core issues of sustainable development will narrow down to the challenges of adaptive management to deal with the continuously evolving institutional reforms. Although there is widespread agreement that pluralistic stakeholders more than ever attach importance to cultural confidence, the FOTs still pose challenges for SM. As of 2010, the number of private FOTs in Fuzhou was approximately 150 (Lin, 2013, p. 11), but according to recent data released by the Fuzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism in October 2022, there are approximately only 69 FOTs still in normal operation throughout the city. This represents a significant contraction. Over the past decade since the market played a decisive role in resource allocation, there has been a gap in the field of SM of FOTs.

To contribute to filling existing gap, this study which embraces the pragmatism grounding, aims – based on two case studies, to make sense of the ecologic changes of FOTs and the adaptive behavior of pluralistic stakeholder groups at different stages. In the quantitative stage, I designed the questionnaire to examine how these key factors discovered from the case studies impact the SM of FOTs. Within the aim of this research, three core objectives are considered:

1. Changes in the external environment that FOTs experienced as a result of the urban-rural reconstruction in the past decade;
2. The adaptive processes of FOTs in response to these changes;
3. The impact of the key factors discovered from the adaptive process on the sustainability of FOTs.

Objectives 1 and 2 were achieved through in-depth case studies, while objective 3 explored using a quantitative tool.



## **1.5 Rationale**

Three core points rationalise the theorizing of this research. Firstly, based on the academic basis of my research on ethnomusicology, this research integrates theories and methods from business administration with applied ethnomusicology to improve the theoretical construction of SM in FOTs. Secondly, the theories and methods from sensemaking become the bond to connect the two disciplines well. Most studies on FOT refer to the contents of ethnomusicology and ICH in China, Singapore, America, and the UK, rather than management at the level of commercialisation and regional governance. Literature on the SM of FOT from the sensemaking perspective is scanty, therefore, this research combined theories and methods of sustainability with applied ethnomusicology to compensate for that gap. Furthermore, the sensemaking from pluralistic stakeholder alliances constructs robust connections between management and the art world. Thirdly, this research explores the key factors that impact the SM of FOTs (Simpson, 2018, p. 54; Daft and Weick, 1984).

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The research is composed of six chapters. In Chapter Two, literature review was undertaken in three sections: the phenomenon of FO in applied ethnomusicology, sensemaking, and SM. I explored the definition of sustainability, intangible cultural heritage management (ICHM), and research on FOTs to understand the phenomenon of FO in the field of applied ethnomusicology. I discussed sensemaking in the process of organisational management dealing with crises and changes, involving its definitions, features, constituents, and contexts. Finally, I integrated theories and methods from applied ethnomusicology and business administration in considering organisational sensemaking through the SM of FOTs.

In Chapter Three, the methodological approach in this thesis was explained. I utilised the mixed-methods approach involving the two case studies and questionnaire

approaches in a pragmatist stance, then discussed the rationality and feasibility of the choices in line with the aim and objectives that drive this research. I elaborated on research contexts, case choice, conceptual framework, and research design. Then, I considered methodological ethics and rigor in data collection and analysis. Finally, I illustrated the data collection in the case study with three approaches, including fieldwork, observation, and semi-structured interviews.

In Chapter Four, the qualitative analysis results for case 1, case 2, and cross-case analysis are reported. In doing that, the analytic strategies of coding and textual understanding were firstly explained. Then, the analytical process categorised and interpreted data combining specific contexts, and existing literature in each case. The integrated results from the two case studies enabled further exploration of the research questions towards reducing equivocality and exploring an empirical model to interpret the relationship between sensemaking and sustainability.

Chapter Five examined the emerging model constructed based on logic and evidence from case studies. I distributed the questionnaire and analysed data by quantitative methods. In the first section, the analysis of the questionnaire, including demographic and descriptive statistics is documented. Then I performed the confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the retained items and constructs. Given the satisfactory reliability and validity results, path analysis was carried out to examine the structural equation models to test the significance of the hypotheses.

Chapter six presented the conclusions from two case studies and the questionnaire, while also showing the theoretical, practitioners and policy implications. Then I point out the limitations based on current findings. Finally, this thesis is concluded by acknowledging the directions for future research.

## **1.7 Summary**

As a kind of heritage, the need for sustainable development for FOTs seems to surpass the pursuit of profit maximisation. With the increasing importance of cultural confidence in China, the inside and outside environment of FOTs is shaped by profound changes. In this chapter, I illustrated organisational changes in FOTs triggered by the social transformation of urban-rural reconstruction and the academic background of traditional opera rescue in China. Then I describe the rationale, the research aim, and objectives before the overview of the thesis is structured. In the next chapter, relevant literature review is undertaken towards showcasing the theoretical premise of this research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

#### **2.1.1 Introduction**

Having described the challenges of SM for FOT in urban-rural reconstruction in Chapter One, this current chapter investigates how these issues have been studied in prior literature. Prior to doing that, the literature search strategy is explained. The chapter contains three sections. Firstly, based on the phenomenon of FOT, I illustrate SM of ICH in applied ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology. Secondly, I describe the definition, features, organisational changes, and interpretive mechanism in sensemaking. Finally, theoretical perspectives integrating sensemaking and sustainability are discussed in relation to FOTs.

#### **2.1.2 Literature Research Strategy**

In reviewing the literature, I tried to evaluate, and organise the core takes from studies on relevant themes and knowledge systematically (Ermel, et al., 2021, p. 2). The core difficulty is integrating relevant theories and methods across disciplines. In integrating multi-disciplinary perspectives, I try to specify the definitions, methods, and theoretical frameworks from past literature. To consider the challenge in specific contexts, I focused on critical literature analysis to discover the solution and empirical approaches. Literature was sourced from broad sources involving academic journals, monographs, books, local chronicles, official websites, and digital databases.

To capture relevant definitions and theories, I tried to clarify the relevant concepts from ethnomusicology to business management through the bridge of sensemaking. Then, literature was expanded continually to these fields, such as traditional opera, ICH, stakeholder theory, SM, and organisational changes. Based on the specific topics linked to research questions, concepts of key terms are defined through the ideas from academic literature. In argumentation, I focused on understanding the claims and

findings by engaging critically with the literature (Machi and McEvoy, 2022, pp. 52-55).

Searching for literature was not an easy process. Given the cross-disciplinary target, literature was obtained from electronic databases, including UWTSD Library, Google Scholar, the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and the Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), for journal articles and books in which key phrases for instance ‘sensemaking’ and ‘sustainability’, or ‘sense-making’ and ‘stakeholder’, or ‘making sense’ and ‘organisation’ featured in the themes, title, keywords, and abstract. Four main fields were considered in the search: management, organisational behavior, ethnomusicology, and cultural anthropology. In the search strategy, the findings were based on a good range of articles and books of high quality.

Despite scanty literature on the management of FOT, relevant research materials were found on policy, commercialisation, and status survey in this field. Three core resource categories were found: digital resources from the Digital Museum of FO (DMFO), local chronicles, and academic articles. These resources introduced the current situation of FOTs in detail and enabled easy investigation of the developing strategies. Secondly, some local chronicles published by local scholars illustrated the important regional memory, such as the book, *A Brief History of Fujian Opera*, and *Annals of Chinese Opera (Fujian Volume)*. These books record the historical materials and the development of the FO in different villages of Fuzhou (Wang, 2015; Editorial Committee of Fujian Volume, 1983, pp. 78-82). Through the snowball strategy, I constructed connections between different articles. Regarding information on policies, the governmental websites in China provided relevant cultural policies to improve understanding of contexts.

## **2.2 The Sustainability of FOTs**

The SM of FOTs has been considered in diverse fields, such as ethnomusicology, anthropology, and management. In addition to the sustainability of aesthetic experiences (Stahl and Tröndle, 2019, p. 249), research on art organisations needs to understand the differences in music culture as traditional arts and commodities. In this part, I review relevant studies on applied ethnomusicology.

### **2.2.1 Sustainability in Applied Ethnomusicology**

With rapid urbanisation, ethnomusicologists in China have emphasised the importance of understanding local culture to promote the sustainability of traditional operas. Simultaneously, the Chinese government and relevant academic institutions have mobilised local scholars to preserve and revitalise these opera traditions. These efforts can be delineated into three distinct stages. Firstly, from 1979 to 1985, local scholars recorded operas nationwide comprehensively, including inheritor, traditional theatrical pieces, stage photos, musical instruments, and so on (Editorial Committee of Chinese Traditional Opera Music Integration, 1991, pp. 1-13). Within this endeavor, the Fujian record provides detailed insights into the musical components of FO. During the second phase, commencing in 1993, and under the influence of musical anthropology, Professor Cao Benye, based at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he assumed leadership of a research project focused on Chinese traditional ritual music, collaborated closely with Chinese scholars (Cao, 2003). This research project highlighted the cultural meanings in ritual space, which brings a comprehensive understanding of the research on traditional opera. The third stage is the era of applied ethnomusicology. Zhang Boyu, a professor at the Central Conservatory of Music who began to focus on this field in 2005 (Zhang, 2015, p. 735), was one of the earliest scholars in China to consider the social application of traditional music. Zhang (2015) illustrated the practices of applied ethnomusicology in China, which highlighted the application value in contemporary social contexts rather than as functional music in traditional Rural China. Thereafter, increasing number of stakeholders began to

consider the sustainable issues of FO in cross-disciplinary and practical aspects; thus, more stakeholders taking part in cultural revitalisation.

This research mainly focuses on the application of ethnomusicology, in which the discipline developed and interacted with anthropology almost at the same time (Marriam, 2010, pp. 4-5). Ethnomusicology always engages anthropology to highlight music as culture in the process of interpreting musical phenomena, rather than the single music itself (Marriam, 2010, p. 8; Rice, 2014, pp. 82-95). Marriam (1964) proposed the conceptual model of three dimensions: “conceptualisation about music, behavior in relation to music, and music sound itself”, which was the most influential model in the anthropology of music by typological vision. This model constructed a feedback loop for interpreting musical changes, called the “Geertzian model of ethnomusicology” (Rice, 2017, p. 6). It understood musical development on a sociocultural level compared with Geertz’s interpretive theory of culture (Geertz, 1973). As Geertz (1973) noted, culture is the “pattern of meanings” of ongoing changes. In other words, it is an important pattern in understanding art organisational changes to interpret the meaning of interaction between music culture and social practices (Griswold, 2013, p. 20; Rice, 2017, p. 45). Therefore, scholars in the field of ethnomusicology also began to focus on the practical use of their research following applied anthropology and public folklore (Harrison, 2012). International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM, 2007) defined applied ethnomusicology thus:

*APPLIED ETHNOMUSICOLOGY is the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts.*

Based on ethnomusicological knowledge, Titon (2015) connected musical changes with social issues in four aspects: sustainability, advocacy, education, and agencies (pp. 4-9). This research mainly reviews the relevant literature on the SM of FOT.

Sustainability is a complex concept in multiple disciplines, such as ecology, economy, and culture (Titon, 2009b). In social contexts, sustainability is a cultural practice with resilience, advocacy, and activism (Schipper, 2015). In applied ethnomusicology, sustainability is the capability to sustain a prospective future of music culture (Titon, 2015) and understand the ecosystems and organisational adaptability to changes.

The ecosystem of music is a mainstream aspect of understanding sustainability. Titon (2009a) pointed out that music should be preserved more based on the four principles of ecology- “diversity, limits to growth, interconnectedness, and stewardship” rather than the economy. Under the academic background of the ecological analogy (Archer, 1964), humans as caretakers are a part of this musical ecosystem interconnecting with other factors to sustain growth and dynamic adaptability<sup>6</sup> (Howard, 2012, p. 5). Schipper (2015) emphasised that the core problem in sustainability was to prompt the diversity of musical culture in their communities, and the ecosystem of music for sustainability included multiple theoretical frameworks<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of basic ecological rationality emphasises all individuals are interconnected, and any changes would impact the other changes (Allen, 2017). As Titon (2009b) mentioned, the changes in musical culture are the transdisciplinary dialogues relating to the cultural ecosystem, folklore, and social contexts. That means the organisational management in the field of traditional music needs to focus on the changes in a comprehensive social environment and cross-disciplinary knowledge. Titon (2015: 158) introduced adaptive management into the research of applied ethnomusicology, which reshaped the understanding of organisational changes and

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<sup>6</sup> Dynamic Adaptability: Early in 1984, Titon pointed out every type of music culture as an ecosystem in the dynamic environment, which meant any changes in one factor would impacted the whole. And Titon (2015) in his article, *Music and Sustainability: An Ecological Viewpoint*, highlighted the familiar principle among the ecological principles was the adaptive value of diversity.

<sup>7</sup> Ecosystems of music for sustainability: Schipper (2010) listed the five domains of sustainable framework which had representativeness in musical sustainability-systems of learning music, musicians and communities, contexts and constructs, regulations and infrastructure, media and music industry.



individual behaviors. The sustainability of musical organisations depends on the ability to change strategies by sensing social transformation. In the research process of this thesis, the theoretical construction of the reconstruction of pluralistic factors in cultural ecosystems and their adaptive management is considered.

### **2.2.2 Sustainable Management of ICH**

It is worth noting that the concepts in applied ethnomusicology often align with the objectives of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) initiatives. Building upon the understanding of the cultural ecosystem discussed in the previous section, this part primarily examines SM practices for ICH to enhance the preservation of tradition within modernised processes.

Considering the historical context, ICHM is defined as “a multidisciplinary practice and policy-generating system” (Lee, et al., 2007, p. 6), to sustain “living heritage” (Titon, 2009b). Several research trends exist in the ICHM discourse. On the one hand, the ICHM is a system of discourse analysis to make sense of regulating power and behavior (Melis and Chambers, 2021; Hannam and Knox, 2005). In China, the discourse of ICH emphasises the bond to improve national unity and peaceful diplomacy (Blumenfield and Silverman, 2013, p. 4; Winter, 2019). Indeed, the recognition of cultural heritage demonstrates the cultural confidence, local identity, and competitive advantage of one nation or region (Askew, 2010; Rice, 2017, p. 113). In musical culture itself, it usually is created in its discourse system with specific beliefs, religions, and folkways (Nettl, 2005, p. 215), therefore cultural heritage owns the interactive capability among the sacred and the profane (Koen, 2008, pp. 3-17). This means the importance of contexts in cultural research, just as the understanding of urban-rural culture in China is the essential factor in sustainable research of FOT.

ICHM has been integrated into the framework of sustainable development in many industries (Page and Hall, 2003). During the late last century and the beginning of the

21<sup>st</sup> century, with the globalisation of heritage, the Chinese government boosted the “heritage boom” to respond to the advocacy of protecting ICH (Rees, 2012, p. 24). In light of societal and political differences, the multifaceted nature of cultural heritage often becomes a source of various social issues (Harrison, 2012, p. 14). To address this, cultural anthropologists have developed the framework of ‘critical heritage studies,’ which seeks to redefine heritage by contextualising it within the broader cultural, religious, social, economic, and political processes. This contextualisation is achieved through core concepts such as heritagisation, heritage regime, and authorised heritage discourse (Salemink, 2021, p. 424). Under the tendency of Heritagisation, cultural consumption receives attention from pluralistic stakeholders in the sensemaking process of heritage discourse (Smith, 2006, pp. 28-29), then the system of heritage discourse connects heritage regimes to formulate diverse policies according to regional differences (Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann, 2012, pp. 11-18). Meanwhile, heritage regimes further emphasise that cultural policies, as a part of national cultural strategy, are applied in local governance (Geismar, 2015). Also, this means that the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, such as FO, also serves as a form of cultural strategy with local governance functionality. It contributes to the establishment of a regional discourse system within the broader cultural framework.

In traditional music, for ethnomusicologists, crisis consciousness contributes to dealing with the difficulties of maintaining cultural memory, meanwhile deriving a series of industrial chains (Kirshenblatt- Gimblett, 1995). Howard (2012, p. 6) emphasised the dynamic approaches to considering the regional differences of music as ICH, and then the practices were impacted by policy, folkways, and other social issues. In the field of ICH, the specific music resources identified as heritage means the music has the difficulties of sustainability (Titon, 2009). If all music has the value of existence, the core problems ethnomusicologists are facing in the sustainability of traditional operas are identifying the changes and adapting to changes (Schippers, 2015, p.137).

In recent years, conflicts in ICHM mainly occurred in the developing process of cultural commercialisation with pluralistic stakeholder engagement (Timothy, 2011, p. 34). Some scholars pointed out the paradoxes between universality and uniqueness when culture becomes a kind of heritage discourse universally but attracts pluralistic stakeholders due to its cultural characteristics (Gimblett, 2006). The term “vernacular heritage” focuses on making sense of cultural memory with the features of retrospective, prospective, and temporality (Frihammar and Silverman, 2018), which is a special type of heritage practice (Meyer and van de Port, 2018), especially in China (Winter, 2019). The art practices of the FOTs are also the expression of such cultural memory. Therefore, the prosperity of ICH demands more policy support and pluralistic stakeholder engagement (Wondirad, Tolkach, and King, 2020) which brings reconsideration of the sustainability of traditional culture.

Another problem in ICHM is the tension between safeguarding and consuming culture (Su, 2019). Research in this field tends to be concerned with protecting the diversification of cultural ecology and improving the life of high quality for residents. Tan et al. (2018) highlighted the theme “person-place bonding”, which improves community participation by the place attachment in the commodification of local ICH. This research acknowledged that emotional stakes could stimulate citizen participation in the cultural industry effectively (Chapin and Knapp, 2015). Based on resilience principles-based systems thinking, Choi et al. (2021) emphasised strengthening the connectivity of ecological and social factors to improve the stakeholders’ social responsibility for cultural sustainability. Therefore, ICH has not been a single industry, but a common undertaking with pluralistic stakeholders. Wondirad, Tolkach, and King (2020) thought stakeholder collaboration was “a joint decision-making process among diverse stakeholders”, that enables the different organisations to thrive together for a long time. A viewpoint that reinforces prior understanding that interaction among pluralistic stakeholders enables the public sector and private sector bonds to collaborate (Su, 2019). Wang and Yotsumoto (2019) pointed out that the role of the villagers’

committee often was ignored in protecting the local's interests when the government developed tourism projects. Hence, decision-making about cultural sustainability should consider the local villagers' stances. Interestingly, pluralistic stakeholder engagement triggers the crisis of cultural undertakings in authenticity, whilst, to some extent, the suggestions from residents contribute to the diversification of cultural ecology.

### **2.2.3 Traditional Operas in China**

This section primarily reviewed literature on the cultural ecosystem changes in China, and how these traditional opera troupes had adapted to the external environment at different stages through continuous transformations. Reviewed literature is organised thus: cultural system reforms (section 2.2.3.1) and reform of traditional opera (section 2.2.3.2).

#### **2.2.3.1 Cultural System Reforms**

Cultural system reform in China is a significant topic in the study of the cultural industry. A series of phased reform measures demonstrate the Chinese government's accumulated experience and its ability to overcome challenges in the development of the socialist cultural sector. This section reviews the relevant studies on historical processes, and theoretical models.

Chinese scholars generally study the historical process of cultural system reform in stages. Some scholars' views on these stages align with the phase division of urban-rural relationship transformation. For example, Han (2008) emphasised that after 2002 cultural system reform entered a deepening stage, that is consistent with the historical phases of balancing urban-rural development. From this perspective, it is evident that there is a close connection between culture and economic development, however, there is not sufficient evidence to establish that they are entirely synchronous as noted by Fu and He (2019). Cai (2014) comprehends the reconstruction of private and SOTs through

a five-stage framework, with the year 2003 marked as the starting point of the reform. This is a practical framework for this thesis to understand the changes in FOTs. Therefore, I listed the main targets in different stages according to Cai's understanding in Table 2.1 (see Appendix 14). The core challenge of cultural system reform lies in the fact that while the reform is government-driven, there are evident differences between the internal management of cultural organisations and government systems management. In other words, continuously restructuring the relationship between the government and cultural organisations becomes a focal point for the SM of cultural organisations during the reform process. The reforms also applied in the industry of traditional operas.

Some theoretical models were pointed out to further understand the relationship between cultural organisations and their pluralistic stakeholder groups. Among them, the 'Triangular coordination model' and 'Balancing of power' are important models for understanding the reconstruction of pluralistic stakeholder engagement (Fu and Huang, 2016). This research suggests that cultural system reform is an outcome of power balance among the compulsory force of the government, the inducement force of the market, and the continuous reconstruction of organisational interests. Furthermore, this outcome is dynamic with changes in socio-economy, policies, and culture across different historical phases. Among these, the reform of SOTs was considered a top-down compulsory institutional change (Zhu, 2012). In other words, although this change has lower costs, the level of remuneration for cultural workers determines the degree of resistance within the organisations toward reform. Based on the situations of state-owned FOTs at that period, the inducement force from the market was inadequate. Therefore, the outcomes of the reforms were a few FOTs as the organisations of ICH protection could not carry out the reforms due to the strong resistance. Meanwhile, other SOTS at the county level implemented measures to continue with the old practices for existing members while adopting new methods for new recruits, essentially being compelled to transform into enterprises (Zhao and Wang, 2022). Indeed, there are some

excellent cases, such as the Group-based management model in the art performing industry of Jiangxi (Ma and Du, 2008). In the face of top-down cultural system reforms, traditional opera troupes need to continuously adapt to changes in the external environment and reconstruct the pluralistic stakeholder groups.

### **2.2.3.2 Reform of Traditional Opera**

Compared to other contemporary or endangered art, the reform of traditional Chinese opera has received significant attention from the government since the founding of the PRC. Table 2.2 (see Appendix 14) introduces the institutional changes of traditional opera troupes from the Ming Dynasty to 1952 (Zhao and Wang, 2022), which is a period connecting feudal society and the beginning of New China. As Table 2.2 shows, the reform focused on the transformation of ownership and began to explore feasible models of coexistence among multiple ownership types. On the other hand, the reforms during this period aimed to abolish the unreasonable systems of the feudal era as well as establish management systems for opera troupes that aligned with the development of socialism. Among them, an important reform happened in the formulation of the opera director's system.

Fu (2020) provides a detailed account of the process through which this director system goes from being a subject of debate to gradually being established in some SOTs through the efforts of more than thirty years. As Table 2.3 (see Appendix 14) shows, the main system in opera performance includes outline opera, private opera, and director system. These three models reflect the systems where leaders, leading actors, and directors play dominant roles in the operation of troupes. Currently, SOTs have established the director system, while in some private troupes, the outline opera model continues to prevail. Fu (2020) believed that both the outline opera and the director system were too extreme when it came to the actors' freedom of creativity in traditional opera expression. Furthermore, the attribution of folk in the industry of traditional opera was gradually eroded by the director's elitist mindset, leading to changes in the whole

ecosystem.

Another research (Xia, 2016) focused on the institutional changes of traditional opera after reform and opening up. Despite the government implementing a series of measures to achieve the market-oriented transformation of troupes, the effectiveness of such reforms was not particularly evident before 2000 (Xia, 2016). Even so, these measures laid the foundation for subsequent marketisation. Based on the work of Xia (2016), Table 2.4 (see Appendix 14) outlines the focus and specific measures of troupe reforms during different periods after the reform and opening-up. In the evolving governments' decision-making, some troupes found themselves in a dilemma, oscillating between government support and market survival, ultimately leading to a challenging situation (Xia, 2016). The categorisation reform aimed at guiding different types of troupes to eventually achieve industrialisation.

#### **2.2.4 Studies on FO**

This section reviews the studies on FO regarding its history and sustainable development. It is worth noticing that the research on FO is primarily conducted by scholars from the Fujian Provincial Art Research Institute<sup>8</sup>, local colleges, and research institutions of choreography. The relevant research on FO focused mainly on its history, protection, and commercialisation.

Current historical research on FO primarily consists of articles written by researchers from the Institute of Art Research, as well as a brief history, the brief records in some local chronicles, and studies on the specific historical period or folklore. On the one hand, the research mainly refers to a brief description of history. Wang (2015) narrated the origins and development of FO in a storytelling style, following a chronological order of early, modern, and contemporary periods. That book is one of the rare

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<sup>8</sup> Fujian Provincial Art Research Institute formerly known as Fujian Opera Research Institute, was established in 1960. It is one of the earliest provincial opera research institute in China, which undertake the important research projects of Fujian folk operas.

monographs on the history of FO that can be found in China, providing a wealth of valuable historical materials. The other brief introduction to FO was published in the Fujian Provincial Local Chronicles (2000), Folklore, Opera, and History of Eight Min 八闽通史. Other studies (Zhang, 2016; Zhang, 2012; Yan, 2019) provide a historical survey of FO within its cultural context, with a particular emphasis on the significant influence of folk customs and changes in the Fuzhou region on the market shrink of modern and contemporary FOTs.

There is however some research on aspects of performance venues, musical accompaniment, and repertoire. Liu (2010) divided the historical changes in performance venues into two stages: the period of the Ming and Qing dynasties and the period since the Republic of China. He criticised that the traditional opera reforms in the early era undermined the existing cultural ecosystem, especially the diversity of cultural performance venues. That is to say, despite the favorable environments of current theater or activity centers that have a uniform architectural form, they lose their regional characteristics. From the perspective of band accompaniment, the original Seven Chairs 七条椅 were expanded into a bigger system incorporating Western music instruments (Liu, 2019). Emphasising repertoire, Yang (2021) explored the six types of repertoires of Fujian experimental opera since 1980, including scholar and beauty, family ethics, suspense opera, historical opera, costume opera, and modern opera. This study did not refer to theoretical perspectives but extensively documents the performance statistics of various types of opera by a certain Fujian opera troupe since 1980. It includes data on the number of performances, average attendance, playwrights, directors, and lead actors. This research provides fruitful historical materials for understanding the changing preferences of the audience over different periods. Indeed, there are also some studies on the origin of scripts, such as an article from Wang (2014). However, as these studies are not directly related to the main theme of this research, they will not be discussed here.



The sustainable development of FO in Modern China primarily encompasses protection and commercialisation. The preservation of FO has been examined through the lenses of talent cultivation and the cultural dissemination of ICH. Research on talent cultivation primarily delves into the optimisation of the system for inheriting ICH and the current state of arts education in vocational schools. Lin (2015) emphasized the six problems of the ICH inheritor system, including insufficient situations in recognition and exit mechanisms, talent cultivation, investment in protective measures, spread, education, and the feedback mechanism. That study attracted much attention given its sensitisation of these problems in the vocational education of FO. For instance, Lin (2015) pointed out that the factors constraining talent cultivation mainly included external factors such as a lack of interest among young people, scarce educational resources, and inadequate government support, as well as internal factors such as insufficient creative capabilities among teachers and poor learning attitudes among students. The results primarily collected data from insiders' suggestions, potentially overlooking a comparative perspective among pluralistic stakeholders, and was therefore to some extent criticised on the ground of subjectivity of outcomes.

Bai's doctoral thesis (2016, p. 348) pointed out that the popularisation of Fujian folk opera was to return to rural areas based on the experimental outcomes of SOTs. However, from the perspective of ethnomusicology, the idea of cultural popularisation is not an appropriate strategy for FOTs to expand their rural market. FO performance as a part of ritual and folk activities has specific aesthetic contexts, whilst these contexts cannot be popularised comprehensively in the modern educational system. To some extent, rural people in the Eastern villages of Fujian are also a part of the cultural context. In the process of sustaining folk rituals, healing, and religion, traditional opera continues to have its market share in rural areas (Avorgbedor, 1992; Koen, 2008, p. 46). In other words, in modern society, the issues of cultural communication to some extent become a marketing dilemma rather than pure cultural inheritance.

Around 2010, scholars in the Fuzhou area were more likely to focus on the survival status of professional troupes. Wang (2007) pointed out that due to the enthusiasm for belief and folkways, the rural market still had strong development prospects, although the management of FOTs was facing many problems, such as chaotic orders, brain drain, and conflicts between public benefits and business profits. Due to the complex issues in the operations of these professional troupes, Lin (2013) edited the book, *The Survival Status of Private Opera Troupes in Fujian*, which provided a detailed record of the operational situation, governments' function, marketing chain at that time. However, in the following decade, there was not a similarly comprehensive record of the management in FOTs. Although limited in number, there are still some studies that have explored the possibilities of FO development and collaboration with more pluralistic stakeholders from the perspectives of cultural tourism, regional cultural branding, and so on (Zhang, 2014; Su, 2018). For example, Zhang (2014) explored the factors for the endangered status of ICH in the art performing industry and analysed the sustainability strategies of FO in tourism based on the assessment model. Clearly, whether in the tourism industry or in the establishment of the cultural brand in Fuzhou, both rely on management strategies guided by the government and involving multiple stakeholders (Zhang, 2014; Su, 2018; Weng, 2015).

Though few, studies beyond the Chinese context point to core insights on the development of Fujian opera. Soon (2000) described that in Singapore, the amateur troupe enjoys a high reputation and sponsorships because it played an essential role in the festival and folk activities, while the actors in professional opera troupes often had apathetic attitudes toward their identities. Indeed, the expansion of amateur opera troupes constructs a cultural framework with Confucianism and nationalism, meanwhile, this phenomenon is the result of "the city-state's cultural policy", especially in the Chinese communities (Soon, 2007). Ma (2019) touched on Fujian folk opera for illegal migrants of the UK as an indispensable ritual commodity to construct an identity in their familiar ritual environment, as the ritual economy boosted individual identity

inclusion and the consolidation of the social economy through family bonds. Meanwhile, FOTs construct an important immigrant cultural circle for Fujianese in Southeast Asia, and America (Lau, 2008, pp. 74-78). In socialist China, Ma (2015, p. 16) considered that politics is an important force in driving artistic experience, management, and strategy, and impacts the marketisation of traditional operas.

### **2.2.5 Conclusion**

In general, the SM of FOT is a comprehensive field. In this part, relevant literature is reviewed on sustainability, ICH, traditional opera, and FO from the diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Based on the existing literature, studies on the history and SM of FOTs give due attention to understanding the changes in cultural ecology, pluralistic stakeholder engagement, cultural policies, and their adaptive management. Regrettably, there is insufficient record to illustrate the SM of FOTs after 2013. To understand the interpretive mechanism of the adaptive management of FOTs deeper, literature on sensemaking would be reviewed next (section 2.3) towards exploring the theoretical framework for discovering equivocality.

### **2.3 Sensemaking: Organisational Changes in Turbulence**

While FOT may not be prioritised in the cultural market as much as other prominent art forms in China, it is essential to recognise that the existence of this industry still holds significant value. To gain insights into the conflicts within the sphere of FOTs, the concept of sensemaking is considered, as proposed by Weick (1995). Sensemaking is the process of connecting individuals and organisational behavior. This process is catalysed by specific events, contextual factors, and industry dynamics, all working together to bestow significance upon a phenomenon and facilitate the interpretation of contextual transformations (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020; Weick, 2012). This section develops an interpretive framework for managing FOTs to effectively respond to cultural and institutional changes through a comprehensive review of the sensemaking literature.

### **2.3.1 Conceptualisation of Sensemaking**

In this section, a review is undertaken regarding the definition of sensemaking. Thereafter, literature is considered on studies on turbulent contexts based on its diverse models and categories. To conclude, a justification is provided for choosing to explore sensemaking.

#### **2.3.1.1 Definition**

Sensemaking is a socially constructed process (Christianson and Barton, 2020) that creates a world more orderly by making sense of equivocality (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). For the sustainability of FOTs, sensemaking is understanding the equivocality in organisational behaviors under the background of social transformation (Mills, 2003, pp. 1-7). In the research field of organisational sensemaking, scholars tend to capture the interactive patterns of leader and stakeholder engagement (Maitlis, 2005; Brown, 2000; Gioia, and Thomas, 1996). Sensemaking was identified to interpret the complex tensions between environment, economy, and social issues through interaction with pluralistic stakeholders, for instance, unstable situations or crisis events (Brown, 2000; Gioia, and Thomas, 1996). Among multiple definitions of sensemaking, constructionism, and cognitivism are two important methodological stances (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015; 2020). This section will review the definitions from the constructionist and cognitivist stances.

Social constructionism is a common lens for the supporters of sensemaking (Gephart, 1993; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Christianson and Barton, 2020), which highlights retrospection, equivocality, and the interplay of individuals and the environment (Weick, 1993; Taylor and Van Every, 2000; Cornelissen, 2012; Höllerer, Jancsary, and Grafström, 2018). Towards defining sensemaking in this research, Table 2.5 (see Appendix 14) captures various definitions of the constructivist stance. As Table 2.5 shows, sensemaking in the constructivist stance generally is defined as an interpretive

system for constructing social order, events, and issues. This interpretive system is based on retrospective explanations of past events, transforming phenomena such as social order and circumstances into a discursive process (Weick, 1993; Gephart, 1993; Taylor and Van Every, 2000; Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). It is important to note the roles of equivocality within the sensemaking process. There exists a comprehensive comprehension of equivocality, spanning from words to actions, and the interaction between individuals and their environment (Cornelissen, 2012; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Equivocality typically arises when individuals find themselves surprised, confronted with complexity, or confused by events both within and outside of an organization (Cornelissen, 2012). Equivocality does not only trigger sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015) but also impacts social orders (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Furthermore, sensemaking is an interactive process from word to action (Taylor and Van Every, 2000) and from individuals to collective (Christianson and Barton, 2020). In other words, meaningful action is built upon the feedback and construction that occurs as diverse individuals interact with the internal and external environments of the organisation.

Weick is an advocate of sensemaking from a cognitivist stance (e.g., Weick, 1995). In the early stage of theoretical development, three factors have been identified as being potentially important in interpreting social phenomenon: selectivity, symbolism, and ambiguity (James, 1890). In this period, sensemaking had not become a specific theory, however, scholars had tried to seek common sense from chaotic elements in psychology and organisation studies (James, 1890). Until the late 1960s, based on a deeper understanding of methodology in organisation theory, the interpretation of daily life started to become an important part of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). Weick published a series of research on sensemaking combining social psychology and organisational behavior to construct the understanding of ongoing changes (Weick,

1969; 1995). To investigate the relationship between cognition and sensemaking, Weick (1995) combined the cognitive lens to explain the success and crisis of organisations, making the integration into social physiology and organisational development further. Commenting on sensemaking, Weick (1995, p.64) states thus:

*Among musicians, there is the saying "You're only as good as your last date," by which they mean that history and reputation count for less than the most recent exhibit of your craft. The same can be said of the topic of sensemaking.*

This instance illustrates that sensemaking has diachronic and synchronic<sup>9</sup> features which are important elements in the research of ethnomusicology (Nettl, 2005, p. 260). When I consider sensemaking in the sustainability process of FOTs, the cognition in changes tends to realise the synchronic counterparts according to diachronic culture. Indeed, sensemaking in organisations is an increasingly important tool for pursuing the ongoing flow of events, and creating the lineage of the new methodological game and intersubjective process (Weick, 1995). Hence, Weick began to investigate the comprehensive system for sensemaking as an organisation theory, encompassing concepts, factors, processes, and the future continuously. As Table 2.6 (see Appendix 14) shows, Weick emphasised the interpretive process of combining cognition and actions. This research on sensemaking constructs the interpretive system for understanding the experience in organisational behavior, bringing appropriate concepts to narrate organisational behavior dealing with changes.

However, organisational sensemaking in this thesis does not only consider individuals' confusion regarding external changes but also seeks to construct the interpretation of

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<sup>9</sup> Diachronic and synchronic: Synchrony and diachrony are two complementary viewpoints in linguistic analysis. A synchronic approach (from Ancient Greek: συν- "together" and χρόνος "time") considers a language at a moment in time without taking its history into account. Synchronic linguistics aims at describing a language at a specific point of time, usually the present. In contrast, a diachronic (from δια- "through" and χρόνος "time") approach, as in historical linguistics, considers the development and evolution of a language through history (Ramat, et al., 2013).

social order and dilemmas in reforms based on both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Undoubtedly, both cognition and words play significant roles in understanding equivocality in changes, hence, it's important to acknowledge the boundaries between these two stances. When organisational activities are disrupted within a specific context, the process by which agents seek to restore operations is full of questioning (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020), and cannot be realised in the situation of a single understanding and out of context.

### **2.3.1.2 Turbulent Contexts**

Here, literature is reviewed on sensemaking in turbulent contexts to understand the current interpretive frames or models for sensing changes. As Table 2.7 (see Appendix 14) shows, turbulent contexts mainly include three aspects: disaster, crisis, and unstable environment. In the literature though, there is scanty distinction between disaster and crisis in sensemaking. Interestingly, scholars tend to highlight the crisis in social issues but define disaster sensemaking in the context of natural hazards. However, the commonality is that the research on these two contexts both focuses on the semantic construction of public inquiry and enactment model. For example, Dwyer et al. (2021) introduced a four-phase inquiry among emergency management practitioners in the aftermath of Australia's most destructive bushfire disaster; while Weick (2010) highlighted the breakdown of awareness enacted by the Bhopal disaster leading to the crisis exacerbation. In these studies, the social order or reality is constructed from the pluralistic stakeholders' retrospective reflections and discourse over different periods.

As theory developed, these frames of issue interpretation are not only used to illustrate the severe natural disaster or financial crisis but also to focus on daily dilemmas in organisations with social transformation or policy changes. Unstable environments are the more common contexts that are often invariably accompanied by organisational changes. Just as rapid changes in economy, policy, and society, cultural organisations adapt themselves to the external environment continuously. Among the models or frames in Table 2.7, in unstable environment contexts, the models of sensemaking

sensitise more political networks, institutional changes, social processes, prospective and retrospective interplay, and strategic changes (Gephart, Steie, and Lawrence, 1990; Gephart, 2007; Gephart, Topal, and Zhang, 2010). Faced with an unstable external environment, scholars are placing greater emphasis on reconstructing pluralistic social networks and institutional pressure to enhance organisational adaptability. In my view, these three contexts can be seen as varying levels of turbulence. As mentioned in Chapter One, the changes in the external environment, such as urban-rural relationships and reforms of cultural systems at different stages, to some extent, are also turbulent contexts. Meanwhile, sensemaking is the process by which individuals in FOTs reconstruct their cognition regarding social order and the sustainability of organisational activities.

### **2.3.1.3 Types and Constituents**

As mentioned above, sensemaking in the organisation field is a multi-layered term. Hence, it is essential to identify the various types and constituents of sensemaking before scholars embark on their research in particular contexts. Given the inherent complexity in the sensemaking process, I delineate the pertinent types and components to categorise and make sense of the equivocality within organisational changes.

Table 2.8 (see Appendix 14) lists the multiple types and outcomes that impact the perception of organisational changes. Maitlis (2005) pointed out that organisations took on “guided, fragmented, restricted, and minimal” forms according to the degree of animation and control in the organising process. This research identified types of sensemaking by organisational behaviors to understand leaders' and stakeholders' engagement in sense giving (Maitlis, 2005), which is an effort to interact sensemaking with pluralistic stakeholders. However, this kind of interaction tends to investigate the impacts of individuals' behavior, especially in leaders' styles, in specific organisations, which means the four forms of sensemaking (Maitlis, 2005) have limitations in understanding the interaction of social environments and organisational changes. To



enhance the understanding of types, Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) pointed out two themes: shared meaning and emotion, which highlighted the dynamic mechanism in adaptability and prospective aspects to sustain organisational development in crisis and changes. This study reviewed the seminal article (Weick, 1988) to examine the interpretive process that individuals can produce profound impacts on organisational adaptability. This mechanism interprets sensemaking in crisis and changes by constructing the relationship between the interaction of shared meaning emotion, adaptive sensemaking, and future directions, which is suitable for exploring the sustainability of FOTs. Section 2.3.3.1 provides further elaboration.

Ontologically, to pursue a more comprehensive understanding, scholars beyond theoretical methods of sensemaking, conceptualise subjects' different approaches to interacting with the world (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011; 2020). Indeed, no matter whether individuals' efforts are in the first order or public inquiry in the second order sensemaking, it is difficult to overcome the deficiency of experience or text (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015). Hence, pluralistic stakeholders' experiences are important data for interpreting strategic changes, and texts from these experiences will construct the feasibility of sustainable development to overcome the challenges in the process of social transformation. While experience served as the foundation for cognitive frames and continued to evolve through exposure to new cues, it ultimately emerged as a pivotal factor influencing both problem-solving and the realisation of expectations (Konlechner et al., 2019). It is worth noting that no matter the aspects taken to understand the interaction of individuals and organisations, the outcomes generally pursue stability, learning, and changes which are conflicting targets but present consistency in expecting survival for the long term (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020).

Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020), in existential-phenomenological ontology, investigated the typology in the practical world, involving two levels: immanent and involved-deliberate in actions (Schildt, Mantere and Cornelissen, 2019); detached-deliberate, and

representational sensemaking in second order (Guiette and Vandenbempt, 2016). I find two issues perplexing when I contemplate the categorisations presented in this article. Firstly, while the suggested results in this article align with the focus of my research, the authors have not provided a detailed exposition of how these categories can directly impact these results. Secondly, although the study purposed to develop a more comprehensive viewpoint through its methodological implications, it did not establish a clear link between these categories and specific contextual applications. To contribute to that regard, this current study embarked on a more in-depth exploration of the constituents of sensemaking.

Interestingly, scholars analyse the differences between types and constituents in their research, but in a practical context, they are hard to separate (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020). To construct a more comprehensive understanding of the sensemaking process, Table 2.9 (see Appendix 14) lists these constituents or processes. Daft and Weick (1984) constructed a model of organisational interpretation to explain the process of strategy formulation and how this model embeds into the environment. This research attempted to pursue a universal interpretive system for sensemaking in a specific environment, which provided a useful model for research in the future. In Table 2.9, Weick (1995) describes seven properties and most constituents of sensemaking process. They are more like guides for sensing changes inside and outside the organisation, rather than a theoretical framework.

Considered contextually, the constituents of sensemaking need to be reconstructed according to different situational factors. However, multiple categories of sensemaking, which were named by contexts, emotions, or actions, such as crisis sensemaking, optimistic sensemaking, and adaptive sensemaking create difficulties in understanding the relationships between them, leading to fragmented understanding, unexpected interruption, and incomplete analysis in the application process. Working on reducing equivocality, Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) conceptualised sensemaking within the

context of “specific episodes, ambiguous events, distinct processes, particular outcomes, and situational factors.” These constituents capture a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of the sensemaking process by focusing on equivocality in detail. This current research draws from these five constituents of sensemaking logic in interpreting changes and constructing frames in the contexts of FOT. However, this current study focuses on understanding the existing process rather than outcomes. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) specified the core constituents of sensemaking to understand reality from the practical levels to the abstract levels, so the connections between action, frames, and outcomes were constructed in the aspect of phenomenology.

Another two factors need to be focused on: experience and multiple frames. Table 2.9 shows the four constituents in Weick’s research (2020), in which the interaction between experiences and understanding in the sensemaking process of interpreting experiences is suggested. In the case of FOT in this study, it was aimed to link experience with a different social process to understand the similarity, ambivalence, and reality among pluralistic stakeholders.

Indeed, these multiple models or frames of sensemaking in turbulent contexts help in understanding how organisations adapt to the continuous changes in their external environment. The models retrospect events or elements that disrupt organisational activities and institutional functioning, as well as the experiences that drive sustainable development during the process of recovery. In the next section, the context of FOTs is revisited with the aim of flagging the justification for choosing the relevant models.

#### **2.3.1.4 Justification for Choosing Sensemaking**

The sensemaking theory applies to this study for several reasons. Firstly, sensemaking is the process of sensing ongoing organisational changes (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022; Klarin and Sharmelly, 2021; Maitlis, 2005). Scholars made sense of sensemaking through individual experiences in specific organisational circumstances (Louis, 1980;

Karreman and Alvesson, 2001; Brown and Toyoki, 2013). They defined sensemaking as the process of understanding organisational changes in the internal and external environment through modes of interpretation systems (Daft and Weick, 1984; Rudolph and Morrison, 2009; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Sandberg, 2000). For the SM of FOTs, this interpretive mechanism is a good way to conceptualise the understanding of change in adapting to external ecology. Accordingly, the useful concepts, encompassing linguistic logic, temporality, and cognition (Hultin and Mähring, 2017; Kunisch, 2017; Elsbach, Barr, and Hargadon, 2005; Gioia, et al., 2013), are introduced to interpret the intersubjective world (Gephart, 1993) with situated changes and dynamic phenomena (Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020). In other words, the study of sensemaking provides the bridge to connect social reality and individuals' cognition.

Secondly, the models and frames of sensemaking generally focus on “the conflation of first order and second order” (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015; 2020), which captures the relationship between individuals and organisations. First-order sensemaking tends to cognise changeable processes in changing individual action (Heaphy, 2017; Dwyer, et al., 2021). From a second-order perspective, the sensemaking process improves the transformation of the interpretive system from “sensemaking in the organisation” to “Organisational sensemaking” (Sackmann, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) through the individuals' social practices interpreting the construction of collective order (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 2012; 2020; Höllerer, Jancsary, and Grafström, 2018). For instance, the reconstruction of the relations between pluralistic stakeholder groups usually is the core issue in the SM of FOTs.

Thirdly, sensemaking is a kind of similar discursive system to the methodology in ethnomusicology (Ahuja, Heizmann, and Clegg, 2019; Hultin and Mähring, 2017; Heap, 1975) to pursue a dynamic process of social culture (Garfinkel, 1967). From a musical culture lens, Marriam (1964) highlighted three levels of interpreting culture:

“conceptualisation of music, behavior in relation to music, and the music sound itself.” Anthropologists often agreed with this model for reality (Geertz, 1973), and were interested in musical changes, phenomena, interpretations, and feedback (Rice, 2017). Furthermore, in specific musical organisations, the meaning of sound-making becomes a social issue, which investigates a continuous intersubjective daily life and the way of constructs recognition and meaning systems for individuals and groups (Feld, 1984). Many scholars flag environmental crisis and cultural loss of traditional opera in the meaning systems (Rees, 2016; Avorgbedor, 1992), and these sustainable dilemmas of the ICH triggered a sensemaking process that linked traditional opera and the business world (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995; Allen, 2017).

In the next section (2.3.2), literature on organisational changes and relevant interpretive mechanisms in sensemaking is reviewed to further explore suitable research models of the SM of FOTs.

### **2.3.2 Organizational Changes**

An uncertain environment is often characterised by frequent organisational changes. Just as Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 570) pointed out, “Change must not be thought of as a property of the organisation. Rather, the organisation is viewed as an emergent property of changes.” Indeed, organisational changes are an ongoing process that is difficult to predict fully in independent contexts but has the trajectories to be sensed and adjusted cyclically (Christianson, 2019; Klarin and Sharmelly, 2021; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Balogun and Johnson, 2005). From the ontology of changes and becoming, the reflection on the past and future is constructed by driving patterns across the interaction between the different levels of dynamic practices (Langley, et al., 2013; Costas and Grey, 2014; Dawson and Sykes, 2019). Therefore, unlike crisis, “change” is a term in the level of organisational behavior with temporality, which tends to focus on the action, interplay, and strategy.

### 2.3.2.1 Time and Strategic Changes

Temporality is an important influential factor to strategic changes. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter One, the different stages of urban-rural relations significantly impact changes in FOTs. Grounded on the interplay of retrospective and prospective sensemaking, temporality exerts an influence on organisational changes through the enactment, interpretation, theorising, and rewriting of the organising process. Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) developed the model of temporal work in the crisis industries and compared the strategic changes in five projects with the same timeline. That research identified that multiple interpretations of the past, present, and future play a crucial role in decision-making, as well as underscored the importance of considering temporal aspects when analysing organisational strategies during uncertain times. On their part, Kunisch et al (2017) developed a more comprehensive model of time in strategic changes. That model emphasised the intricate connection between time and organisational activities, shedding light on how time influences the behavior of both individuals and the organisation. In their study, they identified three concept types in strategic changes, namely “clock time, event time, and life cycle time.” Based on the actual situations of changes in FOTs, the event time<sup>10</sup> needs to be given special attention. Kunisch et al. (2017) highlighted that research on event time indicated that strategic changes are typically responses to both external and internal organisational environments. There is evidence to suggest that strategic changes often result from adaptations to changes in the social economy, institutional dynamics, and public policies (Rajagopalan and Spreitzer, 1997; McCutchen, 1993). Just as FOT undergoes urban-rural reconstruction, different stages of institutional reform typically require certain strategic adjustments, although whether these changes are positive or not depends on the current conditions both inside and outside troupes (Hoskisson, Cannella, Tihanyi, and Faraci, 2004).

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<sup>10</sup> Event time: This is an understanding that time resides in important events.

It should be noted that, under the influence of organisational strategic change, individual transformation is also inevitable. A micro-level study revealed the impact of leaders' substantive actions, such as discourse sensegiving actions, on how other employees perceive changes and undergo shifts in meaning during the implementation of strategic change (Weiser, 2021). In this empirical study, employees' perception of strategic change evolved with the leadership's in-depth communication and strategic adjustments continuously, which was also a kind of change in event time. Research into sustained adaptive change resulting from the exploration of strategic communication within managers is a more prevalent endeavor. This article highlights how middle managers draw upon their tacit knowledge and communication strategies in their daily activities and routines to narrate the creativity and market value of new products. Weiser (2021) explored the micro-level of the sensemaking process employed by managers in promoting strategies within organizations, making it an exceptionally practical value.

### **2.3.2.2 Time and Behavioral Changes**

In addition to the strategic changes at the organisational level over time, behavioral changes at the individual level represent a more widespread aspect influencing sensemaking, mainly cognitively, emotionally, and bodily (Cunha et al., 2015).

Research in the cognitive aspect generally explored the relationship between sensemaking and equivocality by updated cues and multiple frames. For instance, a micro-level study conducted interviews with healthcare professionals at four different time points to understand how the change was achieved by influencing participants' tolerance for expectation (Konlechner, et al., 2019). This research attributed the success of the reforms to the degree of resistance from the participants. That is to say, in the process of change, whether perceived problems can be appropriately solved will impact participants' change initiatives. From both retrospective and prospective viewpoints, this research perceives equivocality as the disparity between experience and expectation. Here, experience denotes the retrospective evaluation of continually

updated cues and cognitive frames, while expectation represents the forward-looking anticipation of the future (Konlechner, et al., 2019). Another study on the sensemaking process after Australian bushfires primarily focuses on how multiple frames enhance participants' cognition over time (Dwyer, Hardy, and Maguire, 2021). This study places a greater emphasis on the impact of future sensemaking capabilities on organisations, and tracked changes before and after the implementation of a recommendation stemming from this bushfire disaster and explored the implementations of associated actions. Ultimately, it resulted in a sensemaking model where the degree of equivocality changed with four phases and specific action implementations. While several studies reinforce that viewpoint (Mills, 2003; Klarin and Sharmelly, 2021), their commonality lies in capturing changes in equivocality within a certain timeline during the sensemaking process, thus gaining insights into predicting the future based on the past.

Another important factor impacting organisational changes is emotion, and some negative emotions may cause the persistence of crisis. Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence (2013) emphasised the role of emotions as a triggering mediator in sensemaking, which has a significant impact on the process of information comprehension and the formation of sound conclusions. Building on that foundation, several studies have focused on specific cases, examining the mediating role of different types of emotions in organisational change. For example, a study suggested that employees' emotions significantly influenced their levels of psychological resources, such as commitment to change, efficacy, and expectations (Helpap and Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016). Another research (Heaphy, 2017) examined the emotion dynamics across the different sensemaking stages. Heaphy (2017) believed that the sensemaking process can primarily be divided into sensemaking interaction and sensegiving transformation. In sensemaking interactions, mediators encourage emotional accounts while handling their own negative emotions, and shifting to sensegiving, they use sympathy or neutrality to soothe others' emotions or provoke surprise for a new understanding (Heaphy, 2017).



Dwyer, Hardy, and Tsoukas (2021) analysed the sensemaking process following an event, including the aftermath, subsequent inquiries, and the implementation phase of recommendations. They summarised the various coping strategies employed by practitioners at different stages, which included involved-deliberate, theoretical, and detached-deliberate coping. And the resulting different types of emotions may either facilitate or hinder the process of sensemaking. Empirically, practitioners' various emotional coping mechanisms at different stages would result in varying emotional expressions, potentially hindering the understanding of information and giving rise to equivocality. This type of equivocality caused comprehension paralysis or confusion.

Finally, it is noted that the body, in the sensemaking process, also impacts organisational changes. However, this influence is often more considered in the context of everyday life (De Rond, Holeman, and Howard-Grenville, 2019) rather than based on event time.

### **2.3.2.3 Time and Interactive Changes**

While organisational change is undoubtedly a process rooted in social construction, it's crucial not to overlook the dynamic interplay of pluralistic individuals, as emphasised by Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010). Scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the significant role played by diverse stakeholders in organisational changes. These stakeholders encompass top managers, middle managers, and various frontline employees (Balogun, 2003; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Bartunek, Rudolph, and DePalma, 2006; Weiser, 2021). For instance, Heaphy (2017) explored how mediators establish a series of discrete social interactions, such as clarifying perspectives with clients and venting emotions to colleagues, resulting in empathy in conflicts or varying temporal sequences.

Failed interactions result in amplified emotions, disrupting collective sensemaking (Christianson and Barton, 2020; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). These social interactions

also exemplify the enriched comprehension of information by a multitude of organisational actors (Christianson and Barton, 2020). From the point of interaction between internal and external organisations actors, Rouleau (2005) examined the communication and interaction strategies employed by middle managers in dialogues with external stakeholders, considering the diverse needs and preferences of various roles every day. His subsequent article delves deeper into this interaction. It emphasised the importance of creating appropriate scenarios to engage individuals from different hierarchical and social systems in the change process through understanding the identities and interests of different stakeholder groups (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). While these micro-level studies do not explicitly delineate specific periods for examining organisational change, they emphasise specific strategies for the interaction of pluralistic stakeholders in everyday work. Although interactions among pluralistic stakeholders commonly influence sensemaking, most studies tend to focus on everyday interactions and rarely explore the significance of such interactions from the perspective of event time.

### **2.3.3 Interpretive Mechanism**

Based on the need for SM within the context of ecologic changes at the FOTs, I have conducted a focused review of literature in two key areas: institutional theory and adaptive sensemaking.

#### **2.3.3.1 Institutional theory**

Institutional contexts are another important ecology for the sustainable development of FOTs. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) conceptualised organisations from an evolutionary perspective within the framework of “ecological change-enactment-selection-retention with the results of retention feeding back into the prior three”. Sensemaking constructs a cyclical and adaptive dynamic system through continuous updates, retrospective cues, and identity rationalisation processes. That study also briefly outlines the interaction of sensemaking with pluralistic elements, opening

possibilities for future research in organisational contexts, including elements such as institutional theory, emotions, power, and more. Building upon Weick's early contributions to the field of sensemaking, further research has been undertaken.

Among these, understanding institutional change from the perspective of organisational actors is a significant research direction. In the field of institutional sensemaking, Weber and Glynn (2006) bridged the gap between early sensemaking and institutional theory, exploring a framework to address the impact of institutional contexts on sensemaking. Building upon the contextual mechanisms (Barley and Tolbert, 1997), the authors considered further mechanisms of priming, editing, and triggering to continuously monitor whether subsequent actions align with institutional expectations. When institutional logic and organisational practices are out of sync, organisational behavior is often disrupted (Barton and Sutcliffe, 2009; Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). In institutional contexts, established organisational behaviors are often challenging to disrupt unless experts express doubts or humble managers actively seek assistance, triggering a reevaluation and change in organisational behavior under institutional pressures and personal interests (Barton and Sutcliffe, 2009). In the interpretation system, institutions are understood as high-level shared meanings (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). However, with strong equivocality generated by institutional logic and organizational logic, shared meanings become unclear and lose their value (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). Based on differences in cognitive understanding of behavior and the identity of perceivers, organisations yield different adaptive outcomes within the institutional context (Barton and Sutcliffe, 2009).

### **2.3.3.2 Adaptive Sensemaking**

“Adaptive sensemaking,” implies the reconstruction of the enactment process in response to environmental changes (Christianson, 2019; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020). Domain literature can be traced back to a study by Weick in 1988. The article “Enacted Sensemaking in Crisis Situations” offered insights into the sensemaking in crises and

changes, which highlighted the core position of actions, and constructed the relationship between enactment and specific hazards (Weick, 1988). Weick emphasised the importance of sensemaking when crises happen (Weick, 1988, p. 305):

*The less adequate the sensemaking process directed at a crisis, the more likely it is that the crisis will get out of control. ...To sort out a crisis as it unfolds often requires action which simultaneously generates the raw material that is used for sensemaking and affects the unfolding crisis itself.*

As Weick (1988) noted, crisis enact action to control organisational instability. An updated analysis by Weick (2010) has defined “enacted sensemaking” as the creation of rational narratives that elucidate challenging situations. That research underscores how the interplay between cognition and action significantly influences enacted sensemaking. Conversely, thoughtless actions or rigid mental models tend to exacerbate crises (Weick, 2010). In essence, enacted sensemaking serves as an interpretive system that illuminates the dynamic relationship among cognition, action, and complex events (Weick, 1988; 2010; 2020). Consequently, these frameworks play a pivotal role in establishing the connection between the interpretive system and various outcomes, such as organisational changes, learning, and stability (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020). In other words, when confronted with changes or an unstable environment, these actions, guided by reasoned interpretation, are enacted to ensure organisational stability. In their contribution on sensemaking in organisational changes, Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) identified two core themes: shared meanings and emotions which contributed to the process of adaptive sensemaking. Shared meanings focus on the diverse meaning and their relevant social process (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Further literature identifies critical lever of changes in three organisational elements: organisational identity, commitment, and expectation (Weick, 1988; 1995; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Schildt, Mantere, and Cornelissen, 2019; Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara, 2014).

Identity becomes important when threats emerge because identity is a fundamental attribute to perceiving causal direction in changes (Weick, 1995; Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012). The research on organisational identity mainly is devoted to studying the enduring and dynamic features based on the four prevalent stances of “social construction, social actor, institutionalist, and population ecologist” (Gioia et al., 2013). The four theoretical stances view organisational identity as the sensemaking of industrial identities from insiders or outsiders, especially emphasising the dynamics and distinctiveness in turbulent contexts (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018; Brewer, 1991). The enactment of sensemaking depends on the sense makers’ identity (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022) to maintain the expected self-awareness or a consensus in their work (Brown, Stacey, and Nandhakumar, 2008). However, the ambiguous identity or interpretation of the environment leads to a negative sense of self (Degn, 2015). For example, for FOTs, marketization in Chinese society brings the emergence of a cultural industry, which no doubt leads to practitioners’ ambiguous identities between peasants and actors (Lin, 2013).

Commitment plays a positive role in organisational management in change scenarios, but at the same time, it can also serve as a blind spot or an impediment to organisational adaptation (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Weick (1988) believed that commitment was one of the actual processes of sensemaking in turbulent contexts, representing the level of dedication and attachment of individuals to their actions and decisions within the organisation. In a further study that explored the interplay between commitment and frames, Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara (2014) posited that individuals within a collective typically operate under the guidance of the shared frames, which subsequently shape their interpretations and actions. Moreover, the repeated communication and emotional experiences among individuals contributed to the strengthening of frames and, consequently, the establishment and escalation of commitment, they noted further. On the flip side, these shared frames can also restrict the capacity for commitment to be updated, thereby impeding adaptive sensemaking in

organisations. This process recurs throughout the adaptive sensemaking, accompanying the organisation's iterations and development (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005).

Expectations that are more like interpretive frames for changes in the future create meanings linking to cues (Weick, 1995). However, the expectation may lead to both a sustainable future and danger because expectation impacts the dynamics of sensemaking in changeable contexts (Weick, 1988; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). In organisational changes, the employees' tolerance is impacted by the different expectations, and crisis will occur when they no longer expect (Konlechner et al., 2019). Therefore, a sustainable future needs to balance the conflicts between expectations and practices (Mills, 2003, p. 6). For pluralistic stakeholders, changes result in different shared meanings and subsequent actions (Dawson and Buchanan, 2005).

Sensemaking based on the interaction between individual levels and their organisations cannot ignore the role of emotions (Ganzin, Islam, and Suddaby, 2020; Ahuja, Heizmann, and Clegg, 2019; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Emotions trigger positive professional identities but also a sense of disillusionment in work identity (Ahuja, Heizmann, and Clegg, 2019; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). The positive and negative emotions as a sense resource impact the shared meanings and subsequent actions of pluralistic stakeholders in changeable contexts (Huy, 2002; Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara, 2014). Therefore, emotions are the cues to discover equivocality and trigger sensemaking (Heaphy, 2017; Dwyer, Hardy, and Tsoukas, 2021).

### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the definitions, types, and constituents of sensemaking, and further clarified the interpretive process of organisational behavior in unstable contexts. Indeed, sensemaking is understanding the organising process in specific contexts. Also, it implies the discursive system, which considers the relationship between first order and second order from the interaction of cognition and substantive actions. In the

research on sensemaking, multiple theoretical frameworks describe interpretive methods of key challenges and changes in a crisis industry, for instance, political networks, enactment, and adaptability mechanisms. The FOT is a kind of crisis scenario in the context of cultural transformation. Indeed, current research has built a robust basis for the sensemaking process, but interdisciplinary perspective remains relatively underexplored. In prior sensemaking research, studies on the pluralistic stakeholders' communication and emotional experiences primarily focused on organisational changes in daily activities and workflows. To fill a gap and contribute to knowledge, this study seeks to understand the meanings of organisational changes by examining the interactions of pluralistic stakeholder groups in chronological order of events. In the next section, I will engage with the aspect of organisational sensemaking in sustainability issues, towards specifying the theoretical framework and gaining enhanced understand of sensemaking.

## **2.4 Sustainable Management in Changes**

From the perspectives of applied ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology, research on sensemaking is well integrated into the process of protection and commercialisation in art organisations by reducing equivocality and sensing organisational changes to realise sustainable expectations. However, organisational sustainability is a complex process including tensions between the economy, environment, social responsibility, and culture (Hahn, et al., 2014). In this part, I draw on the literature on the relationship between perceiving changes and the sustainability of FOT.

### **2.4.1 Sensemaking and Sustainability**

As discussed earlier, sustainability in applied ethnomusicology tends to focus on the future of music practices, while in business administration, sustainability encompasses conflicts between organisational survival and cultural sustainability. Primarily, sustainability aims to address the current interconnected and interdependent needs between the economy, environment, and social issues (WCED, 1987; Hahn, et al. 2015).

Based on the inextricably connected relationships among multiple levels, corporate sustainability (CS) refers to the interaction with pluralistic stakeholders in the process of sensing purpose (van Marrewijk, Werre 2003). The tension among stakeholders' forces pragmatists to investigate feasible approaches for sustaining competitive advantage (Freeman, Phillips, and Sisodia, 2018). Taticchi and Demartini (2021, p. 73) define CS thus:

*“Corporate sustainability is an integral approach to business aimed at enhancing competitive positioning and profitability through the sustained creation of shared value, co-creation practices with stakeholders and the integration of ESG factors in decision-making.”*

FOT bears the social responsibility of sustaining cultural heritage, meanwhile, this responsibility is experiencing a commercialised transformation with the focus on business profits in modern Chinese society (Wang, 2007). The art organisation needs to pursue new business opportunities among pluralistic stakeholders and sustain the meaning of its CSR. Therefore “Create Shared Value” (CSV) has become a principle for organisations to consider sustainable practices (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Taticchi and Demartini, 2021, p. 71). Hart and Milstein (2003) pointed out that creating sustainable meanings from a business perspective contributed to substantive action. However, the research on sustainable values tends to focus on the importance of pluralistic stakeholders, rather than temporality (Cardoni, Kiseleva, and Taticchi, 2020). Sensemaking can provide a retrospective and prospective lens in the research of sustainable development (Konlechner, et al., 2019).

Sensemaking encompasses the capability of perceiving uncertainty. Hahn et al. (2014) explored how the differences in cognitive content and structure impact the sensemaking process based on a business case and a paradoxical cognitive frame of sustainability. That research integrated an interpretive model (Daft and Weick, 1984) into cognitive frames to discuss organisational decision-making, which is a feasible approach to understanding equivocality in sustainability issues. Sensemaking is the process that



constructs organisational orders by extracting cues and developing the plausible image retrospectively, so that the stakeholders sense the future more clearly (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). From cognitive frames, sensemaking timely improves decision-making and reduces equivocality in turbulent conditions (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

On the other hand, in line with the resource-based view (RBV) (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Lovallo, et al., 2020), sensing opportunities and threats is an important adaptability for CS (Grewatsch and Kleindienst, 2018). That point is reinforced by Teece (2009) who emphasised out that it is a significant capability for enterprises to sense opportunities and adapt to the business environment. On their part, Bocken and Geradts (2020) add that sustainable business model innovation requires the dynamic capability of sensing, seizing, and transforming to overcome barriers and drive innovation. To thrive in a turbulent environment, sensemaking emphasises the interpretive process that individuals have an important influence on adapting to changes (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). A core factor in understanding the interpretive system is to discover how the perception impacts organisational changes in the future (Gioia and Thomas, 1996). In the sensemaking system for the SM of FOTs, religious and ritual economics, along with Chinese-style modernisation cultural policies, are two crucial external environments that cannot be overlooked.

#### **2.4.2 Religious and Ritual Economy in China**

This section reviews literature on the influence of religion and rituals on the market of FO. According to domain literature about the ritual economy, the influences primarily come from the religious revival, regional religious model, ethic system, and modern development (Dean, 2003; Dean, K, and Zheng, Z, 2009a; 2009b; Yang, 2008).

Since UNESCO's initiative in 2003, the religious and cultural heritage of local communities and rural areas in China has experienced a significant revival. While

considering this revival, it is important to keep in mind the numerous challenges that Chinese religious institutions and places faced during the Cultural Revolution. Dean and Zheng (2009a) described the temples in Putian, including Guanghai Temple, and how they faced various challenges during the Cultural Revolution. These challenges included monks being forced to renounce their faith, and the destruction of Buddhist images, among others. Ultimately, they escaped the fate of being repurposed for non-religious use and returned to their Buddhist functions (Dean and Zheng, 2009a). This is a significant experience to help readers understand the common ordeals of folk beliefs and ritual operas in China during that period and their valuable history of gradual revival after the 1970s. This revival was not only a resurgence of culture but also reflected the integration with social capital, the interaction of pluralistic stakeholder groups within the cultural ecosystem, and the regeneration of a sense of social ethics (Jones, 2009).

Dean (2003) highlighted the widespread practice of residents' active engagement in sincere temple rituals dedicated to various deities in contemporary Southeast China. That research interpreted these rituals, organised through intricate local structures, as creating temporary autonomous zones characterised by fluidity and transformation, and shaping community bonds. This dynamic interplay serves as a form of creative internal feedback, responding and adapting to the evolving dynamics of capitalism and its development within the local-state and local-capitalist relations (Dean, 2003). Another perspective holds that with the growth of the economy, the revival of religious beliefs involves a blend of capitalism and traditional Chinese popular religion and ritual-based economy (Yang, 2008; 2020). Yang (2008) proposed a complex expenditure in the ritual economy, such as constructing temples, conducting ancestor worship ceremonies, hiring ritual specialists, and making offerings to deities and spirits. The indigenous ritual-based economic model in Wenzhou illustrates how religion drives profitability within capitalism, alleviates its negative social effects, channels wealth towards sacred domains, and intertwines capitalism with the traditional ritual-based economy (Yang,

2008). In a later study, Yang explored the redefinition of national administrative space and the formation of new community spaces defined by deity worship, religious transcendence, ritual practices, and familial relationships (Yang, 2020). The impact of the urban and rural land reorganisation on traditional ritual spaces and customs is one of the significant aspects of this current research.

The understanding of local ritual alliances presents the intricate relationship between pluralistic stakeholders within the ritual economy. Yeung (2007) explored the rural sacrificial rituals and traditional customs in different villages, including the frequency of these rituals and the villages where they were held. Yeung (2007) shed light on the decline of folk sacrificial rituals during the 1920s to 1950s, such as the waning popularity of Mulian marionette plays in the early Hakka areas, the Mulian drama of Fujian, and the Ghost Festival in Hong Kong. This understanding helps us grasp the decline of ritual operas during that period. In other words, within the folk or ritual systems of many villages in China, the rise and fall of folk beliefs determined the fate of ritual performances, and folk ritual alliances constituted the ecological environment for the existence of ritual performances. Dean and Zheng (2009b) analysed the ritual alliances among different villages, involving the participation of multiple communities in shared rituals and activities, as well as the boundaries and relationships between different villages and regions within these alliances. That study provided a detailed introduction to several ritual alliances in the Putian Plain. Each alliance had a main temple where villagers collectively participated in processions to the temple. Subsequently, they took turns inviting deities back to their villages for offerings of incense. Ritual alliances of this kind were quite common in the Fujian region, but they differ from the FO ritual alliances, as each village temple serves as a religious site, and each constructed own ritual alliance. In other words, the influence of local deities on the people of Fuzhou far surpasses that of renowned deities from distant places.

The third type of study focused on the ritual operas in China. Guo (2005) examines the

historical evolution and cultural significance of Mulian performance, particularly in the Huizhou region during late imperial China, highlighting its origins, influences, migration patterns, and integration into broader theatrical and religious contexts, offering valuable insights into Chinese performing arts history and societal impact. On the contrary, FO scripts often focus on family affairs, and societal trends, and exhibit a stronger local and secular character. Therefore, FO ritual operas are essentially highly ritualistic dance performances, without lyrics, directly conveying the devotees' wishes to the gods through both written words and body language. Such rural ceremonies are equally significant in northern Chinese rural areas. The establishment of these rituals is not only intertwined with the historical changes of rural religious sites but also reflects the development of rural China through the evolution of ritual operas (David, 2010). I have to agree that through such religious and ritual activities, rural communities have constructed their own local social ethics and moral standards, and they showcase these virtues and order by inviting troupes to perform.

### **2.4.3 Cultural Policy in China**

In the external environment of FOTs, cultural policies in China as national strategies impact the SM of cultural organisations in regional, local, and communities (Blumenfield and Silverman, 2013, p. 6). In my research, the values and actions of FOT are important content for sensing and reflecting organisational sustainability. Based on the earlier definition of SM, the understanding of sustainable strategies is considered under a comprehensive framework with the interaction of a bundle of theories, mainly involving the ecosystem, adaptive management, stakeholder theory, and shared value creation. The review on the sensemaking part has illustrated theories and methods for sensing the process of organisational changes for sustainable development. This section identified cultural policy based on the Chinese path<sup>11</sup> of sustainable development.

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<sup>11</sup> Chinese path: “Chinese path, including the concrete unfolding of this path in practice and the theoretical method by which this path is reproduced in thought. The so-called Chinese path here

When I consider cultural policy in the Socialist path with Chinese characteristics, Marxism is the philosophy that cannot be circumvented to understand the critical consciousness in the philosophical views of Chinese social reality (Wu, 2022, p. 88). Based on the critical approaches toward specific social reality, the understanding of “scientific abstractions, the concretisation programme, and studies of the real subject” (Wu, 2022, p. 94) is an important area of thought for policymaking in cultural events. The cultural sustainability on the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics should be concreted into social contexts.

Interestingly, in the aspect of Marxist cultural theory, sustainability pursues rational behavior economically and satisfaction of practice needs (Moberg, 2021, p. 22), which seems to conflict with the ecological lens. However, with the localisation of Marxists in China, the functionalist and ecosystem are both integrated into the concretisation of social reality. Considering sustainable strategies, some articles focus on the relationships between cultural theories and policymaking. For example, Adner (2017) presented an ecosystem strategy that examined the systematical relationship between the ecosystem and multiple factors in specific organisations, such as value networks, multilateral markets, and business models. From the perspective of cultural resources, Rindova, Dalpiaz, and Ravasi (2011) investigated a theoretical model to incorporate the new cultural resources for sustainable development by enriching the culture and redefining organisational identity. For the sustainability of ICH, the reconstruction of cultural memory means the incorporation of diverse cultural resources is an inevitable process to improve policymaking (Saleminck, 2021, p. 429). It is worth noting in the process that community involvement (CI) is an important strategic direction that not only requires corporate cultural responsibility but also is a tool to assess business-community relationships (Liu, Eng, and Ko, 2013).

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refers to the path of development that China has blazed and shaped in its historic practice since modern times (Wu, 2022, p. 88).”

The policies of CI as applied in the sustainable development of Chinese traditional opera generally are some dilemmas. Rees (2016) pointed out that performing groups continued their performance in urban communities, which breaks away from the original cultural ecologic environments in rural areas. It is a major challenge to formulate strategies for balancing the conflicts between rules of ritual in villages and public order in urban communities (Ma, 2015, pp. 77-94), for instance, how to combine cultural policy with the collaboration among pluralistic networks. Meanwhile, under the background of Marxist philosophy in China, sustainable strategies reflect the contestation between ideology, political interests, and social conflicts (Moberg, 2021, p. 23), but also cannot ignore the pursuit of harmony in diversity and coexist in harmony based on the core socialist values in China (Liu, 2000, p. 30). For harmony, the Chinese government tries to incorporate the universal values of regional culture into the heritage and tourism policies (Shepherd, 2006) to improve national unity.

#### **2.4.4 Pluralistic Stakeholder**

In the context of sustainability, the engagement of the wider stakeholder groups is a multi-disciplinary topic but has a robust foundation in management. Although some research has advocated multiple stakeholders in their specific business contexts are equal status (Gioia, 1999; Freudenreich, Lüdeke-Freund, and Schaltegger, 2020), the key stakeholder groups in organisational networks still significantly guide practices. De Bakker, Ponte, and Rasche (2019) pointed out that Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSI) constructed “the voluntary rule-systems” for sustainability. Indeed, multiple stakeholders are embedded in the studies on administrative issues naturally, so we must consider the inclusiveness and multiple concepts of stakeholder theory in specific practices (Skilton and Purdy, 2017). Prior research (Hörisch, Freeman, and Schaltegger, 2014) developed a conceptual framework of stakeholder theory applied in SM based on the discussion of links, similarities, and differences between them. Their work pointed out that SM was a developing theoretical framework that involved multiple organising processes in sustainability-oriented decisions and had a similar research gap to

stakeholder theory. When stakeholder theory is not the pure tool to interpret performance, the interpretive system with pluralism constructs the links and interaction among pluralistic stakeholders for value creation (Bakker, Ponte, and Rasche, 2019).

In the research on pluralistic stakeholders, the primary issue is identifying the stakeholders in the specific organisation. To consider the organisational strategies of survival and development (Bonnafous-Bouche and Rendtorff, 2016, p. 9), Clarke (1998) distinguished conceptual and community stakeholders according to stakeholders' expectations. Indeed, there are many similar dichotomies for identifying stakeholders, for instance, voluntary and involuntary (Clarkon, 1995), and internal and external stakeholders (Bonnafous-Bouche and Rendtorff, 2016, p. 13). Although these classifications have practical value, they are difficult to interpret complex relations. Overall, the categorical approach to identifying stakeholders embraced the five roles in a stakeholder group: customers, suppliers, employees, financiers, and communities, which is a traditional analytical model to consider pluralistic stakeholders' engagement (Parmar, et al., 2010, pp. 23-24). On the other hand, the environment and government also play important roles in stakeholder analysis in other frameworks. In further study, the approaches to identifying stakeholders present multiple trends (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). From the perspective of sustainability, the participants need the appropriate structures to sustain their confidence in collaboration (Soundararajan, Brown, and Wicks, 2019). Therefore, the stakeholder theory here is the tool of decision-making to sense the components of the organisation's internal and external stability of resources, which means the process of identifying stakeholders is complex and ambiguous (van der Linden and Freeman, 2017).

For SM, stakeholder theory pursues joint value creation to understand the engagement and interaction of pluralistic stakeholders. Freeman (2010) considered that value creation is a more significant mindset for sustaining business success compared to trade-offs among stakeholders. To some extent, organisational sustainability depends

on finding an appropriate approach to accommodate more interests of pluralistic stakeholders. Van der Linden and Freeman (2017) pointed out that an appropriate way to pursue profit should consider pluralism in value creation by making sense of value in the thick interpretive system. Indeed, efficient joint value creation and the converged tendencies of pluralistic stakeholders are the other popular mindset aspects which managers consider profit maximization (Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2016). Freudenreich, Lüdeke-Freund, and Schaltegger (2020) investigated the relationships between stakeholders in the process of joint value creation from the sustainability-oriented business models. That research highlighted the different types of value created through collective efforts (Teece, 2010). Therefore, scholars need to identify stakeholder groups, meanwhile, classify them, and manage them effectively in the process of value creation (Parmar, et al., 2010, p. 174).

To further understand the sustainable value in the common interest, some scholars developed the conceptual frameworks of SM for stakeholder engagement. Mitchell, et al. (2016) suggested that corporations formulated pluralistic objectives based on a framework that highlighted the expression through invisible hand choices and engagement from stakeholders to realise the maximisation of social welfare. This is a significant suggestion for my research when I consider the fit between artistry, social responsibility, and profits in FO. To deal with value conflicts, Schormair and Gilbert (2021) conceptualised the discursive justification process into multiple procedural steps through an integrative framework of stakeholder engagement. In the process of multi-stakeholder governance, it is the inevitable phenomenon that stakeholder value conflicts cause cooperative disruption, but discursive value-sharing leads to stakeholder value from dissensus to consensus, especially for the marginalised stakeholders (Bakker, Rasche, and Ponte, 2019; Soundararajan, Brown, and Wicks, 2019). In the SM of FOT, this industry is more likely to be a marginalised stakeholder in tourism, education, and the silver economy. Therefore, in my research, pluralism of value creation for stakeholders becomes a strategy to help multiple actors accommodate joint interests.



Some studies highlighted the interaction of pluralistic stakeholders as a discursive ability. Maitlis (2005) noted that leaders and stakeholders engaged in the sensemaking process to impact others' understanding and capture the main features of interactive patterns. Based on different forms of sensemaking, that research examined the strategic changes in three British symphony orchestras based on interaction among stakeholder groups from the position of leader, stakeholders, and others. Rouleau and Balogun (2011) contributed that in a specific sociocultural system, middle managers performed their strategic role through discursive activities, such as upward, downward, and horizontal conversation, and scene settings, to develop a deeper understanding of the discursive practice. From these studies, the interaction of pluralistic stakeholders focuses on discursive construction from leader to other stakeholders. Indeed, this interaction is engaged in the sensemaking process and diffuses stakeholders' influences on each other (Bonnafous-Boucher and Dahl Rendtorff, 2016, p. 49), so strategies continue to change for organisational sustainability.

#### **2.4.5 Conclusion**

This section tried to construct the relationship between sensemaking and sustainability, while also complementing that with the commercial understanding of SM. The derived cues therefrom would enable the construction of the theoretical frameworks for this current research in the integration of sensemaking and sustainability, though in the awareness of scanty literature on integrative theories.

#### **2.5 Summary**

This chapter began with a literature research strategy, then explored the relevant literature on the FOTs in applied ethnomusicology, presenting the definition and contents of sustainability, ICHM, traditional opera, and FO. Subsequently, literature was reviewed on sensemaking and the need to consider organisational changes in unstable contexts. Finally, I explored SM through sensemaking by integrating the

theories and methods from applied ethnomusicology and business administration, giving due consideration also to sustainable value creation (Chandler, 2017). The ICHM emphasises the interaction of humans and the environment, whilst the business administration focuses on sustainable value creation and practices among pluralistic stakeholders. On the other hand, the effective enactment of organisational sustainability is impacted by reasonable interpretation, whilst the interpretive mechanism is composed of interaction between cognition and actions (Weick, 1988; 2010). Since interaction is a part of the organisational adaptability process, appropriate supportive actions from troupes will impact practitioners' emotions at work. Also, the indispensable power of appropriate policy in making sense of sustainability issues in FOTs is underlined.

As showcased in the literature review in this chapter, SM in this research focuses on how the practitioners in this industry can continue to create value and act in ways that improve organisational sustainable development in the context of urban-rural reconstruction. This is a cross-disciplinary study that integrates perspectives from fields such as ethnomusicology, sociology, and business management, a relatively under-utilised theoretical framing in the research of FOTs and sensemaking. Research on SM of FOTs has strangely neglected integrating theoretical frameworks from ethnomusicology and business administration, although some scholars attempt to combine them preliminarily in the theoretical research of applied ethnomusicology (Stabl and Tröndle, 2019, p. 247; Titon, 2015, p. 180). The research gap I want to fill covers two aspects: the sensemaking of changes in FOTs in the past decade and the constructs composition quantitatively in the contexts. In the next chapter, the methodology approach for this research is explained.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the methodological approach is explained towards understanding the process followed to secure the credibility of this research. In doing that, first the aim and objectives of this research are reiterated. Subsequently, the research design is explained, specifying the methodological approach, philosophical grounding and implementation of the methodological approach.

#### **3.1.1 Aim and Objectives**

This research aimed to investigate organisational sensemaking in the SM of the FOTs under the background of urban-rural reconstruction in the past ten years. While the sustainability of FOTs has been understood from different viewpoints, a mainstream described it as the issues in the heritage discourse system in which the multiple meaning of sustainable action is evaluated through collaboration in a cultural ecosystem from pluralistic stakeholders (Schippers, 2015; Wondirad, Tolkach, and King, 2020). In essence, there are conflicts between the changes in cultural ecology, shared meanings, and actions to maintain the vibrancy in FOTs (Skilton and Purdy, 2017; Schippers, 2015). Therefore, this study purposed to understand how state-owned and private FOTs adapt to various contradictions of the external environment and achieve sustainable development. Within that aim, this research has three main research questions:

1. What are the changes in the FOT impacted by the urban-rural reconstruction in the past decade?
2. How do pluralistic stakeholders of FOTs adapt to these changes?
3. How do the key factors impact the sustainability of FOTs?

Research questions 1 and 2 were explored in the case studies phase, while research question 3 was explored in the quantitative phase.

### **3.1.2 Research Paradigm**

Kuhn (1970) argued that paradigms are a central element of understanding the world. Following science development, paradigm experienced shifts and competition, quickly escaping natural science into the field of humanities and social science (Kuhn, 2012, p. 40; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 79). As a worldview or a series of understandings about the world (Deshpande, 1983, pp. 101-102), paradigm embeds and guides the process of investigating reality (Bryman, 2012, p. 630). A paradigm has a set of beliefs/features that underpin its understanding: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology to guide the action (Gube, 1990, p. 17; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 195). Guba and Lincoln (1994) described four paradigms, namely “positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism”. Next, section 3.1.2.1 presents the justification of research philosophy.

#### **3.1.2.1 the Justifications of Research Philosophy**

The choice of research philosophy depends on the beliefs and assumptions about developing knowledge (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 124). Primarily, the knowledge development in this research aims at interpreting and evaluating the complex phenomenon of sustainable development in FOTs in urban-rural transformation. With the urban-rural integration development of China, the development of FOT in the commercial field brings the paradox between cultural ecology and profit maximization (Titon, 2009b). In other words, FOT has lost the original cultural ecosystem in modern China, and commonly their adaptive process cannot be guided by an effective interpretive system timely (Weick, 2010). The phenomenon prolongs the circle of coping with changes. Specifically, in a time of extraordinary changes in social structure and cultural dissemination, the sustainability issues of FOT not only relate to the loss of performing skills (Schippers, 2015, p. 134) but also considers “managing the surrounding cultural environment” (Titon, 2009b, p. 124). Based on the purpose for this research, I consider the choice of research

philosophy. The research questions and interpretive process are shaped by the reflexivity of philosophical assumptions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Next, the philosophical elements of ontology, epistemology, and axiology regarding this research are explained.

“Ontology is the form and nature of reality” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), which shapes the way of recognising the business world (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 127). For this thesis, the rules of business society assist the organisational changes to be more in line with social interest (Simpson, 2018, p. 58; Putnam, 1990). There is no absolute reality when elaborating on the interlinked contexts in which changes happen (Given, 2008, p.161). Therefore, the reality in this research emphasises the characteristics of pluralism and inclusiveness and is constructed by investigating fractional, contingent, and equivocal practices (Johnson and Stefurak, 2013; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017, p. 89; Given, 2008, p. 161). In modern business society, reality in the context of organisational life is relevant to dynamics and practices (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011).

The epistemological assumption focuses on the constituents of knowledge (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 136). Epistemologically, the nature of knowledge tends to consider common sense based on the engagement of multiple social changes (Helin, et al., 2014, p. 289). The boundaries between common sense and knowledge are blurry, which means knowledge can be understood and described objectively and can shape individuals or organisational experiences (Talissee and Aikin, 2008, pp. 27-30). In contextual understanding, the increasing interest in ethnography and narrative studies constructs the discourse system in connection with social construction, knowledge, and interpretation (Given, 2008, p. 161). Cross-disciplinary influences on this research present two main branches of ethnomusicology and business administration that have connected with the questions about epistemology, involving applied anthropology, public folklore, and management (Harrison, 2012). Merriam (1964) pointed out the

music sound could not be an isolated system breaking away from social and cultural contexts, therefore, the pursuit of knowledge might not only be for the music itself but also to solve practical issues in the process of sustainable existence (pp. 28-43). In the cultural interpretation of history and contemporary, ethnomusicological epistemology focuses on the intersubjectivity of fieldwork to sense the social process of folklore performances in the public sector (Rice, 2017, p. 63), then the critiques on the professionalisation and commercialisation of music expand the demands of business management (Titon and Fenn, 2003).

Axiology refers to the role of value and ethics in the process of research (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 128). Axiologically, sensing the cultural organisational changes is useful for understanding the practical value behind music sounds and folk beliefs (Merriam, 1964, p. 6). In the stance of pluralism, this research respects the value of regional differences and cultural diversity, meanwhile interpreting their meaning to the sustainability of FOTs. This study is conducted in a specific interpretive system and needs-based approaches (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) through the sensemaking process of the dynamic environment and provides a propagable analysis case for the sustainable development of regional troupes. In the field, the position among the researcher and participants is dynamic and changeable to respect the specific time and space.

As shown in Table 3.1, based on the research trends and gaps in the last chapter, as well as the major challenges within the practices of FOTs, the research questions were developed considering the nature of reality, the constituents of knowledge, and the value. Because this study focuses on the exploration of changes, it is necessary to clarify the understanding of temporality. I agree with the critical perspective on the conventional practice of dividing time into discrete past, present, and future moments in sensemaking processes (Introna, 2019). This division does not resonate with the organizational management of continuous sensemaking. Introna (2019) mentioned the

idea of time in his article that the past is intricately woven into the present, and the future already exists as a horizon filled with possibilities. This challenges the notion that the past has passed and the future is yet to arrive in the present moment. Therefore, based on the past practices of FOTs up to the present, we have the potential to predict possibilities for its SM in the future.

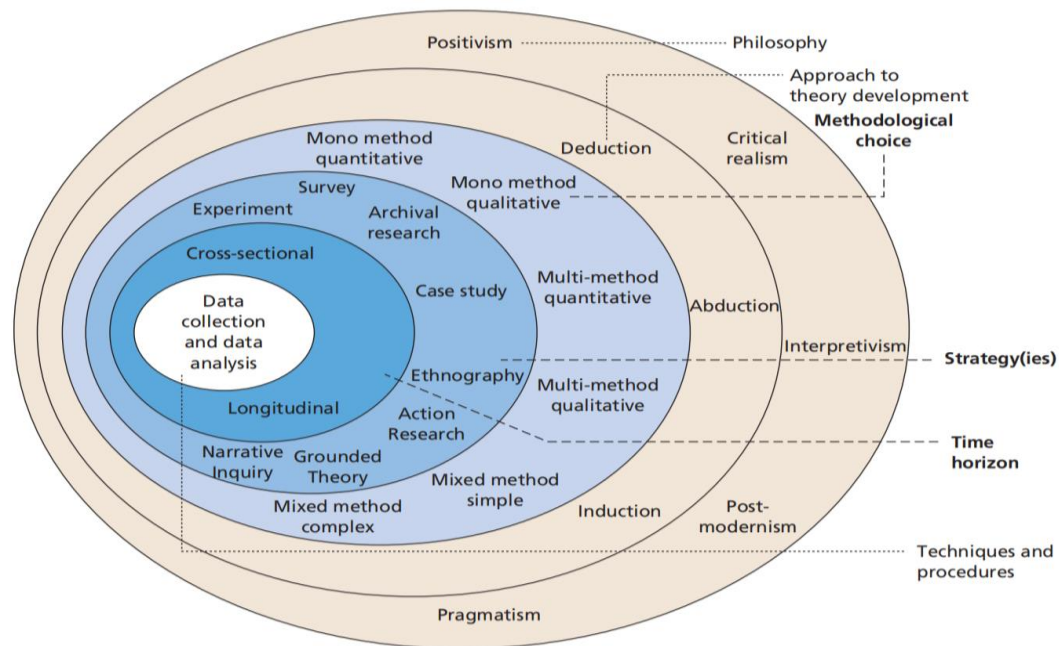
<b>Assumption types</b>	<b>Questions linking assumptions</b>	<b>Research questions</b>
Ontology (What is the nature of reality)	What are the changes inside and outside FOTs?	1. What are the changes in the FOT impacted by the urban-rural reconstruction in the past decade?
Epistemology (What are the constituents of knowledge?)	Including two main branches: Applied ethnomusicology and business administration.  Minor constituents: Sensemaking. Cultural sustainability.	2. How do pluralistic stakeholder alliances of FOTs adapt to these changes?  3. What are the key factors that impact the sustainable management of FOTs?
Axiology (What is the role of value and ethics?)	Understanding the practical issues through perception from pluralistic stakeholder groups in an ongoing changing cultural ecology.	

**Table 3.1: Linking philosophical Assumptions and Research Questions**

Contributing to the debate about beliefs, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) categorised five paradigms discussed widely: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism in four assumptions. Considering the fluid and crossing of paradigms boundaries in the process of solving practical issues, pragmatism focuses on the demands of practices in specific contexts to discover philosophically neutral and available roads (Simpson, 2018, p. 54), which draws from Dewey's stance on how we think for solutions to practical problems (1933). This current study draws from the pragmatism foundation because, in pragmatism, the world goes forward through continuous collective efforts linking social experiences together to adapt to daily emergency circumstances (Talissee and Aikin, 2008). In line with the earlier illustration of the assumptions, this research develops knowledge of organisational

practices in pluralistic values and specific contexts. As elaborated in Appendix 1, this research is suitably positioned in the pragmatism paradigm.

Based on the consideration of research levels in the research Onion (see Figure 3.1, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 164), another important issue about research design is discussing the logical application of three approaches to reasoning: inductive and deductive, abductive. For this research, the first is the phenomenological exploratory, which constructs a theoretical framework in data collection through an inductive approach to make sense of SM in FOT. To achieve theoretical generalisation within the setting for this study, the research strategy examined the application of the theoretical framework in the causal relationship between variables by deductive logic.



**Figure 3.1: Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 164)**

Note: The methodological foundations drawn from Figure 3.1 guided this study’s methodological choice.

### 3.1.2.2 Methodological Choice

Methodologically, pragmatists choose pluralistic approaches more freely for practical purposes. Researchers can utilise qualitative and quantitative approaches to solve research problems (Morgan, 2007; Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 48), especially for interdisciplinary research (Collins, 2015, p. 248) and this is the methodological



approach followed in this study. The important manifestation of pragmatism is solving practical issues. The nature of research questions determines the choice of research methods (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003, p. 14) and a pragmatism approach that combines qualitative and quantitative tools fits the focus of this study.

In the qualitative phase, this study sought to understand the construction contextually and historically of meanings in the stance of interpretivism (Cassell and Cunliffe, 2018, p. 190). It is important to interpret regular and radical changes in equivocality by sensemaking, and in this case, the researcher considers SM aiming to obtain a detailed understanding of the changeable phenomenon of marginalised industries combining complex implications and compatible perspectives (Cassell and Cunliffe, 2018, p. 107). The understanding of applied ethnomusicology methods focuses on dealing with specific problems in the musical field driven by worldviews (Harrison, 2012). Although it is difficult for researchers to decide the linking ways between the qualitative and the quantitative stage (Morse and Niehaus, 2009), the generalisability for SM emphasises the importance of transforming data from text to number (Gubrium, et al., 2012, p. 201). For this thesis, on the one hand, this pursuit of ongoing process is the core philosophical thinking for cultural undertakings (Rosness et al., 2016; Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke, 2004). On the other hand, social temporality continues to reconstruct trajectories for social progress (Garud et al., 2014). As a complementary relationship, stability and change improve organisational innovation in unstable contexts. Finally, this thesis expects the generalisation of research findings between similar contexts, although to some extent, the numerical investigation in the second stage expands the range of fits in contexts. Section 3.1.3 explains the research context.

### **3.1.3 Research Contexts and Case Selection**

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, FOTs have experienced urban-rural separation to integration, which leads to many changes inside and outside organisations. In the early period, cultural undertakings faced the ups and downs of policy change, for

instance, the appeal to “Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom”, the Great Leap, and the cultural revolution (1966-1976) (Kraus, 2012, pp. 1-23), which led to the cultural confidence of the Chinese people being lost in the ideas of “rural corruption” and “class struggle” (Kraus, 2012, p. 10). After the Third Plenary Session, the market gradually played a decisive role in allocating resources (the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2013). Considering the unprecedented role of the market in the allocation of cultural resources since 2013, as well as the research gap in the literature regarding FOT management over the past decade, this paper explores how the FOTs have adapted to change and sustained its development during the period from 2013 to 2023.

FOTs need to change following the demands of the market and cultural policies. In a country once dominated by agricultural civilisation, the sustainability of FOT is difficult to break away from the ecological viewpoint of regional opera. Du Cros and Lee (2007) pointed out that the systematical CHM approaches internationally combined management of inter-governmental organisations and non-government organisations which was deemed the best practice (p. 8). At present, the FOTs primarily consist of two main categories: state-owned and private troupes based on different funding models. The SOT is a troupe of balance allocation, whose income is mostly from government allocations, and the rest from commercial performance. While private troupe on the other hand maintains a diverse investment model, as shown in Chapter One. This study does not aim to conduct comprehensive on-site investigations of all companies in the Fuzhou region. Instead, on accessibility grounds, two FOTs with long operations were selected to explore their sustainability issues.

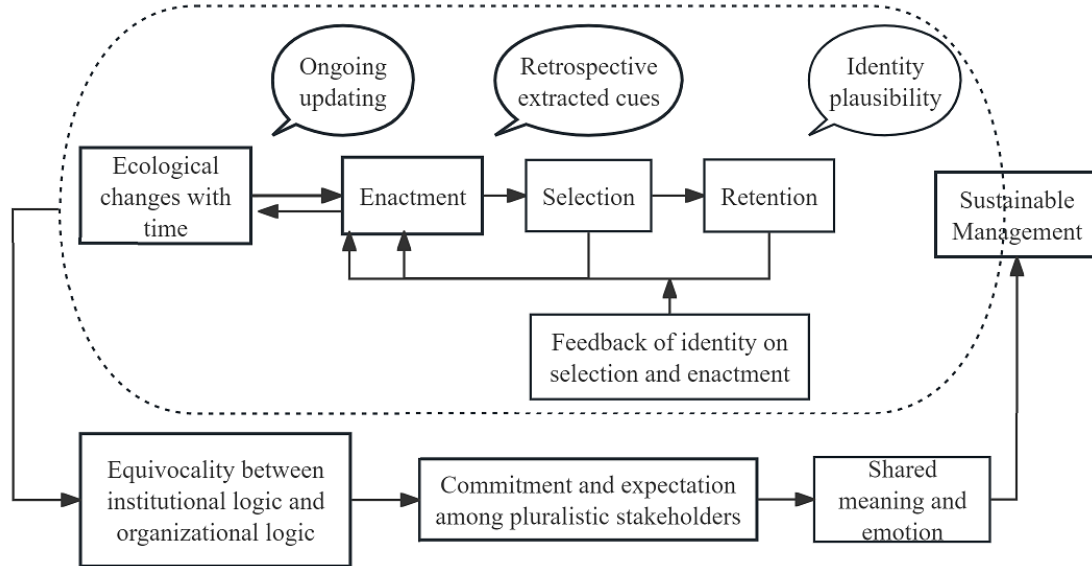
The two case studies were conducted in a state-operated and a private troupe to construct a comprehensive understanding of policy implementation and marketisation. This research selected the state-owned FOT (Fujian Min Troupe, FMT), and a private-operated FOT (Shun Troupe, ST), and both the names of the troupe are pseudonyms.

These two troupes have experienced ecologic changes for a long time and still survived, which has certain backgrounds for generalisability for the SM of FOT. Although there are many private troupes in Fuzhou areas, the ritual and religious markets of the FO are mainly distributed in Changle 长乐, Fuqing 福清, and Lianjiang 连江. Based on this market distribution and the perspective of convenient sampling, I chose the ST in the Lianjiang area which has relatively stable development and familiar gatekeepers. On the other hand, in selecting a case from state-owned troupes, based on the regional characteristics of theater management, the FMT located in the city area was selected based on availability to participate in the study. In the same cultural ecosystem, these two groups are very important stakeholders to each other in their daily organisational lives in talent flow, cultural communication, and cooperation. The two case studies provide a comprehensive representation, reflecting the changes and developments in the FO industry.

#### **3.1.4 Conceptual Framework**

According to Yin (2003), theory development is a critical part of research design prior data collection (p. 28). In this section, a feasible conceptual framework was defined for the research to guide the data collection, which is a common strategy before the case study (Eisenhardt, 1989). As Figure 3.2 shows, this conceptual framework mainly integrated enactment theory (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005), institutional theory (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022), and adaptive sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), which could be conceptualised as a three-tier logical structure. Firstly, the interactive process between ecological changes (Titon, 2009a; Schipper, 2015) with time and enactment includes meaningful selection and retention (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Secondly, based on the interactive outcomes stemming from the feedback at the first logical level, contradictions between institutional logic and organisational logic are compared (Weber and Glynn, 2006; Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). The study analyses the changing trends in the perspectives of multi-identity groups toward commitments and expectations (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). This

exploration leads to the identification of a third logical level, constructing the impact of shared meaning and emotions on the sustained management of organisations (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Next, the application of these three logical relationships is elaborated.



**Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework**

As mentioned in section 2.3.2, change, as a concept within organisational behavior, is inherently temporal, emphasising action, interactions, and strategic approaches. The first level of logic focuses on the interactive process of ecological changes with time and enactment, understanding how the retained content is regarded with trust and skepticism in the subsequent enactment process, and how it is utilised and becomes experiential amidst contradictions, is crucial for adapting to changes in the ecological context (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005; Schippers, 2015). The sustained cognition of the sensemaking process depends on the continuous updating of cues and the construction and alteration of reasonable frames. At the second level of logic, equivocality includes the mismatch between existing policy frameworks and the actual circumstances of the organisation (Weber and Glynn, 2006). Thus, the pluralistic stakeholders within the ecosystem constantly change their behaviors and perceptions, especially regarding the implementation of organisational and policy commitments, stakeholders' expectations for the organisation's future, and changeable emotions at

work. In the exploration of these contradictions, differences, and interactions, the third level of logic focuses on adaptive sensemaking, a relationship model is constructed between shared meaning, emotion, and sustainability. The conceptual framework guides the approach choice and research design.

### **3.1.5 Research Approach**

As scholars continue to discuss MM, this methodological approach is viewed as “the third research approach” (Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Johnson, and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and has its definition development, techniques characteristics, forms, and vocabulary (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a, p. x). To some extent, MM challenges the traditional philosophy (Caracelli and Graham, 1989), therefore scholars are more interested in definitions following the methodological development. In particular, Johnson et al. (2007) pointed out 19 definitions at different stages of mixed research and the three types of “pure mixed, qualitative dominant, and quantitative dominant.” Broadly speaking, mixed research is an approach that combines qualitative and quantitative stances to address research questions (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007). Furthermore, it is difficult for one type of data to present the comprehensive reality relatively, hence MM integrates the deep qualitative understanding of a few entities and quantitative examination between different variables among a big enough sample (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017, p. 46). Then, MM research has an outstanding advantage in the field as it enables the use of multiple methods and data sources to interpret complex issues (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Indeed, MM design is not the new approach that is used in sensemaking perspectives (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Grant, Dutton, and Rosso, 2008) but has been less used recently. For example, Gioia and Thomas (1996) examined the continuity of identity and image with strategic changes in the higher educational institution and used mixed methods to understand sensemaking process moving from a case study to a quantitative stage. This is the pattern followed in this current research research, where there is transition in the interpretation of political and strategic issues from the case study into a quantitative

study.

The data in participant observation (case) enables a comprehensive understanding, and the exploratory findings can be explained, compared, examined, and generalised to achieve the research aims and objectives (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007). In the commercial space, FOT tends to become a marginalised industry in a business society that needs to pursue sustainable ways to deal with commercialised changes. Given the overall focus of this research, the records and comparison of the management of private and state-owned FOTs cannot meet the requirements of axiology completely. Therefore, to understand the complexity of adaptive sensemaking for SM, this research analysed the two cases for the specific contexts and pluralistic stakeholders' ideas through multiple pieces of evidence sources (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Hence, the questionnaire validated the impact of core dynamics on the sustainability of the FO industry.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) categorised three core types of MM design: the convergent, the explanatory sequential, and the exploratory sequential design. The first focus in this study relates to the sensemaking process of sustainability issues which followed the qualitative induction logic as there are not enough sources on the business management of FOTs. In the context of urban-rural reconstruction, many FOTs are facing challenges. Therefore, the use of a quantitative tool was necessary to explore that aspect. Considering the priority of data collection in MM, exploratory sequential design, which commenced with a qualitative study to explore the experiences and phenomena, was used in this study (Molina-Azorin, 2018, p. 107).

### **3.1.5.1 The Case Study**

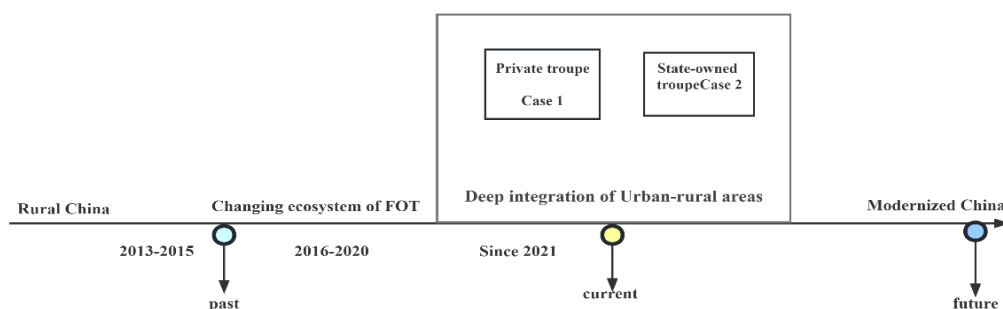
The definition of case study research is all-encompassing based on its application in multiple paradigms and disciplines, however, simply put, it can be seen as a research strategy considering the interaction between contextual factors and a specific entity

towards achieving a research purpose and theoretical construction (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, 2010, xxxii; Eisenhardt, 1989). Indeed, it is difficult for researchers to conduct the case study research strategy in a routinised way in data collection (Yin, 2003, p. 58). The case study needs to be understood in the specific context which is an organisation, phenomenon, or activity embedded in the world without clear boundaries (Gillham, 2000, p. 1; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 600). Among the shadow of contexts, the research strategy has three categories: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies (Yin, 2003, p. 6).

As stated by Yin (2014), case study strategy is appropriate when research questions “how” or “why” are addressed, and research is focused on contemporary issues that could not be controlled by scholars (p. 22). In the qualitative phase of this DBA thesis, the nature of research questions related to nature of changes faced by FOTs and how to adapt to the changes in maintaining vibrant FOT and value pursuit in the specific context (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). The research questions of “what” and “How”, as described by Yin (2014, p. 28) were addressed in this research. Consequently, the exploratory case study is appropriate to investigate the research questions (Cassell and Cunliffe, 2018, p. 353). The variations of the case study generally include single and multiple case studies (Yin, 2014, p. 33). Indeed, single-case research has specific applied circumstances, including the “critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal” features (Yin, 2014, p. 55). However, a case generally cannot be generalised or tested in other cases (Yin, 2014, pp. 55-59). Considering the differences in management between state-owned and private troupes, a single case analysis is insufficient to comprehensively illustrate the issues in the sustainable development of the FO industry. Therefore, the theory-building and testing from the two-case study are often more robust (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Herriott and Firestone, 1983).

Elmore, Abelmann, and Fuhrman (1997) chose one case representing a lower cost and the other representing a higher cost in the educational accountability system for a

complementary and comparative strategy. Chamberlain and Hodgetts (2018) conducted two case studies on reciprocity in the community and the strategy for developing these two cases is designing the latter case based on the first case study. For a comprehensive understanding of two management systems in FOTs, the two-case study is suitable towards addressing the research questions and objectives for this study. This research aimed for theoretical replication by using two case studies expecting complementary results (Yin, 2014, p. 59). Following the guideline for the basic types of designs for case studies (Yin, 2014, p. 55), I specified the relationship between contexts and cases for this research based on the diachronic and synchronic perspectives. The two cases construct the understanding of SM in FOTs together in the changeable social environment, which means the quantitative stage after the multiple-case studies examine variables from the integrative aspect of the Fujian opera industry. Although the fieldwork for exploring the two cases followed the stance of synchronicity, it is inevitable to retrospect the diachronic process of urban-rural reconstruction, encompassing the dynamic transformation of the urban-rural relations. And the urban-rural reconstruction is viewed as a natural historical process of realising socialist modernisation with Chinese characteristics (Xi, 2022). Figure 3.3 shows the relationship between the two case studies and the research contexts.



**Figure 3.3: Relationship Between Two Case Studies in their Research Contexts**

It is worth noting that the multiple-case study is not a variant of other methods and a way of statistical generalisation, but a research approach with its own characteristics



(Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a). A good case study will encompass diverse sources as evidence describing the relevant cultural ecosystem, organisational actions and individual experiences to understand the sensemaking process of practice and routines (Flick, 2017, p. 7). Yin (2014) pointed out “the six sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 90). To build a chain of evidence, the evidence-based methods collect data from the conversation, observation, and documentation for answering the research questions by analysing cases, so that the decision-making in the case study relies mainly on empirical evidence (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2010, p. 6). Therefore, the choice of empirical approaches is decided by the exploratory demands of interpreting questions through the two case studies (Stake, 1995, p. 8), considering the limited time and resources.

On the other hand, keeping in mind the pros and cons of each approach, there is need to balance the relationships between rich evidence, participants’ involvement, and limitations among multiple aspects (Brodsky, et al., 2016, p. 16). And the core problem is to control the levels of impracticability. Documentary sources and participant observation will help identify compelling evidence to understand the conflicts between the actual situations of FOTs and the institutional logic. On the other hand, semi-structured interview data are utilised to understand how pluralistic stakeholders in the cultural ecosystem navigate or are influenced by these contradictions. The three empirical approaches are independent and interactive with each other, which present a corroborating strategy to solve the same research questions from multiple sources (Yin, 2014, p. 101).

### **3.1.5.2 Questionnaire**

Based on the literature review and case study insights, a questionnaire was designed to undertake the quantitative part of this study towards obtaining enhanced understanding of sensemaking in the explored context. Oppenheim (2001) pointed out that “an

accurate correspondence between sample characteristic and population attributes” should exist to ensure every individual in the population has the same opportunity to be chosen in statistics (p. 39). For the representativeness of the sample, sample accuracy is more important than size (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 43). Therefore, questionnaire design is a process of repeated modification considering the optimal length, language, content, and scale (Oppenheim, 2001, pp. 47-48; Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2009, p. 12).

While it is acceptable practice to adopt/adapt validated measurement items from prior literature, there is need to make sure that the questionnaire is suitable for the specific population in a study (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 47). In this thesis, the two case studies provided rich conversation and exploration of prior knowledge for questionnaire development, which is very important towards enabling response rate and applicability. In the data interpretation in the qualitative phase, the high-dimensional data is reduced to optimally represent the data structure (Little, 2013, pp. 143-145). The types of data in the quantitative phase are more likely to be collected by indirect judgment rather than observation directly. Therefore, the Likert scale is a good choice to indirectly measure the participants’ perceptions by a distance data matrix (Little, 2013, p. 240).

Data should be appropriately described on the right scale to secure correct results (Field, 2009). All latent variables in the structural equation model (SEM) are continuous, which means the questionnaire that uses the Likert scale is more likely suitable to be analysed by SEM (Kline, 2016, p. 12). SEM is a causal inference method (Pearl, 2012) to find a model that fits the data (Kline, 2016, p. 10). The process around model fit, factor analysis, and testing hypothesis will provide a robust analytical process for securing the integrity of the research. (Humble, 2020; Kline, 2016).

### **3.1.6 Research Design**

As mentioned earlier, a mixed-methods evaluation design (Creswell and Plano Clark,

2017) of the sequential exploratory (QUAL → quan)<sup>12</sup> (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 300; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which began with qualitative exploration and induction logic (Nastasi, 2007), then conduct a quantitative survey, was used in this study. Figure 3.4 is the multistrand research design reflecting a sequential mixed model with two research strands for higher inference quality (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, pp. 135-138). The design contains two main phases: the first phase is the qualitative exploration of sensing management of FOTs with changeable social contexts in which textual data, including documentary sources, participant observation, and the semi-structured interview to discover influential factors to sustainability for the next quantitative study. In the quantitative phase, questionnaire-based data were collected from practitioners to test the relationships between these influential factors and sustainability.

As Figure 3.4 shows, the first qualitative strand is divided into four stages: conceptualisation, methodological phase (data collection), analysis, and inferences<sup>13</sup>. In the conceptualisation stage, I considered the research purposes, questions, background, research design, and literature review based on prior understanding and experiences. Then I conducted a qualitative study involving two case studies, which were designed based on methodological guideline (Yin, 2014, p. 61), using three empirical approaches to construct the evidence chain: documentary sources, semi-

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<sup>12</sup> Morse (1991) pointed out a system to sign the sequence and priority of mixed-methods. “The main or dominant method appears in capital letters (QUAN, QUAL) while the complementary method is in lower case letters (quan, qual). The notation ‘+’ is used to indicate a simultaneous design, and the arrow ‘→’ stands for sequential design” (Cassell and Cunliffe, 2018, p. 106).

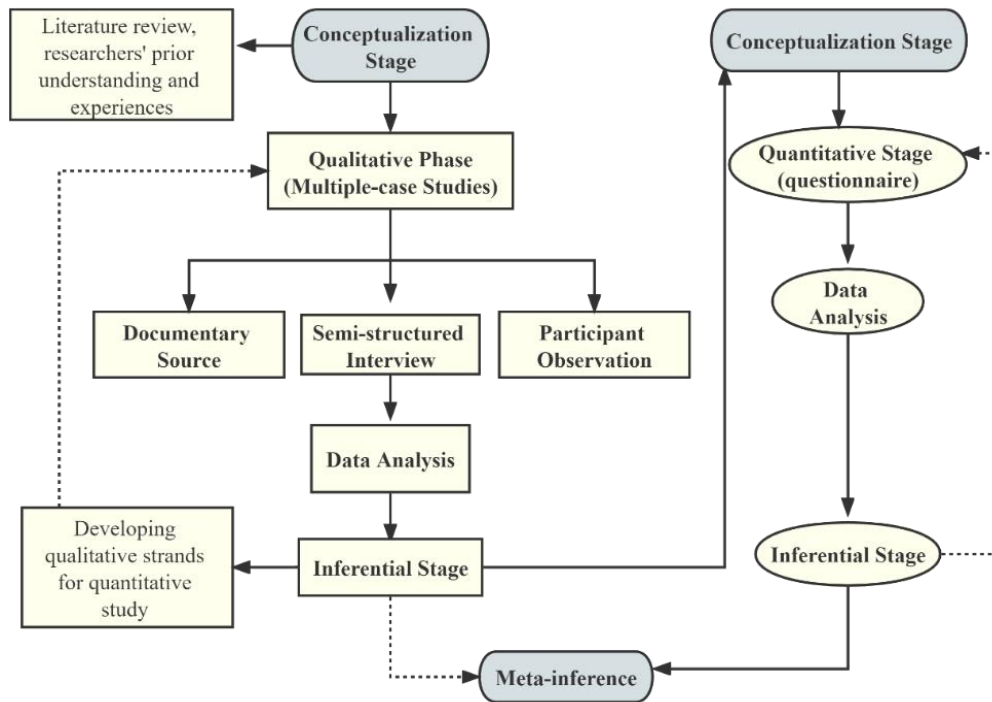
<sup>13</sup> Stage of a research strand—a step or component of a strand/phase of a study;

Conceptualization stage—the sphere of concepts (abstract operations), which includes the formulation of research purposes, questions, and so forth;

Experiential (methodological/analytical) stage—the experiential sphere (concrete observations and operations), which includes methodological operations, data generation, analysis, and so on.

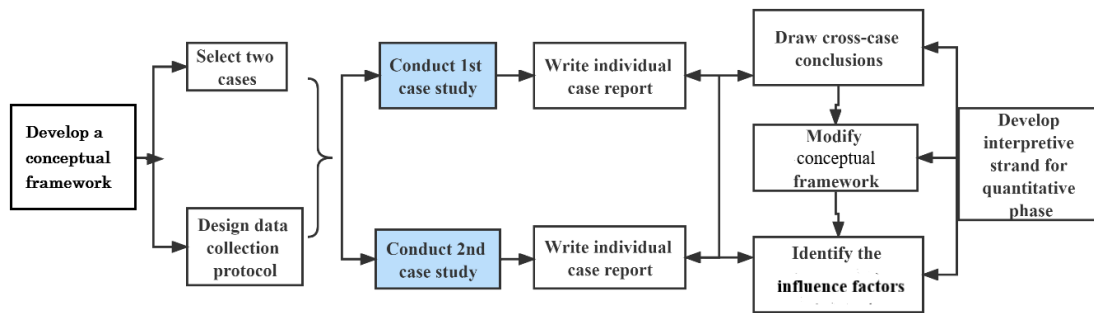
Inferential stage—the sphere of inferences (abstract explanations and understandings), which includes emerging theories, explanations, inferences, and so on (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

structured interviews, and participant observation. Based on the conceptual framework, two case studies were undertaken in a state-operated troupe and a private-operated troupe. The case study database derived from the three approaches was built to analyse the changes and adaptive processes of FOTs (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, 2010, p. 79), which is guided by the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.2) above.



**Figure 3.4: Sequential Exploratory Design (source: adapted based on Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, pp. 135-138)**

Figure 3.5 shows the design of the two-case studies procedure. Based on the conceptual framework constructed above, the two-case studies are divided into four phases: choice of two cases and design data collection, conducting two-case studies and writing the report separately, cross-case analysis and exploring influential factors and developing the interpretive strands for the quantitative phase.



**Figure 3.5: the two-case studies procedure (following Yin, 2014)**

In line with Figure 3.4, in the data analysis, the cues reflect “the present moments of experiences” (Dwyer, Hardy, and Maguire, 2021) through fieldwork with multiple approaches. Indeed, these approaches may change in light of the situations of participation, or interaction between the researcher and the environment (Brodsky, et al., 2016, p. 16). The data analysis process consists of two parts: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative part involves the presentation and analysis of data, including categorising key data, extracting core points from various sources, encoding, template analysis, and cross-case comparative studies. The data was coded into categories to induct logic and rules using NVivo 12 software. Then the analytical process was replicated in the other case study and then theoretical development in specific cases made. The case studies supported the interplay between individuals’ behavior and organisational sensemaking through observation, interviews, and documents. In the outcome stage, the interaction and differences between ST and FMT was discussed, and the key dynamics discovered from the sensemaking process further analysed to understand the relationships between these key factors and sustainability. The inferences stage before the quantitative study defined the conceptual model obtained through the interpretive mechanism from the two case studies. The result was then further analysed to develop hypotheses for further examining how the themes that emerged from case studies impact the sustainability of FOTs.

Thus, the integrative process of the qualitative and quantitative study, grounded on the change model of theory-driven evaluation (Chen, 1990), conceptualised the switch

strategy which applied qualitative study to describe and interpret viewpoints from stakeholders and then evaluate them through quantitative methods (Chen, 2006). In the quantitative phase, hypotheses were developed based on the insights from the case studies and existing literature. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was applied on the FOTs of Fuzhou areas, with the target of obtaining responses from over 150 participants in total by probability sampling (Dawson, 2009). The questionnaire was designed after fieldwork and pilot tested with 10 practitioners in FOTs to improve the efficiency and accuracy of questions (Glaser and Strauss, 2006). The quantitative tool was intended to enable better understanding of the inferences from the qualitative phase. Data analysis for the qualitative study is documented in chapter four, while the data analysis for the quantitative study is documented in chapter five.

## **3.2 Ethics and Rigor**

This section explains “the transitional stage between research design and data collection” (Bengry, 2018, p. 99), illustrating the accessibility, ethical issues, and rigors to secure appropriate standard for the subsequent research process and deal with eventual challenges in implementing the research design (Cunliffe and Alcadipani da Silveira, 2016).

### **3.2.1 Accessibility and Ethics**

In implementing research, a researcher must ensure that access is gained to a group, industries, community, and specific social contexts to interview participants, observe daily management, or access secondary documents (Foster, 2006, p. 64). In the first place, the “field” that the researcher seeks to explore should be identified (McCall, 2006). The field access in this research was not only a formal procedure in the data collection but also a social exchange process, including engaging with participants, establishing a relationship with gatekeepers, and maintaining organisational relations towards explaining to them the importance of their participation and convincing them of the confidentiality code that guides the study (Bengry, 2018, p. 99). Although

establishing interpersonal relationships and field relations is the traditional understanding for field access (Cassell, 1988), it is a necessary consideration in the online field how to establish a presence in the virtual and public space (Griffin and Bengry-Howell, 2017). In this research, “the field” with broader cultural contexts in the post-modern lens, is the complex sites including two FOTs, relevant industrial environment, regional sociocultural contexts in Fuzhou city, public website, and interpersonal network.

Thus, to gain fieldwork access in the FOTs, access purpose was clearly communicated and consent obtained from the participants (Mertens, 2018). The field space for this study involved public and private organisations. The private troupes or the state-owned troupes covered in this study are both independent cultural organisations with their own administrative ways and attributions of public service. Especially, FOT undertakes more social responsibility for inheriting the ICH, encompassing supporting scholars’ surveys. Based on the clear organisational boundaries and responsibility, I determined the most appropriate method of accessing the FOTs. Considering the vintage position of easily accessing others in their organisations (participants), given especially the organisational characteristics of traditional opera troupes, the top leaders in the FOTs as individuals in authority were the first points of contact for my research. I visited these leaders in their offices to familiarise them with the purpose of my research and answer questions that they deemed relevant. Specifically, I provided them the letter requesting their participation in the research (Appendix 2 and Appendix 6) and informed consent (Appendix 3) was sought. As a local Chinese individual, “informed consent” process was not a standard practice in social science research in China, thus it was seen as an odd phenomenon and caused some panic among participants (see also Gobo, 2018, p. 498). Following the principle of written priority (Qureshi, 2010), I insisted on my obligation to comply with research guidelines but respected the participants’ decision on signing or not. It is also a choice for those participants who

will not sign, which is after their agreement, I will record the process of obtaining information and gaining consent from the participant on tape.

The industrial environment and regional sociocultural ecosystem covered in this study had ambiguous boundaries. I evaluated fieldwork settings by situating them on a continuum of the public to private scope (Ruane, 2005, pp. 23-24). In line with the guideline of the three empirical approaches (Johnson, and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), the field mainly includes official websites, FOTs, and relevant places for performances. In the online field, most websites I visited are official and public, so I do not need to establish negotiating access and maintain a presence in these web spaces, but as an invisible 'lurking observer' (Griffin and Bengry-Howell, 2017). Also, the fieldworks included data obtained from the public blogs of some famous actors. Considering the complexity of data usage in cyberspace (Roberts, 2015), I informed the bloggers that their blogs as textual sources will be analysed in my research (Snee, 2013).

In specific contexts, based on the understanding of Confucian Ethics, the social order in the Fujian Opera tends to be traditional, which means those organisations often have a rigid hierarchy and familial relationships. Particular attention was given to the involvement of certain religious and ritual activities during the observations. As a researcher with faith in local deities, I cannot directly document the details of rituals and religious activities by taking photos of the deities, as doing that would be viewed as an act of disrespect. From the participants' perspective, they are very accepting of my presence and communication, as long as it does not interfere with their rituals and religious activities. This is likely due to my efforts to minimise my presence during their devout prayers and maintain a respectful attitude toward the deities. One major taboo is delaying the timing of the rituals and religious activities. This is not tolerated by the worshippers and may even lead to physical confrontations. Therefore, observations during the ritual process are often conducted in silence, while open and candid communication takes place outside of the rituals.



Thirdly, as part of the fieldwork ethics, I tried to be emotionally detached, instead I tried to stay rational and objective, when I investigated the cultural changes and participants' attitudes toward cultural policies (Davies and Spencer, 2010, p. 105). As a local collector rather than an arbiter (Seeger, 1986), I kept my eyes on my position in the process of fieldwork, interview, questionnaire, and participant observation to avoid interrupting the daily organising of these two Fujian operas and impacting the participants' understanding through my ideas. In the questionnaire phase, based on the aging of the audience, I had to exercise more patience in explaining what I was doing to obtain quality response face to face. In the cultural aspect, the Fujian Opera refers to the regional individuals' cultural memory, which reflects the poor era, past values, and cultural identities of different villages. It is important to respect cultural diversity and individual experiences.

### **3.2.2 Sampling Strategies**

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) argued that "MM sampling involves combining well-established qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUAN) techniques in creative ways to answer the research questions posed by the MM research design" (p. 151). For this study, the MM sampling strategy includes purposive and probability sampling to achieve the exploratory target of the four research questions in this thesis.

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016) emphasised that MM design improves the generalisability of research given the interaction of multiple approaches (p. 173). However, it is also more complex when we consider the combination of generalizations in qualitative and quantitative methods. In the qualitative phase, the logic of internal generalisation between the two case studies tends to present theoretical replication, rather than sampling (Yin, 2014, p. 57). Considering external generalization, the case study with the higher contextualised characteristic aims to obtain the transferability of findings for other instances in similar contexts (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). It is worth

noting that I have more expectations for the generalisation of the study on the sustainability of FOTs, therefore the probabilistic generalisation was utilised in the quantitative stage to generalise the research results from the sample to the population (Lewis et al., 2003).

As said earlier, this study takes the exploratory sequential design approach. In this current section, the purposive sampling approach is explained while probability sampling is covered in the quantitative developing phase (see section 5.2.1). For the sampling strategy, the primary issue is the selection of units of analysis (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 151). In the case study stage, the research sought to investigate the perception of SM in FOTs among pluralistic stakeholders and focus on different stakeholders' experiences of the same problems. Based on the characteristic of a heterogeneous sample for research purposes, stratified purposive sampling is appropriate for exploring multiple sensemaking from these stakeholder groups around FOTs (Ritchie et al., 2014). As a top-down approach, before data collection, the sampling process involved three stages. Firstly, I selected five stakeholder groups sharing different experiences for sensing sustainability issues in FOT. In selecting stakeholders, a consideration of the equilibrium between internal and external factors is crucial (Bonnafous-Bouche and Rendtorff, 2016, p. 13). Drawing from the framework of the traditional analytical model featuring five primary roles (Parmar et al., 2010, pp. 23-24), I categorised five stakeholder groups: manager, actor, director, civil servant in cultural departments, and cultural workers from communities. The selection of these five stakeholder groups was based on prior literature collection and participant observations. However, the choice of internal stakeholders did not strictly focus on the specified categories and title description. Rather, consideration was given to career resilience factor, keeping in mind the practical situations of FOT in Chinese regions, where a top leader in one FOT could be the actor and manager at the same time. The government and communities were also considered as important external stakeholders in the sustainable development of FOT.

In the second stage, purposive sampling strategy was employed to discover and modify sample frames based on the demands of research progress (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, snowball sampling was used to identify participants for the sequential exploration (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 156). Given the consideration of sampling within two case studies utilising multiple sources of evidence, a smaller sample size was preferred. The total comprised 20 participants, with two individuals from each stakeholder group in these two cases (Francis et al., 2010). Participants in snowball sampling were identified through introductions by gatekeepers to find the next stakeholder. Subsequently, each new stakeholder would recommend another stakeholder and this process continued iteratively until data saturation was achieved (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 303). In other words, the sampling process stopped when no new ideas, concepts, themes, theories, and information emerged from the fieldwork (Francis, et al., 2010). Furthermore, saturation evidence was obtained based on the interaction of multiple factors, including common sense, contextual interpretation, and the significance of the supplemental topic (Morse, Cheek, and Clark, 2018). So, the data from observation, interviews, and documents could support each other in the same phenomenon for the core research questions.

### **3.2.3 Rigor**

This section focuses mainly on the point of standard of research quality. Collins (2015) defined high-quality research as encompassing transparent processes, a design that reflects validity, integration following quality criteria, defensible outcomes, and applicable findings (p. 241). Commenting on the differences and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, for MM research, Bryman (2006b) identified three quality criteria: convergent criteria, separate criteria, and bespoke criteria<sup>14</sup> to solve problems of validity design (p. 122). This research concurs to that fit logic that

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<sup>14</sup> Convergent criteria—use the same criteria for both the quantitative and the qualitative components of the research; Separate criteria—use separate criteria for the quantitative and qualitative components; and Bespoke criteria—devise new criteria specifically for mixed-methods research (Bryman, 2006b, p. 122).

requires researchers adapting to the unique circumstances of their research, given the particularities inherent in each study (Collins, 2015, p. 249). According to research contexts, purposes, and questions, I reflect on the constituents of rigor to consider quality aspects in this thesis. Furthermore, in the qualitatively driven mixed research, the quality of inferences for the quantitative research strand builds on the basis of the relevant inferences from the qualitative strand (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 31). Next, the central issues of separate quality criteria: validity, reliability, pilot study, and cross-language strategies (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 202; Bryman, 2012, p. 263; Resch and Enzenhofer, 2018, p. 132) are discussed.

### **3.2.3.1 Validity**

There are diverse concepts and alternative terms for the validity of MM, such as legitimation (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006), inference quality (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009), and construct validity (Dellinger and Leech, 2007). Before identifying the validity issues in quantitative and qualitative methods separately, I discuss MM validity for this study primarily. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) flagged the validity threats of exploratory sequential design to include three aspects: “Not building the quantitative feature based on the qualitative results, not developing the rigorous quantitative feature, and selecting participants for the quantitative text that are the same individual as the qualitative sample” (p. 363), which referred to the rigor of the integrative process. The “Problem of integration” can be discussed in different stages of mixed-method research. The typology issues of validity or criteria is summarised in Table 3.2 in Appendix 15.

The integrative model specifies the high-quality criteria in research design and interpretation, including multiple features for inference quality. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) outlined nine types of legitimations in MM research (see Appendix 4) incorporating multiple internal and external validity features in the research design process, data collection, and data analysis towards ensuring research validity. Further

on the point of the validity criteria, the validation Framework (VF) combines the integrative model and legitimation to consider the validity issues by constructing a relatively unified framework (Dellinger and Leech, 2007). Consistency between different phases is still an important criterion in the search for validity. Despite the diverse consideration of the validity of MM research continues, VF improves the inference quality by integrating into every step of the sequential exploratory design. The aspects of validity for this research are presented separately in the sections that cover the respective quantitative and qualitative studies that make up the MM approach in this study.

MM research has high quality as long as the qualitative and quantitative research processes are credible and valid (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 187). The multiple concepts of validity exist largely in qualitative research, whilst quantitative validity tends to measure the significant construct indicators, which is also called construct validity (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). In the quantitative research procedure, researchers need to reduce the threat of internal validity by exploring numerical or logical relationships among variables and considering external validity in the generalisation of research findings. The core validity aspects are documented in section 3.3 while Table 3.3 (see Appendix 15) documents validity aspects for quantitative approach.

There are multiple validity types in qualitative studies, and as evident in Table 3.4 (see Appendix 15), Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise “credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability” in their comment on trustworthiness (validity), while Maxwell (1992) emphasise validity aspects of descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, generalizability, and evaluative. Table 3.5 (see Appendix 15) displays the quality criteria of documentary sources, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. For the case study, validity was enhanced through triangulation to formulate a rigorous chain of evidence (Yin, 2014). For this mixed research, the consistency of meta-inferences from the multi-methods qualitative study presents the typical

triangulation to ensure the validity of data collection. In this research, the other two methods were used to enhance semi-structured interviews-based insights. Given the qualitative-driven exploratory research focus, rigor was ensured in the qualitative study in the first stage towards ensuring the validity of the quantitative study. Therefore, documentary sources were examined, semi-structured interviews undertaken, and participant observation carried out in the case study to ensure “reality” interpretation by cross-checking (Bryman and Bell, 2015). For participant validation, participants from five stakeholder groups presented their comments on the same questions, towards capturing the pluralistic stances to confirm the content validity of each other and sense coming of saturation.

As Table 3.5 shows, for documentary sources, Scott (1990) indicated the high-quality archive needed to ensure the authenticity and credibility of content and paying attention to the clear meaning and textual representativeness. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016) pointed out the specific criteria to understand the quality issue of observation and semi-structured interviews (as shown in Table 3.5 above). In participant observation, the researcher situated a real social scene, so the valid results may impact the ecological environment, an objective interpretation, and rigorous analytical methods (Saunders Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, pp. 363-364). However, the quality of semi-structured interviews depends on more complex criteria, especially highlighting the cultural differences and forms of bias (Saunders Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 396)

### **3.2.3.2 Reliability**

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016) argued that “reliability refers to replication and consistency” (p. 202). Yin (2014) pointed out that reliability aims to reduce errors and biases in the research process so that the latter scholar can obtain similar findings following the same procedure completely (p. 54). From a transparency perspective, the replication of the case study depends on documents recorded in the database and following specific procedures. Reliability issues also encompass the consistency of the

research process and methodological reasonability (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014, p.272). In quantitative research, reliability tends to understand “the agreement between two efforts to measure the same trait through maximally similar methods” (Campbell and Fiske, 1959), and the specific verification steps taken in that regard are shown in the quantitative chapter.

### **3.2.3.3 Cross-language Strategies**

Resch and Enzenhofer (2018) emphasised that scholars should elaborate on solutions for the challenge of the cross-language qualitative study to obtain higher-quality strands in the process of qualitative data transition. Inadequate cross-language strategies will cause “presentation or transparency problems” (Resch and Enzenhofer, 2018, p. 132) as the content authenticity is under threat in the translation. The cross-language barriers between field materials and research reports are matters that should be solved. Fortunately, being bilingual and local researcher, the fieldwork was undertaken in my first language (Chinese), and then translated to English (Lauterbach, 2014). Data interpretation was also done in English. The research also needs to discuss the timing of translation to reduce understanding bias caused by material reconstruction in the translation process as far as possible, especially from the perspective of some expressions about folkways (Nurjannah, et al., 2014, pp. 2-3).

In this research, relevant qualitative procedures were followed to ensure data validity. Firstly, as recommended by Yin (2014) for a case study, the mutual validation of multiple data sources contributes to establishing interpretations with greater authenticity through a rigorous chain of evidence was embraced. The methodological step of this study involved mutual validation of data from documentary sources, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. Also, to address researcher subjectivity related threat, two core steps were taken. First, the translation of the interviewees ‘responses, memos written during participants’ observations, and insights obtained from documentary sources, from Chinese to English, were checked with two

academics who have professional experience of working in both languages and have also published in academic journals in both languages. Secondly, the conclusions from this study were checked with some participants to ensure that the conclusions did not deviate from the perceptions of the participants. Thus, the researcher discussed bilingual data texts and analytical conclusions with participants, industry experts, and scholars through a feedback session. Doing that is essential to ensuring that the researchers' interpretations and translation do not differ from the viewpoints of the respondents and reality of industrial development (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

To enable the reader's understanding of the interviews and field notes in the translation strategy in this study, one bilingual data sample is provided in Appendix 10, making the data presentation clearer. After specific cultural terminology related to FO, Chinese explanation is provided throughout the document to ensure that readers can accurately understand the content.

### **3.3. Data Collection Methods in the Case Study**

#### **3.3.1 Data Collection Strategies**

In describing data collection strategies, Johnson and Turner (2003) point to within-strategy and between-strategy procedures (p. 298). On their part, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) identified four data collection typologies (see Table 3.6 in Appendix 15). The methodological orientation in this study, which is MM has been introduced previously. In this section, the focus is on explaining the data collection strategy from the point of multiple approaches, techniques, and data sources. Bearing in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 208; Yin, 2014, pp. 91-92), this study combined documentary sources, semi-interviews, and participant observation.

The “phenomenon” considered in this case study relates to the sustainability issues of FOTs in the context of Chinese urban-rural reconstruction. The data collection aims to establish an evidence chain for enhanced understanding of the interaction between the



purpose of the case and its contexts (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). In that regard, the multiple sources of evidence in data collection enable the case studies focus of achieving higher quality understanding (Yin, 2014, p. 100). Each case in this multiple-case study adopts a convergent evidence strategy<sup>15</sup> towards gaining enhanced understanding of the organisational phenomenon explored. In that regard too, data collection commenced with documentary sources examination and participant observation, and then combining the experiences therefrom to guide the semi-structured interview process. The data collection explored the external changes and adaptive processes in the SM of FOTs. Data collection included participant observation of FO performances and rehearsals, collection of documentary evidence, and interviews with the managers, actors, writers, and cultural workers in communities and government. The database in this research consists of three components: documents, field notes, and transcripts.

### **3.3.2 Approaches of Data Collection**

Documentary data collection sources mainly focus on textual documents in the types of words (Finnegan, 2006, p. 139) or as described by (Lee, 2012, p. 391) are the knowledge repository encompassing texts, and visual and audio contents. In this thesis, documentary data sources including photographs, images, fieldnotes, blogs, and Official websites (Rapley and Rees, 2018, pp. 378) were considered. Thus, official, organisational, and personal websites were considered. The search strategy commenced with familiarising myself with relevant documents and refining the appropriate topical focus (Rapley and Rees, 2018; p. 380). Though I aimed not to be too sensitive and broadly collecting results, searching the keywords on the internet, I discovered that the keyword “Fujian Opera” could not grasp enough sources for the sustainability issues of FOT. Therefore, I expanded the search range to the relevant documents about

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<sup>15</sup> Convergent evidence strategy: the phenomenon of interest may pertain to a behavioral or social event, with the converged finding implicitly assuming a single reality. Use of evidence from multiple sources would then increase confidence that your case study had rendered the event accurately (Yin, 2014).

“traditional opera management.” Appendix 7 lists the main websites of documentary sources. The second type is the materials from the field, which encompass photos of fieldwork, programme, internal documents, and propaganda poster. To secure quality of documentary sources, accuracy of information was ensured by cross-checking different types of information (Yin, 2014, p. 106).

Although the participant-observation technique is most widely used in anthropological research for understanding cultural groups, this approach provides vital opportunities for case study to sense reality inside (Yin, 2014, p. 98). For this study, documentary source data was a significant tool for verification of the interview content. As an outsider, I developed field notes to record the data while “being there” and observing (Wästerfors, 2018). When I was immersed in the field and close to the data, my reflections and feelings about events or people were worth recording for formulating the description of fieldwork (Crewe and Maruna. 2006). To fully understand the explored phenomenon, I engaged iteratively across different field notes to capture fully the core insights. Then, the observations and research questions presented the dialectic relationship to influence each other, and interpretation as a part of the observation reshaped the themes continuously (Stake, 2010, p. 91).

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016) categorised two aspects of participant observation: pure observation to full participation (p. 356). The observation process is open, which means the participants in the situations know what I am doing. In most scenes, I am a spectator. I am also a participant when interacting with informants and participating in some activities to observe the details, sequences, and atmosphere in research settings (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 360; Wästerfors, 2018). Based on the emergent and dispersed feature in data (Yin, 2014, p. 98), I conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously and try to update my understanding from incompact records to systematic contents (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 361). Further, an important issue is observing what (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 215). Firstly, the

description of detail, in participant observation was a way to capture the organisational life from the observer, including contexts, perceptions, feelings, and specific elements (Wästerfors, 2018). Secondly, I recorded the cultural environment and organisational operations during fieldwork. The key strength of this data source compared to the other two approaches was obtaining more authentic and informal information (Yin, 2014, p. 98), especially the information which could not be captured in audio-recorded content (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 356). Although some observation contents were also evident in interviews and documentary source contents, the observation and documentary sources also stimulated my reflection in the interviews to probe questions deeper when conflict aspects were noted (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). Further explanation was sought to obtain a more objective perception.

The semi-structured interview was the common qualitative tool. With the development of MM design, the combination of text and number often poses a challenge in the data collection, therefore, a semi-structured interview in qualitatively driven mixed-method design (QUAL→quan) aims to discover the point of interface for meeting quantitative phase by description, understanding the world and interpreting meanings (Morse, 2012; Brinkmann, 2013, p. 21). Considering the compatibility between qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative data, in this MM research, semi-structured interviews are the more appropriate approach to realise data integration (Bryman, 2006a; Morse, 2012). It is necessary to obtain knowledge, understand the world, and construct numerous relationships with others through conversation (Brinkmann, 2012). The semi-structured interview aims to obtain information that is hard to observe in the field or read from those documents (Stake, 2010, p. 95). Through conversation, the interviews apply relatively open questions to collect quotable materials from pluralistic stakeholder groups. (Roulston and Choi, 2018). To guide my interviews, I designed a question list (see Appendix 5). I interviewed 20 stakeholders inside and outside FOTs, including managers, actors, directors, cultural workers in communities, and government staff. The interviews were audio recorded and memos were also written

during the interviews. After coding and interpretation of data, I organised a meeting with participants in each troupe to obtain their feedback (Roulston and Choi, 2018).

### **3.4 Conclusion to the Chapter**

This chapter commenced with a reminder of the aim that drives this research and the objectives embedded in that aim. Subsequently, the aspects of research paradigm, case study choice, conceptual framework, research design, and approaches were considered. Then, the aspects of ethics and rigor in the implementation of the research were addressed. Data collection strategy was explained, including explaining how the three elements qualitative approach was implemented. Next, the analytical process is explained in chapter 4.

## **Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis in the Case Study**

The purpose of this current chapter (4) is to present the analytical steps followed in processing data from the three sources of evidence. According to the general characteristics of analytic methods, the data collection includes assigning codes, sorting through coded materials, comparing commonalities and differences, elaborating propositions, and constructing theories (Miles Huberman, and Saldana, 2014, p. 29). Given the mixed method approach for this study, where the qualitative tool was used first to explore the phenomenon, leading to the use of a quantitative tool, the analytical approach for the qualitative tool is explained in this chapter, while the analytical process for the quantitative tool is explained in chapter 5.

### **4.1 Strategies of Data Presentation and Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis in this involved three phases. The first step is the presentation and analysis of data classified by different evidence sources. Subsequently, the data obtained from participant observation were subjected to thematic analysis, while data from the other two sources were subjected to template analysis. This was done to develop a coding template and continuously reorganise initial codes during the data collection process, aligning them with the research questions and the conceptual framework (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, 2016, p. 588). Questions from semi-structured interviews were formulated based on the conflicts between the multiple frames of policy and organisational realities, exploring the updated cues from pluralistic stakeholders' adaptive cognition and behaviors. In the second stage, I compared the interactions, differences, and adaptive processes between ST and FMT to further discover issues in the SM of the FO industry. The third phase developed an emerging model to interpret how the key factors discovered from sensemaking impact the sustainability of FOTs based on the findings from two case studies.

### **4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis of Case 1 and Case 2**

This section primarily displayed the data from three evidence sources in Case studies. The content from documents constructed the policy frames for continuing to explore questions next. Based on the policy frames, further data collection through participant observation was carried out to understand the actual situation of ST within its cultural context both internally and externally. This sourced data was described as organisational frames. The semi-structured interview tool was utilised to further understand the equivocality between these two frames. For the specific coding book in Nvivo 12, see Appendix 11 which also includes the detailed coding process using the transcript from Appendix 10 as an example.

#### **4.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis of Case 1 in ST**

Before the data presentation of Case 1, I provide a brief introduction to ST. ST is a private FOT located in Lianjiang County, Fuzhou. It was established in 1988 and has gained a reputable status in the Fuzhou region as a folk professional troupe. Although the troupe was established long ago, it was only in 2015 when the current boss took over from his father that the formal business registration was completed. The startup capital of ST was primarily sourced from the boss' sole proprietorship<sup>16</sup>. As mentioned in section 1.3.2 regarding the classification of theatrical performance quality, within both state-owned and private troupes, ST is considered a second-tier troupe in the industry. The remuneration for a single performance typically ranges from 15,000 to 20,000 RMB<sup>17</sup>. Among private troupes, ST is recognised for its stable ensemble of actors and high-quality performances. The most outstanding actor in ST specialises in the Xiaosheng 小生, which is why the majority of the operas revolve around family and ethical dramas with a focus on reuniting family members<sup>18</sup>. The “Gan Guobao and Wang Lianlian” 甘国宝和王莲莲 are the most cherished and proudly preserved

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<sup>16</sup> Sources: Fieldnote 01, location: Lianjiang county, time:18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Sources: Fieldnote 05, interviewee: the president of the elder association in Baisha village, time:17<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Sources: Fieldnote 01: the trouper of ST, location: Lianjiang county, time:18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

repertoire for them.

#### 4.2.1.1 Data Presentation and Analysis for Documentary Sources

The collection of documentary sources from ST primarily includes policy documents that the managers in ST deem relevant from 2013 to 2023. That will contribute to the understanding of institutional logic outside organisation. Table 4.2.1 displayed 11 policy documents obtained from the relevant official website or ST. National governance in China adopts a top-down approach to achieve effective management. Based on each five-year plan for the cultural industry development of the PRC, regional governments or cultural departments will formulate their five-year plan for the development of the cultural and creative industry. These plans serve as guides for the sustainable development of cultural enterprises, including FOTs. Following the staged research approach in Chinese cultural reform (Fu and He, 2019), making sense of the adaptive process was based on the event timeline of five-year plans, facilitating cognition of the organisational change. Policy guidance has established an external institutional logic for the management of FOTs. Next, I will present the institutional logic from the policies of urban-rural plans, cultural industrial development, and sustainable development of private troupes.

Years	Name of document	Document Number
2011	Multiple Cultural Industries during the 12th Five-Year Plan period of the PRC (2011-2015)	D-01
2011	The 12th Five-Year Plan for Cultural and Creative Industry Development of Fuzhou City	D-02
2014	Scientific management and effective guidance for private troupes	D-03
2014	Transformation and upgrading of the performing market in China	D-04
2016	The development and plan of the cultural industry during the 13th five-year plan of the PRC (2016-2020)	D-05
2016	The 13 <sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan for Cultural and Creative Industry Development of Fuzhou City	D-06
2018	Encouraging the cultural performance in the “People Stage”	D-07
2021	The development and plan of the cultural industry during the 14th five-year plan of the PRC (2021-2025)	D-08
2021	The 14 <sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan for Cultural and Creative Industry Development of Fuzhou City	D-09
2021	Creating a better environment for supporting the reform of private troupes	D-10
2021	Suggestions for the development of cultural tourism exhibitions	D-11

**Table 4.2 1: Document list from ST**

Based on the three five-year plans in Table 4.2.1, I would like to emphasise that my primary focus is on understanding the evolving institutional framework for the sustainable development of urban-rural culture in Fuzhou from three stages: 2013-2015, 2016-2020, and 2021-2023. I will categorise and present data based on these three periods and the different departments publishing these policies.

#### ***4.2.1.1.1 Policies Frames from 2013 to 2015***

Firstly, Table 4.2.2 (see Appendix 16) presents the key points of policies at different levels of national, regional, and troupes from 2013 to 2015. According to the “triangular coordination model” (Fu and Huang, 2016) mentioned in section 4.2.3.1, I categorised the data into three key themes: government, market, and cultural organisations, to display the constituents of institutional frameworks from pluralistic stakeholder groups. Table 4.2.2 shows my coding methods in Nvivo 12. In general, during the period from 2013 to 2015, the core issue of urban-rural reconstruction embraced the policy of urban-rural integration. Localities were actively encouraged to cultivate cultural brands imbued with distinctive urban-rural characteristics, thereby fostering a more equitable and judicious allocation of urban-rural cultural resources (D-01). In light of this contextual backdrop, Fuzhou City has adopted a targeted strategy. It expanded the development of public cultural infrastructure in urban and rural areas considering their cultural characteristics to foster the amalgamation and equitable allocation of cultural resources between urban and rural domains (D-02).

The data primarily illustrates three key policy changes. Firstly, there was a transformation in the functions of government from a dominant position to public services, including policy guidance, supervision, and public services (D-01; D-03; D-04). The local government of Fuzhou had actively promoted the sphere of “Min Capital Culture” 闽都文化, encouraging the fusion and development of diverse cultural industries. Furthermore, they worked to enhance various mechanisms, such as the



intangible cultural heritage system and market regulatory measures (D-02).

Secondly, the market gradually plays a more positive role in resource allocation. Influenced by the policies of dismantling regional barriers and market segmentation (D-01), local cultural markets have begun to facilitate the integration of cultural resources between urban and rural areas. However, this has also given rise to certain market irregularities (D-02). The contradiction lies in the fact that during this period, the cultural market continued to expand in scale, yet performance markets such as FO were shrinking (D-03; D-04). The final change concerns cultural organisations. In response to national initiatives for the cultural industry (D-01), the regional government of Fuzhou introduced a modernised theater management model (D-02). Nonetheless, for private FOTs, the primary challenges during this period included establishing a talent cultivation system, resolving financing difficulties, and creating high-quality operas, which remained of paramount importance (D-03; D-04).

*Cue 1- Updating and expanding in the cultural market: Comparing data at the three levels, a series of policies were introduced at both the national and local levels to expand the cultural market. However, there were relatively few measures that could be implemented to support private FOTs.*

#### **4.2.1.1.2 Policies Frames from 2016 to 2020**

Table 4.2.3 (see Appendix 16) shows the key points of the policies from 2016 to 2020. During this stage, the understanding of urban-rural reconstruction from the previous stage was continued. In addition to highlighting the cultural characteristics of urban and rural areas separately, it further emphasised cultural strategies that promote complementary advantages (D-05). With the merger of the cultural and tourism departments, the urban-rural complementary strategy in Fuzhou primarily focused on building higher-quality public infrastructure and cultural venues to promote the deep integration of art performance and rural tourism (D-06).

Regarding the functionaries of government, there was a continuous effort to refine their

regulatory and service functions, with a particular focus on addressing the high-quality demands of the cultural market. There was a strong emphasis on enhancing the flexibility of supply-side structures in response to changing demands (D-05). Based on the background, the high-quality development in Fuzhou mainly presented more excellent operas, beautiful halls, and more extensive public performances (D-06). The hopeful changes in the market present optimising the industrial structure and strengthening the integration of performing arts and tourism (D-05). It aims to find harmonious solutions to the contradictions between traditional and contemporary, rural and urban resources and cultures (D-06). For private FOTs, the best course of action is to engage more actively in philanthropic endeavors while excelling in market cultivation and cultural outreach (D-07). With regard to the private troupes, they can only secure additional funding through government-sponsored philanthropic performances, as the avenues and policies for involvement in cultural tourism projects are not clear. Therefore, based on the main demands of ST, the cue developed from this section is as follows:

***Cue 2- Increasing the supply of high-quality FO productions:** to address the market situation characterised by a structural imbalance in the supply of high-quality operas, the integration of performing arts and tourism was a solution to this dilemma. What ST could do was seek more funding support for charitable performances.*

#### **4.2.1.1.3 Policies Frames since 2021**

As Table 4.2.4 (see Appendix 16) shows, since 2021, the core issues of urban-rural reconstruction have changed towards developing new urbanisation (CDRF, 2013) by rural revitalisation (D-08). At this stage, the difference in urban and rural cultural development lies in the prioritisation of promoting the integration of tourism and performing arts in urban areas (D-11), while rural areas are more inclined to develop eco-tourism projects (D-08). This implies that in rural areas, traditional opera performances have to some extent preserved their original ritualistic ecology, while performances in cultural venues of urban areas present a dynamic, immersive viewing experience. And the phenomenon is called “living inheritance”. In general, the changes

in urban and rural culture during this period are characterised by an attempt to move away from pure stage performing, allowing music to return to its cultural ecology. As shown in Table 4.2.4, during this period, the government expanded its functions to guide the protection of cultural ecology and the promotion of digitalisation in performing arts (D-08). The cultural department in Fuzhou, in particular, had adopted the active inheritance of ICH as a significant strategy, with the cultivation of large-scale scenic performance projects as a key achievement (D-09). Additionally, there was an emphasis on the possibility of private troupe engagement (D-10).

***Cue 3- Few measures implemented to support private FOTs:** Despite the vibrant development of cultural and tourism projects during this period, private troupes did not have a way to join.*

#### **4.2.1.1.4 Findings**

In summary, market expansion has shifted towards the international market (D-08), with the local government of Fuzhou using its regional culture as a city brand (D-09). The primary strategy for market expansion is to offer a high-quality urban cultural life. Therefore, the competitiveness of urban cultural and tourism projects as well as SOTs has become crucial in the market competition (D-11). At the level of cultural organisations, it appears that the policies have provided support for private troupes to participate in cultural tourism projects (D-08; D-10; D-11). However, in practice, they have not fully engaged in these projects (D-09). It's worth noting that this period is an important stage in the development of urban-rural integration. This means that as urban populations increase and urban areas expand, with the successful effects of rural revitalisation in terms of ecological preservation, especially in economically developed regions, the boundaries between urban and rural areas have become less distinct. It has presented a state of interdependence, where urban and rural cultures are interconnected. Based on the policies above, I conclude the key changes in urban-rural strategies, and the relationship between pluralistic stakeholder groups in Table 4.2.5 to make the data presentation clearer and prepare for the cross-analysis between the following data.

As Table 4.2.5 shows, based on the presentation and classification of documentary sources, I have observed continuous changes in the urban and rural cultural environments, markets, and the operations of private troupes within the policy framework, spanning three stages. It is worth noticing that, since 2013, there has been a shift in government functions from dominance to a focus on service. This trend has been progressively integrated into practical implementation and has not had a fundamental change. In this trend, the dynamism of the market becomes a key factor that the government and FOTs need to consider in the process of connecting through policies. The specific situations of FOTs, such as establishing a modern management model, creating high-quality productions, and the actual situations of policy support for private FOTs in the context of new urbanisation needed to be explored further. Therefore, in the next section, I will present data from participant observation of the rural cultural environment, markets, and daily operations of ST, to respond to the data classification in this part.

Period	Urban-rural strategies in Fuzhou	Situations of the cultural market in Fuzhou	Measures in FOTs
2013-2015	Developing a more equal urban-rural culture	Break regional barriers	Establishing a modern management system adaptable to the market.
2016-2020	Urban-rural complementary	Structural imbalance in supply-side	Enriching their cultural products and promoting performance quality.
2021-2023	New urbanisation focusing on cultural ecology	Expand the market through the increasing cultural influence	The lack of policy support for private FOTs

**Table 4.2.5: Key changes inside and outside troupes in three periods**

#### **4.2.1.2 Data Presentation and Analysis for Participant Observation**

This section explored the updated cues of religious and ritual environments and the management of ST by thematic analysis. Data primarily consisted of 5 field notes (see Table 4.2.6) and 39 photographs that I took on the spot (see Appendix 8), that were collected from my participant observation. Also, establishing connections between the data points in the three periods mentioned in the previous section to uncover how these cues reflect changes inside and outside ST was focused too. Due to the extensive length of the five field notes, it was difficult to display the entire text. Appendix 9 presents a

sample of field notes 3 after minor details were omitted.

Field notes	Topics	Locations	Key points	Date
F-01	Fieldwork in ST: tracking its daily works	Baisha town, Fuzhou city	The content describes changes in daily work, rehearsals, life, and internal facilities within the ST.	Dec 2021 to Dec 2022
F-02	The experience of appreciating FO in the village hall	Villages in Fuzhou areas	The content describes the experience of watching an FO performance, audience feedback, and everything observed and heard to reflect the changes in the audience's perspectives.	15 Dec, To 31 Dec 2022
F-03	Description of cultural ecology based on the ritual operas	Villages in Fuzhou areas	The content describes folk beliefs, cultural spaces, and urban-rural development strategies.	August 2022
F-04	A ritual opera for Monkey King's birthday	The activity center of Baisha village	The content describes the folk activities during the ceremony, the ritual performance to pay tribute to the gods, and the folk customs and order of the countryside.	22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2022
F-05	The ritual alliance as a marketing network	The Baisha village	The content describes the ritual alliance of Baisha Village and how the alliance consists of a marketing network for ST.	17 Dec, 2022

**Table 4.2 6: Observation Schedule in Case 1**

The list of photos in Appendix 8	Photo Number
Performance Contract of FOTs	1-2
Record of performances from the Elder Association	3-6
Activity Center of the Elder in Baisha Village	7-9
The advertising board of ST	10-11
Schedule of FOTs Performance	12
Stage photo of ST	13-16
Backstage and props	17-24
Rehearsal of Band	25-27
Actors' rehearsal	28-30
Cultural Hall in Baisha Village	31-34
Ritual operas	35-38
Official Account of Opera Information	39

**Table 4.2 7: List of photos in Case 1**

As indicated in Table 4.2.6, I documented my participant observations from fieldwork in a series of field notes. Based on the three cues identified in the previous section, field notes 03 and 04 support the investigation of the rural cultural environment, field notes 02 and 05 support the examination of the market environment, and field note 01 describes observations of the daily operations in ST. Undoubtedly, participant observation is primarily rooted in what is currently observed and experienced. Therefore, the purpose of presenting data here is to search for updated cues that look back at the past from these current records, especially focusing on the events that happened in the three periods from 2013 to 2023. I categorically present data from the

three aspects. Furthermore, Table 4.2.7 lists the images relevant to this case study and annotates the themes of the scenes. These photos in Appendix 8 are used as evidence and integrated into the data presentation in this section.

Firstly, I present the key points from fieldnotes 03 and 04 to further describe the rural cultural environment of ST. Fieldnote 03 documented my visits to villages in the Fuzhou area in August 2022, and Fieldnote 04 described the ritual operas for celebrating Monkey King's birthday on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022. According to the key points of the description, by Nvivo 12, I categorised the data into three themes: urban-rural development strategies, folk beliefs, and cultural spaces. I will present specific information on three villages within these three thematic areas to further understand the folk beliefs of villages over the past decade. These villages are located in different areas: Lianjiang County, Fuqing City, and Changle City (the latter two are county-level cities under the jurisdiction of Fuzhou City). These three regions are the most prominent areas for FO and also the regions where ST performs most frequently. While FO performances are common in many villages across these three regions, one village was selected for micro-exploration due to some folk activities taking place there at that time, and the information from other villages will be supplementary evidence.

#### ***4.2.1.2.1 Developing strategy in the urbanization process***

Baisha Village situated in Lianjiang County, Fuzhou City, is one of the main fishing villages in the township, and a renowned overseas Chinese community. According to the record of F-03, local villagers introduced the experience of land reform. The record can be viewed as evidence of rural developing strategies in the process of urban-rural integration.

*Due to its proximity to the county center, and in the process of land reform, the village party secretary showed a good deal of acumen. He was able to advocate for the welfare of the entire village and proposed, on behalf of the villagers collectively, to lease the land to the government for development according to the planning. As a result, the land surrounding the village and commercial districts were leased to businesses or the government after the land reform, providing the village with a*

*considerable annual income from rent.*

As described in the previous section of data, changes in rural cultural environments cannot be separated from the impact of urban-rural development, especially in terms of land reform and developing policy. Based on the descriptions from the villagers and my fieldwork of the village, the urban-rural development of this village between 2013 and 2023 has exhibited different strategies in three distinct phases. The detailed descriptions are recorded in Fieldnotes 03. Here, I will briefly outline the key issues from the data.

Between 2013 and 2015, Baisha Village underwent another round of land reform. The objective of this land reform was to acquire residential land from the village residents living near the urban area to use for expanding the educational facilities and for road development within the county town. The entire process spanned two years, and the outcome of the reform was a further reduction in the land area of Baisha Village. Some residents were relocated to housing provided within the county town. Although it may seem that the villagers benefited from this land exchange process, the elderly residents had to leave the agricultural land and chicken coops they had been tending to for a long time. It is entirely reasonable that many of them felt a deep sense of attachment and therefore a reluctance to leave. Some villagers even described stories of elderly individuals collapsing and requiring medical attention due to emotional distress during that time. Such land acquisition actions are very common during the urbanisation process in Fuzhou, and nearly every village experienced similar situations at different stages.

Between 2016 and 2020, it was evident that the urbanisation process had reached its peak. This conclusion is reflected in the case of Baisha Village by the stagnation of land acquisition and the advancement of cultural tourism. For instance, management of the southern riverbank aimed to showcase some maritime cultural elements from the villagers' lives in the past. Since 2021, this ecological management has extended to the continued restoration of temples and ancestral halls, as well as the development of the

surrounding environment of cultural public facilities. Reflecting on the urbanisation process of many villages in the Fuzhou region over the past decade, it is evident that as rural land area gradually diminishes, the survival space for FO, a ritual opera, is also shrinking. However, FOTs seem to have the potential to open up a new mode of operation tailored for immersive eco-tourism, even though such an operational model has not yet been fully implemented in rural areas.

#### ***4.2.1.2.2 Public Cultural Spaces in Baisha Village***

This section presents information about the cultural activity center and the Elder Association which are the main activity spaces for FOTs. In the Fuzhou region, nearly every village has constructed an activity center, temples, and ancestral halls. These buildings typically have a plaque at the entrance, inscribed with the names of all the donors, serving as a way to pass down their merits to the next generations. This viewpoint is derived from the logic of the villagers' description during my investigation of the cultural activity center in Baisha Village and my observation. Therefore, it's precisely because the villagers of Baisha have this shared understanding that overseas family members invest in the construction of ancestral halls and temples in the village, contributing to the well-being of their hometown. This is believed to bring blessings and wealth. As photo P13 shows, as early as 2004, Baisha Village constructed a beautiful rural hall. I visited this rural hall and documented my observations and experiences in Fieldnote 03. The following is quoted verbatim from a passage in this fieldnote 03.

*The activity center consists of two buildings. One is the cafeteria, where during events, the village either hires a chef or relies on its people to prepare meals. When a theater troupe visits, their fees do not include meals. According to customs and tradition, the elders can arrange catering services, providing noodles, dried goods, and several types of pot dishes for the villagers who come to watch the show. The lunch of FOTs consists of several tables of dishes, and they can have their meals at noon.*

*Another building, or rather two buildings combined, is the Guanyin Temple and the auditorium. This type of combination is very common in rural China because*



*whenever a troupe performs, they first perform for the gods and then entertain the people. In Baisha Village, the Monkey God they worship is enshrined in the Guanyin Temple. The Guanyin Temple is elaborately decorated and well-built, and many villagers come here regularly on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month to pray for blessings and make offerings. The main deity in the Guanyin Temple faces directly towards the stage, which is convenient for performances dedicated to the gods.*

*The auditorium can be accessed by coming down the stairs from the second floor of Guanyin Hall, leading to the first-floor lobby. It can accommodate roughly over a thousand seats, even equipped with heating. The seats are old-fashioned wooden chairs. The screen is an LED display that can show subtitles and scenic views. The backstage area is located on the second floor behind the stage and offers ample space. The corridor area connecting the backstage to the stage serves as the performance area for the band.*

As photos 31 to 34 show, since its construction, this cultural activity center, which blends folk life and traditional opera performances, has undergone continuous renovations. The manager of this multifunctional public cultural space is the Elder Association. With the guidance of the villagers, I arrived at the office of the Elder Association on the second-floor backstage of the auditorium. According to them, whenever there is an FO performance, staff from this organisation take turns to be on duty to maintain order. This is to prevent disputes among the villagers, such as conflicts arising over the sequence of additional rituals after the main deity drama performance. This is a genuine description provided by the villagers during this part of the investigation.

*During an FO performance, there was an antagonist character whose surname happened to be the same as that of the audience. This audience became very angry and, without waiting for the play to finish, publicly proclaimed that people with their surname were not so wicked. The villagers participating in the play believed that stopping the performance midway was highly inauspicious and requested that the matter be resolved after the play concluded. Both parties were at an impasse, and a conflict was difficult to avoid. Fortunately, the president of the Elderly Association intervened in the mediation and the head of the troupe agreed to change the character's surname in the play, which finally quelled the dispute (F-03).*

This story illustrates the significant role of the Elderly Association in maintaining order and harmony in rural folk life. Therefore, I visited another important public cultural venue, the Elderly Association of Baisha Village. Photos 07 to 09 present the buildings of the elder activity center and its surrounding environment. Photo 07 shows an important public cultural space in the villages of Fuzhou. Under the large tree at the village entrance served as an important gathering place for villagers to chat and relax after meals. Before the land reform in 2015, this tree was not originally at the village entrance. Due to the previous road at the entrance being requisitioned for road construction, this large tree now stands at the village entrance. The photo displays a two-story building of the Senior Activity Center, primarily used for registering requests for performances, discussing folk activities, fundraising, and deliberating on other village matters. During hot weather or in their leisure time, villagers also forsake the shade of the tree and gather inside the activity center to engage in casual conversations. During my fieldwork and participant observation, I often joined in these gatherings as well.

#### ***4.2.1.2.3 Ritual Opera for the Monkey King's Birthday***

Due to the cultural changes brought about by the transformation in urban-rural developing strategy and public cultural spaces, there has indeed been a decline in the density of folk activities in the rural lives of the Fuzhou region. However, the large-scale series of folk celebrations dedicated to local deities' birthdays remain unaffected and continue to be an indispensable part of village life, showcasing a unique rural ceremonial and cultural order. For villages within the Fuzhou dialect region, FO is an irreplaceable ritual opera. Fieldnote 04 documents the celebration of Monkey King's birthday in Baisha Village, which is a case to understand the different types of ritual operas, which presents a general situation in the Fuzhou area. According to the contract photos (see Photo 02) provided by the Elder Association, it can be determined that the "Chou Shen Xi" performance is primarily divided into "Jia Guan" 加冠, "Da Chang Chun" 大长春, "Eight Immortals" 八仙, and the other improved versions. This section mainly presents the flows and functions of these ritual operas according to the record

in Fieldnote 04.

On July 25th, 2022 of the lunar calendar, the villagers gathered in front of the Guanyin Temple early in the morning to complete a series of temple opening ceremonies, including worshipping deities, offering sacrifices, and burning paper money. The expenses for hiring the FOTs on this day were collectively funded by the all villages, and villagers who wanted to offer performances to the deities could register in advance. The troupe would then perform for Monkey King by the order of registration. In the following days, villagers continued to register for requesting opera performances, and if other villagers had the need, they could contribute some money to have the opera troupe perform an additional segment after honoring the deity for the main sponsor. For villages like Baisha, which are fishing communities, the main aspiration is to pray for the safety and prosperity of their loved ones working abroad. Once their wishes are fulfilled, regardless of the circumstances, the villagers will hold a ritual opera performance to pay tribute to the deities. Otherwise, it is considered a lapse in merit and virtue. This is also why the revenue of FOT is connected to the situation of villagers working abroad. With the development of the local economy and the loss of folk beliefs, the subtle connection between the two has led to erosion.

The price of the performance varies depending on specific factors such as the number of actors required and the complexity of the plot, by the ritual requirements. For example, I recorded the details of the ritual operas on the Monkey King's birthday in my fieldnote 04. The first ritual opera in "Jia Guan" 加冠 is "Tian Guan Blessing" 天官賜福. The actor wore a mask with a white base, a black beard, and a charming smile. He was dressed in red robes and entered the stage while dancing to the accompaniment, holding an ivory tablet in their hand, and unfurling auspicious banners with phrases like "Rise in Official Rank and Nobility" 加官進爵 while dancing. Throughout the entire process, there was no singing or speaking; communication is conveyed solely through actions. As photos 35 to 37 show, on the screen behind them, images of the God of

Wealth and others are projected, and some even play rolling images of gold ingots. The second ritual opera was “Jia Guan by Women” 女加官. A female performer dressed in a red robe continuously flips a long wooden board while performing various dance moves. Then, she raises an official hat, beneath which hangs a slogan with words of good fortune. According to the villagers, these short operas had a very clear purpose, which was to perform for the deities and communicate the expectations of the villagers to the gods.

#### ***4.2.1.2.4 Changes in the Cultural Environment***

During the past decade, the changes in the folk environment have mainly been the modernised development of folk beliefs. Firstly, the ritual operas were becoming more concise. For example, the staff of the elderly association introduced that in recent years, villagers have mostly chosen more concise performances, such as “Jiaguan” 加冠, because the “Eight Immortals” and “Da Changchun” require a larger number of actors and are more expensive. Even though the price was higher, there were still a few believers who chose Da Changchun or Eight Immortals. One villager described this choice as follows: *“If you have a lot of money, then I think I would still choose the more expensive ritual operas. It has a grander scale, more actors, and a greater sense of sincerity. We love to watch it, and the gods love to watch it too.”* Another perspective was that the sanctity of faith lies in the sincerity of one's heart, regardless of cost. There was no need to extravagantly spend for the sake of the face. It is evident that this was the prevailing viewpoint recently.

Secondly, the form of ritual operas had also become more modernised, such as performances of Fuzhou songs, blessing dances staged by ST (see photo 38), and the digitalisation of folk beliefs. For example, the use of electronic candles for rituals and the creation of digital ceremonial spaces using electronic screens (see photo 35). Although many believers considered these simplifications and digitisations to be insincere representations, it appeared that this perspective is also being changed. This is a very interesting case. At the celebration of Monkey King's birthday, a delivery

driver helped a villager who was far away from home come to offer incense to the Monkey King. It's evident that the age of the believers is becoming younger, but faith-related rituals are gradually becoming more digitised and simplified. Ritual operas have been generally recognised by the public as a part of folk belief rather than superstition.

#### ***4.2.1.2.5 Ritual Alliance System***

Fieldnotes 02 and 05 present evidence for describing the market environment of ST. Based on the key points, I categorised the information into two Nvivo 12 identified themes: ritual alliance system and market situations.

Fieldnote 5 recorded my visits to the Elderly Association, temples, ST, and intermediary organisations in Baisha Village. It focused how pluralistic stakeholder groups cooperate within the ritual system. Here, I present the key points among these records. As mentioned in the previous section, the Elderly Association, as a village self-governing organisation, primarily functions to organise folk activities within the village. This includes activities such as raising funds, registering the order of opera performances, arranging information for troupe performances, publicity, coordinating with intermediaries and troupes, and handling logistical work on the day of the performance. Based on my observations during the fieldwork, the elderly have become the bearers of rural customs. When there are folk rituals like making wishes needed at home, they take the initiative to organise them. Many young people, as a result, are unaware of these folk customs. However, the elderly usually subtly convey the logic to the younger generation that they have made prayers to the gods, and these matters at home are sure to proceed smoothly. If things indeed go as expected, the younger generation in the village gradually believes in this faith. As they age, they may voluntarily take up this responsibility and pass down the folk traditions. This creates a belief community that is passed down from generation to generation.

Certainly, the staff of the Elderly Association indicated that the coordination with the FOTs was almost entirely the responsibility of the president. This meant that even if the

president might not personally appreciate traditional operas, they still played a crucial role in this link of the market industry chain. Therefore, sales intermediaries placed great importance on maintaining Guanxi (Bian, 2018) with the presidents of the Elderly Associations. They often took them to watch various opera performances, helping them appreciate the art form. Through these interpersonal networks, they tap into the vast folk market in rural areas. The FOTs in turn, became dependent on them for marketing efforts. This has also led to some confusion in the market, such as chaotic prices.

It seems that religious venues, such as temples play a role in the operations of FOTs by providing a ceremonial environment. Through my fieldwork at the ST and the Guanyin Temple, I found that ritual dramas and religious music are two kinds of cultural systems. This also made the FOTs and religious organisations independent of each other. From the musical function, religious music conveyed a sacred sound of baptising souls in folk rituals, while ritual operas tended to transmit the worldly desires of the believers to the deities. The entire process of a folk ritual helped villagers establish a connection between the sacred and the secular, finding balance in giving and receiving. In general, the request for opera performances in Baisha Village revolved around the elderly association, ancestral temples, intermediaries, and FOTs, forming a relatively stable ritual alliance system.

#### ***4.2.1.2.6 Changes in The FO Market***

Based on official data statistics, supported by data from my fieldnote in F-05, the FO market had seen a significant contraction. According to the data provided by the elderly association, the total number of FO performances requested in Baisha Village in 2022 did not exceed 30, which is less than half of what it was around 2010. In casual conversations with villagers, I also found that the enthusiasm for requesting opera performances had waned. Some villagers have expressed that they can express their gratitude by simply going to the temple to burn incense, suggesting a shift in their preferences away from requesting opera performances. On the other hand, the marketing strategies of ST had struggled to keep up with modern development needs,

which mainly presented a lack of capacity when it comes to actively expanding into new markets, as they have been holding onto the traditional folk market. For example, I did not see their performance information on the Damai website<sup>19</sup>. I could only find performance information for the entire city on the “Xixun” 戏讯 public account (see photo 39). Moreover, the audience for this public account was not very large.

Furthermore, Fieldnote 02 mainly described the scene where I enjoyed performances of ST in the village auditorium. On the one hand, operas from ST mainly feature literary performances led by young male actors, while many coastal villagers prefer martial performances. This undoubtedly means that the elderly associations in these villages, under the guidance of intermediaries, might not choose ST for their opera requests. In a section of the fieldnote 02, residents from the Changle region shared their comments on the play “Reunion Dream” 团圆梦. In general, they felt that there weren't enough martial arts scenes in the play, and the focus on family ethics made the plot too complicated. Also, many longtime fans believed that the adapted opera lacked the same flavor as it did in the past. They referred to this aesthetic of FO as “shrimp paste flavor” 虾油味. While watching the performance live, I noticed that many fans would hum along with the musical cues of the opera. When the melody deviated from what they remembered, they would furrow their brows in dissatisfaction. For veteran opera enthusiasts, it was essential for the troupe to faithfully carry on the tradition of Fuzhou opera and maintain the continuity of the melodies to truly satisfy them. The data showed that the new original productions from ST were causing them to lose their audiences.

Finally, fieldnote 2 describes the performance fee and salary of the employees in ST. Table 4.2.8 displays the data I collected during participant observation at the local cultural department, including price ranges for three tiers of FOTs and the number of troupes. According to the managers of ST and the president of the Elder Association,

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<sup>19</sup> Damai website: Barleya website 大麦网, an official APP which is developed by Alibaba to reserve or sale the tickets of performing art in China.

the price in 2022 for FO performance from ST was 15,000 RMB, and this price has remained unchanged for the past two or three years. From 2013 to 2015, this price was closer to that of a first-tier FOT, but now it is closer to the pricing of a third-tier troupe, even though they claimed to still be in the second tier.

Tier of FOTs	Prices	Number
First-tier troupes	20000-25000RMB	About 17 FOTs
Second-tier troupes	15000-20000RMB	About 24 FOTs
Third-tier troupes	Below 15000RMB	About 28 FOTs

**Table 4.2 8: Prices list in Fuzhou areas**

#### ***4.2.1.2.7 Daily Operations of ST***

This section presents the key points from Fieldnote 01, which includes the history of ST, troupe structure, and daily work in ST. First is the developing history of ST. The boss in ST was named Wang, and in the following text, I would refer to him as Wang. The development of ST had its roots in Wang's family business from previous generations. Wang's father, who was young at the time, joined a famous troupe for learning at 9 years, became proficient in the art, and passed on this skill to Wang and his siblings of the same generation. However, from 1988 to 2012, ST did not complete its business registration as a modern enterprise. It was merely a private professional troupe registered with the cultural department. It was not until 2013 that Wang's father completed the business registration for the troupe. Wang himself officially registered the current ST in 2015 and took over the brand and assets from his father. From then on, ST became a private enterprise solely funded to the sum of 1 million RMB by Wang.

Second, is the organisational structure. In addition to Wang himself, there are three long-term partners who served as the management team and actors in the troupe. These partners include his wife and two peers who studied FO alongside him. In addition to the management team, the ST also included around 40 long-term collaborating actors and bandsmen. This included two outstanding actors hired from municipal troupes, approximately twenty-something local actors engaged, and some martial arts actors with greater mobility hired from provinces like Henan 河南 and others. These actors



all conducted their daily rehearsals under the guidance of an artistic teacher. As for directors and playwrights, they were mostly invited temporarily each year, depending on the actual needs of ST. However, there were also one or two long-term collaborating creators, they called them stage directors 排戏先生.

Third is the daily work of ST. To reduce costs and deal with the demands of performing in different villages, employees in ST generally did not own the fixed rehearsal space and offices. This meant that the staff needed to use the village hall for their daily rehearsals. On this day, the troupe had a daytime performance, and a little after 8 a.m., the bus from ST had parked in the parking lot of the Baisha Village Hall. The actors began to move their belongings and systematically set them up in the backstage area (see photos 17 to 24), which took about half an hour. Next, the managers would arrange the daily work, including the order of rehearsals, the timing for preparing for the midday performance, scheduling photo shoots and promotional video sessions, and so on. Due to their long-term collaboration, the staff had developed a kind of understanding where they could carry out their roles even without the manager's instructions.

In the following hours, the actors engaged in rehearsals for various segments, including celebratory songs and dances, as well as some scenes in the FO performance (see photos 28 to 30). As photo 28 show, the artistic director would demonstrate on stage, assisting the younger actors in mastering the techniques. Photos 29 and 30 show a rap performance about the stories of “24 Filial Exemplars” 二十四孝. The manager explained that this performance was prepared for an elderly resident's birthday banquet in the village, and today they were rehearsing it first. In the audience, one manager and an intermediary were capturing the rehearsal scene on stage for later promotional purposes. Approaching lunchtime, some actors had already begun their makeup preparations, and the cafeteria next to the auditorium had set up several tables with meals for them as lunch. Lunchtime was a joyful moment when all the members of the troupe gathered, and the atmosphere was very pleasant. Lunch was arranged by the Elderly Association and contracted by several villagers. They also provided simple

snacks like rice noodles and fish balls for other villagers who came to watch the play.

After lunch, all the members of ST became busy. The logistics staff began to hang up performance signs (see photos 10 and 11), set up the stage curtains, and display subtitles and electronic screens. The other actors each went about their respective roles. Meanwhile, the artistic director found a spot with a good view on the second floor of the auditorium, quietly watching the performance on stage and considering its strengths and weaknesses. After the performance, everyone would remove their makeup, change out of their costumes, load their equipment onto the bus, and then return to their base. Such busy work sometimes required employees to start as early as 7 a.m. and continue until 10 p.m. During periods of frequent folk activities, the workload for employees in ST remains very high. Fortunately, the actors were all experienced and knew how to find a quiet place to have a cup of tea and relax when they were not on stage.

Regarding employee benefits, I also gathered detailed information during the field study about employee salaries, allowances, hiring methods, and other related benefits. On my observation evidence, actors' income primarily consisted of their base salary, performance-based bonuses, living allowances, and contributions from fan support. It was evident that ST had not established an electronic platform for salary distribution, and many income arrangements still rely on customary agreements and the specific terms outlined in contracts. During my conversations with employees, I conducted a rough analysis of the monthly income across different positions and roles in ST. Firstly, the two lead actors, one playing the role of Xiaosheng 小生 and the other playing the Qingyi 青衣 sign annual labor contracts with ST. These contracts specified the minimum number of performances per month to ensure their income. According to one manager, their average monthly income could reach close to 50,000 RMB. Secondly, the roles like "Huadan" 花旦 and "Laodan" 老旦, whose monthly income typically falls in the range of 3,000 to 10,000 RMB depending on their contributions to the operas this year. However, their income fluctuated with the number of performances and was relatively less stable. Other supporting actors, who perform minor roles, typically

earned between 1,000 to 2,000 RMB in monthly income. Therefore, they often hold positions in multiple companies simultaneously to augment their income. Managers and logistics personnel received fixed salaries, typically ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 RMB. In addition, ST would negotiate transportation and meal expenses with the Elder Association. For each performance, the Elder Association provided a subsidy of 1,000 RMB for transportation and 100 RMB for rice. Other expenses, such as cosmetics, costumes, props, and so on, were covered by the ST. This meant that employees would not have any additional expenses while working. The data shows that there is a significant disparity in employee income, and according to the descriptions provided by actors regarding their past income, this gap appears to be continuously widening.

#### 4.2.1.2.8 Findings

	Urban-rural strategies	Situations of the cultural market	Measures of FOTs
<b>Policy frames</b>	Equality, complementary, and ecological civilisation	Break regional barriers; Structural imbalance on supply-side; Expand the market through the increasing cultural influence.	Establishing a modern management system; Enriching their cultural products and promoting performance quality; Difficult to join these projects.
<b>Organisational frames (Actual situations in Baisha Village and ST)</b>	Shrinking of rural areas; Renovating the public cultural spaces.	The FO market had shrunk.	Primitive management and marketing methods; No data indicated that ST had participated in projects of cultural tourism.

**Table 4.2 9: Comparison of policy expectations and actual situations**

This section presents key descriptions of the external culture, market environment, and daily operations of ST. From the stances of the past and present, I define policy continuity and change as a form of institutional frame, while I define the transformation of the troupe and its cultural environment as an organisational frame. Table 4.2.9 compares the equivocality between policy expectations and actual situations. The equivocality includes three contradictions: the simultaneous urban-rural development and the decrease of rural cultural spaces; the continuously expanding cultural market and the shrinking FO market; and the requirements for modernised management and insufficient policy support. These equivocalitys were explored during the semi-structured interviews on pluralistic stakeholders' perceptions and actions.

### **4.2.1.3 Data Presentation and Analysis for Semi-structured Interview**

The interview tool aimed to capture new cues from the perceptions of pluralistic stakeholders regarding the logical conflicts between the policy frames and organisational frames. Therefore, the interview questions revolved around these contradictions, exploring how organisational behavior was disrupted during these three stages of change, how it was restored, and the outcomes of adaptation, based on the three aspects of urban-rural construction, cultural market, and operation of FOTs. The interview list of questions was pilot-tested (see section 4.2.1.3.1).

#### ***4.2.1.3.1 Pilot Study of Semi-structured Interview***

To ensure the feasibility of the interview questions, I conducted a pilot study for the semi-structured interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 263). Yin (2014) argued that “convenience, access, and geographic proximity can be the main criteria for selecting a pilot case” (p. 85). The pilot test involved the selection of five participants from an FOT using a snowball sampling strategy. This sample included a manager, an actor, a director, a government staff member, and a cultural worker. The sampling strategy took into account the geographical proximity of the private troupe, as recommended by Pressey (2000). The gatekeeper for this study was the boss of this troupe, ensuring an effective start with a private troupe. As noted by Yin (2014, p. 86), the pilot case study can become a good prototype for the formal case study.

At the beginning of field access, I clarified the details of the Letter for the pilot study of Semi-Structured Interviews (see Appendix 2) and informed consent (see Appendix 3) to the gatekeepers in FOTs. The Letters in Appendices 6 and 3 were used in the main survey. To ensure the participants could understand the interview questions comprehensively, during the pilot study, I adjusted the interview questions according to the participants' responses until the question list had high-quality rigor and the pilot study procedure tended to be completed (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, p. 303). Appendix 5 shows the revised outline of interview questions after the pilot interviews,

including three introductory questions and nine main questions about changes in the cultural environment, market, and modern management.

**4.2.1.3.2 Data Display of Introductory Questions**

Table 4.2.10 shows the interview schedule and codes of the transcripts. The formal interview in case 1 included five stakeholder groups, each with two participants. A sample of the transcripts has been provided in Appendix 10.

<b>Interview number</b>	<b>Pluralistic stakeholders</b>	<b>External or internal</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Codes of transcripts</b>
1	Manager 1	Internal	12/25/22	1C1MA
2	Manager 2	Internal	12/28/22	2C1MA
3	Actor 1	Internal	10/30/22	1C1AC
4	Actor 2	Internal	12/18/22	2C1AC
5	Director 1	Internal	12/18/22	1C1DI
6	Director 2	Internal	12/26/22	2C1DI
7	Cultural worker 1	External	12/17/22	1C1CW
8	Cultural worker 2	External	12/27/22	2C1CW
9	Government staff 1	External	12/19/22	1C1GS
10	Government staff 2	External	12/28/22	2C1GS

**Table 4.2 10: The Interview Schedule in Case 1**

Aligning to the cues from the documentary sources and participant observations, the interviewer selected the five most common stakeholder groups around the operation of FOT. The first three questions focus on the basic information of pluralistic stakeholders to further understand the relevant stories of these practitioners. Table 4.2.11 (see Appendix 16) illustrates the key points gathered from the first three introductory questions. The data presents three main situations. Firstly, the average age of the five stakeholder groups is 52.8, which is the aging age structure. Secondly, the practitioners in the FO industry need to have strong adaptability in different types of jobs (many interviewees reflected experience working in more than one position). Thirdly, apart from government officials, most other stakeholders in this industry have typically learned the skills of FO for many years. Three core factors explained their involvement and the position they held: inheriting a family business, a passion for performing operas, and being sent into FOTs by their parents because of financial constraints.

Next, the data from interview questions 4 to 12 are presented, comparing the cultural environment, market, and management of different stakeholders at three different periods. Additionally, according to relevant literature (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) and Nvivo 12 output (see Appendix 11), I will categorise the data into three aspects: interruptions, restoration, and changes in expectation.

#### ***4.2.1.3.3 Interview Questions 4 to 6 focusing on events from 2013 to 2015***

Focusing on the important policies or events from 2013 to 2015, the data presents the perception and actions of five stakeholder groups about the cultural environment, market, and operation of ST. In the coding of this section, I categorised participants' responses into three groups: interruption, restoration, and change in expectation. This deconstruction aims to analyse the challenges, adaptive strategies, and mindset changes participants experienced in response to ecological changes.

Question 4 sought to understand the influence of rapid urbanisation in the religious and ritual environment of FO. This question was based on the rapid urban-rural integration trend in China during this period, where a significant amount of rural land was being requisitioned and integrated with urban areas, blurring the cultural boundaries between rural and urban life. For example, as mentioned in the section on participant observation, the case of Baisha Village illustrated this phenomenon. This phenomenon was likely to have an impact on beliefs and rituals in rural society. As Table 4.2.12 in Appendix 16 shows, the internal stakeholder groups and the cultural workers from communities expressed the strategy of urban-rural integration interrupted the original developmental environment of FOT. They believed these strategies caused a continuous contraction of the FO market. For instance, one actor indicated that only the outstanding actors in this industry could ensure their income, while the other stakeholders' career development had significant uncertainty (2C1AC). Furthermore, the staff from the cultural department and government indicated the loss of rural culture is an inevitable trend of

modernisation in China, including the loss of rural population, insufficient funding, and talent shortage (1C1CW; 2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS). Indeed, participants also proposed some measures to restore the continuous development of the organisation. One manager stated that to sustain the troupe's income, they expanded their business scope from folk activities to other needs, such as birthday parties and store openings (1C1MA). However, these measures still failed to generate entirely positive expectations among participants for the organisation's future, especially in market demands and occupational perspectives. As mentioned by a government official, considering contemporary career choices and in comparison, to some other professional skills, the current talent training strategy for FO seemed to be less effective.

Question 5 sought to comprehend the changes in the FO market impacted by the policies, especially in a scenario where the market plays a decisive role in resource allocation. These influences necessitate adaptation and change within the FOTs. As Table 4.2.13 (see Appendix 16) shows, internal stakeholders were generally concerned about the interruption caused by the shift in market preferences. According to several managers and playwrights, even with increased investment in creating modern operas, they could not attract more viewers and were instead receiving complaints from their loyal fans. Strategies to restore the sustainable development of the organisation mainly included increasing investment to capture the rural market, enhancing the professional skills of actors, increasing flexibility in actor management, and focusing on the preferences of a broader audience. For example, a manager thought maintaining the original aesthetic of FO was crucial for ST to capture the rural elderly audience (2C1MA). However, internal stakeholders' expectations for the future market were still declining. As mentioned by Actors, despite the actors' efforts, many skills from the past and the loss of linguistic charm due to dialect changes continued to be a challenge (1C1AC; 2C1AC).

As Table 4.2.14 in Appendix 16 shows, for the external stakeholder groups, the shift in

government functions had introduced some ambiguity in market supervision, although government departments were working with various stakeholders to find reasonable ways to regulate. Among them, intermediary agencies were a significant contributor to the market confusion, meanwhile, they also complained about inadequate market regulation. A cultural worker mentioned that some private troupes performed without proper business registration, resulting in poor performance quality and market price confusion. To strengthen market supervision, the government had demonstrated a willingness to listen to suggestions, but it appeared that other stakeholders in ST had not realised this. One cultural worker indicated with the shrinking trend of folk culture markets, only FOTs capable of creating high-quality operas had a chance to survive (1C1CW). Therefore, despite strong policy support for the development of private troupes, the number of FOTs was still decreasing.

Question 6 presents a deeper understanding of the interruption, restoration, and expectation that ST encountered when implementing modern management-related policies. Table 4.2.15 (see Appendix 16) displays the core viewpoints expressed by internal stakeholders of ST regarding this question. The impact of modern governance on FOT primarily manifested in increased operating costs, improved employee living standards, and contradictions between the legal society and the original management model. For instance, a manager mentioned, “In the past, the actors used to live together in a simple house we rented in the village. Although the conditions were tough, they reduced living expenses for some actors. However, now that living standards have improved, we don't have enough funds to support collective housing that complies with labor law requirements (2C1MA).” To sustain the development of the troupe, various cost-cutting measures have been employed, for instance, gaining substantial support in the form of tax breaks from the government. However, participants still expressed some negative expectations for future turnover and collaboration between different positions. One manager indicated they cut costs by combining the roles of playwright and director into a single experienced employee, resulting in reduced employee benefits and



financial strain on the troupe (1C1MA;2C1MA).

Table 4.2.16 (see Appendix 16) shows the key ideas expressed by the external stakeholders for Q6. The data presented that the government faced many difficulties in transforming its functions, such as the failure to implement broker licenses. Meanwhile, the intermediaries did not want external art forms to divide the FO market. Furthermore, some unscrupulous intermediaries even attempt to protect their interests through unfair competition, such as manipulating prices. Despite the efforts to establish flexible regulatory mechanisms, these practices were somewhat inadequate.

Firstly, during this period, the interruption primarily includes cultural changes triggered by urbanisation, the functional transformation of government, challenges from the market, and the difficulties in the adaptive process of ST. When rituals and folk beliefs were eroding, ST continually adapted to government requirements for modern business management systems, such as completing business registration and obtaining broker licenses, among others. However, at this stage, the government often struggled to balance support and regulation for private troupes, leading to the failure of some policies, such as the management of brokers. Secondly, adaptive behaviors encompassed both adaptive actions within ST and policy adjustments at the government level. Troupe adaptation involves breaking away from traditional paternalistic management, adopting flexible internal management systems, and so on, while policy adjustments are reflected in the flexibility of market supervision mechanisms. Most of the difficulties culminated in helpless outcomes. Participants believed that the important lifelines available to them were more policy support and organisational flexibility for ST facing these dilemmas. Based on the analytical evidence, two emerging cues on interruption and expectations from pluralistic stakeholders are further highlighted.

***Cue 4- Unfulfilled Policy Commitments and Dwindling Organizational Support: Impacted by urbanisation, the functional transformation of government, challenges from the market, and modernised management, the interruption of organisational***

*behavior in ST mainly manifested as unfulfilled policy commitments and the disappearance of parental-style organisational support.*

***Cue 5-Adapting positively, but the degree of expectation decreased:*** *Stakeholder groups are all striving to adapt to the disruption in organisational behavior caused by the changes. However, due to unfulfilled commitments, participants are starting to experience negative emotions and view these efforts as ineffective.*

#### ***4.2.1.3.4 Interview Questions 7 to 9 focusing on events from 2016 to 2020***

This section presents the key findings for questions 7 to 9 based on the policies and events from 2016 to 2020, towards further understanding practitioners' adaptive process in the ongoing changes.

Interview question 7 sought to understand why the ritual and folk beliefs of FO cannot prosper contrary to policy initiatives, despite strong support for ICH and promoting urban-rural complementarity. As Table 4.2.17 in Appendix 16 shows, an important insight was the fact that the management system of the ICH and the native rituals and religious environment of FO had certain contradictions. The elderly artists, who were regarded as inheritors of ICH, had in contrast, departed from the original ritual ecology and continuously delved into purely staged FO performances. While many FO performances that are closely tied to folk belief demand were not strictly considered heritage, ICH policies had also not significantly benefited the prosperity of folk beliefs. A government staff provided a very useful idea for the development of ICH as follows:

*ICH encompasses a wide range of forms, and our funding and management efforts may initially require an accessible policy for every ICH. In reality, the circumstances for each type of intangible heritage vary. Some forms, such as certain traditional singing or ensemble music, may no longer have a viable market and are primarily showcased in museums. However, for heritage like FO, commercialisation has existed in the past. Balancing different situations requires a collaborative effort from all sectors of society.*

While this viewpoint may not yet be reflected in ICH policies, it is a valuable perspective concerning the preservation of rituals and folk beliefs associated with FO. However, as the data shows in Table 4.2.17, it appears that other stakeholder groups

may not be aware of their right to voice their opinions on current ICH policies or their potential to influence policy changes. Undoubtedly, these factors impact participants' expectations for the industry's future.

Question 8 sought to understand why the FO market was rapidly shrinking in the continuously expanding market of cultural tourism. As Table 4.2.18 (see Appendix 16) shows, due to the impact of the pandemic, the demand for traditional rituals when going abroad for work had significantly decreased. Some businesses were facing survival challenges, leading to a reduction in the quality of operas. Intermediaries and managers in ST lacked the marketing skills to seek cross-regional collaborations in cultural tourism projects. Some actors had to seek job opportunities in these projects of tourism and performing arts on their own (2C1CW). Despite the increasing flexibility in organisational structure, the trend of declining production quality, difficulty in finding projects, and unstable income for many actors persisted.

Interview question 9 sought to understand the implementation of the “People’s Grand Stage” 百姓大舞台 and the reasons for ST not continuously participating in the project. “The People's Grand Stage” was a cultural welfare project, involving government funding to set up a stage on the square of the Provincial Children's Library in the Dongjiekou commercial district of Fuzhou City. It hosted a welfare performance every Friday evening. In my participant observation, the ST had not been consistently involved in this project. Table 4.2.19 (see Appendix 16) shows the ideas from pluralistic stakeholders for this project. The interruption of policy implementation primarily stems from the fact that a series of policies related to ICH had not substantially aided the cultural environment and organisational development of ST. Taking the case of the “People’s Grand Stage” as an example, the funding provided by the government was insufficient to support the performing costs of ST (1C1MA). Therefore, this project is more suitable for SOTs, making it challenging for private troupes to sustain.

***Cue 6 -The malfunctioned ICH policies and the thoughts of changing careers:  
Most of the policy support for ST development were ineffective, leaving diverse***

*stakeholder groups feeling frustrated through repeated attempts and failures.*

#### **4.2.1.3.5 Interview Questions 10 to 13 focusing on events since 2021**

Since 2021, policies have started to focus on the original ecological environment of cultural heritage. However, the loss of rituals and religious environment within ST had not stopped. Generally speaking, the cultural policies during this period had primarily focused on limited projects of art performing and tourism in urban areas. Currently, there are limited projects in Fuzhou, and they all aim to create cultural brands for Fuzhou City by creating high-quality cultural products. Although some policies had emphasised the inclusion of private troupes in these projects, it appeared that these initiatives had not been fully implemented yet. As this part mainly involved the commercial activities of SOTs, insights relating to questions 10 to 13 are summarised next to understand pluralistic stakeholders' perceptions of commercial activities, such as living performances, and Fans Festival.

Interview question 10 mainly explored the aspect of living inheritance 活态传承 contributing to the preservation and development of the ritual and religious environment of FO. This aspect reflected scholars' concerns about the overdevelopment of ICH, while government promotion fueled its popularity in the field of performing arts. Apart from government officials, the other stakeholders from ST had not paid much attention to this aspect of cultural ecology within the policy. Most of them indicated it was a bit strange to perform FO in artificial settings. They felt somewhat out of the ritual and religious environment (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI; 1C1CW; 2C1CW). However, for their livelihood, some young actors choose to take on part-time jobs in entertainment performances within scenic areas, such as “Minyue Water Town” 闽越水镇 (2C1AC). The government staff believed that although the actual settings were quite different from authentic ritual and religious environments, these projects offered many opportunities for the sustainable development of FOTs (1C1GS). If the loss of the folk was an unstoppable trend, practitioners needed to proactively expand their market and find their niche again (2C1GS).

Interview question 11 sought to understand the possibility that in the future, ST might also move away from religious and ritual contexts to adapt to the developing model of large-scale cultural tourism. Although scholars originally proposed the concept of cultural ecology to encourage practitioners to respect the native environments of ICH, rather than forcing them to become entirely stage-oriented, the result has given rise to another form of art performance that takes place in artificial landscapes and is often celebrated as immersive experiences. Managers and the liaison believed that there were currently no such projects that would pay for private FOTs (2C1MA; 2C1CW). They preferred to hire actors directly for long-term work in the scenic area, which not only reduced costs but also eliminated the hassle of dealing with FOTs or intermediaries. Moreover, the FO performances in scenic areas were usually “Zhezi Xi” 折子戏 and the audience consisted of tourists from various regions, so the demand for the quality of opera performances was not very high (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1CW). A seasoned actor mentioned that the current ritual and religious market could still meet his needs. The compensation from cultural tourism projects was not as high as in ST, so he was not considering it at the moment (1C1AC). The government staff and president of the Elder Association indicated despite reaching the peak of urbanisation, there was still a demand for FO in rituals and folk beliefs. This indicated that this demand held enduring cultural value for local communities. The current integration of traditions in scenic performances was primarily in the form of staged performances, rather than authentic living scenarios. Whether life itself would become a selling point for tourism in the future would depend on subsequent policies (2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).

Interview question 12 investigated the future competitiveness of private FOTs in the future following the policy frames. The managers believed that finding ways to maintain a reputation in the folk market at lower costs was a crucial direction for enhancing competitiveness (1C1MA; 2C1CW). For example, some troupes could reduce significant expenses in hiring lead actors because the owner was a leading actress themselves. So, the quality of operas could remain high quality continuously.

However, ST currently lacked this condition and could only achieve differentiation in competition by creating lower-cost popular pieces. In the future, actively engaging with diverse social groups, such as government publicity departments, to increase performance opportunities as much as possible, would help navigate through uncertainty (21CMA). The lead actor showed a calm attitude toward the future, believing that continuous dedication to studying vocal techniques and skills could help maintain competitiveness (1C1AC). However, other actors and playwrights had a more pessimistic outlook. They felt the need to acquire more flexible and diverse skills to adapt to the evolving entertainment market. He even considered the possibility of switching careers if they could not adapt (2C1AC; 1C1DI). The government staff believed the quality of operas and talent training was important for the future (1C1GS; 2C1GS).

During this period, ST relied on lowering the quality of their productions or staging modern works with lower costs to gain a competitive advantage. Without enough policy support, the rise of cultural tourism industries had little to no impact on the development of ST.

***Cue 7- Policy failure exacerbates, and ST lowers costs to ensure survival.***

#### ***4.2.1.3.6 Findings***

Between 2013 and 2015, ST underwent continuous adaptation in response to the government's call for modernised management of private troupes. During this period, stakeholders recognised that policy support and organisational adaptability had become the most pivotal factors for ensuring SM. However, the years from 2016 to 2020 witnessed ST grappling with a swiftly contracting FO market and nearly ineffective policies regarding the protection of ICH. This led to heightened demands from stakeholder groups for stronger policy support. Since 2021, the level of policy support for ST has remained notably inadequate. Consequently, the troupe has resorted to

sustaining its growth by compromising on production quality and implementing cost-cutting measures. Regrettably, this trend does not bode well for the future.

Up to this point, I have compiled all the primary data collected for Case 1. Next, I will present the analytical evidence for Case 2, and thereafter complete the data analysis, by connecting data from both cases.

#### **4.2.2 Data Presentation and Analysis of Case 2 in FMT**

Before the data presentation of Case 2, I provide a brief Introduction to FMT. FMT is a state-owned performing arts troupe established in the mid-20th century when several famous troupes were popular in the Fuzhou region, such as the “Old Saiyue” 旧赛乐. The troupe boasted several renowned veteran artists who had left a lasting impact in the Fuzhou area. In the early stages of the establishment, due to a shortage of talent within FMT, they recruited some young actors and martial actors from several well-known troupes in the Fuzhou area. Furthermore, they also went through four rounds of reorganisation, ultimately forming FMT. Due to multiple troupe reorganisations, the mentorship and learning backgrounds of employees of FMT can be traced back through several troupes at different stages. The most significant disruption to the development of FMT came during the Cultural Revolution when troupe members were required to engage in labor and production activities in rural areas. Currently, most of the senior or retired staff in the troupe are actors and their family members or apprentices who were able to return to the industry after the Cultural Revolution ended. Now, the mission of FMT is to protect FO, provide cultural performances for the benefit of the public, and promote international cultural exchange. It is worth noticing that the economic benefits and the expansion of the FO market are not within their primary mission.

Since ST and FMT are two organisations that performed the same type of opera, there is a shared policy and cultural context between Case 1 and Case 2. Therefore, this section primarily aims to provide additional data not mentioned in Case 1.

#### 4.2.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis for Documentary Sources

Table 4.2.20 displays the relevant policies of FMT development to explore the institutional logic from the expectation of policymakers. It's worth noting that the documents in Table 4.2.1 of Case 1 also serve as policy documents related to the FMT. Since the data presentation had already been done in the previous text, there was no need to reiterate it here. Based on the three five-year plans in Table 4.2.1 in Case 1, this part continues to complement the institutional framework based on the foundation of Case 1 from three stages: 2013-2015, 2016-2020, and 2021-2023. Following the encoding and presentation methods used in Case 1, the results are presented next.

Years	Name of document	Document Number
2014	Reform and innovation in state-owned troupes	D-12
2015	Support the Inheritance of Traditional Opera in Fujian	D-13
2017	Traditional opera enters the campus	D-14
2017	Suggestions for strengthening the education of traditional opera under the new situation	D-15
2019	Social benefit evaluation of state-owned troupe in Fujian	D-16
2019	Identification and administration of representative inheritors of ICH in Fujian	D-17
2022	Promoting the High-Quality Development of the Tourism Industry	D-18

Table 4.2 20: Another document list related to FMT

##### 4.2.2.1.1 Policies Frames from 2013 to 2015

This section displays the key points of Document 12 at the levels of government, market, and cultural organisation. The key focus of Document 12 aimed to understand the internal mechanism reform of SOTs. Through the mechanism reform, SOTs would establish a management mechanism centered around the audience, and market, with the integration of social and economic benefits as the goal (D-12). Exactly, for SOTs, the market was gradually starting to guide both creative endeavors and management, playing an equally important role alongside social benefits, such as the preservation and development of ICH. At the level of cultural organisation, this reform was being piloted with several top SOTs. It involved restructuring various functional departments and comprehensively integrating the connections between different positions to align them with market-driven competition mechanisms (D-12). On the other hand, the document emphasised the improvement of the modern public cultural service system and the organisation of public service activities, such as “Culture to the Countryside” and



“Bringing High Art to Schools”. Document 13 which was released in 2015, contained relevant policies to support the inheritance and development of traditional operas during the 13th Five-Year Plan period. Therefore, its data are presented in the next section.

*Cue 8- Adjusting internal mechanisms to align with market demands: the key idea of the policy during this period focused on the reform of internal SOTs to further spread culture and adapt to the demands of the market.*

#### **4.2.2.1.2 Policies Frames from 2016 to 2020**

This section presents the key points of policies from Documents 13 to 18. In the frame of national cultural policy, the stakeholders involved in these documents primarily included local governments and relevant organisations. The SOTs are often viewed as parts of the cultural public sectors, which means that the categorisation of the dataset is primarily based on the level of the local cultural department. Due to these policies placing less emphasis on the market, this section outlines specific measures taken by local cultural departments in the reform of SOTs, ICH management, and traditional opera inheritance, aiming to provide a more specific policy frame for the understanding of SM of FMT.

Documents 13 to 15 elaborated on the policies related to the inheritance and development of traditional opera. Document 13 aimed to promote the prosperity of traditional opera, enhance the dissemination of outstanding traditional culture, and enrich the cultural lives of the people. The measures are diverse, including supporting the protection and inheritance of local operas, promoting the creation of opera scripts, nurturing talent, enhancing public awareness about traditional Chinese opera, and so on. Document 14 outlines the implementation of bringing opera into schools, emphasising the establishment of provincial-level coordination mechanisms and effective communication in the cultural system. Finally, the core focus of Document 15 relates mainly to talent cultivation and employment of traditional opera. For instance, facilitating effective employment coordination between opera colleges and local

troupes.

Document 16 presents the policies for the annual assessment of FMT. As D-02 in Case 1 shows, the reform of SOTs into enterprises was the key focus during this period. The cultural department in Fuzhou had developed a relevant assessment mechanism for the SOTs that had not yet been able to transform enterprises. FMT was one of the SOTs that needed to implement this assessment mechanism. The assessment content mentioned in this document is consistent with the tasks that FMT needs to complete annually. The document primarily outlines the assessment of the social benefits of SOTs, including creativity, performance, audience satisfaction, artistic outreach, the popularisation of art knowledge and appreciation, artistic training, as well as the promotion of artistic communication. At the same time, it emphasises that the weighting of social benefits in the assessment must be higher than economic benefits, and the document does not impose specific requirements on economic benefits. Among the various assessment criteria, creativity, performance, and the popularisation of artistic knowledge hold a large weight. Hence, employees in FMT are required to share the designated creative tasks, performance schedules, and artistic outreach activities to help their troupe achieve better results in the assessment. Otherwise, FMT and its employees may face consequences such as the troupe losing its eligibility for awards in various assessments, the top leader being deemed incompetent, and limitations on employee compensation. It is worth noting that excellent results in the assessment will bring increased policy and financial support, and it has a positive impact on the compensation of their top leader. Based on the content, it appears that the demands of the top leader for his compensation and career development could potentially influence the completion of the overall tasks to some extent.

Document 17 primarily covered the recognition and management of the representative inheritors of ICH in Fujian. The focus of the recognition process was to identify inheritors of ICH who are representative and influential in the preservation and

transmission of that heritage. On the other hand, in the management, the key emphasis lies in safeguarding their rights, ensuring the fulfillment of their obligations, conducting regular performance assessments, providing support, and promoting their work to facilitate the preservation and development of ICH. From the document, it is evident that the selection of inheritors is a highly cautious process, as they usually receive significant government support and bring financial backing to the organisation. Additionally, they must demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for lifelong contributions to develop the ICH. Worth noting too is that, within the limited resources, policies and funding often prioritise the organisations where these inheritors are based.

*Cue 9- Enhancing the management of SOTs in their social benefits: the policy emphasised the further refinement of ICH protection and inheritance, as well as the performance assessment of related SOTs.*

#### **4.2.2.1.3 Policies Frames since 2021**

Document 18 pointed out various measures for the comprehensive enhancement of the cultural tourism industry in Fuzhou, such as investment attraction, nighttime cultural tourism, consumer potential exploration, convenient transportation, and safety management. Policies emphasised the integrated development of the tourism and music industries. For instance, rich tourism performance projects in national-level scenic; and organised performances related to ICH in scenic spots, neighborhoods, and parks.

*Cue 10- The cultural tourism transformation of ICH.* The public welfare activities of SOTs have become a key factor in reducing costs and improving the quality of cultural tourism projects.

#### **4.2.2.1.4 Findings**

From the data, it could be seen that over the past decade, the policy frames for the development of SOT primarily focused on the improvement of ICH management. Hence, the participant observations focused on documenting the specific implementation of the policy frames.

#### 4.2.2.2 Data Presentation and Analysis for Participant Observation

This section mainly presents the projects and activities about the inheritance and development of FO related to FMT. Data primarily consists of 15 photographs that I took on the spot (see Table 4.2.21 and Appendix 8) and 4 field notes (see Table 4.2.22), that were captured during my participant observation. Due to the extensive length of the field notes, I organised the data into three sections in Nvivo: education and communication, cultural tourism projects, and management of FMT. Explanations for image data are integrated into the main content of the field notes.

<b>List of photos in Appendix 8</b>	<b>Photo Number</b>
An FO performance celebrating the birthday of CPC	40-41
The FO performance in Minyue Water Town	42-44
A daily performance program schedule	45
Digital FO performance in the Cultural Museum of Fuzhou	46
List of FO performance and environment in the Grand View Garden of FO	47-49
Some scenic performances or activities	50-51
Bring FO into primary schools	52
Public performance in villages	53
FO performance in the ancient house	54

Table 4.2 21: List of photos in Case 2

<b>Field notes</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Key points</b>	<b>Date</b>
F-06	A series of public FO performances	Villages, and communities in Fuzhou	The content describes a series of public cultural activities in communities, villages, museums, and scenic spots.	Jan, 2022 to Feb, 2023
F-07	The cultural tourism projects in FMT	the Grand View Garden of FO, parks, the cultural museum, and scenic spots	The content describes the ticking system, buildings, art performances, and the experience of appreciating FO in a tea house	7 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2021 to Dec 2022
F-08	Bringing FO into Schools	Primary schools in Fuzhou	The content describes an activity bringing FO into a primary school, including FO teaching, living interactions, and so on.	5 <sup>th</sup> Oct, 2022
F-09	Fieldwork in FMT	Offices of FMT	The content describes the daily work, rehearsals, life, and internal facilities within the FMT.	August 2022 to 23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan, 2023

Table 4.2 22: Observation Schedule in Case 2

#### *4.2.2.2.1 Management of FMT*

This section presents the key contents of Fieldnote 09, which includes organisational structure, funding, and other daily aspect. FMT had over a hundred employees, with approximately 110 of them being staff within the system, while several dozen were contracted employees. The troupe consisted of departments such as the performance group, the department of traditional musical instruments, the stage design center, administrative offices, and so on, making it an organisation with a complete group of actors. From the point of funding, FMT is primarily funded through government balance allocations, with a supplementary income generated from commercial performances. These commercial opportunities for the FMT are typically facilitated from other public sectors. In essence, the troupe experienced minimal survival pressure, and most actors or employees are part of the talent plan within the ICH and cultural system. The income of employees within the troupe was similar to that of staff in other cultural public sectors. In private conversations with some employees, it was found that the employee's average income was approximately 5,000 to 6,000 RMB, while leaders or managers received relatively higher additional income based on performance. In addition to the basic salary, they also received allowances and union benefits, making their overall compensation significantly better than the employees in private FOTs. Furthermore, some experienced actors earned a high annual income by working part-time in private troupes.

The troupe maintained a stable organisational structure. Unless the employees retire or young actors establish mentorship relationships with ICH inheritors or graduate with a degree of bachelor from the Central Academy of Drama, it was difficult to be employed as an insider within the system by FMT. According to the staff within the troupe, under the trend of SOTs transitioning into enterprises, even if there was still a shortage of actors for some performance tasks, few young actors who joined to work mostly only could sign employment contracts with the organisation, and the probationary period

was 5 years. Only exceptionally outstanding performers have the chance to become civil servants within the cultural system. Based on my observations, a significant portion of the employees had graduated from the Art School of Fuzhou. Many of them commenced this training after primary school and, after six years of rigorous artistic training, only students with a solid foundation in many art skills had the opportunity to work with the troupe. According to a senior actor within the troupe who also taught at the art school, there were indeed fewer young people taking this path. Nowadays, many highly talented children and their parents prefer to cultivate FO performing as a hobby rather than as a full-time pursuit. As a result, the art school was facing serious enrollment challenges.

In career development, employees at FMT had three main career development pathways. Firstly, they could gain industry recognition by participating in various drama festivals and competitions. With the continuous enhancement of their titles and reputation, they gradually secured more significant roles in large-scale opera performances. Secondly, they advanced in administrative roles within the troupe, such as logistics and administration to seek opportunities for promotion. Thirdly, after working in this industry for many years to establish a good reputation, they could earn higher compensation by taking on lead roles part-time in private troupes. Based on the current situation within FMT, the third path seems to be the most common route for most performers. In terms of cultivating and assessing actors, especially young ones, they usually organise regular performance assessments and encourage them to participate in various levels of youth actor competitions to gain more recognition. For artistic guidance, they provided specialised coaching for different operas, and young actors also continued to learn from their own teachers or senior colleagues within the organisation to enhance their performance abilities.

Unlike ST, FMT completed the integration of theater and troupe at the beginning of its establishment. The rapid implementation of this reform was made possible thanks to

government support in terms of resources and policy. Although the initial office and theater conditions were challenging, with crowded backstage areas and an aging stage, the leaders in FMT continually sought more support from the cultural department. Leveraging the advantage of FO as one of the first national ICH and the local characteristics, FMT recently improved its office environment. The new office location included a rehearsal hall that better suited modern troupe needs, a theater that could accommodate hundreds of audiences, and areas for cultural exhibitions. The improvement in office conditions benefited every employee. Each department had its own separate office, and the backstage makeup areas were also more spacious.

The coordination for commercial performances was primarily achieved through direct communication by calling one of the key leaders. In 2022, the work in FMT mainly revolved around publicising and performing FO for public benefit, with a few commercial performance activities. According to one manager, the plays they rehearsed or created were often large-scale productions that required a budget of over 50,000 RMB per show. In general, villages tended to invite private troupes for their ritual and religious demands, because the operas performed by private FOTs with lower prices had been able to adequately meet the needs of the villagers. Therefore, in daily management, the managers and leaders were busy every day juggling administrative tasks, artistic creation, and organising public performances. Meanwhile, other actors scheduled their work time based on their rehearsal and performance needs, with the level of busyness depending on the number of performances. Among the over 100 employees, there were still some senior actors who, due to their commitments to private FOTs or other reasons, had not taken on many works in performances. Meanwhile, some young actors and key FMT performers are often very busy. Therefore, every year, FMT still needed to sign contracts with some young actors to fill in supporting roles.

As a part of the cultural system, compared to the pressure on profits, the managers are more likely to feel competition among different SOTs for getting more resources due

to Fujian being a province with very rich traditional operas. Based on my observation, the influence of ICH and its potential as a local cultural symbol are crucial factors in securing resources for FMT. To expand their influence in these areas, the main leader of FMT needed to pay great attention to the promotion of ICH. I had particularly observed the strategies in this regard. Firstly, the troupe regularly promoted information related to ICH activities through various official accounts to effectively publicise their events. Secondly, personal official accounts were created for key actors and leaders of FOTs. These individuals periodically released promotional videos, engaged with fans, and participated in various local cultural programs to continuously enhance their influence.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of political propaganda and the ability to interpret policies is also competitive advantage importance. For example, at crucial junctures, such as the birthday of CPC or before and after important meetings, they would contribute to the overall atmosphere by performing FO. They typically used the organisation of FO performances to serve as a means of propaganda and creating a conducive atmosphere. Just as described in the second scenario at the beginning of this thesis, many party branches brought the party flag or national flag to the scene and concluded the event with a collective singing for China (see photos 40 and 41). In recent years, performances from FMT had not only taken place within theaters but had gradually integrated into the projects of cultural tourism.

#### ***4.2.2.2.2 Cultural Tourism Projects in Fuzhou***

Fieldnote 07 described some cultural tourism projects related to FMT, including the Grand View Garden of FO 闽剧大观园, “The Night of Museum”, FO Performance in the Heart of Min River 闽江之心, and “Minyue Watertown” 闽越水镇.

Also, I present the main contents of my participants observation in the Grand View Garden of FO and Museum separately. Photos 47 to 49 were taken during my fieldwork



at the Grand View Garden of FO. The Grand View Garden of FO was a historic courtyard located in Taijiang District, Fuzhou City. It served as an FO showcase platform built in the style of a teahouse. Its operations encompassed cultural exhibitions, opera performances, and so on. According to the original plan, FO performances have been held every Saturday and Sunday evening since June 2021. Audiences were required to book online in advance, to guarantee art performances at weekends. The audience needed to purchase seating to appreciate FO. VIP seating costs 238 RMB per person, while regular seating is priced at 118 RMB per person. As photo 49 shows, the seating arrangement followed the traditional teahouse configuration, with VIP tables accommodating 2-3 people per table, while other tea tables seated eight people per table. The offerings were the same for both, including a cup of jasmine tea and four shared refreshment dishes per person.

Photo 47 displays the program schedule for the performance that evening. The program schedule included not only FO performances but also Fuzhou songs, instrumental ensembles, and dances. The performance was organised by teacher Lin from the FO class at Minjiang Normal Junior College, and from what I understand, it was likely part of a supported entrepreneurship project involving students in the university. For the audience looking forward to enjoying FO performances, a short play was not enough to satisfy their expectations. However, everyone still enthusiastically applauded and showed their support, engaging in live interactions with the performers. I could sense that many people in the audiences were familiar with each other. At the end of the performance, the staff patiently inquired with the audience about how to obtain information about the performance and invited everyone to visit the backstage to see the costumes and creative products. The downside was that there was no air conditioning indoors, and it was often hot in the summer. Employees from FMT had previously participated in some activities related to this project but did not continue their involvement.

Another interesting project about FO was the FO exhibition in the museum. Photo 46 shows a digital exhibition at a cultural museum in Fuzhou. There was a 3D audiovisual playback system continuously playing FO throughout the day. While it was not practical for the audience to stand and watch all day, it served as a new form of digitalisation for FO performances. Furthermore, photo 54 shows the FO performance in “The Night of Museum”, illuminated by the lights of the traditional courtyard. This resonated with the cultural atmosphere of literati and scholars under the influence of Confucianism. Judging from the age structure of the audience, it appeared that such performances were particularly popular among younger people.

Furthermore, FO performances were also beginning to develop in large-scale cultural and tourism projects. “The Heart of Min River” was an urban tourism project that connected the Shangxia Hang Scenic Area 上下杭景区 and the Min River. In Fuzhou, the drive in this project was primarily to provide the citizens with a more beautiful environment for leisure and entertainment through park construction and waterway management. The routine artistic performances at the cultural square and the stage situated at the center of the river, as shown in Photos 50 and 51, are a collaborative effort between the urban investment department in this district and the culture and tourism department. Performing here was considered a public performance in the city park for FMT. These performance tasks were typically assigned by the culture and tourism department.

Another large-scale tourism project had been established in “Minyue Watertown.” As photo 45 shows, within the artificial town, there were regular 94 performing arts monthly. Among them, the Min Business Association Hall hosts FO performances approximately 5 performances a month. Besides the entrance fee to the Watertown, all art performances within the scenic area are freely attended (at no cost). Photos 42 to 44 were taken by me at the Min Business Association Hall during the FO performance. The FO performance by the two young actors did not stand out, and the lavish decor in

the venue may not have been well-complemented by the performance. According to the staff here, the most important landscape was the nighttime light show, while these art performances were meant to add some entertainment to tourists, they were not necessarily on par with opera quality in theatres, as the main focus was on the visual experience and ambiance. Most of the actors were recruited from art schools. To ensure the quality of FO performance, they often opted to play recorded operas, and the students simply needed to perform in sync with the music. For FMT, their staff evidently might not be willing to participate in such performances, unless if task is politically assigned by higher authorities.

#### ***4.2.2.2.3 Education and Communication of FO***

This section presents the key description of Fieldnotes 06 and 08. Fieldnote 06 mainly presents several FO communications that I participated in within rural villages or communities. According to one FMT leader, based on the assessment requirements of higher authorities, the FMT was required to complete a certain number of public performances each year; otherwise, it would face points deduction in the annual evaluation of SOTs. Therefore, in addition to the performance tasks assigned by higher authorities, they also needed to proactively reach out to cultural personnel in villages or communities to coordinate matters related to public performances. Due to their charitable nature, it was not suitable for the FMT to connect with elderly associations through intermediaries. Managers typically initiated contact directly with the responsible individuals in their villages or familiar villages through personal Guanxi. The staff of the elderly association then wrote down relevant performance information on red paper, including the date, time, location, and title of the play, and posted it on the notice board. However, villagers did not need to check the notice board because word of mouth remained the most effective advertising method in rural areas. Photo 53 showed a public performance in the village hall of the Changle area. FMT had chosen several classic excerpts to meet the expectations of villagers. There were dozens of such shows throughout the year in FMT, all of which are free. Also, the lead actors or leaders

typically chose their hometown villages as the preferred locations for performances. Villagers had watched them grow up from a young age or at least knew them to some extent. The scenes were sometimes so enthusiastic that people needed to stand there. Besides the elderly, there are sometimes children and middle-aged people crowded together in the auditorium.

The public performance in communities was generally organised using similar methods. The differences primarily lie in the following aspects. Firstly, residents in the community were not as familiar with each other or frequently interacted as in rural areas. Therefore, managers in FMT often took a more serious approach to promote its performance information within the community. According to a manager, a week before the performance, a very large billboard was placed at the entrance of each community, so that residents could see it in their goings and comings. Secondly, an additional expense was setting up a temporary stage, which meant not only the props but also the speakers and lighting needed to be transported to the venue in advance. Therefore, besides the actors, more logistics personnel were required to maintain order. Public performances in communities usually chose high-traffic times during holidays to take place in commercial squares or parks, ensuring that the performance could be enjoyed by a large audience. Thirdly, in terms of promotion, there was typically a stronger political influence. For example, advertising slogans aligned with the themes of policies.

Fieldnote 8 described the activity of bringing FO into school. According to the assessment requirements set by higher authorities, FMT needed to conduct 4 to 5 events like this for the promotion of art knowledge in a year. The activities of art knowledge outreach in schools mainly consist of three components: knowledge outreach lectures, segment performances, and interactive sessions with the audience. As a result, it was common for FMT leader, along with a few actors and administrative staff, to visit schools. The leader of FMT conducted the lecture component, while the actors performed the segment and engaged with the audience. As photo 52 shows, interactive

sessions involved inviting some students on stage to learn simple opera movements together. One actor stated, “The patterns of these types of activities are quite similar, but occasionally, we introduce some innovative elements, such as face painting.” A music teacher who coordinated this work on-site added

*This work is also in line with the requirements of the education bureau. We need to collaborate with intangible cultural heritage inheritors to jointly promote the teaching and dissemination of traditional opera. This process extends beyond just this event and includes the integration of intangible cultural heritage knowledge into our daily teaching, rehearsing opera programs for various competitions, and organising on-campus theatrical creation activities (F-08).*

Indeed, knowledge popularisation of FO involves not only campus events but also various types of lectures, hosting open house events for fans, as well as engaging in outbound exchange performances.

#### **4.2.2.2.4 Findings**

Based on the data comparison for documentary sources and participant observation, the work effectiveness of FMT and policy frames were generally in line. However, as Table 4.2.23 shows, there were still some challenges in the implementation of policies. In comparing policy frameworks with the actual state of FMT, the equivocality mainly manifests in four contradictory aspects. Firstly, the policy had pushed for SOTs to transform into enterprises, but FMT still maintains its state-owned nature to this day. Secondly, the policy advocated regularly organising educational activities in primary and secondary schools, but the recruitment of students into FO programs at art schools remained challenging, and it seemed that the number of young people studying FO had not noticeably increased. The third contradiction lies in the abundance of public promotion activities and the ongoing contraction of the FO market. The final contradiction is between the promotion of ecological tourism and the interruption of some performances within artificial scenic areas. Using the semi-structured interview tool (see section 4.2.2.3), how these obstacles are being addressed and what the prospects might be, are explored.

Projects	Policy frames	Organisational frames
Marketisation	The transformation of cultural institutions into enterprises	Have not finished the reforms
Bringing FO into schools	Cultivate more young audiences or opera actors	The art school of Fuzhou still had difficulties in recruiting students.
Public performance in villages and communities	The transmission of ICH	The FO market was still shrinking.
Cultural tourism	Driving the convergence of multiple industries based on the aspects of cultural ecology.	The artificial landscapes caused the misunderstanding of the cultural ecology; Many commercial performances struggle to sustain.

**Table 4.2 23: Comparison between policy frames and organisational frames**

#### 4.2.2.3 Data Presentation and Analysis for Semi-Structured Interview

Table 4.2.24 shows the interview schedule and codes of the transcripts. Same as in Case 1, the formal interview in Case 2 also included five stakeholder groups, each with two participants based on the snowball sampling.

Interview number	Pluralistic stakeholders	External or internal	Date	Codes of transcripts
1	Manager 1	Internal	12/28/22	1C2MA
2	Manager 2	Internal	12/28/22	2C2MA
3	Actor 1	Internal	01/04/23	1C2AC
4	Actor 2	Internal	01/06/23	2C2AC
5	Director 1	Internal	01/04/23	1C2DI
6	Director 2	Internal	12/23/22	2C2DI
7	Cultural worker 1	External	11/23/22	1C2CW
8	Cultural worker 2	External	01/04/23	2C2CW
9	Government staff 1	External	12/20/22	1C2GS
10	Government staff 2	External	12/20/22	2C2GS

**Table 4.2 24: Interview Schedule in Case 2**

##### 4.2.2.3.1 Introductory Questions

Table 4.2.25 in Appendix 16 documents the information gathered from the introductory questions. Firstly, the average age of the five stakeholder groups is 40.4, which is far younger than the average age of participants in ST. As requested by majority of interviewees, Table 4.2.25 does not report their specific ages. Clearly, the positions in FMT have more attraction for young people than those working in ST. Secondly, the stakeholders in FMT have a clearer occupational division of labor and political consciousness. For the FMT, the cultural workers in communities primarily undertake the responsibilities of connecting and collaborating between the FMT and regional institutions. As recommended by the manager in FMT, two teachers were chosen, one

from a primary school and the other from an art school, as the participants in this stakeholder group. It is worth noting that the cultural workers in case 1 principally engage in sales and rural management. On the other hand, the cultural workers in case 2 had the responsibility of inheriting culture unlike those in case 1. Thirdly, the stakeholder groups in Case 2 bear different responsibilities in the inheritance and development of ICH. Although they engage in various types of work, they undeniably collectively form the ecosystem of ICH. Next, I will present data from interview questions 4 to 12 following the coding methods used for Case 1. Therein too, the aim is also to show how FMT faced behavior interruptions, restoration, and outcomes in the process of the efforts to implement policies based on the conflicts between policy frames and organisational frames.

#### ***4.2.2.3.2 Interview Questions 4 to 6 focusing on events from 2013 to 2015***

Focusing on the important policies or events from 2013 to 2015, the data reports the perception and actions of five stakeholder groups about the cultural environment, market, and operation of FMT.

Question 4 sought to understand the influence of rapid urbanisation on the sustainable development of FMT. Based on the compared viewpoints of five stakeholder groups, Table 4.2.26 (see Appendix 16) suggests that under the influence of the urban-rural integration strategy, the changeable cultural environment caused interruption of organisational behavior reflect four aspects: the loss of local knowledge, the difficulties of recruiting students, limited resources, and the changes in modernised management. For example, A director and an actor indicated the loss of the Fuzhou dialect and folk beliefs caused a decrease in the audience (2C1DI). As a cultural worker mentioned, the majors of FO in Art School of Fuzhou and Minjiang Normal Junior College were both facing enrollment challenges, primarily evident in difficulties in recruiting enough students, and a lack of artistic talent passion, and diligence. The adaptation process lies in the integration of local knowledge and modern management, achieving a harmonious coexistence between cultural characteristics and contemporary societal demands,

including cultivating the audience and seeking more funding. It was the common expectation that the function of FO as a local cultural brand had given FMT a competitive edge among various performing arts.

Question 5 sought to explore efforts of marketisation in FMT. As Table 4.2.27 (see Appendix 16) shows, most participants believed that the strategy of transforming FMT into an enterprise is not feasible due to the loss of traditional music, the current market situation, and modern musical education. As the managers and actors mentioned given the situation in the cultural market of Fuzhou at the time, it was challenging for FO's creative process to simultaneously address market demands and traditional characteristics (1C2MA; 2C2MA; 1C2AC; 2C2AC). Moreover, local dialects and some past excellent techniques are also being lost. A music teacher working in a primary school also mentioned that basic music education lacks emphasis on traditional music theory (1C2CW). As a result, both children and teachers find it challenging to truly grasp the essence of traditional Chinese opera. To restore the process of cultural reform, for FMT, the optimal strategy requires refining local characteristics in their creations to attract more financial support. Also, community cultural promotion leans towards cultivating the interest of small audiences rather than actual learning of traditional opera. Hence, a government official revealed "*in response to the trend of market-oriented reforms, most SOTs are gradually transforming into enterprises. They maintain the original treatment for veteran actors, while new employees are managed through contract systems (1C2GS).*" Participants do not have high expectations for the transformation of FMT into an enterprise; they generally perceive it as a lengthy process.

Question 6 focused on the issues in the modernised management of FMT. For instance, after establishing the ticket box office through third-party platforms, the FMT also gave away many tickets to attract more audiences. As Table 4.2.28 in Appendix 16 shows, the challenges primarily lie in the conflict between modern management and customer habits, modern directorial institutions and the creation of FO, and opera education



principles and the knowledge framework of young people. Stakeholders believed that cultivating new habits and creating a more robust long-term communication mechanism among pluralistic stakeholder groups within the ICH system were the pathways to solving these issues. Indeed, the results needed to be achieved through long-term efforts.

***Cue 11- Adhering to policy requirements, maintaining lower initial expectations:***  
*Influenced by diverse cultural forms, theater management, and the loss of local knowledge, the market-oriented organizational adjustments of FMT have malfunctioned, resulting in low attendance and the loss of audience and professionals. This was anticipated by the diverse stakeholders of FMT.*

#### ***4.2.2.3.3 Interview Questions 7 to 9 focusing on events from 2016 to 2020***

This section displays the data relating to questions 7 to 9 focusing on the policies of ICH, assessment of SOTs, and recognition of ICH inheritors from 2016 to 2020, to further understand the conflicts between policy expectation, market conditions, and actual organisational behavior.

Question 7 sought to explore the difficulties in improving the inheritance and development of FO. In other words, could some policies, such as bringing FO into school, talent cultivation, and recognition of ICH inheritors, effectively address these challenges? Focusing on the activities of FO entering school, as the cultural workers mentioned in Table 4.2.29 (see Appendix 16), would only be beneficial when the relevant knowledge of FO is truly integrated into basic music education to achieve long-term development. In the system of ICH inheritors, the complex interest relations among stakeholders had to some extent affected the adjustment of the ICH management. For instance, the recognition and management of ICH inheritors, and career development and talent training. As an actor indicated, *“There were some senior inheritors whose ages are quite advanced, and due to reasons, such as health or family, it is sometimes challenging for them to fully cooperate with the intangible cultural heritage inheritance work. And most of the young artists were unable to become official inheritors because the quota was limited.”*

Question 8 aimed to understand the interrupted actions of FMT in cultural tourism projects, and how to restore them, such as interruptions occurring in FO performances in the Grand View Garden of FO. The managers believed that the cultural and tourism projects were not profitable enough. Therefore, most performances in museums or Three Lanes and Seven Alleys 三坊七巷 were arranged by the cultural department, with relatively lower performance allowances compared with the market price. Sometimes, they could also reimburse performance expenses from the funds allocated for public performances (1C2MA; 2C2MA). Thus, due to the increasing number of cultural and tourism projects, some programs faced a shortage of sponsorship. That meant, considering opera quality and market prices of FMT, art performances in most of these projects could only be scheduled for main holidays. Otherwise, it would result in huge expenses. On the other hand, other internal stakeholder groups viewed art performances in these projects as political tasks. They believed that the cultural and tourism market in Fuzhou still required more time for cultivation. Without government support, it would be challenging to sustain substantial initial investments. The external stakeholder groups exhibited a more optimistic attitude towards these issues. They believed that these cultural and tourism projects had opened up new avenues for FOTs to tap into the market of young people, especially through exhibitions in museums or organising sharing events. The key challenge lies in establishing a dynamic balance between funding constraints and the development of high-quality opera.

Question 9 sought to understand the contradiction between the assessment mechanism and the policy goals of marketisation. Overall, the stakeholder groups unanimously expressed negative views on transformation into an enterprise based on the cultural market situation of Fuzhou. Currently, it appears that FMT would continue to operate under the organisational structure of SOT for the foreseeable future, subject to assessment by the cultural department (1C2MA; 2C2AC; 1C2AC; 2C2AC; 1C2DI; 2C2DI; 1C2CW; 2C2CW). Government officials had indicated that this assessment

mechanism was dynamic. It aimed to strike a balance by safeguarding the interests of most employees while stimulating practitioners' motivation for the inheritance and development of FO as much as possible. As the market conditions improve, economic benefits might gradually be reflected in the assessment system, truly achieving the simultaneous development of economic and social benefits (1C2GS; 2C2GS). In other words, the government was likely to be more market-driven in guiding the future development of FMT based on market conditions.

***Cue 12- Rationally dealing with policy imbalances with fluctuating expectation:** Facing policy dysfunction in cultural communication, organisational management, and cultural tourism projects, the pluralistic stakeholder groups of FMT displayed more rational emotions when dealing with disruptions and could make timely adjustments, although they continuously reduced their expectations for the goals. As long as there was no enterprise transformation, they generally expressed confidence in sustainable change.*

#### **4.2.2.3.4 Interview Questions 10 to 12 focusing on events since 2021**

Question 10 aimed to understand the conflicts between the living inheritance 活态传承 of FO and the theatre management of FMT. Managers were more concerned about budget issues. Clearly, the fixed theater could save significant expenses on stage setup and sound equipment rental. If moving towards other models, they needed to figure out how to implement this while being cost-effective (1C2MA; 2C2MA). From the actors' stance, the repetitive performances of FO on stage had been polished to a high degree of maturity. Besides the aesthetic and nuanced meanings, there were limitations in further innovation (1C2AC; 2C2AC). From the directors' stance, in the situations of lacking context and with the incorporation of Western musical instruments, FO performances required continuous adaptation of movements and vocal styles. This adaptation manifested as increasingly regular melodies and more synchronised dance movements. It was undeniable that such traces of artificial creation indeed existed in FO performances (1C2DI; 2C2DI). Finally, cultural workers and government staff pointed out that it was essential to heed the advice of experts and respond to market feedback to find a more suitable transformation path for the stage of FO performances

(IC2CW; 2C2CW; 1C2GS; 2C2GS). It was worth noting that the stakeholders of FMT were observing how top troupes in other cities were transforming their thoughts on living heritage into performance styles. Until then, they had not plan to make significant changes. Therefore, the changes would be dynamic and continuous. More importantly, these changes depended on policy support.

Question 11 sought to understand the stakeholders' perception of prioritising the development of cultural industries in urban areas, such as the incorporation of immersive and real-scene elements. From the stances of internal stakeholders, these large-scale cultural performances primarily aimed to expand the influence of local culture, especially in tourism. However, these projects till date are not impacting on the stage performances of FMT and the ritual settings of other private troupes. Managers indicated that the FO performances that attracted tourists required significant financial investment. The innovation in the stage performances might also impact the traditional performance in theatre. These simple stage performances might consequently fail to captivate the audience (1CMA; 2CMA). The actors viewed these high-budget FO performances as a form of cultural product. They emphasised the need to adapt to new modes of performing arts, such as how to seamlessly integrate with the actual environment. In such an environment, they felt unfamiliar with the FO performance. The safer approach for them was to heed the director's advice and replicate the director's requirements (1C2AC; 2C2AC). From the director's perspective, this type of ICH product needed highly experienced directors. They typically had experience organising large-scale cultural performances and light shows, which differ significantly from directing traditional FO performances. As mentioned by government officials, such performances were initially intended as a showcase of achievements in the cultural and tourism industry development. There was still some way to go before they became regular cultural products. Cultural workers were concerned about the impact of the cultural products on students. Distant and immersive experiences undoubtedly diverted the audience's attention elsewhere. Young practitioners might develop a tendency to

underestimate the importance of solid skill training as a result (1C2CW; 2C2CW). Therefore, the ongoing challenge primarily lies in whether the government can adjust its strategies through effective communication to prevent the continuance of these concerns.

Question 12 aimed to understand the competitiveness potential of FMT in the future. Managers and actors believed that the ability to maximise the striving for resources within policy support would become a crucial competitive advantage in the future. This advantage largely depended on the leadership ability of the key leaders. As explained by one manager, that leadership needs to be characterised by the ability to adapt organisational strategies promptly based on higher-level policy demands and the capacity to actively communicate and establish Guanxi with superior departments and various segments of society (2C2MA). The directors believed that finding a balance between politics and the market in their creation was important. The external stakeholder groups believed that establishing effective incentive mechanisms in the process of talent cultivation would be a crucial competitive advantage for FMT in the future (1C2CW; 2C2CW; 1C2GS; 2C2GS).

This section outlined and analysed the challenges and adaptation processes faced by pluralistic stakeholders in the operation of large-scale cultural tourism projects in urban areas. The transition during this stage primarily involved a shift in performance style, and stakeholders expressed negative expectations regarding the future of this transition in talent training and maintaining the tradition of FO performance.

***Cue 13- Decreasing expectations in establishing effective communication with the government:*** The stakeholders in FMT believed that this transition in stage format was detrimental to maintaining tradition and talent development. They emphasised the need for timely communication with relevant departments for adjustments. However, participants hold negative expectations regarding this process.

### **4.2.3 Conclusion**

In the preceding sections (4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2 and 4.2.2.3), the evidence from the three methodological approaches were presented separately. In the next section (4.3), further

analytical evidence is presented in the drive to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives.

### 4.3 Cross-analysis of Cases 1 and 2

The purpose of this section is to analyse the differences and interactions between ST and FMT based on the specific data presentation in Cases 1 and 2 through policy frames and organizational frames. Based on these differences and interactions, a comparison of the perceptions and actions among the pluralistic stakeholder groups of ST and FMT at the same event time is undertaken.

#### 4.3.1 Differences between ST and FMT

Table 4.3.1 primarily compares disparities in four aspects: policies, funding, transmitters of the tradition, and community involvement.

##### 4.3.1.1 Policy frames

Based on the relevant policies in sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1, I observed that since 2013, the essence of policy changes lies in maximising the role of the market in the sustainable development of cultural endeavors, as well as harnessing the social benefits of SOTs in areas such as ICH and cultural tourism. This section explores how the understanding of institutional logic for ST and FMT evolved as cues were updated in policy frameworks. To simplify the text, I will refer to the period from 2013 to 2015 as T1, the period from 2016 to 2020 as T2, and the period from 2021 to 2023 as T3. Table 4.3.1 compares the updated cues from sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1 for interpreting the policies that are useful to ST and FMT separately.

Period	Private troupes	SOTs
T1	Updating and expanding in the cultural market	Adjusting internal mechanisms to align with market demands
T2	Increasing the supply of high-quality FO productions	Enhancing the management of SOTs in their social benefits
T3	Few measures implemented to support private FOTs	The cultural tourism transformation of ICH in urban area.

**Table 4.3.1: Updated cues for policy frames in ST and FMT**

### ***T1: Reforms of Modernised Management for Marketisation***

The main policy differences between ST and FMT were in the modernised management approaches for private troupes and SOTs. Comparing the cues captured from the policies at this period, policies beneficial to ST tended to lean towards market regulation and guided adapting to market updating and expanding. However, the policies aimed at FMTs provided more specific measures of adjustments for SOTs that needed to gradually adapt to the market. This might be an imperfect analogy, but it's quite apt. ST was like a mature child exiled into the market by the government; it was regulated and served, but not nurtured like a child. On the other hand, the growth of FMT still relied on gradual guidance from the cultural department. With regard to surviving independently in the market, FMT was still a child in need of growth. However, FMT was also a significant organisation with a substantial talent pool in the field of FO, indicating that its marketisation is unlikely to be hasty. As Table 4.2.2 in Appendix 16 shows, ST was like many small and micro-enterprises in the market, receiving preferential treatment from the government in terms of taxation and loans. And being a very small part of the ICH system, such preferential treatment might be even more pronounced. For FMT, the government was much gentler. For example, the policy in Document 12 integrated economic benefits and social benefits as the core objectives of FMT development, rather than simply throwing them into the market directly as well as fulfilling the social responsibility of inheriting ICH.

### ***T2: Market Imbalance in the Supply of High-Quality FO***

During this period (T2: 2016 to 2020), the assessment of policy for the cultural market, as evidenced in Documents 05 and 06, reflected a supply-side structural imbalance. In other words, within the current market capacity, there is a shortage of high-quality FO productions, while there were many similar-level companies. Ironically, FO productions from FMT were often regarded as high-quality in the industry, yet they were not solely market-driven creations. Productions from ST emphasised the response of the market and audience, but due to the limited funding of individual sole

proprietorships, it seemed insufficient to match the substantial investment required for high-quality works. Therefore, an assessment of social benefits for SOTs was applied to FMT (D-16). Although there was mention of aligning economic benefits with social benefits, the prioritisation of social benefits made this requirement seem like a mere formality. The policy had put forth specific requirements for FMT in terms of FO creation, performance schedules, education, and knowledge dissemination. Additionally, it introduced related policies such as promoting the creation of opera scripts, FO entering schools, and public performances in communities (see Documents 13 to 15). These initiatives were aimed at helping FMT promote FO performances and encourage the creation of high-quality operas. However, they still had a charitable nature. Among the numerous policies during this period, the activities of the “People’s Grand Stage” 百姓大舞台 appeared to be the sole form of limited support for ST from governments. However, the functions of the cultural spread far outweighed its functions to support the creation of high-quality productions. Clearly, policymakers might not have the means to provide sufficient financial support to most troupes and were instead focusing on promotional activities with lower costs.

### ***T3: Cultural Tourism as the New Market Demands***

During this period (T3: 2021 to 2023), the foundational infrastructure of cultural and tourism projects in the Fuzhou region, such as ecological construction, had been mostly completed. These projects added another market demand for FO performances, in addition to ritual and theater demands. From policy frames, these cultural and tourism projects were open to both ST and FMT. However, the policy emphasised an urban-centric strategy and did not provide specific details about the funding source for FO performances within these projects. This implies that during this stage, this endeavor was destined to remain a part of charitable activities (D-08.09;18). That meant FMT was more likely to participate in these cultural and tourism projects.



#### **4.3.1.2 Organisational frames**

Table 4.3.2 shows the differences in funding, implementation of policies, transmitters of the tradition, and community involvement between ST and FMT. In funding, ST, being a private troupe, primarily relied on the owner's investments for its operational and activity expenses (F-01). Based on data from participant observations and semi-structured interviews, it was evident that government funding for ST had been minimal in recent years. However, the operation of FMT, on the other hand, heavily relied on government grants (F-09). If government funding is insufficient, it can lead to a decrease in employees' income. Fortunately, this situation did not occur, as stakeholders did not complain about income instability. Due to different investment approaches, the market impact on the two organisations is significantly different. ST faces intense market competition. Fortunately, the demand for folk beliefs maintains a certain market capacity, ensuring the sustainable development of ST, although the rituals and folk beliefs exhibited a trend toward digitisation and simplification (see data in section 4.2.1.2.3 and 4.2.1.2.4). In contrast, as mentioned in section 4.2.2.2.1, FMT faced competition for policy resources among numerous SOTs. The employees of FMT often responded promptly to policy calls and proactively incorporated elements that aligned with policy requirements in their creative works, thereby gaining a competitive advantage in fund applications. At the end of section 4.2.2.2.1, the FO performance and creation for the founding anniversary of CRC were introduced.

Regarding policy implementation, there is evidently a significant imbalance and dysfunction in policy support between FMT and ST. Private troupes lacked effective communication with policymakers. As reflected in section 4.2.1.3.4, although the failure of "People's Grand Stage" largely depended on the lack of funding, an important reason for the ineffectiveness of most similar policies in private FOTs lay in the failure of the managers in ST to establish effective communication with policymakers, often perceiving such communication as futile. However, the employees of FMT have a better understanding of this approach. The stakeholders within the ICH system, seeking to

solidify their limited policy support, might not also strongly help the development of private troupes. Therefore, based on the policy frames in sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1, the difference lay in areas such as ICH, cultural tourism, awards, and grant applications, where ST had limited opportunities to receive any policy support (see Table 4.2.16). However, the FMT had more experience and resources in obtaining these policy supports (see sections 4.2.2.2 and 4.2.2.3.3).

For the transmission of opera art, it was evident that the two organisations had different traditional carriers. For example, the young actors in ST generally learned the artistic skills of FO performances from experienced actors and artistic teachers (F-01). The actors in FMT mainly graduated from the Fuzhou Art School, and part of them learned FO from the inheritors of ICH (F-09). The model of learning FO skills in ST was a result of a talent shortage. Based on the information obtained, actors graduating from art schools typically did not choose to work in private troupes during their early years of employment considering the career development (F-09). Finally, the data in sections 4.2.1.2.3 and 4.2.2.2.3 presented the details about situations of community engagement in ST and FMT. For ST, community engagement was a kind of ritual alliance with the interaction among the Elder Association, temples, FOTs, and believers based on the orders of folk beliefs and ritual procedures. However, the interaction between FMT and communities aimed to spread the FO culture through public welfare activities.

Items	ST	FMT
Funding	Boss' sole proprietorship	Government funding
Implementation of policies	Lack of effective communication with the policymakers.	Having more opportunities and resources to obtain support.
Transmitters of the tradition	Internal transmission within the ST.	Learning from the inheritors of ICH; and students from the art school of Fuzhou
Communities/village engagement	The ritual alliance system	The system of ICH, including schools, Community committees, and so on.

**Table 4.3.2: Differences in organisational frames between ST and FMT**

### 4.3.2 Interaction between ST and FMT

Both ST and FMT operated within a similar policy environment. Besides the differences between private and state-owned FOTs in the four aspects, their interactions mainly manifest in the common cultural environments and talent flows.

### **4.3.2.1 The Cultural Environment of Urban-rural Reconstruction**

As evident in the data presentation and analysis in sections 4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2, and 4.2.2.2.1, the changes in the cultural environment of ST and FMT were consistent. This section analyses the interaction between ST and FMT under the cultural environment reconstructed by urban-rural relations.

#### ***T1: Rapid Urban Expansion***

During this rapid urban expansion phase, while rituals and folk beliefs markets may have been shrinking, ST and FMT, as reputable troupes in the industry, maintained their positions in the folk culture market through price differentiation. Almost every participant supported this logic: the main reason for emphasising FO performances was to ensure the safety of family members going abroad for work. However, with more job opportunities within the country and fewer people going abroad for work, and even some who did go abroad no longer organising these performances, the business had suffered significantly. Differentiation in market positioning during this period was driven by the internal restructuring undertaken by FMT. By refining and adjusting the division of labor within the troupe, they achieved a model of modern theater management (D-12). This model undoubtedly paved the way for FMT to operate with the theater as its hub for performances and marketing, although in the past, they also rehearsed in their old theatre. Amid the trend of urban-rural market integration, FMT gradually distanced itself from rural customs and traditions, embarking on the exploration of a pure modernised stage performance. Therefore, in the FO market, ST continued to strive for a larger share of the ritual theater market, while FMT focused on constructing a more modern theater through the advantages of ICH resources.

#### ***T2: The Harmony and Coexistence***

The development in ST and FMT could be seen as harmonious and coexistence of FO art between traditional and contemporary. In the historical development of FO, the ritual context and the leisure activities of literati and scholars during the urban-rural divide

era represented the authentic functions of FO, each respectively belonging to the urban and rural domains (Wang, 2015). As section 4.2.1.2.1 showed, due to rural areas gradually integrating into urban regions through land consolidation, this distinct functional difference also begins to exhibit a trend towards fusion. The comprehensive arrangement of roles and orchestra in theatrical production in FMT often came with significantly higher costs compared to other troupes. This made it challenging for most worshipers, whether individuals or families, to afford the troupe for deity celebrations. Furthermore, it was evident that the ICH system and the ritual alliance system were two distinct social networks (see section 4.2.1.2.5 and 4.2.2.2.1). This also led FMT and ST to develop their respective social functions, which involve the inheritance and protection of FO culture, as well as serving the needs of folk belief rituals. Therefore, despite being seemingly disparate organisations, within the common framework of FO culture and the market environment, they had gradually evolved into a state of harmonious coexistence through policy regulation and market guidance.

### ***T3: Living Inheritance and Actual Ritual Operas***

The development of ST and FMT existed within a context that had never ceased to be based on folk beliefs and the entertainment demands of audiences. However, living inheritance seems to lean towards cultural heritage that has already lost its societal function and remains in museum exhibitions. Some governments and scholars believe that already vanished social contexts and functions could not be truly restored. Therefore, they had incorporated the consideration of this living heritage into the development of cultural tourism in policies (see sections 4.2.1.1.3 and 4.2.2.2.2), aiming to take heritage out of exhibitions, off stages, and back into its original context, although this cultural environment was artificial and inauthentic, for example, the case of “Minyue Watertown” 闽越水镇. However, FO performances with genuine societal needs might seem somewhat out of place in such an artificial cultural environment. In the light of the grand lighting and ancient architecture, it was difficult for the audience to fully immerse themselves and appreciate FO. Instead, they were constantly distracted

by the flashlights and crowds in the sea of people. This was a transient prosperity stemming from cultural tourism rather than a revival of the traditional opera culture. As 4.2.2.2.2 showed, these performances might only occur on a few days each month, and most of the time, they were not visible due to a lack of tourists. It seemed that cultural tourism projects were more inclined to profit from FMT, but in reality, FMT employees did not view this as a solemn FO performance, rather, it was a task that they were not very accustomed to. Overall, in the cultural tourism arena, neither ST nor FMT had found a suitable way to integrate effectively.

#### **4.3.2.2 The Talent Flows**

Another crucial aspect of interaction between ST and FMT relates to the mobility and sharing of talent. As shown in sections 4.2.1.2.7 and 4.2.2.2.1, the leading role of ST was generally depended on SOTs. Furthermore, the experienced actors in FMT were also willing to obtain higher incomes through part-time jobs in private troupes. This flexible and reasonable talent mobility benefits most practitioners. The experienced actors in FMT can earn significant additional income through part-time work, which serves as extra support from the organisation. Since they inevitably need to allocate a significant amount of time to performances and rehearsals with private troupes, if the organisations would have preferred to prevent this part-time work, they would still comply with the arrangement for the sake of their stable income. However, the leaders of FMT had tacitly approved their actions and provided support in actual work arrangements. Undoubtedly, this serves as compensation for veteran actors who have been working at FMT for a long time but do not hold a higher rank or have more performance opportunities. For young actors, it is also a motivation because there are only a few leading roles in an opera and limited higher-ranking positions within the troupe. Such part-time opportunities at least provide them with the motivation to strive for improvement during their early years. On the other hand, for private troupes like ST, which suffer from a talent shortage, this kind of talent mobility can help them create higher-quality operas and gain a competitive edge in the market. It is undoubtedly a

crucial matter concerning the survival of the troupe.

### 4.3.3 Adaptive Sensemaking among Pluralistic Stakeholders

As mentioned by Weick in 1988, commitment is one critical process within sensemaking, and plays a crucial role in determining employees' dedication and attachment. In the dynamic interplay between commitment and frames, shared frames serve as guiding principles for collective interpretation and action, as emphasised by Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara (2014). Simultaneously, these shared frames significantly influence the adaptive process. As evidenced in the semi-structured interviews data for the FO industry, the practitioners' dedication and attachment to organisational decisions largely depend on policy support. For SOTs, policy support is undoubtedly a decisive factor. Employees of ST also exhibited a high degree of attachment to policies, but it seemed that the outcomes of policy support were not satisfactory to them, for instance, the implementation of a broker's license (see Table 4.2.16) and cultural tourism (see section 4.2.1.3.5). This section simultaneously examines the disparities in how employee expectations change within ST and FMT, stemming from the conflict between policy support and the actual situation when confronted with the same policy. This prompts reflections on the organisation's future. ST actively responded to the demands of modern governance in the fierce competition of the cultural market, while FMT, having successfully consolidated its organisational position in the ICH system, to some extent, was spared from market impact. Therefore, as Table 4.3.3 shows, facing the demands of modernised reforms and effective management, the pluralistic stakeholders in these two troupes had distinctively different expectations in organisations and policies, despite similar trends.

Period	ST	FMT
T1	Unfulfilled policy commitments and disappear organizational support; Positive adaptation, but the degree of expectation decreased	Adhering to policy requirements, maintaining lower initial expectations
T2	The malfunctioned ICH policies and the thoughts of changing careers	Rationally dealing with policy imbalances with fluctuating expectation
T3	Policy failure exacerbates, then ST lowers costs to ensure survival	Decreasing expectations in establishing effective communication with the government

**Table 4.3.3: The changes in commitment and expectation from pluralistic stakeholders' perception**

#### **4.3.3.1 Unfulfilled Commitment in Policies and Organisations**

Comparing the perceptions of the pluralistic stakeholder groups from FMT, as Table 4.2.12, 4.2.14, and 4.2.16 shows, stakeholders of ST had more unfulfilled promises, especially in aspects like market regulation and financial support. In the early stages of policy implementation, stakeholders of ST took various actions to adapt to the changes brought about by the reforms. For instance, they expanded the scope of FO performances and increased funding for creative endeavors (see Table 4.2.12 and 4.2.13). However, when certain policies were not fully implemented and ST practitioners put in a lot of effort to meet the policy requirements without gaining a competitive advantage, it led to a decrease in participants' expectations regarding the goals. Furthermore, the formerly paternalistic approach within the troupe was no longer applicable to modern corporate management. As a result, employees no longer received care from the troupe regarding their basic needs outside of working hours (see section 4.2.1.3.3). Such changes evidently impacted organisational cohesion. When organisational behavior is disrupted or income is not secure, doing part-time jobs or changing careers became considered options (see Table 4.2.12 and 4.2.15).

On their part, practitioners at FMT had lower initial expectations for a modern theater management model, so their emotional response was less volatile and their level of expectation did not change significantly when faced with policy implementation discrepancies. Especially with the internal organisational adjustments within the troupe, employees did not have high expectations for market-oriented reforms. On the contrary, almost all participants believed that FMT lacked the conditions for transition into an independent enterprise (see Table 4.2.26). As anticipated, such organisational adjustments did not have a substantial impact on sustainable development. Therefore, even when encountering extremely low theater attendance and challenges in talent training, pluralistic stakeholders maintained a reasonable level of confidence that these challenges would not significantly impact their basic income (see Table 4.2.27).

#### **4.3.3.2 Changes in expectation for policy support**

The policies during this period had inclined towards strengthening the ICH system and establishing specific strategies for cultural education and promotion. The pluralistic stakeholders perceived challenges in integrating themselves into the ICH system. As Table 4.2.16 shows, despite being involved in the development of FO arts, the ICH system established based on the system of inheritors had formed a relatively fixed apprenticeship system, excluding practitioners who had not been included in policy support potentially. Additionally, due to the direct impact of the pandemic, the number of people from Fuzhou going abroad for work has sharply declined. This had a catastrophic impact on the FO market. As Tables 4.2.16, 4.2.17, and 4.2.18 show, there was a peak in aspiration for policy and financial support, but the failure of ICH policies and some assistance policies further disappointed participants. This led them to consider changing their careers. These fluctuating expectations have led to significant changes in the organisational structure of ST. The organisational form had shifted from professional troupes to more flexible, club-like entities to better adapt to the crisis. Additionally, to meet the annual needs of theatrical scripts, troupes had opted for a more flexible approach in hiring supporting actors, reducing the number of individuals under fixed contracts. Skilled supporting roles, such as martial artists, were being sourced from economically underdeveloped areas in other provinces to reduce wage costs. The negative impact of these changes was the participants' negative emotions and the potential dissolution of ST. Participants associated that potential outcome to the fact that anticipated policy support had not materialised.

The stakeholders of FMT generally felt policy dysfunction in ICH management and the implementation of some cultural tourism projects. Indeed, this discrepancy had to some extent affected their enthusiasm for work. As Table 4.2.28 shows, this discrepancy was mainly evident in talent incentive mechanisms and daily management. Young students acquired FO performance skills through long and arduous study, but even the most



outstanding young actors among them could only secure a five-year service contract when they first joined FMT. In a structural sense, they are treated like outsourced personnel within the cultural system. On the other hand, the significant investment in cultural tourism projects appeared to have expanded new performance markets for FMT. However, as sections 4.2.2.3.3 and 4.2.2.2.2 show, in reality, many FO performances had been interrupted, and low-quality FO performances were being mass-produced in tourist areas. Despite their wholehearted dedication, some public welfare activities often remain superficial, with relatively average actual promotion and dissemination effects (see Table 4.2.28). These situations had, to some extent, disrupted or reduced the practitioners' expectations regarding policy implementation and organisational goal achievement. In contrast to stakeholders from ST, participants in FMT exhibited more rational emotions when faced with such policy discrepancies. This allowed them to flexibly adapt their actions by enabling the resumption of interrupted phases or progressing toward more positive directions.

#### **4.3.3.3 Changes in Expectation for Organisational Support**

With policies persistently malfunctioning and showing varying degrees of bias, stakeholders were beginning to lose expectation in the possibility of obtaining organisational support. Comparing the views of stakeholders in ST and FMT, there were some differences in expectations regarding organisational support between these two groups. In ST, due to the prolonged policy support failure, the boss had begun seeking sustainable development by reducing costs. Unfortunately, one of the primary areas where costs were being reduced was actor salaries. Although this strategy did not originate in this period, it was evident that it had peaked during this time. A compelling piece of evidence in section 4.2.1.3.5, was that the prices for inviting ST to perform FO, which used to be similar to those of first-rate troupes, had now dropped to a level closer to third-rate companies during this period. For regular actors, the lack of guaranteed performance opportunities meant their well-being and income were not assured. This instability led to a gradual lowering of their expectations for the sustainability of their

profession. Employees lacking motivation would receive increasingly less support from ST both in terms of compensation and the number of performance opportunities. These will bring negative emotions in perceiving sustainability of their jobs.

On the other hand, the stakeholders from FMT harboured negative emotions regarding the future of FO performances, particularly concerning talent training and stage forms. They believed that effective communication with policymakers was important for enhancing the integration of traditional and contemporary needs. This could involve strengthening incentive mechanisms for talent, with a specific emphasis on the cultivation of fundamental skills and local knowledge. Another underlying theme, not explicitly stated in the data section but evident through the interview, was the potential for obtaining more policy and financial support within the limited resources of the ICH system. This support could help maintain traditions of FO performances while balancing market and political orientations. However, achieving this necessitates astute insights and a strong drive from FMT leaders in interpersonal interactions. In terms of upholding artistic traditions and fostering commercialized development, the stakeholder groups obviously decreased expectations of organisational support. Meanwhile, negative emotions brought by low expectation impact the progress of sustainable development in these aspects.

#### **4.3.4 Findings**

The previous sections compared the differences and interactions between ST and FMT in terms of policies and organisational aspects. Examining these contradictions between policies and organisational frames, highlighted how stakeholder groups from both theaters continuously adapt to these changes, showcasing adaptive behavior and the changes in the degree of expectations during the process. Based on the data analysis evidence, the shared meanings of these two FOTs focused on the commitment to sustainable profits and cultural prosperity. ST and FMT do have differences in their sequences of values and sustainable development focus. ST places a priority on

maximising profits, while FMT is more concerned with the social responsibility of FO inheritance and development for the future. This disparity influences their business strategies and goals. With regard to sustainability, in the ongoing changing cultural ecology, based on sensemaking rooted in the practitioners' discourse system, the data suggests that inadequate support from policy and organisation will decrease the practitioners' positivity in creation and change, thereby impacting their expectation for the future of organisations.

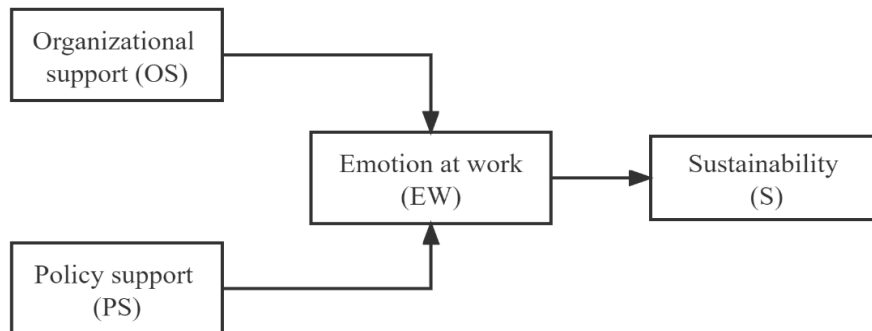
Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) indicated that in unstable conditions, shared meaning (commitment, identity, and expectations) and emotion impact sensemaking; thus, individuals significantly shape organisational adaption. Weick (2010) noted that reasonable perception through updating mental models can reduce mindless actions. Based on that understanding of sensemaking, I further analysed the adaptive mechanism that impacts the sustainable future of FOTs. I integrated the key factors that impact practitioners' adaptive behavior and cognitions in Table 4.3.4 to present the interaction between shared meanings and emotions (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Data suggest that shared meanings are mainly from organisational support and policy support. Based on the cues from the case study, the demands from practitioners within organisations include care, commitment to career development, and identity. Also, policy support was largely emphasised in their interview as impacting the proactivity of practitioners in sustaining FO creation. The uncertainty of support influences the competition and tradeoffs for the future development of FOTs. In addition, negative expectations and emotions caused by insufficient support impact sustainability in organisational changes (Porath et al., 2012; Tummers et al., 2015). Considering the understanding of sustainability in applied ethnomusicology, humans play a key role in interacting with the surrounding cultural soil (Titon, 2009b; Lee, 2007, p. 1). Meanwhile, based on the interpretive mechanism of adaptive sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), the practitioners' emotions at work play a mediating effect in connecting shared meanings and a sustainable future. The impact of these shared

meanings on organisational sustainability also depends on the balance that policy-makers and organisational decision-makers strike among diverse needs and the intricate social network. Ultimately, the outcome of the sensemaking will manifest in changes in cognition and behavior among practitioners, conveyed through the emotional channel.

Key dynamics	Levels for adaptive sensemaking	Sustainability in the Future
<i>Share meanings</i> Policy support Organisational support	Updating and doubting	Competition and tradeoffs between multiple requirements and enact power for policymakers; Competition and tradeoffs between profits, social network, and capability for FOTs.
<i>Emotions</i> Positive emotions in their work Negative emotion in their work	Moderately intense, positive or negative emotions	How sensemaking changes practitioners' psychological and bodily sensations

**Table 4.3.4: Summary of the relationship between key dynamics, sensemaking, and sustainability**

Therefore, the key dynamics that impact the sustainability of FOTs relate to the three influential factors: policy support (PS), organisational support (OS), and emotions at work (EW). Based on these findings, a feasible model is forwarded in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1: The Emergent Model**

### 4.3.5 Conclusion

This chapter (4) has documented the data analysis evidence for the two case studies. The analytical steps were taken towards understanding sensemaking in SM, and specifically to understand the key factors that impacted the pluralistic stakeholders' adaptive process from the sensemaking results in two case studies. Based on the

analytical findings within three methodological sources in the two cases, a deeper understanding of the changes inside and outside FOTs, and how the practitioners from these two troupes adapted to these changes, was achieved. From the analytical results, it is evident that the expectations of pluralistic stakeholders regarding the future change with the failure or inadequacy of policies and organisational support. This change leads to a decline in their motivation for adaptability to change. From the data results of the case study, it is clear that policy support and organisational support have a significant impact on participants' adaptability to change and positive expectations for the organisation's future. Based on this subjective evidence, a model of the relationship between these influential factors and sustainability in FOTs has been forwarded in Figure 4.1. Taken together, the analytical evidence presented in this chapter explored research questions 1 and 2.

Despite the subjective expressions from participants in interviews and observations by researchers, I did not find sufficient evidence in this phase to confirm that policy support and organisational support, mediated through changes in participants' emotions, ultimately affect the sustainability of the organisation. At the same time, it was not possible to determine the extent to which the mediating effect of emotions comes into play during the adaptive meaning construction process. Finally, I could not confirm whether these factors have a consistent impact on the sustainable future of various troupes in the FO industry for their stakeholders. These aspects were however explored through a quantitative tool (see chapter 5). Thus, in the next chapter, the questionnaire based quantitative approach implementation and analytical results are documented towards exploring research question 3.

## **Chapter Five: Data Collection and Analysis in Questionnaire**

In Chapter 4, I have aggregated themes from two case studies to conceptualize the key influential factors of the sustainability of FOTs and construct a model. This current chapter aims to examine the relationships between these key factors and sustainability through a quantitative survey. The exploration of changes in FOTs and stakeholders' adaptive behavior and cognition mentioned in the last chapter is still an important context for quantitative research. This chapter answers research question 3 to examine how the key factors impact the sustainability of FOTs.

### **5.1 Theories and Hypothesis Development**

According to the cross-analysis of cases 1 and 2, facing the changes inside and outside FOTs, the adaptive process of pursuing sustainable development could not ignore support from organisations and government, as well as the important role of practitioners' emotions at work. Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) explored the key themes of shared meanings and emotions while examining how sensemaking could impact the adaptive process in the ongoing changed environment. Table 4.3.4 adapted from this summary of the sensemaking theme clarified the key factors that impacted sustainability from the theme aggregation (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Considering the role of the practitioners' emotions in sustaining the development of FOTs (Titon, 2009b; Lee, 2007, p. 1), OS and PS may positively contribute to practitioners' emotions at work, sequentially impacting the sustainability of FOTs. The relationships between these key factors to sustainability may depend on the part that emotions play at work as a mediator. The quantitative research explores the key factors that impact sustainability combining cues from the case study and validated items/variables from past literature. The emerging model (see Figure 4.1) that is explored here has been constructed based on the qualitative evidence documented in chapter 4. Next, the conceptualised variables are discussed drawing from existing literature to provide a justification for further examining the theorized relationships and overall model by statistical methods.

Based on the influential factors presented in Figure 4.1, the practitioners consider the premise of the sustainability of FOTs is the sustaining creation of values, encompassing profitability for the long term and cultural prosperity. In the existing literature, organisational sustainability is more likely to be the interpretation of sustainability performance (SP). SP measures the degree of integration of social, economic, and environmental in corporate operations to build the organisational capability of sustainable development (Lourenço et al., 2012; Eccles, Ioannou, and Serafeim, 2014). Based on the understanding of the three dimensions, the connection between organisational capabilities and SP meets the demands of stakeholders as well as focuses on ecology and social responsibility (Gelhard and von Delft, 2016).

As analysed in section 4.3.3, practitioners consider striving for more OS and PS as important capabilities for the sustainability of FOTs. Perceive organisational support (POS) for stakeholders can be viewed as a commitment to assisting practitioners' career development (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Wang et al., 2018). The OS meeting the demands of stakeholders contributes to positive emotion at their work (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Then, positive employees in their jobs will trigger positive shared meanings and subsequent actions (Ahuja, Heizmann, and Clegg, 2019; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), ultimately improving the growth of sustainability (Byrne and Hochwarter, 2008). Based on the evidence from case studies and existing literature, I hypothesized:

***Hypothesis 1a:*** OS will be positively related to sustainability (S).

***Hypothesis 1b:*** OS will be positively related to EW.

***Hypothesis 1c:*** EW will have a mediating effect on the relationship between OS and S.

On the other hand, policymakers consider FOTs as a part of the cultural and tourism industry. However, the pluralistic stakeholders in case studies needed more effective policy support to increase their expectations for the organisational future. Asmelash and

Kumar (2019) assessed the progress of tourism sustainability, including four dimensions: economy, environment, social culture, and institution. The institutional dimensions included policy making and implementation (Miller, 2001; Asmelash and Kumar, 2019). The data from the interview and theoretical construction in two-case studies indicated the degree of policy support impacted practitioners' emotions at work (see section 4.3.4). As discussed above, the practitioners' emotions at work finally influenced the sustainability of FOTs. Hence, I hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2a:* PS will be positively related to S.

*Hypothesis 2b:* PS will be positively related to EW.

*Hypothesis 2c:* EW will have a mediating effect on the relationship between PS and S.

## **5.2 Analytical Implementation**

### **5.2.1 Sample and Data**

I considered the sampling frame based on the FOTs list collected in the qualitative strand (Kemper et al., 2003, p. 284), with a list of 69 FOTs in urban-rural areas of Fuzhou that continued their business in coastal Fujian. To achieve the sample representativeness and balanced distribution of the stakeholders inside and outside FOTs, I asked and assisted the managers in each troupe to randomly select 7-8 practitioners to participate in different positions of inside and outside troupes. The participants in this research showed a preference for non-use of electronic options. Therefore, in the main survey, I distributed the paper version of the questionnaire and visited every troupe to outline the purpose, procedure, and confidentiality aspects during the data collection and analysis.

The analytical results from the quantitative instrument in this study are clearly documented towards an understanding of core aspects: demographics of respondents, variable measurement, descriptive statistics, assessment of measurement model, report of reliability and validity, and assessment of Structural Equational Model (SEM).



### **5.2.2 Demographics of Respondents**

In total, I distributed 180 questionnaires, and 153 valid questionnaires were received. The response rate was 85%. Table 5.1 analyses the demographics of respondents based on SPSS 28. Participants' demographics, such as gender, age, education, position, and years of working are documented in that Table. In gender, among these participants, female practitioners account for a higher proportion compared to male practitioners, respectively 58.17 and 41.83 percent of the total. In age, the number of respondents over 40 years old accounts for 41.83%, and among them, participants over 50 years old account for 20.26%, which shows that the employee age structure in both case studies is slightly old. In education, most respondents do not have a bachelor's degree, accounting for 70.59%, and a degree in middle school and below occupied 36.60%, which indicates that the research group in the FO industry generally has a relatively low educational background. For the data distribution regarding working positions, the internal stakeholders account for 64.06% of the total, and the external stakeholders account for 35.94%, which has similar results in the proportion of internal and external stakeholders in snowball sampling of cases study.

This data supports the idea that the FOTs have flexible administrative modes, and the actors generally have work experience in different positions. Regarding the years of working, most participants worked in FOTs for more than ten years. The years of work between 10 to 20 years and over 20 years account for 45.10% and 35.95% respectively. Secondly, only 4.58% of young people entered this industry in the last five years. However, more than triple the number as many people joined FOTs five to ten years ago as in recent five years. This evidence suggests that in the case studies the number of practitioners is decreasing, and many old employees continue their work although they have reached retirement age.

In addition, the age and position crosstabulation (Table 5.2) shows the age distribution in different positions. Data indicates actors under 39 years old account for 32.68%; the managers have a more balanced age distribution than other positions and a more

seriously aging age structure; and the workers in the cultural department have a similar age structure to actors. Data shows actors are a large group in this industry. And the other external stakeholders in this industry are more distributed in the range over 40 years old. From the age structure of internal and external stakeholders, the external stakeholders have a higher degree of aging than the internal stakeholders. To some extent, the results from the case studies suggests that many retired employees become external practitioners in this industry for sustainable income.

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	64	41.83	41.83	41.83
	Female	89	58.17	58.17	100.00
	Total	153	100	100	
<b>Age</b>	Under 30 Years	38	24.84	24.84	24.84
	30 To 39 Years	51	33.33	33.33	58.17
	40 To 49 Years	33	21.57	21.57	79.74
	50 Years and Older	31	20.26	20.26	100.00
	Total	153	100	100	
<b>Education</b>	Completed Primary School or below	13	8.50	8.50	8.50
	Completed Middle School	43	28.10	28.10	36.60
	Completed High School	52	33.99	33.99	70.59
	Bachelor's Degree or above	45	29.41	29.41	100.00
	Total	153	100	100	
<b>Position</b>	Actor	77	50.33	50.33	50.33
	Manager and other internal stakeholders	21	13.73	13.73	64.05
	Workers in the cultural department	31	20.26	20.26	84.31
	Other external stakeholders	24	15.69	15.69	100.00
	Total	153	100	100	
<b>Years of work</b>	Within five years	7	4.58	4.58	4.58
	5-9 Years	22	14.38	14.38	18.95
	10-20 Years	69	45.10	45.10	64.05
	More than 20 Years	55	35.95	35.95	100.00
	Total	153	100	100	

**Table 5.1: Characteristics of Respondents (N=153)**

Based on the record of field notes in two case studies, an FOT generally encompasses 2 or 3 managers and about 40 actors. Therefore, many actors undertake administrative work in FOT. Although best effort was made to distribute questionnaires to different stakeholder groups, the data suggests that facing multiple career identities, internal employees generally identify themselves as the actors. The results suggest a uniform trend in both case studies, practitioners generally need to work in multiple positions, so they have an ambiguous career identity. This phenomenon causes a minimum of under 5 in some cross items based on the 153-sample number. Table 5.3 shows clearly that most actors have an educational background of high school and below, and more than half of managers in troupes and workers in the cultural department have bachelor's degrees and above.

			Position				Total
			Actor	Manager and other internal stakeholders	Workers in the cultural department	Other external stakeholders	
Age	Under 39 years	Count	50	10	20	9	89
		% of Total	32.68%	6.54%	13.07%	5.88%	58.17%
	Over 40 years	Count	27	11	11	15	64
		% of Total	17.65%	7.19%	7.19%	9.80%	41.83%
Total	Count		77	21	31	24	153
	% of Total		50.33%	13.73%	20.26%	15.69%	100.0%

**Table 5.2: Age \* Position Crosstabulation**

			Position				Total
			Actor	Manager and others	Workers in the cultural department	Other external stakeholders	
Education	High school and below	Count	70	4	12	22	108
		% of Total	45.75%	2.61%	7.84%	14.38%	70.59%
	Bachelor's degree and above	Count	7	17	19	2	45
		% of Total	4.58%	11.10%	12.42%	1.30%	29.41%
Total	Count		77	21	31	24	153
	% of Total		50.33%	13.71%	20.26%	15.68%	100.0%

**Table 5.3: Education \* Position Crosstabulation**

### **5.2.3 Measures**

I developed the questionnaire in English and translated it into Chinese for the participants. To explore the rationality of items in the questionnaire, I conducted a pilot study involving 10 practitioners from two troupes and the content analysis for the questionnaire (Moenaert and Souder, 1990) was subsequently undertaken. The questions were displayed on a seven-point Likert scale. The common attitude scale in social science research indicates from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Bollen, 1989, p. 485) and this was used to evaluate participants' degree of agreement with each item. Taking into consideration the responses of participants in pilot testing, measurement items were revised to ensure the suitability of the survey tool to the sample for this study (Moenaert and Souder, 1990).

### **Variables**

Sustainability was measured using five items adapted from Gelhard and Delft's (2016) 5-item scale. According to the conceptualisation of sustainability developed from the qualitative phase, sustainability in this thesis encompasses two dimensions of sustainable profits and cultural creation, which are integrated into the scale. The alpha coefficient for the scale in this research is 0.887.

Organisational support was measured using five items adapted from Shen and Benson's (2016) eight-item perceived organisational support scale. Three items were deleted from the original scale because the participants did not adapt to the reverse questioning and standardised factor loadings were relatively low. The alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.907. Policy support was measured with 4-items adapted from the scale of Local Policy Planning and Support (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019). Two items were deleted from the original scale, due to low standardised factor loading. The alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.901.

In this thesis, positive emotion is viewed as a factor that positively impacts

sustainability. Porath et al. (2012) pointed out that vitality is the “high activation manifestation of positive affect” which is more related to positive than negative emotion. Based on the investigation in the case studies phase, emotions as a sensegiving resource encompass positive and negative dimensions in turbulent conditions. Therefore, emotion at work was measured by the scale adapted from the vitality dimensions of thriving at work scale (Porath et al., 2012), and the alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.850. The survey instrument for all variables explored in this study is documented in Appendix 12 and the questionnaire is shown in Appendix 13. The data analysis used software SPSS 28 and AMOS 26.

### **5.3 Results**

The data for this study were screened for reliability and validity evidence. Results reported include descriptive statistics, reliability evidence, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to assess the measurement model (validity evidence), and structural equation model (SEM) results for testing hypotheses.

#### **5.3.1 Descriptive statistics**

Based on the data for retained items, Table 5.4 reports the sample number, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values. The sample number is 153 without missing data; and the minimum and maximum range for all items is between 1 to 7. Secondly, the mean values are between 4.350 to 5.020, which reflect high mean values given the maximum range of 7. Thirdly, the skewness of each item is between -0.493 to 0.347, and the kurtosis of each item is between -0.715 to 0.857. From the skewness and kurtosis, deviations are less than the absolute value  $\pm 1$ , which is a good range (Humble, 2020, p. 39). Therefore, the curve of the data follows the normal distribution (Kline, 2016, pp. 74-76).

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
OS1	153	1	7	4.350	1.121	-0.194	0.196	0.230	0.390
OS3	153	2	7	4.490	1.064	0.208	0.196	-0.193	0.390
OS4	153	2	7	4.440	1.063	0.148	0.196	-0.424	0.390
OS6	153	2	7	4.360	1.055	0.053	0.196	-0.312	0.390
OS7	153	1	7	4.480	1.136	0.082	0.196	-0.015	0.390
PS3	153	2	7	4.780	1.152	-0.038	0.196	-0.357	0.390
PS4	153	2	7	4.760	1.146	-0.112	0.196	-0.306	0.390
PS5	153	3	7	4.720	1.144	0.250	0.196	-0.715	0.390
PS6	153	2	7	4.760	1.031	0.049	0.196	-0.421	0.390
EW1	153	2	7	4.590	1.178	-0.267	0.196	-0.664	0.390
EW2	153	2	7	4.740	1.044	0.015	0.196	-0.140	0.390
EW3	153	1	7	4.850	1.213	-0.245	0.196	-0.285	0.390
EW4	153	2	7	4.730	1.045	0.347	0.196	-0.167	0.390
EW5	153	2	7	4.830	1.152	0.050	0.196	-0.543	0.390
S1	153	2	7	4.970	0.976	-0.493	0.196	0.400	0.390
S2	153	2	7	5.010	1.006	-0.419	0.196	0.069	0.390
S3	153	1	7	5.020	0.983	-0.376	0.196	0.857	0.390
S4	153	3	7	4.970	0.932	0.052	0.196	-0.332	0.390
S5	153	2	7	4.990	0.925	-0.126	0.196	0.058	0.390

**Table 5.4: Descriptive Statistics**

### 5.3.2 Assessment of measurement model

The measure part reports Cronbach's alpha of each construct which was all higher than 0,7 (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955; Hair et al., 2010). Based on the normal distribution of the data curve and good reliability, factor analysis was used to confirm whether the prior understanding of scale items adapted for this study (Humble, 2020, p. 79) truly reflects the conceptualised factors. AMOS 26 was used to estimate standard factor loading and model fit of each construct to confirm the retained items. In all cases, at least 3 items were used to measure each construct (Cappelleri et al., 2000), and the standardised factor loadings satisfy the 0.7 benchmark (Garver and Mentzer, 1999). The model fit statistics are also satisfactory. The results in Table 5.5 showed the fit indices, and the four constructs had model fit results that were good or acceptable (Humble, 2020, p. 85).

Model	Fit Index						
	Chi-square	DF	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
OS	9.924	5.000	0.974	0.922	0.080	0.999	0.979
PS	0.391	2.000	0.999	0.993	0.000	1.000	1.013
EW	7.930	5.000	0.980	0.940	0.062	0.990	0.980
S	27.578	5.000	0.929	0.786	0.172	0.945	0.891

**Table 5.5: Fit Indices in Four Constructs**

### 5.3.3 Reliability and Validity

AMOS 26 software was used to estimate reliability and validity in this study. Following relevant coefficients benchmarks, reliability and validity of measured factors in CFA models (Raykov, 2004; Hancock and Mueller, 2001; Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair, et al., 2010) were assessed.

Humble (2020) pointed out: “The composite reliability (CR) is the ratio of explained variance over total variance (P. 313).” The benchmark of CR is  $\geq 0.7$  (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Hair et al. (2010) considered the SEM needed to report standardised factor loading (p. 680) and squared multiple correlations (SMC) and are both viewed as the indexes of item reliability (P. 678). The standardised factor loading ideally needs to be higher or equal to 0.7 (Hair, et al., 2010, p. 679), and the good rule of thumb of SMC is greater than 0.5 (Hair, et al., 2010, p. 678). Furthermore, it is necessary to report the parameter estimates in the SEM, including Unstandardized loadings, standard error, z-value, and p-value (Hair, et al., 2010; p. 679).

Table 5.6 reports the significance of the estimated parameter, item reliability, and composite reliability. The results show the CR values for all constructs are between 0.850 to 0.910, thus satisfactory estimates have been achieved for all factors. The standardised factor loadings of all retained items are greater than 0.7 and the SMC values are between 0.49 to 0.77. Therefore, the reliability evidence for all factor measures in the CFA model conforms to SEM benchmarks.

item	Significance of estimated parameter				Item Reliability		Composite Reliability
	Unstd.	S.E.	z-value	P	Std.	SMC	CR
OS1	1.000				0.850	0.730	0.910
OS3	0.870	0.080	11.410	<0.001	0.780	0.610	
OS4	0.820	0.080	10.460	<0.001	0.740	0.540	
OS6	0.970	0.070	13.670	<0.001	0.880	0.770	
OS OS7	0.980	0.080	12.540	<0.001	0.830	0.690	
PS3	1.000				0.850	0.720	0.900
PS4	0.980	0.080	12.180	<0.001	0.830	0.690	
PS5	0.960	0.080	11.940	<0.001	0.820	0.670	
PS PS6	0.880	0.070	12.280	<0.001	0.840	0.700	
EW1	1.000				0.710	0.500	0.850
EW2	0.870	0.110	7.690	<0.001	0.700	0.490	
EW3	1.050	0.130	7.920	<0.001	0.720	0.520	
EW4	0.980	0.120	8.500	<0.001	0.780	0.610	
EW EW5	1.040	0.130	8.200	<0.001	0.750	0.560	
S1	1.000				0.750	0.560	0.890
S2	1.110	0.110	9.910	<0.001	0.810	0.650	
S3	1.160	0.110	10.510	<0.001	0.860	0.740	
S4	0.950	0.100	9.120	<0.001	0.750	0.560	
S S5	0.940	0.100	9.010	<0.001	0.740	0.550	

**Table 5.6: Reliability**

Furthermore, to ensure research credibility, rigor of measurement, convergence, and discriminant validity of data (Humble, 2020, p. 93) were checked in this research. Table 5.7 reports the correlation matrix showcasing convergence and discriminant validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) is “the summary measure of convergence among a set of items representing a latent construct (Hair et al., 2010, p. 662)”, and for latent variables, the benchmark of AVE is higher than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010, p. 680). As Table 5.7 shows, the AVE of each variable is between 0.54 to 0.7, so convergent validity is confirmed for all variables.

Campbell and Fiske (1959) pointed out that a multitrait-multimethod matrix was a convenient method to examine discriminant validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) pointed out a common approach establishes discriminant validity. Hair et al. (2010) also discussed the details of this approach which is the AVE estimates for each factor are



higher than the squared inter-construct correlations associated with that factor (p. 694). Table 5.7 shows that the value of AVE in each construct is more than the square of correlation coefficients in most other constructs, which follows the logic of the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Therefore, the evidence supports satisfactory discriminant validity conclusion (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

	AVE	S	EW	PS	OS
S	0.61	<b>0.781</b>			
EW	0.54	0.695	<b>0.735</b>		
PS	0.70	0.583	0.784	<b>0.837</b>	
OS	0.67	0.524	0.756	0.724	<b>0.819</b>

**Table 5.7: Correlation Matrix**

### 5.3.4 Assessment of Structural Equational Model

Table 5.8 reports the fit indices for the empirical model with four factors (see Figure 4.1). Compared in line with the specified benchmarks for model fit indices (Humble, 2020, pp. 84-85; Hair, et al., 2010; p. 692), the result shows that the empirical model has a relatively good fit: except for two (GFI= 0.874 and AGFI=0.838) indicators.

Index	Criteria	Model fit	Result
Chi-square		214.151	
DF		146.000	
CHI-SQUARE/DF	<3	1.467	A good fit
GFI	>0.9	0.874	An acceptable fit
AGFI	>0.9	0.836	An acceptable fit
RMSEA	<0.08	0.055	A good fit
S-RMR	<0.08	0.0458	A good fit
CFI	>0.9	0.964	A good fit
TLI	>0.9	0.957	A good fit

**Table 5.8: Fit Indices**

The model in Figure 4.1 includes two paths with the same mediation variable. Table 5.9 reports the results of the path analysis. In H1a, H1b, and H1c, I proposed that OS positively impacted sustainability directly, OS positively impacted EW, and EW would have a mediating effect on the relationship between OS and S. Checking the indices of the unstandardised coefficient, data shows that OS positively relates to EW but has no

direct effect on sustainability, and EW has a significant and positive effect on sustainability. Analysed in line with Baron and Kenny 's (1986) causal chain guideline, the data reflects the perfect mediation influence of EW as OS has no direct effect on sustainability. Therefore, H1b and H1c are supported. In H2a, H2b, and H2c, I proposed that PS positively impacted sustainability, PS positively impacted EW, and EW would mediate the relationship between PS and sustainability. Table 5.9 shows that PS has a significant positive influence on EW but has no direct effect on sustainability, and EW is significantly positively related to sustainability. Therefore, H2b and H2c are supported.

Also, in Table 5.9, the standardised regression weights show that policy support has a larger impact than organisational support on emotion at work. Based on the statistical evidence too, it could also be argued that policy support would more likely have a positive effect on sustainability than organisational support. Finally, the R<sup>2</sup> shows that 68.9% and 48.7% of the variance can be explained by correlation, which satisfies the medium or high degree benchmark (Humble, 2020, p. 55; Hair, et al., 2010).

Endogenous	Exogenous	Unstd.	S.E.	z-value	P	Std.	R2
EW	OS	0.328	0.087	3.773	<0.001	0.396	0.689
	PS	0.399	0.088	4.549	<0.001	0.497	
S	EW	0.572	0.159	3.606	<0.001	0.635	0.487
	OS	-0.029	0.097	-0.295	0.768	-0.038	
	PS	0.082	0.103	0.798	0.425	0.113	

**Table 5.9: Significance of Structural Equation Model**

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter documented the analytical steps taken towards confirming reliability and validity in this study and gauging the hypothesised relationships using SEM approach (Amos 26). In other words, the analytical exploration of Figure 4.1 is documented in this chapter. The results indicate that policy support has a more significant positive effect on emotion at work and sustainability than organisational support. Emotion at

work mediates the relationship between policy support and sustainability, as well as organisational support and sustainability. Therefore, the quantitative results support the qualitative findings of the two case studies, and also shed some light on the mediating impact of emotions on the association between OS and Sustainability on the one hand, and PS and Sustainability on the other.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions, contributions, limitations, and Future**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This research sought to understand sensemaking in the SM of FOTs in the cultural ecology of urban-rural reconstruction. Using the mixed methods approach for data collection, this study provides useful insights towards understanding the adaptive process of FOTs in dealing with ecological change. This chapter summarises the core conclusions from this study, explains the implications, as well as acknowledges study limitations, while also forwarding critical directions for future research. This chapter is organised in four sections. Section 6.2 underlines the core conclusions reached, while section 6.3 explains the study implications. Section 6.4 acknowledges the limitation of this study, while future research directions are pinpointed in section 6.5.

### **6.2 Conclusions of the Study**

Premised in the cultural industry management domain, this research combined cultural ecology theory from applied ethnomusicology and sensemaking in business administration to understand the sustainable development in FOTs. The case studies mainly explored two questions. Firstly, what are the external changes in FOTs? Secondly, how do these FOTs adapt to the changes? I analyzed equivocality through cues embedded in the policy and organisational frames. Then I identified cues on how pluralistic stakeholder groups adapt to these ambiguities through semi-structured interviews. The cues related to urban-rural construction, cultural market, and operation of FOTs constructed the pluralistic stakeholders' understanding of the organisational future. The final stage of the case study explored the key factors that influence the sustainability of FOTs. I constructed a model based on the relationship between these factors and sustainability and tested these hypotheses by SEM. Next, the core conclusions from this study are delineated based on the research objectives.

## **6.2.1 Completion of Three Objectives**

### ***Objective 1: Changes in the external environment that FOTs experienced impacted by the urban-rural reconstruction from 2013 to 2023***

The thesis achieved research objective 1 by conducting an in-depth analysis of the evolution of pertinent policies and the transformation of cultural ecology concerning ST and FMT from 2013 to 2023. As demonstrated in section 4.3.2.1, through a phased policy analysis (see sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1) and participant observation (see sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.2.2), the process of urban-rural reconstruction was comprehended through analysing social changes occurring at varying degrees of urban-rural integration across three distinct periods. These changes impact negatively on the development of FOTs, such as market contraction, talent attrition, and the waning of folk beliefs. On the other hand, markets play a decisive role in resource allocation. Therefore, the increasing diversity of the cultural market, along with policy adjustments by the government in market regulation and public services, pose challenges to the sustainable development of FOTs. Policymakers have distinctly diverged in their approach, favouring a laissez-faire stance for private theater troupes while providing nurturing support for state-owned ones. Therefore, both the ritual alliance system and the ICH system were actively working to maintain each other's stability, thereby facilitating the continuous growth of FO arts within their respective ecosystems. An established customary talent exchange mechanism had evolved between private and state-owned FOTs. The data obtained through documentary sources and participant observations in this study enabled an enhanced understanding of these external changes.

### ***Objective 2: The adaptive processes of FOTs in response to these changes.***

The exploration of this objective is primarily reflected in sections 4.2.1.2.7, 4.2.1.3, 4.2.2.2.1, and 4.2.2.3. Through the case studies of ST and FMT, insights were gained into the transformation of private and SOTs in the process of adapting to change. As Tables 4.2.9 and 4.2.22 show, the exploration of the adaptation process was primarily achieved by identifying contradictions between policies at different stages and the

actual organisational behavior. Semi-structured interviews were then used to further investigate the impact of these contradictions on the interruption of organisational behaviour, recovery, and the stakeholders' expectations for the future. The contradictions that ST needed to adapt to mainly included the following: the simultaneous urban-rural development and the decrease of rural cultural spaces; the continuously expanding cultural market and the shrinking FO market; and the requirements for modernised management and insufficient policy support. ST navigates the challenges posed by the external environment at each stage by expanding the FO market, enhancing organisational flexibility, increasing investments in opera creation, and other different ways. However, for FMT, the process of transitioning to enterprises and marketisation represented a significant adjustment. Although this adjustment has not fully materialised to date, within the ICH system, the transformation of FO toward cultural tourism direction is taking shape.

As section 4.3.3 shows, in the face of these organisational adjustments, it is evident that the adaptive behaviors of the stakeholders of the two organisations differ. However, the trends in stakeholders' perceptions of organisational support and policy support are similar. The changes in their perceptions and behaviors transition from initial active engagement to decreased anticipation due to varying degrees of policy malfunction and organisational dysfunction, ultimately culminating in negative emotions of organisational support and policy support. These two case studies established an emerging model of the impact of policy support and organisational support on stakeholder work emotions and organisational sustainability, as revealed through the sensemaking process across three different periods.

***Objective 3: The impact of the key factors on the sustainability of FOTs.***

Based on the theoretical framework and the results of data analysis during the case study phase, this research examined the core dynamics of the adaptation process. The quantitative phase is subsequently used to validate the relationships between these key

factors. The results from the structural equation model indicated that stakeholders' work emotions fully mediated the relationships between organisational support and sustainability, and between policy support and sustainability. Furthermore, policy support exerts a more significant influence on stakeholder work emotions and organisational sustainability compared to organisational support.

## **6.2.2 Summaries of the Core Findings**

This study focuses on the FO industry in the Fuzhou area. By investigating the ecological changes and adaptive processes of FOTs from 2013 to 2023, it reveals numerous influencing factors affecting the sustainability of such organisations. The core findings of organisational sensemaking through the SM of FOTs are presented next (see sections 6.2.2.1, 6.2.2.2 and 6.2.2.3).

### **6.2.2.1 Ecological Changes of FOTs**

As stated in sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1, cultural policy from 2013 to 2023 changed leading to the reconstruction of urban-rural relations. In this period of urban-rural integration, policy changes inevitably need to adapt to the state of interdependence between urban and rural areas. As Table 4.2.5 shows, this study presents the understanding of ecological changes through policy comparison across three stages. The core trends of policy changes include three aspects. First is the trend of these adjustments signifying a progressive shift away from segregated urban-rural policies towards unified policies focused on internationalised and high-quality cultural brands (D-08; D-09). Second is the shift in government functions from dominance to a focus on service. Third is the progressive refinement of ICH policy, especially in the perspective of combination with cultural tourism.

Such trends of policy change in the three stages of urban-rural integration accelerated the transformation of cultural ecology. As sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.2.2 show, these changes include the following aspects. First of all, the integration of urban and rural

areas brought about by land reforms has accelerated the loss of folk traditions related to FO and cultural reconstruction surrounding new urbanisation. Next, with contributions from overseas Chinese and local villagers, there has been a progressive reconstruction of public cultural spaces belonging to each village, integrated into the urban life sphere. Thirdly, the simplification of folk religious rituals in the Fuzhou area led to the decline of the market of ritual operas. Fourth, the cultural demands of connecting the sacred and secular provided by the ritual alliance system make the sustainable development of FOTs inevitable. Fifth, the expansion of the FO market was increasingly challenging. This was primarily manifested in the difficulties of adapting to the modern ticketing management system and meeting diverse aesthetic preferences. Finally, the development of cultural tourism provided broad market prospects for the diverse forms of FO performance.

#### **6.2.2.2 Adaptive Management of FOTs**

From the management of ST, although the organisation strives to adapt to the modern business administration system in China, current market conditions suggested that retaining some of the original management tools and simplifying organisations rules was the best path to adapt to changes. This strategy provided flexibility for the SM of ST. For example, as evident in section 4.2.1.2.7, employees with low income had more opportunities to do part-time jobs, thus avoiding the fate of completely changing careers. Also, the flexibility is evident in the employment system. For instance, the principal actors are contracted for long-term agreements, while others are paid per specific performance engagements.

From the management of FMT, the core of SM lies in the leadership of the key managers. As mentioned in section 4.2.2.2.1, the leaders' ability to secure funding support and perform projects directly impacted the income of FMT. As shown in section 4.2.2.3.2, the organisational malfunction in the transition to the market economy aligned with stakeholders' expectations for SM. In other words, stakeholders prefer to



entrust the fate of organisational sustainability to leaders' effective communication with the government rather than market-oriented reforms. Certainly, whether ST or FMT, ensuring high-quality creation is the cornerstone for them to sustain organisational development.

### **6.2.2.3 Organisational Sensemaking of Sustainable Management**

The importance of sustainable development of FOTs is sustaining the practitioners' music-making (Titon, 2009). For these practitioners, support from troupes, society, and the government is a reasonable policy direction. Nonetheless, the support provided is not fully aligned with practitioners' needs, necessitating them to reshape their disrupted organisational behaviour or adjust their expectations for the organisational future. As analysed in section 4.3.3.1, stakeholders are more prone to develop negative emotions towards their work when faced with unfulfilled commitments, thereby impacting SM. These commitments primarily include policy support and organisational support. The results of the quantitative analysis quantify the relationship between these impacting factors and sustainability and support the following deeper viewpoints. Firstly, for SM of FOTs, PS is more influential than OS. Secondly, on the cognitive level, EW plays a crucial intermediary role between PS, OS, and sustainability. Therefore, as shown in sections 4.3.3.1 and 5.3, when considering policy and management, implementers need to fulfill initial commitments as much as possible to encourage multiple stakeholders to maintain positive emotions in their respective works more effectively. As a consequence, the stronger confidence in commitment fulfillment enables SM to become feasible.

## **6.3 Implications**

Based on rich empirical data, this study offers a novel theoretical framework and meaningful recommendations for the development of private and state-owned FOTs. Also, it forwards suggestions on how to systematically and effectively resolve typical management issues. Next, the study implications are specified, both from theoretical

(see section 6.3.1) and practitioners (including policy aspects) (see section 6.3.2) perspectives.

### **6.3.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study offers meaningful theoretical implications for the sustainable development of such organisations, due to the relevance between theoretical construction and verification. In constructing a theoretical framework, the ecosystem of music was pioneeringly integrated into the framework of sensemaking for understanding sustainability (Titon, 2009a; Schippers, 2015; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This contributes to understanding organisational adaptation with mature theories from business administration and unique industrial ecosystems.

#### **6.3.1.1 Theoretical Development of Adaptive management**

This study not only empirically validates sustainability theories but also extends the theoretical perspectives of adaptive management in FO industry in applied ethnomusicology.

The research findings refine the theoretical framework of adaptive management. As Titon (2009b; 2015) mentioned, sustainability implies adaptability to changes. This study empirically validates the adaptive practices of FOTs in response to changes, offering insights into their capacity to sustain the future of FO creation. By exploring ecological changes and the behaviors of diverse stakeholders, this research deepens the theoretical framework of adaptive management, elucidating how multiple groups within the cultural ecology of FOTs perceive social and organisational transformations and adjust their strategies accordingly. Furthermore, collaborative decision-making process of pluralistic stakeholders (Wondirad, Tolkach, and King, 2020) was integrated into the sustainability potentially, aiming to identify factors that disrupt such collaboration, such as the simplification of folk rituals and inadequate funding support. Additionally, the theoretical exploration integrates studies related to ICH management

and cultural reform, incorporating the concepts of reform phases and systematic ICH into the sustainability paradigm (Tan, et al., 2018; Fu, 2020). For example, semi-structured interviews with community cultural workers and fieldwork of cultural services in communities deepen the understanding of “person-place bonding” (Tan et al., 2018), highlighting local sentiment as a crucial factor in motivating pluralistic stakeholders’ engagement (Chapin and Knapp, 2015). The integration of stage-based theories of cultural system reform (Cai, 2014; Fu and He, 2019) provides temporal theoretical support for the organisational sensemaking in SM. Based on the empirical findings from this study findings, the critical importance of understanding the ecological changes faced by FOTs has not only been reinforced but also enhanced. Particularly, the theories of “Triangular coordination model” and “Balancing of power” (Fu and Huang, 2016) have been effectively validated. For instance, in the case study of FMT, the stakeholders generally welcome the failure of marketisation policies in their troupe, which validates the inadequacy of market inducement forces. Further, the understanding of opera reform in China rationalises some of the dilemmas arising from existing internal management, such as the loss of local characteristics due to the director system (Xia, 2016). The validation and development of these theories provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability in the applied ethnomusicology, aiding in a more diverse perspective on changes within and outside of FOTs.

### **6.3.1.2 The Formation of Innovative Interpretive Mechanisms**

This study enhances the interpretive mechanism of sensemaking in SM. The related theoretical findings are as follows:

One significant theoretical achievement lies in the application of the temporal model. The case study in this research explores the adaptive changes of private and state-owned FOTs along the same timeline, delving deeply into the practices and perceptions of the past, present, and future (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013). These empirical investigations further extend the theoretical research of sensemaking on temporality. A more

significant theoretical application of the temporal model is the integration of “event time” (Kunisch et al., 2017) into the temporal framework. This aligns with the perspective of the stage theory of Chinese cultural system reform, grounding the sensemaking of SM for FOTs on a theoretical foundation that considers specific context and the mature temporal models.

Another theoretical implication in sensemaking lies in the exploration of enactment theory. This study integrates a series of research on enacted sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) to ensure that the theoretical framework aligns with and complements sustainability in applied ethnomusicology. Particularly in the ecological changes that triggers sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005), this study has enhanced the theory with industry-specific insights. This expansion establishes a logical connection between sensemaking and sustainability of FOTs. Based on the critical impact of cultural system reform on FOTs, this study contributes to theoretical development of sensemaking within the institutional contexts (Weber and Glynn, 2006). Additionally, this study focuses on the disruption and recovery of practices in the face of contradictions between institutional and organisational logic (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022). This exploration is effective in understanding equivocality in shared meaning through policy and cultural changes.

Furthermore, this study emphasises the impact of pluralistic stakeholders’ perceptions on SM. For example, understanding changes in stakeholders’ expectation regarding policy implementation through updating cues and multiple frames. Additionally, predicting the sustainability of organisational behaviours by observing emotional shifts in participants triggered by ecologic changes. The detailed exploration of pluralistic stakeholders’ perceptions contributes empirical evidence to the micro-level sensemaking. Additionally, these findings support the two core themes in sensemaking related to organisational changes: shared meaning and emotions (Maitlis and

Sonenshein, 2010). Then, it further explores the key elements of sustainability. For management of FOTs, the theoretical logic is undoubtedly innovative.

### **6.3.2 Practitioners and Policy Implications**

This study provides a substantial collection of empirical data on the adaptive process of FOTs from 2013 to 2023. It contributes to filling the literature gap regarding research on the management of FOTs during the critical decade of marketisation and modernisation in China. Furthermore, this study offers valuable insights into the adaptation of local opera in China to the changes in the cultural ecology of socialism with Chinese characteristics. From the practitioner's perspective, this includes identifying the contradictions between institutional frameworks and management practices, as well as exploring the solutions that pluralistic stakeholders employ during their adaptive process (see sections 4.2.1.2.8 and 4.2.2.2.4). From the policy-making perspective, this study explores the views and specific practices of pluralistic stakeholders within the industry chain regarding policy, contributing positively to the advancement and implementation of future policies. The implications of this study to practitioners are flagged in section 6.3.2.1 while the policy implications are specified in section 6.3.2.2.

#### **6.3.2.1 For Practitioners Implications**

First of all, practitioners from private and state-owned FOTs adopt distinct strategies in response to policy and cultural changes. Clearly recognising the differences in these adaptive strategies contributes to addressing management issues for other managers or stakeholders. This research explored the practitioners' experiences with their respective cultural ecologies. For example, how to balance the conflict between modern management systems and traditional folk rituals, and the contradiction between FO market contraction and the increasing demands for high-quality opera performances (see sections 4.2.1.2.5 and 4.2.1.2.6). Particularly, using semi-structured interview, the study further explored the resolution strategies for these conflicts and potential future

developments through insights from pluralistic stakeholders. By analysing the behaviors and perceptions of diverse practitioners, the study offers a more informed forecast of the future of FO industry. These insights can be leveraged by other practitioners in the industry to draw on these experiences when facing similar changes, and seeking career adaptation and sustainable development.

This study also offers relevant insights on how practitioners within the industry can embrace appropriate initiatives towards effectively navigating challenges. For instance, it offers insights on how private FOTs can better integrate into cultural tourism projects (see section 4.2.1.1.2). Particularly in terms of cultural tourism funding, it offers insights on how practitioners can better seek chances in the market rather than relying entirely on government support. This study through detailed empirical documentation analysed the nuances and core issues of the challenges faced, and in doing that also laying bricks for driving future research on organisational sustainability and from a more in-depth perspective.

Furthermore, for practitioners in different positions, despite varying interests, this study through its qualitative research approach in exploring pluralistic stakeholder groups, reveals that the sustainable future of FOTs requires the continuous reconstruction of the vested interest landscape among multiple stakeholders. Balancing interests at different times is essential to gradually achieving a more optimistic industry outlook. This means that fulfilling commitments to all stakeholders simultaneously presents significant challenges. Therefore, amidst the overarching trend of cost reduction and efficiency enhancement, findings from quantitative research assist decision-makers in analysing the extent to which organisations provide support and fulfill commitments, towards better maintaining employee motivation and achieving SM.

### **6.3.2.2 For Policy Implications**

This study examined the practical implementation of relevant policies, with the impact

on cultural policies mainly reflected in the following aspects.

This study reflects the perceptions of pluralistic stakeholders regarding policies related to SM of FOTs. Understanding the implementation of policies by different stakeholder groups helps policymakers objectively deepen cultural system reforms, aiming for more efficient policy execution and commitment fulfillment in the future. Moreover, the exploration of contradictions between policies and practices exposes core issues in the process of reconstructing the diverse interest landscapes (see sections 4.2.1.2.8 and 4.2.2.2.4). This helps practitioners understand the current and future states of the industry, enabling them to consider their career development more objectively. Furthermore, the policy-making with unique social context provides valuable insights from local Chinese society for addressing management issues in other countries or regions experiencing similar stages of development. Finally, this study reveals the core driving forces behind the continuous improvement of relevant policies. As mentioned in section 4.2.1.2.3, local society needs to sustain the sociocultural activities of the FO to meet the cultural demands of regional people and cater to the appeal for cultural equity (Lomax, 1972). In modernisation construction, the business pursuit of profit maximisation leads to the utilitarian worldview and value at the expense of destroying nature. The harmonious attitudes toward life behind the FO can become the spiritual power of self-redemption in the impetuous life of local groups. Meanwhile, that is a nonnegligible force on the road of rural development with Chinese characteristics. For future of policy changes, understanding the unique influence of faith for SM of FOTs is essential to truly provide strong support for a wide range of FOTs, especially those private troupes.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the Study**

Despite aforementioned contributions (see sections 6.3.2.1 and 6.3.2.2), this research has several limitations. Firstly, the study explored the organisational sensemaking of SM in FOTs focusing mainly on the timeframe 2013 to 2023. In addressing the specified

the research objectives, a retrospective and reflective perspective is captured in this study. This may lead to a certain degree of information loss. Secondly, this study was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation that may have caused more dilemmas in the art performing industry, and as result may have impacted practitioners' opinions. It must be noted too that the pandemic also affected the extent to which participants were willing to participate in this study. Thirdly, due to the scanty literature on the management of FOTs from 2013 to 2023, it was challenging to ground this research on a deeper or more detailed theoretical foundation. Certainly, other relevant literature in the cultural field assists in addressing this limitation. However, the diversity of opera genres and the developmental differences in Chinese local communities make such cross-referencing challenging. Fourth, the findings from this study culminated in a preliminary model constructed from the case study, a conclusion that builds a foundation for future research, towards further understanding the complexity of the empirical model involving the four factors. It is worth noting that this model is still preliminary and would require validating efforts for full application to FOTs, and extendedly the entire industry. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that this study was based on a relatively small sample size. Finally, this study focuses on FOTs management from 2013 to 2023, thus having temporal limitations. This suggests that the research findings will need to be considered taking into account however current practical circumstances in future applications.

## **6.5 Future Research**

Based on the conclusions and limitations of this study, there are cues that could be leveraged to enhance knowledge development in the explored theoretical (and related) domains.

Methodologically, several steps could be taken towards validating and enhancing this current study. Continuing in-depth research into the cultural policies related to FOTs will be a crucial direction for the future, towards improving overall understanding of



this theoretical domain. Further studies that utilise qualitative or quantitative approaches or a combination of both to further explore the conceptualised framework within and beyond the setting of this research would contribute to the development of theory. Methodologically too, further studies that utilise larger sample size would help in enhancing knowledge in the theoretical domain and offer new insights towards steering policy initiatives for addressing the challenges encountered in the operational dynamics.

Future research could also embrace a more comprehensive conceptual approach towards enhancing overall understanding of the theoretical domain emphasised in this study. In that regard too, studies that seek to further explore the forwarded conceptual framework, using diverse methodological options, would no doubt enhance knowledge. Such research could also aim at illuminating the cooperation mechanisms between private and state-owned FOTs towards achieving mutual complementarity and enabling sustainability. Also, the path of career development for young employees and retirement mechanisms for elderly employees based on the specific circumstances of private and state-owned troupes, could be alternative directions for research.

No matter the dialect in Fuzhou or the cultural memory in the operas, both are composed of the cultural environment with regional characteristics. In pursuing high-quality economic development, urban-rural integration is a medium to transfer conflicts between insufficient resources in urban areas and excessive production capacity (Wen et al., 2013, p. 219). Therefore, future FOTs research should aim to shed light on pathways for ensuring suitable policy formulation and implementation to support and enable FOTs sustainability.

The functional reconstruction of FO for social psychology and cultural reconstruction requires continued research attention in the future. Viewed from the aspects of urban-rural reconstruction, there is no doubt that the modernisation construction in socialism

with Chinese characteristics is a magnificent feat in a short period (Rozelle and Hell, 2020). Although the economy in China is growing fast, the regional social order and culture have not developed at the same speed based on the ongoing changes in social ecology. Chinese people living in urban or rural areas find it difficult to find peace and contentment in their expectations (Merkel-Hess, 2016, p. 39). As one participant mentioned, she often felt overwhelmed in some recent ritual environments. But in the ritual environment with FO performing, everyone seemed to know their responsibilities conventionality (1C2MA). This sense of disorderliness and confusion in modern society has impacted the mental health and social contact of local people (Koen, 2008, p. 48). Empirically deduced, the sustainability of FOTs should pay attention to discovering their values in reconstructing social order. The healing of supernatural power at the mental level for regional people; also, is a sense of security from rural culture. Therefore, in business society, FOTs can find their position. More research could be undertaken to illuminate these dynamics and offer ways forward for improving the modus operandi and outcome.

This exploration of FOTs sustainability should be advanced. More investigations into the more complex influential factors or conceptual models are required towards a broader understanding in this traditional cultural industry. More research should be undertaken to explore specific items of policy and organisational support to verify the aspects that have a tangible impact on SM.

## **Concluding remarks**

Schippers (2015, p. 136) wrote: “It is easy to succumb to a historically and intellectually unsound tendency to impose a static, preservationist approach on music genres as objects.” Indeed, FOTs cannot exist in isolation, which means if FOTs wants to sustain and develop, sensing the surrounding cultural ecosystem cannot be ignored. Using a dynamic approach to understanding music sustainability and art organisational changes is imperative. Interestingly, there seems to be a conflict between heritage and sustainability, but so many people still appeal to the development of cultural heritage for a world with cultural diversity. Even though some cultures cannot adapt to the demands of business society completely now, human concerns about the unknown future make them sustainable. The only counterweight to commercial capital is visible control from the government. Maybe we can discuss the sustainability issues more effectively after a deeper understanding of the Chinese government and socialist road with Chinese characteristics.

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## Appendices

**Appendix 1: Comparison of five paradigms** (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016, pp. 136-137)

<b>Ontology (nature of reality or being)</b>	<b>Epistemology (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)</b>	<b>Axiology (role of values and ethics)</b>	<b>Methodology (Typical methods)</b>
<b>Positivism</b>			
Real, external, independent One true reality	Scientific method Observable and measurable facts Law-like generalizations; Numbers; Causal explanation and prediction as contribution	Value-free research; the researcher is detached, neutral, and independent of what is researched; Researcher maintains objective stance	Typically deductive, highly structured, large samples, measurement, typically quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analyzed
<b>Critical realism</b>			
Stratified/layered (the empirical, actual, and real) External, independent Intransient Objective structures Causal mechanisms	Epistemological relativism Knowledge historically situated and transient; Facts are social Constructions; Historical causal explanation as contribution;	Value-laden research; Researcher acknowledges bias by world views, cultural experience and upbringing; Researcher tries to minimize bias and errors; A researcher is as objective as possible	Retroductive, in-depth historically situated analysis of pre-existing structures and emerging agency. Range of methods and data types to fit the subject matter
<b>Interpretivism</b>			
Complex, rich Socially constructed through culture and language Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities Flux of processes, experiences, practices	Theories and concepts too simplistic Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions, and interpretations New understandings and worldviews as contribution	Value-bound research Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective; Researcher interpretations key to contribution; Researcher reflexive	Typically inductive. Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted

<b>Ontology (nature of reality or being)</b>	<b>Epistemology (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)</b>	<b>Axiology (role of values and ethics)</b>	<b>Methodology (Typical methods)</b>
<b>Post-modernism</b>			
Nominal Complex, rich Socially constructed through power relations Some meanings, interpretations, realities are dominated and silenced by others Flux of processes, experiences, practices	What counts as 'truth' and 'knowledge' is decided by dominant ideologies Focus on absences, silences and oppressed/repressed meanings, interpretations and voices Exposure of power relations and challenge of dominant views as contribution	Value-constituted research Researcher and research embedded in power relations Some research narratives are repressed and silenced at the expense of others Researcher radically reflexive	Typically deconstructive reading texts and realities against themselves In-depth investigations of anomalies, silences and absences Range of data types, typically qualitative methods of analysis
<b>Pragmatism</b>			
Complex, rich, external 'Reality' is the practical consequences of ideas Flux of processes, experiences and practices	Practical meaning of knowledge in specific contexts 'True' theories and knowledge are those that enable successful action Focus on problems, practices and relevance Problem-solving and informed future practice as a contribution	Value-driven research Research initiated and sustained by the researcher's doubts and beliefs Researcher reflexive	The following research problem and research question Range of methods: mixed, multiple, qualitative, quantitative, action research Emphasis on practical solutions and outcomes

## Appendix 2: Letter for pilot-study of semi-structured interview



Prifysgol Cymru  
Y Ddrindod Dewi Sant  
University of Wales  
Trinity Saint David

LETTER FOR PILOT-STUDY OF SEMI-  
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

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The Head of the Troupe

.....  
.....  
.....

DBA Research Student of IMH Swansea  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

Date:

Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Dr...

I am writing to kindly ask for your help with my doctoral research. I am researching to investigate organizational sensemaking through the sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupes among pluralistic stakeholders based on the reconstruction of dual urban/rural culture in China.

Sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupes (FOTs) is important to the traditional opera industry in making sense of commercialization and inheriting intangible cultural heritage. Consequently, the outcome of this research can improve FOTs sustainability by integrating into the market economy system.

Based on the demands of research questions, I have devised questions of semi-structured interviews to explore organizational sensemaking of sustainable management in FOTs among pluralistic stakeholders. The next stage of my research requires a pilot study of the interview questions with 5 participants.

Therefore, if you agree to this, I sincerely expect you to participate in the interview and the process will be audio-recorded. In the meantime, I will record my observation in field notes. The interview session will last about 20 minutes.

The information provided by you in the interview will be used for research purposes. It will not be used in a manner that would allow identification of your individual responses. At the end of the study, the anonymized and confidential research thesis will be archived at the UWTSD. The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of UWTSD.

Once again, we would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. If you have any questions about the research at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards  
Zhenying Yang

## Appendix 3: Informed Consent

### INFORMED CONSENT

I, the undersigned, have read and understood the Letter to Solicit Participation In the Research providing relevant content.

- I have been allowed to ask questions about the Study.
- I understand that taking part in the Study will include being interviewed and audio recorded.
- I have been given adequate time to consider my decision and I agree to take part in the Study.
- I understand that my personal details such as name and employer address will not be revealed to people outside the project.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used.
- I agree to authorize the use of the copyright I hold in any material related to this project to Zhenying Yang.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the Study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

(Source: Bryman, 2012, p.141)

#### Appendix 4: Typology of MM Legitimation Types

Typology of MM Legitimation Types		
Sources	Types of Validity	Description
Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006)	Sample integration Legitimation	The relationship between the quantitative and qualitative sampling designs yields quality meta-inferences.
	Inside-Outside	The extent to which the researcher accurately presents and appropriately utilizes the insider's view and the observer's views for purposes such as description and explanation.
	Weakness Minimization	The extent to which the weakness from one approach is compensated by the strengths from the other approach.
	Sequential	The extent to which one has minimized the potential problem wherein the meta-inferences could be affected by reversing the sequence of the quantitative and qualitative phases.
	Conversion	The extent to which the quantizing or quantizing yields quality meta-inferences.
	Paradigmatic mixing	The extent to which the researcher's epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological, and rhetorical beliefs that underlie the quantitative and qualitative approaches are successfully (a) combined or (b) blended into a usable package.
	Commensurability	The extent to which the meta-inferences made reflect a mixed worldview based on the cognitive process of Gestalt switching and integration.
	Multiple Validities	The extent to which addressing legitimation of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study results from the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed validity types, yielding high-quality meta inferences.
	Political	The extent to which addressing legitimation of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study results from the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed validity types, yielding high quality meta inferences.



## **Appendix 5: List of Semi-structured Interview Questions**

Q1: What is your occupation?

Q2: How old are you?

Q3: Could you share some stories about you entering or meeting FOT?

Q4: Between 2013 and 2015, this period corresponds to a rapid urbanization process, for instance, in Baisha Village, which underwent a two-year land acquisition to expand the county center. What were the effects of these urbanization measures on the cultural environment of the FOT, particularly the folk culture environment? How did we overcome these impacts, and what were the results?

Q5: During the years from 2013 to 2015, there was a shift in the functions of government from leading to serving, and the market played a decisive role in resource allocation. We could find the actions of breaking geographical constraints and market segmentation in market strategies. How do you think these changes affected the market of FO performances? Can you share some stories about you adapting to these changes? What are the changes in expectations that you think?

Q6: Between 2013 and 2015, local governments introduced many measures to encourage the establishment of modern management systems and support FOTs development. What motivated our troupe to adapt so actively to the new management model? However, from the perspective of modern management in FOTs, it seems to be somewhat different from the policy advocacy at that time. What reason interrupted some FOTs to follow these policies? How do you adapt to these? What are the changes in expectations that you think?

Q7: From 2016 to 2020, cultural policies emphasized the promotion of complementary advantages between urban and rural areas and increased protection of intangible cultural heritage, including the construction of various exhibition halls and the launch of various industrial integration projects. Why could not the prosperity of FO be

achieved as per the policy initiatives? How did you overcome these difficulties during that period? What are the changes that you think?

Q8: During the period from 2016 to 2020, the cultural market continued to expand in cultural tourism, but it seems that the market contraction trend was not resolved. What interrupts the development of the ritual and religious market? How can you adapt to these difficulties? What are the changes of expectation that you think?

Q9: During the period from 2016 to 2020, some policies that could have most likely benefited the management of FOTs, such as the public performance of “Grand Stage for People” 群众大舞台, or the assessment mechanism of FOTs. Did our troupe participate in the performance? Why stop or continue? What are the outcomes of these policies?

Q10: Since 2021, there has been particular attention to the living inheritance 活态传承 of intangible cultural heritage, and the promotion of eco-tourism. Consequently, we have witnessed many live performances in Three lanes and seven alleys. Do you think the ritual and religious environment of FO can become a kind of setting in the project of cultural tourism?

Q11: Since 2021, the market focus has shifted towards large-scale tourist performance projects in urban areas, building upon the foundation of eco-tourism, such as the Opera Festival of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys 三坊七巷戏剧节. How do you think this market-oriented approach has impacted the cultural environment? For example, FO has gradually moved away from its original religious and ritual environment.

Q12: Since 2021, the government has emphasized enhancing the competitiveness of troupes, allowing more troupes to participate in cultural tourism projects. How do you view the prospects of these projects? Do you believe these projects will be beneficial for the ongoing development of FOTs, and if so, in what ways?

Appendix 6: Letter to solicit participation in the research



Prifysgol Cymru  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
University of Wales  
Trinity Saint David

LETTER TO SOLICIT PARTICIPATION  
IN THE RESEARCH

The Head of the Troupe  
.....  
.....  
.....

DBA Research Student of IMH Swansea  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

Date:

Dear Mr/Mrs Miss/Dr...,

I am writing to kindly ask for your help with my doctoral research. I am researching to investigate organizational sensemaking through the sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupes among pluralistic stakeholders based on the reconstruction of dual urban-rural culture in China.

Sustainable management of the Fujian Opera Troupes (FOTs) is important to the traditional opera industry in making sense of commercialization and inheriting intangible cultural heritage. Consequently, the outcome of this research can improve FOTs' sustainability by integrating into the market economy system.

Based on the demands of research questions, my research will be divided into two phases. In the first stage, I devised semi-structured interviews to explore organizational sensemaking of sustainable management in FOTs among pluralistic stakeholders. To elicit more views, I need 20 participants in this phase, and each interview will last about 20 minutes. If you agree to this, I sincerely expect you to participate in the interview and the process will be audio-recorded. Meanwhile, to understand the research purpose deeper, I need to collect relevant public documents, official websites, blogs, leaflets, and any other relevant materials you can provide them. It is worth noting that, in the meantime, I will record my observation in field notes. The second stage refers to a questionnaire that I designed for testing sustainable strategies for the development of FOTs. Therefore, I need to recruit more participants external and internal FOTs for the testing session and each questionnaire will last about 10 minutes.

The information provided by you in the interview and questionnaire will be used for research purposes. It will not be used in a manner that would allow identification of your individual responses. At the end of the study, the anonymized and confidential research thesis will be archived at the UWTSD. The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of UWTSD.

Once again, we would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. If you have any questions about the research at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards  
Zhenying Yang

## Appendix 7: Selected Internet documents

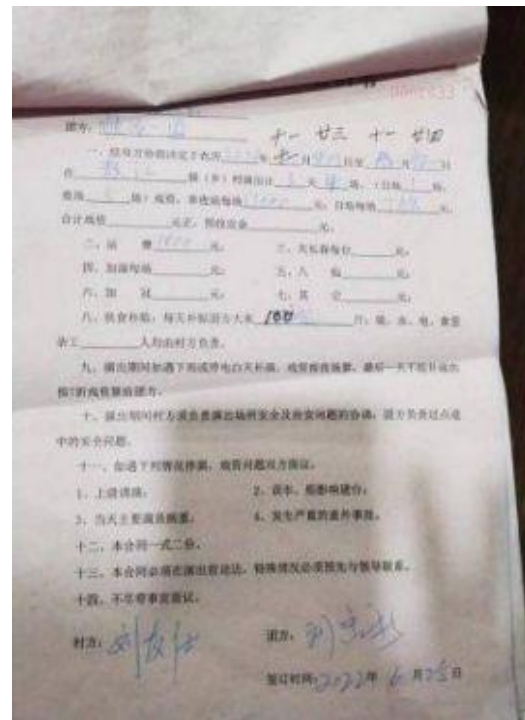
Name	Internet Address	Comment
<b>Government websites</b>		
Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC	<a href="http://mct.gov.cn">mct.gov.cn</a>	Release cultural policies from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
Department of Culture and Tourism of Fujian Province	<a href="http://fujian.gov.cn">fujian.gov.cn</a>	Distribute cultural policies, policy interpretation, and rules in Fujian.
Bureau of Culture and Tourism of Fuzhou	<a href="http://fuzhou.gov.cn">fuzhou.gov.cn</a>	Implement cultural policies from the superior departments.
Cultural market supervision and service platform	<a href="https://ccm.mct.gov.cn/ccnt/hbase/index.html">https://ccm.mct.gov.cn/ccnt/hbase/index.html</a>	Entrance of cultural enterprises and administrative departments
<b>Organization websites</b>		
China Association of Performing Arts	<a href="http://www.capa.com.cn/">http://www.capa.com.cn/</a>	Focus on the industrial dynamics of Performing Arts.
Fujian Opera. com	<a href="http://www.fjminju.org/">http://www.fjminju.org/</a>	Digital sources about Fujian Opera
Fuzhou Opera Heritage Center	<a href="https://weibo.com/u/2762931265">https://weibo.com/u/2762931265</a>	Public information of Fuzhou Opera Heritage Center
Digital Museum of Fujian Opera	<a href="http://fzmjtc.cn">fzmjtc.cn</a>	Digital sources about Fujian Opera
Fuzhou Art School	<a href="http://fzartschool.cn">fzartschool.cn</a>	Basic information of Fuzhou Art School
Website of Chinese opera	<a href="http://xi-qu.com">xi-qu.com</a>	Basic information about different types of Chinese traditional opera
Website of Intangible Cultural Heritage in PRC	<a href="https://www.ihchina.cn/">https://www.ihchina.cn/</a>	Include multiple types of digital sources
<b>Personal websites</b>		
Weibo of Zhou Hong	<a href="https://weibo.com/u/1948649233">https://weibo.com/u/1948649233</a>	Activities information of FOT.
TikTok of Rugu agent for FO	TikTok Number: 593381743	the short videos about the performance of FO

Sources: Adapted from the selected Internet secondary data gateways and archives (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill, (2016) pp. 323-324), and content is from the researcher

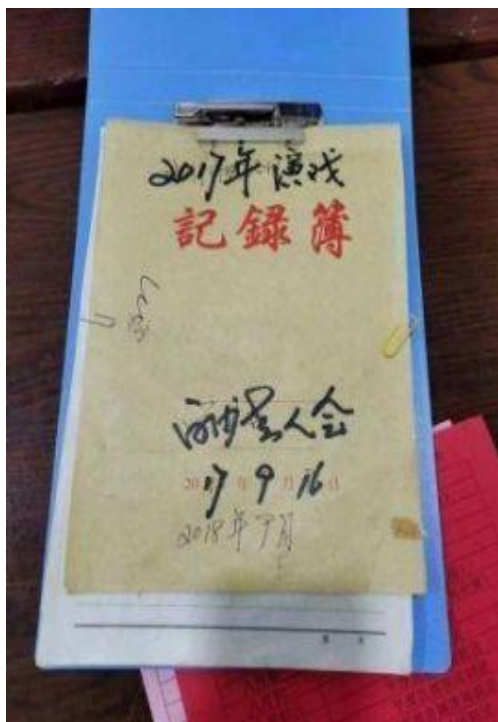
Appendix 8: Photo list



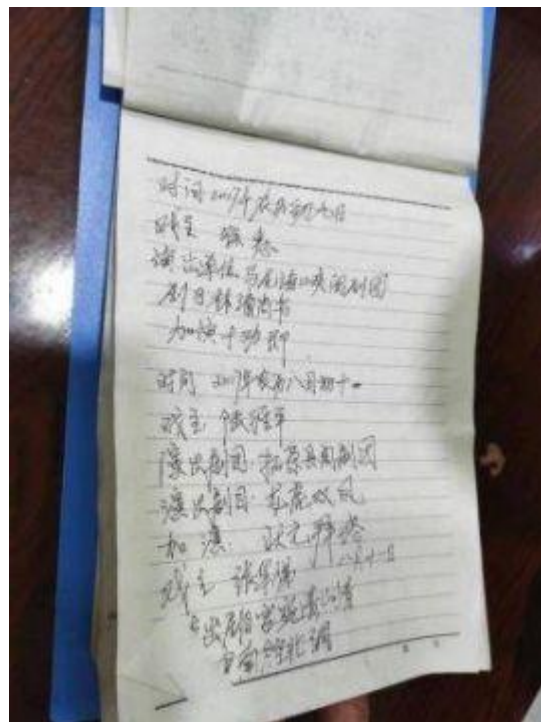
P1



P2

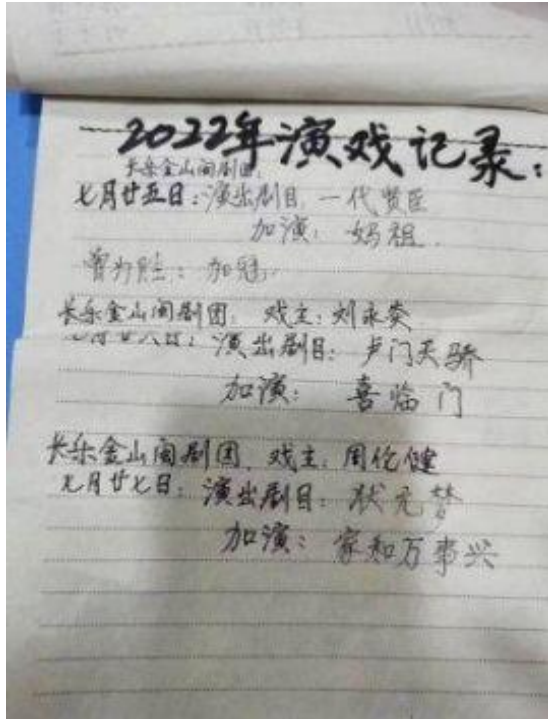


P3

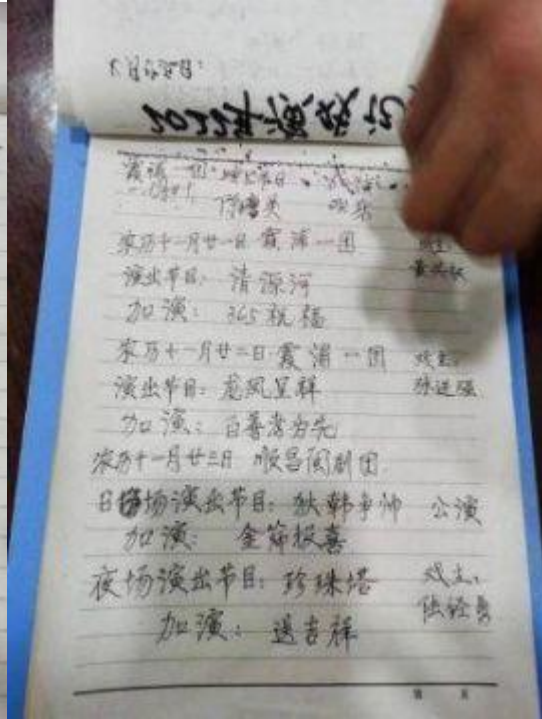


P4





P5



P6



P7



P8



P9



P10



P11

**白沙老人会2022年  
齐天大圣千秋寿诞联欢历报表**

表演姓名	表演日期	表演
郑惠民	十一月廿十日	电子乐新曲
黄兴秋	十一月廿十一日	民族舞蹈
伍进强	十一月廿十二日	舞蹈新曲
林廷贵	十一月廿十三日	舞龙舞狮(传统)
陈树强	十一月廿十五日	单县唱潮团(台、表演)
陈乃强	十一月廿十五日	单县唱潮团
曹立平	十一月廿十六日	单县唱潮团
曾灶头	十一月廿十七日	单县唱潮团
曹成康	十一月廿十八日	单县唱潮团
陈尚强	十一月廿十九日	单县唱潮团
张福强	十二月初一日	单县唱潮团
刘永清	十二月初二日	单县唱潮团
陈乃和	十二月初三日	单县唱潮团
陈伟强	十二月初四日	单县唱潮团
林书强	十二月初五日	单县唱潮团
陆善仔	十二月初六日	单县唱潮团
林息	十二月初七日	林息
林贤强	十二月初八日	单县唱潮团
黄兴安	十二月初九日	单县唱潮团

备注：禁止燃放烟花爆竹，请自觉佩戴口罩！

白沙老人会  
2022年11月15日

P12



P13



p14



P15



p16



P17



p18





P19



p20



P21



p22



P23



P24



P25



p26



P27





P28



p29



P30



p31



P32



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P34



p. 35



P.36



p.37



p38



p.39





P 40



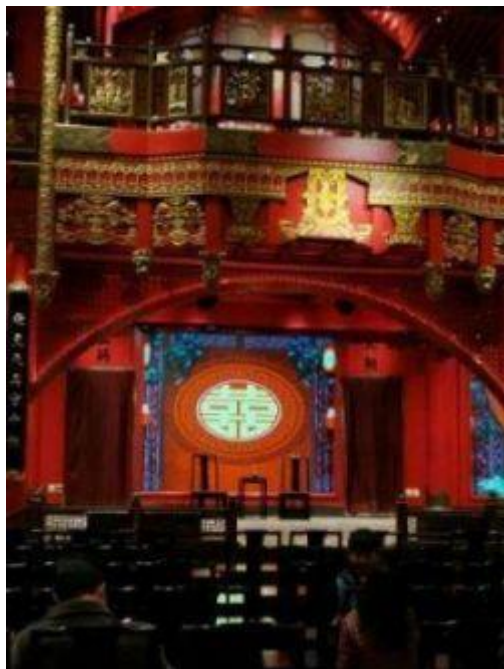
p41



P42



p43



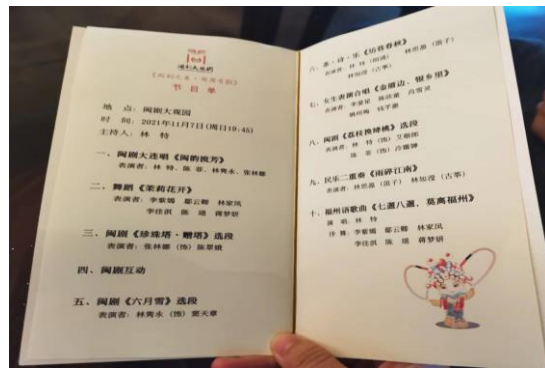
P44

时间	节目名称	表演者
15:00	互动人偶	杨城艺家
	魔术绝活	魔术师
	曲艺表演	水月楼台
	杂技片	杨城艺家
15:15	三仙归洞	曹红艳、三秀萍
	才艺展示	朱嘉广
	音乐演奏	杨城艺家
	舞蹈专场	杨城艺家
15:30	礼仪之邦及重要礼仪	杨城艺家
	互动魔术及互动杂技表演	水月楼台
	杨城秀 (北评岳)	杨城艺家
	魔术绝活	杨城艺家
15:45	舞蹈互动	杨城艺家
	音乐绝活水上飞人表演	杨城艺家
	杂技绝活	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
16:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	三仙归洞	杨城艺家
	杨城秀 (北评岳)	杨城艺家
	魔术绝活	杨城艺家
16:15	魔术绝活	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
16:30	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
17:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
17:15	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
17:30	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
18:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
18:15	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
18:30	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
18:45	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
19:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
19:15	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
19:30	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
19:45	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
20:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
20:15	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
20:30	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
20:45	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
21:00	杂技片	杨城艺家
	曲艺表演	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家
	杂技片	杨城艺家

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### **Appendix 9: The Sample of Fieldnote 03**

I must say, that Fuzhou is an area with a significant overseas Chinese population. Walking in the villages of Fuzhou, if you ask the elderly where you can watch Min opera conveniently and where there are more performances, they will unanimously tell you that Min opera thrives where there are many people who have gone abroad. In the Fuzhou region, the three areas that cannot be ignored are Lianjiang County, Changle City (a county-level city), and Fuqing City (a county-level city). If a village's auditorium doesn't host many plays this year, they will make arrangements to visit other villages together. This makes the buses operating between urban and rural areas an important space for my observations.

With the guidance of the villagers, I came to Baisha Village in Fuzhou. According to the local villager who was guiding us, Baisha Village has many young people who have gone abroad, and the village is relatively prosperous. The village's geographical location is favorable, and during the government's land reform process, the village head showed intelligence by leasing the land to the government on behalf of the villagers and developing it according to the government's plan. Therefore, the land around the village, including storefronts and commercial areas, was leased to businesses or the government during the land reform, providing a considerable income for the entire village each year. Hence, Baisha Village is relatively prosperous in the county. Next to the village's entrance, there is a building where the elderly gather, and it seems to have been around for some years. Walking further inside, between the village's households, the houses are not as well-built. Following a small path with a couple of turns, we arrived at the Cultural Activity Center for the Elderly, completed in 2004. This is a well-maintained auditorium, and according to the villagers, every village has such an auditorium, and they notify each other when there are plays to be watched in the auditorium.

On the morning, I arrived at Baisha Auditorium in Fuzhou city, led by local villagers. According to the local villagers, Baisha Village has many young people going abroad, and the village is relatively prosperous. Baisha Village has a good geographical location. During the government's land reform process, the village leader was quite capable and was able to work for the welfare of the entire village. They proposed, on behalf of the villagers as a collective, to lease the land to the government and develop it according to government planning. As a result, the land around the village and the commercial areas were leased to businesses or the government after the land reform, generating a significant annual income for the entire village. Therefore, Baisha Village is relatively prosperous in the county.

Next to the village entrance, there is an elderly community center. The elderly community center and the community service station are multi-story buildings that have been around for over a decade and appear quite spacious. Further inside, as you



move away from the main entrance, the quality of housing becomes less favorable. Following a winding path, we arrived at the Elderly Cultural Activity Center, which was completed in 2004. This is a well-maintained auditorium, and according to the villagers, every village has such an auditorium, and they use it to notify each other when there are performances to watch at the auditorium.

The activity center consists of two buildings. One is the cafeteria, where during events, the village either hires a chef or relies on its people to cater meals. When a theater troupe visits, their fees do not include meals. According to customs and tradition, the elders can arrange catering services, providing noodles, dried goods, and several types of pot dishes for the villagers who come to watch the show. The lunch of FOTs consists of several tables of dishes, and they can have their meals at noon.

Another building, or rather two buildings combined, is the Guanyin Temple and the auditorium. This type of combination is very common in rural China because whenever a troupe performs, they first perform for the gods and then entertain the people. In Baisha Village, the Monkey God they worship is enshrined in the Guanyin Temple. The Guanyin Temple is elaborately decorated and well-built, and many villagers come here regularly on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month to pray for blessings and make offerings. The main deity in the Guanyin Temple faces directly towards the stage, which is convenient for performances dedicated to the gods. The Guanyin Temple is beautifully decorated and regularly visited by many villagers on specific days, such as the first and fifteenth of each lunar month, for prayers and offerings. The main deity in the Guanyin Temple faces the stage, and before major performances, the opera troupe performs a special segment based on the requests of the villagers. This segment might involve invoking the God of Wealth, the Eight Immortals, or other deities. The staff at the Elderly Community Center mentioned that such additional performances come at a cost. Typically, the Elderly Community Center receives red envelopes of 800 yuan from the elderly attendees, while the opera troupe receives 300 yuan. If a private group wants to request a performance for a specific purpose, they make an offering and dedicate a segment of the performance to the deity, thereby making a vow. If the entire village collectively requests a performance, villagers can register with the Elderly Community Center and have their names included before the major performance as a collective vow. This form of dedication and offering is a commitment made by the villagers when making a wish to the deity, and failing to fulfill it would bring them unease. Some elderly individuals, even at an advanced age, still remember the commitments made by their previous generations to the deity. They feel they must have the opera troupe perform the dedication and offerings, or they cannot find peace of mind.

The entrance to the Guanyin Temple is adorned with stone carvings bearing the names of all the donors, and villagers believe that this is a form of merit. By making such donations, they hope to receive the blessings of the deity and benefit their future generations. You can descend from the Guanyin Temple to the first floor of the

auditorium via a staircase. The auditorium can be accessed by coming down the stairs from the second floor of the Guanyin Hall, leading to the first-floor lobby. It can accommodate roughly over a thousand seats, even equipped with heating. The seats are old-fashioned wooden chairs. The screen is an LED display that can show subtitles and scenic views. The backstage area is located on the second floor behind the stage and offers ample space. The corridor area connecting the backstage to the stage serves as the performance area for the band. Perhaps because it was morning, the opera troupe was rehearsing other acts, such as “Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars” which is intended for a specific performance celebrating an elderly person's birthday. There were almost no audience members in the audience area, just a few staff members including a liaison (agent) recording snippets for the troupe's promotion, along with camera operators and the troupe's staff. Actors were busy applying makeup, and the orchestra occasionally rehearsed segments. In this sparsely populated hall, my presence as a stranger drew their attention. Nearby villagers adeptly greeted them and offered brief introductions. However, I overheard some villagers quietly wondering, “Why would a young person come here?” It seemed that more than the arrival of a stranger, my age was of greater interest to them.

I curiously asked, “Why is the village entrance built as a senior activity center instead of other public cultural spaces?” In my opinion, the village entrance is a crucial facade of the village, and it seems like public spaces like a village committee should be built. Villagers told me, “The temples, shrines, and public cultural facilities, including auditoriums, in these villages, are mostly constructed with contributions from the villagers, so where and how they are built is, of course, convenient for everyone.” Along the way, I saw some temples and shrines still under construction, seemingly undergoing renovation based on their original structures, and the funding for these projects is also raised within the village. The contributors are mostly from the same shrine or people of the same surname. The village head mentioned that a long-term plan for the future includes the renovation of approximately seven traditional cultural facilities for cultural activities or rural tourism projects. However, the village has limited land, and most of it has been converted to commercial use. Therefore, large-scale ecotourism isn't feasible in the village.

Recalling my research, which was based on the changes of the past decade, I began to explore buildings or stories in the village that bore the marks of time. One memorable event for the villagers was the land requisition that occurred roughly between 2013 and 2015. According to the village committee's residents, there were many anecdotes associated with this land requisition. The initial plan was to demolish the homes of villagers along Aojiang Road to expand County No. 1 High School and widen the road leading to the riverbank. During the compensation process, most villagers chose the option of resettlement housing compensation because, at the time, property prices were increasing much faster than the compensation value. However, for various reasons, the resettlement housing didn't materialize for a long time, and it took two years to finalize the relocation...One villager recalled that at times, conflicts would

arise during these negotiations, and there were instances where elderly residents became overly emotional and unwilling to leave their chicken and duck coops, leading to cases of them fainting and needing medical attention. In 2016, the village road at the entrance was connected to the main road of the county town, greatly improving transportation convenience without the need to detour around the village. However, the village underwent significant changes. Afterward, there weren't many changes to the physical landscape, and the village began to focus on the development of rural culture. Renovation projects for local landmarks like the Huang Clan Ancestral Hall and the Pingshui Zunwang Temple began. A villager mentioned, "In recent years, it seems like there hasn't been much requisition of homestead land. The village seems to be focusing on environmental improvements, like our southern riverbanks. It's a trend these years; neighboring villages are doing similar things—managing the river, renovating bridges, and such." During an FO performance, there was an antagonist character whose surname happened to be the same as that of the audience. This audience became very angry and, without waiting for the play to finish, publicly proclaimed that people with their surname were not so wicked. The villagers participating in the play believed that stopping the performance midway was highly inauspicious and requested that the matter be resolved after the play concluded. Both parties were at an impasse, and a conflict was narrowly avoided. Fortunately, the head of the troupe intervened and agreed to change the character's surname in the play, which finally quelled the dispute.

When discussing the village's past, present, and future with the village committee staff, they mentioned, "Our village's young people emigrated early, and now even the second and third generations of immigrants are living abroad. The majority of people in the village are elderly. In total, there are just over a thousand residents. Their cultural activities mostly revolve around attending performances in the village hall during various festivals or traveling to other villages to watch shows. That's pretty much the extent of their cultural life."

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## Appendix 10: A Sample of Transcript

1C1MA-12.28. 2022

Q1: What is your occupation?

问题 1: 您的工作岗位是什么?

Manager: I work as the manager at ST. I used to be an actor, but as I got older and my voice and other conditions weren't sufficient, I transitioned into management.

Q2: How old are you?

问题 2: 方便问一下您今年多大岁数吗?

Manager: I'm 55 years old.

经理: 我今年 55 了

Q3: Could you share some stories about FOT?

问题 3: 您可以分享一些关于你在闽剧团工作的故事吗?

Manager: FO has been around for over 400 years, even longer than Peking Opera. It's all about tradition. But in today's world, it's tough to keep the old-school shows going because they don't always bring in the big bucks. Some troupes, like the ST, have been at it for over 30 years, passing down the family legacy. Many troupes have a good quality repertoire this year, but it might not be the same next year. Many troupes have to stick around for decades to make it work. It's a mix of passion and know-how. If you don't know the ropes, creating shows that people want to see can be a financial gamble. You've got to invest a ton in everything, from the script to the music, the set, lights, and costumes, and there's no guarantee you'll make it back. It's a real challenge. I have been with ST for a while, starting as an actor and now doing management, so I have seen the ups and downs firsthand.

经理: 闽剧我们历史有四百多年, 比京剧还久远, 以传统为主, 现在社会商业化, 闽剧的传统剧目内容比较艰辛, 或者就是老剧目, 不好赚钱, 要精益求精太难。有的老板他做这行三十几年, 老板就做的比较好, 比如 ST, 就能坚持下去, 家传的, 他们家里一代代坚持下来。也有很多剧团, 今年剧目不错, 明年就不行了, 得有几十年的传承, 才能坚持下来, 也有一些情怀。有的老板不内行, 做的戏没市场, 剧本作曲舞美灯光服装都需要把关, 一本戏都是几十万的投资, 钱不一定拿得回来, 很难坚持。我年轻的时候就在 ST 做演员, 现在做管理, 在这个剧团时间也挺长了。就看着这么过来的。

Q4: Between 2013 and 2015, this period corresponds to a rapid urbanization process, for instance, in Baisha Village, which underwent a two-year land acquisition to expand the county center. What were the effects of these urbanization measures on the cultural environment of the FOT, particularly the folk culture environment? How did we overcome these impacts, and what were the results?

问题 4: 2013 年至 2015 年间, 这一时期对应着快速的城市化进程, 例如, 白沙村经历了为期两年的征地以扩大县域。这些城市化措施对闽剧团的文化环境, 特别是民俗文化环境的影响是什么? 我们是如何克服这些影响的, 结果是什么?

Manager: People have moved to the cities, and as a result, there are fewer young people in our area. It's mostly the elderly now. In the past, in coastal areas, people would go sea fishing or work abroad, and they'd invite FOTs to perform for safety. Nowadays, it's not as common, primarily because fewer people are going abroad. Moreover, many kids these days are engrossed in playing video games and watching short videos, unlike in the past when they used to enjoy participating in traditional activities with their families. Traditions may not hold our interest when we're younger, but as we grow older, we often find them meaningful. This is age-related, and certain traditional needs persist. We can't simply replace FO in traditional customs with movies. It doesn't work that way. Furthermore, there's still room for creativity and innovation. Troupes with high-quality traditional opera performances have a significant advantage, while those with lower-quality shows find it challenging to survive. So, our theater troupe has two strategies: one is for the boss to invest more, and the other is to expand our range of services, offering more plays that can be performed by the general cast, like celebratory songs and dances. This way, our troupe manages to sustain itself, and in some years, both the owner and the actors make a decent profit.

经理: 大家都搬到城里去了, 现在(村子里)年轻人越来越少, 都是老人家。以前我们沿海地方出海捕鱼或者出国打工, 为了保平安都会请戏, 现在也不一定请了。主要还是出国的人少了。而且小孩子有的都打游戏, 刷抖音, 也不像以前小孩子都会凑热闹, 陪家里长辈参加民俗活动。传统的事情, 很多人可能现在不感兴趣, 但是年龄大了, 又会感兴趣, 这个和年龄有关系, 还有一些传统的需求在, 还是会需要闽剧。总不能拿电影去酬神。这样不行。而且也还在创作创新, 但是好的团就比较有优势, 不好的团就不好生存。那我们剧团一个就是老板多投资吧, 另一个就是扩大一下业务范围, 就是一般的演员都可以演的作品多排点, 像祝寿的歌舞之类的吧。所以现在剧团还能维持, 有的年份老板和演员赚的还是挺多的。

Q5: During the years from 2013 to 2015, there was a shift in the functions of government from leading to serving, and the market played a decisive role in resource allocation. We could find the actions of breaking geographical constraints and market segmentation in market strategies. How do you think these changes affected the market of FO performances? Can you share some stories about you adapting to these changes? What are the expectations you think?

问题 5：2013 年至 2015 年，政府职能由主导向服务转变，市场在资源配置中起决定性作用。我们可以在市场战略中发现打破地域限制和市场细分的行为。您认为这些变化对闽剧表演市场有何影响？你能分享一些你适应这些变化的故事吗？你认为他们的期望是什么？

Manager: The main reason is that the government doesn't regulate as much as before. In the past, when other troupes from different places wanted to perform, they had to go through various levels of government and approvals, which were quite strict. Now, it's more about filing reports, so various troupes, including circus and other types of performances, can easily come to our area. This makes it challenging for traditional local troupes like ours to compete. We have to focus on retaining our existing market and ensuring that the two plays we perform each year receive positive feedback. This might be more crucial. We used to perform at store openings and still do when invited, but people's preferences vary, and sometimes they prefer less established troupes to create a lively atmosphere... The owner increases investment in these two plays each year, primarily to cater to the audience's tastes. However, as mentioned earlier, the overall market share is still declining because when you follow a trend, others do the same.

经理：主要就是没有像以前那样政府管的比较多吧，以前其他地方的剧团来演出都要去县里头登记，各种审批，比较严，现在就报备一下之类的，所以各种团就都可以来，什么马戏团，其他歌舞啥的，我们这种传统地方戏也不好竞争。还是得保住原来的市场，保证每年排的两本戏能有好的口碑。这个可能比较重要。我们以前也去商店开业的仪式给人家做过表演，现在也是，只要有请我们，我们就都去，但是人家也不一定喜欢，可能还更喜欢一些末流的剧团，搞得热闹……老板每年就加大投资在两部戏上，主要还是得对观众的口味吧。但是总的来说，市场份额还是在下降，因为你知道这样做，别人也知道这样做。

Q6: Between 2013 and 2015, local governments introduced many measures to encourage the establishment of modern management systems and support FOTs development. What motivated our troupe to adapt so actively to the new management model? However, from the perspective of modern management in FOTs, it seems to be somewhat different from the policy advocacy at that time. What reason interrupted some FOTs to follow these policies? How do you adapt to these? What are the expectations that you think?

问题 6：2013 年至 2015 年，各地出台多项措施，鼓励建立现代管理制度，支持闽剧团发展。是什么促使我们剧团如此积极地适应新的管理模式？然而，从闽剧团的现代管理角度来看，这似乎与当时的政策倡导有所不同。是什么原因中断了一些闽剧团遵循这些政策？你如何适应这些？你认为他们的期望是什么？

Manager: In 2015, our boss registered ST, which is essentially the same troupe as before but with a change in ownership. Approximately 13 years ago, the government began requiring us to operate more formally as a business. Before that, the troupe had operated for a long time in the form of a performance group registered with the cultural

department, without strict regulations. The staff used to live and eat together, and we referred to the troupe as the tuán bù. It was challenging, but the troupe provided for all the basic needs, though the income was low, and the rules were strict. However, everyone had good relationships.

Now, we can't continue in the same manner because people would say the living conditions are illegal and the staff is being exploited. The boss found it tough and unappreciated, so everyone started to arrange their living by themselves. Previously, we all lived together in rural-style houses, but the living conditions were similar for everyone. Now, with improved living standards and the troupe's income not being able to cover modern housing, everyone had to find their solutions. Many families in the village received compensation due to demolitions, which improved their conditions.

In small enterprises like ours, people have their own lives, making management more flexible. When there's a play, we gather, and when it's time to rehearse, we come together. Many of us have been friends and family for years, so there's still cooperation. But regarding things like a box office system, I don't think it's necessary. In our rural setting, one believer covers money for the entire performance, and other audience members get to watch for free. However, in our industry, we use some methods like running public accounts, publishing information, and using traditional methods like posting notices at the village entrance. The most crucial aspect is word of mouth. Moreover, in the past, actors used to record the plays themselves. Now, with directors and screenwriters, it involves more costs. The income for regular actors is affected by this change. Most practitioners in this field face significant challenges, and it's getting increasingly difficult. More money is the most practical solution.

我们老板是15年的时候注册的ST，之前也在做这个工作，其实都是一个剧团，就是变更了一下老板。大概13年前后吧，政府就要求我们如果要合法经营，就必须更正规的企业化管理，之前剧团很长一段时间是以文化部门登记的那种演出队的形式承接业务，没这么多条条框框的要遵守。员工都吃住在一起，我们管剧团叫做团部。但是确实条件是比较艰苦，员工的衣食住行剧团都包了，挣得少，管得严，但是大家感情都很好。现在就没办法啦，人家会说你什么住宿环境不合法，剥削员工之类的。老板也省的吃力不讨好，大家干脆自己解决生活问题。因为之前我们大家都是一起住在农村里头那种瓦房里面，但是以前大家生活环境也都差不多。现在生活条件好了，剧团收入哪里能支付得起楼房的住宿。大家也都各有各的办法。村子里头拆迁，各家各户也还是会有获得一些赔偿款，条件也好了。那我们这种小企业，大家有各自生活，管理上肯定就比较灵活。就有戏的时候就聚一下，召集排练的时候都到一下，都是一起演戏很多年的亲朋好友，还是会配合。但是你说什么票房制度之类的，我觉的没必要。我们这个农村里头演戏，都是戏主包了一整场，其他观众都是免费的。不过我们行业里头有做一些公众号，发布戏讯，还有就是传统的在村口贴告示的方法，大家告知一下，最重要的还是口口相传吧。而且，以前我们都是通大路，演员自己组织排练一下戏，现在还得导演，编剧，费用都不少。其他普通演员的收入那肯定是会受影响。大部分从业者还是挺困难的吧。而且越来越困难。多给点钱（投资）吧，最实在。

Q7: From 2016 to 2020, cultural policies emphasized the promotion of complementary advantages between urban and rural areas and increased protection of intangible cultural heritage, including the construction of various exhibition halls and the launch of various industrial integration projects. Why could not the prosperity of FO be achieved as per the policy initiatives? How did you overcome these difficulties during that period? What are the outcomes that you think?

问题 7：2016 年至 2020 年，文化政策强调促进城乡优势互补，加大对非物质文化遗产的保护力度，包括建设各类展览馆，启动各类产业融合项目。为什么不能按照政策措施的目标实现闽剧的繁荣？那段时间你是如何克服这些困难的？你认为结果是什么？

Manager: To put it simply, we are the department that doesn't receive funding. For example, performances related to intangible cultural heritage often have a public service nature, so the publicity department or the cultural department usually chooses state-owned theater troupes. When it comes to cultural and tourism projects or school events, they don't typically choose us; the demand is relatively low. It might seem like there are many performances related to intangible cultural heritage, but they don't have much to do with our private theater troupe market. In the beginning, we used to participate in some of these, thinking that even if the pay was modest, it could help us establish a good reputation. However, eventually, we couldn't afford to continue, and they didn't have the budget to pay us. Especially during the pandemic, the performing arts industry has faced even greater challenges. For instance, I remember one time the county was organizing a funding project for us to participate in a traditional opera creation. We had discussed how to obtain funding and everyone was very excited—organizing performances, creating content, and so on. In the end, the event was quite lively... However, when it came time to reimburse the expenses, we didn't receive the expected funding due to various reasons. It's quite complicated.

经理：说白了，就是没有付账的部门。你说像一些非遗的演出都是公益性质的，宣传部或者文化部门肯定会选国营的院团。要是文化旅游项目，进校园，也不会找我们，需求比较少。看起来非遗的各种演出好像挺多，但是和我们民营剧团的这块市场基本没啥关系。刚刚开始，我们也会参加一些，想着钱不多好歹也挣个好名声。到后来就搞不起来了，没钱给到我们。特别是疫情，演出行业就更搞不起来了。比如有一次，我记得县里头本来组织我们参加一个戏曲创作的资助项目，那时候说好了如何如何获得资助之类的。大家都很激动，组织排戏、创作。最后活动是办的很热闹……在报销经费的时候，我们因为各种原因未能获得原本期待的资助。挺复杂。

Q8: During the period from 2016 to 2020, the cultural market continued to expand in cultural tourism, but it seems that the market contraction trend was not resolved. What interrupts the development of the ritual and religious market? How can you adapt to these difficulties? What are the outcomes that you think?



问题 8：2016 到 2020 年期间，文化旅游市场规模持续扩大，但市场萎缩趋势似乎并未得到解决。是什么阻碍了仪式和宗教市场的发展？你如何适应这些困难？你认为结果是什么？

Manager: As mentioned earlier, most cultural and tourism projects don't seek us out. In these projects, no one is willing to foot the bill for our performances. You see, we can't penetrate these markets, and with the decline in folk beliefs and the reduction in the number of people going abroad, the market is bound to shrink. We can only try to reduce costs to sustain our development. For example, some martial artists who don't have singing roles and don't speak the Fuzhou dialect aren't an issue for the boss. He'll hire actors from Henan because they come cheaper. Moreover, our daily expenses are also decreasing. Apart from the necessities for performances, we try not to arrange other activities. During the pandemic, our troupe almost turned into an amateur theater club. Enthusiasts would get together when there was a need and perform for some extra income. Those of us in management find it challenging, and for regular actors, their income becomes even more unstable.

经理：还是之前提到的，大部分文化旅游项目不会找我们。在这些项目中，没有人会为我们的演出买单。你看，这些市场我们没办法介入，民间信仰又在流失，出国的人数也在减少，那市场肯定得萎缩。我们只能说尽可能去降低成本维持发展。比如，有一些武打演员，他没有唱词，不会说福州话也没问题。老板就会请河南过来的演员，他们工资更便宜。还有就是日常的开支也在减少吧，除了演出需要，尽量就不安排其他活动。疫情期间，剧团都快变成闽剧俱乐部了，爱好者有需要了就一起演一下戏，挣点外快。我们这些做管理的都觉得困难，那些普通演员收入就更不稳定了。

Q9: During the period from 2016 to 2020, some policies that could have most likely benefited the management of FOTs, such as the public performance of "Grand Stage for People" 群众大舞台, or the assessment mechanism of FOTs. Did our troupe participate in the performance? Why stop or continue? What are the changes in expectations of these policies?

问题 9：在 2016 年至 2020 年期间，一些政策最有可能使闽剧团的管理受益，例如“群众大舞台”的公开演出，或关于闽剧团的评估机制。我们剧团参加演出了吗？为什么要停止或继续？这些政策的预期有哪些变化？

Manager: In the early stages of this program, we did participate, but later on, there wasn't much communication or news about it. At that time, everyone felt that the influence could be expanded, and participating in such projects was a point of pride since it was organized by the government, which meant that everything was vetted and the quality was recognized. However, on a small stage, without any underlying belief or significance, having just a few people perform a segment of a play, and with only a small amount of funding provided, it's different. The expenses for our troupe to go out on such trips are quite substantial. We didn't see any promotion from the cultural department. I believe the budget was insufficient, and eventually, only state-owned

theater troupes continued to be involved in the program. These performances were essentially public service-oriented and didn't offer much if any, income. This led private theater troupes to gradually lose interest, likely due to the lack of adequate funding.

经理：这个活动刚开始的时候，我们也参加过，但是后来就没什么消息了。那个时候政策刚出来，大家觉得可以扩大点剧团的影响力，而且参加这种项目也感觉骄傲的，毕竟政府组织的，你各方面是被把关了，质量是被认可的。但是小舞台又没有信仰在里头，个把人在台上唱个折子戏，给的费用也不多。我们团里头出去一趟开销不少。也没见文化部门宣传，估计费用也不够，就剩下国有剧团在做了，都是公益的，参加了也没什么收益，民营剧团逐渐就没热情参加了。还是资助不够吧。

Q10: Since 2021, there has been particular attention to the living inheritance 活态传承 of intangible cultural heritage, and the promotion of eco-tourism. Consequently, we have witnessed many live performances in Three lanes and seven alleys. Do you think the ritual and religious environment of FO can become a kind of setting in the project of cultural tourism?

问题 10：自 2021 年以来，特别关注非物质文化遗产的活态传承，并促进生态旅游。因此，我们在三坊七巷见证了许多现场表演。你认为闽剧的仪式和宗教环境可以成为文化旅游项目中的一种场景吗？

Manager: I think performing traditional opera in certain tourist spots might feel a bit unusual, and I imagine that actors from the troupe might also find it somewhat uncomfortable. Folk traditions usually don't involve opera performances in tourist areas or parks. If they do appear, it's likely to be a stage performance, which differs from the authentic ceremonial opera. It's challenging to make them the same.

我就觉得在一些旅游景点里头唱戏有点奇怪吧，估计团里的演员如果参加也会觉得有点不自在。民间传统需要的戏曲表演大概不会出现在景区或者公园。如果出现了，大概是舞台表演，和真的仪式戏曲还是有差别。我感觉很难变成一回事。

Q11: Since 2021, the market focus has shifted towards large-scale tourist performance projects in urban areas, building upon the foundation of eco-tourism, such as the Opera Festival of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys 三坊七巷戏剧节. How do you think this market-oriented approach has impacted the cultural environment? For example, FO has gradually moved away from its original religious and ritual environment.

问题 11：从 2021 年开始，市场重点转向以生态旅游为基础的城市大型旅游演出项目，如三坊七巷戏剧节。你认为这种以市场为导向的方式对文化环境产生了怎样的影响？例如，闽剧逐渐脱离了其原有的宗教和仪式环境。

Manager: I feel that at the moment, it may not be necessary. In the folk cultural market, it can still sustain our theater groups. The potential challenges might primarily affect some ordinary actors. For instance, in martial arts performances, they have to

participate in many shows to make a decent living. Some younger actors might find working in tourist areas a bit more comfortable, but it's still temporary work. For them, it might not matter much about the market or the environment as long as they have a higher income. As for some large-scale performances in places like Sanfang Qixiang, I've also seen them, but the investment required is not something private theater groups can afford. Moreover, the actors are typically recruited by state-owned organizations and they already receive government salaries, so they don't mind participating in public service work. We still need to support our families, and we can't just rely on these performances for reputation alone.

我感觉目前来看还不需要吧。在民间民俗市场还可以满足我们这些剧团的生存。脱离可能主要在一些普通演员。比如说武打，他们要兼很多他团的演出赚的才够生活。有一些年轻演员，现在景区里头的工作可能环境会好一些，但是也是零时工。可能对他们来说，也无所谓什么市场，哪种环境，就是有个更高的收入就可以了。像三坊七巷的一些演出，我也去看过，那个大型演出，投入不是我们民营可以承担的，而且演员一般也是招募国营的，他们本来就领政府的工资，公益帮忙也无所谓。我们还得养家糊口，总不能演出图一个名声。

Q12: Since 2021, the government has emphasized enhancing the competitiveness of troupes, allowing more troupes to participate in cultural tourism projects. How do you view the prospects of these projects? Do you believe these projects will be beneficial for the ongoing development of FOTs, and if so, in what ways?

问题 12: 从 2021 年开始，政府强调提高剧团的竞争力，允许更多的剧团参与文化旅游项目。您如何看待这些项目的前景？您认为这些项目会对当前的闽剧团的发展有益吗？如果是，会以什么方式受益？

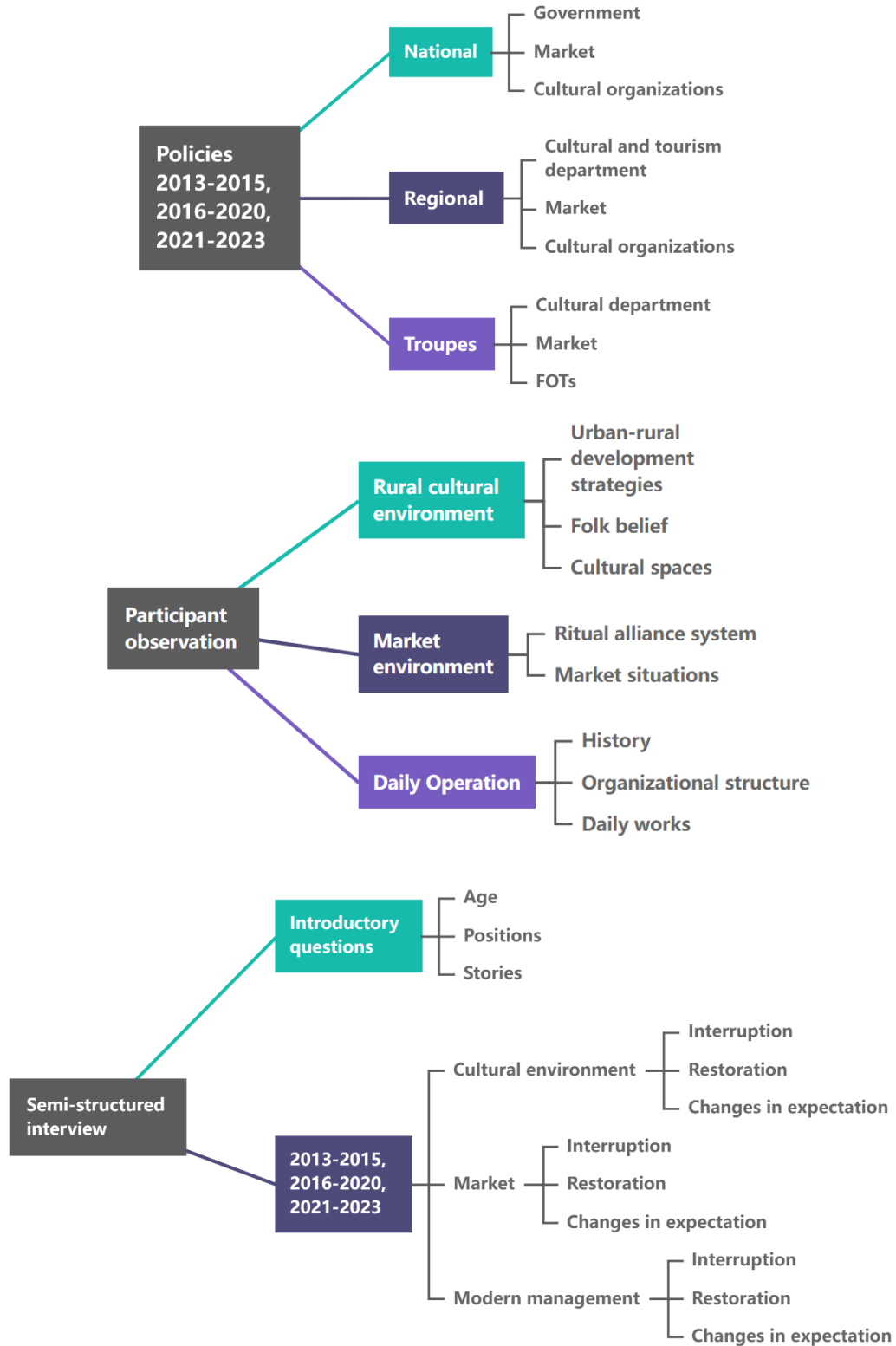
Manager: To be honest, I don't think the outlook is very promising. These past few years have been tough for everyone, but some theater groups, like the Min Opera troupe in Mawei, have their owner taking on lead roles, which saves them a significant amount of money in terms of actors. We've been training actors in our group for many years, but, indeed, we haven't been able to produce actors like that. The expenses we can save might come from the scripts or various stage setups, but it still affects the overall quality. In the past couple of years, our troupe has also included Fuzhou songs in our performances. In the future, we'll try to secure more collaboration opportunities or performance opportunities. Sometimes, teaming up with county troupes or other forms of cooperation might provide us with alternative avenues. However, many of the actors in the troupe are here out of their passion. They are willing to do this when they have the time. Some of the younger actors are not professionals in the field; they are doing it out of their interest. As they reach a certain age and find it enough to make a living, they enjoy doing this. It's a community of familiar faces. So, the troupe can still be sustained...If you're asking whether these cultural and tourism projects or policies are beneficial to us, it's not that they have no value, but it's limited. However, some of our actors can indeed make some extra money by doing odd jobs. In the future, there may also be opportunities to participate in some of these projects, after all, it's still a way

forward. But for now, no one is paying the bills.

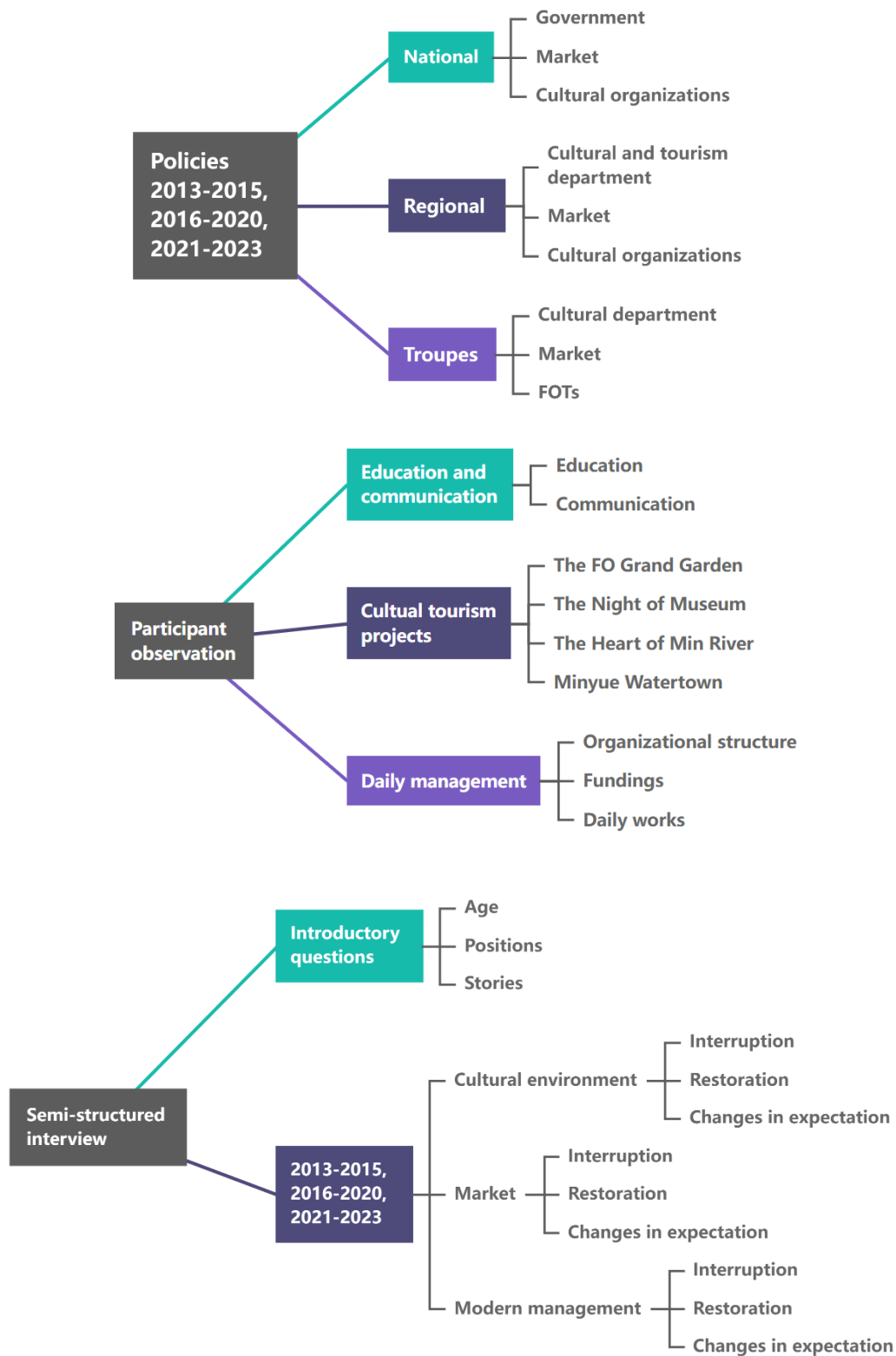
经理：说实话，我觉得前景不是很好。这几年大家都不容易，但是有的剧团像马尾的闽剧团，他们老板自己就能挑大梁唱主角，那在主演这块就省了一大笔钱。我们团培养演员也很多年，但是确实培养不出来这样的演员，那能节省的开支可能就是在剧本或者舞台各种配置上，总归还是会有点影响质量。团里头这两年也排点福州歌曲之类的。以后就是看看能不能多争取一些合作或者演出机会。有时候可能和县剧团搞点合作之类的，兴许能有别的出路。不过团里很多演员也是兴趣在这里，他们有时间也愿意干这个。有的年轻演员刚刚开始也不是专业从事这个，就是兴趣。到了一定年纪，她觉得够生活，喜欢干这个。都是一个村相熟的自己人。ST 还是可以维持……你要是说这些文旅项目或者政策之类的对我们有没有用，也不能说没有，就是有限。但是我们一些演员确实可以靠做些零工多挣点钱。以后是不是也有机会参加一些，总归也是条路。但是现在还是没人付账。

## Appendix 11: Coding Book

### Case 1:



**Case 2:**



The following is a detailed coding process using the transcript from Appendix 10 (Q4 to Q12) as an example:

Data	Code	
<b>Q4</b>		
People have moved to the cities, and as a result, there are fewer young people in our area. It's mostly the elderly now.	Cultural environment	Interruption
In the past, in coastal areas, people would go sea fishing or work abroad, and they'd invite FOTs to perform for safety. Nowadays, it's not as common, primarily because fewer people are going abroad.	Cultural environment	Interruption
Moreover, many kids these days are engrossed in playing video games and watching short videos, unlike in the past when they used to enjoy participating in traditional activities with their families.	Cultural environment	Interruption
Traditions may not hold our interest when we're younger, but as we grow older, we often find them meaningful. This is age-related, and certain traditional needs persist.	Cultural environment	Restoration
We can't simply replace FO in traditional customs with movies. It doesn't work that way.	Cultural environment	Restoration
Furthermore, there's still room for creativity and innovation.	Cultural environment	Restoration
Troupes with high-quality traditional opera performances have a significant advantage, while those with lower-quality shows find it challenging to survive.	Cultural environment	Restoration
So, our theater troupe has two strategies: one is for the boss to invest more, and the other is to expand our range of services, offering more plays that can be performed by the general cast, like celebratory songs and dances.	Cultural environment	Restoration
This way, our troupe manages to sustain itself, and in some years, both the owner and the actors make a decent profit.	Cultural environment	Changes in expectation
<b>Q5</b>	<b>Code</b>	
The main reason is that the government doesn't regulate as much as before.	Market	Interruption
In the past, when other troupes from different places wanted to perform, they had to go through various levels of government and approvals, which were quite strict. Now, it's more about filing reports, so various troupes, including circus and other types of performances, can easily come to our area.	Market	Interruption

<p>This makes it challenging for traditional local troupes like ours to compete. We have to focus on retaining our existing market and ensuring that the two plays we perform each year receive positive feedback. This might be more crucial.</p>	<p>Market</p>	<p>Restoration</p>
<p>We used to perform at store openings and still do when invited, but people's preferences vary, and sometimes they prefer less established troupes to create a lively atmosphere...</p>	<p>Market</p>	<p>Interruption</p>
<p>The owner increases investment in these two plays each year, primarily to cater to the audience's tastes.</p>	<p>Market</p>	<p>Restoration</p>
<p>However, as mentioned earlier, the overall market share is still declining because when you follow a trend, others do the same.</p>	<p>Market</p>	<p>Changes in expectation</p>
<p><b>Q6</b></p>		
<p>In 2015, our boss registered ST, which is essentially the same troupe as before but with a change in ownership.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Restoration</p>
<p>Approximately 13 years ago, the government began requiring us to operate more formally as a business. Before that, the troupe had operated for a long time in the form of a performance group registered with the cultural department, without strict regulations.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Interruption</p>
<p>The staff used to live and eat together, and we referred to the troupe as the tuán bù. It was challenging, but the troupe provided for all the basic needs, though the income was low, and the rules were strict. However, everyone had good relationships. Now, we can't continue in the same manner because people would say the living conditions are illegal and the staff is being exploited. The boss found it tough and unappreciated, so everyone started to arrange their living by themselves. Previously, we all lived together in rural-style houses, but the living conditions were similar for everyone. Now, with improved living standards and the troupe's income not being able to cover modern housing, everyone had to find their solutions.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Interruption</p>
<p>Many families in the village received compensation due to demolitions, which improved their conditions. In small enterprises like ours, people have their own lives, making management more flexible. When there's a play, we gather, and when it's time to rehearse, we come together. Many of us have been friends and family for years, so there's still cooperation.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Restoration</p>



But regarding things like a box office system, I don't think it's necessary. In our rural setting, one believer covers money for the entire performance, and other audience members get to watch for free.	Modern management	Interruption
However, in our industry, we use some methods like running public accounts, publishing information, and using traditional methods like posting notices at the village entrance. The most crucial aspect is word of mouth.	Modern management	Restoration
Moreover, in the past, actors used to record the plays themselves. Now, with directors and screenwriters, it involves more costs. The income for regular actors is affected by this change.	Modern management	Interruption
Most practitioners in this field face significant challenges, and it's getting increasingly difficult. More money is the most practical solution.	Modern management	Changes in expectation
<b>Q7</b>	<b>Code</b>	
To put it simply, we are the department that doesn't receive funding. For example, performances related to intangible cultural heritage often have a public service nature, so the publicity department or the cultural department usually chooses state-owned theater troupes.	Market	Interruption
When it comes to cultural and tourism projects or school events, they don't typically choose us; the demand is relatively low. It might seem like there are many performances related to intangible cultural heritage, but they don't have much to do with our private theater troupe market.	Market	Interruption
In the beginning, we used to participate in some of these, thinking that even if the pay was modest, it could help us establish a good reputation.	Market	Restoration
However, eventually, we couldn't afford to continue, and they didn't have the budget to pay us.	Market	Interruption
Especially during the pandemic, the performing arts industry has faced even greater challenges.	Market	Interruption
For instance, I remember one time the county was organizing a funding project for us to participate in a traditional opera creation. We had discussed how to obtain funding and everyone was very excited—organizing performances, creating content, and so on. In the end, the event was quite lively...	Market	Restoration

However, when it came time to reimburse the expenses, we didn't receive the expected funding due to various reasons. It's quite complicated.	Market	Changes in expectation
<b>Q8</b>	<b>Code</b>	
As mentioned earlier, most cultural and tourism projects don't seek us out. In these projects, no one is willing to foot the bill for our performances. You see, we can't penetrate these markets, and with the decline in folk beliefs and the reduction in the number of people going abroad, the market is bound to shrink.	Cultural environment	Interruption
We can only try to reduce costs to sustain our development. For example, some martial artists who don't have singing roles and don't speak the Fuzhou dialect aren't an issue for the boss. He'll hire actors from Henan because they come cheaper. Moreover, our daily expenses are also decreasing. Apart from the necessities for performances, we try not to arrange other activities.	Modern management	Restoration
During the pandemic, our troupe almost turned into an amateur theater club. Enthusiasts would get together when there was a need and perform for some extra income.	Modern management	Restoration
Those of us in management find it challenging, and for regular actors, their income becomes even more unstable.	Modern management	Changes in expectation
<b>Q9</b>	<b>Code</b>	
In the early stages of this program, we did participate, but later on, there wasn't much communication or news about it.	Modern management	Interruption
At that time, everyone felt that the influence could be expanded, and participating in such projects was a point of pride since it was organized by the government, which meant that everything was vetted and the quality was recognized.	Market	Restoration
However, on a small stage, without any underlying belief or significance, having just a few people perform a segment of a play, and with only a small amount of funding provided, it's different. The expenses for our troupe to go out on such trips are quite substantial. We didn't see any promotion from the cultural department. I believe the budget was insufficient, and eventually, only state-owned theater troupes continued to be involved in the program. These performances	Modern management	Interruption

were essentially public service-oriented and didn't offer much if any, income.		
This led private theater troupes to gradually lose interest, likely due to the lack of adequate funding.	Modern management	Changes in expectation
<b>Q10</b>	<b>Code</b>	
I think performing traditional opera in certain tourist spots might feel a bit unusual, and I imagine that actors from the troupe might also find it somewhat uncomfortable. Folk traditions usually don't involve opera performances in tourist areas or parks. If they do appear, it's likely to be a stage performance, which differs from the authentic ceremonial opera. It's challenging to make them the same.	Cultural environment	Interruption
<b>Q11</b>	<b>Code</b>	
I feel that at the moment, it may not be necessary. In the folk cultural market, it can still sustain our theater groups.	Market	Interruption
The potential challenges might primarily affect some ordinary actors. For instance, in martial arts performances, they have to participate in many shows to make a decent living. Some younger actors might find working in tourist areas a bit more comfortable, but it's still temporary work. For them, it might not matter much about the market or the environment as long as they have a higher income.	Modern management	Restoration
As for some large-scale performances in places like Sanfang Qixiang, I've also seen them, but the investment required is not something private theater groups can afford. Moreover, the actors are typically recruited by state-owned organizations and they already receive government salaries, so they don't mind participating in public service work. We still need to support our families, and we can't just rely on these performances for reputation alone.	Market	Changes in expectation
<b>Q12</b>	<b>Code</b>	
To be honest, I don't think the outlook is very promising. These past few years have been tough for everyone, but some theater groups, like the Min Opera troupe in Mawei, have their owner taking on lead roles, which saves them a significant amount of money in terms of actors.	Modern management	Changes in expectation
We've been training actors in our group for many years, but, indeed, we haven't been able to produce actors like that.	Modern management	Interruption

<p>The expenses we can save might come from the scripts or various stage setups, but it still affects the overall quality.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Restoration</p>
<p>In the past couple of years, our troupe has also included Fuzhou songs in our performances. In the future, we'll try to secure more collaboration opportunities or performance opportunities. Sometimes, teaming up with county troupes or other forms of cooperation might provide us with alternative avenues.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Changes in expectation</p>
<p>However, many of the actors in the troupe are here out of their passion. They are willing to do this when they have the time. Some of the younger actors are not professionals in the field; they are doing it out of their interest. As they reach a certain age and find it enough to make a living, they enjoy doing this. It's a community of familiar faces. So, the troupe can still be sustained. If you're asking whether these cultural and tourism projects or policies are beneficial to us, it's not that they have no value, but it's limited. However, some of our actors can indeed make some extra money by doing odd jobs.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Restoration</p>
<p>In the future, there may also be opportunities to participate in some of these projects, after all, it's still a way forward. But for now, no one is paying the bills.</p>	<p>Modern management</p>	<p>Changes in expectation</p>

## Appendix 12: Previous scales which will be adapted in this research

Scales	Main items
Sustainability performance scale (Gelhard and Delft, 2016)	<p>SP1: We are the first that offer environmentally friendly products/services in the marketplace.</p> <p>SP2: Our competitors consider us a leading firm in the field of sustainability.</p> <p>SP3: We develop new products/services or improve existing products/services that are regarded as sustainable for society and the environment.</p> <p>SP4: Our reputation in terms of sustainability is better than the sustainability reputation of our competitors.</p> <p>SP5: Compared to our competitors, we more thoroughly respond to societal and ethical demands.</p>
Perceived organizational support (Shen and Benson, 2016)	<p>POS1: My organization cares about my opinions.</p> <p>POS2: My organization cares about my well-being.</p> <p>POS3: My organization appreciates any extra effort from me.</p> <p>POS4: My organization would ignore any complaint from me.</p> <p>POS5: Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice.</p> <p>POS6: My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.</p> <p>POS7: My organization shows very little concern for me.</p> <p>POS8: My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.</p>
Local Policy Planning and Support (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019)	<p>LPP1: Availability of clear sustainable heritage tourism master plan</p> <p>LPP2: Implementation of land zoning practices in the attraction sites</p> <p>LPP3: Inclusion of heritage tourism into the community development program</p> <p>PS1: Presence of support for development projects at a regional level.</p> <p>PS2: Local leaders towards heritage tourism development.</p> <p>PS3: Level of support for conservation of heritage sites at the local level.</p>
Vitality dimension of thriving at work (Porath, et al., 2012)	<p>VW1: I feel alive and vital</p> <p>VW2: I have energy and spirit</p> <p>VW3: I do not feel very energetic (R)</p> <p>VW4: I feel alert and awake</p> <p>VW5: I am looking forward to each new day</p>

## **Appendix 13: Questionnaire**

### **About the survey**

The questionnaire aims to investigate your views on the sustainable management of Fujian opera troupes and promote their development. This survey should take about 10 minutes of your time, which use the seven-pointed Likert-type scale to indicate the degree of agreement with each item, including (7) Strongly agree, (6) Agree, (5) Slightly agree, (4) Mixed or neither agree nor disagree, (3) Slightly disagree, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly disagree. You can place a tick in the box provided.

The information in this questionnaire is completely confidential and the information you provide will be recorded on a completely anonymous basis. It will be passed on to the researcher from UWTSD, who will ensure that the information you provide is kept securely stored. You will not be asked to provide your name during the survey.

If you have any problems completing the survey or would like to speak to the researcher, then please contact:

DBA Research Student of IMH Swansea  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

**1.  I understand the following rules:**

I am free to withdraw from the study at any time if I wish and if I choose to do this, there will be no further contact from the researchers

Any personal information I provide will be treated as strictly confidential

I can refuse to answer any question

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications

Please check the following boxes to indicate that you are willing to participate in the survey and that you are aware of the conditions under which you are submitting information before beginning to answer the main survey questions.

**2.  I agree that I have read the information:**

Read the information provided on the first page

Received satisfactory information regarding the research

**3.  I understand that:**

I am free to withdraw from the study at any time if I wish and if I choose to do this, there will be no further contact from the researchers

Any personal information I provide will be treated as strictly confidential

I can refuse to answer any question

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications

## **Part 1: Personal**

### **4. Gender**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer Not To say

### **5. Age**

- Under 18 years
- 18 to 29 years
- 30 to 39 years
- 40 to 49 years
- 50 years and older

### **6. Education**

- Completed primary school or below
- Completed middle school
- Completed high school
- Bachelor's degree or above

### **7. Position**

- Actor
- Manager and other internal stakeholders
- Worker in the cultural department
- Other external stakeholders



8. How many years have you been engaged in the Fujian opera

- Within five years
- 5 to 9 years
- 10 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

## Part 2: Scale

**Introduction:** This scale uses the seven-pointed Likert-type scale to indicate the degree of agreement with each item. Please respond to each question by placing a tick in the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on the following scale:

(7) Strongly agree, (6) Agree, (5) Slightly agree, (4) Mixed or neither agree nor disagree, (3) Slightly disagree, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly disagree.

<b>Section A: Organizational support (OS)</b>								
No.	Statements	Scale						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
OS1	Fujian Opera Troupe cares about my opinions.							
OS2	Fujian Opera Troupe cares about my well-being.							
OS3	Fujian Opera Troupe appreciates any extra effort from me.							
OS4	Fujian Opera Troupe would not ignore any complaint from me.							
OS5	As long as I did the best job possible, Fujian Opera Troupe would notice.							
OS6	Fujian Opera Troupe cares about my general satisfaction at work.							
OS7	Fujian Opera Troupe takes pride in my accomplishments at work.							

<b>Section B: Policy support (PS)</b>								
No.	Statements	Scale						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PS1	I am clear Fujian Opera is the sustainable heritage master plan.							
PS2	The sustainable development of the Fujian Opera Troupe has been incorporated into the strategy of local cultural tourism.							
PS3	The sustainable development of the Fujian Opera Troupe has been included in the community development program.							

PS4	The sustainable development of the Fujian Opera Troupe has received support for development projects at a regional level.							
PS5	The Fujian Opera Troupe has received support from local leaders.							
PS6	The sustainable development of the Fujian Opera Troupe has received the conservation of intangible cultural heritage at the local level.							

<b>Section C: Emotions at Work (EW)</b>								
No.	Statements	Scale						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EW1	I feel alive and vital working at Fujian Opera Troupe.							
EW2	I have energy and spirit working in Fujian Opera Troupe.							
EW3	I rarely have trouble concentrating on work.							
EW4	I feel alert and awake working in Fujian Opera Troupe.							
EW5	I am looking forward to each new day working at Fujian Opera Troupe.							

<b>Section D: Sustainability (S)</b>								
No.	Statements	Scale						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
S1	We have the highest-quality Fujian opera performing in the market.							
S2	Our competitors consider us a leading troupe in the sustainability of Fujian Opera culture.							
S3	We obtain investment or profits to create new Fujian operas due to respect for the local culture and tradition.							
S4	Our reputation in terms of cultural sustainability is better than our competitors.							
S5	Compared to our competitors, we more thoroughly respond to societal and ethical demands.							

## Appendix 14: Tables in Chapter Two

Period	Reforms
2002-2005	Allowing private capital to enter the cultural industry.
2005-2010	Reconstructing cultural market and transfer governments' function.
2010-2011	Completing the reforms of SOTs
2011-2013	Institutional Innovation in Radio and Television Group
2013-2014	Transforming operational cultural institutions into enterprises.

**Table 2.1: Five-stage framework (Cai, 2014)**

Period	System or Reform	Introduction
Ming and Qin Dynasty	Leader Formation System 班主组班制	The leader managed all affairs of the troupes.
	The Famous Actor Formation System 名角挑班制	Centered around a particular leading actor, other roles are recruited to form a troupe.
In 1949	Republican Troupe 共和制 文艺院团	Emphasises democratic involvement; 2. Resulting in employees acting independently, making it difficult to implement.
In 1950	Experimental Opera Troupes	The beginning of the state-owned troupes. Reliance on the government. The employees' motivation had significantly declined.
In 1951	Directive On The Fifth Of May 五五指示	Reform the old-style economic distribution system. Abolish old-fashioned artist training systems. Establish a modern management system, including the 'director system' and 'script system.'
In 1952	Folk Professional Troupes 民间职业剧团	The coexistence of multiple ownership models, including state-owned, private, and private with public assistance

**Table 2.2: Reforms of Traditional Opera Troupes between Min Dynasty to 1952**

Model	Introduction
Outline Opera 提纲戏	The performers directly stage a ready-made story without any script; Actors acquire improvisational skills for the story through standardised performance patterns, called Tongdalu 通大路.
Private Opera 私房戏	Showing the charm of the leading actor and satisfying the fans' demands; It is difficult to find the supporting actors.
Director System 导演制	From the 1950s to the 1960s, the directors didn't truly be distinguished from the 'rehearsal director' 排戏先生; At the beginning of the 1980s, the director became an important position in these troupes due to the personnel system in SOTs and the market shrink.

**Table 2.3: The System of Creative and Performance in Traditional Opera Troupes**

Period	System	Introduction
1981-1984	Contract management responsibility system	1. Borrowing the rules of agricultural reform. 2. The opera market was influenced by the Cultural Revolution.
1985-1992	Dual-Track Reform	1. Alleviate the financial burden caused by SOTs; 2. Pointing out the policies of merging, abolishing, retaining, and supporting. 3. Ownership and management are separated. 4. SOTs received differential subsidies, while private troupes introduced market competition mechanisms.
1993-2000	The reforms of the internal management mechanism	The changes include the legal representative system, personnel system, and more, but the impact of reforms is not significant.
2001-	Categorisation Reform and Industrialisation	1. The SOTs transferred into enterprises. 2. The private troupes faced the industrialised process.

**Table 2.4: Reforms of Troupes after 1981**

Author	Definitions
Weick (1993)	“The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs.”
Gephart (1993)	“Sensemaking has been defined as the discursive process of constructing and interpreting the social world” (p. 1469).
Weick (1995)	“Sensemaking is clearly about an activity or a process, whereas interpretation can be a process but is just as likely to describe a product” (p. 13).
Taylor and Van Every (2000)	“Sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard for action” (p. 275).
Weick, et al. (2005)	“A central theme in both organizing and sensemaking is that people organise to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly” (p. 410).
Cornelissen (2012)	“Sensemaking refers to processes of meaning construction whereby people interpret events and issues within and outside of their organisations that are somehow surprising, complex, or confusing to them” (p. 118).
Maitlis and Christianson (2014)	“Sensemaking is the process through which people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations” (p. 57).
Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015)	“Sensemaking in organisations has been seen as consisting of specific episodes, is triggered by ambiguous events, occurs through specific processes, generates specific outcomes, and is influenced by several situational factors.”
Brown, Colville, and Pye (2015)	“Sensemaking’ is an enormously influential perspective (or concept, approach, lens, or theory) in organisation studies, associated strongly with research that is interpretive, social constructionist, processual and phenomenological” (p. 265).
Höllerer, et al. (2018)	“Sensemaking is most likely to support the objectification of novel ideas when it is a collective, rather than individual, effort” (p. 619).
Christianson and Barton, (2020)	“Sensemaking is a socially constructed process in which individuals interact with their environment and with others to create meaning and enable action.”
Alvesson and Jonsson (2022)	“Sensemaking is thus a core aspect and a way to explore and understand how this system is processed” (p. 729).

**Table 2.5: The Definitions of Sensemaking**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Main Idea</b>
Weick (1969)	Constructed the relationship between social psychology and organisational sensemaking, combining procedure, behavior, puzzles, and interpretation.
Weick (1985)	“Cosmos vs. chaos: Sense and nonsense in electronic contexts”
Weick (1988)	Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations
Weick (1993)	Reanalyse the Mann Gulch fire disaster to consider why the organisation collapsed. And how can the organisation be more resilient?
Weick (1995)	The book concluded with nature, properties, history, occasions, Belief-Driven Processes, Action-Driven Processes, and the future.
Weick (2001)	“Sensemaking skills are a means to manage excess load.”
Weick, et al., (2005)	“Evaluated the concepts of sensemaking by pinpointing central features to restate sensemaking in ways that make it more future-oriented.”
Weick (2010)	“Expanded analysis of disaster analysis shows that the tight coupling between cognition and action, normally associated with enacted sensemaking.”
Weick (2012)	This paper focused on the links among sensemaking, organising, and storytelling for a deeper understanding of interpretive work.
Weick (2020)	Focused on the interplay between experience and understanding to reflect the intellectual influence for improving social psychology in the organisation.
Weick (2021)	“The concept of sensemaking in the context of whistleblowing.”

**Table 2.6: Sensemaking in Weick’s Literature**

<b>Types</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Models or frames</b>
Disaster	<p>Environment disasters (Gephart, 1984)</p> <p>Mann Gulch (Weick, 1993; Introna, 2019)</p> <p>The Pipeline Fire and the Government Inquiry (Gephart, 1993)</p> <p>The Bhopal disaster (Weick, 2010)</p> <p>‘Black Saturday’ Bushfires (Dwyer, Hardy, and Maguire, 2021)</p>	<p>Rationalist Model of social reality, political sensemaking</p> <p>Model of social reality</p> <p>decentered sensemaking</p> <p>Interpretive system</p> <p>Enactment model</p> <p>A Model of Post-Inquiry Sensemaking</p>
Crisis	<p>Several crisis events (Weick, 1988)</p> <p>Marketing Crisis: A Speculative Bubble (Abolafia and Kilduff, 1988)</p> <p>Organizational hazards: The 1977 -1978 Lodgepole “sour gas well” blow-out and inquiry (Gephart, 1997)</p> <p>The collapse of Barings Bank (Brown, 2005)</p> <p>Heatwave in France in 2003 (Boudes and Laroche, 2009)</p> <p>The Global Financial Crisis (Höllerer, Jancsary, and Grafström, 2018)</p>	<p>Enacted sensemaking</p> <p>Enactment theory</p> <p>Quantitative sensemaking</p> <p>Narratives and sensemaking</p> <p>Analysis of discourse strategies</p> <p>Multimodal meaning construction</p>
Unstable Environment	<p>Strategic change in modern academia (Gioia and Thomas, 1996)</p> <p>The key roles in a major British symphony orchestra (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003)</p> <p>The middle managers in a Canadian manufacturer of top-of-the-line women’s clothing (Rouleau, 2005)</p> <p>Three British symphony orchestras (Maitlis, 2005)</p> <p>Wildland fire management (Barton and Sutcliffe, 2009)</p> <p>The discursive competence of middle managers (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011)</p> <p>The uncertain market of ATG (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013)</p> <p>The agency flows through the emergency ward at a Nordic university hospital (Hultin and Mähring, 2017)</p> <p>The war in Afghanistan (Brown, 2018)</p> <p>A comparison of change trajectories in two hospital units (Konlechner, et al., 2019)</p> <p>Political connections between transnational enterprises (Klarin and Sharmelly, 2021)</p> <p>A top-management-led change in TMT (Weiser, 2021)</p> <p>The quality assurance system in a Sweden business school (Alvesson and Jonsson, 2022)</p>	<p>Issue interpretation</p> <p>The Interplay of Organisational Discourse and Politics</p> <p>Strategic sensemaking and sense giving processes</p> <p>The social process of sensemaking</p> <p>Institutional pressures and Self-interest</p> <p>Strategic sensemaking and discursive ability</p> <p>A model of temporal work in strategy-making Material-discursive practices in the post-humanist view</p> <p>Narrative character</p> <p>The prospective and retrospective interplay</p> <p>Political networks in the unstable institution</p> <p>Substantive actions</p> <p>Institutional Theory and Shared Meaning</p>

**Table 2.7: Themes of Contexts in Sensemaking Research**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Types</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Weick (1995)	Ambiguity and Uncertainty	Interpretive system
Maitlis (2005)	Guided, fragmented, restricted, and minimal	Capture the interaction of animation and control
Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010)	Share Meaning (adaptive sensemaking: commitment, identity, and expectations) and Emotion (negative emotion, positive emotion, and Self-conscious emotions)	Understand sensemaking in crisis and changes politics and embodiment in the future research
Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015)	First-order and second-order sensemaking	Understanding the equivocality in the sensemaking process
Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020)	Immanent, involved-deliberate, detached-deliberate, and representational sensemaking	Organisational stability, learning, and change
Konlechner et al. (2019)	Perceive problem pressure, change initiative, perceived fit, and initial expectation embedded in actors' frames	Development of expectation, experience, and ambiguity

**Table 2.8: The Types of Sensemaking**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Constituents</b>	<b>Sensemaking Processes</b>
Daft and Weick (1984)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scanning,</li> <li>2. Interpreting</li> <li>3. Learning</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data sources, data acquisition</li> <li>2. Equivocality reduction, assembly rules</li> <li>3. Strategy formulation and decision-making.</li> </ol>
Weick (1995)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grounded in identity construction,</li> <li>2. Retrospective,</li> <li>3. Enactive in sensible environments,</li> <li>4. Social,</li> <li>5. Ongoing,</li> <li>6. Focused on and by extracted cues,</li> <li>7. Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identities by projecting, reacting to the environment, and self-referential suggestions;</li> <li>2. Attentional process, a specific point, memory, and the sequence, stimulus-response.</li> <li>3. Cause-effect, stimulus-response, and subject-object.</li> <li>4. Network, intersubjectively shared meanings, common language, and social interaction.</li> <li>5. Positive emotion associated with interruption: unexpected events associated with interruption.</li> <li>6. Context affects what is extracted as a cue, and how the extracted cue is then interpreted.</li> <li>7. Separate signal from noise and filter out stimuli.</li> </ol>
Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specific episodes,</li> <li>2. Ambiguous events,</li> <li>3. Specific processes,</li> <li>4. Specific outcomes</li> <li>5. Situational factors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creation, interpretation, enactment</li> <li>2. Interrupts ongoing activities, forcing them to retrospectively make sense, and restore the disrupted activity.</li> <li>3. The creation process, interpretation process, and enactment process.</li> <li>4. The forms of sensemaking efforts, such as fragmented sensemaking efforts.</li> <li>5. Context, language, identity, cognition, framework, emotion, politics, and technology.</li> </ol>
Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sense–action nexus,</li> <li>2. Temporality</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Absorbed coping, abstract detachment, theoretical detachment.</li> <li>2. Practical time, chronological time, existential time.</li> </ol>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Embodiment</li> <li>4. Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Habitual side, expressive side.</li> <li>4. Representational way and performative way.</li> </ul>
Weick (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-validating prophecy.</li> <li>2. Partiality toward similarity.</li> <li>3. The ambivalence between belief and doubt.</li> <li>4. Understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The relationship between experience and understanding.</li> <li>2. Emphasis similarity.</li> <li>3. Linking with the different processes.</li> <li>4. Reality is created and sustained.</li> </ul>
Dwyer, Hardy, and Maguire (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cues,</li> <li>2. Frames</li> <li>3. Temporality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Question, recognise, and interpret.</li> <li>2. A professional frame, a forensic frame, an authority frame, and an organisational frame.</li> <li>3. Retrospective and prospective</li> </ul>

**Table 2.9: The Constituents of Sensemaking**

### Appendix 15: Tables in Chapter Three

Sources	Typology of Validity	Criteria	Phase of Research
Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003;2007; 2008)	An Integrative Model of Inference Quality	Design quality	Design Suitability, design adequacy, Design Consistency, and Analytic Adequacy
		Interpretive Rigor	Interpretive Consistency, Theoretical Consistency, Interpretive agreement, Interpretive Distinctiveness, and Integrative Efficacy
Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006)	Legitimation	Sample Integration	The sampling phase of Data Collection
		Inside-Outside	Description and Interpretation in Data Analysis
		Weakness Minimization	The whole process of research
		Sequential	The whole process of research
		Conversion	The integrative phase of Data collection
		Paradigmatic mixing	Research Design
		Commensurability	Research Philosophy
		Multiple Validities	High-quality meta-inferences through the mixed components
Dellinger and Leech (2007)	Validity Framework (VF): Construct Validation	Foundational Element	Researchers' prior understanding of a construct under study
		Inferential Consistency	Consistent between prior understandings and inferences in the study.
		Utilisation Element	Utility and evidence as sources
		Consequential Element	Access the consequences
		Using the VF	Thinking about the validity (Design Quality, Legitimation, and Interpretive Rigor) in MM research

**Table 3.2: Validity Quality in MM Research**

<b>Quantitative research</b>		
Sources	Types of validity	Purposes
Cronbach and Meehl (1955)	Content validity	The test items represent a sample of a universe that the researchers are exploring.”
	Criterion-related validity	Including predictive validity and concurrent validity, to understand the sequence of test scores and criterion scores.
	Construct validity	Measurement-related Design-related Statistical inferences
Campbell and Fiske (1959)	Convergence validity	“Convergence of independent methods”
	Discriminant validity	“While the usual reason for the judgment of invalidity is low correlations in the validity diagonal.”

**Table 3.3: Validity of Quantitative Research**

<b>Qualitative Research</b>			
Sources	Quality issue	Criteria	Techniques
Lincoln and Guba (1985)	Trustworthiness	Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability	Prolonged engagement, Persistent observation, Use of triangulation, Member checks, Thick descriptions, Reflexive journal
Maxwell (1992)	Validity	Descriptive validity, Interpretive validity, Theoretical validity, Generalizability, and evaluative validity	Member-checking, Purposive sampling, Multiple theories as part of the interpretive framework

**Table 3.4: Validity of Qualitative Research**

Sources	Quality issue	Criteria
Yin (2014)	Case study (Strengthen the construct validity)	Triangulation; Maintain a chain of evidence;
Scott (1990)	Archive standard	Authenticity, Credibility, Meaning, Representativeness
Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016)	Observation (Ecological validity)	Observer error, Observer bias, Observer effect.
Saunders, Lewis, and Thornill (2016)	Quality of semi-structured interview data	Reliability/dependability, Forms of bias; Cultural differences; Generalisability, Transferability

**Table 3.5: Validity for Different Approaches**

<b>Level 1</b>	Methodological orientation	Qualitative, quantitative, or MM
<b>Level 2</b>	Data collection strategies	Observations, unobtrusive measures, focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, tests
<b>Level 3</b>	Specific data collection techniques	Data collection strategies (e.g, unstructured and structured observation)
<b>Level 4</b>	Data sources	The specific data sets

**Table 3.6: Four Levels of Data Collection Typology (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 191)**

## Appendix 16: Tables in Chapter Four

levels	Key points in these policies	
National level	Government	D-01: Policy guidance, control, funding, and public service functions.
	Market	D-01: Playing a positive role in allocating cultural resources by utilising the characteristics of both urban and rural areas, breaking geographical boundaries, and market segmentation.
	Cultural Organisations	D-01: Being encouraged to promote vigorously, including cluster development, industrial integration, brand building, theatre construction, integration with tourism, cross-regional performances, and establishing the ticketing system.
Regional level	Government	D-02: Guiding the cultural development of Min Capital 闽都; extending public cultural services to benefit urban and rural areas; innovating cultural market management mechanisms; establishing the more comprehensive ICH system.
	Market	D-02: Accelerating the integration of urban and rural culture; producing a market chaotic.
	Cultural Organizations	D-02: Encourage private troupes, performance venues, and intermediaries to collaborate; transfer the SOTs into enterprises; Establish the ticket system; and promote the educational function of museums. The FO “Wang Maosheng Wine” 王茂生进酒 and “Red Skirt” 红裙记 had been shortlisted for the “National Stage Fine Arts Project” 国家舞台艺术精品项目; additionally, “Lin Zexu’s Return” 林则徐的复出 received the Gold Award for Original Drama; The FO “Generals Yang” 杨门女将 was performed in an international theatre festival in Russia; hold the FO enthusiasts sharing session.
Troupes	Cultural Department	D-03: Assistance, support, and supervision of the private FOTs; D-04: From depending on the government to face the market.
	Market	D-03: the cultural market continuously grows, but the market of regional operas shrinks; D-04: The market scale presented a decreased trend; the phenomenon of empty nests in theatre is serious.
	FOTs	D-03: Establish a robust system of talent cultivation and create high-quality operas. D-04: Established the sale tickets online; financing difficulty; and aging of talents.

**Table 4.2 2: Relevant Policies from 2013 to 2015**

levels	Key points in these policies	
National level	Government	D-05: Promoting supply-side structural reforms; Continuing to strengthen market management mechanisms;
	Market	D-05: The cultural market scale is not yet large enough, and the structural layout needs further improvement. The cultural resources in urban and rural areas realise the complement of advantages and coordinated development. Cultivate the market by integrating tourism and the art performing industry.
	Cultural Organisations	D-05: Innovation-driven in the construction of a performing arts theater Chain; Rich in the products of integrating tourism and art performance.
Regional level	Cultural and Tourism Department	D-06: Energetically promote the prosperity of local traditional operas; funding the creation of high-quality operas; Constructing a series of distinctive exhibition halls, including the Grand View Garden of FO.
	Market	D-06: The harmony and coexistence of traditional culture and modern civilisation
	Cultural Organizations (D-06)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating the FO “Lin Zexu and Wang Ding” 林则徐与王鼎, and “The Broken Silver Zither” 银箏断; normalising activities “Weekly Opera Night”, exhibitions of the ICH, introducing FO to students in primary or secondary schools, and expend the numbers of public performance.</li> <li>2. Implementing “more performances, more rewards” in SOTs;</li> <li>3. Increasing support for private troupes, including policies, funding, and professional title assessments; guiding them to participate in public cultural services.</li> </ol>
Organisational level	Cultural Department	D-07: Funding implementation of cultural benefit performances.
	Market	D-07: Pursue social benefits rather than economic benefits; free of charge.
	FOTs	D-07: Every FOT can apply to perform one show every Friday evening.

**Table 4.2 3: Relevant Policies from 2016 to 2020**

levels	Key points in these policies	
National level	Government	D-08: Innovating the cultural ecology; promoting the high-quality development of the cultural industry; developing the digital strategy; tourism and art performing plan.
	Market	D-08: Deepening supply-side structural reform; Building a sound market system; Meeting the needs of people; Integrating the domestic market with the international market; Promoting new urbanisation through rural revitalisation.
	Cultural Organisations	D-08: Digitalisation of performance venues; building the famous brand of performing online; integrating the immersive experience into urban-rural tourism; development of the performing arts alliance; investment in rural areas.
Regional level	Government	D-09: Enhancing the protection and inheritance of cultural characteristics in Fuzhou; Exploring dynamic paths of the living inheritance of ICH; Establishing the demonstration center of ICH; Cultivate the products of cultural tourism performance, such as creating large-scale live performances.
	Market	D-09: Increasing the market competitiveness of SOTs.
	Cultural Organisations	D-09: Deepen the reforms of SOTs; The important cultural projects include “One Opera in Taijing” 台江一台戏, “FO Art Festival in Three Lanes and Seven Alleys” 三坊七巷戏剧节, and “the Grand View Garden of FO” 闽剧大观园.
Private troupes	Government	D-10: Improving the reforms and update of private troupes. D-11: The target of the province with fruitful ecotourism and culture.
	Market	D-11: Expand the market of tourism and art performance in urban areas first;
	FOTs	D-10: The integrating development of private troupes with tourism, business, sports, and other fields. D-11: Add the projects of cultural tourism in urban areas.

**Table 4.2 4: Relevant Policies from 2021 to 2023**

Stakeholders	Age	Positions	The key points of stories
Manager 1	49	Head of ST	Inheriting the family business.
Manager 2	55	Administration and logistics	Transitioning from an acting role to an administrative position due to age.
Actor 1	58	A Leading role	Passion for Chinese opera when he was a child.
Actor 2	31	A supporting role	Transitioning from Peking Opera to FO
Director 1	51	A playwright	Studied FO for many years, but due to limited innate talent, He transitioned to a career in adapting FO.
Director 2	60	An internal director for actors	After retiring from the other FOT, dedicated myself to mentoring young talents in the troupe full-time.
External Cultural Worker 1	53	A marketing liaison	Transferring his position from actor to intermediary
External cultural worker 2	52	A president of the Elder Association	After retiring from the public sector in the village, he was elected as the president of the Elder Association through a vote.
Government staff 1	60	Managers of ICH in a cultural department	The increase in the types of ICH was the primary reason for limiting the funding to FO.
Government staff 2	59	Be responsible for propaganda work	Worked in the rural township government department for over 30 years

**Table 4.2 11: Detail Information on Introductory Questions in Case 1**

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers and Directors	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. Fewer people worked abroad because the urban expansion needed high labour force (1C1MA); 2. Urban-rural integration introduced more diverse art forms into rural markets (2C1DI). Under the influence of online entertainment, some young people did not even leave their homes, let alone accompany their elders to participate in these religious (2C1MA; 1C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Expanded their business into broader areas simultaneously, such as opening stores and hosting family celebrations like birthday parties (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> They felt they could not reverse this situation. Due to the limitations of the local language, the markets in other areas were too small (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>
Actors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> The possibility of not being able to guarantee the number of performances each month has arisen (1C1AC). Income became unstable, but the cost of living was higher (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. He safeguarded his income by including clauses in the labor contracts that ensured a certain number of performances (1C1AC). 2. He needed to take on additional part-time jobs to cover the higher cost of living brought about by urbanisation (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> There was a greater income disparity among actors in different roles.</p>
Cultural Workers	<p><b>Interruptions.</b> 1. As many villagers had moved to urban areas, many rituals had been simplified (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration: 1.</b> Expanded into the market more and established good Guanxi with the heads of elderly associations in various villages (1C1CW). 2. Being proactive in assisting villagers if they needed rituals (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> Fewer demands for inviting FOTs (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p>
Government Staffs	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. More forms of art became ICH, but the funding support was not enough (1C1GS). 2. The talent shortages had become evident due to more occupational choices with rapid urbanisation (2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Strengthening the ICH management and striving for reasonable resource allocation (1C1GS). 2. Increase funding for specialised opera colleges (2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> The social status of actors had improved (1C1GS), but the effectiveness of talent cultivation remained subpar (2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 12: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q4



Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers	<p><b>Interruption:</b> Markets were impacted by other cultural forms. While local uniqueness was an advantage in rituals and religious contexts, it faced many challenges in the globalised cultural market, such as difficulties in cross-regional dissemination (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Invested more funds in packaging the annual rural opera performance to capture the love of their loyal fans (2C1MA). The most prudent strategy was to maintain a strong reputation in the rural folk market (2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> The market share of ST still presented a declining trend due to the similar strategy among these private FOTs.</p>
Actors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Our performances evolved with the times, but the elderly folks in the village still preferred the traditional flavor of FO (1C1AC). 2. They could not conduct some roles of martial operas, but the audience for the opera of family ethics was decreasing (2C1AC)</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Improve their skills in intonation with the characteristics of the Fuzhou dialect (1C1AC). 2. They worked for multiple troupes to earn a higher income (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> The skills of the past are challenging to reproduce, and many actors have lost their competitive edge in their career development.</p>
Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> With the emergence of more diverse aesthetics in rural areas, failing to meet these preferences could lead to a loss of audience (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. He had once tried to create some youth-oriented versions of FO (1C1DI). 2. During rehearsals, she added some contemporary popular elements to the production (2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> They received complaints from their loyal fans, who said that these operas lost their original essence of FO. Furthermore, they had failed to attract a larger audience (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>

Table 4.2 13: Key Ideas from Internal Stakeholder Groups in Q5

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Cultural Workers	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. The government was largely uninvolved in the management of cross-regional performances, and sometimes even groups with no foundation could be formed and performed anywhere (1C1CW). 2. There had been an increase in the types of performances, and some demand for non-ritual performances had significantly decreased (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> The government had implemented a series of policies to strengthen market supervision, and the market also had regulatory mechanisms (1C1CW; 1C1CW).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> 1. FOTs with higher-quality opera performances had managed to thrive in the market, especially in the ritual and religious context (1C1CW) 2. Intermediaries sometimes prioritised their profit maximisation, leading to price confusion and unfair competition (2C1CW).</p>
Government Staffs	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> The transition from strict control to more leniency required an adjustment process (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Encouraging leaders from cultural organisations to discuss relevant issues with them, so they would gradually find suitable supervision and service measures (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> Finding a method for different stakeholder groups to jointly regulate (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 14: Key Ideas from External Stakeholder Groups in Q5

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. The local government provided significant support to private troupes in taxation and others with the condition that they register as legitimate businesses through formal business registration; on the other hand, expanded demands of funding to add positions, such as director and playwright (1C1MA). 2. Managing the troupe according to established business regulations might require a reevaluation of previously informal practices to ensure compliance with labor laws and relevant regulations (2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Increased the expenses for hiring excellent directors and playwrights (1C1MA). 2. The troupes were gradually shifting away from the traditional paternalistic management style, which often included no longer providing rudimentary rural housing as a dormitory for collective lives (2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> Employee benefits had been reduced, and the overall expenses had increased. However, the actual income of ST was declining. They had to cut costs, such as assigning the work of the playwright and director to a single experienced employee (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p>
Actors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. His troupe strengthened management for employees, so the part-time job in ST needed to become a private and individual action (1C1AC). 2. The cost of living had increased, but salaries had not seen an increase (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Found ways to coordinate from the aspect of Guanxi (1C1AC). 2. Done many part-time jobs (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Continued their job in ST (1C1AC). Many actors transitioned to a new career (2C1AC).</p>
Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> Strengthening the professional requirements for directors (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Participating in the director training programs organised by various sectors (1C1DI). 2. Continued her job in ST (2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Some renowned directors found their places in the FO industry, but it was challenging for those who switched careers in this position (1C1DI). 2. She often did the work of director, playwright, and teacher in ST(2C1DI).</p>

Table 4.2 15: Key Ideas from Internal Stakeholders in Q6

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Cultural workers	<p><b>Interruptions.</b> 1. They were required to obtain a broker's license before their practices (1C1CW). 2. FOTs hoped to be provided more subsidies for actors' travel and meals during their performances (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Working hard for the licenses (1C1CW). 2. Negotiating a fixed subsidy to be directly included in the contract (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> The license in the FO market was practically ineffective because many people did not adhere to the regulations and market supervision was lacking (1C1CW). 2. Establishing a standardised cooperation model (2C1CW).</p>
Government staffs	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Market supervision could be challenging, especially when some villagers work as intermediaries individually. They might face difficult living conditions, but regulating them effectively can be a complex task, especially when they have a good reputation in the market. (1C1GS). 2. It was difficult to balance support and supervision due to the lower profit in private troupes (2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Established a flexible regulatory mechanism(1C1GS). 2. Established rural workshops to help them (2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Efforts had yielded limited results seem somewhat ineffective (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 16: Key Ideas from External Stakeholder Groups in Q6

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. The policies and resources of the ICH system could only benefit a few SOTs, making it difficult for private troupes to profit from them (1C1MA). 2. The strategy of urban-rural complementarity was primarily achieved through the development of rural tourism. However, the rural tourism projects were still in the stage of infrastructure construction, and there was no financial support for FO performances within the context of folk beliefs (2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Efforts to participate in various performances could help increase visibility and create opportunities for collaboration with ICH projects (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> Due to the impact of the pandemic, there were fewer performances during this period, making the policies not be implemented (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p>
Actors and Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. The ICH system operated on a system of apprenticeship, and private troupes in the county might find it challenging to enter this system. 2. There was insufficient funding to support artistic creation within the context of rural rituals and beliefs (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Having county-level theater troupes step in to obtain some opportunities in the ICH projects (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> After the county troupe transferred into the enterprise, there was a significant decline in the number of employees (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI). So this strategy could not continue to work.</p>
Cultural workers and government staff	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> There were some conflicts between the actual ritual environment and the ICH exhibition (1C1CW; 2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration and Changes in Expectation:</b> Appropriate safeguarding strategies should be developed based on the specific circumstances of each cultural heritage. During this period, there might not be perfect solutions (1C1CW; 2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 17: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q7

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. Due to the pandemic, the number of people traveling abroad had decreased (1C1MA). 2. No one was covering the expenses for their participation in cultural tourism (2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. The troupe was transferred from a professional troupe to an opera club to reduce the financial burden; 2. Hiring martial actors and opera performers from outside Fujian with lower wages (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Changes in Expectation:</b> Employee income was highly unstable (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p>
Actors and Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. With a decrease in the number of performances and annual income (1C1AC; 2C1AC). 2. Fewer invitations for FO scripts (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Some practitioners needed to find additional employment through art performing and tourism projects (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> The quality of operas had declined (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>
Cultural workers	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. The projects of cultural tourism would prioritise to consider SOTs. They had no resources to establish cooperation with the government (1C1CW). 2. There was no tradition of inviting FOTs for cultural tourism projects, and there were no large-scale projects of cultural tourism in their village (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration and Expectation:</b> There were no perfect solutions (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p>
Government staff	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. The investment of funds was substantial, and many projects of cultural tourism had slow progress (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> They needed to proactively explore the market in areas where there were projects available (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Expanding into the market of cultural tourism in urban areas was challenging due to limited business capacity. There was no progress (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 18: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q8

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Pluralistic Stakeholders	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. Due to the low profits, only a few young actors could participate, and there was no significant impact on the reputation (1C1MA). 2. The need for registration each time could be quite cumbersome (2C1MA).</p> <p>3. Due to insufficient funding, there was also low participation from the private troupes (1C1AC; 2C1AC; 1C1DI; 2C1DI; 1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p> <p>4. The original intention was to provide an opportunity for private troupes to join government-funded public welfare projects, but it appeared that the policies and financial support for such initiatives had been inconsistent over time (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. It had transformed into a public welfare activity that generated income for SOTs. The stage locations had also become more versatile, reaching a wider audience by going into communities and rural areas (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> They did not continue to participate.</p>

Table 4.2 19: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q9

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Positions</b>	<b>The main idea</b>
Manager 1	A leader of the FMT	A learning experience for a long time, including FO skills, dissemination of local knowledge, and traditional culture
Manager 2	An administrative employee	The administrative, promotional, and logistical tasks.
Actor 1	A leading role	The apprenticeship relationship from the art school to learning at FMT.
Actor 2	A supporting role	A young actor's job-seeking experience from art school to FMT.
Director 1	A playwright	A story of how he created FO
Director 2	An art director	Stories about transferring her position from actor to director
Cultural worker 1	A music teacher in primary school	How she began FO teaching in primary school
Cultural worker 2	A teacher working in an art school	A story of how his family opposed him learning FO in the past
Government staff 1	Work in the cultural department	The experience of coordinating work with troupes like FMT.
Government staff 2	Be responsible for the work of ICH	Changes in the development of ICH from public benefit to cultural tourism.

**Table 4.2 25: Detail Information on Introductory Questions**

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers and Directors	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. Fans in urban and rural areas were not accustomed to purchasing tickets for enjoying FO (1C1MA); 2. Most young people did not speak the Fuzhou dialect, and this was even more pronounced among young people in urban areas (2C1DI). Pop music and Western music had a significant influence on young people's aesthetics (2C1MA) 3. Compared with the facilities of other cultural theatres in urban areas, the facilities in FO theatres were too outdated to meet audiences' needs (1C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Advocating for the government to fund FO performances in theatres so that even without a sufficient audience, FO performances still could be conducted regularly; 2. Promoting the importance of the Fuzhou dialect in the local culture and undertaking effective efforts for its preservation and dissemination; (1C1MA; 2C1MA). 3. Applying for funding to improve the theatre environment (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Seized policy changes promptly and gradually pushed for the plans (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>
Actors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> So many ICHs and performing arts made it challenging to obtain more attention (1C1AC). 2. The loss of the Fuzhou dialect led to many young actors struggling to grasp the correct intonation, and an inability to capture the traditional characteristics of FO performances (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Seek more support by grasping the advantage of local cultural characteristics and creating a cultural brand for urban influences (1C1AC). 2. Specially arranging the most experienced actors to mentor the young actors in their intonation (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> There were long-term requirements in these aspects.</p>
Cultural workers	<p><b>Interruptions.</b> 1. Basic music education used the theory knowledge from Western music, which differed from that in traditional opera (1C1CW); 2. The impact of contemporary employment made the difficult to recruit students in the major of FO performance (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Prioritizing audience cultivation (1C1CW). 2. Students would obtain very generous subsidies after enrollment (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Unsatisfactory (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p>
Government staffs	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. There were wide types of traditional operas in Fujian, but resources were limited (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Seizing the advantage of Fuzhou being the provincial capital to strive for more resources (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Gradually becoming the cultural brand of Fuzhou (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2.26: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q4

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers and Actors	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. Considering the current cultural market situation in Fuzhou, it was difficult to balance the traditional characteristics of FO and market demands (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> The best choice may be to prioritise the development of FO in its local features so that it obtains more support in policy and funding (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> FMT could not implement the policy objective of transition into an enterprise (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p>
Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Many directors or playwrights who originally studied fields other than FO may face challenges when creating FO. These challenges could include a lack of familiarity with the local dialect and an insufficient grasp of vocal styles (1C1DI). 2. The actors' efforts in designing their roles had decreased (2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> 1. Focusing on prominent local cultural elements as the main driving force and developing other aspects around it (1C1DI). 2. The FMT convened all the cast and crew members to polish roles and details together before and after opera rehearsals (2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> The FO balanced local characteristics and modern elements, but it could be challenging to recreate the traditional FO that fans remembered (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>
Cultural workers	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. She could not teach FO in school due to a lack of learning of traditional opera (1C1CW). 2. It was difficult to cultivate the actors that could drive the development of the FO market (2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> The primary focus was on cultivating students' interest (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Some students who were interested often sought private lessons with teachers (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p>
Government staff	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Most employees from SOTs were unwilling to accept the transition to enterprises (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Retaining the benefits of the civil service system for existing employees while hiring new ones under employment contracts like enterprise. (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Gradually met the policy requirements of transforming SOTs into enterprises (1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

**Table 4.2.27: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q5**

Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers and Actors	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. The number of audiences purchasing tickets through various ticketing platforms was insufficient to meet the requirements from the supervision department for audience attendance per performance (1C1MA). 2. Although internal structures and systems had been adjusted, there had not been a substantial change in management (2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Gave away tickets to loyal fans and professionals to secure attendance while also selling through platforms. Gradually cultivate a ticket-buying habit among the audience by building a good reputation. (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> The box office revenue was relatively low, and there was still a significant gap in being able to sustain the operation of the theater (1C1MA; 2C1MA; 1C1AC; 2C1AC).</p>
Directors	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Directors or playwrights capable of creating and organising regional operas like FO were relatively scarce, especially those who could systematically undergo relevant professional training (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p> <p><b>Restoration and Expectation:</b> 1. They recommended local universities and colleges increase their focus on cultivating directors or playwrights in regional opera (1C1DI; 2C1DI).</p>
Cultural workers and Government staff	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. The students in primary or secondary school needed more operas that aligned with their personality traits and growing environment (1C1CW). 2. The teaching philosophy of traditional opera needed constant updates, but it was challenging to find a balance between contemporary music systems and traditional opera systems in practice (2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> There was a need to enhance the coordination between teachers from the school and actors from the theater continuously (1C1CW; 2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> Due to insufficient emphasis, the effectiveness was not obvious (1C1CW; 2C1CW; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 28: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q6



Stakeholder Groups	Key points
Managers	<p><b>Interruption:</b> For instance, in activities like bringing FO into schools, although we meticulously organised each event, only a small number of children were willing to continue to study FO as their interest (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Established regular activities whenever possible (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p> <p><b>Expectation:</b> In the process of exploration and improvement (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p>
Actors	<p><b>Interruption:</b> 1. The lack of talent incentive mechanisms resulted in insufficient motivation for young actors and students (1C1AC) 2. Although there had been policy changes regarding the recognition and management of inheritors, she felt insufficiently specific and was unable to address the existing issues. For instance, the selection criteria heavily emphasised awards and participation in public activities, which meant outstanding actors from private troupes often missed out on opportunities. Furthermore, the serious aging of inheritors posed significant challenges to management. When artists were advanced in age so that they could not finish some responsibilities of ICH inheritors, it became challenging for younger generations to effectively manage the situation (2C1AC).</p> <p><b>Restoration and Expectation:</b> For various reasons, it was difficult to propose to the relevant departments. So, they only maintained the status quo (1C1MA; 2C1MA).</p>
Directors and Government staff	<p><b>Interruptions:</b> 1. Work in the positions of director or playwrights tended to be more flexible, while directors or playwrights specifically involved in FO creation might be limited to local cultural department staff. These individuals are typically government employees, making it challenging to establish the mechanism of talent training between universities and troupes (1C1DI; 2C1DI; 1C1GS; 2C1GS). 3. For most children, there was insufficient motivation to learn opera. Moreover, the systematic cultivation needed a significant time investment (1C1CW; 2C1CW).</p> <p><b>Restoration and Expectation:</b> Implementing a dedicated recruitment mechanism within the cultural department, allowing graduates to compete for positions based on their career preferences (1C1DI; 2C1DI; 1C1GS; 2C1GS).</p>

Table 4.2 29: Key Ideas from Pluralistic Stakeholder Groups in Q7