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An Exploratory Study on Spatial Governance Toward Urban–Rural Integration: Theoretical Analysis with Case Demonstration

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Abstract: Establishing a territorial space governance system that supports URI is essential for modernizing national governance capacity and systems. It also serves as a critical strategic measure to promote sustainable development in both urban and rural areas. The current research has not adequately explored the theoretical mechanisms and pathways of territorial spatial governance, resulting in challenges in providing the necessary theoretical foundations and practical guidance for advancing URI. The methods used in this study include theoretical analysis, logical deduction, and field research. The findings are as follows: (1) The key characteristics of TSG are the synergy of governance entities, the comprehensiveness of governance objects, the diversification of governance methods, and the systematization of governance content. Territorial spatial governance, driven by multiple stakeholders, influences the structure and functional arrangement of urban and rural territorial systems through means such as spatial planning, rights allocation, and top-level institutional design. (2) The essential process and core driving path to promote URI involve the interaction of urban and rural elements, the complementarity of their functions, and the reciprocity of their values, all guided by territorial space governance. (3) In the case study area, TSG facilitates the construction of an orderly element circulation channel, coordinating land circulation and capitalization, promoting local urbanization, and aligning residential with industrial development. This results in a complementary urban–rural functional structure, multifunctional rural development, and an urban—rural model characterized by stable interest relationships and balanced service facility layouts.

Keywords: urban and rural integration; territorial spatial governance; territorial space planning; rural transformation; China

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1. Introduction

Urban–rural integration (URI) is an unavoidable trend in the development of urban–rural relations, representing a global phenomenon. Nations encounter shared challenges in reality, including the urban–rural income gap and the equalization of public services [1,2]. The primary objective of URI is to enhance the overall optimization of urban and rural regional system functions. This progression is vital for China's comprehensive modernization and realization of "the Two Centenary Goals", rendering it a substantial and extensively debated subject in academic research.

During specific historical periods, China adopted various strategies and governance models for urban and rural development. Before the reform and opening-up era, the state uniformly allocated resources to rapidly accumulate industrial capital and meet modernization needs. This was achieved by exploiting the price differential between industrial and

agricultural products. Concurrently, a system of separate management for urban and rural areas emerged in economic, political, and social spheres. The household registration system was not fully optimized, resulting in disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of employment, healthcare, pensions, and other welfare systems. Consequently, urban and rural residents did not enjoy equal rights and interests, leading to the formation of two relatively independent governance systems and dual structures [3,4]. This unbalanced development and urban–rural separation have become significant obstacles to integration, hindering the efficient allocation of factors between urban and rural areas in the market [5]. Studies focusing on rural perspectives highlight that rural revitalization and URI are mutually supportive, with the dynamic transformation process of rural revitalization being integral to URI [6]. Therefore, promoting URI requires starting from the rural regional system, developing scientifically tailored plans adapted to rural transformation through classification and zoning, and shaping a new urban–rural pattern [7].

Currently, rural areas in China continue to lag behind urban regions due to the complex and prominent contradictions in the relationship between people and land. Consequently, in the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, the interaction among people, land, capital, and industry—as core elements linking urban and rural systems—directly affects the achievement of URI [8–11]. Furthermore, some scholars have approached the issue of rural spatial governance by establishing a comprehensive governance system focused on rural areas, utilizing a "material–ownership–organization" framework [12]. This framework offers solutions for improving urban–rural relations through aspects such as rural spatial reconstruction and reconfiguration of development rights. Building on this foundation, a multi-scale governance system defined by "spatial integration–spatial zoning–spatial mobility" has been proposed [13,14]. This approach is crucial for overcoming the spatial differentiation barriers that impede URI and addressing the structural contradictions in the distribution of urban and rural resources, as along with the provision of public services.

On the other hand, the comprehensive functions of strategic guidance and regional regulation of territorial spatial planning are gradually being strengthened, and it is anticipated that these will become indispensable tools for promoting the symbiotic development of urban and rural areas. Previous studies have revealed that territorial spatial planning creates a symbiotic environment of "form–flow coupling" facilitated by "definite zoning", "definite systems", and "definite forms" [14,15]. This approach plays a vital role in the management and supervision of the efficient allocation and collaborative development of urban and rural resources. Simultaneously, territorial spatial planning takes "development" as a fundamental guarantee, integrating the overarching concepts of coordinated development, equity, and ecology throughout the entire life cycle of URI. By innovating the control system of land use for urban and rural areas and promoting land use transformation, it provides essential support for urban–rural symbiotic development [5,16–18].

Territorial space serves as spatial support for the integrated development of urban and rural areas. Optimizing spatial patterns and enhancing the efficiency of resource allocation in urban and rural territorial spaces are intrinsic requirements of URI. However, challenges persist, such as resource allocation barriers and value biases between urban and rural areas, with asymmetric land resource distribution and unequal functional values being the most significant obstacles [19,20]. As China enters a new stage of development, it is imperative to form an intervention force through land system reform, planning controls, and other means to effectively govern urban and rural territorial spaces. As a component of China's national governance system, territorial space governance (TSG) is a vital tool for coordinating the layout, development, construction patterns, and ownership systems of these spaces. Naturally, it also represents an important approach to land management. Sustainable TSG fosters conditions for optimizing urban and rural regional systems and serves as the necessary foundation for the stable advancement of URI. Current research highlights the importance of sustainable land management and planned utilization, emphasizing that optimizing landscape structures and strengthening farmland protection are critical for

sustainable land use. These findings provide a scientific basis for formulating reasonable land management policies. The loss of land resources, especially farmland, threatens global food security and challenges sustainable urbanization [21,22].

Some studies emphasized that TSG needs to balance the guidance for macro-regional development with the refined management and control of micro-land elements, linking "regional" and "element" governance to strengthen baseline control and resource management. This helps enhance governmental organizational and coordination capabilities for urban and rural elements, laying the groundwork for the transformation and reconstruction of rural regions and the allocation of urban–rural spatial development rights during URI [23,24]. Comprehensive enhancement of the service capacity of TSG involves optimizing spatial patterns, coordinating system structures, and improving functional systems within certain urban and rural areas [25–27]. However, this requires empowerment at the local government level and the establishment of a territorial governance mechanism [28]. Although TSG is anticipated to effectively address URI challenges, few studies have established a systematic framework for it or elucidated the combined effects and internal mechanisms of the associated governance measures. As URI progresses, it will also reshape the existing governance model, imposing new demands on current territorial spatial governance. However, existing studies mostly explore concepts and implementation strategies from either a single perspective or a dualistic urban–rural approach, leaving the theoretical discourse on TSG and URI fragmented. This highlights a gap in research that integrates these aspects into a cohesive framework for coordinated urban–rural development and effective governance.

How can TSG drive URI? Addressing this question is crucial not only for understanding spatial governance practices within the modernization of the national governance system but also for exploring strategies for URI and urbanization. Therefore, it is essential to revisit the theoretical foundations to clarify the potential pathways through which TSG can influence URI and development. This exploration aims to uncover the mechanisms that facilitate URI, offering valuable insights for its advancement.

It is noteworthy that this paper seeks to analyze the internal mechanisms and pathways of URI from a theoretical perspective at the regional level. The focus is on a broader, macro-level analysis rather than on individual settlements or administrative scales. This study begins by defining the concept of TSG through theories of human–land relationships and governance frameworks. It then establishes a governance system that aligns with the characteristics of URI development. Utilizing an "elements–functions–values" analytical framework, this paper reveals the mechanisms through which TSG facilitates URI. Finally, empirical studies of typical cases in China are conducted to refine the understanding and practical approaches of TSG in promoting URI. This study aims to provide new insights into the effectiveness of TSG in China and the mechanisms driving URI.

The remainder of this paper is organized into five parts. In Section 2, the authors construct the analysis framework of TSG for URI from the theoretical level, and reveal the specific mechanism. Section 3 summarizes the research field and research methods. Section 4 introduces the implementation path of rural–urban integration in case studies. Section 5 provides the discussion, and Section 6 concludes the article.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Spatial Governance for Urban–Rural Integration

2.1. Spatial Governance

Governance refers to a decision-making framework designed to achieve specific goals through the formulation and implementation of public policies or the management of public resources. Unlike traditional top-down administratively driven approaches, governance seeks to establish a collaborative model among government, market, social organizations, residents, and other stakeholders [29,30]. TSG is a crucial element of the national governance system, embodying and practicing governance within the spatial dimension. It encompasses a comprehensive process from planning and management to supervision, aiming for the rational allocation and efficient utilization of land resources [31,32]. In

the context of modernizing governance capacity and systems, TSG can be defined as the management of urban and rural land spaces as the field of governance. It involves collective action and cooperation among various stakeholders, leading to external interventions in ownership, use, development intensity, and functional layout of national land space. This is achieved through tools such as territorial spatial planning, spatial rights distribution, and top-level institutional design, optimizing the comprehensive process of element pattern, structural organization, and overall function of the urban and rural land space system. From a geographical analysis perspective, the essence of TSG lies in coordinating the relationship between the people and the land. It focuses on the study of process patterns, external characteristics, and mechanisms of TSG within different spatial scales. Essentially, it seeks to reconstruct the spatial form and human–land relationship patterns through multi-scale and multi-dimensional governance of urban and rural spaces [33].

The concepts of territorial spatial governance, rural spatial governance, comprehensive land consolidation, and territorial spatial planning are both interrelated and distinct. Rural spatial governance addresses challenges related to spatial constraints and disorganized systems during rural transformation, offering solutions to structural problems in rural revitalization [32]. Comprehensive land consolidation involves systematic regulation of elements within urban and rural geographical systems through ecological engineering, land consolidation projects (such as agricultural land regulation and rural construction land regulation, etc.), and cultural restoration. This approach is crucial for promoting the reconstruction of rural spaces and the optimal allocation of urban and rural land resources [6,34,35].

TSG primarily addresses issues such as inconsistent planning, chaotic zoning, and ineffective transmission mechanisms in land use. It establishes an integrated urban–rural governance system with strategic and controlling features, following the top-level design of "five levels, three categories, and four systems", serving as a key initiative for governments at all levels to implement spatial governance actions [36,37]. The connotation of TSG is more comprehensive, emphasizing the integration of governance objects, diversification of governance means, and the systematization of governance content. Both territorial spatial planning and rural spatial governance are important components of the TSG system [31,38]. In summary, TSG integrates time, space, and human elements within a unified governance framework, employing refined strategies to regulate the territorial spatial system and optimize urban and rural spatial patterns, functional structures, and rights configurations, thereby broadening and deepening our theoretical understanding of territorial spatial governance.

2.2. A Tentative Framework for Understanding Spatial Governance System

The primary aim is to establish a multi-dimensional governance approach to address the challenges of land use between urban and rural areas and among different regions, ultimately supporting the URI strategy and rural revitalization.

TSG involves various aspects such as objects, methods, and targeted entities, and is inherently a complex and systematic activity. Considering the core characteristics and overall goals of territorial spatial governance, we have developed a system encompassing governance entities, content, methods, and objectives, following the logic progression of who governs, what is governed, how to govern, and the outcomes of governance. This system is designed to emphasize the developmental aspirations of the urban–rural system by optimizing the material spatial pattern of the national territory, while also focusing on achieving spatial justice and managing social relations [39,40]. The fundamental purpose is to establish a multi-dimensional governance approach to handle the challenges of land use between urban and rural areas and among different regions, ultimately supporting the URI strategy and rural revitalization (Figure 1).

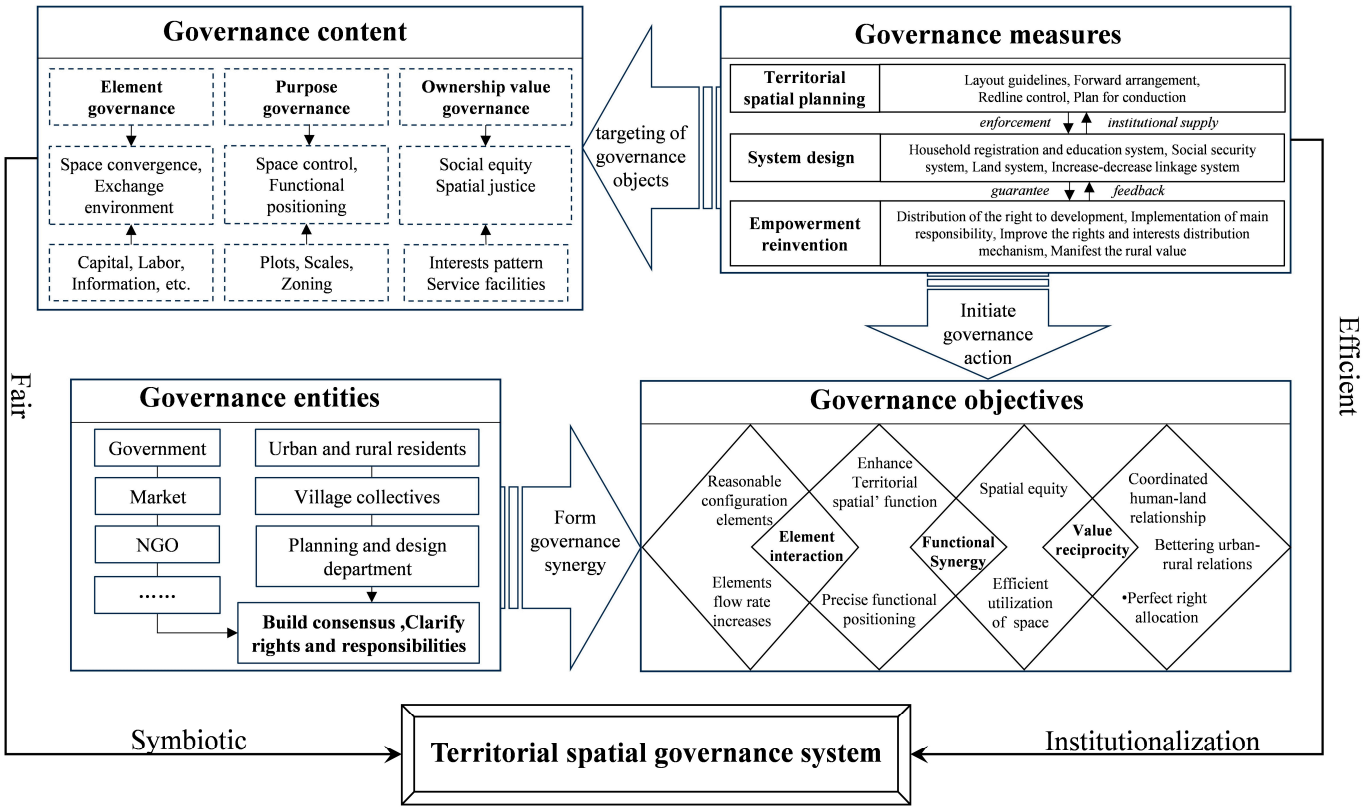

Figure 1. Theoretical illustration on the spatial governance system.

Specifically, in terms of governance subjects, the full-cycle approach to TSG highlights the market's dominant role in the allocation of spatial resources. Reforms aimed at streamlining government, delegating power, and improving services have led to the decentralization of governance authority [41,42]. A redefinition of the boundaries of rights and responsibilities among the government, the market, and social actors fosters social consensus and creates synergistic collaborations among governance subjects. These developments contribute to the establishment of a more scientific governance decision-making system.

In terms of governance content, TSG encompasses three dimensions: element governance, use governance, and tenure value governance. Concretely speaking, the TSG system starts with a fundamental institutional design, attempting to dismantle the dual-track system barriers through reforms such as the homestead system, household registration system, and innovations in land market transaction systems [43–45]. The aim is to address the institutional constraints on the flow of factors between rural and urban areas and to mitigate the inequities caused by unidirectional flows, thereby establishing a smooth interactive pattern for factors like population, capital, and technology between rural and urban areas [46]. Use governance focuses on clarifying the functional roles, zoning layouts, and control strategies of urban and rural land space across various scales, such as parcel, unit, and region, to ensure a balanced mix and differentiation of land space functions. Guided by China's "Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018–2022)" [47], it explores tailored functional design schemes that consider local conditions, including each village's resource profile, location, geographical environment, and development needs. For instance, in villages designated for special conservation, TSG emphasizes leveraging local cultural resources to create unique living environments, enhancing attractiveness and distinctiveness. In villages undergoing suburban integration, TSG focuses on undertaking industrial transfers from urban areas, attracting capital, promoting multifunctional rural space use, and cultivating integrated units centered around small towns, rationalizing the spatial functional structure between urban and rural areas. The existing differentiated territorial spatial use control and property rights system in urban and rural areas has shaped an initial rural value

distribution pattern [5,48], inhibiting value spillover potential and exacerbating spatial development rights inequity between urban and rural areas. TSG tackles this by addressing ownership value governance, establishing an integrated urban–rural use control system, and creating an equivalent market where land enjoys equal rights and value. This improves the value distribution mechanism and expands rural value transformation pathways [49]. Additionally, TSG employs spatial planning tools to optimize the spatial layout of service facilities based on scale and demand differences and deepens the reform of the household registration system to eliminate identity disparities, promoting benefit sharing.

In terms of governance measures, the multifaceted nature of territorial space—encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions—naturally positions spatial governance activities as a complex system. The approach within this system must address the challenges of urban and rural spatial development and use, establishing a comprehensive governance toolkit. This includes territorial spatial planning, institutional design, empowerment reconstruction, and other governance strategies. Territorial spatial planning is fundamental, focusing on guiding spatial layout and making anticipatory arrangements throughout the governance process. Its development and implementation involve multi-agent collaboration, where local governments often integrate land oversight and restrictive strategies to standardize land use patterns and regulate the organizational structure of spatial elements in urban and rural areas [36,37]. For example, national master plans for functional zones apply differentiated spatial zoning controls to clarify development orientations for territorial units, providing strategic guidance for spatial governance [50].

The institutional design ensures governance practices are standardized and effective by formulating and refining relevant policies and regulations, serving as a foundational guarantee for constructing a high-quality spatial governance framework. China's recent land system reforms focus on land property rights, agricultural land empowerment, and land transactions, adjusting the spatial allocation of land, capital, labor, and other elements to achieve coordinated human, land, industry, and production development, thus facilitating rural transformation and enhancing regional functions [51].

The land use control system prioritizes farmland protection to maintain total farmland area stability and food production security, balancing production, living, and ecological spaces by controlling construction land quantities [52]. It sets protection red lines and refines development indicators for various land types, ensuring fair allocation and effective development of land resources, and promoting the stable operation of the territorial space system.

Concurrently, the integration of household registration, education, social security, evaluation, and land systems, along with a mechanism linking land increase and decrease, forms an institutional bundle. This drives TSG toward legalization and refinement, enhancing the authority, humanity, and scientific basis of institutional design. Empowerment reconstruction focuses on the equitable allocation of development rights among multiple entities, establishing responsibilities, and improving the distribution mechanism by adjusting the rules for allocating and redistributing territorial space development rights [53]. Additionally, it explores new methods for utilizing territorial space alongside land system reforms, addressing the disparity in urban and rural market values, exploring new avenues for rural value realization, and achieving equitable urban and rural development.

Regarding governance objectives, the integrated development of urban and rural areas aims to reduce regional development disparities, enhance living standards, promote the free movement of resources, create complementary functions, and achieve equivalent development [54]. This ultimately results in comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development for both urban and rural communities. Consequently, TSG pursues the values of rights allocation and spatial equity, focusing on resolving various dilemmas in the distribution pattern, organizational layout, and flow rate of development factors between urban and rural spaces. By reasonably managing the timing and processes of territorial space utilization, it enhances the efficiency and functionality of these spaces, providing fundamental support for integrated urban–rural development. Additionally,

this governance approach facilitates ongoing negotiation and reconciliation among various stakeholders, further clarifying the ownership relationships of urban and rural spaces [12], ensuring the efficient utilization of territorial space, and establishing a network of equal and reciprocal social relations.

2.3. Theoretical Rationales on Leveraging Spatial Governance for Advancing Urban–Rural Integration

The analysis above illustrates that TSG transforms the allocation and flow patterns of urban and rural factors, thereby accelerating functional interactions between urban and rural systems and unlocking the potential value in rural areas. This process ultimately reshapes spatial, human–land, and interpersonal relations during URI, enhancing the overall level of integration. The following discussion will further explore the driving mechanisms of TSG on URI, focusing on the empowerment pathway of "factors/functions/values" (Figure 2).

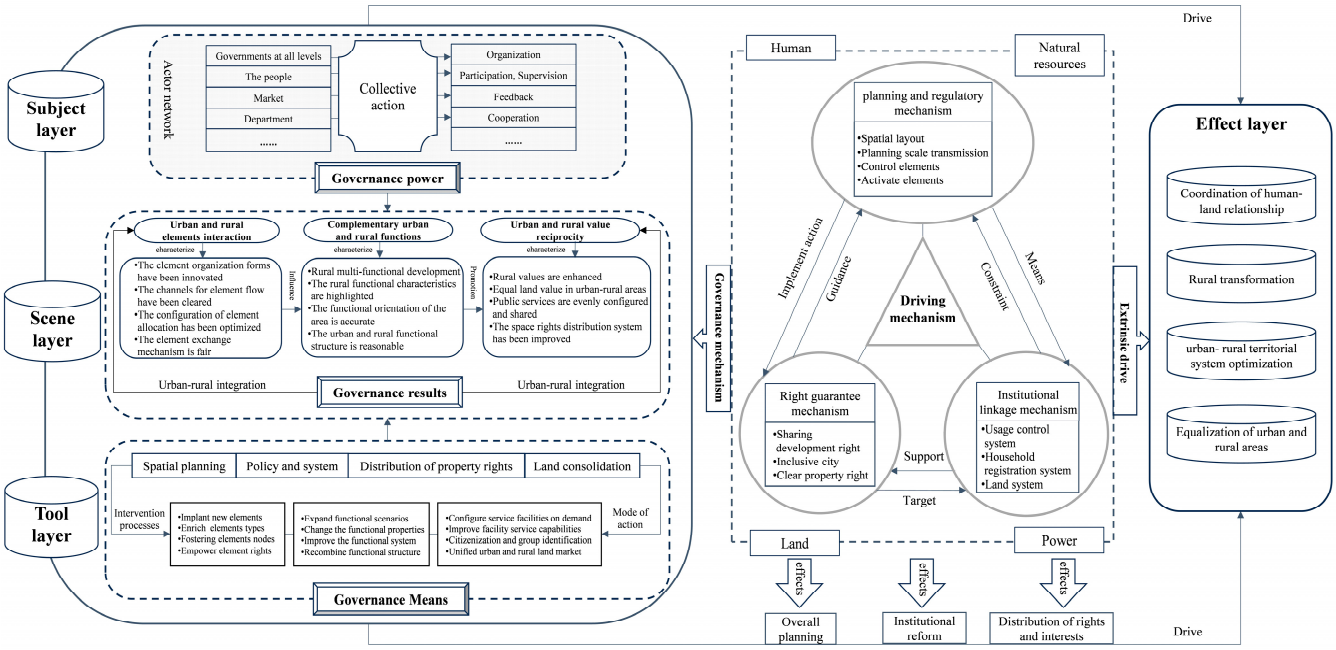

Figure 2. Theoretical rationales on spatial governance to advance URI.

2.3.1. Spatial Governance of Urban–Rural Element Flows

The free and efficient circulation of urban and rural factors is a prerequisite for achieving integrated urban–rural development. However, the unilateral outflow of rural development factors, such as a large number of laborers, has weakened the momentum for rural development. Meanwhile, China's land management system exhibits distinct urban–rural dual characteristics, specifically divided into state ownership of urban land and collective ownership of rural land [55]. This ownership environment creates significant disparities in the integration of urban and rural construction land markets, thereby impeding the efficient flow of key development factors like capital, information, and labor, which obstructs the process of URI [5]. TSG addresses these challenges by utilizing policies to enhance "flow spaces" such as information and economic flows. It establishes a synergistic approach to update resource types, improve flow environments, and upgrade circulation channels. This approach corrects the previous misallocation of urban and rural resources, which favored urban areas, thereby encouraging orderly growth and a virtuous cycle of resource exchange between urban and rural regions.

To address the challenge of unilateral factor circulation in URI, TSG aligns with the developmental needs of multifunctional and global villages, focusing on the modernization of rural economic and social systems. It clarifies the new requirements posed by urban–rural regional linkages and emphasizes the integration of locally rooted factors shaped by rural

areas' unique natural environments and cultural heritage. Government departments, in partnership with village collective organizations, employ comprehensive land remediation to transform physical spaces, creating modern consumption scenarios that are functional, distinctive, and culturally grounded [56]. The aim is to enhance rural appeal, thereby attracting industrial and commercial urban capital to support rural development. The infusion of social capital provides essential support for rural areas [57]. The convergence of various capital factors enhances the value of land through market pricing mechanisms, increasing employment opportunities for local farmers and returning laborers. This approach helps construct a new factor pattern of people, land, industry, and capital, thus enriching and improving the types and structures of factors within rural territorial systems through the spillover effects of multiple factors. This strategy addresses the shortcomings of rural development capabilities within the context of URI.

The fundamental driving force behind the dynamic evolution of URI is a fair factor flow mechanism [58]. TSG is dedicated to establishing a multi-scale planning linkage system and empowering factors to enhance the flow environment. This approach facilitates the transformation and upgrading of circulation channels, providing a stable platform for the exchange of material, energy, and information between urban and rural factors. A prominent challenge is the impotent spatial mobility network between urban and rural areas, which hinders the creation of a large integrated market and the coupling of urban and rural factors [13]. The "flow space" concept highlights the advantages of TSG by emphasizing the integration of multiple plans to achieve a balanced allocation of urban and rural elements. It ensures collaborative construction, mutual benefits, interoperability, and complementarity in spatial planning across all levels.

For instance, at national and provincial levels, planning is guided by national territorial spatial frameworks and main functional zones, reinforcing factor planning at the regional and watershed scales based on geographical differentiation features and economic characteristics. This provides strategic guidance for the layout and positioning of urban and rural productivity [13]. At the city and county levels, authorities implement the requirements of higher level plans, focusing on total quantity control, flow scale, and the differentiated index allocation of factors. They are also tasked with relaxing rigid local planning controls and exploring flexible planning schemes tailored to city government needs, optimizing factor input structures at these scales. Achieving a relative balance among governments in factor distribution is essential to address supply shortages and create conditions for a URI model with counties as key carriers [59].

The town–village scale spatial planning approach emphasizes the interaction between elements and optimizes their structure from a micro perspective. It facilitates the rational allocation of resources within rural settlements and villages by implementing practical village planning through classification, zoning, and grading [1,60]. The convergence of advantageous factors drives TSG, which uses detailed rural planning to revitalize idle land and other resources, cultivate factor space nodes, and promote the interaction and coupling of development factors such as land, labor, capital, industry, and technology [61]. This approach improves the efficiency of rural factor allocation and supports the creation of a broader circulation network for factors.

On the other hand, TSG empowers the development of elements within a fair allocation model. With the comprehensive deepening of the land system reform, TSG takes land elements as a starting point. It relies on the reform of rural collective property rights and the homestead system [10]. This strategy addresses issues like limited element circulation freedom and weak bidirectional interaction through cross-regional transaction rules and orderly paid withdrawal policies for land use indicators. Breaking regional spatial restrictions and policy barriers is essential to unify the factor market, establish cross-scale and cross-regional circulation corridors, improve cross-regional transaction rates of land and capital, and eliminate institutional obstacles to integrating urban and rural factors.

2.3.2. Spatial Governance of Urban–Rural Functional Complementarity

Urban–rural functional complementarity (URFC) is a key link for fostering the dynamics of URI and development [62]. It serves as an essential support for establishing economic cycles within the urban–rural territorial system. Villages undergoing rapid urbanization risk functional decline, marginalization, and the homogenization phenomenon known as "a thousand villages in a row". Additionally, the dysfunctional structure and low service levels within the URI system hinder deep integration between urban and rural areas, highlighting the weak interaction effect of the urban–rural system [4]. To address the diverse needs of integrated economic, social, and spatial development in urban and rural areas, TSG aims to optimize the rural functional system and coordinate the organization of urban–rural functional structures. This approach promotes adjustments and mutual symbiotic development within the functional landscape of urban and rural territorial spaces.

The city and the countryside function as a pair of intertwined organisms [63], each with unique and irreplaceable intrinsic values, together forming the space for human socio-economic activities. Historically, the countryside has primarily supported urban development by providing raw materials and labor, but its potential for modernization remains underexplored. There is an urgent need to clarify the countryside's role and status within urban–rural development. Currently, the issue of "rural disease" is a common global challenge, manifested through village depopulation, atomization, cultural erosion, and environmental pollution. These issues have weakened rural functions related to production, life, ecology, culture, and education [64–66].

Rural areas face multiple difficulties such as vague functional positioning, insufficient exploration, and loss of function vitality [67]. TSG aims to enhance the rural functional system by expanding and innovating rural function types and optimizing the urban–rural functional distribution through redefined positioning. This approach seeks to build a sustainable functional system for the countryside. Within a market economy, a sound institutional mechanism for market-based factor allocation is crucial for increasing factor interaction intensity [68]. TSG incorporates new development elements through institutional reforms that facilitate factor flow, leveraging agricultural resources and technological innovation to introduce new capital structures, management modes, and operational methods. It also transforms land use patterns [69], reorganizes idle resources through industrial integration, and promotes structural changes in functional attributes, leading to diversified, digitized, and vernacular rural industries. This aligns with the overall trend of urban–rural functional transformation, breaking the urban–rural functional segmentation and facilitating functional exchange. Under renewed governance focused on updating rural functions, diverse business models such as urban, tourism, and recycling agriculture overlap [70,71]. This creates new consumption spaces that meet the evolving material and spiritual needs of urban and rural residents, establishing favorable conditions for a new order of urban–rural functional development and enhancing inter-functional interaction.

Recognizing the differences between urban and rural functions is essential for the dynamic evolution of URI. The heterogeneous nature of these functions depends on the comprehensive arrangement of TSG across spatial and target dimensions. Currently, the fragmented functional forms, unclear positioning, and disorganized layout of urban and rural areas contribute to unequal value patterns. The countryside has often been viewed as either an appendage of the city or a traditional production unit [72], leading to a low level of functional coupling between urban and rural areas. TSG employs flexible spatial planning through classification, zoning, and use control of urban and rural spaces. This involves delineating three zones and three lines to guide main functions on a macro scale, while village planning refines land use at the micro level.

From the perspective of urban–rural interaction, spatial governance strengthens the unique functional roles of the countryside, such as preserving Chinese farming civilization, ensuring food quality and ecological security, providing spaces for healthy living, and serving as a hinterland for urbanization and industrialization [73]. This establishes an urban–rural functional system characterized by distinct differences, unique features,

and synergistic interactions to meet the needs of integrated development. Achieving complementary and symbiotic urban–rural functions requires reconstructing the spatial organization of existing functional structures [74]. TSG coordinates the overarching structural arrangement based on regional perspectives. Studying regional advantages and development plans creates functional nodes of various levels and purposes through township system planning, emphasizing the critical roles of county units in URI and development in terms of their functions of evacuation and urbanization in the vicinity of towns and villages [75]. This facilitates reasonable governance of functional hierarchies. Moreover, TSG uses rural revitalization planning to focus on synergizing residential and industrial systems. It develops revitalization strategies for villages based on location and development level, enhancing the functional structure of rural communities. This approach promotes the articulation of functional systems at county–municipal–territorial scales and supports the complementarity of the urban–rural territorial system [76].

2.3.3. Spatial Governance of Urban–Rural Value Reciprocity

China's long-standing urban–rural dual structure has significantly undermined rural values due to unequal factor mobility and imbalanced functional structures between urban and rural areas. The urban-centric development model has increasingly encroached on rural spaces, gradually leaving rural systems in a precarious position concerning their legitimate rights and interests [77]. This issue is evident in the slow urbanization of the rural population, limited social integration for farmers, and unequal distribution of public service facilities [5,78]. A primary goal of URI is to achieve equitable development between urban and rural areas, essentially fostering positive interactions within the urban–rural territorial system, and emphasizing rural values to ensure equal development rights and opportunities for all entities [79]. TSG aims to rectify the disordered pattern of urban–rural values, supporting spatial justice and embodying the dual value criteria of equitable public services and fair distribution of rights and interests. Accordingly, its core governance objective is rights reconstruction, promoting fair exchange and equivalent value distribution between urban and rural spaces. Urban capital, information, and advanced productivity should be extended to rural areas through coordinated resource planning. Additionally, the quality of rural service facilities should match that of urban areas. Innovative models for allocating development rights should be implemented to ensure fairness and equivalency in urban–rural values [13,80].

Urban–rural value reciprocity (URVR) should prioritize a balanced allocation of service facilities between urban and rural areas, ensuring that the physical space structure aligns with supply and demand to advance the equalization of public services [81]. Utilizing the latest territorial spatial planning across various regions, facilities' spatial layout should be integrated to address the needs of all age groups and the daily activities of urban and rural residents. This involves refining allocation standards through multi-level spatial planning to achieve Pareto improvements in spatial requirements and avoid the uniform distribution of public services. Consequently, the supply of service facilities in urban–rural integrated development will be enhanced, promoting public service integration. Addressing the core demand for urban–rural equal value development [82] and achieving fairness in the distribution of rights and interests is essential for TSG and the deeper integration of urban and rural areas. The challenges facing URI are fundamentally linked to flawed mechanisms for the allocation of development rights and unfair distribution of rights and interests [83,84].

The urban-productivism growth model, predominant during rapid urbanization, has exacerbated the inequality in development rights, diminishing the dynamics of rural territorial systems and hindering the manifestation of rural values. TSG leverages the macro-regulatory role of government, using reforms in household registration and employment systems to enhance citizenship and status for various groups, including the floating and informally employed populations. This approach allows diverse interest groups to express their spatial interests, improving inclusive urban governance and addressing barriers

to resources like education, employment, housing, and healthcare [85]. This creates favorable conditions for a people-centered urbanization model. The entrenched urban–rural dual structure results in significant differences in land use, rights allocation, and value assessment, limiting fair and efficient land transfers and reducing land use efficiency [45,68]. This presents a major obstacle to URI in China. To address land value suppression caused by the urban–rural partitioned land system, TSG employs market-based allocation systems for land development rights, ensuring spatial benefit deployment. Enhancing the urban–rural integrated land market mechanism establishes a synergy between rural land value impairment and compensation, addressing land allocation malfunctions and property rights ambiguities. This unleashes the capitalization effect of rural land resources, reshapes land empowerment, and supports URI and development.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Area

This study focuses on a case located in Jintang County, Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, China. The area is strategically positioned near major transportation routes, including the Chengdu-Bazhong Expressway, Qing Baijiang-Jintang Expressway, and Da Zhou-Chengdu Railway, providing a comprehensive external transportation system and an advantageous geographical location. The whole area is about 29 km^2, including four communities of Shi Ziling, Jiang yuan, Yun Xiu, and Guanyin Mountain, with a registered population of 26,426 and a permanent population of 24,079 in 2021. The cultivated land area in the area is 673.79 ha, mainly irrigated land and paddy fields, with good quality. The garden area is 676.48 ha, mainly distributed in the Shi Ziling community of Guanyin Mountain, with rich forest resources, mainly woodland in the hill area and Linpan of western Sichuan. Agricultural planting in the region is dominated by traditional grain and oil planting, and the per capita cultivated land area is small. There are more than 30 food processing, furniture and building materials, plastic products, brick factories, and other enterprises, and the problem of idle industrial and mining land is prominent. Part of the area has a foundation for the pension industry, and Guanyin Mountain has been rated as the "first batch of forested villages in China", which has a certain potential for the development of agricultural, commercial, cultural, and tourism integration (Figure 3).

During the research process, it was discovered that, in recent years, Jintang County, in response to President Xi Jinping's park city initiative, has explored rural expressions of Chengdu Park City. The county has actively integrated into the synergistic development framework of the European Industrial City and Huizhou New City, forming a dual-city functional linkage. It has established a comprehensive planning strategy focused on "controlling the bottom line, revitalizing the industry, re-regulating, optimizing facilities, and strengthening guarantees". Through collaboration among government bodies, village collectives, villagers, and planners, specific governance actions have been implemented, including village and land renovation, spatial layout optimization, and innovative operational models. This effort has resulted in the construction of 13 new communities, 2 new aquaculture lands, and 16 planting facility construction sites, providing 116.21 ha of land for major infrastructure, transportation, water conservancy, and industrial development projects (Table 1). These projects have enhanced livable and convenient tourism service facilities, contributed to beautiful rural community development, and supported nearby urbanization, making the area a significant growth pole for rural revitalization and URI. Over its historical development, the area has innovated its regional policy through TSG, ensuring abundant land resources via land consolidation. Territorial space planning has facilitated functional optimization and clear area positioning. Institutional optimization has led to the establishment of an asset management team, which has used the land system to foster mutually beneficial value exchanges between urban and rural areas, promoting integrated development. This case exemplifies China's efforts toward URI and represents a common developmental trajectory achieved through TSG measures. Its practical initiatives

offer universally applicable insights for exploring URI in similar regions in China and globally (Figure 4).

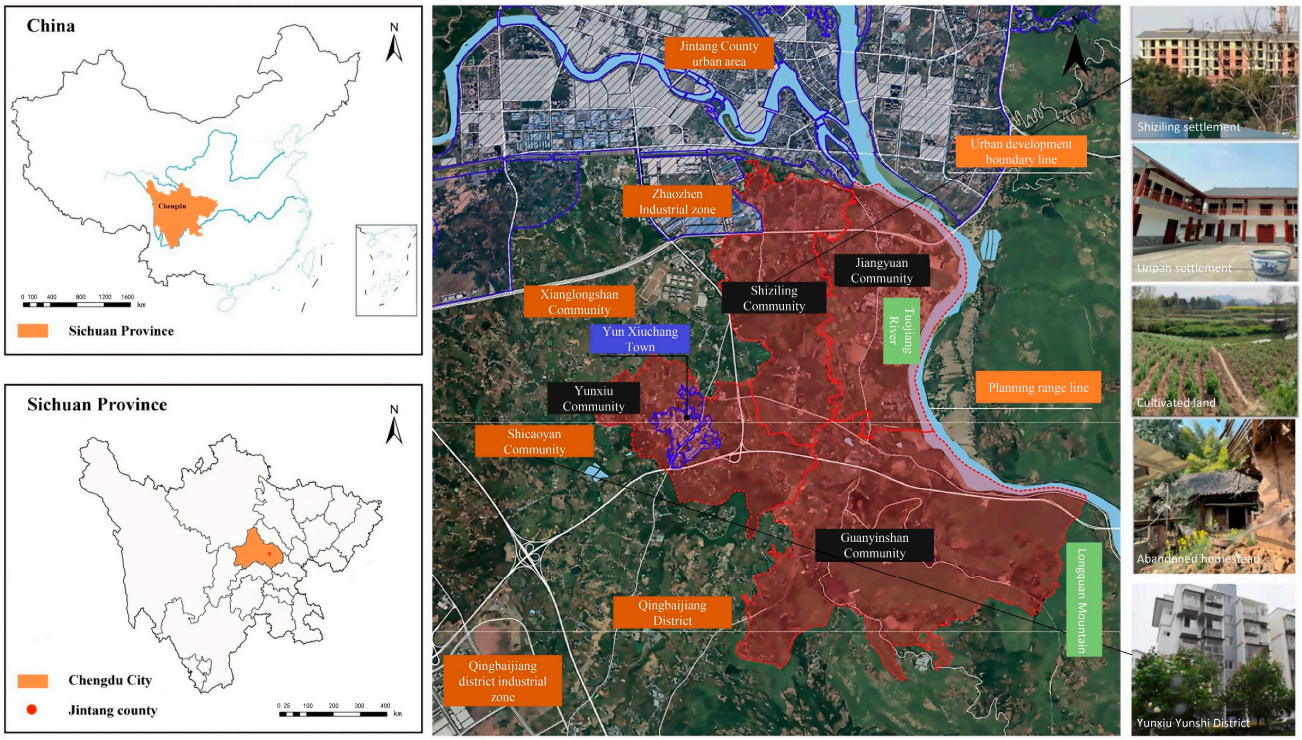

Figure 3. Case study area.

Table 1. Land allocation for various development projects in the study area.

Number	Project Name	Area (ha)
1	Guanyinshan Lake Chengdu Guanyinshan Jinshu Agricultural Science and Technology Development Co., Ltd.	0.28
2	Rural Revitalization Project	0.19
3	Farming Cloud Agriculture Innovation and Incubation Park	0.85
4	Qinghua Reservoir	0.02
5	Shi Ziling Village Collective Peony Industry Park	0.69
6	Sichuan Guofu Investment Co., Ltd.	0.03
7	New Resettlement Site	3.01
8	Yunguan Farm	5.43
9	Yunxiu Flower Field Project	0.02
10	Shangling Aquaculture Cooperative	0.06
11	New Rural Road Construction	0.16
12	S422 Zhaozhen to Huaikou Road Renovation Project	0.12
13	Chengdu Jintang Yangliu 110 kV Substation Expansion Project	0
14	Chengdu to Bazhong Railway, Chengdu to Santai Section	1.2
15	Dacheng Railway Capacity Expansion	6.74
16	Guanyin Mountain to Yunding Mountain Tourist Road Construction Project (Phase 2)	1.55
17	Jintang Gorge Flood Discharge Capacity Enhancement Project	4.16
18	Jintang County Longquanshan Urban Forest Park Water Source Project Phase I (Guanyin Mountain Project)	0.6
19	Jintang County Social Welfare Home Relocation Project	0.25
20	Chengdu Fuxing Elderly Care Service Center	0.52
21	Tuanjie Water Hub–Pihe Diversion Canal	6.77
22	Tuanjie Water Hub–Qimu River Flood Storage Reservoir	15.84
23	Tuanjie Water Hub–Tuojiang River Diversion Canal	47.53

Table 1. *Cont.*

Number	Project Name	Area (ha)
24	Jintang County Reclaimed Water Plant and Supporting Pipeline Project (Phase I)	3.47
25	Jintang County Construction Waste Disposal Project	2.79
26	Jintang County Sewage Treatment Plant Sludge Centralized Deep Processing Center Project (Phase I)	0.04
27	Jintang County Sewage Treatment Plant Sludge Centralized Deep Processing Center Project (Phases II & III)	3.56
28	Longquanshan Urban Forest Park Tourism Loop	3.36
29	Rural New Community Sewage Treatment Facility Construction Project	0.19
30	Pengqing-Huai Expressway	5.22
31	Qingjin Expressway	1.56
	Total	116.21

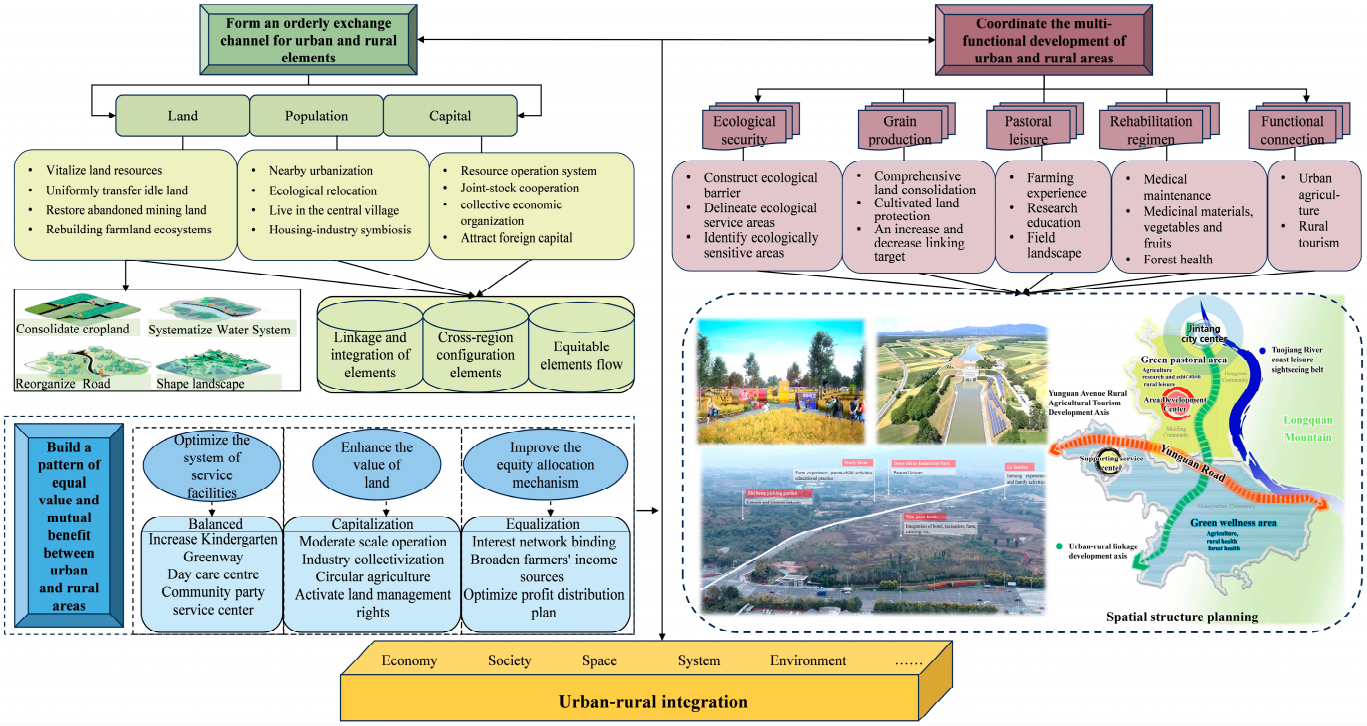

Figure 4. Spatial governance measures are taken in the study area for advancing URI.

3.2. Research Methods

This research adopts field surveys to interview government officials, villagers, community representatives, and other stakeholders. These interviews are supplemented by policy documents, planning texts, and other sources to obtain first-hand information on the current status of URI and the process of TSG in the case area. In March 2022, we conducted in-depth research in four communities, focusing on the spatial layout of key industries, construction, and public service facilities. On 8 April 2022, we engaged in discussions with town leaders and community leaders in Zhaozhen Street to understand some basic regional conditions.

In early 2023, we conducted on-site visits, concentrating on villagers' aspirations, industrial conditions, community public service facilities, municipal infrastructure, and other issues. Villagers' opinions and demands were collected through questionnaires. Additionally, the team also obtained relevant information from the Natural Resources and Planning Bureau of Jintang County and town leaders. We also acquired and thoroughly analyzed key

documents, including the "Regulations on the Preparation of URI Development Area Plans in Chengdu" (Implemented), the "Guidance for the Preparation of Village-Level Plans in Sichuan Province", and the "Jintang County Territorial Spatial Planning (2019–2035)". These materials have provided rich, authentic, and accurate support for this study (Table 2).

Table 2. Selected policies and spatial plans in the study area.

Number	Policy/Plan	Relevant Points
1	2021 General Design for Rural Revitalization of Guanyin Mountain Community in Jintang County	Combining the ecological characteristics of "hills, valleys, forests, and fields" on the site, creates a characteristic rural area with "immersive" consumption and in-depth experience, and builds a healthy and recuperative Guanyin Mountain.
2	Conceptual Planning for Rural Revitalization of Shi Ziling Community in Zhaozhen, Jintang County	Promotes the development of characteristic rural tourism, and focuses on creating characteristic rural tourism products with comprehensive functions such as leisure and sightseeing, green ecology, and farming culture experience.
3	Project Plan for Rural Revitalization Demonstration of Yunxiu Huatian and Shi Ziling Community Agricultural Park in Zhaozhen Street	Creates an AAAA rural tourism theme park; Jintang County Rural Revitalization Demonstration Zone is a model area for rural revitalization in the province and city.
4	14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Modern Urban Agriculture in Jintang County (2021–2025)	Focusing on urban agriculture (efficient ecological agriculture, characteristic high-quality agriculture, leisure, and sightseeing agriculture), creates a national model of urban agriculture with characteristics in hilly areas. The specific content is to build a supply base for characteristic agricultural products, a beautiful health and recuperation resort, and a new model of vacation agriculture.
5	Overall Tourism Development Plan of Jintang County	Focuses on the development of leisure and vacation, health, and recuperation industries.
6	Spatial Planning of Land for Modern Service Industry Area in Tianfu Water City, Jintang County (2021–2035)	Pending further docking, strictly transmits the binding indicators such as the cultivated land reserve and permanent basic farmland in this area. The function is positioned to create a collection of flowers and elderly care.
7	Spatial Planning of Land in Jintang County (2019–2035)	Located in the western optimization area, mainly focuses on stock renovation, and strictly controls the development scale along Longquan Mountain. In terms of industrial function layout, creates a cultural tourism and health care service center and an external exchange center in the coordinated area, and the leading industry is the modern service industry of "culture and tourism +".

4. Case Analysis: Leveraging Spatial Governance for Advancing Urban–Rural Integration

4.1. Forming an Orderly Exchange Channel of Urban–Rural Elements

The case area utilizes innovative policy systems and comprehensive land management to tackle challenges in elements circulation. Through the land transfer system, village collective economic organizations or cooperatives lease, contract, or share idle industrial and residential land, revitalizing land resources, enhancing agricultural advantages, and improving the regional market allocation of land resources. A special resource development and management system attracts investment, facilitates shared cooperation, establishes village-level collective economic entities, and promotes interaction among foreign capital, local resources, and labor. According to field surveys, 26% of villagers express a willingness to move to urban areas, while about 56% prefer to centralize their settlements. This is primarily because the Jiang yuan community, located along the ecologically fragile and flood-prone Tuo Jiang River, necessitates relocating scattered rural residences to higher, safer farm towns and central villages, optimizing the spatial and demographic patterns of villages and towns.

Additionally, the improved facilities in the Yun Xiu community attract former residents to return for work and living, benefiting from urban conveniences. The case area also undertakes comprehensive land improvement and ecological restoration through the following four major strategies: rectifying fields, managing water, improving roads, and shaping landscapes. This includes constructing 153.11 ha of high-standard farmland in the Guanyin Mountain community, reclaiming 94.17 ha of homesteads as arable land, and remediating 12.85 ha of mining wasteland. Furthermore, 11.3 ha of construction land has been revitalized inefficiently, while 29.57 ha has undergone functional replacement, providing ample land elements to advance agricultural modernization, rural development, and industrial space expansion in the region.

4.2. Coordinating Multifunctional Development of Urban and Rural Areas

Leveraging the area's resource endowment and strategic location, the case area integrates its functional development needs through comprehensive management strategies that include master planning and detailed refinement. This approach ensures land availability for rural industrial development and promotes distinctive agriculture, such as recycling farming and the cultivation of green organic fruits and vegetables. These efforts align with regional synergy under the "green industry" theme and the foundation of green agriculture. The industrial chain is extended to create a functional integration pattern that combines idyllic recreation and tourism, agricultural research and education, retirement communities, and health and wellness services.

Firstly, areas such as Tuojiang River, Bihe River, and Alder River are designated as crucial for ecological service functions and identified as ecologically sensitive through territorial spatial planning. This is primarily intended to establish spatial barriers for urban and rural ecological security. Concurrently, comprehensive land remediation projects are utilized to supplement approximately 127 ha of arable land and create an additional 14 ha, fulfilling the goal of arable land protection and ensuring agricultural production and residents' livelihoods.

Secondly, while ensuring food security, the region will establish three supply bases for "grains and oil, flowers and trees, and fruits and vegetables". It is designed to introduce diversified elements such as pastoral sightseeing, farming experience, and cultural innovation, thereby enhancing the agricultural landscape. This will form an urban agricultural demonstration area with local characteristics and a green rural leisure agricultural tourism zone. Specifically, Shi Ziling Area develops modern agriculture relying on the market demand advantage of the proximity of Jintang County to supply fresh ready-to-eat agricultural products to urban areas. It also aims to absorb the leisure demand from nearby cities by establishing a rural tourism park that integrates parent–child education, sports, and summer vacation activities. The area develops various types of rural leisure industries and strengthens functional interactions with Chengdu, Qing Baijiang, and Jintang County. Yunxiu Community opens up the health and pension market and builds a significant pension base in western China by utilizing facilities like the Jiujiu Pension Center, Yunxiu Pension Service Center, and Wanxia Community Pension Service Center. Taking advantage of the superior ecological landscape of the Tuojiang River, Guanyin Mountain develops a mountain-based planting base for medicinal herbs, vegetables, and fruits, enhancing the functions of forest health, forest activities, and medical care.

Finally, the initiative aims to promote the functional transformation of existing industrial land. By leveraging its advantageous location and convenient transportation near Zhaozhen Industrial Park, the Jiangyuan community encourages existing factories to relocate to the park through administrative measures, economic compensation, and tailored "one enterprise, one policy" strategies. This strategy targets gradually achieving land reclamation and greening, fostering a new green industrial base characterized by sustainability, low-carbon emissions, and increased income, hence contributing to the dual-carbon goal.

4.3. Constructing a Pattern of Equal and Reciprocal Value Between Urban and Rural Areas

As one of the pilot areas for the comprehensive reform of URI development in Sichuan Province, the case area advances land market transactions centered on land system reform to ensure that the rights and interests of secondary land development are equitably shared. To balance the interests of the collective economy and social capital, a working group on the reform of village asset demutualization has been established. This group leads a comprehensive verification of operational, non-operational, and resource assets under village collective ownership, along with government inputs. Following the model of "party branch leadership, party member initiative, farmer participation, and cooperative operation", these assets are integrated into the village collective economic organization. Shares of this organization are then quantified and allocated to individuals, enhancing farmers' property rights and increasing collective economic income. The proposal proposes an interest network comprising combinations such as "farmers + companies", "farmers + cooperatives + companies", and "collective economy + companies". It encourages qualified farmers to utilize idle rural settlement units, including homesteads, courtyards, dams, and forest trays. Through leasing, shareholding, and other means, these units are transferred to business experts to develop industries like unique homestays, inns, and bars, along with weaving workshops and product yards. This also attracts folk craftsmen and artisans to start businesses in rural areas, forming industrial clusters and expanding income-generating opportunities for farmers (Table 3).

Table 3. Overview of some collective economic incomes in the case area.

Community Name	Enterprise (Individual Business) Name	Type	Annual Output Value (CNY Ten Thousand)	Number of Employed Individuals
Shi Ziling	Hexiangyuan Restaurant	Catering	4000	35
	Qianting Manor	Catering	500	15
	Strawberry Picking Garden of Sichuan Yihong Agricultural Co., Ltd.	Strawberry Picking	50	3
	Happy Farm	Agricultural Research and Study	5000	15
	Agricultural Cloud—Eastward. Cultivate Learning in the Countryside.	Agricultural Innovation and Entrepreneurship Incubation Park	150	10
	Community Collective Peony Daya Industrial Park	Flower and Fruit Appreciation, Cold Storage, Flower Trading Market, Hot Pot City	100	1
	Subtotal		9800	79
Yunxiu	Xiangweiju	Catering	25	5
	Chuanjia Agriculture	Breeding, Catering	400	10
	Native Chicken Restaurant	Catering	27	4
	Sister Tian's Grocery Store	Supermarket	100	5
	Zhejing Supermarket	Supermarket	200	15
	Baihui Supermarket	Supermarket	150	8
	Qilin Commerce and Trade	Supermarket	180	6
	Subtotal		1082	53
Jiangyuan	Jintang Tuozhiyuan Catering Company	Catering	143	38
Guanyinshan	Tian Tian Le Farmhouse in Zhao Town, Jintang County	Catering	110	20
	Tuba Network Ecological Agricultural Farming Culture Theme Park	Planting and Picking	300	12
	Guanyinshan Fruit King Valley	Planting and Picking		6
	Subtotal		410	38
	Total		11,435	208

Simultaneously, the reform of "separation of rights" is actively implemented to revitalize land management rights, attract foreign capital, and promote the ongoing development of advantageous industries and moderate-scale operations in the area. This is intended to achieve rational resource allocation and enhance the benefit distribution mechanism within each community. As a result of the land reform, projects such as Yunguan Farm, Guofu Family, and Zhiheng Picking Garden have been successfully introduced. These projects utilize cultivated land, forest land, and construction land to establish an ecological circular agriculture model, including rice/fish, rice/shrimp, rice/turtle, and rice/vegetable systems, thereby maximizing land value and significantly increasing the value-added income for various stakeholders, such as farmers and enterprises. It strengthens the interest relationships among the government, social capital, and village collectives. In addition, the case area optimizes the residential space structure through unified planning and self-directed construction. It guides villagers from regions prone to natural disasters to relocate to central villages, such as the Guanyin Mountain settlement and the Shi Ziling new community. Coincidentally, new facilities such as kindergartens, urban and rural greenway networks, community party service centers, and daycare centers are being added. These efforts contribute to promoting the equalization of urban and rural infrastructure and public service facilities, ensuring that residents in both areas enjoy fair rights and opportunities in residence, education, retirement, work, and leisure.

5. Discussion

5.1. Policy Implications

To advance URI and build a new urban–rural relationship, it is imperative to identify the structural contradictions that impede URI and elucidate the internal logic of TSG in fostering the multidimensional integration of urban–rural elements, functions, and values. From the theoretical analysis above, the following insights are derived.

TSG is a crucial aspect of the national governance system and serves as an effective institutional means to enhance national governance capabilities. It should capitalize on its strengths in spatial allocation, institutional constraint, and developmental guidance. Firstly, within the logical framework of TSG that facilitates the seamless flow of URI elements, it is important to objectively grasp the specific policy environment and land resource situation, advance land system reforms prudently, manage human–land relationships properly, and create a conducive environment for factor mobility and external growth. Secondly, in the context of functional interaction mechanisms, it is crucial to harness the spatial control efficacy of TSG, formulate spatial access lists tailored to regional specifics, balance the multifunctional development with ecological protection, and utilize unique village resource endowments to develop distinctive business formats. This approach fosters a functional landscape characterized by "one village, one product; one enterprise, one policy".

In the specific implementation process, it is essential to focus on rural areas' resource endowments and development needs, assessing their regional status from a macro perspective to accurately guide rural planning and functional allocation. Additionally, identifying rural characteristics and highlighting rural values based on unique cultural attributes is crucial to prevent homogeneous development. At the rural level, special consideration should be given to their distinct functions and attributes within the context of regional urban–rural integrated development. At the county level, it is necessary to optimize the internal spatial structure and residential–industrial systems of rural areas to achieve functional complementarity and spatial connectivity with neighboring towns and counties. In terms of value reciprocity, TSG should utilize its tools to innovate rural value realization methods and refine value distribution mechanisms. By establishing equitable trading platforms such as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets banks" and adopting market-oriented operational modes, we can enhance the service capabilities of ecological products, express diverse values, and ensure a sustainable supply by converting resources into assets and capital values. Simultaneously, reforms should be deepened to enable the market entry of collectively constructed operating land and innovate cross-regional

and cross-administrative land circulation schemes, thereby increasing land revenues and expanding farmers' profit opportunities.

5.2. Research Contribution

The existing literature has discussed the concepts and implementation pathways of spatial governance and URI, yet these discussions often present fragmented analytical models that overlook the intrinsic relationship between the two, lacking a comprehensive theoretical framework to examine how TSG empowers URI. To address this gap, this paper integrates the current practical demands of URI, delving into the theoretical connotation and systemic content of TSG. It constructs a framework that bridges the research on URI and TSG. As a related approach to land resource management, TSG serves as an important tool for achieving sustainable protection and utilization of urban and rural territorial spaces. Recent studies have examined the relationship between farmland governance and urbanization, attempting to establish a sustainable farmland utilization evaluation system to clarify future directions for land resource protection, thereby effectively promoting regional sustainable development [22,86]. Meanwhile, the existing literature has analyzed effective strategies for promoting urban–rural integrated development from various dimensions, mainly including comprehensive territorial land remediation projects, the construction of urban–rural data-sharing platforms, and land use transformation [87,88]. Numerous studies have confirmed that multi-scale pathways to achieve urban–rural integrated development involve strengthening URI within urban agglomerations, gradually urbanizing county-level populations, enhancing economic ties between urban and rural areas, and improving agriculture connectivity [89,90]. While these studies provide valuable references for this paper, they often fail to systematically analyze the impact pathways of TSG on URI.

In contrast, our research expands on this by analyzing the relationship between urban–rural integrated development and TSG from a spatial governance perspective, exploring the governance mechanisms of URI. We focus on deconstructing how TSG drives URI, offering a unique theoretical perspective and analytical framework for understanding the enabling process and implementation pathways of TSG oriented towards URI. On the other hand, most existing research on TSG is predominantly fragmented in its theoretical analysis, lacking a cohesive analytical framework based on logical chains, and insufficiently exploring the enabling effects and practical implications. Recent studies have analyzed the connotation and implementation pathways of TSG from a structural functionalist perspective [33], and examined the linkage mechanisms between URI, rural transformation, and rural spatial governance across different historical stages in Yucheng, China [91,92]. While the aforementioned theoretical and case studies contribute to understanding the impact of specific governance approaches, they fail to provide a holistic view of TSG. This study dissects the intrinsic logical relationship between TSG and URI, further elucidating the theoretical mechanisms and procedural dynamics through which TSG facilitates the interaction of urban and rural elements, the complementarity of their functions, and their mutual benefits. Furthermore, grounded on systematically collected data from TSG cases in western China, this study analyzes the practical pathways of TSG in concretely promoting URI, thereby verifying the reliability and validity of the theoretical framework. It also proposes a relatively detailed Chinese-style governance approach for the integrated development of urban and rural areas that could apply to similar regions worldwide.

5.3. Research Prospects

China's URI is at a pivotal historical juncture, prompting the scientific community to address essential questions, such as how to delineate the facilitation mechanisms of TSG for URI, and how to leverage URI's leading role in directing TSG. As China enters the latter phase of its urbanization process, it is crucial to reassess national conditions regarding key elements such as urban–rural population, land, and resources. This reassessment aims to expand the new connotations of TSG in line with China's core values and strategic modernization needs. Clarifying the new requirements for URI development and devising

spatial governance strategies adapted to emerging integration trends are also essential. Despite advancements, regional development disparities persist in China, and improving the income and intergenerational equity of urban and rural residents remains urgent. Addressing the call for common prosperity and exploring targeted regulatory pathways for TSG based on current conditions continue to be pressing research topics.

The case study examined in this research represents a microcosm of China's URI. Developing countries and similar regions worldwide face comparable challenges when promoting URI. The most prominent issue is the lagging development in rural areas, where rural values are not effectively transformed into assets. Consequently, farmers struggle to earn substantial local wages, contributing to a global trend of rural decline [93]. In response, China has implemented the Rural Revitalization Strategy, which provides increased policy support, capital investment, and talent inflow to rural areas, aiming to elevate the modernization of rural construction. Simultaneously, land remediation projects and land system reform innovations have been carried out across regions to achieve sustainable development of rural territorial systems by accelerating land use transformation. It is evident that continuously enhancing rural modernization and sustainable development capabilities addresses deficiencies in the rural dimension. Revitalizing rural areas fosters regional economic and social growth, narrows the income gap between urban and rural residents, elevates villagers' status, and thereby supports URI.

While TSG offers unique advantages in driving URI, it also encounters potential risks, such as imbalanced governance structures and lagging governance tools [94]. Future research should not only emphasize the facilitative role of TSG in promoting URI but also be aware of the hindering factors and practical challenges in this process. Moreover, given the pronounced spatial heterogeneity in China's URI development, which exhibits a pattern of higher integration in the east compared with the west and middle [58], it is urgent to identify the main contradictions and obstacles factors in URI development across different geographical regions. Developing a differentiated optimization path system using TSG is essential. Tailored, dynamic, and region-specific governance schemes should be devised based on China's national conditions and integration levels of integration across different historical stages.

Additionally, the advent of globalization, intellectualization, and digitization has profoundly impacted global urban–rural systems and spatial relations, necessitating careful consideration. Digital technology, as a new production factor, is reshaping rural spatial production, lifestyles, and social governance structures, initiating the digital transformation of rural areas [95,96]. This transformation creates favorable conditions for URI from a flow space perspective. Responding to the practical needs of digital urban–rural construction, TSG theories should promptly incorporate digital elements and adjust governance strategies. Future research should clarify the theoretical logic, implementation mechanisms, and pathways by which digital technology can enhance TSG, based on an assessment of its transformation trends. Theoretically, a spatial governance framework under a digital context should be established to deepen the coupling relationship between URI and digital TSG, explore governance technologies in the digital era, and better support URI development.

6. Conclusions

In recent years, China's level of urbanization has significantly increased, with ongoing efforts to promote deep URI to achieve a new model of urbanization that effectively coordinates population and land use. Within the framework of enhancing governance capabilities and systems, the multifunctional and multi-value aspects of TSG play a crucial role. This governance approach is vital in pursuing the strategic goal of URI, serving as an essential systematic tool. Drawing from the literature reviews and policy analyses, this paper constructs a theoretical framework and implementation pathway for using TSG to drive URI. This study finds that TSG is a comprehensive process aimed at optimizing the allocation of elements, structural organization, and overall functions of the urban–rural territorial spatial system. It necessitates collective action from various stakeholders and the

coordination of tools such as spatial planning and institutional design. By following the logic of element interaction, functional complementarity, and value reciprocity, it seeks to reconstruct the human–land relationship and spatial form, thereby promoting URI.

A qualitative analysis using Jintang as a case study reveals that the path to achieving URI should begin with TSG and progress through three dimensions: elements, functions, and values. Specifically, the orderly exchange of urban–rural elements can be facilitated through land circulation and management, encouraging villagers to move into towns, and land consolidation. Ensuring food security while promoting urban agriculture, green rural leisure industries, and the transformation of industrial land can support coordinated multifunctional development between rural and urban areas. Establishing village-level asset securitization reform teams can secure land appreciation returns, while optimizing village and town spatial structures and facility layouts can achieve balanced urban–rural development. The research conclusions offer a Chinese approach to URI and spatial governance that can be applied to other similar countries and regions worldwide.

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