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On the Synergy in the Sustainable Development of Cultural Landscape in Traditional Villages under the Measure of Balanced Development Index: Case Study of the Zhejiang Province

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Abstract: Regional balance has an important role in driving the sustainable development of the entire society. The fast, ever-increasing urbanization advances are widening the gap between urban and rural areas, which is an ongoing global problem attracting much attention all over the world. Currently, balanced development occupies the highest priority in social development goals in the Chinese society. It aims at driving sustainable development in rural areas and promoting the urban–rural synergistic development to establish a balanced relationship. In this study, we consider the Zhejiang Province as an example and explore the synergy of the sustainable development of the traditional village cultural landscape based on the balanced development index. Based on the growth synergy model and the fractal aggregation dimension model of the complexity theory, this study discusses the overall characteristics of growth and aggregation synergies of the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province. We propose the synergistic activation path for the sustainable development of the cultural landscape in traditional villages under the perspective of "cultural balance" in three aspects: space, society, and industry, with a view to provide a theoretical basis and guiding suggestions for promoting sustainable and regional balanced development of villages.

Keywords: balanced development; traditional villages; cultural landscape; sustainable development; urban–rural synergy

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1. Introduction

The regional balanced development is one of the main dynamics that plays a crucial role in enabling a society to conduct sustainable development. The United Nations projected, in its 2030 agenda, the balance of the dimensions of economy, society, and environment as the main goal of sustainable development in the future [1]. The inequality welfare due to different levels of living conditions, i.e., the differences in the level of coordination in different regions, is an emphasized issue at the core of the development goals [2]. The Chinese modernization style looks at the main task of social development as a concept of common prosperity. This is represented by the synergistic development of the material and spiritual life of people in harmonious coexistence with nature. It is mainly concerned with the overall improvement of peoples' material, spiritual, social, and ecological way of life. In this dynamic process, the economic, social, spiritual, cultural aspects, and the ecological environment will form a dialectical unity of "balance" and "development," achieving a healthy interaction between distribution and growth [3]. In recent years, the Chinese government has carried out a series of reforms to promote the process of balanced development [4]. It announced, on 25 February 2021, the completion of the fight against poverty, which constituted the first historical task of balanced development from the economic aspect. In order to consolidate this achievement and sustain the

comprehensive synergetic development of urban and rural areas, the imbalance between urban and rural development has to be eliminated. A comprehensive revitalization of rural areas will be promoted in terms of industry, ecology, culture, and economy. Thus, it can be seen that rural revitalization and regional balanced development are consistent with policy [5] and share the common characteristics of synergy and pace [6].

Poverty and decline in rural areas became the primary global challenges faced in the current efforts of sustainable developments. Promoting rural revitalization and development has become the core task of sustainable development in countries all over the world. All efforts aim at achieving higher standards in economic aspects, living standards, the ecological environment, and rural civilization from a global perspective [7]. They all share the same goal of solving the problems of inadequate development in rural areas and unbalanced urban–rural development. Based on this, various countries and regions are exploring and implementing programs and measures adapted to their own conditions, such as the European Common Agricultural Policy that nurtures competitive agriculture, ensures the sustainable management of natural resources, and achieves geographically balanced development of rural economies and communities. Other examples include Italy's study on rural economic development, Japan's demonstration project of integrated construction of villages and towns, and South Korea's Saemaul Undong [8–10]. At present, China's problem of unbalanced development is more prominent compared with that of developed countries. There are still gaps in the rural, regional economic and environmental development, as well as in urban–rural balanced and synergistic development. The urban–rural relationship is fundamental to social development, which must be dealt with in regional development [11]. Social and regional developments are two interdependent, mutually integrated and complementary systems [12]. Only the sustainable development of each can promote the development of the other. However, with the constant expansion of cities and advancement in urbanization processes, the number of natural villages in China decreased from 3.65 to 2.36 million, and the number of administrative villages decreased from 850,000 to 490,000 from 1986 to 2020 [13,14]. From the year 2000 to 2010, about 900,000 traditional villages disappeared at an average rate of 100 per day [15]. The traditional villages are those formed earlier in time, having historical, cultural, scientific, artistic, economic, and social values that require protection. The village system mainly consists of traditional production, culture, and environment [16]. As a non-renewable and irreplaceable living inheritance-bearer of China's agricultural civilization, a traditional village engenders the values and national spirit of our predecessors, being naturally formed and existing as a space–time coordinate in the advancing process of Chinese history and civilization [17]. Bearing both material and cultural heritage, it is an important field for implementing rural revitalization and a valuable resource to promote regional balanced development that cannot be ignored. The distribution numbers and revitalization quality directly influence the implementation level of the rural revitalization strategy and the realization level of balanced development. Therefore, realizing the sustainable development of traditional villages is the necessary means to promote rural revitalization and regional balanced development.

As a cultural landscape, traditional villages are the result of long-term interactions between human beings and nature in a certain area [18]. The cultural value of traditional villages constitutes external culture, such as natural scenery and traditional architecture, and internal culture, such as ideology, folk customs, and lifestyle, together [19]. Between 2012 and 2019, a total of 6,819 traditional villages were announced nationwide, forming the world's largest heritage conservation cluster of farming civilization [20]. Berdegué et al. argued that the development transformation of rural areas can be seen as a comprehensive changing process of society [21]. Although urbanization leads to the weakening of traditional villages, the two are not antagonistic in nature, but should develop synergistically to jointly promote the process of regional balanced development and ultimately achieve sustainable development of the whole society.

The settlement landscape formed by traditional villages is one of the five major types of the Chinese cultural landscape. This illustrates the historical evolution of the

interaction of, and sustainable development between, humans and nature [22], as well as the result of the socio-ecological process of co-evolution throughout history, forming a sustainable system with high values [23]. The village cultural landscape is based on a farming economy centered on villages with the three elements of natural background, regional culture, and physical environment [24]. It illustrates the evolution of human societies and settlements over time under the influence of their natural environment and constant external and internal forces, such as social, economic, and cultural forces [25]. The cultural landscape in traditional villages has the triple attributes of time, space, and culture, and is an important heritage category carrying forward China's excellent traditional culture. It is more a material and spiritual carrier of cultural self-confidence and national self-confidence. Therefore, the conservation of the cultural landscape in traditional villages is an important means of inheriting Chinese culture, promoting the sustainable development of rural areas, and realizing a synergistic and balanced urban–rural development.

Through the collection and analysis of relevant data from various cities in the Zhejiang Province, this study aims to understand the balanced development level of the traditional village cultural landscape in the Zhejiang Province and the problems it presents, to grasp the synergistic characteristics of the traditional village cultural landscape in various cities in the province, and analyze the underlying reasons for the unbalanced and unsustainable development of different cities, which is conducive to better protection and development of traditional villages. Furthermore, this study provides a collaborative revitalization path for the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province that can promote the sustainable development of traditional villages in the province, improve the overall balanced development level, strengthen the sustainable revitalization transformation of the cultural landscape in traditional villages, and provide a basis for building a macro pattern that better reflects the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the province.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Cultural Landscape in Traditional Villages

The arguments related to the development of traditional village cultural landscapes can be traced back to 19th century Britain. Howard suggested related concepts, such as a "garden city," and pointed out the adverse effects caused by urban expansion; it was proposed that returning to the countryside is the key to solving these problems [26]. Protecting villages and developing balanced urban–rural relations have become important in solving various social problems. With further research on the traditional village cultural landscape, the importance of the ecological environment, social living environment, and regional economic conditions is gradually coming to the fore. The revival and balance of the natural and human environments and the protection of traditional village spaces and structures have been effective in achieving sustainable development of traditional villages [27]. Additionally, the support of the state and government has become one of the most effective means for the development and protection of the traditional village cultural landscape [28]. As early as 1930, France enacted a law on the protection of scenic spots, which included protecting traditional villages [29]. The state of Bavaria in Germany has more recently formulated a Village Master Development Plan, comprising proposed plans for cultural and historical buildings in traditional villages [30]. Japan has promulgated an important traditional building protection area system, in which various regulations for the protection and development of traditional villages are clarified [31].

The related studies on the cultural landscape in traditional villages mainly focus on landscape conservation and revitalization [32,33], landscape genetics and mapping [34,35], and landscape characteristics and formation [36,37]. The efforts focus more on research and discussions on planning and design strategies and methods, whereas quantitative data remain less represented. The few studies on the cultural landscape in the traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province are limited to spatial characteristics [38,39], temporal evolution of villages in different dynasties [40], and the description of the current situation of conservation and utilization [41]. Nonetheless, the studies on regularity, synergy, and

complexity are still lacking. Therefore, the present study focuses on these aspects to explore the synergistic characteristics of the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province by analyzing the regional balanced development indices, and finally putting forward the synergetic revitalization path of the cultural landscape in traditional villages.

2.2. Study Area

The Zhejiang Province (Figure 1) is located in the Yangtze River Delta region on the southeast coast of China, between 118°01′–123°10′ E and 27°02′–31°11′ N. It has jurisdiction over 11 prefecture-level administrative regions, including 11 prefecture-level cities, 20 county-level cities, 32 counties, 1 autonomous county, and 37 municipal jurisdiction districts. In 2021, the Zhejiang Province had a resident population of 65.4 million, a GDP of 7351.6 billion yuan, with a year-on-year increase of 8.5% calculated at comparable prices and a two-year average growth of 6.0%.



Figure 1. Administrative boundary map of Zhejiang Province (from Zhejiang geographic information public service platform).

The Zhejiang Province is representative of the national rural revitalization and of balanced development. It has a considerable scale in terms of area and population, with the geographical characteristics of "seven mountains, one water and two fields" in the area. From the perspective of urban–rural synergy, Zhejiang has both urban and rural areas, and half of the population is registered in rural areas.

In 2021, the Zhejiang Province was selected by the state as a demonstration area for high quality development and construction with sustainable and balanced development, which further corroborates the research value of Zhejiang Province in terms of sustainable and regional balanced development. The basis and advantages of the research value mainly manifest in a higher degree of affluence and better developmental balance. In 2020, Zhejiang's gross regional product was evaluated at 6461.3 billion yuan, ranking fourth in the country in terms of economic aggregate, or about 936.8 billion dollars at the average exchange rate of that year, which is close to the economic aggregate of Indonesia, ranking 16th in the world. The per capita gross regional product reached 16,000 dollars, which is 60% higher than that of the national average, and the per capita disposable income was 52,400 yuan, second only to Shanghai and Beijing and 1.63 times of the national average. The income of urban and rural residents has ranked first among all provinces and regions of China for 20 and 36 successive years, respectively. In 2020, the income ratio of urban and

rural residents in Zhejiang Province was 1.96:1, which is far lower than the national ratio of 2.56:1. Furthermore, the ratio of the highest and lowest resident income among all of the cities in the province was 1.67:1. This constitutes the only province in China where the income of the residents in all of the districts and cities exceeds the national average [42,43]. At the same time, Zhejiang has made some outstanding achievements in a number of fields, such as the market economy, modern rule of law, enriching and benefiting the people, and green development.

In the list of the 6819 traditional villages announced by the state, the Zhejiang Province ranks fourth with 636 traditional villages. As one of the smallest provinces in China, the Zhejiang Province is in the forefront of both the urbanization rate and per capita gross regional product. At the same time, it is the region with the largest distribution density of best-conserved traditional villages in China [44], which proves that the conservation and development of traditional villages do not conflict with the development of socio-economic and other factors. The Zhejiang Province has successively issued a series of relevant policies, such as the "General Office of Zhejiang Provincial People's Government on Strengthening the Conservation and Development of Traditional Villages" (ZZBF (2016) No. 84) and the "Zhejiang Province's Three-year Plan for Promoting Living Environment of Rural Areas at a High-caliber Level (2018–2020)" (ZWBF (2018) No. 3), to promote the sustainable and balanced development of traditional villages. Effectively, a significant improvement has been embodied in terms of funding declarations, conservation mechanisms, and publicity efforts.

Although the Zhejiang Province has made successful achievements in exploring the path to sustainable and balanced development, there is still room for further optimization and development potential in improving the urban–rural synergistic development, revitalization of traditional villages, and sustainable development of public culture. This constitutes the core focus of the present study by exploring and innovating in the synergy of the sustainable development for the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province.

2.3. Establishment of the Index System

The current balanced development of the Chinese society requires a scientific and feasible index system that meets the national conditions. At present, the academic community has paid much attention to the "balanced development index," without delivering relevant studies. Our present study takes the "balanced development index model" constructed by Chen Lijun et al., which applies to China's development [45], as the reference and uses development, sharing, and sustainability as three major evaluation dimensions. This study starts with the four aspects of income, space, efficiency, and cultural synergies based on the two-way coupling perspective of "material + spirit". This work abides by the availability, importance, and availability and comparability principles of index data, to construct the Balanced Development Index Model (Table 1) with 3 primary indices, 13 secondary indices, and 46 tertiary indices to explore the process and level of regional balanced development of Zhejiang Province.

2.4. Measurement Methods

An objective and comprehensive weighting method described in [46] was used. In contrast to the traditional subjective evaluation methods, such as the Analytic Hierarchy Process and the Fuzzy Analytical Hierarchy Process, the entropy weighting method is far more accurate, in which the weights could be modified, thus indicating its high adaptability. Determining the weights by the size of information transmitted by the objective data of each index is considered more rigorous and reasonable, and it is an important tool for measuring complexity in a scientific manner [47,48].

Table 1. Balanced Development Index System.

Primary Indices	Secondary Indices	Tertiary Indices
Development	Affluence	① Urban residents per capita disposable income (yuan) ② Rural residents per capita disposable income (yuan) ③ Per capita disposable income as a proportion of per capita GDP (%) ④ Urban residents per capita consumption expenditure (yuan) ⑤ Rural residents per capita consumption expenditure (yuan) ⑥ Total fixed-asset investment (100 million yuan) ⑦ Average savings deposit balance per person (yuan) ⑧ Retail price index ⑨ Consumer price index
	Group Synergy	① The total amount of urban security funds (100 million yuan) ② The total amount of rural security funds (100 million yuan) ③ The number of urban minimum living standards (10,000 persons) ④ The number of rural minimum living standards (10,000 persons)
	Urban-rural Synergy	① Diversity factor of urban–rural per capita living consumption expenditure ② Multiple difference of income between urban and rural residents
Sharing	Education	①The average number of students per teacher in elementary schools (persons) ② The number of students in secondary schools (10,000 persons) ③ The number of students in higher education institutions (persons)
	Medical Health	① The number of doctors per 1000 residents (persons) ② The number of beds in medical institutions per 1000 residents (numbers) ③ Rural doctors and medical orderlies (persons)
	Social Security	① Medical relief expenditure (100 million yuan / 10,000 persons) ② The number of participants in basic medical insurance (10,000 persons) ③ The number of participants in basic endowment insurance (10,000 persons)
	Housing	① Rural residents per capita housing area (m^2) ② Urban residents per capita housing area (m^2)
	Public Infrastructure	① Public transportation vehicles per 10,000 people (units) ② Wastewater treatment rate (%) ③ Per capita ownership of road area (square meters)
	Digital Applications	① Cell phone popularizing rate (pcs / 100 persons) ② The number of computers per 100 rural households (units) ③ The number of computers per 100 urban households (units)
	Public Culture (Spiritual Wealth)	① Total expenditure on cultural museums (stations) (10,000 yuan) ② The total collection of public libraries (10,000 copies) ③ The number of books, periodicals and literature lent (10,000 copies)
Sustainability	High Quality Development	① GDP per capita (yuan/person) ② R&D investment (100 million yuan) ③ The number of patents granted (items) ④ Urban registered unemployment rate (%)
	Governance	① Per capita fiscal income (10,000 yuan per person) ② The number of grassroots labor union organizations (numbers) ③ The number of lawyer staff (persons)
	Ecology	① Urban greening coverage area (hectares) ② Habitation park green space (square meters) ③ Domestic waste removal volume (10,000 tons) ④ Industrial solid waste comprehensive utilization rate (%)

1. Dimensionless processing

To eliminate the otherness effect in the measuring units of each index, the extremum method was selected for the dimensionless processing of the raw data for indices [49], among four different methods of data specification, including standard deviation, extremum, range, and mean-value methods.

$$P_i = \begin{cases} \frac{p_i}{Max(p_i)} \ ForwardIndex \\ \frac{Min(p_i)}{p_i} \ Contrary\ Index \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where *Pi* is the dimensionless normalization value of index *i* after being processed by the extreme value method; p_i is the original value of index *I;* and Max(p_i) and Min(p_i) are the maximum and minimum values of index *i*, respectively.

2. Entropy weight determination

The entropy weight is calculated according to the Shannon's information entropy formula [50,51]:

$$H_i = -\frac{k}{\sum_{j=1}^{m} P_{ij} Ln P_{ij}}, \quad (2)$$

$$W_i = \frac{1 - H_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (1 - H_i)}, \quad (3)$$

where H_i is the information entropy of the *i*-th index and W_i is the entropy weight of the *i*-th index. i = (1, 2, . . . , n), j = (1,2, . . . , m), k = 1/Ln(m), and P_{ij} is the dimensionless normalization value of the *j*-th evaluation object of the *i*-th index.

3. Measurement of balanced development level

After proceeding with the compositional operations of the combined weight W_i of each index with the single index value of each research object, the level of aggregation Z_i of the *i*-th index is obtained; subsequently, the common affluence level of the primary and secondary indices can also be obtained through the backward induction method:

$$Z_i = \sum_{j=1}^{m} W_i P_{ij.} \quad (4)$$

2.5. Data Sources and Processing

The relevant indices data of the Zhejiang Province from 2011 to 2020 were selected according to the statistical yearbooks released by the official website of the Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics. The study of the regional balanced development process and development level should have required a long time span, but considering the lack of data of some indices before 2010 and the inconsistency in the statistical caliber, which may enhance the incomparability and meaninglessness of these indices, the relevant data for the last 10 years were adopted as the basis of measurement. Among them, several index statistics are in mutual conflict; thus, the data in more recent yearbooks prevailed.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of Balanced Development Level

3.1.1. Overall Level Fluctuates Upward

Generally speaking, the regional balanced development level in the Zhejiang Province between 2011 and 2020 shows a non-equilibrium fluctuating upward trend from 0.580 to 0.955 (Figure 2). It is worth pointing out that the value 1 is not the absolute upper limit of the balanced development level, but a relative reference measured and calculated by the extremum method. Although the overall level continues to rise, the increase over the years shows wild "wave-like" fluctuations and uncertainty (Figure 3), touching the "trough" in 2016 (due to the economic restructuring under the New Normal) and 2020 (due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic) (i.e., the values were 0.029 and 0.031, respectively). It can be predicted from the trend that the increase in the balanced development level may remain at the "trough" level in 2021.

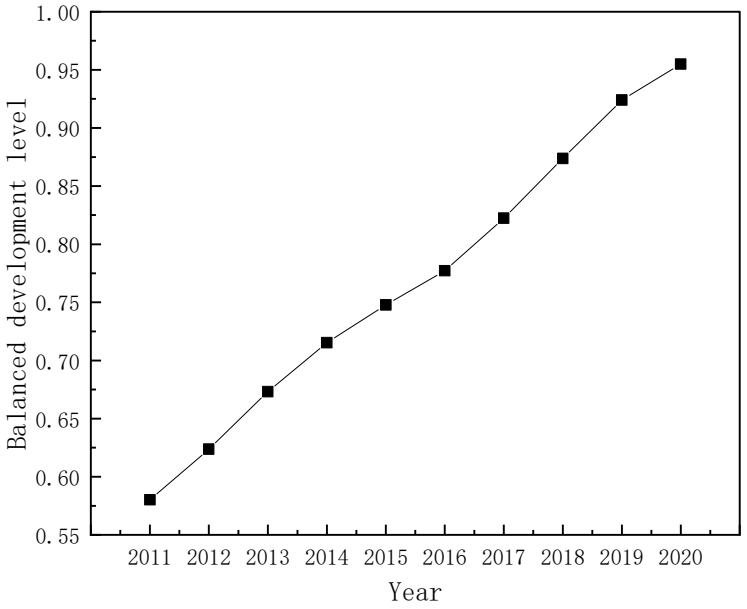


Figure 2. Balanced development level of Zhejiang Province from 2011 to 2020.

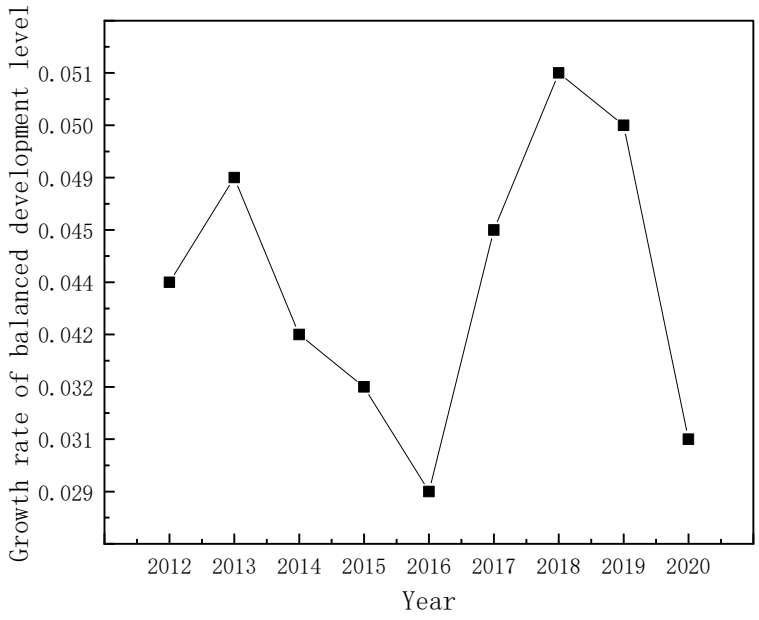


Figure 3. Growth rate of balanced development level of Zhejiang Province from 2011 to 2020.

3.1.2. Low Level of Urban–Rural Synergy Index

The measuring and calculation result of the balanced development level of the secondary indices show that the three indices of affluence, high-quality development, and group synergy are relatively high, indicating that the balanced development, with "material life" as the core, presents a good momentum from 2011 to 2020. However, the two indices of urban–rural synergy and public infrastructure are low, indicating that more efforts are required in aspects of urban–rural integration and facility sharing. Among those indices, the level of urban–rural synergy index is only 0.296, indicating that the two sub-indices of the diversity factor of urban–rural per capita living consumption expenditure and multiple differences of income between the urban and rural residents still need to be reduced. The conditions that urban and rural areas occupy combined and circulated resources determine the process and effect of the comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development of urban and rural areas. "The Implementation Plan for the High-Quality Development

and Construction of a Regional Balanced Development Demonstration Area in Zhejiang Province (2021–2025)" puts forward the index threshold of "reducing the multiple difference of income between urban and rural residents to within 1.9" by 2025. In fact, the multiple differences of income between urban and rural residents in 2020 is 1.96, and according to the trend line, 1.9 should be reached in 2021 (Figures 4 and 5).

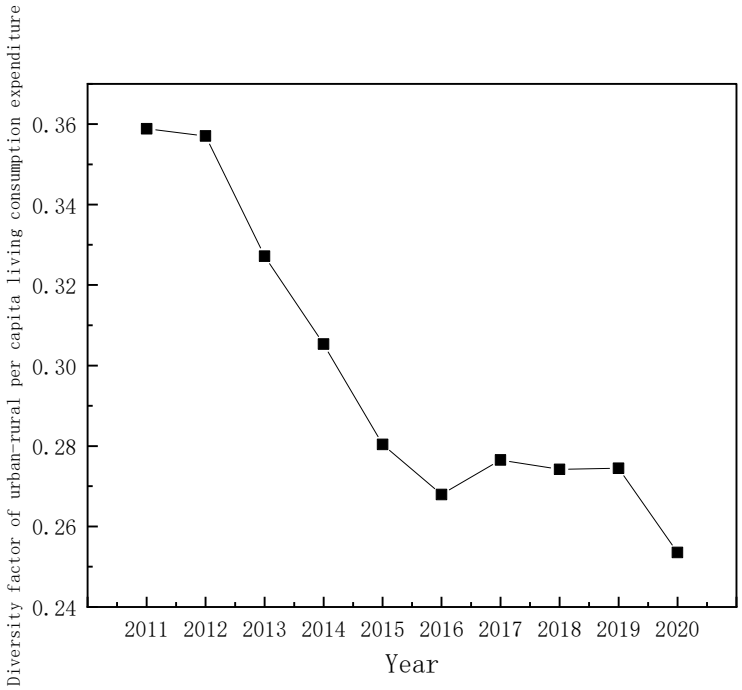


Figure 4. Diversity factor of urban–rural per capita living consumption expenditure of Zhejiang Province from 2011 to 2020.

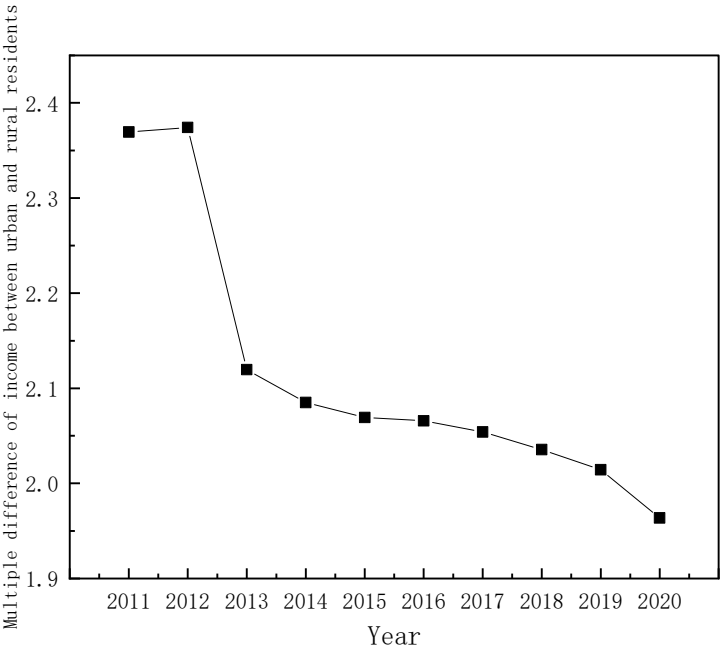


Figure 5. Multiple difference of income between urban and rural residents of Zhejiang Province from 2011 to 2020.

3.1.3. High Weight of Public Culture Indices

In the weight of the Balanced Development Index Model (Table 2), the sharing index has the highest weight (0.419). Among the sub-indices of the sharing index, public culture (spiritual enrichment dimension) has the highest weight (0.083), indicating that public culture plays a dominant role in the process of achieving regional balanced development. In fact, cultural balance is seriously absent in this balanced development index system, which can be divided into dominant culture, elite culture, popular culture, and other sub-index systems [52]. However, the data acquisition is highly subjective and not suitable to be applied in the entropy weighting method to derive objective weights; so it has been excluded from the present study.

Table 2. Weights of indices in the balanced development index system.

Primary Indices	Weights	Secondary Indices	Weights
Development	0.349	Affluence	0.205
		Group synergy	0.110
		Urban–rural synergy	0.033
Sharing	0.419	Education	0.056
		Medical care and health	0.074
		Social security	0.076
		Housing	0.035
		Public infrastructure	0.030
		Digital applications	0.065
		Public culture (spiritual enrichment)	0.083
Sustainability	0.232	High-quality development	0.105
		Governance	0.058
		Ecology	0.069

To sum up, under the background of an upward fluctuation in the regional balanced development level in the Zhejiang Province, the level of the urban–rural synergy index is low, whereas the weight of the public culture index is high. Therefore, it is a strategic point to enhance the level of regional balanced development to continuously advance urban–rural synergy development and improve the guiding power, benefiting and producing the power of the public culture. The essence of the urban–rural synergetic development process is the constant merging of the urban and rural spheres. As the overall remains of regional culture and the major living force of rural revitalization strategy in terms of culture, the construction level of the synergy of its cultural landscape plays an essential role in preserving the original genes of the traditional villages. This promotes the modernization transformation of traditional villages, raising the urban–rural synergistic development of "cultural synergy," and promoting the construction of balanced development demonstration areas of "cultural balance".

3.2. Synergy of Cultural Landscape in Traditional Villages

In order to study in a comprehensive and systematic manner the level of synergy of the cultural landscape in traditional villages, the growth synergy characteristics (coordination degree of quantitative growth) and aggregation synergy characteristics (compactness degree of spatial distribution) of the overall pattern of the cultural landscape in traditional villages [53] are explored from two aspects: the spatial order of "relative synchronicity" and the evolution law of "absolute diachronism" [54]. This is achieved by following the three-

dimensional coordinate system of spatial and temporal axes and taking the growth synergy model and the fractal aggregation dimension model of complexity theory as references.

3.2.1. Characteristics of Synchronicity: Growth Synergy

With reference to the data from five batches of traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province published by the Chinese Traditional Villages Preservation and Development Study Center on the official website of "Chuantongcunluo.com" [55], we calculated the following set of parameters: (i) the annual average growth rate S1 for 2012–2014, (ii) the annual average growth rate S2 for 2014–2016, and (iii) the annual average growth rate S3 for 2016–2018 of the number of cultural landscapes in traditional villages. Additionally, we calculated the value "C" of the growth synergy for traditional villages from 2012–2018 in 10 prefecture-level cities in the Zhejiang Province (among the 11 prefecture-level cities in Zhejiang Province, only Jiaxing City has the fifth batch of data, so it is not included in the statistics). These calculations have been achieved through the following equation, based on the growth synergy model proposed by Liu Zhiqiang and Yang Shengfu [56,57]:

$$S_i = (X_e / X_b)^{1/(te-tb)} - 1 \quad (5)$$

$$C = (S_1 + S_2 + S_3) / \sqrt{S_1^2 + S_2^2 + S_3^2}, \quad (6)$$

where X_e and X_b are the numbers at the end and beginning of the study, respectively, and t_e and t_b are the time at the end and the beginning of the study, respectively. The growth synergy situation of the number of cultural landscapes in traditional villages in various cities was found as follows (Figures 6 and 7).

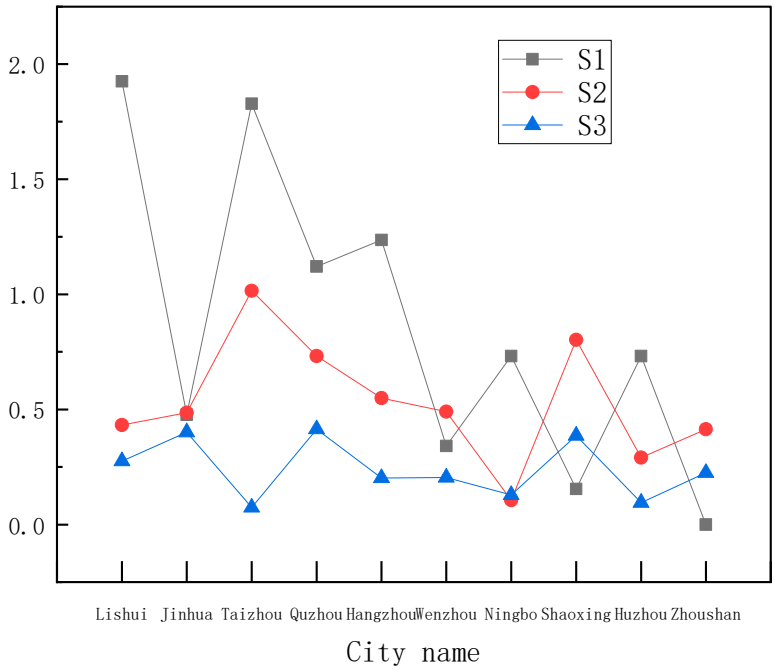


Figure 6. Average annual growth rate of traditional villages in cities of Zhejiang Province from 2012 to 2018.

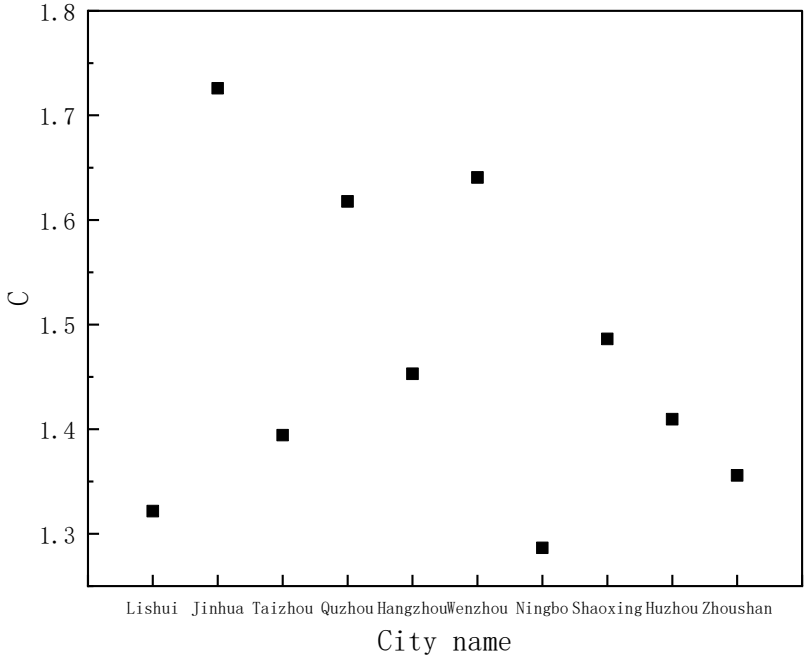


Figure 7. Growth synergy of traditional villages in cities of Zhejiang Province from 2012 to 2018.

1. The numbers of five cities remain to be improved. The traditional villages in Lishui, Jinhua, and Taizhou are significantly aggregated, accounting for 68.6% of the 11 prefecture-level cities in Zhejiang Province, and their number is significantly negatively correlated with the degree of local economic development and transportation convenience. In sharp contrast, the traditional villages in Zhoushan, Huzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo, and Wenzhou only account for 14.3%, and nearly every batch shows single-digit or even zero growth;
2. The average annual growth rate slows down segment by segment in the three segments studied, with the average values of S1, S2, and S3 being 0.855, 0.532, and 0.241, respectively, showing an overall trend of gradual saturation of traditional villages. Except for the S1 values of Lishui, Taizhou, Quzhou, and Hangzhou and the S2 value of Taizhou which exceeds 1, the other annual average growth values are below 1. Among them, the S3 value of Taizhou drops precipitously, and it starts to exhibit an end in growth. The number of traditional villages in Shaoxing is not good on the whole, but the trend of "forging ahead" is obvious;
3. Seven cities showed no synergy. Among the 10 cities studied, only Jinhua showed synergy in the growth of the number of traditional villages (C value of 1.726), and only Wenzhou and Quzhou showed relative synergy (C values of 1.641 and 1.618, respectively), indicating that the spatial growth of traditional villages in these three cities from 2012 to 2018 was coordinated and relatively orderly; however, Jinhua and Wenzhou were synergistic at low growth rates. The remaining seven cities all showed no synergy (C value below 1.55), and the number of traditional villages in Lishui continued to show blowout growth in the third, fourth, and fifth batches, which enhanced the instability of the synergy values, but with a good growth trend. The S values of Hangzhou in the three study segments were halved, segment-by-segment, as the traditional villages were highly impacted by the rapid urbanization, which led to a decrease in the synergy coupling of their growth number.

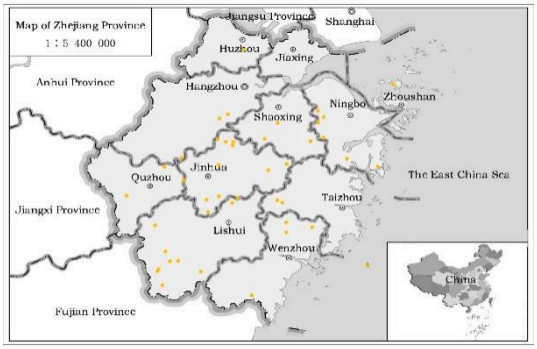
3.2.2. Characteristics of Diachronism: Aggregation Synergy

Taking the fractal aggregation dimensional model as a reference and Guanling village (also known as "the last mysterious realm at the south of Yangtze River" in Songyang County), located in the high-density core area of traditional villages in the province, as the

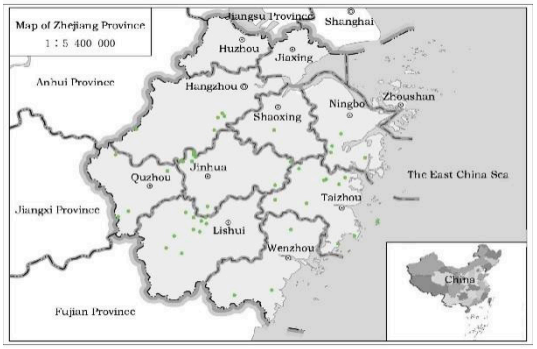
central village, 17 scales of different radii r were set at an interval of 20 km to cover the study area and calculate the number of traditional villages N in the r scale. Further, r was transformed into the average radius R to eliminate the influence of radius value on the fractal dimensions [58]. If the spatial distribution of cultural landscape in traditional villages has fractal aggregation characteristics, there is a fractal dimensional relationship [59], such as:

$$lnN = DlnR + C, \quad (7)$$

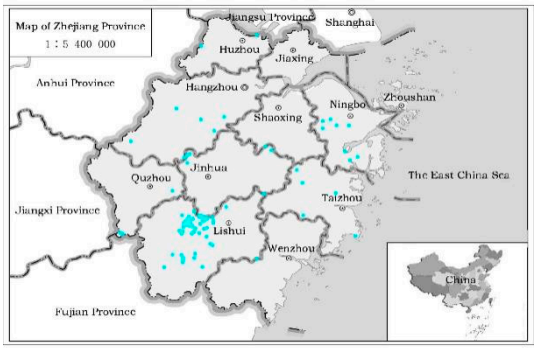
where D is the aggregation dimension (in general, $D \in (0,2)$). The smaller the value, the stronger the aggregation degree [60]; C is the intercept of this fitted equation. The measurement results show that the spatial distribution of the cultural landscape in the five batches of traditional villages has the following characteristics: (Figures 8 and 9)



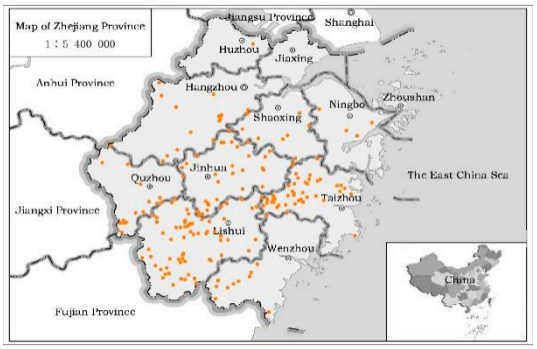
(**a**) 1st batch



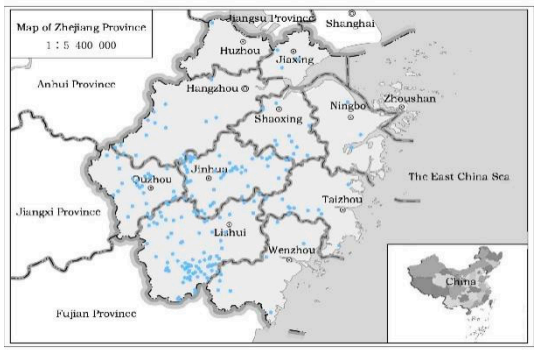
(**b**) 2nd batch



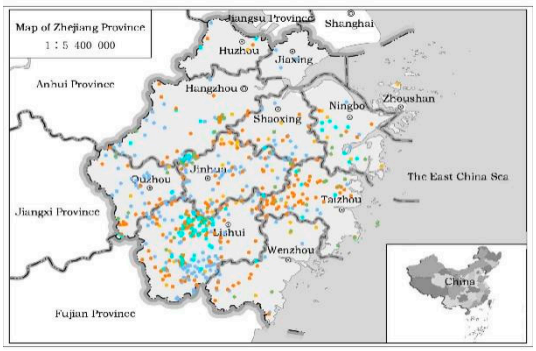
(**c**) 3rd batch



(**d**) 4th batch



(**e**) 5th batch



(**f**) All five batches

Figure 8. Batching and overall spatial distribution of cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province.

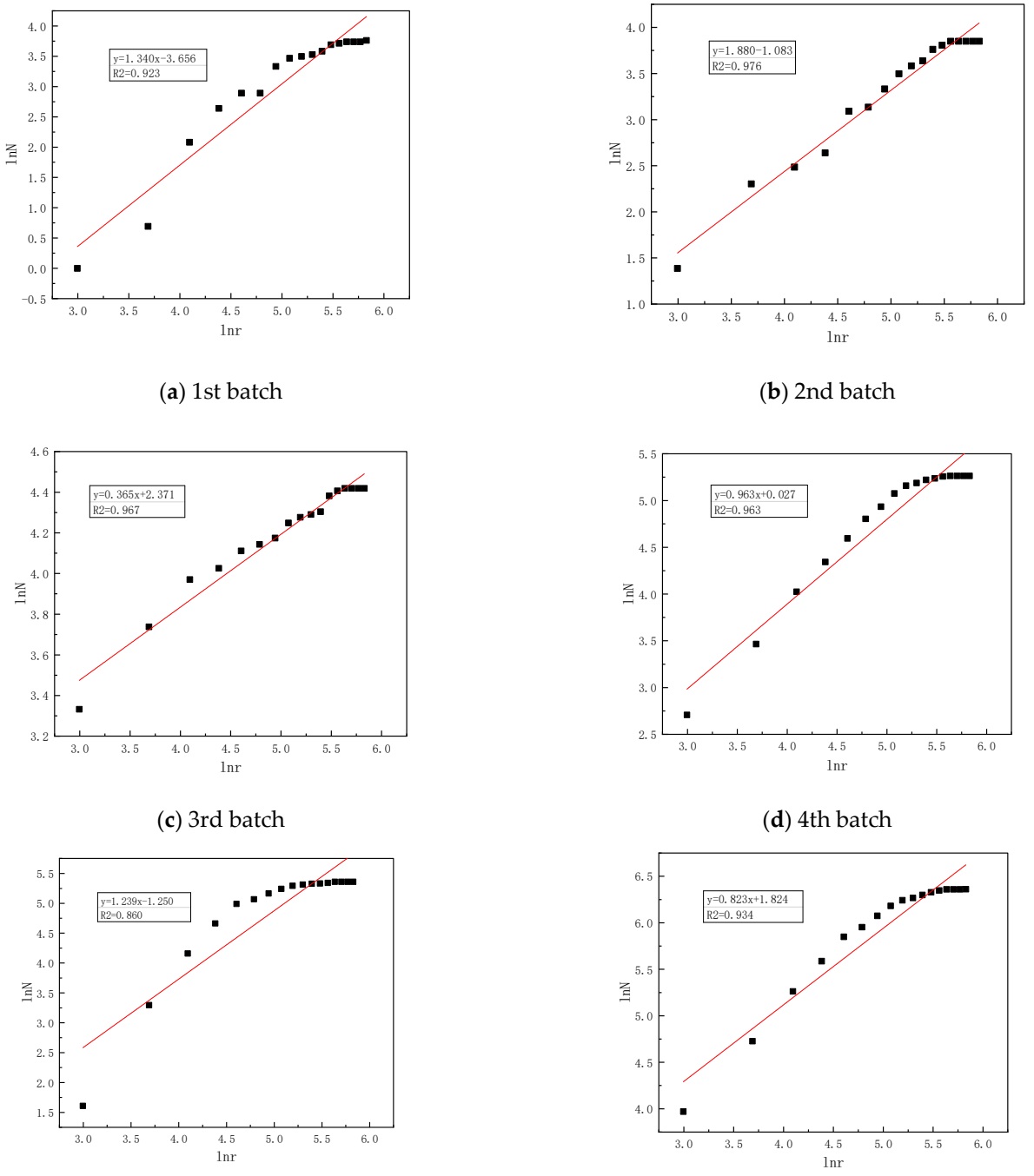


Figure 9. The aggregated dimensional double logarithmic coordinate map of batching and overall spatial structure of cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province.

1. Significant self-similarity fractal (good linear fitting, determination coefficient R2 above 0.890) and the existence of scale-free sections, especially in the fourth batch of scale-free sections, Longquan City and Xianju County within the range of (3.1, 5.1) showed enhanced aggregation;
2. The aggregation dimensions are less than 2, indicating that the attenuation from the central village to the peripheral circles is obvious. Around the three spatial influence centers/palms, that are, "Songyang-Wuyi", "Jingning-Longquan", and "Lanxi", there shows a spatial pattern of "three centers, five fingers, multiple points";

3. The aggregation dimension increases after decreasing (values of 1.340, 0.850, 0.365, 0.963, and 1.239), indicating that the degree of aggregation increases and then decreases, i.e., from the first batch of "free distribution state," the second batch of "centripetal scattering aggregation state," and the third batch of "central bursting state," evolving to the fourth batch of "polycentric aggregation state" and the fifth batch of "centrifugal fractal state".

It can be seen that the overall distribution pattern of the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the Zhejiang Province is still in the preliminary fractal form, while the optimized structure of nature is a polycentric fractal form with stable iteration [61]. Thus, the focus should be on mining a large number of historical and cultural villages scattered in northern and southeastern Zhejiang Province, forming a polycentric aggregation optimization state, and expanding and refining fractal dimension to reach a synergistic structure that can be sustainably optimized.

4. Discussion

The high-quality development of the cultural landscape in traditional villages remains hindered by the difficult-to-achieve morphing. Explicitly, this includes the difficulty in transforming traditional agriculture into modern agriculture, the difficulty for the high ecological value to transform into high economic growth, and for the "external traction" to mobilize "internal drive". In order to constantly meet the diversified, multi-level, and multi-faceted spiritual and cultural needs of the public, the leading role of the core socialist values has to be strengthened, the public cultural undertakings have to be developed, and the public cultural service system has to be improved. This would thus lead to extracting the "people-oriented" cultural equilibrium model (Figure 10), to stimulate endogenous motivation with culture-fostering aspirations, to recreate practicable abilities with digital-fostering-intelligence, and to serve the developmental, sharing, and ecological goal of common prosperity and the balanced development of the cultural landscape in traditional villages. Ultimately, this would lead to the formation of a full-network, full-field, and full-chain cultural common prosperity-balanced development system.

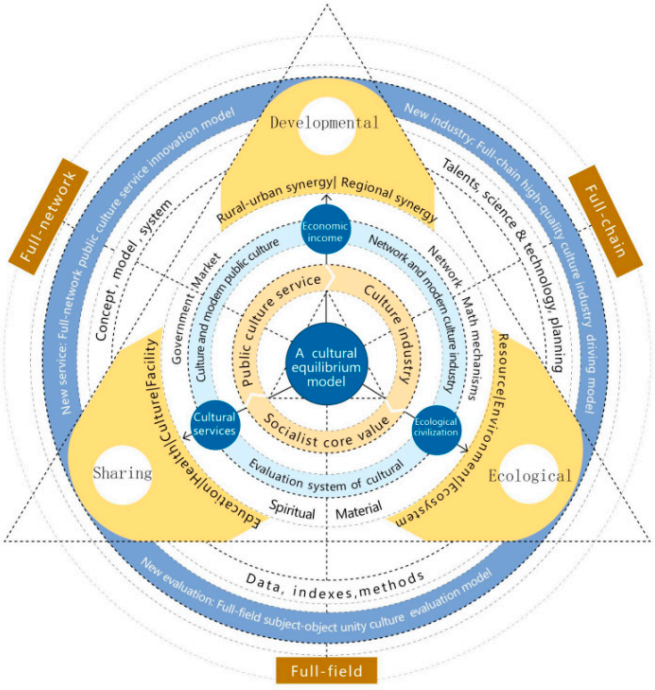


Figure 10. A "people-oriented" cultural equilibrium model of cultural landscape in traditional villages.

4.1. "Diverse Synergy" Driving Sustainable Spatial Development

Under the background of the regional coordinated development strategy of the "Yangtze River Delta Integration," the construction of an overall conservation and utilization spatial pattern of "diverse synergy" of cultural landscape in traditional villages requires the integration of traditional villages and the surrounding natural cultural resources. These include the four major poetry roads, the Silk Road cultural belt, the Yangtze River Delta Greenway, and other special paths, digging deep into the potential "origin" and "integrity" value of the cultural landscape in the traditional villages in northern and southeastern Zhejiang. This also requires elaborately delineating prior, key characteristics and general conservation and utilization areas in classifications, grades, and divisions within the five cultural and geographic divisions of Wu, Yue, Dongou, Gumie, and Bawu. Through the integration of the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries, highlighting the village characteristics, and innovating and integrating cultural tourism, etc., the sustainable revitalization transformation of conservation and the utilization of cultural landscape in traditional villages is promoted.

4.2. "Culture-Fostering-Aspiration" to Drive Sustainable Social Development

The culture-fostering-aspiration [62] consists in guiding the microscopic individual behaviors through fostering ideas, concepts, confidence, and perseverance, so as to realize the transformation from passiveness to activeness. The "Ten Million Project" has completed the functional upgrade of more than 10,000 old ancestral halls, unused school buildings, and abandoned buildings in rural areas to "cultural halls" and "moral banks." However, the phenomena of emphasis on assessment, neglecting effectiveness, and going through the motions still ubiquitously exist in the construction of a public culture service system in traditional villages. Additionally, no attention is being paid to the bottleneck of human resources in public culture construction. To realize a shift in focus from the hardware renovation stage to the software enhancement stage and to promote the precise, refined, and high quality development of cultural landscape in traditional villages, a "Ten Million Project" combining the form and spirit has to be forged through the protective excavation of traditional culture. Moreover, the problem of formalism needs to be solved using public culture service chain (information platform), the supply and demand of public culture services have to be matched through focusing on investigation and surveys on cultural demand, and culture-fostering-aspiration paths such as the bottleneck of talents and funds have to be solved through the establishment of a public culture service investment mechanism, etc.

4.3. "Digital-Fostering-Intelligence" to Achieve Sustainable Industrial Development

Digital-fostering-intelligence consists in helping the residents establish adaptive learning mechanisms by fostering ideas, knowledge, and technology, so as to realize the transformation from "unable to get out of poverty" to "continuously achieving prosperity." Lin'an's "Internet + Agricultural products sales" e-commerce model, Pujiang's "Data center + Grape industry" agricultural products model, and Anji's "Information platform + Agriculture and tourism integration" agriculture and tourism model, are all typical examples of digital integration of the rural industrial revitalization. To innovate the digital development model of cultural industry in traditional villages, the "digital attainment gap" [63] and integrating the digital technology of the Metaverse generation into the cultural industry innovation link have to be addressed first. In addition, relying on tangible cultural heritage industries, such as architecture and landscape, and non-heritage industries, such as clan, folklore, education and farm work, and handicrafts, etc., should also be considered. Secondly, this innovation requires a strengthening of the cultural brand and label shaping, using brand IPs, poverty alleviation influencers, and other "attraction factors" to build brand association, thus forming customer groups of high adhesiveness and comprehensive new media channels. Finally, the development of cultural industry in traditional villages consisting of informatized services, intelligent management, precise marketing, intelligent experience, and digital operations can be achieved.

5. Conclusions

Based on the balanced development index system, this study demonstrated that the level of balanced development in the Zhejiang Province between 2011 and 2020 showed an unbalanced fluctuating uptrend, and the level of urban–rural synergy index was low. Nonetheless, the weight of the public culture index was found to be high, so that "cultural balance" is one of the priorities for the Zhejiang Province in the establishment of a demonstration area of regional balanced development. The overall synergy degree of the cultural landscape in traditional villages directly affects the construction level of "cultural balance". Our findings, in terms of common synchronicity characteristics, showed that the numbers in five cities need to be increased, the average annual growth rate has slowed down, and seven cities showed no synergy. In terms of diachronism characteristics, we found that the aggregation decay is obvious from the central village to the surrounding circles, showing a spatial pattern of "three centers, five fingers, multiple points," and the aggregation degree strengthens and then weakens, and is still in the initial fractal state.

These data can help identify the following three points: (1). Focus on the number of cities to be improved. (2). Analyze the deep-seated reasons for the slow and uncoordinated annual growth of traditional village cultural landscapes in different cities, and whether it results from resource or cognitive problems to better protect and develop traditional villages. (3). The overall distribution pattern of the cultural landscape of traditional villages in Zhejiang Province is still in a preliminary sub-form, which urges us to focus on excavating numerous historical and cultural villages scattered in the north and southeast of Zhejiang, and then form a multi-center aggregation optimization state to build a macro pattern that better reflects the cultural landscape in traditional villages in the province.

This study constructs a "people-oriented" cultural equilibrium model for the cultural landscape in traditional villages, which serves development, sharing, and ecology. The model puts forward a synergetic revitalization path from three aspects of overall spatial patterns, social public culture services, and cultural industry development, based on the above conclusions. Further research directions and recommendations are discussed as follows.

1. From the perspective of complexity theory, to categorize and explore the unique regionalism, spatial–temporal correlation, and chaotic complexity in the genetic expression and iconographic language of cultural landscape in traditional villages, and to refine typical schemes to form "demonstrations";
2. Going in-depth to the cultural landscape theory, to vertically outline the regional spatial pattern management system, implementation paths in classifications and grades, and development priorities in steps of timing sequence of heritage conservation and utilization in traditional villages, famous historical and cultural villages, and the historical and cultural villages at the national and provincial levels;
3. Based on a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative perspective, to horizontally sort out the association and differences in spatial patterns and influencing factors among national-level traditional villages, national-level key villages of rural tourism, and national-level key precise poverty alleviation areas, thus providing guidance and suggestions for sustainable development in rural areas.

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