land

MDPI

Article

A Study of Historic Urban Landscape Change Management Based on Layered Interpretation: A Case Study of Dongxi Ancient Town

Xiaotian Ma and Junqiao Sun *

School of Art, Chongqing University, Chongqing 401331, China; mxt@stu.cqu.edu.cn
* Correspondence: sjq@cqu.edu.cn

Abstract: In the face of external shocks from urbanization and the inherent needs of economic development, it is essential for urban and rural heritage to adapt timely to achieve sustainability in development. Employing Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) methodologies for change management holds significant implications for the sustainable preservation and utilization of heritage. This study used Dongxi Ancient Town as a case study, characterized by a distinct evolutionary trajectory and diverse layers of accumulation throughout its historical progression, making it an exemplary instance for change analysis. This paper analyzed the processes and outcomes of historic urban landscape changes through a layered historical approach. Combining historical data translation methods with ArcGIS spatial analysis, we documented and mapped the cultural and natural characteristics of Dongxi Ancient Town. The layered process of the town's historical landscape was categorized into four stages: the primary formative period from the Western Han to the Ming dynasties, the rapid development during the Qing dynasty, the prosperous period of the Republic of China, and the transitional expansion period following the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The study analyzed the morphological changes and values of the historical landscape throughout these periods. Based on the analysis results, we suggest three transformation management strategies for historical landscapes oriented towards economic development: (1) converting cultural heritage into cultural assets, (2) implementing moderate and controlled quantitative changes, and (3) enhancing operational feasibility through collaborative efforts among multiple stakeholders. These strategies aim to establish a sustainable model that balances heritage conservation with economic growth.

Keywords: Historic Urban Landscape; layering; change management; ancient town; sustainable development

check for updates

Citation: Ma, X.; Sun, J. A Study of Historic Urban Landscape Change Management Based on Layered Interpretation: A Case Study of Dongxi Ancient Town. *Land* **2024**, *13*, 2116. https://doi.org/10.3390/land13122116

Academic Editor: Maria Ignatieva

Received: 28 October 2024
Revised: 24 November 2024
Accepted: 4 December 2024
Published: 6 December 2024

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Currently, more than half of the global population resides in urban areas [1], and since the 1980s, China has experienced the most extensive and rapid urbanization in history. While this process has spurred the growth of urban scale and overall strength, it has also brought complex challenges, notably significant changes to the spatial forms and structures of historical towns. Rapid urbanization has led to the fragmentation of historical spaces, the replacement of historical information and cultural activities by economic pursuits, and an intensifying conflict between heritage preservation and economic development, turning them into opposing forces.

Against this backdrop, the tension between cultural heritage preservation and modern urban development has become increasingly pronounced, necessitating scientific approaches to enable cultural heritage to adapt to contemporary changes and developmental needs. Taking Dongxi Ancient Town as an example—a nationally recognized historical and cultural town in China—it faces profound impacts from urbanization and economic growth. On one hand, urbanization has inflicted irreversible damage on its historical landscapes; on the other, without effective management and transformation, historical landscapes struggle

to adapt to modern societal and economic demands. Moreover, a sustainable economic model based on heritage has yet to be established, with low resident participation, limited improvement in income and living conditions, increasing aging issues, and a gradual decline in historical urban and rural scales. Thus, there is an urgent need for effective change management strategies to ensure the sustainable development of Dongxi Ancient Town and similar historical towns.

Since the Athens Charter, international heritage conservation principles have evolved from the preservation of individual material objects to the comprehensive protection of the broader environmental context. This shift reflects a transition from a focus on commemorative value to a recognition of shared social value and from static restoration aimed at historical cross-sections to sustainable conservation that accommodates dynamic development [2]. In the context of this conceptual shift, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape [3] (hereafter referred to as the Recommendation) was adopted at the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2011. The Recommendation formally introduced the concept and methodology of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), defining it as "the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic center' or 'ensemble'".

The HUL approach regards urban heritage as a critical resource for enhancing urban livability, fostering economic development, and strengthening social cohesion [1]. The objective is to investigate sustainable methodologies that reconcile conservation and development, encompassing both object- and process-oriented perspectives. On the one hand, the approach regards urban heritage as a spatiotemporal entity with multifaceted dynamics. On the other, it recognizes the unavoidability of urban morphological alterations. Consequently, the emphasis is on the proactive acceptance and governance of these transformations [1].

By analyzing the process of historical stratification, the Recommendation accepts and manages changes and puts changes at the core of urban heritage conservation practice, which is a major breakthrough in the field of heritage conservation. Every city is born in the historical process of stratification, which is the result of the interaction between human society and the environment, aiming to create human settlements that adapt to the needs of life, population density, and development, that is, Historic Urban Landscape [4] (p. 2). In this process, changes are everywhere. Natural ecology, living environment, and social economy are all in a dynamic state of change, and the recognition of the stratification process is the recognition of the universal state of change.

However, the traditional urban conservation methods rarely included the process of stratified change into the research scope, and the field of heritage conservation regarded change as the biggest threat in the early stage [5]. For example, in 1933, the Charter of Athens believed that changes would greatly damage the urban landscape under the development of the era from handicraft industry to machine industry. In 1964, the Charter of Venice stated that the preservation and restoration of historic sites should be free from change in order to preserve their authenticity. Therefore, heritage protection often adopts the method of simple division of protected areas through the formulation of laws and regulations to force isolation and intervention.

It was not until the issuance of the Vienna Memorandum in 2005 that changes began to be faced and accepted, and then the Xi'an Declaration held that "it is not necessary to prevent or block changes", and the Recommendation in 2011 formally proposed a Historic Urban Landscape approach to change management. It is regarded as an important key and main tool for heritage protection, and changes are supervised and managed through four means: "Civic Engagement Tools", "Knowledge and Planning Tools", "Regulatory Systems" and "Financial Tools" [6,7]. Heritage protection and utilization are comprehensively considered in the same framework system as urban economic development.

Since then, the focus of discussion has shifted to how to adapt to and manage change. UNESCO has organized several international conferences focused on layering cognition and change management and has published a series of guiding documents. Key docu-

ments include New life for historic cities [8], published in 2013; The HUL Guidebook [9], published in 2016; and Urban heritage for resilience [10], published in 2023 (Table 1). The implementation of official documents has further guided and catalyzed the development of relevant studies and pilot cities worldwide and is the cognitive summary of Historic Urban Landscape theory on the changes in the process of stratification.

Table 1. Main official documents and publications regarding the city's historical landscape (Source: Created by the author).

Time	File Name	File Function	Main Content
2005	Vienna Memorandum	Preparation and foundation	The concept of urban historical landscape and the concept of stratification have emerged.
2011	Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape	Programmatic file	The concept and method of urban historical landscape were formally put forward, and the concept of stratification was first put forward in the normative document in the field of World heritage protection.
2013	New life for historic cities	Supplementary implementation methods	Emphasis was placed on the spatio-temporal continuity and stratification of cities as social, cultural, and economic assets of urban development.
2016	The HUL Guidebook	The deepening of implementation methods	The four main tools and six key elements of the urban historical landscape approach to change were described in detail.
2023	Urban heritage for resilience	An updated summary of implementation results	It reflected the results of the third consultation between UNESCO and Member States on the implementation of the Recommendation [1].

[1] UNESCO Member States have so far held three consultations on the implementation of the Recommendation, including the first consultation in 2015, the second in 2019, and the third in 2022.

Furthermore, the Recommendation argues that historic urban landscapes can adopt new functions, emphasizing their role in socio-economic development. For instance, services and tourism can enhance community well-being and support heritage conservation while maintaining economic and social diversity and the residential function. Heritage preservation, as a form of resource reuse, offers sustainability by generating social and economic benefits unattainable through demolition and reconstruction [11]. However, this requires heritage to adapt to viable economic uses within contemporary social contexts.

Economic benefits, in turn, ensure the physical upkeep of heritage structures while fostering cultural continuity. Thus, heritage preservation and economic growth are interdependent, each reinforcing the other. Effective heritage protection provides a foundation for sustainable socio-economic development, while economic progress sustains heritage conservation efforts.

Theoretical and practical approaches to studying stratification and change in Historic Urban Landscape include the following:

In terms of theory, Ron van Oers and Francesco Bandarin classified the Historic Urban Landscape into both tangible layers—comprising geological, hydrological, archaeological, urban landscape, and urban morphology aspects—and intangible layers, including intangible values, planning processes, and economic activities [4] (pp. 1–17). Their work explored the "limits of acceptable change" [12] and addressed a common debate in heritage conservation: the precarious balance between development and conservation [13,14]. This theoretical framework provides a systematic approach to analyzing changes in historic urban landscapes. However, while its concepts are ambitious, its practical applicability remains limited. Specifically, it lacks clarity on how to quantify "acceptable change" and

resolve conflicts among stakeholders at different levels of interest. Scholars of the Conzen school, focusing on geography and urban morphology, revealed the formation process of urban landscapes and their resistance to change by mapping morphological regions [15,16]. This approach aids in studying the complex formation processes and relationships of historic urban landscapes, providing process-related evidence and serving as a primary theory for historical layering studies. However, current research is limited by its focus on explicit physical characteristics, with insufficient attention to changes in implicit socio-cultural values and inadequate exploration of driving mechanisms. There is a notable lack of case-specific analyses that integrate local examples to examine the dynamics and outcomes of change.

Current research generally takes the historical stratification process of the Historic Urban Landscape as a foundation, further analyzing the landscape characteristics [17–19], stratification relationships [20–22], value connotations [23,24], and management approaches [25–27]. The research objectives center on sustainable development and enhancing urban heritage resilience [28–33]. Case studies encompass ancient cities, towns, and villages, as well as micro-level nodes such as buildings and urban landmarks [34,35]. However, existing studies lack further exploration of future heritage change management based on stratified interpretation. Consensus on "change management", a key objective of the Historic Urban Landscape approach, remains elusive [36]. This underscores the need for broader theoretical exploration and more extensive empirical research.

In terms of practice, England and Scotland have respectively employed the methods of Historic Landscape Characterization (HLC) and Historic Land-Use Assessment (HLA) to distill landscape features, managing change on the premise of feature continuity [37–41]. However, these approaches face challenges related to data dependency and public participation. In regions where public awareness is low or data resources are scarce, their implementation and effectiveness are significantly constrained.

Furthermore, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP) in Shanghai has initiated pilot projects in 11 cities across 6 countries [4] (pp. 39–211) [42,43]. These cases demonstrate the strengths of the Historic Urban Landscape approach in promoting public participation and the transmission of social capital. However, they are largely centered on specific socio-economic contexts, lacking a universal framework applicable to diverse scenarios. Public participation facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills between local communities and planners [6]. Yet, challenges persist in practice, particularly regarding the lack of public discourse power, especially in regions dominated by government authority. Therefore, case-specific analyses are essential to assess the methods and roles of public participation under local conditions.

By analyzing the case of Dongxi Ancient Town, existing theories and methods face limitations in application. First, while current research highlights the historical changes in landscape layering, it tends to focus on visible material phenomena, neglecting social and economic factors driving changes. For Dongxi, insufficient analysis of historical transitions has led to undervaluation of heritage, delaying protection of significant assets and hindering their economic potential. Second, under rapid urbanization, existing methods struggle to adapt to local characteristics and dynamic changes, lacking a long-term perspective for managing urbanization's impact on heritage.

This study addresses these gaps by refining methods to align with Dongxi's context, particularly in analyzing driving factors, enhancing public participation, and managing dynamic changes. Using the layered interpretation method of HUL, this research evaluates the drivers and outcomes of historical landscape changes and proposes adaptive strategies. This approach enhances understanding of Dongxi's heritage value and interconnections, providing actionable insights for regional protection and development while offering a practical framework for similar heritage sites.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Subject

Dongxi Ancient Town, recognized as a national historic and cultural town, embodies over two millennia of historical layering. The town's form and functions have undergone multiple phases of transformation and overlay, revealing distinct trajectories of change across various periods and presenting a current state of multicultural coexistence—making it an exemplary case for change analysis. Located in the southern part of Qijiang District, Chongqing (Figure 1), Dongxi lies strategically along the Qijiang River, which flows into the Yangtze River and stretches upstream to Guizhou, fostering extensive water and land connectivity. Historically, Dongxi served as a bustling port and commercial hub. The town's origins trace back to the Wanshou Market of the Western Han dynasty, evolving into Dongxi Town in the Tang dynasty. By the Ming and Qing dynasties, it had become a center for trade, salt transport, and migration, and during the Republic of China, it served as a vital rear base in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. With a rich layering of spatial and temporal, tangible and intangible historical landscapes, Dongxi is an ideal subject for research on layering and transformation. The current resident population of Dongxi Ancient Town is approximately 24,000. The town includes four main areas: Shuyuan Street—Chaoyang Street—Bei Street, Shangping Bridge, Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge, and Chengpingtan, covering a total area of 26.73 hectares. This constitutes the primary scope of the study.

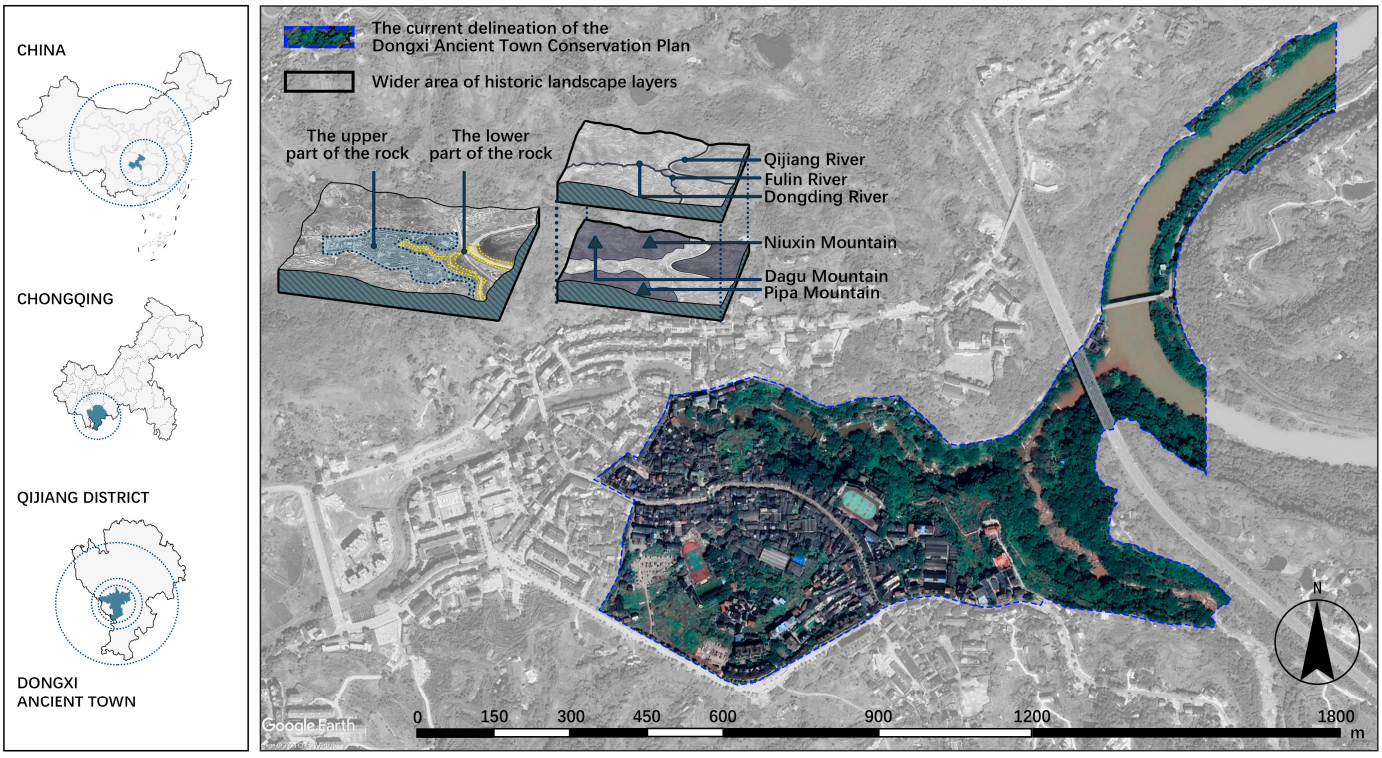


Figure 1. Location of the research area. (Source: Self-drawn by the author.).

2.2. Research Method

2.2.1. Historic Urban Landscape

This study employs the layered approach of Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), which effectively integrates diachronic (temporal) and synchronic (spatial) perspectives. This method allows for a detailed analysis of the drivers and outcomes of changes. It is particularly suited for identifying key conflicts and developmental needs within historic urban landscapes that have undergone multiple transformative stages over centuries. This study analyzed historical layering to document and illustrate the cultural and natural charac-

teristics of Dongxi Ancient Town. Through the assessment of heritage value, we aimed to support decision-making for sustainable development. We hope that the proposed measures for managing changes will enhance the spatial quality and economic vitality of the heritage area.

This study posits that the historical layers can be comprehensively analyzed from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Urban historical landscapes are formed through a continuous and dynamic layering process, where the trajectories of changes in morphology, function, and culture serve as diachronic representations. Conversely, the phase-specific slices created during each period manifest synchronic characteristics. Therefore, this study, grounded in the analysis of the components constituting the layers, employed diachronic process analysis to understand the dynamics of change, elucidated the primary contradictions, and identified future development needs. Additionally, it utilized synchronic cross-sectional comparisons to recognize change outcomes, synthesize forms of change, and summarize value characteristics, thereby providing a basis for future scales of change (Figure 2).

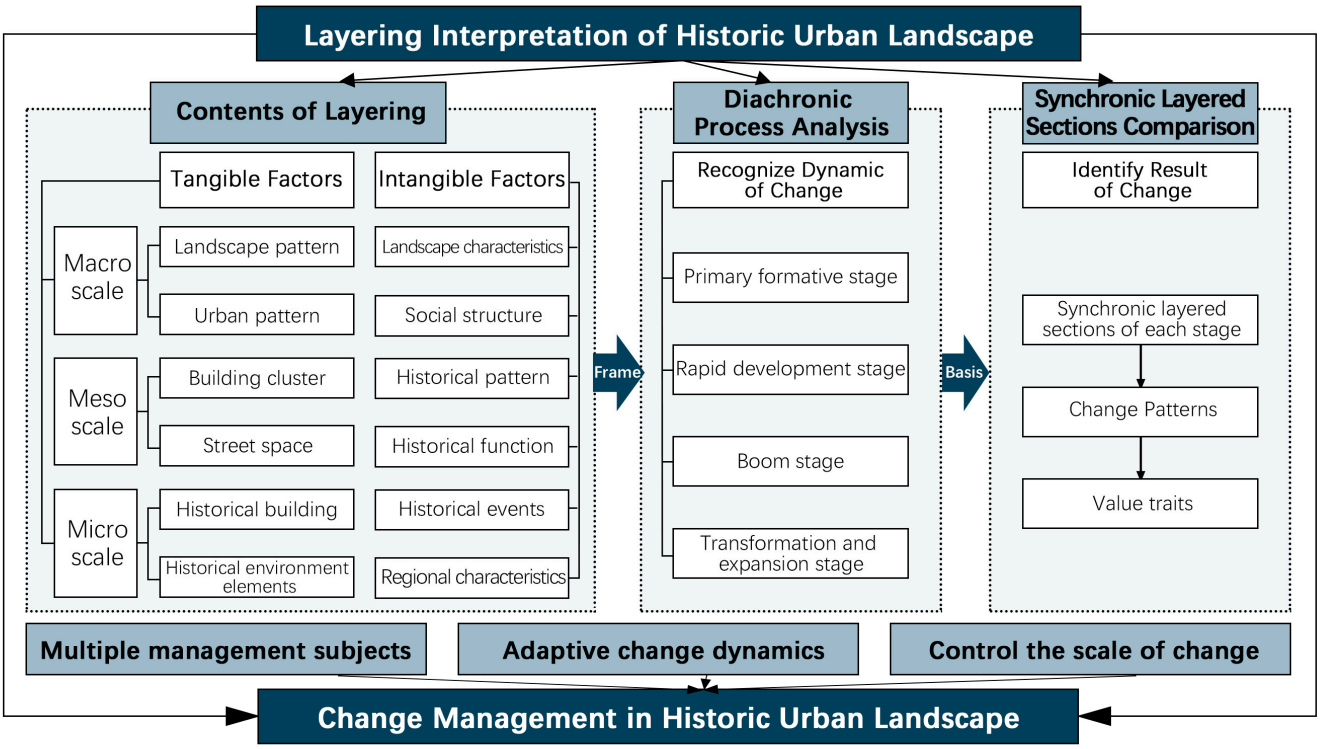


Figure 2. Change management approach based on the layered interpretation of urban historical landscape (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

Specifically, the value characteristics of heritage stem from historical processes and are formed through long-term interactions with people, embodying human thought and emotions. Therefore, this study explores the interaction between heritage and people in the analysis of historical processes, including the reasons for its formation, the content of its changes, and its intrinsic relationships with other heritage elements. This provides a historical basis for determining current values and proposing future directions. Regarding the scale of change, heritage conservation needs to preserve its essence while allowing for sustainable change. Change involves both quantitative and qualitative transformations, and only moderate changes within the quantitative limits can maintain the essence. Therefore, in heritage management, the value characteristics of heritage should be maintained as the standard for controlling the scale of change.

2.2.2. Historical Information Translation

The interpretation of historical layers has established a systematic and mature application framework. This framework primarily employs the translation of historical data as a typical method, utilizing AutoCAD2022 and ArcGIS10.8 to transform early historical maps into comprehensive urban maps based on modern cartography. By employing the layered approach, the research utilized the historical period as a baseline for identifying the spatial evolutionary trajectory of the town [44,45]. To visualize the process of stratigraphic interpretation, we employed modern maps to intuitively depict the historical information of the ancient town [46]. ArcGIS was also utilized for the digitization of historical data, enabling a clearer representation of the layered historical context [47].

The ArcGIS method is the most basic approach for organizing data in layers. By layering geographical entity data and image decomposition, it builds spatial maps of data models [48]. In the analysis of value changes over time, ArcGIS's spatial analysis tools transform the distribution of landmark nodes from different historical periods into vector point data, conduct kernel density analysis, and evaluate historical value richness and trends for each period. For current value assessment, the weighted sum tool is used to overlay historical value richness data across periods, resulting in a layered map of total historical value richness, highlighting areas with high historical value.

2.3. Research Materials

The historical data used in this study were derived from The Annals of Dongxi, compiled by the Dongxi Town Committee of the Communist Party of China and the People's Government of Dongxi Town, Qijiang County, as well as other historical sources such as The Annals of Qijiang County, The Annals of Chongqing Prefecture, and The Yuanhe County Records. Relevant survey data from The Protection Plan for the Historical and Cultural Town of Dongxi, Qijiang District, Chongqing City (2020–2035) were also consulted, alongside historical information gathered by the author through field investigations and interviews. First, the historical evolution stages of Dongxi Ancient Town were analyzed through historical document analysis and on-site investigations. Second, by comparing historical data with existing heritage sites, the spatial characteristics of Dongxi Ancient Town at each historical stage and the distribution of heritage points were identified. Third, historical information from various periods was mapped in ArcGIS, revealing the spatial morphology and features of Dongxi Ancient Town across different historical stages.

3. Results

3.1. The Composition of Layered Elements of the Historical Landscape in Dongxi Ancient Town

The transformation of spatial morphology is influenced by various factors, including social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics, while also reflecting the evolution of intangible elements. Through tangible external representations, one can identify the underlying intangible factors [49]. The critical aspect lies in the "characteristic" embedded within the spatial "representation". Therefore, this study synthesized relevant historical materials [50–53] and existing research [54–59], utilizing tangible elements as representations and intangible factors such as value and significance as connotations. The layered elements were categorized into three levels: macro-regional patterns, meso-cluster systems, and micro-landmark nodes (Table 2). Based on this framework, the study interpreted the specific dynamics and outcomes of change within the layering process, subsequently proposing sustainable strategies for change management.

Table 2. The composition of layered elements of historical landscape in Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Created by the author).

Level		Tangible Elements	Intangible Elements
Macro-regional pattern	Landscape pattern	River: Qijiang River, Dongding River, Fulin River Mountain: Pipa Mountain, Niu'xin Mountain, Dagu Mountain	Landscape Values Pattern Evolution Process
	Urban pattern	The upper part and the lower part of the rock	
Mesoscopic cluster system	Building cluster	Shuyuan Street—Chaoyang Street—Bei Street cluster, Shangping Bridge cluster, Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge cluster, Chengpingtan cluster	Social structure Industrial function
	Street space	"Three streets and seven lanes": Shuyuan Street, Chaoyang Street, Back Street, seven north and south branches "Four Ancient Roads": Sanhelou section, Shangpingqiao section, Taiping Bridge section, Chengpingtan section Niuxin Mountain Ancient Road	
Microscopic landmark nodes	Historical building	"Three Palaces and Eight Temples": Nanhua Palace, Wantian Palace, Wanshou Palace (old site), Longhua Temple, Daxiong Temple (old site), Guanyin Temple, Wangye Temple, Dimu Temple, Yuwang Temple (old site), Niuwang Temple (old site), Shuikou Temple (old site) Others: Maxiangyue Civil Postal Office, Central Bank Dongxi branch, Qijiang Iron Mine preparatory office Dongxi office, Chen family Ancestral Hall (military Senate site), Taiping ancient village, Pipa ancient village, etc.	Historical events Historical figures Regional characteristics
	Historical environment elements	Big Jingyin Cave waterfall, Small Jingyin Cave waterfall, Wugui stone, Taiping Bridge, Shangping Bridge, Taiping Wharf, Fuwojieyi Stele, Nanping Liao Stele, stone sculpture coiling dragon, etc.	

3.2. Analysis of the Diachronic Process in Dongxi Ancient Town: Cognitive Change Dynamics

The dominant demands and primary contradictions at each historical stage directly determine the direction and content of the ancient town's development, serving as the driving forces behind the evolution of its historical landscape layering. The historical process of Dongxi Ancient Town was divided into four phases: the primary formative phase (from the Western Han to the Ming Dynasty), the rapid development phase (Qing Dynasty), the prosperous phase (Republic of China), and the transformation and expansion phase (post-establishment of the People's Republic of China) (Figure 3). This section primarily aimed to identify the evolutionary processes and layered content of the various elements in Dongxi Ancient Town from a diachronic perspective, analyzing the main demands and contradictions characteristic of each developmental stage.

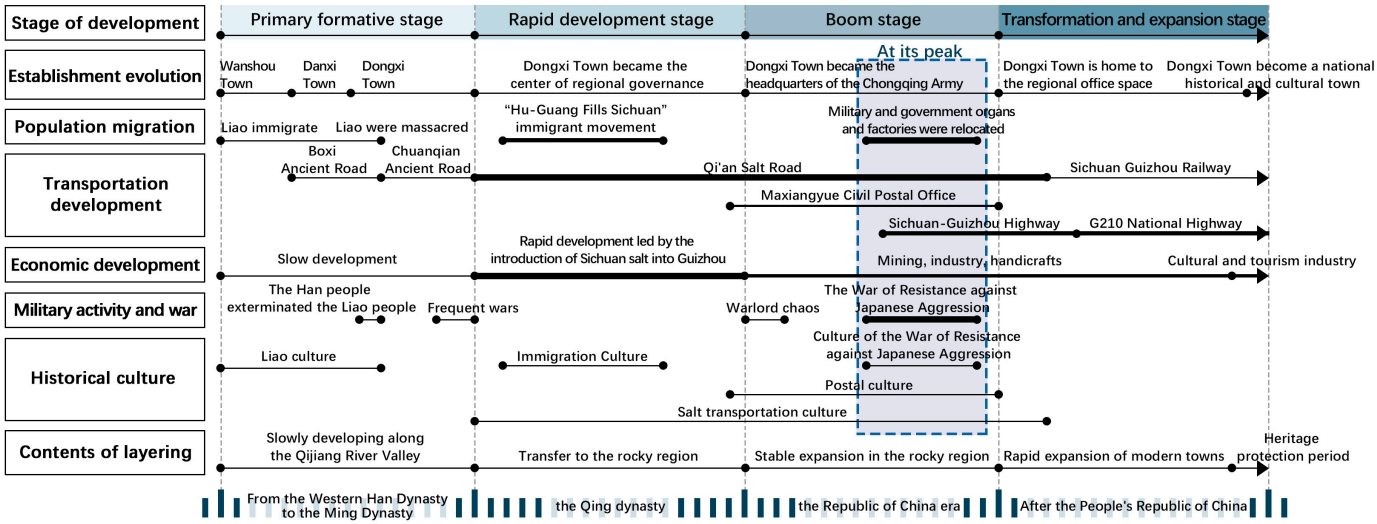


Figure 3. Dongxi Ancient Town historical landscape stratification stage division. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

3.2.1. The Primary Formative Phase (From the Western Han to the Ming Dynasty): Transportation Demand Pushed the Ancient Town to Emerge

From the Western Han Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, Dongxi Ancient Town began to carry out historical stratification. On the one hand, the layered content came from the Liao people's culture, which was briefly affected by the war. On the other hand, it took the geographical location as a natural advantage and gradually established the water and land hub along the Qijiang River under the transportation needs of the post delivery system, forming the ancient town prototype.

The historical layering of Dongxi Ancient Town began with the establishment of the Wanshou Field in the first year of Emperor Gao Di of the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC). Layering content at this time was expressed in the establishment of the wooden Wanshou Bridge over the Dongding River [50] (p. 368). In the second year of Emperor Gaozu's reign during the Tang Dynasty (619 A.D.), Danxi County was established at Wanshou Field, which was later renamed Dongxi Town in the seventeenth year of the Zhenguan era (644 A.D.). During the Han and Tang periods, the Liao people migrated here to escape warfare, becoming known as the "Nanping Liao". In the Song Dynasty, the Liao were largely suppressed by the Han, leaving only the "Nanping Liao Stele" on the opposite bank of Taiping Wharf as a historical testament to their fleeting culture.

The need for transportation development served as the primary driving force behind the continuous historical layering of Dongxi Ancient Town. Situated in the upper reaches of the Qijiang River, Dongxi Ancient Town was a crucial passage for the four provinces of Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangxi, and Hunan entering Sichuan. The Qijiang River, historically known as the Bo River or Yelang River, witnessed the formation of the Bo Ancient Road during the Tang and Song Dynasties. In the third year of the reign of Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty (1370 A.D.), Taiping Bridge was constructed in Dongxi Ancient Town [50] (p. 367), evolving into the Sichuan-Guizhou thoroughfare. The establishment of Dongxi Post Station and Dongxi Inspection Office further solidified its significance [53]. North of Taiping Bridge lied Taiping Wharf, where goods were transferred to the shore. Along the Qijiang River, settlements were established on the riverbank, with residences, inns, and shops closely interconnected, forming elongated building clusters known as Shepitan (currently referred to as Chengpingtan) [50] (p. 764). Consequently, Dongxi Ancient Town emerged as a strategic transportation hub in the upper reaches of the Qijiang River, laying the groundwork for its evolving spatial pattern (Figure 4).

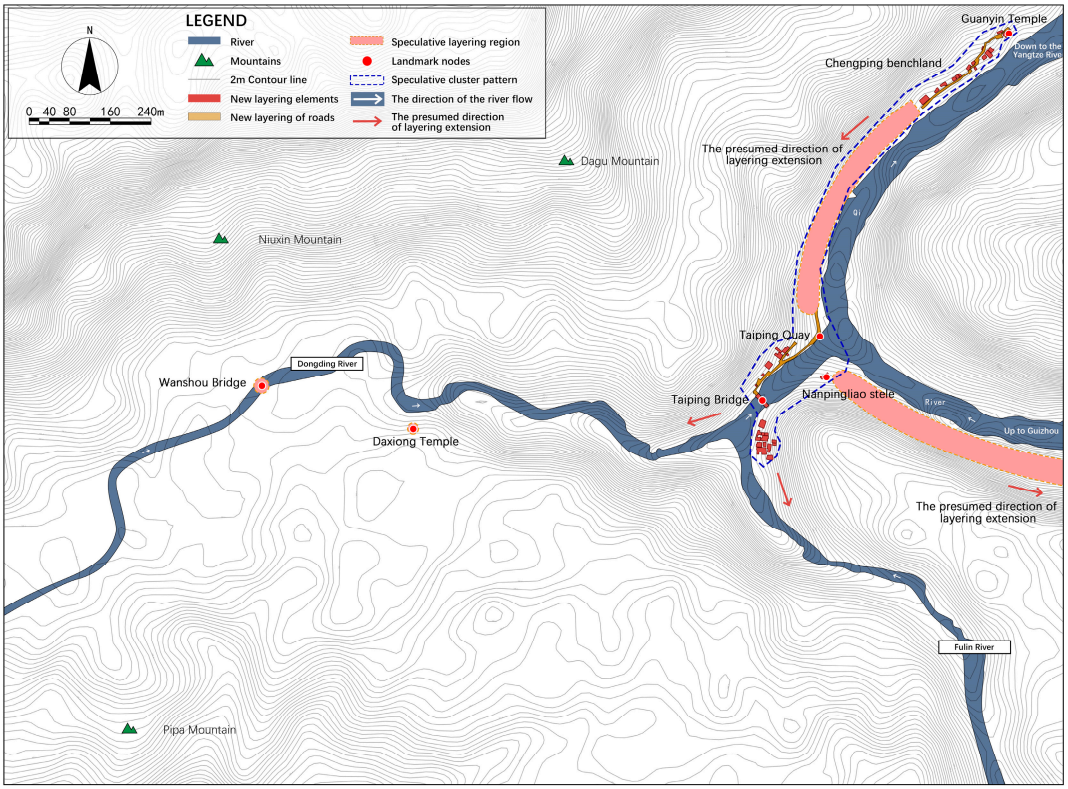


Figure 4. The historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town in its primary formative phase. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

3.2.2. The Rapid Development Phase (Qing Dynasty): Trade Demand to Promote the Revitalization of Ancient Town

During the Qing Dynasty, the food salt for the entire province of Guizhou primarily originated from Sichuan, resulting in a commercial trade dominated by the transportation of Sichuan salt into Guizhou, which guided the developmental trajectory of the ancient town. The influx of merchant groups brought population, technology, and capital, leading to rapid expansion of the town's scale. The historical layers of this stage included the palaces and factories built by the merchants, the bridges and laneways built for transportation, and the residential clusters gathered around them.

At the macro level, the Qijiang River's thoroughfare became a vital route for transporting Sichuan salt into Guizhou during the Qing Dynasty, known as the "Qi'an Salt Route". Dongxi Ancient Town served as an important port for the transshipment of goods between water and land, rapidly developing due to the salt trade. Additionally, driven by policy incentives, a significant influx of migrants from Hubei and Guangdong provinces entered Sichuan (known as the "Hubei and Guangdong Filling Sichuan" migration movement). Consequently, the existing scale of the ancient town could no longer accommodate the rapid population growth and urgent commercial needs. In response, the town extended into the upper rock part on the western side of Taiping Bridge, gradually forming a landscape characterized by significant elevation differences between the upper and lower sections. The original half-street of Chengpingtan further evolved into the main wharf and thoroughfare for the distribution of goods in Dongxi Ancient Town, gathering numerous merchant factories [50] (p. 764).

At the meso level, Dongxi Ancient Town functioned as a critical nexus for the transport of salt from Sichuan Province to Guizhou Province, serving as the intersection of water and land routes. Upon arrival at Taiping Wharf, a portion of the salt was transported via water channels to Songkan Town, while another portion was unloaded for transfer to Xishui Town and other destinations. Consequently, a land route for salt transportation was constructed from Taiping Wharf to the upper rocky terrain, alongside a bridge built beneath

the Jingyin Cave Waterfall. This development established the Sichuan-Guizhou Ancient Salt Road, effectively linking the upper and lower sections of the ancient town, as well as the Niuxin Mountain Ancient Road, which connected the town to Xishui. Merchants and caravans took advantage of the time during the transfer of goods to trade and rest in the area, fostering the construction of shops, inns, and residential buildings along the ancient road. This process led to the initial formation of clusters within the ancient town and the emergence of an embryonic system of streets and lanes.

At the micro level, the convergence of salt merchants and immigrants introduced diverse beliefs from across the country. In response to the needs of salt merchants' discussions, commercial gatherings, and public worship, merchants established palace and temple halls based on territorial units, culminating in the significant development of "Three Palaces and Eight Temples" during the Qianlong period. Between the Qianlong and Xianfeng periods, high-ranking officials and affluent businessmen constructed residences in the town, resulting in the formation of what became known as the "Six Yards". These structures served various commercial purposes, including sauce shops, banks, and ironworks, thereby standing as historical witnesses to the prosperity and evolution of commerce in Dongxi Ancient Town [50] (p. 480). During the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, the need for Dongxi immigrants to reconnect with their hometown facilitated the establishment of the oldest post office in Southwest China, the "Maxiangyue Civil Postal Office". This post station emerged as yet another significant historical stratified center. (Figure 5).

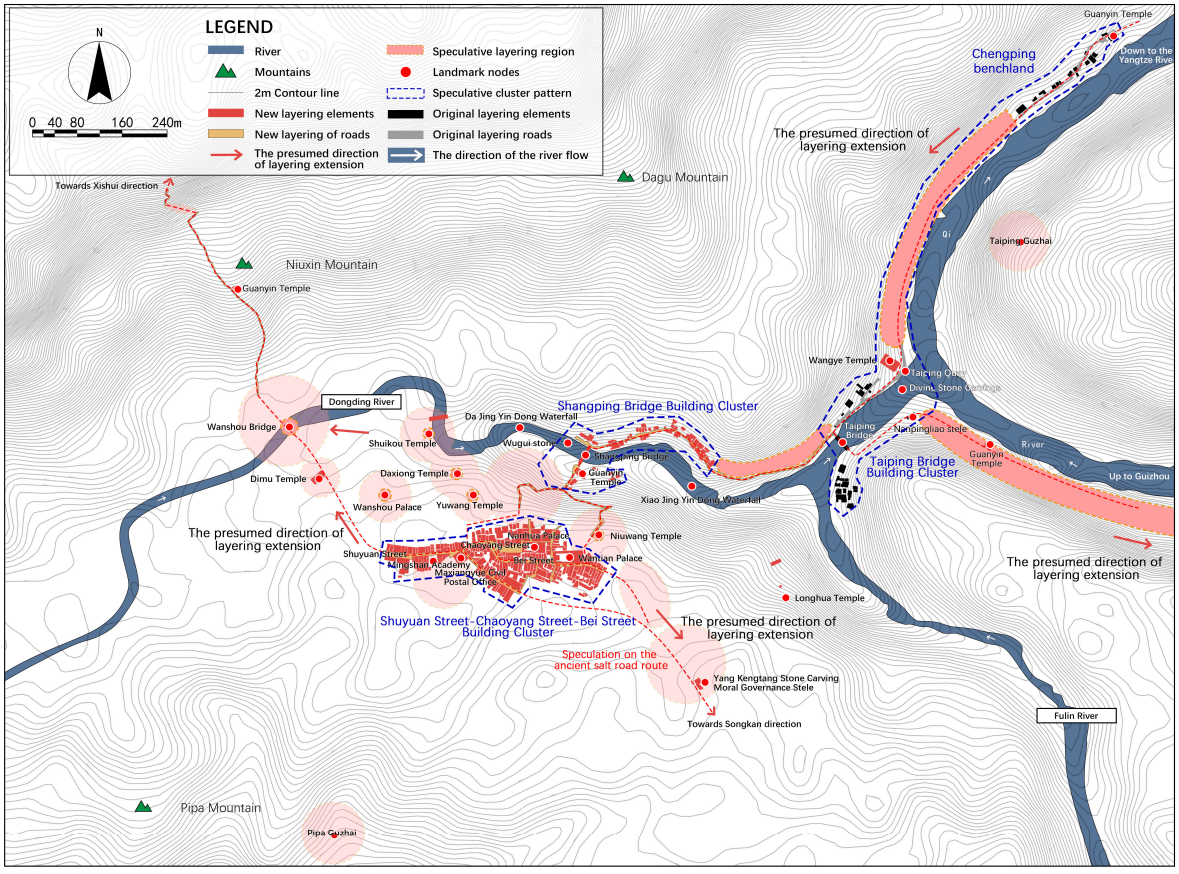


Figure 5. The historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town in the rapid development phase. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

3.2.3. The Prosperous Phase (Republic of China): Political Migration Creates Temporary Prosperity

During the Republic of China period, the turbulent political climate, while creating a crisis, also presented development opportunities for Dongxi Ancient Town. With its

convenient transportation, abundant iron and coal resources, and strategically concealed natural environment, the town was ideally positioned as a vital hub connecting international aid with the frontlines of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. During this period, many significant institutions relocated to Dongxi Ancient Town, resulting in a flourishing of its spatial configuration and industrial economy, influenced by the interplay of political needs and the town's intrinsic advantages.

At the macro level, local authorities constructed the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway in 1935 and subsequently began building the Sichuan-Guizhou Railway in 1940 [50] (p. 369). Due to its existing transportation infrastructure and political needs, Dongxi Ancient Town emerged as a crucial transportation hub along both the highway and the railway. As modes of transportation shifted, the town no longer developed along the Qijiang River for waterway transport; instead, its goods distribution center relocated to the flatter areas on the upper rock part. Additionally, the influx of military and governmental agencies, along with the relocation of officers and their families due to political migration, resulted in a population increase of over ten thousand residents. This surge prompted the expansion of the ancient town, extending all the way to the foothills of Pipa Mountain, Niuxin Mountain, and Dagushan Mountain.

At the meso level, the Dongxi section of the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway was temporarily redirected through the town due to the original route along the river being predominantly composed of hard rock layers. The highway was constructed parallel to the Wanshou Bridge, following the alignment of the Shuyuan Street-Chaoyang Street-Bei Street cluster, resulting in the coverage of a significant number of existing residences and farmland, which were replaced by the highway and the new buildings constructed in the period of the Republic of China on both sides. Following the full-scale outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, "Zhongzheng Street" was established along the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway to accommodate the relocated officers and their families, leading to a proliferation of shops and offices [50] (p. 61) and a complete development of the ancient town's street system characterized by "Three Streets and Seven Lanes".

At the micro level, during the Anti-Japanese War, Dongxi Ancient Town emerged as a significant base due to the shift in political focus, resulting in the overlay of various functions such as material production, transportation, and information dissemination within its historical layers. Additionally, the political context led to the establishment of tangible layers, including the Dongxi branch of the Central Bank, the Qijiang Iron Mine Preparatory Office, the Dalu Construction Company, and the Southwest Highway Administration. This period witnessed a rapid construction of numerous residential and commercial buildings driven by the political and wartime demands. The influx of administrative agencies, businesses, and families of military officers stimulated the swift development of Dongxi's economic activities; however, following the conclusion of the war, this growth was abruptly reversed, resulting in a transient period of prosperity for Dongxi (Figure 6).

3.2.4. The Transformation and Expansion Phase (Post-Establishment of the People's Republic of China): Transformation and Expansion Led by Social Changes

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, social transformation and institutional reforms significantly impacted the economy, society, and culture of Dongxi Ancient Town. The modern road network and the rapid expansion of settlement patches emerged concurrently, leading to widespread destruction of the original historical layers due to changing perceptions. It was not until the 21st century, when the concept of cultural heritage preservation became deeply ingrained, that some historical remnants were maintained and restored, allowing them to retain their historical significance.

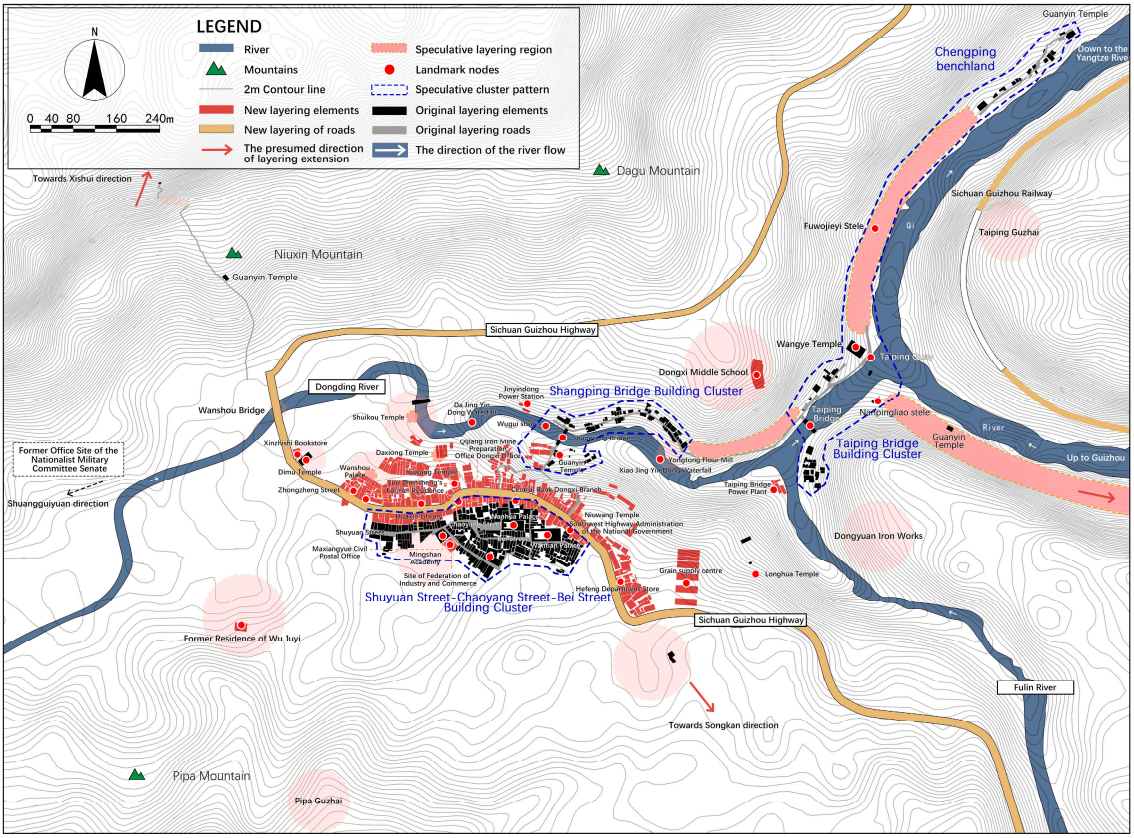


Figure 6. The historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town in the prosperous phase. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

At the macro level, the modernization of transportation led to the rapid decline of the Sichuan-Guizhou Ancient Road along the Qijiang River, as highways and railways completely replaced the millennia-old human transport methods. In the 1980s, the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway was renovated and widened to become National Route G210, serving as the central road within the town [50] (p. 370). Following the 1990s, residents in the areas around Taiping Bridge and Chengpingtan gradually relocated, resulting in the collapse and deterioration of coastal buildings due to a lack of maintenance [50] (p. 765). During this phase, the development of Dongxi Ancient Town exhibited extreme differentiation between the upper and lower rock areas: the lower region experienced a dramatic contraction, with only a few households remaining along the banks from Taiping Bridge to Shangping Bridge, while the upper region expanded significantly, leading to an increasingly refined road network and modern urban construction.

At the meso level, Dongxi Ancient Town was guided by rational planning and scientific development in its modern road network construction. This involved the expansion of existing roads, the establishment of district and town highways, and the construction of bridges, residential areas, and public service facilities. The modernization of Dongxi Town was characterized by an extension from the ancient town towards the flat areas to the north and south, with layers of development organized along the road systems, leading to a more refined urban layout.

At the micro level, the CPC and the government implemented socialist transformations of existing enterprises, leading to the development of township industries such as the Dongxi Brewery, Dongxi Weaving Factory, Dongxi Chemical Factory, and Dongxi Coal Mine [50] (p. 14). The historical layering of Dongxi Ancient Town has undergone a transition from degradation and destruction to preservation and renewal. In 1949, the Maxiangyue Civil Postal Office, initially a feudal family enterprise, ceased operations due to a combination of chaotic circumstances, mismanagement, and outdated transportation

methods. During the 1950s, a significant portion of the "Three Palaces and Eight Temples" was either damaged or dismantled. For instance, Wanshou Palace was demolished and transformed into commercial street houses, later renamed Wanshou Square, while Niuwang Temple was repurposed as a dormitory for a grain station, and Yuwang Temple was converted into the Dongxi Post and Telecommunications Office [50] (p. 462). In the 21st century, recognizing the significant value of historical culture, the focus of development shifted from modern urban expansion to heritage preservation. In 2005, Dongxi was designated as a historical and cultural town in Chongqing, prompting government efforts to renovate Chaoyang Street and Bei Street [50] (p. 473). By 2007, Dongxi had achieved national recognition as a historical and cultural town, leading to several protection plans aimed at restoring the original appearance of major historical streets and buildings, with the cultural tourism industry becoming the focal point of the town's development (Figure 7).

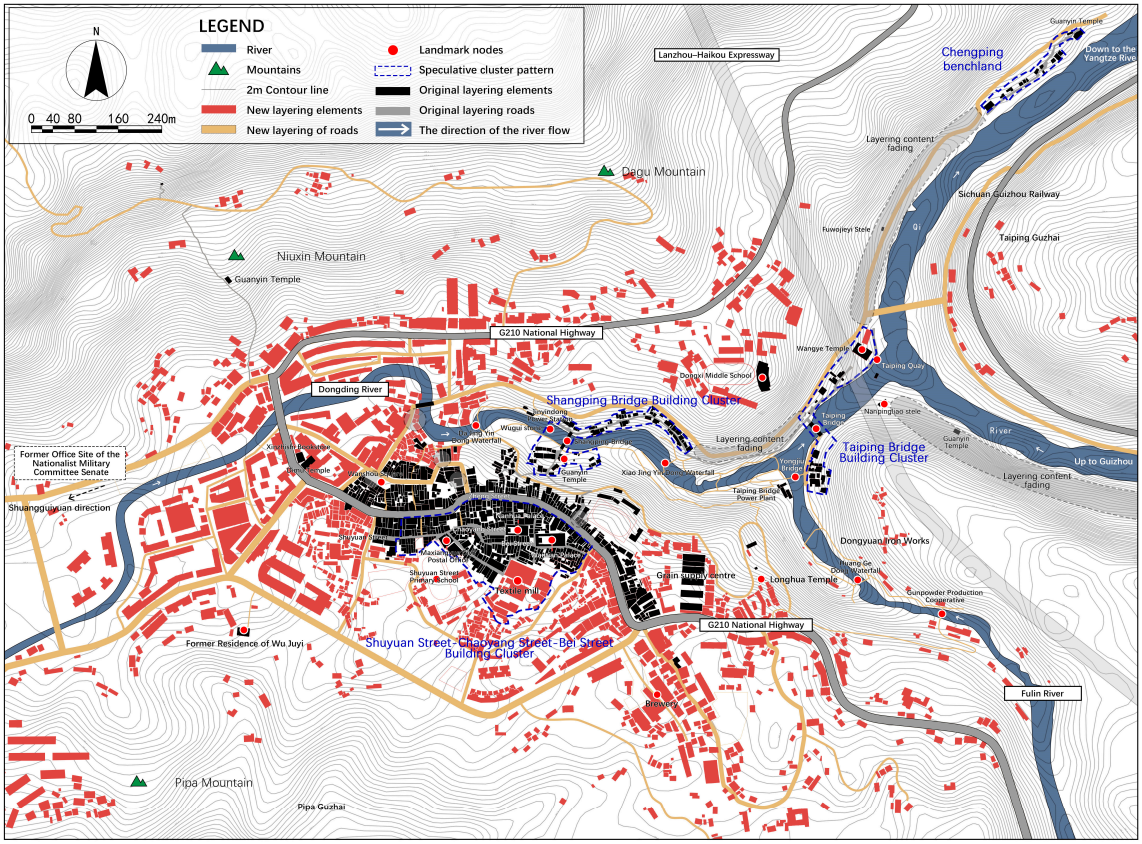


Figure 7. The historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town in the transformation and expansion phase. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

3.2.5. Driving Mechanisms of Historical Landscape Changes in Dongxi Ancient Town

Through the diachronic analysis of the historical landscape accumulation process in Dongxi Ancient Town, this study identifies the driving factors behind the changes in its historical landscape. These factors include the construction of transportation infrastructure, the development of commercial trade, the establishment of political institutions, and social transformations. These forces interact in a complex mechanism, with changes unfolding along a temporal axis and manifesting through spatial expressions. This process involves formation, development, differentiation, and even disappearance, ultimately reaching a state of equilibrium [60]. To further analyze the driving forces, this study systematically categorizes the core drivers and their outcomes during the four stages of the town's historical landscape evolution (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of driving mechanisms of historical landscape changes in Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Created by the author).

Historical Period	Historical Landscape Level	Driving Forces	Outcome	Summary of Mechanisms
Han Dynasty to Ming Dynasty: Primary Formative Stage	Macro-regional pattern	Construction of transportation routes	Establishment of Dongxi Town	Transportation development initiated town formation, leading to the emergence of historical landscapes.
	Mesoscopic cluster system	Construction of transportation routes	Formation of the Sichuan-Guizhou Avenue	
		Development of commercial trade	Formation of the Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge cluster and Chengpingtan cluster	
	Microscopic landmark nodes	Construction of transportation routes	Establishment of Taiping Bridge and Taiping Wharf	
		Warfare and migration	Formation of the "Nanping Liao Stele"	
Qing Dynasty: Rapid Development Stage	Macro-regional pattern	Sichuan salt trade; "Hunan and Guangdong Filling Sichuan" migration; Construction of transportation routes	Expansion of the town from the river valley to higher elevations	Sichuan salt trade became a major driver of new historical landscapes.
	Mesoscopic cluster system	Sichuan salt trade; Construction of transportation routes	Development of Sichuan-Guizhou Avenue into the Qi'an Salt Route; Formation of Ancient Salt Route and historical streets	
		Sichuan salt trade	Formation of architectural clusters in Qing styles	
	Microscopic landmark nodes	Sichuan salt trade	Formation of "Three Palaces and Eight Temples" and "Six Courtyards"	
		"Hunan and Guangdong Filling Sichuan" migration	Establishment of Maxiangyue Civil Postal Office	
		Construction of transportation routes	Formation of Shangping Bridge	
Republic of China: Prosperity Stage	Macro-regional pattern	Relocation of political institutions; Construction of transportation routes	Expansion of the upper part of the town	The wartime background spurred rapid growth and functional transformations.
	Mesoscopic cluster system	Support for the Anti-Japanese War; Construction of transportation routes; Technological advancements	Construction of Sichuan-Guizhou highway and railway	
		Relocation of political institutions	Formation of architectural clusters from the Republic of China period; Street and alley systems developed comprehensively	
	Microscopic landmark nodes	Relocation of political institutions; Construction of transportation routes	Establishment of military and governmental offices and institutions	
		Support for the Anti-Japanese War	Some landmark nodes were endowed with new functions	
		Development of commercial trade; Production capacity improvement	Formation of national enterprises	

Table 3. *Cont.*

Historical Period	Historical Landscape Level	Driving Forces	Outcome	Summary of Mechanisms
Post-Establishment of the People's Republic of China: Transition and Expansion Stage	Macro-regional pattern	Construction of modern transportation routes; Social transformations	Shrinkage of the upper part of the town and rapid expansion of the lower part of the town	Social change and modernization caused significant damage to historical landscapes, but cultural heritage initiatives led to preservation and redevelopment.
	Mesoscopic cluster system	Social transformations; Production capacity improvement	Formation of modern urban towns; Traditional streets were divided	
	Microscopic landmark nodes	Social thought transformation	Significant destruction of landmarks	
		Protection and reutilization of cultural relics	Partial restoration and revitalization of historical relics	
		Development of commercial trade; Production capacity improvement	Formation of modern enterprises	

Overall, in different political, military, economic, and social contexts, transportation has consistently been the primary driving force behind changes in the historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town. During its formative stage, the town's location along the vital Chuanqian transportation route led to its establishment as an administrative town, the construction of postal stations, and the gathering of populations. In the development stage, leveraging the transportation advantage of the Sichuan-Guizhou Avenue, Dongxi became a critical water-land transshipment hub for the Sichuan salt trade to Guizhou. The movement of merchant guilds along these routes brought population, capital, and technology, making transportation and transshipment the town's main functions. In the prosperity stage, with the improvement of social productivity, the government constructed highways and railways following the routes of the original waterways and stone-paved roads. The construction of the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway and railway further enhanced the town's regional transportation status. Thus, well-developed transportation remained the dominant factor in the town's growth and prosperity.

However, in modern society, the advancement of transportation systems has rendered the historically labor-intensive transportation methods obsolete, leading to the decline and eventual disappearance of transportation-related heritage. This transformation of transportation has become the primary reason for the decline of the town's historical landscape.

Therefore, Dongxi Ancient Town can be defined as a traffic-driven historical settlement. Its development should pay attention to the formation and evolution of several roads throughout history, focus on the multicultural interactions facilitated by transportation, and reflect the spatial and cultural connections that these roads brought about.

In addition to transportation, commercial trade, military conflicts, and social transformations have also driven changes in the historical landscape. Among these, commercial trade has generally had a positive impact, fostering population mobility, material exchange, and the dissemination of technology and culture. This, in turn, enriched the diversity of the landscape and its cultural connotations. For example, the Sichuan salt trade to Guizhou made Dongxi an important transshipment node, directly contributing to the formation of its street system and landmark nodes.

The impact of military conflicts propelled the town to its peak of prosperity, driving its development and functional transformation. However, this influence quickly faded during peacetime, leading to a rapid decline in development momentum.

Social transformations have had a dual effect on the historical landscape. In the 1950s, human activities caused the destruction of many landmark historical buildings, and subsequent modernization projects encroached on historical spaces. However, with the rise of cultural heritage conservation awareness in the 21st century, the historical landscape has been preserved and revitalized.

3.3. Comparison of Synchronic Slices in Dongxi Ancient Town: Identification of Change Results

The changing forms and accumulated values of various elements within the ancient town vividly illustrate the outcomes of the driving forces at play during different periods. Therefore, this section, based on the analysis of diachronic evolution and driving forces, examines the morphologies of each layered element in the historical progression, utilizing the synchronic slices generated at each stage (Figure 8). By adopting a developmental perspective, it assesses the impacts of these changes and summarizes the stable, enduring value characteristics that emerged throughout the transformation process. This section serves as a foundation for evaluating the future scales of change in Dongxi Ancient Town, ensuring the maintenance of its core value characteristics amid developmental transformations.

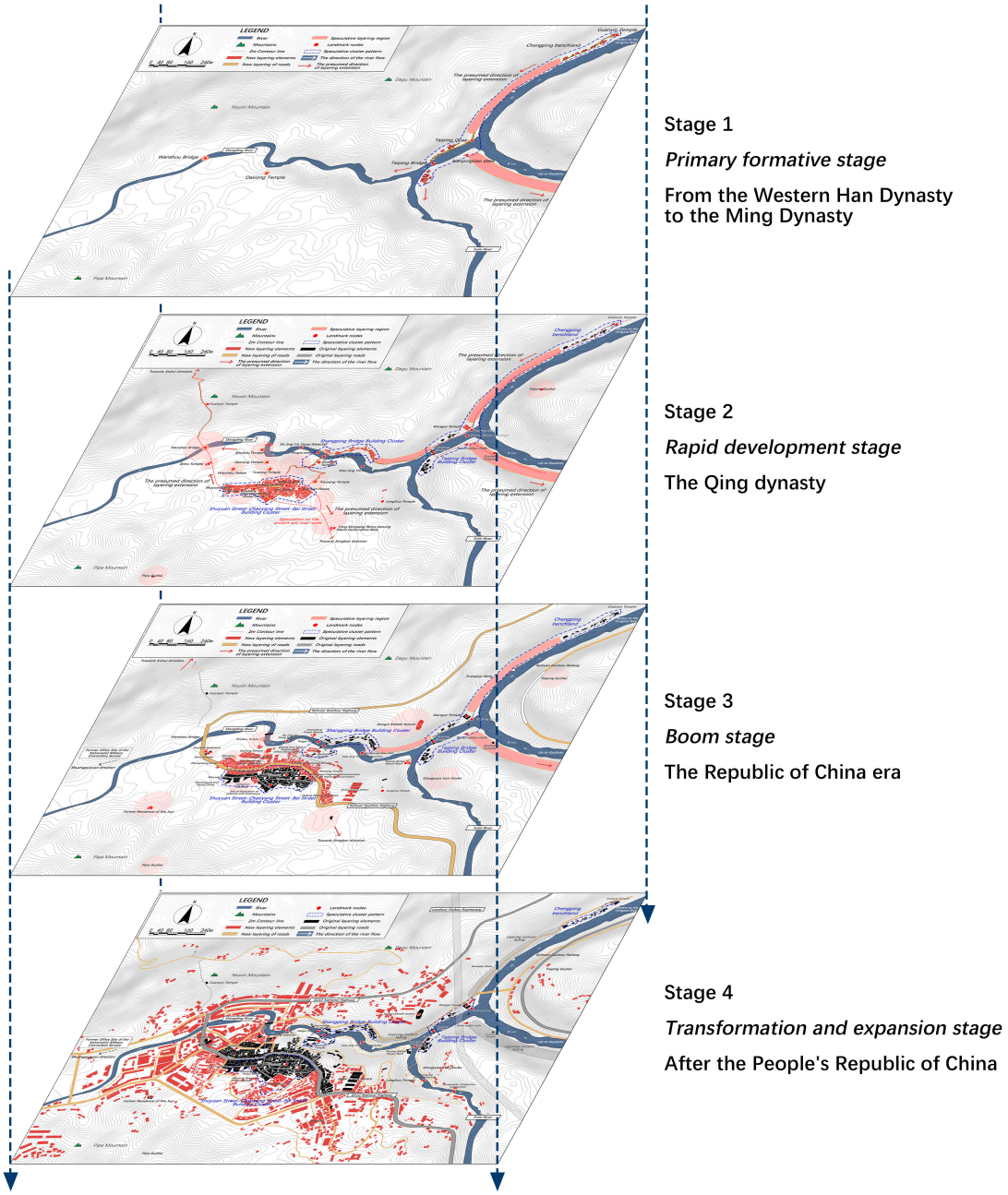
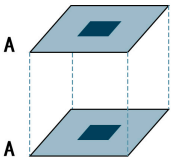
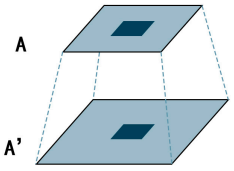
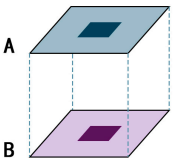
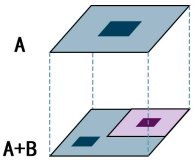
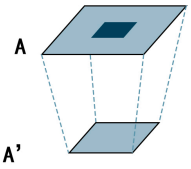


Figure 8. Stratified section of historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

3.3.1. Analysis of Change Patterns in the Historic Landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town

By synthesizing existing research on the classification and summary of stratified relationships, this study classified the change morphologies in the historical progression of Dongxi Ancient Town into four types: maintenance, expansion, layering (including overlay and juxtaposed layering), and decline (Table 4). These change forms interact and overlap within the evolutionary process of each element.

Table 4. Stratified change of historical landscape in Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Created by the author).

Pattern	Maintenance	Expansion	Layering (Overlay)	Layering (Juxtaposition)	Decline
Graphical representation					
Description	The core qualities of the elements remain the same.	The core characteristics of the elements remain unchanged, and the scale expands.	The core quality of the element is overlaid by another quality.	The core quality of the element remains the same, juxtaposing another quality.	The core qualities of the elements decline.

At the macro level, the landscape pattern of Dongxi Ancient Town remains consistently intact, with minimal human-induced disruptions. This stability stems from the resilience of its mountainous and riverine environments and the limited impact of historical changes on fundamental transformations. As a result, objective constraints have preserved the landscape. However, various components of the urban structure display contrasting morphological changes, such as expansion, layering, and decline. Comparison of synchronic slices from prosperous periods and phases of transformation reveals evident expansion and layering in flat areas above the rocks, where social and functional needs, like population growth and urban development, have driven sustained growth. This has allowed the modern urban system to overlay the core characteristics of the historical regional pattern. In contrast, decline manifests in the lower river valley areas, where transportation changes and geographical constraints have led to rapid contraction, undermining essential landscape attributes.

At the meso level, clusters exhibit diverse change patterns, including maintenance, expansion, layering, and decline. The stability of clusters like Shuyuan Street, Chaoyang Street, and Bei Street is notable, with the Ming Dynasty street system remaining largely intact. This continuity is reinforced by landmarks such as Nanhua Palace, Wanshou Palace, and Mingshan Academy, which provide structural stability while enabling new developments around them. The expansion of modern roads and urban patches, clustered along flat areas near historical sites, has not fostered distinct local characteristics or value attributes. Layering is evident in developments like the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway, where synchronic comparisons show it and associated Republic-era buildings overlaying original structures, creating new historical layers and disrupting existing ones. Decline is particularly evident in clusters like Shangping Bridge and Taiping Bridge-Yongjiu Bridge, which lost their transport and economic foundations, leading to population loss and building decay. In terms of intangible elements, the social structures and industrial functions embedded in these clusters' systems have largely been replaced by modern communities, commerce, and tourism. Nonetheless, some traditional commercial customs, such as the tri-daily market gatherings, have been preserved, maintaining their original three-day cycle.

At the micro level, landmark nodes exhibit layering in functionality due to the influence of historical context and societal values, manifesting primarily in forms of maintenance and decline. Comparing synchronic cross-sections from the periods of rapid development and peak prosperity, nodes such as the "Three Palaces and Eight Temples", bridges, and stone carvings, once established, maintain spatial anchoring. However, their functions have

experienced juxtaposed layering influenced by historical developments, incorporating new, era-specific functions atop their original purposes. For instance, Nanhua Palace and Wantian Palace served as wartime propaganda platforms or storage facilities while continuing to fulfill their role as sites of public worship. Comparing synchronic cross-sections from the prosperity period to the transitional expansion period, landmark nodes like Wanshou Palace, Yuwang Temple, and Daxiong Temple were intentionally destroyed as societal views shifted, causing significant harm to their heritage value. Regarding intangible elements, the historical information carried by these landmark nodes is well-preserved, with historical events and figures being passed down through local annals and published works. Additionally, intangible cultural heritage, local customs, and traditional crafts remain active, providing a source of economic income for local residents.

3.3.2. Analysis of the Value of Historical Landscapes in Dongxi Ancient Town

The overall spatial density of historical landmark nodes reflects the distribution of historical value richness during specific periods. Conzen's concept of morphological regions is widely used to analyze historical value richness [61]; a higher number of landmark nodes within a region indicates greater historical value richness [62]. This study employed ArcGIS10.8 software's spatial analysis capabilities to transform the distribution of landmark nodes across various historical periods into vector point data. Kernel density analysis was performed for each historical period to visualize changes in historical value richness (Figure 9).

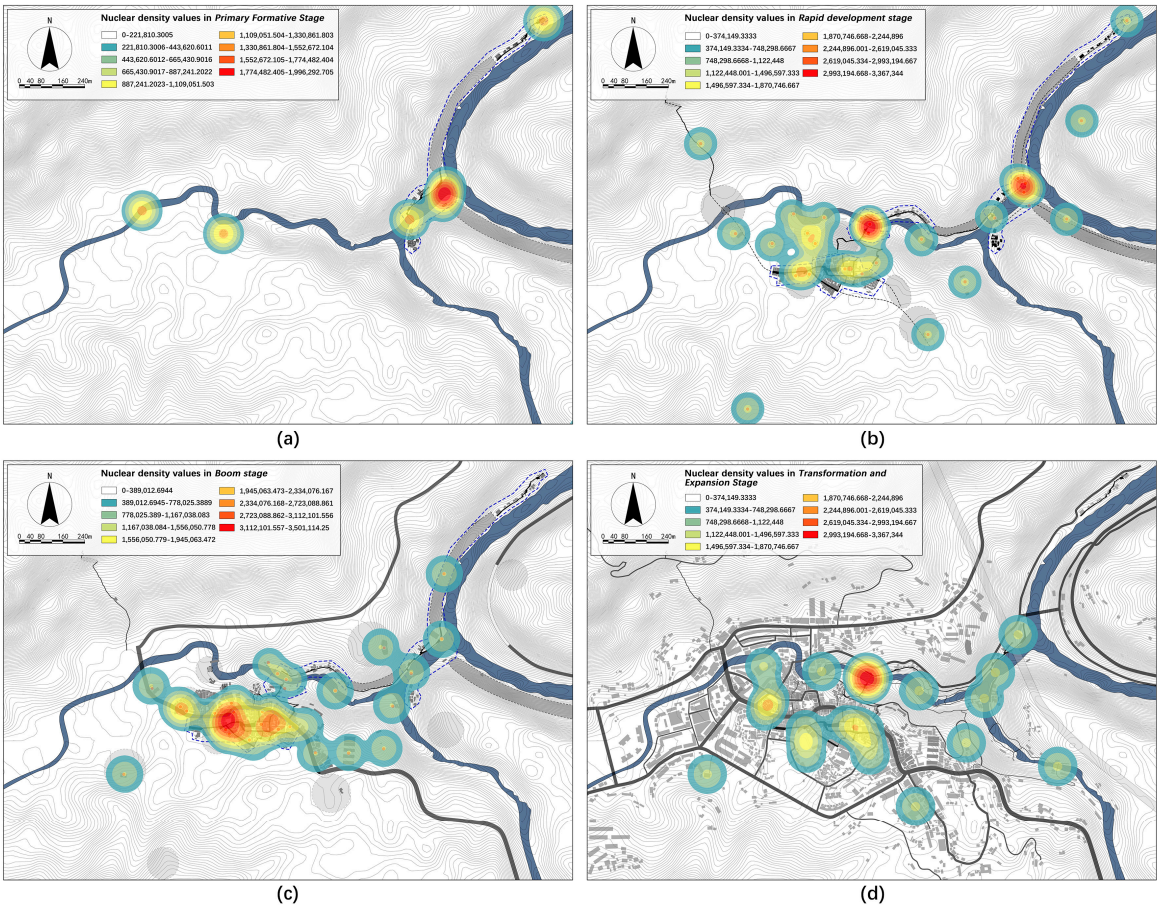


Figure 9. Distribution map of historical value richness of Dongxi Ancient Town in different periods: (**a**) the primary formative phase; (**b**) the rapid development phase; (**c**) the prosperous phase; (**d**) the transformative expansion phase. (Source: ArcGIS Screenshot).

The results indicate significant differences in the spatial distribution of landmark nodes across various periods, reflecting a gradual migration trend from the Taiping Bridge river valley region to the flat area above the rock, in line with the overall development trajectory of the ancient town. During the formative period, landmark nodes were primarily centered around Taiping Wharf and Taiping Bridge (Figure 9a). In the rapid development phase, the high-density area of landmark nodes remained concentrated in the Taiping Wharf region, with an additional high-density zone emerging at the junction between the upper and lower rock areas, where religious and cultural buildings clustered densely, gradually forming a new core (Figure 9b). In the prosperous period, numerous Republic-era buildings were constructed in the flat area above the rock, establishing a high-density core of landmark nodes, while the density in the Taiping Wharf area declined (Figure 9c). During the transformation and expansion phase, the historical architectural elements among the landmark nodes underwent two stages: deterioration and preservation. Conversely, the historical environmental elements were relatively well-preserved, resulting in a final high-density region predominantly composed of these elements, located at the transitional area between the upper and lower rock regions, while the flat area formed a secondary dense region of landmark nodes (Figure 9d).

To further investigate the relationship between historical value richness and spatial distribution, the weighted sum tool within the spatial analysis capabilities of the ArcGIS platform was employed to conduct an equal-weight overlay analysis of the historical value richness results from various periods, yielding a cumulative historical value richness layer map (Figure 10).

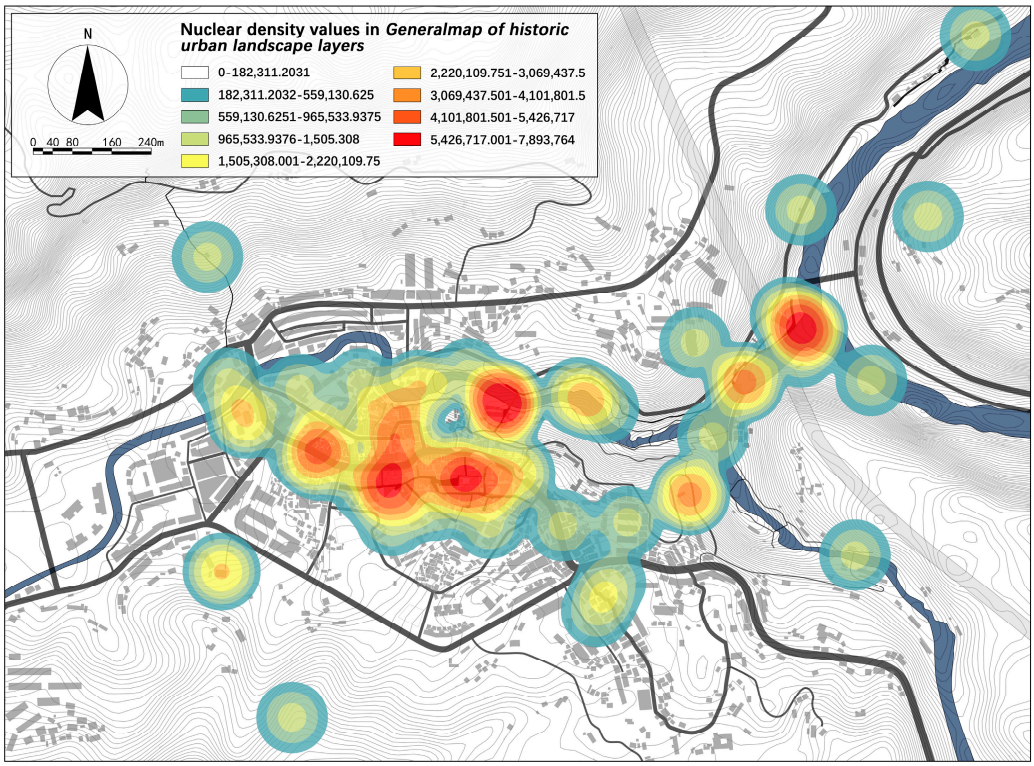


Figure 10. Analysis of the overall spatial distribution density of micro-landmark nodes in Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: ArcGIS Screenshot).

The raster-to-point tool was used to convert the total layered map into point data, followed by spatial autocorrelation analysis of the value richness of landmark nodes. The global Moran's I index was calculated to be 0.99, which is greater than 0, indicating a strong positive spatial correlation in the historical value richness distribution of Dongxi Ancient Town (Figure 11a). The high/low cluster analysis tool was then applied to test the

clustering relationships, with a z-value of 430.34, which suggests a high/high clustering relationship (Figure 11b). This means that areas with higher value richness tend to cluster together in spatial distribution.

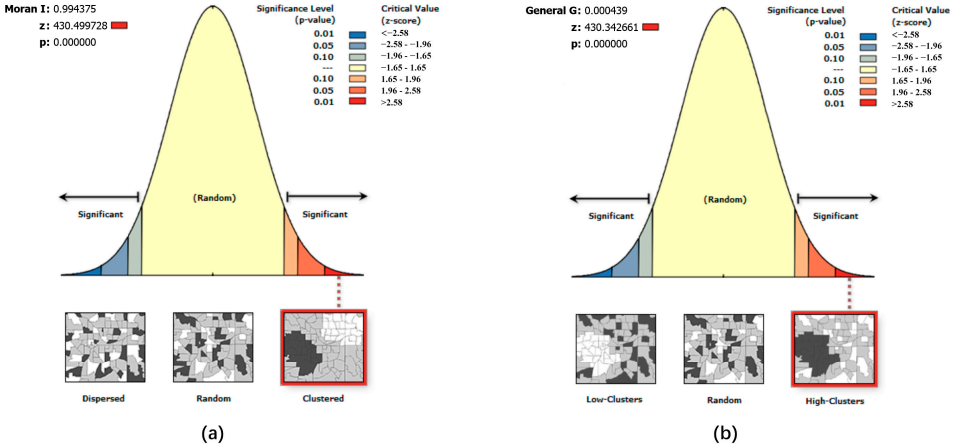


Figure 11. (**a**) Space autocorrelation statement; (**b**) High/low clustering analysis. (Source: ArcGIS Screenshot).

Based on the total historical value richness layer map, it can be observed that the Shuyuan Street—Chaoyang Street—Bei Street cluster, the Shangping Bridge cluster, and the Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge cluster exhibit relatively high historical value. By integrating analyses across macro, meso, and micro levels, a focused examination of areas with higher historical value richness was conducted.

At the macro level, the natural landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town, preserved in its maintenance morphology, embodies a profound mountain–water character. The upper rock area features flat terrain framed by mountains to the north and south, creating a picturesque skyline, while the river valley below offers a serene environment enriched by natural features such as the JingYin Cave waterfalls and the Huangge Tree ecological group. Initially, Dongxi Ancient Town developed in the narrow river valley, with streets and buildings distributed along the river and encircled by natural elements; it later flourished on the plateau above, forming a harmonious integration of "mountain-river-town" that requires comprehensive protection. The changes in the town's layout reflect an evolutionary process spanning over two thousand years, warranting accurate interpretation and thorough presentation (Figure 12).

At the meso level, the cluster system of Dongxi Ancient Town has undergone prolonged development, with value characteristics accumulated in both maintaining and overlapping forms. The architectural cluster encompassing Shuyuan Street, Chaoyang Street, and Bei Street demonstrates stability, preserving the distinct features of the Ming and Qing dynasties alongside the historical layout. Although portions of the "Three Streets and Seven Lanes" system and ancient salt roads have been obscured by modern roads, their overall orientation remains discernible, reflecting the historical functions and primary economic activities of the ancient town. The main street exhibits a multi-layered character, having been expanded through the construction of the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway and national roads, and it continues to serve as the central thoroughfare of the ancient town. In the context of urban development, it is crucial to maintain the historical characteristics of the street and cluster patterns in their maintaining and overlapping forms. This can be achieved by reinforcing tangible aspects, such as ground pavement and facade style, while preserving the original spatial arrangement, including the black bricks on the street, the structure of buildings along the street, the open spaces in front of palace and temple buildings, and the triangular retreat spaces at the corners of the street. Additionally, the intangible aspects should express and interpret the historical layering process. For the declining clusters of Shangping Bridge, Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge, and Chengpingtan,

transformation and revitalization should be pursued to transition them into maintaining or overlapping forms (Figure 13).

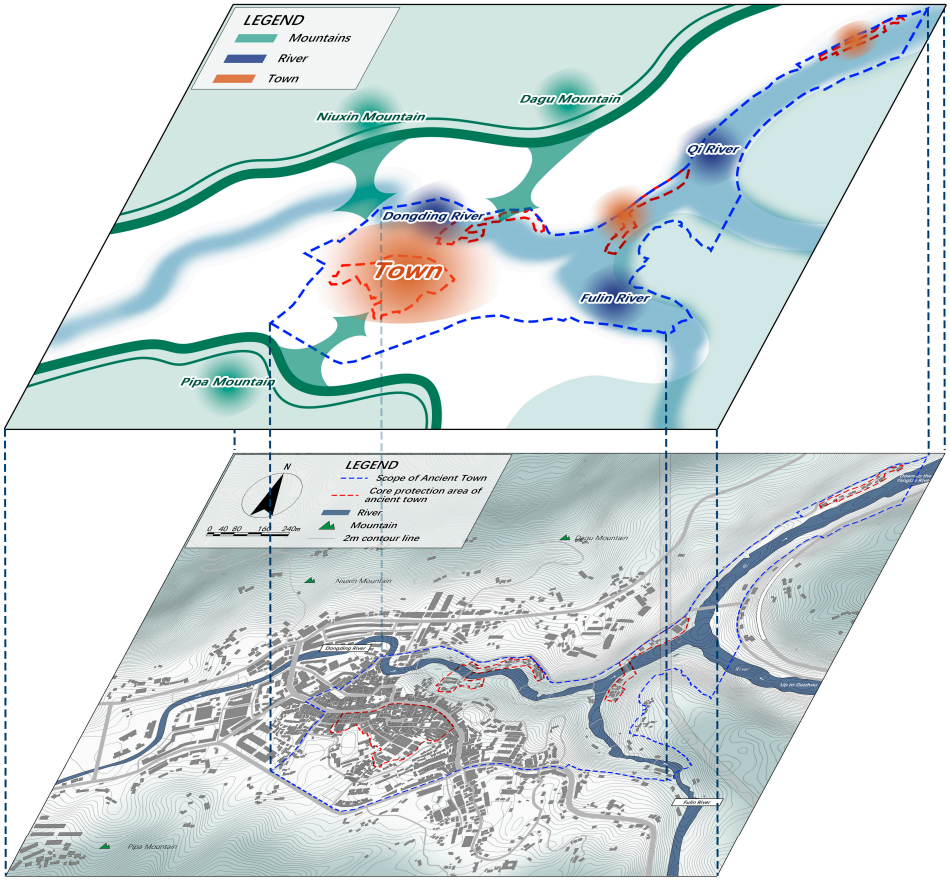


Figure 12. The value characteristics of the macro-regional pattern of historical landscape in Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

At the micro level, the landmark nodes of Dongxi Ancient Town exhibit a rich historical accumulation characterized by maintaining and overlapping forms, which encompass multiple periods and functions. Different historical periods and events are layered within the same elements, demonstrating their multi-layered characteristics. For instance, Taiping Wharf serves as a hub for immigrant landings and cargo transfers, while also being the site of the "Dongxi Rice Case", embodying layers of immigration, salt transport, trade, and military significance. The "Three Palaces and Eight Temples" not only serve as primary venues for folk beliefs but also fulfill roles in merchant meetings and gang negotiations. During the Republican era, these sites briefly became locations for anti-Japanese propaganda, reflecting multiple layers of historical significance related to immigration, salt transport, trade, and wartime activities from a synchronic perspective. It is essential to explore the layered content and processes of each historical element for a multifaceted presentation (Figure 14).

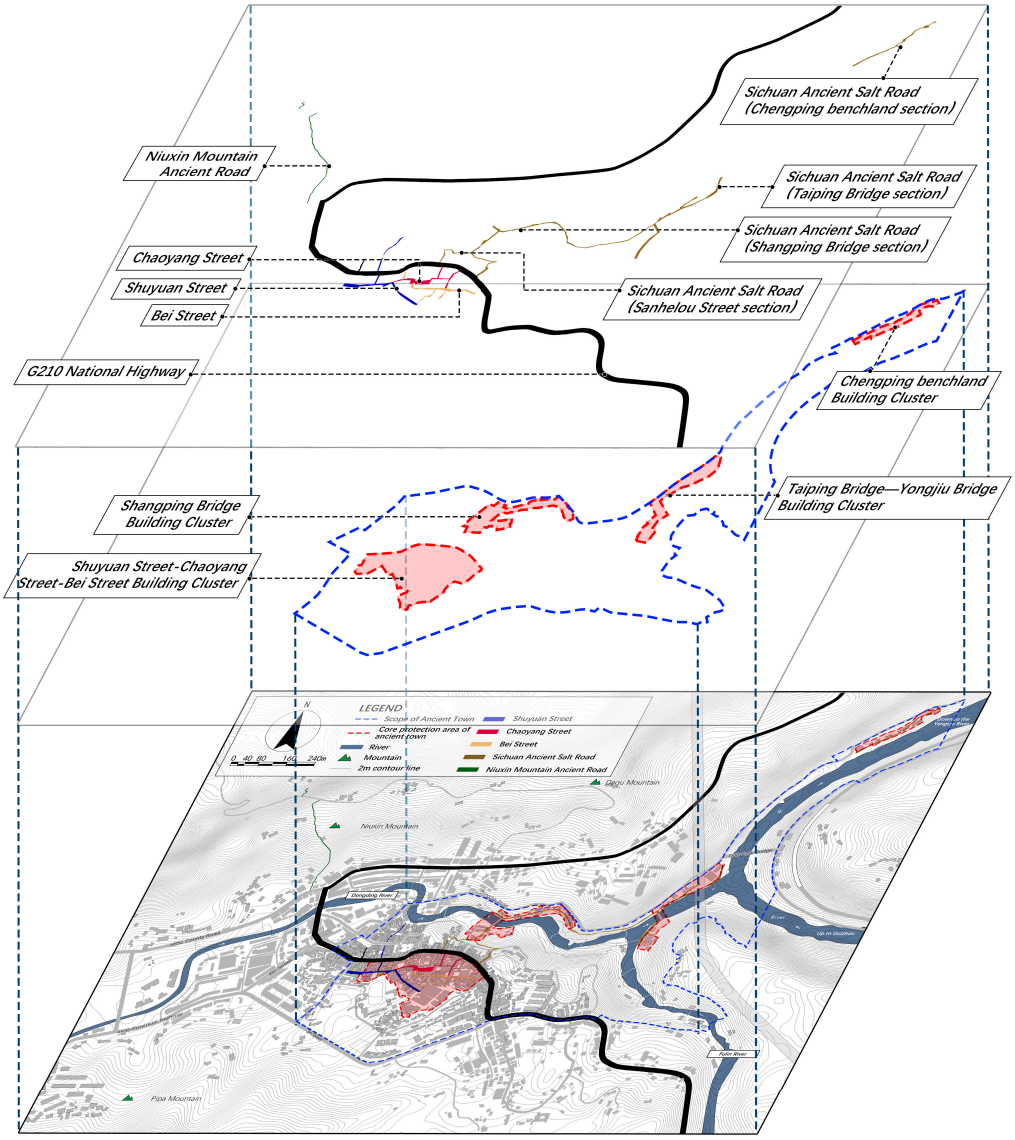


Figure 13. The value characteristics of the cluster system in the historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

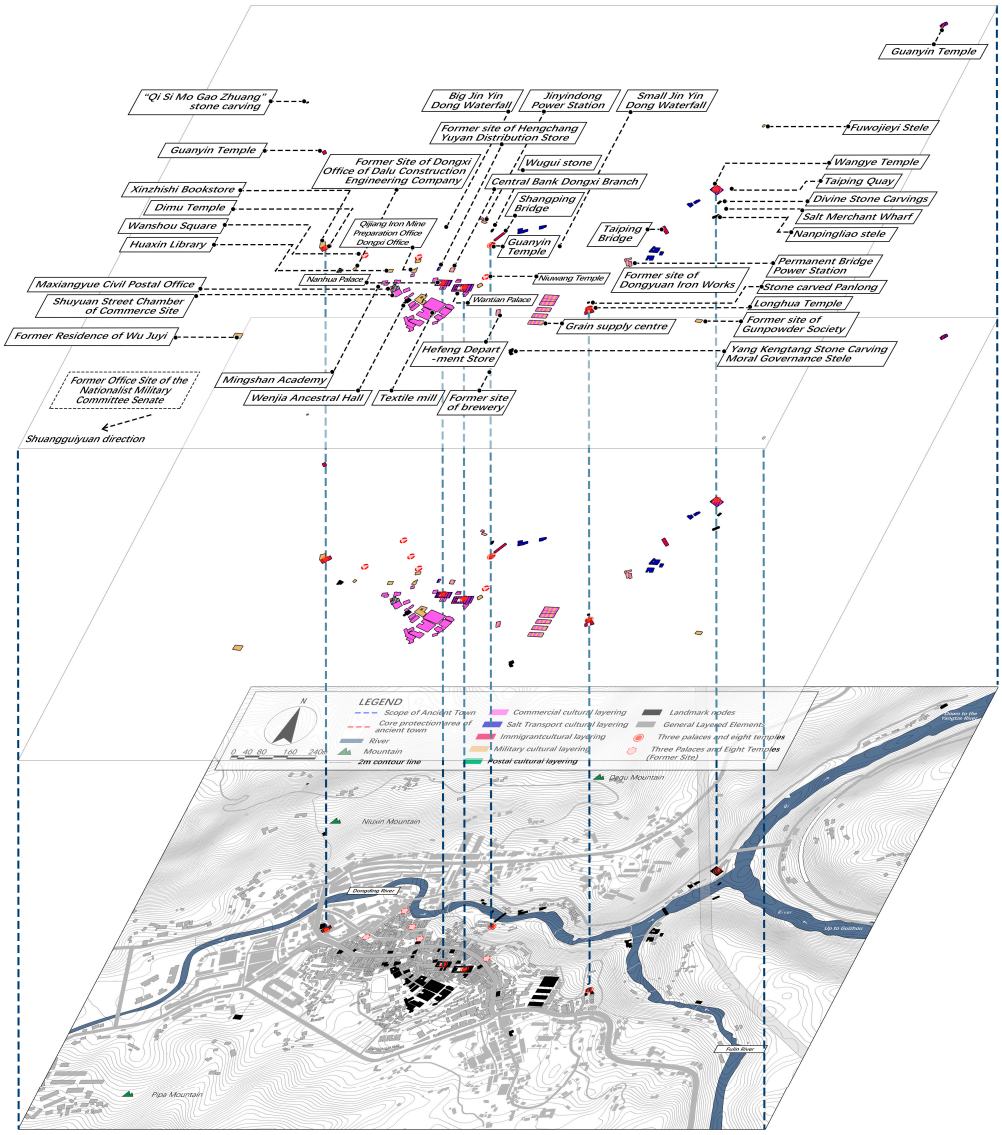


Figure 14. The value characteristics of micro-landmark nodes in the historical landscape of Dongxi Ancient Town. (Source: Self-drawn by the author).

4. Discussion

4.1. Management of Historical Landscape Change in Dongxi Ancient Town Based on Layering Interpretation

Throughout the evolution of Dongxi Ancient Town, change is a constant feature. It is essential to accurately identify the main contradictions currently present, proactively seek change, and actively adapt in order to explore the development direction of the historical landscape. In the process of preservation, it is important to balance value and change, ensuring adaptive reuse [63,64]. This paper argues that urban historical heritage should undergo appropriate changes and updates within a controlled scope to achieve a balance between cultural heritage preservation and socio-economic development. Specific management strategies for change are proposed in the following three areas.

4.1.1. Dynamics of Change: From Cultural Heritage to Cultural Assets

Based on the previous analysis of the driving forces behind change, it is crucial to identify the main contradictions when analyzing the direction of change, as they play a decisive role in the evolution of the town. Dongxi Ancient Town has undergone four development stages, with key drivers of change in different periods, including transportation

demands, commercial needs, political center relocation, and social transformation. The historical landscape has experienced corresponding layered changes in response to these forces. In the current context, the main driving forces for change are the internal demands of the residents to improve living standards and increase income, as well as external pressures from modernization. Thus, the urban historical landscape must adapt to current demands, evolving into a fundamental tool for promoting sustainable socio-economic development, transforming from cultural heritage to cultural assets that generate direct or indirect income [4] (pp. 17–33).

4.1.2. Scale of Change: Moderate and Controlled Change

After identifying the direction of change, it is essential to define the boundaries and scale of that change. Change occurs in both quantitative and qualitative forms, and only moderate changes within the limits of quantitative change can preserve the essence. In heritage management, the value characteristics of heritage need to remain unchanged, and any transformations should not alter its intrinsic value.

Based on the previous analysis of value in the results of change, the number of landmark nodes correlates positively with the historical value richness. Therefore, maintaining these landmark nodes is key to preserving the historical characteristics of the area. Landmark nodes should be treated as the heritage essence to be monitored closely. General historical elements can undergo functional updates to meet the development needs of the environment, society, and economy. By using controlled quantitative changes, the historical value of the region can be maintained while addressing the development needs of the environment, society, and economy.

4.1.3. Implementation Participants: Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Construction

Managing the evolution of urban historical landscapes necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach, involving government, enterprises, NGOs, neighborhood committees, and residents in a polycentric governance framework that maximizes mutual cooperation and oversight, enhancing operational viability [65]. The balance of power and the coordination mechanisms among stakeholders are key to ensuring the effectiveness and fairness of change management. Each stakeholder must fulfill its role, oversee others, and collectively optimize the objectives of change management.

Specifically, the government, as the core leading force, must not only ensure policy formulation and implementation but also delegate certain powers to local communities, village committees, enterprises, and NGOs to stimulate broader participation. Enterprises, as resource integrators and economic drivers, should assume greater social responsibilities while being subject to dual oversight from the government and residents. They must strike a balance between economic interests and heritage preservation. NGOs, as providers of professional support, should leverage their technical resources and expertise to offer scientific guidance for change management. They must also actively consider residents' needs and disclose decision-making processes transparently. Resident committees play a dual role in change management. On the one hand, they act as a bridge between the government and residents, ensuring that the latter's interests and aspirations are incorporated into the decision-making process. On the other hand, they supervise the activities of residents and enterprises, ensuring compliance with laws and planning requirements.

Most importantly, residents are the direct stakeholders in managing historical landscape changes, and the level and form of their participation directly affect governance outcomes. Traditional passive participation models are inadequate to fully reflect residents' needs. Residents should have multiple channels to express their demands and engage in decision-making. For example, they can participate in oversight and feedback through strategic consultation meetings and reporting mechanisms. They can also engage directly in developing local resources and branding through property rights consultations. In this process, the government and NGOs should use education and outreach to enhance residents' awareness of heritage conservation and sustainable development, fostering their initiative.

To achieve collaborative governance among multiple stakeholders, the following mechanisms can enhance cooperation and interconnectedness among stakeholders. First, regular consultation meetings involving representatives from various stakeholders should be held to exchange demands and align on common goals. Second, a guidance and advisory platform should be established to integrate professional knowledge and local practices through online community networks, which can also expand residents' participation. Finally, reporting mechanisms and feedback channels should be developed to ensure that actions harming public or individual interests can be promptly addressed, thereby ensuring the fairness and transparency of governance.

4.2. Specific Strategies for Heritage Protection and Change Management in Dongxi Ancient Town

Based on the analysis of the direction, scale, and key stakeholders of change, this study proposes specific heritage protection and management strategies for Dongxi Ancient Town.

Based on the analysis of historical value richness, the areas of the "Shuyuan Street—Chaoyang Street—Bei Street cluster", "Shangping Bridge cluster", and "Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge cluster" exhibit significant historical value. These regions hold high potential for economic development, positioning them as focal points for the promotion of tourism and cultural industries in Dongxi Ancient Town. The following discussion focuses on these areas as critical nodes for implementing heritage-driven revitalization strategies.

Based on the analysis of transformation types, it is evident that the forms of maintenance and layering are most conducive to the accumulation of historical value. The generation of economic value through the transformation and renewal of cultural heritage should be grounded in these two forms to ensure the integrity of the heritage's essential characteristics. Therefore, this study proposes a framework comprising protection, renewal, and production modes, designed to align with the requirements of transformation direction and scale.

The preservation mode ensures the maintenance of the heritage's intrinsic values. On the one hand, it involves restoring and safeguarding physical structures. On the other hand, intangible aspects of heritage can be protected through initiatives such as establishing cultural communities [66,67] and maintaining historical archives [68]. Leveraging digital technologies, a historical information platform for Dongxi Ancient Town can be developed, enabling bottom-up digital heritage preservation through social media engagement [69].

In Dongxi Ancient Town, based on the analysis of value characteristics at macro, meso, and micro levels, the essential attributes requiring preservation at each level are identified. At the macro level, the natural landscape features, including rivers, mountains, and the Huangjue tree ecological community, represent intrinsic elements that must remain unchanged. Additionally, the hierarchical town layout reflecting historical evolution requires comprehensive protection. At the meso level, historical architectural clusters must retain their Ming-Qing era characteristics and layouts. Historical streets are defined by ground and façade styles, spatial density, and their historical development processes. At the micro level, landmark nodes exhibit multi-layered characteristics, with elements from different historical periods and events overlapping, forming a rich accumulation of multi-period, multifunctional heritage.

The updated model refers to the quantitative changes made to cultural heritage. Based on the preservation of heritage characteristics, this model involves updating residential elements by enhancing supporting infrastructure and improving living standards and environmental quality without disrupting the overall aesthetic structure. For commercial elements, it combines regional themes to define functional positioning. This approach emphasizes creating thematic business clusters that highlight the value connotation, guiding functional replacements and localized updates.

Based on the previous analysis of the driving mechanisms behind changes in the historical landscape, it is possible to identify directions for revitalization by examining historical evolution. First, during the formation and prosperity stages of the ancient town, transportation infrastructure played a central role in the evolution of its landscape. There-

fore, in the current revitalization efforts, it is essential to avoid the destruction of historical transportation relics by modern transport facilities. At the same time, efforts should be made to restore certain historical transportation routes and recreate the spatial or cultural connections of various historical relics within the town, using historical transportation resources to establish touring routes. Secondly, the economic vitality brought by commercial trade was a significant driving force in the formation of the historical landscape. In the revitalization process, there is an opportunity to explore the traditional commercial culture of Dongxi Ancient Town, develop a cultural tourism economy, and promote the integration of historical landscapes with modern economic activities. Furthermore, military conflicts provided a brief period of dynamic growth for the town. In the process of revitalization, relevant historical layers can be showcased through interpretation and exhibitions, highlighting their historical significance.

For example, the Shuyuan Street—Chaoyang Street—Bei Street cluster was historically a hub for merchant groups and has a rich commercial heritage. This area can be developed into an experiential cultural zone that showcases Ming and Qing dynasty commercial trade, allowing visitors to engage with the town's historical commercial atmosphere and practices. By transforming general architectural elements, businesses such as teahouses, boutique guesthouses, and snack shops with Ming and Qing styles and features can be introduced to enhance the area's economic vitality. Within the landmark nodes of the region, the primary focus would be on functional layering. For instance, a Sichuan opera performance center could be established in the Nanhua Palace and Wantian Palace while also integrating educational experiences related to immigrant and commercial cultures. In the Shangping Bridge cluster, Taiping Bridge—Yongjiu Bridge cluster, some ancient road routes can be restored to create a spatial connection between these areas. Additionally, the residential buildings along the old salt road can be renovated and transformed into commercial shops that sell products related to the salt culture, offering visitors an immersive experience in the town's historical trade and cultural heritage.

The production model promotes the transformation of cultural heritage into cultural assets, generating economic value. Ancient towns can leverage existing heritage to attract tourists and drive economic activities, such as cultural tourism and cultural consumption. Historical and cultural areas can attract both tourists and residents to consume in unique or quaint environments that often cater to niche markets. Active cultural policies and widespread cultural activities enhance the appeal of heritage sites, drawing more visitors and residents, which in turn boosts related industries such as dining, accommodation, transportation, and shopping, increasing consumer spending and promoting economic growth. Moreover, ancient towns can create new cultural and artistic expressions in material cultural production. Based on the inventory and registration of the indigenous cultural techniques of Dongxi Ancient Town, efforts should be made to encourage and support local leaders, creating cultural ambassadors. Through industrial innovation and policy guidance, this can drive local residents to actively participate in cultural entrepreneurship.

For example, the Qijiang Longhai Textile Center and surrounding buildings can be renovated into a cultural industry park to attract local artisans and develop a "research-production-sale" integrated cultural factory. Specific initiatives could involve developing cultural products based on local material culture, such as Huang-style wood carving and farmer's prints, and innovating production methods for Dongxi dried tofu, Huangjing tofu flower, and Liu-style black duck, utilizing digital technologies like live streaming and short videos to showcase the production process and generate economic value.

The implementation of change management strategies involves various stakeholders, including government, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), neighborhood committees, and residents. In the protection model, NGOs such as universities and research institutes should lead the development of scientific protection standards with the involvement of professionals, ensuring that the characteristics of historical and cultural heritage are maintained through collaboration among the government, businesses, and residents. In the updated model, the government and NGOs should take the lead in selecting

the elements to be updated, guided by expert evaluations to ensure the stability and continuity of the heritage's essence while also encouraging rational development by residents and businesses to prevent excessive pursuit of economic benefits. In the production model, residents should play a leading role, fully harnessing their initiative under the organization and guidance of the government, businesses, and neighborhood committees in developing local features to create a brand effect.

4.3. Comparative Analysis: A Study of Transformation Management in Dongxi and Heshun Towns

To enhance the generalizability and effectiveness of the proposed historical landscape management strategies, a comparative analysis is conducted between Dongxi Ancient Town and Heshun Ancient Town, located in Tengchong County, Yunnan Province, China, near the Myanmar border. Both towns share characteristics such as advanced transportation advantages, thriving trade, multicultural immigrant influences, and impacts from the Anti-Japanese War, demonstrating similar historical trajectories. However, Heshun's economic development and prominence far exceed Dongxi's, having reached a mature stage of tourism development, offering insights into varying developmental phases and challenges.

During their historical development, Dongxi and Heshun Ancient Towns share similar driving forces. In transportation, Heshun was a critical hub on the Southwestern Silk Road connecting China to Myanmar and India, with the Burma Road traversing the town. Dongxi served as a waterway nexus on the Sichuan-Guizhou corridor, intersected by the Sichuan-Guizhou Highway. In commerce, leveraging its transportation advantages, Heshun engaged in Sino-Myanmar trade as early as the Ming Dynasty, notably in jade. Dongxi specialized in Sichuan salt trade. Regarding population, both towns share a history of immigration, with large-scale migrations to Heshun from Sichuan, Hunan, and Jiangsu during the Ming Dynasty. During the Anti-Japanese War, Heshun was recognized for contributions by overseas Chinese, while Dongxi functioned as a logistics hub.

In terms of cultural heritage protection and development, the two ancient towns show significant differences. The protection and development of Dongxi Ancient Town began with a conservation plan in 2005. Currently, its development is managed by the Chongqing Qijiang District Ancient Town Development Co., Ltd., with funding primarily from government investment, foreign capital, and state-owned enterprises, which manage and develop government-owned buildings. In contrast, Heshun Ancient Town established a "tourism-driven town" approach in the 1990s. In 2003, it introduced the Peilin Group, transferring operational and managerial rights to the tourism enterprise, creating a "government control, enterprise operation" development model [70]. In tourism development, the enterprise's main practices can be summarized into three modes: preservation, renewal, and production. These include maintaining historical buildings, organizing cultural exhibitions, establishing museums, and constructing new cultural and commercial districts.

Therefore, Dongxi's conservation efforts are government-driven, whereas Heshun's are market-oriented, granting enterprises significant influence. These divergent approaches lead to distinct challenges. In Dongxi, low resident engagement has resulted in extensive property vacancies and the dissolution of community structures. In Heshun, while the enterprise-led model initially generated economic benefits and preserved native communities, overdevelopment has harmed the historical and ecological environment, exacerbating conflicts among residents, enterprises, and the government [71–73].

Despite differing issues, the root cause in both cases is the imbalance of interests among stakeholders. Thus, the diversification of stakeholders in change management is crucial. Collaborative and regulatory mechanisms must be established to balance power and interests, fostering stakeholder synergy. In Dongxi, the government should delegate power to enhance resident participation, while in Heshun, the government must reclaim oversight from enterprises to regulate development and guide rational resource utilization. Additionally, Heshun must focus on controlled, incremental changes to prevent excessive ecological and historical damage, ensuring sustainable heritage management.

5. Conclusions

Cultural heritage exists in a state of continual change. By employing the layered interpretation of urban historical landscapes, we can accurately understand the forces and outcomes of these transformations, enhancing insight across temporal depths and spatial extents and providing both a basis and framework for the integrated utilization of heritage. Based on the case study of Dongxi Ancient Town, a general simplified process for analyzing changes in urban historical landscapes can be summarized as follows:

Based on the method of historical information translation, this study analyzes the changes in urban historical landscapes through the processes of change content, change process, and change outcomes. In terms of change content, the layering elements are classified into three levels: macro-regional patterns, meso-cluster systems, and micro-landmark nodes. The study also analyzes the intangible connotations embedded within the tangible elements of each layer. Regarding the change process, it examines the driving forces behind the changes in urban historical landscapes from a diachronic perspective. In terms of change outcomes, the study analyzes the morphological changes of elements at each level within historical periods based on the synchronic snapshots generated in each phase, summarizing the stable and enduring value characteristics formed during the change process. On this basis, the paper further proposes management measures for changes in historical landscapes from the perspectives of driving forces, scale, and implementation subjects. Through change management, cultural heritage can be transformed into cultural assets by actively adapting and making appropriate changes, thus serving as a means to address local issues and achieving a sustainable balance between protection and development.

Compared with existing research, current measures for the protection and development of urban historical landscapes tend to focus more on preserving heritage authenticity and integrity, with an emphasis on the continuity of cultural context, while giving less attention to the economic costs and benefits [74–77]. Such heritage maintenance measures, which focus on conservation, cannot promote sustainable and resilient development over time. The strategy proposed in this study, however, balances both heritage preservation and economic benefits. By transforming cultural heritage into cultural assets, heritage protection and economic development can align with a common goal, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders enhances the feasibility of implementation. The development strategy presented in this paper is more sustainable compared to current protection-focused strategies.

Based on the case study of Dongxi Ancient Town, this paper argues that heritage preservation can create a sustainable pathway for economic growth. Through the restoration and adaptive reuse of historical areas, heritage preservation can stimulate local employment, enhance the attractiveness of specific regions, and promote the development of related industries. This, in turn, fosters economic consumption, generates brand effects, and strengthens community cohesion. Simultaneously, economic development also facilitates heritage preservation. Therefore, heritage preservation and economic development mutually reinforce each other, achieving a sustainable dynamic balance.

In urban development, there have been successful cases of heritage-led economic growth. Heritage-based investments help foster the symbiotic relationship between heritage preservation and reuse, aligning heritage conservation with socio-economic development. The aim is to address urban issues and sustainably improve the economic, physical, social, and environmental conditions of areas that have already undergone changes or offer opportunities for further enhancement [78]. For instance, the Townscape Heritage Initiative research project in the United Kingdom demonstrated the effectiveness of heritage-based urban investment in regenerating socially disadvantaged communities [79]. Impact investing in the UK and the USA can promote a shift towards a symbiotic approach to heritage preservation and adaptive reuse, facilitating the coordination of public and private interests around common outcomes at the systemic level [80]. In Canada, heritage preservation districts have a potential positive role in economic development [11]. Similarly, the historic cities of Iran have utilized their cultural heritage for physical, social, and economic regeneration [81].

However, economic development can have unintended negative impacts on heritage, such as the risk of gentrification. The 2011 Valletta Principles identified gentrification as a major threat. The document states that "the process of gentrification can affect communities and lead to the loss of a place's livability and, ultimately, its character". While heritage contributes to strengthening community resilience, it can also generate inequality [82]. Gentrification is an economic and political process that often results in the displacement of original communities and residents due to rising real estate prices and living costs, replaced by new social elites and middle-class individuals [83]. Furthermore, this process often overlooks marginalized social groups, such as the elderly and low-income migrant workers [84].

Therefore, some researchers argue that the approach to urban historical landscapes has limitations [85]. In response, urban historical landscape strategies aim to overcome these gaps by fostering a sense of ownership within local communities, supported by public participation [86]. This study also seeks to mitigate this potential risk by strengthening the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the management of changes.

In systematically examining the stratified elements of Dongxi Ancient Town across regional patterns, cluster systems, and landmark nodes, this study delineates the evolutionary phases of the town into four stages: the initial formation period from the Western Han to the Ming Dynasty, the rapid development period of the Qing Dynasty, the flourishing period of the Republic of China, and the post-founding transformation and expansion period. The driving forces behind the transformation of stratified content are identified as transportation demands, commercial needs, political migration, and social change. Synchronic slices from each stage are extracted and comparatively analyzed to reveal the forms of change and refine core attributes.

Based on layered interpretation, this study proposes change management strategies for historical landscapes in terms of both drivers and scale, aiming to strengthen feasibility through multi-stakeholder participation. In this approach, cultural heritage undergoes adaptive transformations and moderate changes, ultimately converting into cultural assets that contribute to solving local issues, achieving a balanced, sustainable state of preservation and development.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, X.M. and J.S.; methodology, X.M.; software, X.M.; validation, X.M. and J.S.; formal analysis, X.M. and J.S.; investigation, X.M. and J.S.; resources, X.M. and J.S.; data curation, X.M.; writing—original draft preparation, X.M.; writing—review and editing, X.M. and J.S.; visualization, X.M.; supervision, J.S.; project administration, J.S.; funding acquisition, X.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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

References

1. Taylor, K. The Historic Urban Landscape paradigm and cities as cultural landscapes. Challenging orthodoxy in urban conservation. *Landsc. Res.* **2016**, *41*, 471–480. [CrossRef]
2. Sun, J.Q. Protection of Historic Towns: International Expirence and Chongqing Practice. *J. Nanjing Univ. Philos. Humanit. Soc. Sci.* **2023**, *60*, 59–74.
3. UNESCO. *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*; UNESCO: Paris, France, 2011.
4. Zhou, J.; van Oers, R. *Operationalising the Historic Urban Landscape—A Practitioner's View*; Tongji Universtty Press: Shanghai, China, 2018.
5. Sun, J.Q.; Shao, L. Research on the Paradigm of Urban Historic Landscape Protection Based on Dynamic Integrity. *Mod. Urban Res.* **2024**, 16–23+36.
6. Höftberger, K. Conservation and development: Implementation of the historic urban landscape approach in Khiva, Uzbekistan. *Int. J. Herit. Stud.* **2023**, *29*, 314–328. [CrossRef]
7. El-Bastawissi, I.Y.; Raslan, R.; Mohsen, H.; Zeayter, H. Conservation of Beirut's Urban Heritage Values Through the Historic Urban Landscape Approach. *Urban Plan.* **2022**, *7*, 101–115. [CrossRef]

8. UNESCO. *New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained*; UNESCO: Paris, France, 2013.
9. WHITRAP. *The HUL Guidebook: Managing Heritage in Dynamic and Constantly Changing Urban Environments; A Practical Guide to UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*; World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITRAP): Shanghai, China, 2016.
10. UNESCO. *Urban Heritage for Resilience: Consolidated Results of the Implementation of the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*; 3rd Member States Consultation; UNESCO: Paris, France, 2023.
11. Shipley, R.; Snyder, M. The role of heritage conservation districts in achieving community economic development goals. *Int. J. Herit. Stud.* **2013**, *19*, 304–321. [CrossRef]
12. Francesco, B.; Ron, V.O. *The Historic Urban Landscape: Managing Heritage in an Urban Century*; John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2012.
13. Bandarin, F.; Van Oers, R. *Reconnecting the City: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*; John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2014.
14. Veldpaus, L. Reconnecting the city: The historic urban landscape approach and the future of urban heritage. *Cult. Trends* **2015**, *24*, 340–342. [CrossRef]
15. Conzen, M.R.G. Alnwick, Northumberland: A study in town-plan analysis. *Trans. Pap. Inst. Br. Geogr.* **1960**, *27*, 3–122. [CrossRef]
16. UNESCO. *World Heritage Papers 27: Managing Historic Cities*; UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Paris, France, 2010.
17. Wang, W.; Shi, Q.; Wang, G. Analysis of Performance and Genetic Characteristics of Cultural Landscapes in Traditional Villages along the Jinzhong Section of the Wanli Tea Road from a Landscape Gene Information Chain Perspective: A Case Study of Xiamen Village. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 8131. [CrossRef]
18. Shi, T.; Sang, W.C.; Zheng, Y.N. Research on the Influencing Mechanism of Historic Urban Landscape Characteristics on Public Sentiments and the Spatio-temporal Differentiation Patterns—A Case Study of Shaoxing Ancient City in Zhejiang Province, China. *Landsc. Archit. Front.* **2024**, *12*, 73–88. [CrossRef]
19. Oumelkheir, B.; Nadia, D. Assessment process in the delimitation of historic urban landscape of Algiers by AHP. *Misc. Geogr.* **2021**, *25*, 110–126. [CrossRef]
20. Sun, Y.; Wu, Y.; Yu, H.; Li, Y. Spatiotemporal evolution of urban landscapes in Chinese historic water towns (1918–2021). *Landsc. Res.* **2024**, *49*, 568–583. [CrossRef]
21. Liu, Y.F. The Anchoring-Layering Theory: For a Better Understanding and Conservation of Historic Urban Landscape. Ph.D Thesis, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, 2014.
22. Xiao, J.; Cao, K.; Li, H.P. The Evolution Laws and Layering Management Methodologies of Historic Urban Landscape. *Urban Dev. Stud.* **2018**, *25*, 59–69.
23. Li, J.; Wang, J.; Li, X. Heritage Value Assessment and Landscape Preservation of Traditional Chinese Villages Based on the Daily Lives of Local Residents: A Study of Tangfang Village in China and the UNESCO HUL Approach. *Land* **2024**, *13*, 1535. [CrossRef]
24. Pei, Y.; Yang, R.; Dang, A.R. Historic Layering Process Interpretation and Value Assessment of the Ancient City of Yulin Based on Historic Urban Landscape Approach. *Urban Dev. Stud.* **2022**, *7*, 128–136.
25. Tu, L. Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms Through the Prism of Historic Urban Landscape: A Case Study of the Xidi and Hongcun World Heritage Sites. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 5136. [CrossRef]
26. Li, X.; Hou, W.; Liu, M.; Yu, Z. Traditional Thoughts and Modern Development of the Historical Urban Landscape in China: Lessons Learned from the Example of Pingyao Historical City. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 247. [CrossRef]
27. Muminovic, E.; Radosavljevic, U.; Beganovi, D. Strategic Planning and Management Model for the Regeneration of Historic Urban Landscapes: The Case of Historic Center of Novi Pazar in Serbia. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 1323. [CrossRef]
28. Yusuf, D.A.; Zhu, J.; Nashe, S.A.; Usman, A.M.; Sagir, A.; Yukubu, A.; Hamma, A.S.; Alfa, N.S.; Ahmed, A. A Typology for Urban Landscape Progression: Toward a Sustainable Planning Mechanism in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria. *Urban Sci.* **2023**, *7*, 36. [CrossRef]
29. Mrak, I.; Ambrus, D.; Marovic, I. A Holistic Approach to Strategic Sustainable Development of Urban Voids as Historic Urban Landscapes from the Perspective of Urban Resilience. *Buildings* **2022**, *12*, 1852. [CrossRef]
30. Zhang, K.Y.; Liu, J. Towards Sustainable Development of the Old City: Design Practice of Alleyway Integration in Old City Area Based on Heritage Corridor Theory. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 8158. [CrossRef]
31. Grazuleviciute-Vileniske, I.; Seduikyte, L.; Daugelaite, A.; Rudokas, K. Links between heritage building, historic urban landscape and sustainable development: Systematic approach. *Landsc. Archit. Art* **2020**, *17*, 30–38. [CrossRef]
32. Wang, S.S.; Jiang, Y.; Xu, Y.Q.; Zhang, L.J.; Li, X.P.; Zhu, L. Sustainability of Historical Heritage: The Conservation of the Xi'an City Wall. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 740. [CrossRef]
33. Appendino, F. Balancing Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Development—The Case of Bordeaux. In Proceedings of the World Multidisciplinary Civil Engineering-Architecture-Urban Planning Symposium (WMCAUS), Prague, Czech Republic, 12–16 June 2017; IOP: Bristol, UK, 2017.
34. Pang, Z.Y. The Multi-Layered Correlation Between Historic Urban Landscape and Building Type: A Case Study of DIAOYUTAI historic area in Nanjing, China. In Proceedings of the 30th International Seminar on Urban Form Conference (ISUF), Belgrade, Serbia, 4–9 September 2023; pp. 1442–1455.

35. Xiao, J.; Zhang, Q.Q.; Lv, S.W.; Yang, Y.L.; Cao, K. Multi-Dimensional Identify of the Civic Cultural Values of Urban Landmarks after 1949 Under the Perspective of Historic Urban Landscape:A Case Study of Chongqing Municipality. *J. Hum. Settl. West China* **2022**, *6*, 73–79.
36. Azpeitia Santander, A.; Azkarate Garai-Olaun, A.; De la Fuente Arana, A. Historic Urban Landscapes: A Review on Trends and Methodologies in the Urban Context of the 21st Century. *Sustainability* **2018**, *10*, 2603. [CrossRef]
37. Sengur, S.; Nurlu, E. Historic Landscape Characterization in Protected Areas; A Case Study Kazdagi National Park. *J. Agric. Sci. Bilim. Derg.* **2021**, *27*, 106–113. [CrossRef]
38. Crow, J.; Turner, S.; Vionis, A.K. Characterizing the Historic Landscapes of Naxos. *J. Mediterr. Archaeol.* **2011**, *24*, 111–137. [CrossRef]
39. Turner, S.; Crow, J. Unlocking historic landscapes in the Eastern Mediterranean: Two pilot studies using Historic Landscape Characterisation. *Antiquity* **2010**, *84*, 216–229. [CrossRef]
40. Herring, P.C. Framing Perceptions of the Historic Landscape: Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Historic Land-Use Assessment (HLA). *Scott. Geogr. J.* **2009**, *125*, 61–77. [CrossRef]
41. Turner, S. Historic landscape characterisation: A landscape archaeology for research, management and planning. *Landsc. Res.* **2006**, *31*, 385–398. [CrossRef]
42. Rey Pérez, J.; González Martínez, P. Lights and shadows over the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape: 'managing change' in Ballarat and Cuenca through a radical approach focused on values and authenticity. *Int. J. Herit. Stud.* **2018**, *24*, 101–116. [CrossRef]
43. Jiang, J.; Zhou, T.; Han, Y.; Ikebe, K. Urban Heritage Conservation and Modern Urban Development from the Perspective of the Historic Urban Landscape Approach: A Case Study of Suzhou. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 1251. [CrossRef]
44. Li, X.F.; Zhou, X.P.; Weng, F.F.; Ding, F.; Wu, Y.; Yi, Z. Evolution of cultural landscape heritage layers and value assessment in urban countryside historic districts: The case of Jiufeng Sheshan, Shanghai, China. *Herit. Sci.* **2024**, *12*, 2–19. [CrossRef]
45. Dong, S.J.; Shen, D.J. A Study of Historical Urban Landscape Layering in Luoyang Based on Historical Map Translation. *Land* **2023**, *12*, 663. [CrossRef]
46. Potdar, K.; Verbakel, E. Eidetic Mapping An Exploration for Sustainability and Resilience of Historic Urban Landscapes. In Proceedings of the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), Electr Network, 24–28 August 2021; Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands; pp. 547–559.
47. Berila, A.; Isufi, F. Two Decades (2000–2020) Measuring Urban Sprawl Using GIS, RS and Landscape Metrics: A Case Study of Municipality of Prishtina (Kosovo). *J. Ecol. Eng.* **2021**, *22*, 114–125. [CrossRef]
48. Cervelli, E.; Pindozzi, S. The Historical Transformation of Peri-Urban Land Use Patterns, via Landscape GIS-Based Analysis and Landscape Metrics, in the Vesuvius Area. *Appl. Sci.* **2022**, *12*, 2442. [CrossRef]
49. Xiao, J.; Li, H.P.; Cao, K. Characteristic Recognition and Layering Interpretation of Historic Urban & Townish Landscapes in Southwest China. *South Archit.* **2017**, 18–25. [CrossRef]
50. CPC Qijiang County Dongxi Town Committee; People's Government of Dongxi Town, Qijiang County. *The Annals of Dongxi*; Luo, Y., Ed.; Qijiang County Graphic Printing Factory: Chongqing, China, 2011.
51. Qijiang District Committee of CPPCC Chongqing. *Qijiang Street Town History And Culture Series—Ancient Town East Creek*; Hunan Map Publishing House: Changsha, China, 2013.
52. Liu, Z.A.; Luo, Y. *Dongxi*; Chongqing Press: Chongqing, China, 2023.
53. Lan, Y. *History of Ancient Traffic Routes in Sichuan*; Southwest China Normal University Press: Chongqing, China, 1989.
54. Mo, X.Y.; Yang, J.X.; Feng, Y.X. Spatial Network Renewal of Ancient Town Streets Based on Space Syntax:Taking Dongxi Town as an Example. *Archit. Cult.* **2023**, 155–157. [CrossRef]
55. Huang, X.P.; Liu, J.; Gu, G.C. Research on the Development Strategy of Independent Governance in the Historic Urban Areas of Dongxi Ancient Town, Chongqing. *Archit. Cult.* **2019**, 128–129. [CrossRef]
56. Lu, Y. Analysis of morphology and pattern of Dongxi ancient town in chongqing. *Theor. Res. Urban Constr.* **2018**, 194–195. [CrossRef]
57. Peng, Y. Research on Public Space Protection and Utilization Optimization of Historical Value in Dongxi Ancient Town. Master's Thesis, Southwest University, Chongqing, China, 2022.
58. Yang, Y. Dongxi Ancient Town Folk Beliefs of Research into the Subject. Master's Thesis, Southwest University, Chongqing, China, 2011.
59. Zhang, C.Y. Integrated Conservation to Historie Town: Research of Dongxi Town. Master's Thesis, Chongqing University, Chongqing, China, 2004.
60. Jiang, X.; Guo, W.; Zhang, W.H.; Lyu, W.Y.; Lin, Q. Coexist with Canal: Research on the Evolution and Driving Mechanism of Traditional Space Paradigm in Towns along the Huaiyang Canal under the Influence of Canal. *Urban Dev. Stud.* **2021**, *28*, 76–84.
61. Whitehand, J.W.R. British urban morphology: The Conzenian tradition. *Urban Morphol.* **2001**, *5*, 103–109. [CrossRef]
62. Cai, R. Study on Adaptation Protection for Historic Blocks from the Perspective of Layering Rules Analysis: A Case Study of Ciqikou Historic Block, Chongqing. Master's Thesis, Chongqing University, Chongqing, China, 2020.
63. Ken, T. Historic Urban Landscape Paradigm—A Tool for Balancing Values and Changes in the Urban Conservation Process. *Landsc. Archit. Front.* **2023**, *11*, 96–104.

64. Pérez, A.J.Y.; Verbakel, E. The role of adaptive reuse in historic urban landscapes towards cities of inclusion. The case of acre. *J. Cult. Herit. Manag. Sustain. Dev.* 2022; *ahead-of-print*. [CrossRef]
65. Zhang, Z.Y.; Li, Y.F.; Wang, Z.X. Study on Rural Governance Mode from the Perspective of Multi-center Governance: A Case Study of Hengdu Town, Sanmen County, Zhejiang Province. *Shanghai Urban Plan. Rev.* **2021**, 36–42.
66. Arapovics, M. Cultural Community Development and the Role of Museums in Community Development. *Civ. Szle.* **2018**, *15*, 95–116.
67. Azmat, F.; Fujimoto, Y.; Rentschler, R. Exploring cultural inclusion: Perspectives from a community arts organisation. *Aust. J. Manag.* **2015**, *40*, 375–396. [CrossRef]
68. Bai, X.; Jiao, X.; Sakai, T.; Xu, H. Mapping the past with historical geographic information systems: Layered characteristics of the historic urban landscape of Nanjing, China, since the Ming Dynasty (1368–2024). *Herit. Sci.* **2024**, *12*, 283. [CrossRef]
69. Ginzarly, M. *Social Media Data for the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes: Prospects and Challenges*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2021.
70. He, S.W. Study on Place Reconstruction of Cultural Tourism Characteristic Towns: A Case Study of Characteristic Town of Heshun Ancient Town. Master's Thesis, Kunming University of Science and Technology, Kunming, China, 2021.
71. Wang, Y. The Research And Evaluation for Current Protections and Developments in Historical Urban Area: Using Examples of Yunnan Historical Urban Area. Ph.D. Thesis, Southeast University, Nanjing, China, 2015.
72. Duan, Y. What is Heritage All About? Perception and Practice of Cultural Heritage from Comparative Perspective. *Cult. Herit.* **2024**, 104–112.
73. Chen, X. Research on the coordination of interests between developers and local residents in the development of tourism destinations in minority areas. *Thinking* **2013**, *39*, 40–43.
74. Guo, Q.; Xiao, L.; Huang, K. Research on the Conservation of the Historic Site of Duanzhou Government Office in Zhaoqing from the Perspective of Historic Urban Landscape(HUL). *Chin. Landsc. Archit.* **2023**, *39*, 99–105. [CrossRef]
75. Zhao, X.Y.; Li, J.Y.; Zhang, Z.Y.; Wang, L. Study on Activation Pathway of Xiangyang Historical Urban Landscape Based on Collective Memory. *Mod. Urban Res.* **2024**, 24–30. [CrossRef]
76. XU, M.; Li, J.J. Historic Urban Landscape Evolution of the Port City Area from the Perspective of Historic Layering: A Case Study of Qingdao. *Mod. Urban Res.* **2023**, 29–36. [CrossRef]
77. Han, J.Y.; Li, X.; Wang, X.R. Research on the Evolution Mechanism of Hefei's Urban Landscape Pattern from the Perspective of Urban Historical Landscape. *Mod. Urban Res.* **2022**, 63–71. [CrossRef]
78. Roberts, P. The Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration. In *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook*; BURA: London, UK, 2000; Volume 1, pp. 9–36.
79. Reeve, A.; Shipley, R. Heritage-based regeneration in an age of austerity: Lessons from the Townscape Heritage Initiative. *J. Urban Regen. Renew.* **2014**, *7*, 122–135. [CrossRef]
80. Francesca, M.; Fiorenza, L. Impact investment for urban cultural heritage. *City Cult. Soc.* **2021**, *26*, 100413. [CrossRef]
81. Lak, A.; Gheitasi, M.; Timothy, D.J. Urban regeneration through heritage tourism: Cultural policies and strategic management. *J. Tour. Cult. Change* **2020**, *18*, 386–403. [CrossRef]
82. De Cesari, C.; Herzfeld, M. Urban heritage and social movements. In *Global Heritage: A Reader*; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2015; pp. 171–195.
83. Skoll, G.R.; Korstanje, M. Urban heritage, gentrification, and tourism in Riverwest and El Abasto. *J. Herit. Tour.* **2014**, *9*, 349–359. [CrossRef]
84. Zhu, Y.; González Martínez, P. Heritage, values and gentrification: The redevelopment of historic areas in China. *Int. J. Herit. Stud.* **2022**, *28*, 476–494. [CrossRef]
85. Fouseki, K.; Nicolau, M. Urban Heritage Dynamics in 'Heritage-Led Regeneration': Towards a Sustainable Lifestyles Approach. *Hist. Environ. Policy Pract.* **2018**, *9*, 229–248. [CrossRef]
86. Ferro, L.; György, E.; Oláh, G.; Teixeira Lopes, J.; Sonkoly, G.; Apolinário, S.; Azevedo, N.; Ricardo, J. Gentrification and touristification in urban heritage preservation: Threats and opportunities. In *Cultural Trends*; Taylor & Francis: Abingdon, UK, 2024; pp. 1–16. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.