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Documented Governance Configurations for Proximity-Based Public Cultural Services in Zhejiang, China

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Abstract

Proximity policies specify where services should be reachable, but documented service design does not establish sustained operation. This study compares the policy and governance configurations presented for public cultural services in Jiaxing and Lishui, Zhejiang, China. Operational stability is defined as an observed condition of recurrent provision over a specified period; enabling capacity, coordination processes, adaptation, and resilience are distinguished from this outcome. The core analysis uses 14 legal, policy, planning, evaluation, and secondary documents, supplemented by official statistics for contextual comparison. Jiaxing's implementation rule emphasizes a municipal "10-min" standard, a "1 + 3" space configuration, recurring activity requirements, volunteering, and monitoring. Lishui's plans and reports emphasize multi-tier facilities, shared village spaces, proposed mobile and digital delivery, local operators, cultural stewards, and village-produced events. These are documented arrangements intended to support provision, rather than verified explanations of stability. Lishui's adopted plan also acknowledges low rural-space utilization, showing that reported construction and admitted operating shortfalls can coexist. The comparison identifies contrasting design emphases under a shared provincial framework. It generates propositions about coordination, resource sharing, participation, and feedback that require longitudinal operating records and user and non-user evidence. It does not establish that settlement context causes a particular configuration or that either configuration produces stable, inclusive cultural services.

Keywords: public cultural services; policy design; documentary analysis; governance configurations; urban–rural services

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1. Introduction

Proximity-based planning defines where everyday public services should be reachable, but it does not by itself specify how a service system should operate. A travel-time threshold identifies a spatial boundary and a set of potential service nodes; it says much less about the coordination of institutions, facilities, personnel, programs, technologies, and users inside that boundary [1–6]. The question addressed here is how such coordination is represented in local policy designs under different settlement conditions.

Public cultural provision makes this coordination problem visible. Libraries, cultural halls, museums, reading rooms, mobile programs, digital platforms, operators, volunteers, and residents perform different but connected functions. Nearby facilities require staffing, programming, information, and demand feedback to provide usable services. Shared

resources and mobile delivery are possible responses to dispersed settlement, but their actual contribution to continuity must be evaluated with operating records. The present study examines these documented arrangements rather than measuring their performance.

Operational stability is used here as an outcome construct: an observed condition in which a defined service system maintains its scheduled public-cultural function across a specified observation period. The public function includes recurrent availability and provision, accountable operation, and maintenance of the intended service remit. Staffing, funding, coordination, and feedback are potential enabling conditions or processes; their presence in a policy is not evidence that the outcome has occurred. Stability is not equated with facility coverage, resilience after a disruption, adaptive capacity, or cultural and social outcomes [7–13]. The documents analyzed here do not measure this outcome.

China's public-cultural policy provides a setting for studying multi-level service design. National policy combines equal and convenient provision with venue-based, mobile, and digital delivery, social participation, and demand feedback [14,15]. Zhejiang's common-prosperity program places urban–rural public-service equalization within a shared provincial framework [16]. The cultural-life-circle instrument provides a local coordination boundary without demonstrating operational continuity.

Systems thinking provides a vocabulary for examining interdependencies among actors, processes, resources, technologies, and environmental conditions [17,18]. Research on China's public cultural service system has identified complexity in public and non-state provision [19–23]. A documentary comparison can examine how local authorities organize these interdependencies, but cannot establish which design remains viable over time. Whether a configuration suited to a dense network also works in a mountainous territory is therefore a question for subsequent operational research.

This article compares Jiaxing and Lishui, two prefecture-level cities within the same provincial policy environment. Jiaxing's documents emphasize standardized coordination around a "10-min" rule; Lishui's documents emphasize multi-tier facilities, shared village spaces, mobile and digital delivery, and local intermediaries. The comparison identifies contrasting design emphases and their stated constraints. It does not rank cultural-service performance or attribute the contrast exclusively to settlement form.

Research question. How do the documents for Jiaxing and Lishui configure proximity-based public cultural services, and what evidence supports or limits propositions connecting those configurations with operational stability?

The article's central contribution is a comparison of documented policy and governance configurations, together with an explicit account of what the evidence cannot establish. Institutional coordination, resource-delivery arrangements, and participation with feedback provide analytical categories for reading the documents. Their connection to operational stability remains a proposition. The corpus contains no household microdata, independently audited use data, interviews, longitudinal operating series, or pedestrian-network analysis; it therefore cannot estimate causal effects, lived access, operational persistence, or long-term cultural and social outcomes.

2. A Systems Perspective on Proximity-Based Public Cultural Services

2.1. System Boundary, Components, and Environment

The 15-min boundary is not the complete public cultural service system. It defines a local coordination space, but the operative system also includes administrative rules, facilities, personnel, programs, fixed and mobile delivery, digital channels, participating residents, and monitoring arrangements. These elements interact with an external environment shaped by settlement density, terrain, mobility, demographic change, fiscal and staffing capacity, and local cultural resources.

This boundary choice makes the unit of analysis a documented local governance configuration rather than a mapped catchment or an observed operating system. Accessibility research distinguishes destinations, mobility, time, and individual capabilities [5,6]. The documentary analysis additionally examines how venue opening, staffing, programming, information, and adjustment are specified. These specifications are interpreted as possible operating conditions, without assuming that the documents establish their implementation or effect.

Four analytical levels must remain distinct. Structural coverage records facilities, catchments, and delivery channels. Organized operating capacity concerns assigned roles, available resources, and scheduling arrangements. Operational stability concerns actual recurrent provision over time. Experienced access and wider cultural or social outcomes require user-level and population-level evidence beyond these organizational observations [7,8]. A requirement, a reported event, and a verified longitudinal outcome cannot be substituted for one another.

2.2. Interdependence Feedback and the Operational Stability Construct

Facilities require staff, programs, information, and users; mobile services require routes, schedules, content, and receiving organizations; and participatory programs require support and local organizers. These interdependencies motivate a proposition that coordinated resources may support recurrent provision. Co-production research identifies possible contributions from residents' knowledge, voluntary labor, and creative activity [9,10,24–26], but public responsibility for staffing, funding, and safeguarding remains a separate requirement. Neither the resource links nor their stabilizing effects are verified by their appearance in a plan.

For comparison, the study groups documented arrangements into three domains. Institutional coordination assigns responsibility, standards, and monitoring across administrative levels. Resource delivery combines, shares, schedules, repurposes, or moves facilities, personnel, programs, finance, and digital content. Participation and feedback specify roles for residents, volunteers, social organizations, operators, and cultural stewards in demand expression and service production. These are features of governance design; their joint contribution to stable operation is a testable proposition.

The construct has three observable dimensions for future verification: temporal continuity of scheduled opening and recurrent provision; resource continuity demonstrated by staff availability and executed operating support; and preservation of the intended public-service function, including evidence that access and provision remain available to the target population. Service continuity is the first dimension, not the whole construct. Robustness concerns resistance to a specified perturbation; resilience concerns response and recovery after disruption [13]. Adaptive capacity is an ability to alter delivery, and adaptation is a change process. Institutional sustainability concerns the longer-term reproduction of organizational support. Operational stability is a condition observed over a bounded period that may result from such capacities and processes; this study does not establish it as an emergent empirical property.

2.3. Governance Design and Contextual Propositions

The model organizes the reading of policy and governance configurations. Collaborative, network, and systems governance research highlights rules, accountability, interorganizational coordination, and the relationship between governance arrangements and organizational capabilities [27–31]. The three analytical domains used here identify proposed or reported links among these elements. They do not form an estimated explanatory model of an observed stability outcome.

Settlement density and terrain are plausible contextual influences on delivery design: co-location and shared scheduling may be feasible in dense settlements, while movement of resources and local intermediaries may be relevant in dispersed areas. Fiscal capacity, demographics, administrative capability, local cultural resources, mobility, and digital access are alternative or interacting influences. The comparison examines the stated contextual rationale of each design without isolating the effect of any one influence.

Digital provision is treated as a documented socio-technical arrangement for schedules, bookings, content, records, and feedback. Such arrangements could reduce coordination costs or extend reach, but these effects depend on devices, skills, awareness, organizational routines, and program relevance [23,32–35]. Platform availability is therefore a design feature; inclusive use and a contribution to continuity require channel-specific and user-level evidence.

Figure 1 provides a conceptual map for reading the documents. Its sequence from proximity standards to organized opportunity, activated service, and experienced access distinguishes possible analytical levels. Arrows represent propositions, including feedback and adaptive allocation, rather than an observed progression. Only the policy and governance-design portions are examined here; activation, continuity, lived access, and outcomes remain unverified.

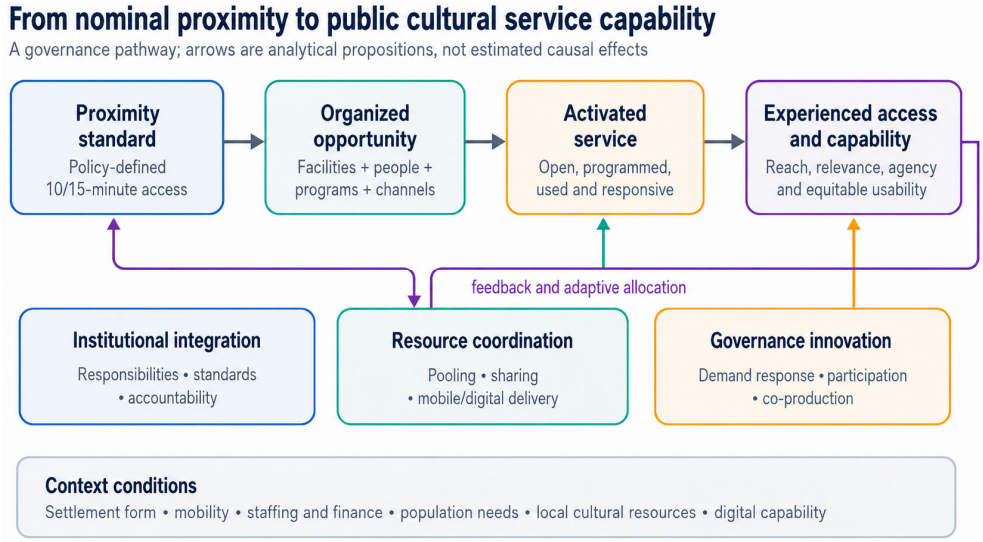

Figure 1. Analytical map of proximity-based public cultural service design. Arrows identify proposed relationships. The documentary study examines standards and organized arrangements; it does not verify progression to activated service, operational stability, experienced access, or cultural capability.

The comparison asks whether Jiaxing's documents place greater emphasis on standardized facility and activity requirements and whether Lishui's documents place greater emphasis on shared and mobile resources and local intermediaries. These are expectations about documentary design emphases. They do not predict measured stability, establish mutually exclusive configuration types, or test whether settlement conditions cause the contrast.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Comparative Documentary Policy Design

The study uses a qualitative comparative documentary design to examine policy boundaries, assigned roles, resource links, participation, evaluation arrangements, and reported shortfalls. Document analysis is suitable for studying what institutional rules and plans specify when their provenance, purpose, audience, and limits are explicit [36]. Thematic analysis guided the interpretation of recurring governance arrangements [37,38],

and case-study logic supported an exploratory contrast rather than population-level generalization [39]. The design is a policy and governance-configuration analysis, not an assessment of system stability.

The unit of comparison is the governance configuration represented in each city's documents: linked rules, resources, delivery channels, operating roles, participation, and feedback provisions. The unit of coding is a source passage, not an operating node, respondent, or completed service cycle. No participants were recruited or personal data processed, and no survey, interview, observation, administrative microdata, or GIS dataset was generated.

3.2. Case Selection

Jiaxing and Lishui were selected purposively as a contextually contrasting pair within Zhejiang. The shared provincial framework provides a common policy reference, rather than a statistical or causal control. The cases permit comparison of a municipal implementation rule with a mountainous municipality's planning and reported practices. Two cases are sufficient for this exploratory document comparison, but cannot establish an exhaustive configuration typology, transferability, or a context-to-stability relationship.

Jiaxing's municipal rule emphasizes urban–rural integration, a common space configuration, and recurring activity requirements [40]. Lishui's adopted plan identifies mountainous counties and describes facility gaps, dispersed delivery, and operating constraints [41]. Table 1 adds a structured whole-prefecture baseline using matched-year official statistics, while recording variables that remain unmeasured. Differences in fiscal resources, population composition, administrative capability, cultural endowment, digital infrastructure, and policy priority remain possible alternative explanations. Moreover, a prescriptive implementation opinion and an adopted development plan are different genres; differences in documentary emphasis may partly reflect their purpose and date rather than different operating practices.

Table 1. Contextual baseline and unresolved alternatives for the two cases.

Baseline Dimension	Jiaxing	Lishui	Interpretation and Unresolved Alternatives
Provincial and administrative setting	Zhejiang; prefecture-level municipality	Zhejiang; prefecture-level municipality	Shared policy instrument and administrative tier; local capacity and priority are not controlled.
Resident population at end-2023 (million)	5.584 [42], p. 2	2.528 [43], section I	Whole-prefecture residents; does not locate users around facilities.
Resident urbanization at end-2023 (%)	73.2 [42], p. 2	64.6 [43], section I	Urban–rural composition; not a measured density or walking-access control.
General public budget revenue in 2023 (CNY billion)	63.202 [42], p. 4	18.61 [43], section I	Different revenue bases; does not measure cultural budgets, transfers, expenditure needs, or funding continuity.
Age structure cultural staffing and digital access	No matched measure verified in this study	No matched measure verified in this study	Unresolved differences; missing verification does not imply that the feature or public data are absent.
Cultural endowment administration and policy priority	Municipal circle rule [40]	Adopted plan and village cultural practices [41,44,45]	Different histories, capacity, and emphasis may explain design; document presence is not a common capacity or effort measure.

Note: Quantitative rows use the March 2024 official releases for 2023, doing so at the whole-prefecture scope [42,43]. They are contextual statistics, not cultural-service performance or funding-continuity measures. These sources were checked during revision on 11 October 2026, being checked separately from the fourteen-source core corpus. Unverified matched measures remain unresolved alternatives.

Alternative explanations are considered through a structured interpretive check, not statistical adjustment. Fiscal resources could support standardized provision; cultural traditions and organizational histories could support village production; and staffing and

policy attention could affect either design. The documents do not adjudicate their relative contributions. Rule-based and flexible resource coordination identify relative documentary emphases that may coexist in both cities.

3.3. Documentary Corpus and Source Hierarchy

The core corpus remains fourteen publicly accessible sources: five national legal or planning documents, three provincial evaluation or implementation reports, two Jiaxing sources, and four Lishui sources. National documents define the policy context [14–16,46,47]; provincial sources specify an evaluation instrument and report implementation [48–50]. Jiaxing sources comprise a formal implementation opinion and a secondary report of a multi-sector assessment [40,51]. Lishui sources comprise an adopted plan, a consultation draft, and two earlier official Rural Gala reports [41,44,45,52]. Official statistical bulletins [42,43] are additional contextual sources for Table 1, not evidence of cultural-service operation and not additions to the core operating corpus.

Core sources were included for public accessibility; identifiable issuer, status, and date; relevance to service design, coordination, participation, evaluation, or operating constraints; and national, provincial, or case-specific scope. Original retrieval used government portals, agency websites, and public news and scholarly portals, with a core-corpus cut-off of 14 July 2026. The revision rechecked key case passages and added contextual statistical sources; it does not claim a comprehensive municipal or county archive. Table 2 summarizes the core corpus. Revised Supplementary Material S1 supplies the inventory, corrected titles and dates, source URLs, coding rules, quotation audit, and inferential boundaries.

Table 2. Core documentary corpus and evidentiary role.

Corpus Block	n	Main Source Types	Primary Role in Analysis	Main Evidentiary Constraint
National context	5	Law and adopted national plans/policy	Defines public-cultural obligations, equalization, accessibility, digital/mobile provision, participation, and common-prosperity context	Requirements and intentions do not demonstrate local implementation
Zhejiang	3	Trial evaluation instrument and public implementation reports	Defines indicators and documents province-wide program framing and reported scale	Platform/reporting data are not independently audited in the accessible corpus
Jiaxing	2	Formal municipal implementation opinion and secondary report of provincial assessment	Documents the 10-min policy design and attributed multi-sector assessment values	Assessment scores cover multiple public-service sectors, not culture alone
Lishui	4	Adopted plan, consultation draft, and official secondary reports	Documents proposed flexible resource coordination, reported practices, construction outputs, and admitted shortfalls	Official sources dominate; consultation draft is not evidence of completion
Total	14			

Evidence status and evidence strength are coded separately. Q1 records legal or policy requirement, implementation rule, reported output, reported limitation, or a claimed outcome requiring verification. A future target, adopted rule, and consultation proposal retain their respective statuses; none is recoded as completed implementation. An operating trace requires a dated observation or record of provision or use, not merely an indicator listed in an evaluation scheme. No independently verified stability or cultural/social outcome is identified in the core corpus.

3.4. Coding and Comparative Evidence Audit

The coding scheme combines deductive categories and document-specific subthemes. Codes cover policy boundary (A1), delivery arrangement (A2), institutional coordination (I1), resource coordination (R1), participation and feedback (G1), operating evidence and its strength (O1), contextual conditions and equity risks (C1), and source status (Q1). Facility existence, an evaluation indicator, actual bookings, and documented adjustment are recorded separately. Subthemes include the "1 + 3" rule, shared village operation, cultural buses, and low utilization; their occurrence indicates documentary content rather than verified effects. Revised operational codebook for documentary governance analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Revised operational codebook for documentary governance analysis.

Code	Construct	Inclusion Rule	Qualification or Exclusion
A1	Policy boundary	Travel-time label, territorial coverage, catchment or coordination unit	A policy label is not measured walking access.
A2	Delivery arrangement	Fixed, mobile, digital, evening, booking or remote provision	Availability and use require separate observations.
I1	Institutional coordination	Cross-level responsibilities, operating standards, accountability or monitoring	A prescribed link is not coordination in practice.
R1	Resource coordination	Pooling, sharing, scheduling, reuse or movement of resources	Construction alone is excluded; intended and executed transfers are separated.
G1	Participation and feedback	Resident, volunteer, social-organization, operator, steward or demand role	Attendance alone is not co-design; a feedback indicator is not a response record.
O1	Operating evidence and strength	Design-only D; episodic/report W; repeated auditable M; longitudinal corroborated S; negative N	Counts or multi-sector scores: NE. No core case source meets M or S; see S1 Section S3.
C1	Context and equity risk	Settlement, mobility, demography, resources, digital access or uneven use	A citywide diagnosis does not establish a node-level cause or subgroup effect.
Q1	Evidence status	Requirement, implementation rule, proposal, reported output/practice, limitation or claimed outcome	Status is coded separately from strength; plans and indicators are not verified outcomes.

The analysis reads eligible passages with both a substantive code and Q1 status, prepares separate within-case summaries, compares design emphases, and checks interpretations against reported shortfalls (Figure 2). In the revision, O1 distinguishes design-only evidence (D), weak episodic or unattributed-duration operating reports (W), moderate auditable records of repeated provision with staffing and funding checks (M), and strong longitudinal and independently corroborated evidence across a complete planned service cycle (S). Evidence of low use or breakdown is recorded separately as negative operating evidence (N); coverage counts and multi-sector scores provide no culture-specific O1 evidence (NE). These are study-specific transparency rules, not a validated stability scale. The case documents supply D, W, N, or NE evidence; none meets M or S.

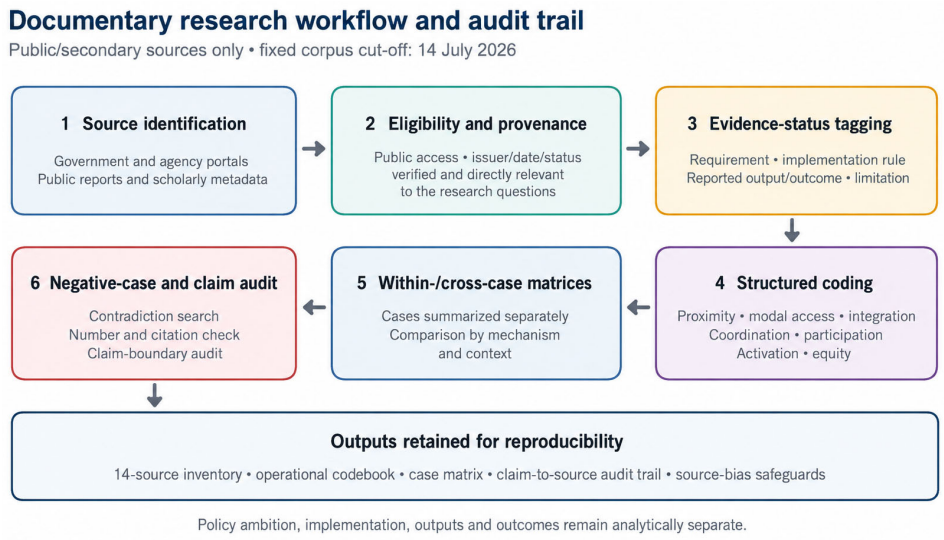

Figure 2. Original core-corpus workflow and documentary audit trail. The fourteen-source inventory and 14 July 2026 cut-off apply to the core corpus. The revision adds separate contextual statistics, an explicit evidence-strength rubric, and a quotation audit; arrows describe analytical steps rather than operational processes observed in the cities.

The original analysis was conducted as a single-coder documentary study; no independent inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated. The revision makes coding decisions inspectable through source excerpts, passage locators, status labels, and explicit exclusions in Table 4 and revised Supplementary Material S1. Interpretive transparency does not substitute for reliability testing, triangulation with operating records, or independent field verification. No node-level process tracing is claimed.

Table 4. Case evidence excerpts coding decisions and inferential boundaries. English excerpts are the authors' translations of the Chinese originals.

Case Source and Locator	Short Source Quotation	Status and O1 Decision	Supported Inference and Boundary
Jiaxing; J1 [40], 20 April 2022; IV(5)	At least one offline cultural activity each week.	Implementation rule; O1-D	Prescribed recurrence; no session or cancellation records establish compliance.
Shared provincial instrument; Z1 [48], 5 July 2022; III(5), p. 3	Monthly evaluation and annual assessment.	Evaluation requirement; I1/O1-D	A formal evaluation cycle; no site-level score series or independent data audit supplied.
Jiaxing; J2 [51], March 2024; opening and facilities-matching paragraphs	The composite score was 92.86 points.	Reported multi-sector assessment output; Q1; NE	2023 city assessment, with matching/accessibility each 95 points; cannot establish culture-specific continuity.
Lishui; L1 [41], January 2024; I(1), p. 7 (PDF p. 10)	972 circles.	Reported coverage output; A1/Q1; NE	Municipal reported construction; exact count date unspecified; activation rate and operating continuity unknown.
Lishui; L1 [41], January 2024; I(4), p. 16 (PDF p. 19)	Rural public cultural spaces have low utilization.	Reported limitation; C1/O1-N	Expansion coexists with under-use; extent, affected sites and causes are unmeasured.
Lishui; L3 [44], 13 March 2018; first substantive subsection	Residents lead; government promotes.	Reported episode organization; G1/O1-W	Reported seasonal co-production and support; year-round continuity, inclusion and outcomes unverified.

Table 4 anchors case interpretations to short source excerpts, passage locators, evidence status, and coding decisions. Original-language excerpts, translations, and additional

passage-level paraphrases are provided in revised Supplementary Material S1. The audit distinguishes prescriptions, reported events, coverage outputs, and ad-mitted shortfalls. It also identifies absent coordination, funding, staffing, feed-back-to-action, and follow-up links. This is an audit of documentary evidence; it is not node-level process tracing.

3.5. Evidence Requirements and Inferential Boundaries

To distinguish recurrence from an isolated event, stronger evidence would identify the same node or program, its planned schedule, dated delivery and cancellation records, and a stated observation window covering its ordinary service cycle. Resource continuity requires actual staff presence or replacement and executed operating expenditure or confirmed support across that window, rather than job or budget intentions alone. Adaptation requires a dated chain from feedback to decision, implementation, and follow-up assessment. A festival repeated in official narratives, a booking indicator, or a funding allocation does not by itself satisfy these requirements. The current documents lack harmonized node-level series, denominators, disruption records, and follow-up outcomes; statistical tests, process-mechanism confirmation, and comparative stability ranking are therefore not warranted.

Numerical claims are attributed by source, reporting period, territorial or service scope, unit, and inferential boundary. Jiaxing's 92.86 composite score and two scores of 95 are dimensionless values reported for Zhejiang's 2023 multi-sector public-service-circle assessment [51]; the accessible report does not establish a culture-specific score, a common denominator, a longitudinal trend, or an independently validated outcome. Lishui's 972 cultural-life circles are a built-coverage count reported in the January 2024 adopted plan; the count's precise observation date is not stated [41]. These observations describe different scopes and units and are not compared as measures of stability.

The study also makes no GIS-based claim that residents actually reach facilities within 10 or 15 min. Such a test would require geocoded facilities, pedestrian networks, terrain and barrier data, opening hours, service capacity, and disaggregated population locations. Here, "10-min" and "15-min" refer to policy designs and reported delivery arrangements.

4. Results

4.1. Provincial Documents Specify a Multi-Level Service Architecture

National and provincial documents specify a cultural-life circle extending beyond a facility radius. The national law requires public benefit, equality, and convenience alongside venue-based, mobile, and digital services; social participation; demand feedback; and evaluation [14]. National plans propose menu, order, reservation, rural, and digital provision [15,46,47]. These are institutional obligations and intended arrangements, not confirmation that their components have been coordinated in every locality.

The Zhejiang trial evaluation instrument specifies service guarantee, work organization, public influence, and whole-process management. Its 24 secondary indicators, as listed in the July 2022 instrument, address spaces, teams, volunteers, activity, bookings, cultural orders, online learning, participation, satisfaction, response, and negative-list management [48]. This count concerns the instrument's structure. The inclusion of an indicator shows what authorities intend to monitor, rather than providing observed values or demonstrating recurrent service.

Some specified indicators rely on platform activity, reservations, clicks, or administrator reporting. These could yield operating traces if dated records and denominators were available, but the accessible documents do not provide a culture-specific node-level series, subgroup distribution, audit, or validation against non-digital users. Indicator design and reported composite assessment values are consequently kept separate from verified continuity, inclusiveness, and cultural value.

Provincial reports describe the integration of existing facilities, including libraries, cultural halls, museums, reading rooms, community and social spaces, teams, and digital channels [49,50]. The reports provide a documentary account of resource integration. Whether reuse reduces duplication, improves connectivity, or sustains each node remains an operational question that province-wide counts cannot answer.

4.2. Jiaxing Documented Rules for Coordination and Recurring Provision

Jiaxing's formal implementation opinion translates the provincial framework into an urban–rural integrated "10-min quality cultural life circle" [40]. The "1 + 3" rule combines at least one essential public cultural venue with three or more other public-benefit spaces. It therefore defines both a local system boundary and a minimum node configuration, while allowing existing venues and compatible public spaces to be integrated rather than treating each circle as a single facility.

The implementation opinion connects a municipal standard, urban–rural coverage, activity requirements, volunteering, and monitoring [40]. These provisions specify how responsibility and operating expectations should be organized. They establish evidence of formal design, while compliance, coordination in practice, and continuity remain unverified.

The "1 + 3" rule combines required and supplementary spaces, while fixed, mobile, and digital channels are specified in the municipal design [40]. Reuse could expand a service portfolio, but the document does not supply node-level sharing agreements, schedules, capacity records, or measurements of duplication and utilization. The arrangement is therefore coded as intended resource coordination rather than demonstrated resource pooling or activation.

The April 2022 implementation opinion requires at least one offline cultural activity per week within each circle [40]. This is a prescribed circle-level frequency, not a record that every venue or circle delivered the activities. Volunteering and monitoring provisions likewise define roles and reporting expectations. Together with the provincial index [48], they describe a possible coordination cycle, but the corpus does not trace named actors, staff allocations, actual schedules, resident feedback, program changes, or breakdowns for representative nodes.

The secondary report of Zhejiang's 2023 multi-sector assessment attributes a composite score of 92.86 to Jiaxing and scores of 95 each for supply–demand matching and facility accessibility [51]. They are reported assessment values for the broader public-service-circle program, published in March 2024, rather than culture-only performance measures. Their scale, subgroup denominators, repeated observations, and independent validation are not supplied in the accessible report. The figures are retained as contextual reporting and provide no direct evidence that Jiaxing's cultural services operated continuously or produced user outcomes.

Jiaxing's documents give prominence to a common municipal rule, integrated spaces, recurring-activity requirements, and monitoring (Figure 3). This design can be described as an emphasis on rule-based coordination. It cannot establish that the rules were implemented consistently, that operation remained stable, or that feedback altered provision. Inactive nodes, cancellations, non-use, and access among residents outside digital channels are not documented sufficiently for assessment.

4.3. Lishui Documented Plans Practices and Operating Shortfalls

Lishui's adopted plan identifies a mountainous municipal setting and discusses transport, talent, funding, land, demographic change, and cultural demand as constraints [41]. These are the authority's contextual diagnosis. The plan proposes a multi-tier network, mobile and digital delivery, shared village spaces, local operators, and participatory pro-

duction. It does not test whether terrain, rather than fiscal, demographic, administrative, or cultural differences, explains these choices.

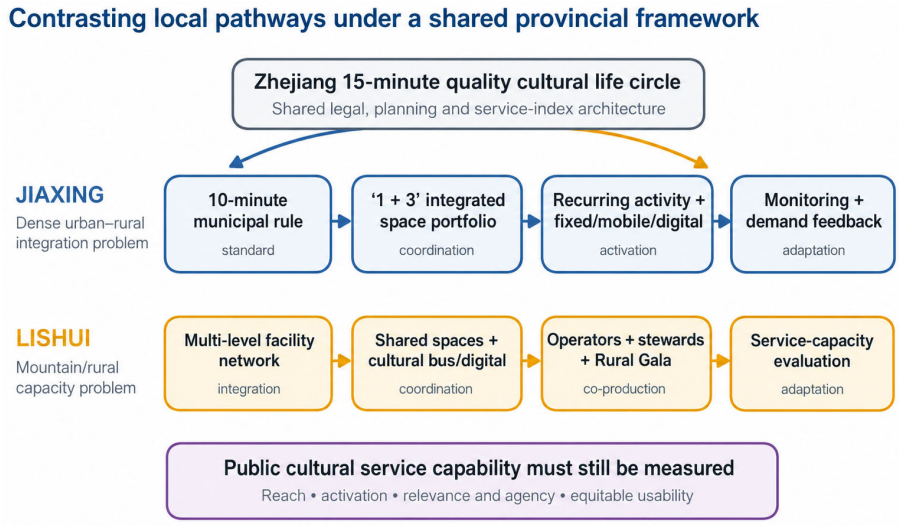

Figure 3. Documented design emphases in Jiaxing and Lishui. Rules, proposals, and reported practices are distinguished in Table 5. Arrows are schematic, without verifying implementation, exclusive city types, comparative performance, or operational stability.

Table 5. Cross-case comparison of documented public cultural service configurations.

Dimension	Jiaxing	Lishui	Bounded Cross-Case Interpretation
Boundary and context	Municipal 10-min label and urban–rural integration [40]	Mountainous setting and provincial 15-min framework [41,52]	Documented labels and diagnoses; actual travel time is not measured.
Institutional coordination	Common space, activity, staffing/volunteer and monitoring rules [40]	Multi-tier plan, proposed service evaluation and socialized operation [41,52]	Both specify responsibilities; implementation and effects are unverified.
Resource coordination	1 + 3 spaces and fixed/mobile/digital design [40]	Proposed sharing, buses, operators, stewards and digital services [41,52]	Relative design emphases overlap; actual transfers and costs are not traced.
Participation and feedback	Volunteer and feedback requirements [40]; provincial indicators [48]	Reported village production [44,45]; proposed stewards and operators [41]	Roles are specified or reported; representative reach and feedback-linked change are unmeasured.
Operating evidence	Recurring-activity requirement: D; multi-sector score: NE	Reported Rural Gala: W; admitted underuse: N; construction counts: NE	Evidence of design and episodic practice does not meet moderate or strong continuity criteria.
Missing verification	No culture-specific node series, executed support history or user/non-user data	No quantified low-use panel, causal diagnosis or reform follow-up	Neither configuration is verified as stable or comparatively superior.

The January 2024 plan reports 972 built quality cultural-life circles and 335 built rural cultural halls, together with 57 newly added provincial rural museums, 18 newly added urban reading rooms, and 9 newly added cultural service stations [41]. The precise count dates are not specified, and the newly added counts are not presented as total stocks. These are reported construction or coverage outputs. In its analysis of remaining challenges, the same plan acknowledges inadequate facilities in parts of the central city and county seats, low rural-cultural-space utilization, and mismatch with changing cultural demand.

This directly challenges any inference from construction to successful operation, without quantifying the prevalence, severity, duration, or cause of low use.

The 2021 consultation draft proposed multi-tier facilities, integrated library access, evening provision, menu/order services, a cultural cloud, and mobile services [52]. Its draft status precludes treating these as completed implementation. The adopted plan proposes socialized operation, cultural stewards, support for non-state institutions, village-space service evaluation, professional operators, sharing across adjacent villages, joint activities, and cultural buses [41]. Adoption establishes the authority of the plan, not evidence that these reforms were delivered or repaired the reported shortfalls.

Construction and low use can coexist because a physical asset and an operating service are different observations. Three diagnostic hypotheses follow from the plan's juxtaposition of shortfalls and proposed reforms: insufficient staff or operating support may interrupt provision; distance and dispersed settlement may limit attendance; and programming may fail to match changing demand [41]. The plan motivates these hypotheses but does not connect each cause to named low-use nodes. Transport barriers, population aging, digital exclusion, seasonal absence, and fragmented administration require separate tests rather than attribution from the citywide narrative. Staffing rosters and executed expenditure, route and attendance records, and user and non-user interviews would discriminate these explanations.

Official Rural Gala reports describe performances organized, directed, and performed by villagers [44,45]. The earlier report links events with cultural halls and describes people returning during Spring Festival, while some villages are sparsely populated at other times [45]. These accounts support reported resident production and a seasonal-use concern. They predate the current circle instrument and do not establish year-round operation. The adopted plan's treatment of the Rural Gala as a service and standardization brand [41] records an institutionalized policy reference, rather than continuous delivery at every hall.

The Rural Gala account is evidence of a reported productive role for villagers, beyond attendance alone. Its contribution to continuity, identity, inclusion, or responsiveness is not measured. A concentrated festival may activate a venue while leaving ordinary-period use low; this is a possible failure mode supported by the earlier report's seasonal context, not a demonstrated explanation for the plan's later utilization diagnosis. The two sources are separated in time and do not follow the same nodes or residents.

Lishui's documents give prominence to mobile and shared resources, local operators and stewards, and village cultural production (Figure 3). This is a design emphasis on flexible resource coordination, accompanied by explicit operating shortfalls. The documents do not show that these arrangements compensate successfully for dispersion. Reliance on episodic events, scarce professional capacity, transport, digital access, and voluntary intermediaries identifies questions for operational verification.

4.4. Cross Case Comparison of Documented Configurations

Table 5 compares governance features documented within a shared provincial framework. Both cases specify integrated spaces, multiple delivery modes, and participation or evaluation arrangements. Jiaxing's implementation rule gives greater prominence to common facility and activity requirements; Lishui's planning and historical reports give greater prominence to mobile or shared provision, local intermediaries, and village production. The categories overlap, and variation in document genre and period limits any inference about differences in actual practice.

The comparison answers the research question at the level of documentary representation. The two cases show contrasting design emphases and differing reported constraints.

Context-sensitive design is a plausible interpretation, but settlement form is not isolated from fiscal capacity, demographics, administration, cultural endowment, digital infrastructure, policy priority, or source genre. No measured stability outcome is available to confirm that either emphasis maintains the public-service function.

5. Discussion

5.1. Operational Stability as an Unmeasured Outcome

The comparison identifies possible organizational conditions for stable operation, rather than demonstrating stability as a system property. Assigned responsibility, connected resources, recurrent provision, staff and funding continuity, and preservation of the public function form an evaluation agenda. The distinction between spatial opportunity and realized access [5,6] helps explain why proximity design alone cannot establish service delivery or user outcomes. Whether the arrangements jointly produce operational stability must be tested with observations over time.

The analysis separates structural coverage, organized operating capacity, observed stability, and experienced access or outcomes.

A facility count describes a structural output; an activity requirement describes intended operation; a dated event describes episodic activation. Verified recurrent provision requires records across a stated observation window. Cultural and social value requires additional user-level and population-level evidence. These are evidentiary distinctions, rather than a measured linear progression.

Coordination, resource sharing, participation, and feedback are potential explanatory processes. They could also fail: responsibility may be unclear, resources intermittent, participation selective, and feedback unrepresentative. The documents identify arrangements intended to address these issues, but lack the dated chains of actor decisions, resource transfers, delivery, and subsequent observations needed to confirm a mechanism.

Lishui's reported 972 circles and admitted low rural-space utilization illustrate that a construction output and an operating shortfall can coexist [41]. They do not establish a citywide stability deficit or its causes. Jiaxing's "1 + 3" rule likewise specifies an architecture without documenting whether staffing, funding, or provision persisted. Both observations justify separating policy design from verified operation.

5.2. Context and Governance Design as a Testable Relationship

Standardization and flexible delivery are possible design responses rather than demonstrated stabilizing mechanisms. Common standards can specify minimum responsibilities and comparable reporting, while local adaptation can alter delivery when geography, mobility, population, or cultural practice makes a uniform facility design difficult. Whether either response improves continuity, or introduces rigidity and additional coordination costs, remains open.

Jiaxing's documents emphasize standardized space and activity requirements; Lishui's documents emphasize sharing, mobility, and local organization. This contrast supports an exploratory proposition that different contextual constraints may encourage different design emphases. It does not establish a universal rule for dense or dispersed settlements. Fiscal resources, administrative capability, population composition, cultural traditions, digital access, and policy priority require examination alongside settlement form.

A possible multi-level architecture could combine common public-service guarantees, locally selected delivery modes, and reporting disaggregated by place and population. This proposal is informed by the two document sets and process-oriented policy integration [30]. It requires validation across additional municipalities and through implementation research. The comparison does not show that the proposal is generally feasible, more equitable, or

more stable than alternatives, nor does it prescribe a single division of responsibilities for all localities.

5.3. Participation Digital Channels and Unverified Effects

The Rural Gala reports identify villagers as organizers, creators, directors, and performers [44,45]. This is consistent with the productive roles described in co-production and public-service value-creation research [20,24–26]. A stabilizing effect is only a proposition: evidence would need to show recurring delivery, continued professional and financial support, inclusive recruitment, and what happens when key local organizers withdraw.

Co-production may introduce dependencies on voluntary labor, influential intermediaries, or flagship events. Their distribution and consequences are not observed here. Professional support, open recruitment, ordinary-period programming, and non-participant input are possible safeguards whose effect requires evaluation. The seasonal context in the earlier Lishui report reinforces the need to distinguish an event's mobilization from year-round service continuity [45].

Bookings, satisfaction, and response indicators specify possible feedback channels [48]. The corpus does not provide channel-specific response records or a dated request-to-adjustment sequence in either case. The proposition that feedback improves relevance or continuity would require the identification of a request, the responsible actor, a decision, a delivered change, and subsequent use or barrier reduction.

Digital designs provide potential channels for schedules, reservations, content, records, and requests [35]. Their effect on reach, coordination, or stability is not measured in these cases. Comparison should distinguish platform availability from use, unique users from repeated contacts, and online activity from additional access that would not otherwise occur.

Platform data, if obtained, would record only people using the channel. Devices, connectivity, awareness, skills, accessible interfaces, and relevance may filter participation [32–34]. No platform analytics or user-level digital traces are analyzed here; the documents' indicator lists cannot be presented as actual population reach or demand response.

Equity implications are therefore an explicit research agenda. Older adults, disabled residents, migrants, residents with low digital literacy, rural residents, and non-participants should be included in channel-specific research rather than represented by aggregate attendance or satisfaction. Useful evidence includes subgroup population denominators, accessible interviews with users and non-users, unsuccessful booking attempts, travel and scheduling barriers, assisted and offline use, and actual response decisions. Walk-in, telephone, community-worker, and assisted channels are design options to test; this study does not verify their availability or effectiveness in either city.

5.4. Evidence Needed to Evaluate Operational Stability

The provincial instrument specifies activity, participation, satisfaction, and response indicators [48], but no stability measure is estimated here. A future evaluation should keep four domains separate and state the service remit, node or program, planned recurrence, observation window, denominators, and missing records before interpreting continuity.

Structural configuration: network travel time or scheduled mobile-service coverage, node types, opening hours, capacity, and accessible formats.

Operational continuity: scheduled and actual opening, recurring provision, operating staff, confirmed support or executed expenditure, use, and cancellations across the same stated period.

Adaptive feedback: Dated requests or barriers, responsible decisions, delivered program or channel changes, and follow-up observations. Satisfaction or response rates alone do not verify adjustment.

Distribution and inclusion: results disaggregated by rurality, age, disability, migration status, delivery channel, and repeated or non-use.

Administrative records could support continuity checks if operating periods, denominators, node-level missingness, staff replacement, and funding execution were visible. Feedback and distribution additionally require accessible qualitative or survey research that recruits users and non-users. A full ordinary service cycle would provide stronger evidence than an isolated event; multi-year follow-up and independent corroboration would further test persistence. These requirements are proposed validation criteria rather than measures applied successfully in this study.

A composite index should be interpreted with its constituent units and reporting boundaries visible. A future evaluation could display structure, continuity, adaptation, and distribution separately, so that an inactive node is not obscured by performance elsewhere. This is a proposed reporting approach; the present comparison does not test whether it improves management or reduces strategic reporting.

Table 6 translates documentary vulnerabilities into propositions and evidence requirements. The proposed responses have not been evaluated as interventions.

Table 6. Provisional design responses and evidence required for validation.

Documented Vulnerability or Concern	Possible Response to Test	Validation Evidence and Possible Failure
Nearby space may remain inactive	Connect recognition to accountable operators and recurring provision	Same-node opening, delivery, cancellations, staff presence and executed support; rules may remain unenforced.
Fragmented resources	Test sharing across public/community spaces and delivery channels	Agreements, actual transfers, schedules, staff allocation and costs; links may add coordination burdens.
Dispersed delivery	Evaluate shared operation, itinerant services and local intermediaries	Repeated routes, missed settlements, costs and reliable visits; distance or scarce staff may interrupt delivery.
Demand mismatch	Test feedback, co-design and resident production	Request–decision–implemented change–follow-up chain and non-user inquiry; visible participants may dominate.
Digital access barriers	Evaluate digital channels with assisted and offline provision	Channel-specific reach, failed attempts, usability, denominators and subgroup barriers; availability may not yield additional access.
Uneven inclusion	Test disaggregated reporting and accessible non-user recruitment	Age, disability, migration and place-specific experiences; aggregate scores may obscure absent residents.
Official reporting bias	Permit external and participatory verification	Provenance, source excerpts, missingness and independent checks; documentary transparency alone does not establish continuity.

5.5. Contribution of the Documentary Comparison

The contribution is a source-sensitive account of governance design for proximity-based public cultural services. It distinguishes an unmeasured stability outcome from enabling capacity, coordinating processes, episodic activity, and coverage outputs. It identifies what the two case documents emphasize and the evidence needed to test their implications, rather than offering a confirmed theory of context-conditioned stability.

The three analytical domains make possible dependencies explicit: standards require implementation; resource links require actual transfers and schedules; participation requires continuing support; and feedback requires a traceable response. Failure at any link is a hypothesis about operation. The corpus does not establish the prevalence of these failures or show that their absence is sufficient for stability.

Settlement form is one candidate influence on configuration, alongside resources, demographics, administrative capacity, cultural practices, digital access, and documentary

framing. An expanded multi-city design with comparable operating records could assess which combinations support recurrent, inclusive provision. The current two-case contrast provides propositions and a coding framework for such work.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Four limitations delimit the documentary findings and their proposed operational implications.

First, the fourteen-document core corpus is compact and dominated by official sources. Legal and planning documents support analysis of prescribed roles, designs, and admitted shortfalls, but cannot reconstruct ordinary operation. A defensible node-level operating archive was not established for this study. Municipal and county implementation reports, executed cultural budgets, staffing histories, platform logs, local investigations, and NGO or community records would be needed to assess stability. The present study therefore adopts the narrower policy-design interpretation.

Source selection was purposive rather than exhaustive, and public visibility may favor formalized or promoted initiatives. The contextual statistical bulletins add a baseline but no cultural-service operating evidence. No new interviews, surveys, focus groups, administrative use microdata, or process-tracing observations were added. Missing empirical evidence is not remedied by a more detailed documentary codebook.

Second, the two cases are not matched on fiscal resources, administrative capacity, population composition, cultural endowment, digital infrastructure, or policy priority. A common province does not control these alternatives, and the different source genres and periods further constrain comparison. No causal context-to-configuration relationship, stability ranking, shock response, or geographic accessibility is demonstrated. Jiaxing's multi-sector assessment and Lishui's construction counts cannot serve as common outcome measures.

Third, users and non-users are not directly represented. No evidence establishes the reach, relevance, continuity, accessibility, or effects of participation and digital channels for older adults, disabled residents, migrants, residents with low digital literacy, or non-participants. The absence of a group's experience in official documents is not evidence of inclusion or exclusion; targeted empirical work is required.

Fourth, no independently estimated inter-coder reliability is reported. The revised definitions, quotation audit, source-status labels, negative evidence, and explicit exclusions improve inspectability, but do not validate the proposed strength rubric or substitute for independent coding and field triangulation.

Future research should expand municipal and county sources and collect harmonized longitudinal node-level schedules, actual delivery, cancellations, staffing, and executed operating support. Representative programs should be followed from coordination and allocation through provision, feedback, adjustment, and breakdown, including inactive or discontinued nodes. User and non-user research should be stratified by place, age, disability, migration status, and delivery channel. A multi-city comparison could then test contextual explanations and the proposed multi-level architecture against common continuity and inclusion measures.

7. Conclusions

This study compared how Jiaxing and Lishui documents configure proximity-based public cultural services and what evidence supports their proposed operational implications. The direct findings concern governance representation: Jiaxing's municipal rule gives prominence to standardized spaces, recurrent-activity requirements, volunteering, and monitoring; Lishui's plans and historical reports give prominence to mobile or shared

provision, local intermediaries, and village-produced events. The emphases overlap and are not exhaustive city types.

The evidence does not establish that either configuration produces operational stability, that participation or digital provision improves outcomes, or that settlement context causes the observed documentary contrast. Operational stability remains an outcome requiring records of recurrent service and resource continuity across a defined period. Fiscal capacity, demographics, administration, cultural endowment, digital access, policy priority, and source genre remain competing or interacting explanations.

Lishui's adopted plan reports extensive construction alongside low rural-space utilization, while Jiaxing's reported assessment scores concern multiple service sectors. These observations justify keeping policy requirements, coverage outputs, operating traces, and verified outcomes distinct. Neither observation supplies a culture-specific longitudinal measure or a comparable performance ranking.

The practical contribution is a set of propositions to test: connect facility design with accountable recurrent operation, examine actual resource sharing, assess delivery choices against local constraints, and trace participation and feedback through subsequent provision. A multi-level architecture combining common guarantees with locally selected modes is a possible approach requiring validation in additional cases and implementation settings. Longitudinal operating evidence and user and non-user research are needed before claiming sustained, inclusive cultural services.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/soc16100356/s1. Revised Supplementary Material S1: Core Document Corpus Contextual Baseline Codebook and Evidence Audit. It includes source excerpts, coding decisions, numerical-claim boundaries, missing process links, and validation requirements. This supplementary file comprises twelve sections covering corpus construction, public-document inventory, coding procedures, operating-evidence assessment, source excerpts, comparative analysis, source-bias safeguards, document URLs, conceptual definitions, contextual baseline, low-utilization hypotheses, and validation requirements. All references cited or documented in Supplementary Material S1 are included in the reference list of the main manuscript [13–16,40–52].

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