

# Practical Research on Site Regeneration Design in the Core Area of Traditional Villages——Take Jiuxian Village in Mazhang District, Zhanjiang City as an Example

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**Abstract:** *This study takes the core site of Jiuxian Village, a traditional village, as the research object. By integrating site theory and historical stratification theory, it builds an analytical framework. Through on-site investigation, it sorts out its spatial form, current characteristics and prominent problems, and then proposes targeted renovation and renewal plans, providing practical ideas for the protection and revitalization of core sites in similar traditional villages.*

**Keywords:** *Traditional Villages; Site Regeneration Design; Place Theory; Historical Stratification Theory*

## 1. Introduction

As an important spatial carrier of Chinese agricultural civilization and regional culture, the core places of traditional villages are not only the hubs of villagers' daily lives, but also the material manifestations of the village's historical memory, social structure and cultural identity. With the rapid advancement of urbanization, many traditional villages are confronted with the challenges of the decline of physical space, the disappearance of cultural characteristics and the disintegration of social structure, and the vitality and integrity of their core sites are seriously threatened. Therefore, conducting in-depth research on the core sites of traditional villages and exploring sustainable protection and renewal paths for them have urgent theoretical value and practical significance for continuing the local cultural context and revitalizing the vitality of villages.

Jiuxian Village is an ancient village with a history of over 1,400 years. It is the only ancient county site in Zhanjiang City and was selected as one of the second batch of ancient villages in Guangdong Province in 2012. Its core premises carry rich historical accumulation and regional cultural connotations. This study takes the core site of Jiuxian Village as the research object, builds an analytical framework by combining site theory and historical stratification theory, sorts out its spatial form, current characteristics and prominent problems through on-site investigation, and then proposes targeted renovation and renewal plans, providing practical ideas for the protection and revitalization of core sites in similar traditional villages.

## 2. Theoretical Research

The core sites of traditional villages, as the core nodes of the village's spatial structure, require multi-dimensional and multi-level theoretical support for their research. Based on the review and integration of existing literature, this study mainly relies on the site theory and historical stratification theory to construct a theoretical framework for the research of core sites in traditional villages, in order to systematically explain their spatial characteristics, cultural connotations and evolution mechanisms.

### 2.1 Overview of Place Theory

The theory of place originated from the phenomenological philosophical tradition and was systematically constructed and developed by the Norwegian architect Norberg Schulz into the core theory of architectural phenomenology [1]. This theory refers to the unique atmosphere, historical memory and

cultural identity contained in a specific place. The place becomes the bond connecting space and people's emotions, breaking through the traditional perception that space is merely a material container. It emphasizes that space is a "place" that acquires meaning through people's experience and perception. In the context of traditional villages, core places such as Taishan Mansion, Longyan Well, and Peng Family Ancestral Hall in Jiuxian Village are typical manifestations of the deep integration of the three attributes of material environment, functional activities, and place significance. Schultz's concept of "place spirit" reveals that each place has its unique atmosphere and sense of identity. This spirit is jointly created through material elements such as the form organization, spatial scale, and material texture of buildings, as well as social activities such as sacrifices, deliberations, and daily interactions, becoming the material carrier for villagers' emotional attachment and identity recognition. The "sense of place" theory further developed by Yi-Fu Duan and Rief deepened the understanding of place from the perspective of people's subjective experience, emphasizing the formation mechanism of people's emotional connection and sense of belonging to place [2-3]. In traditional villages, the core place is not only a physical space but also a repository of villagers' collective memory and local sentiments, possessing irreplaceable spiritual value. Although the place theory has been criticized by the academic community for its subjectivity and the lack of a unified evaluation standard, its profound revelation of the humanistic value of space still provides an important theoretical tool for understanding the cultural connotation of the core places in traditional villages [4].

## ***2.2 Overview of Historical Stratification Theory***

The theory of historical stratification originated from the concept of "Historic Urban Landscape" (HUL for short) proposed by UNESCO, emphasizing that urban landscapes are the result of the "layer-by-layer accumulation" of cultural, natural and social values in different historical periods [5]. This theory provides a crucial analytical framework for understanding the spatio-temporal evolution of the core sites of traditional villages. In the case of Jiuxian Village, from the ruins of the county seat of the Sui and Tang Dynasties to the ancestral halls and temples of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, each historical stage has left material and cultural traces in space, forming a complex three-layered structure of "time - space - culture". These historical layers are not merely physical superpositions but are interrelated through dynamic mechanisms such as "continuation, adaptation, replacement, and integration", jointly shaping the contemporary appearance of the site. The dual-dimensional analysis method of "diachronic" and "synchronic" proposed by scholars such as Cao Yongmao and Li Heping has further improved the research framework of the historical stratification theory. Diachronic emphasizes exploring the evolution of the site from the perspective of the time axis, while synchronic focuses on the spatial features and structural relationships on specific time sections. The two together constitute a complete spatio-temporal interpretation of the core sites of traditional villages [6]. The "landscape narrative grammar" and "layering mechanism" analysis methods developed by scholars such as Xiao Jing further regard the site as a "text" carrying historical information, and interpret its spatial narrative logic through the hierarchical structure of "pattern - cluster - street and alley - landmark", providing methodological support for analyzing the organizational structure of the core site in Jiuxian Village [7].

## **3. Analysis of the Core Locations in Jiuxian Village**

### ***3.1 Overview of Jiuxian Village***

Jiuxian Village is an ancient village with a history of over 1,400 years, located in Huguang Town, Mazhang District, Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province. It is the only ancient county site in Zhanjiang City, with a total population of over 8,000. In 2012, Jiuxian Village was rated as one of the second batch of ancient villages in Guangdong Province.

### ***3.2 Analysis of the Core Locations in Jiuxian Village***

The core site of Jiuxian Village starts from the Cultural Center of Jiuxian Village and extends northward along the ancient central alley. Overall, the buildings within the premises are closely arranged outward along the central ancient alley and several branch alleys, presenting a comb-like settlement spatial layout with clear and distinct spatial form and texture [8-9]. This research will, based on different spatial forms. The core area of Jiuxian Village is divided into three spatial forms: point, line and surface, this has been listed in Figure 1.

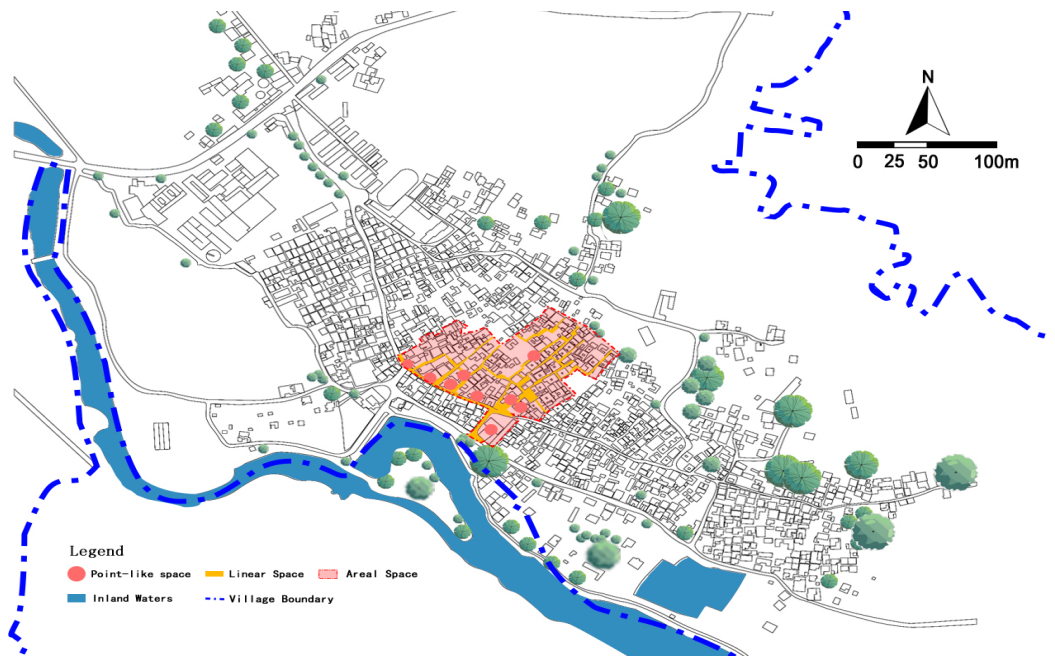


Figure 1 shows the point, line and surface spatial forms of the core site in Jiuxian Village

### 3.2.1 Point-like spatial form

The point-like spatial form is the cultural relic and historic site within the place and serves as the key contact point for mutual connection within the place[10]. Jiuxian Village has a long history. Within its premises, there are numerous cultural relics and historic sites such as Taishan Prefecture, Longyan Well, and Mingjing Hall, which carry the historical memories and cultural heritage of the village.

### 3.2.2 Linear spatial form

The linear space form is divided into two levels of linear space. The first level is the central ancient alley, which serves as the main road within the site. Its primary function is to connect some cultural relics and historic sites with functional service nodes, as well as to facilitate the internal and external connections of the site. The second level consists of several branch alleys of the central ancient lane within the site, connecting the residents' residences with the cultural relics and historic sites outside the current space of the first level.

### 3.2.3 Planar spatial form

The planar space is composed of various important nodes within the core area of Jiuxian Village and the network of streets and alleys connecting these important nodes. It has multiple functions such as rest, religious gatherings and entertainment.

## 3.3 Venue Issues

There are ancient buildings in the core area of Jiuxian Village that have not been effectively restored and protected. These ancient buildings have been dying out or becoming vacant Spaces over time, and at the same time, they have had a destructive impact on the integrity and continuity of the traditional village's appearance.

## 4. Renovation and update strategy

### 4.1 Space utilization and street beautification

As the main linear space of a village, streets and alleys play a significant role in connecting various historical sites. Around the streets in the countryside, there are various idle Spaces of different sizes, which are one of the preferred points for improvement and renovation. On the basis of preserving the original rural texture, the damaged facilities are slightly renovated in accordance with the situation, and local native materials and native plants are used to create a rural characteristic courtyard landscape. Achieve an organic combination of protection and renewal. It provide practical experience support for

the improvement of the rural landscape, the continuation of cultural heritage and the dynamic inheritance of the core protection area.

In the improvement of the street and alley space landscape, dry tree trunks, pebbles, small stones, dilapidated water tanks and other raw materials are used to build the scenery, with the combination of plants as an auxiliary. The heights are staggered to create a street and alley space with a rural flavor and a fresh and elegant style(See Figure 2).



Before renovation

After renovation

*Figure 2 Renovation of street and alley Spaces*

#### **4.2 Courtyard Transformation, Enhanced Appearance**

The courtyard sites of the traditional village of Jiuxian Village embody a unique local culture. After the accumulation of history, they have formed a distinctive local memory space. At the same time, they are connected with the emotional memories of family emotions and neighborhood interactions, possessing the ecological aesthetics and ancient charm of a traditional village. The beauty of China lies in the countryside. The charm of the countryside is condensed in one courtyard. The beauty of the courtyard is an indispensable part of the "one household, one scene" in the picture of rural revitalization. The beautiful courtyard conceals the poetry of life and the warmth of home. The embellishment of flowers and plants and the ingenious setting are all witnesses to a beautiful life. The transformation of the courtyard, taking a point-to-surface approach, focuses on the inheritance and protection of the village's historical and cultural heritage. Through methods such as waste material renovation, creative handicraft embellishment, and resource recycling, it is believed that the "small beauty" of the courtyard can converge the "great beauty" of the countryside and enhance the traditional appearance of the core place.



Before renovation

After renovation

*Figure 3 Renovation of the old courtyard*

For the design of courtyard renovation in villages, corresponding renewal strategies should be formulated. Firstly, cultural connotations should be explored, the memory of the place should be found, and the protection of physical space should be elevated to the reshaping of the spirit of the place. Then, by adopting the approach of minimal intervention and restoring the old as it was, new functions of the



site should be implanted to infuse vitality. Moreover, villagers should be encouraged to participate in decision-making, design and subsequent maintenance, and a mechanism of "co-planning, co-construction and co-management" should be established. When updating, it should be divided into two levels. First, for the new-style architectural courtyards, materials with a unique local flavor should be selected, economical and aesthetically pleasing plants should be planted, scientifically combined and managed, and the design should incorporate the local Nuo dance culture to promote the traditional culture of the old county. The courtyard has a unique connotation. Its essence lies in the emotional bond between people and the environment. It extracts regional cultural elements such as the Nuo dance culture and the distinctive ancient architectural culture of Jiuxian Village (Figure 3 and Figure 4) and transforms them into landscape language. It uses landscape walls, stone carvings, sculptures, and pavement patterns to showcase the stories accumulated over a thousand years of Jiuxian's history.

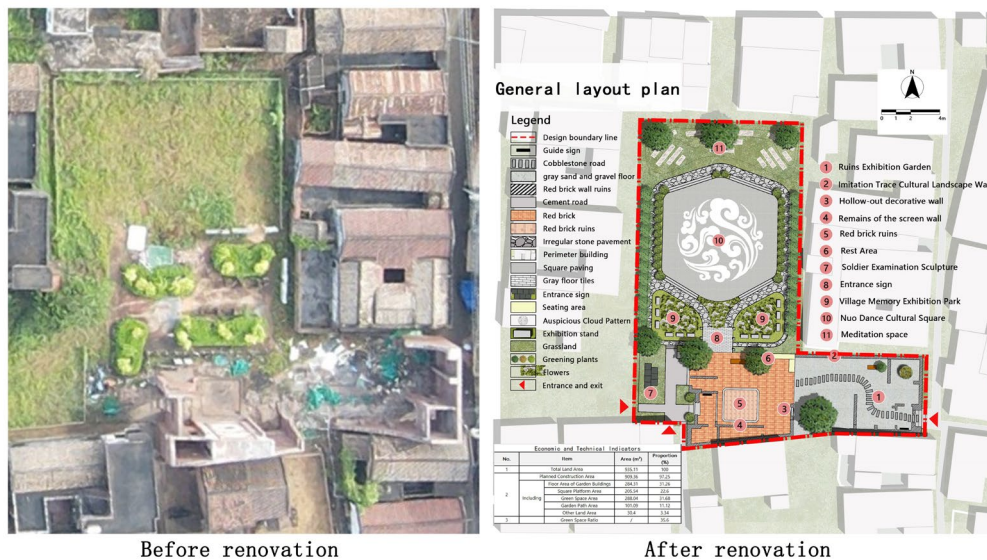


Figure 4 Renovation of ancient building courtyards

## 5. Conclusion

The protection and renewal of the core sites of traditional villages need to strike a balance between "the inheritance and protection of history" and "actual needs". Not only should the integrity of the physical space and the authenticity of the historical accumulation be safeguarded, but also cultural characteristics should be prevented from being buried. It is also necessary to invigorate the vitality of the places by optimizing functions and encouraging villagers' participation, so as to prevent public Spaces from deteriorating.

The analysis conducted and the renewal strategies proposed in this study for Jiuxian Village can provide theoretical references and practical examples for the sustainable development of core sites of similar ancient villages in southern China. This is conducive to the continuation of local cultural context and the promotion of rural revitalization.

## Acknowledgements

2022 Guangdong Province College Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project: Practical Research on the Regeneration Design of "Abandoned" Sites in the Core Area of Traditional Villages S202212622009.

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