

# Exploring the Evolution Characteristics of Rural Space Production and Its Driving Mechanism Taking Sanzhou Village in Changting County as an Example

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## ABSTRACT

With the introduction of Lefebvre's space production theory, this paper uses the spatial trialetics, takes Sanzhou Village in Changting County, a traditional Hakka village in western Fujian Province, as an example, aims to explore the space production history of the village space since the reform and opening up in 1978, and summarizes the characteristics of its "triadic space", namely, institutional space, production space and living space, and then analyzes the mechanism of space production changes in Sanzhou Village. Sanzhou Village has gone through three stages: the internal filling of the ancient building area, the expansion of the ancient building area to the outside, and the unified and centralized construction. In terms of spatial characteristics, Sanzhou Village's institutional space is gradually improved and the institutional orientation is complex; its production space is broken and reorganized, and the industrial structure is diversified; its living space is both ancient and modern, and social relations are open. In this development process, complex spatial forms are produced synthetically through different driving forces.

**Keywords:** *Sanzhou Village, Space production, Evolution characteristics, The period since 1978.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the "space production theory" of Lefebvre, this paper analyses the evolution of space production in Sanzhou Village from 1978 to the present in three spatial dimensions: institutional space, material space, and living space, reveals the driving role of Sanzhou Village in the development process and the interaction between various subjects, and actively reflects on its spatial reconstruction and transformation. The space production theory was put forward by French scholar Lefebvre, with its core idea being that "space is a product of society". He believed that "space" is not just a "container" external to the social-historical process or a passive vehicle for the transformation of social relations, but a product with rich social connotations, full of various ideologies and social production relations. [1] In his book "Production of Space", Lefebvre proposed that power and capital are the core driving forces for the production of urban space, and also proposed "spatial trialetics", in which "triadic

space" refers to the dialectical unity of three dimensions[2]: spatial practice, spatial representation, and representational space. [3] They correspond to three types of space, namely "space of perception", "space of conception" and "space of life". The space production theory shows the practical, living and political characteristics of space, which helps to understand the mechanism of spatial evolution and the social relations and interactions between different groups in space. [4] Based on the space production theory, the traditional village space can be divided into three dimensions: production space, living space, and institutional space. Production space is mainly the economic structure of the village, the space where different production subject of the village produce and reproduce, i.e., spatial practices; [5] living space is the real space occupied by "villagers" and "users" in production and life, i.e., representational space; [6] institutional space is the "objective" and "scientific" system of symbols edited and conceived by the knowledge and ideology of ruling groups and planners, such as government documents,

written laws and regulations, official marketing advertisements, etc., i.e., spatial representation. [7] Under the action of economic, institutional and social activities and other forces, the traditional

village space realizes the formation of spatial elements of diachronism and synchronicity, and develops a specific space production pattern. ("Figure 1")

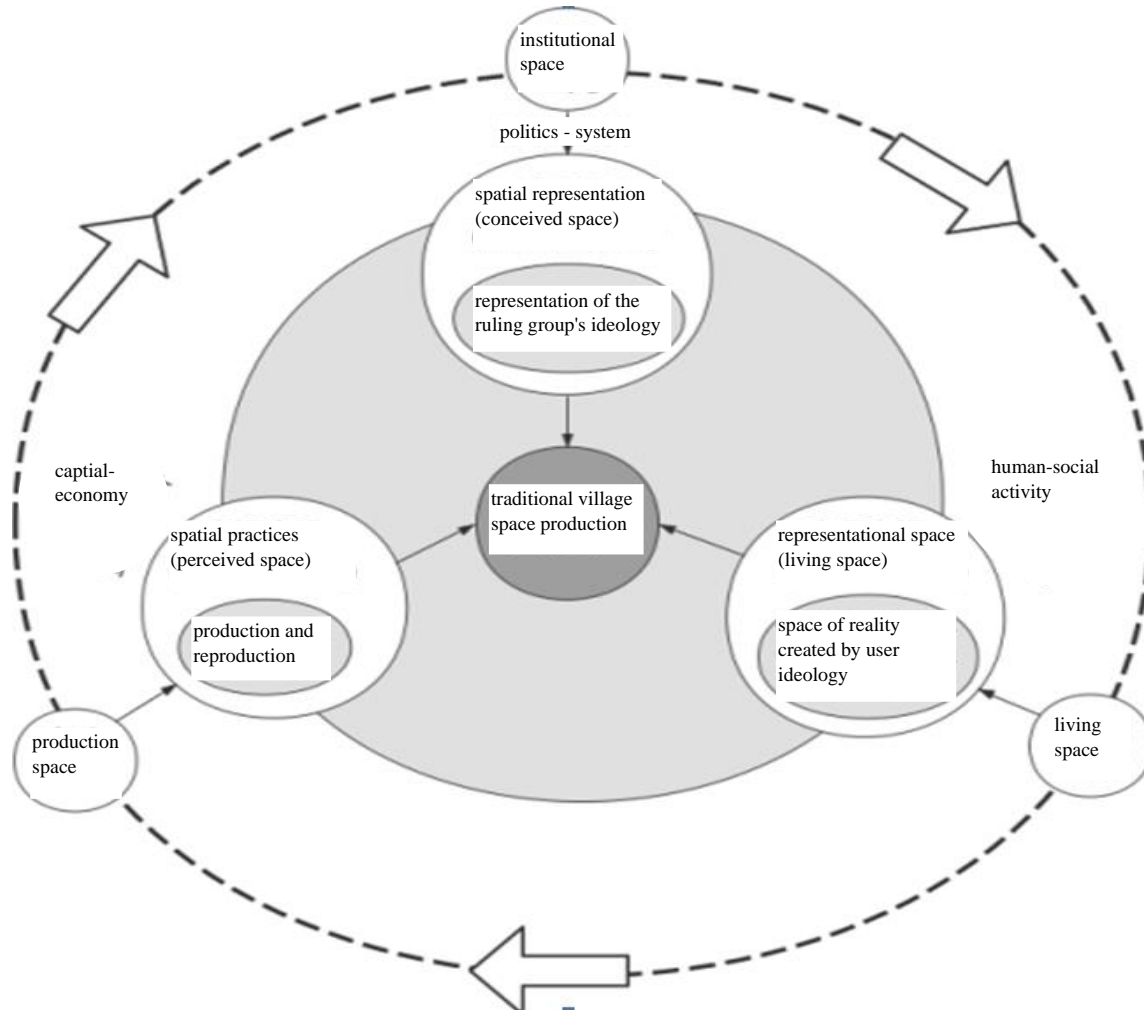


Figure 1 Composition of the "triadic space" in traditional villages. (Source: drawn by the author)

## 2. OBJECT OF STUDY

Sanzhou Village is located in Sanzhou Town, Changting County, Longyan City, which is the seat of Sanzhou Town Government and market town, and is situated along the Tingjiang River in the south of Changting County, in the river basin; the village is surrounded by mountains on three sides and the terrain there is relatively flat. ("Figure 2") The village now has 26 groups of villagers, with a total of 1,068 households, mainly focusing on agricultural production, the waxberry industry, and tourism services. In terms of transportation, the village is mainly connected to the outside world through County Road 651 and the ecological landscape avenue on the west side of the village,

with relatively convenient transportation. The beginning of the village can be traced back to the Neolithic period. In 1987, during the cultural relics inspection, pottery shards, stone adzes and bronze ware sites from the Neolithic period were found in Sanzhou, which led to the saying that "there was no Tingzhou, but Sanzhou first". Later, with the immigration, Sanzhou Village became the habitation of Hakka. There are still more than 70 cultural relics and architectural monuments of the five dynasties from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties in the village, among which the traditional buildings left by the Ming and Qing dynasties are in the majority.

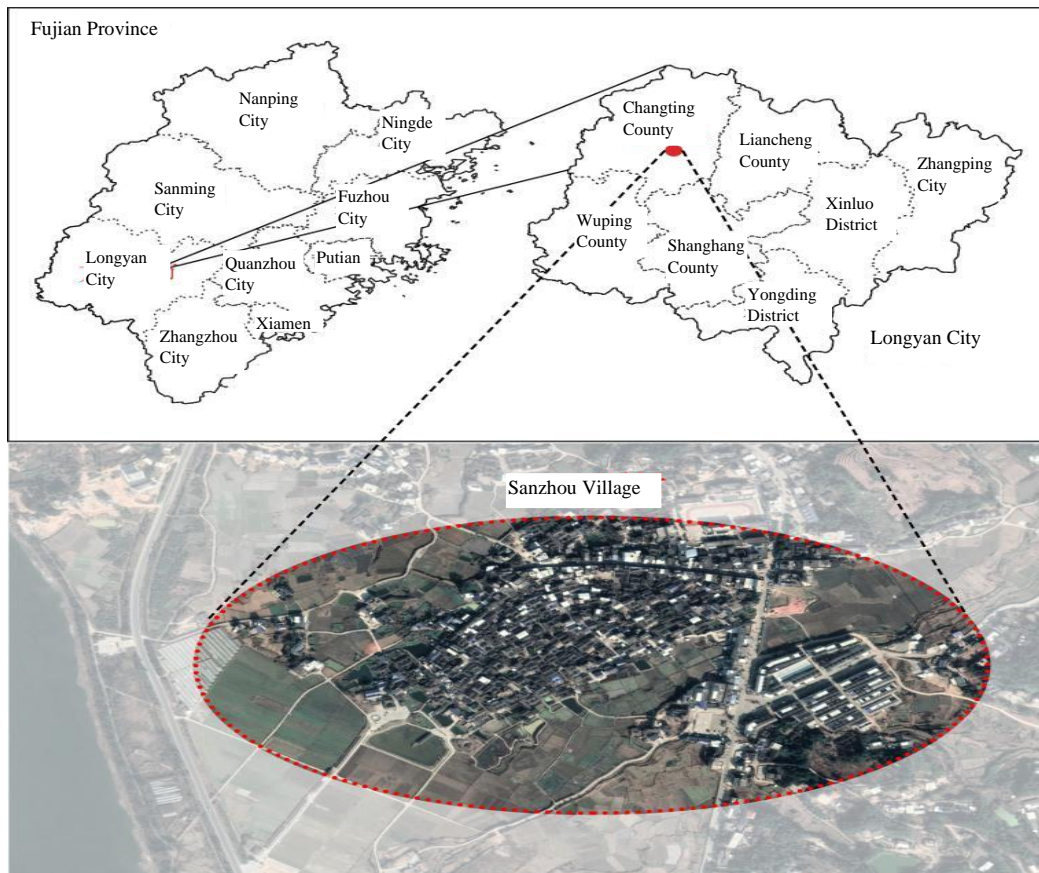


Figure 2 Location map of Sanzhou Village. (Source: drawn by the author)

### 3. THE EVOLUTION OF SPACE PRODUCTION IN SANZHOU VILLAGE SINCE 1978

Since the reform and opening up in 1978, the space production process of Sanzhou Village has obvious stage characteristics. Based on the occurrence of key events and the evolution of spatial forms, the development history of Sanzhou Village after 1978 to the present can be divided into the stage of the internal filling of the ancient building area (1978-1990), the stage of the expansion of the ancient building area to the outside (1991-2010), and the stage of unified and centralized construction (2011-present). (“Figure 3”)

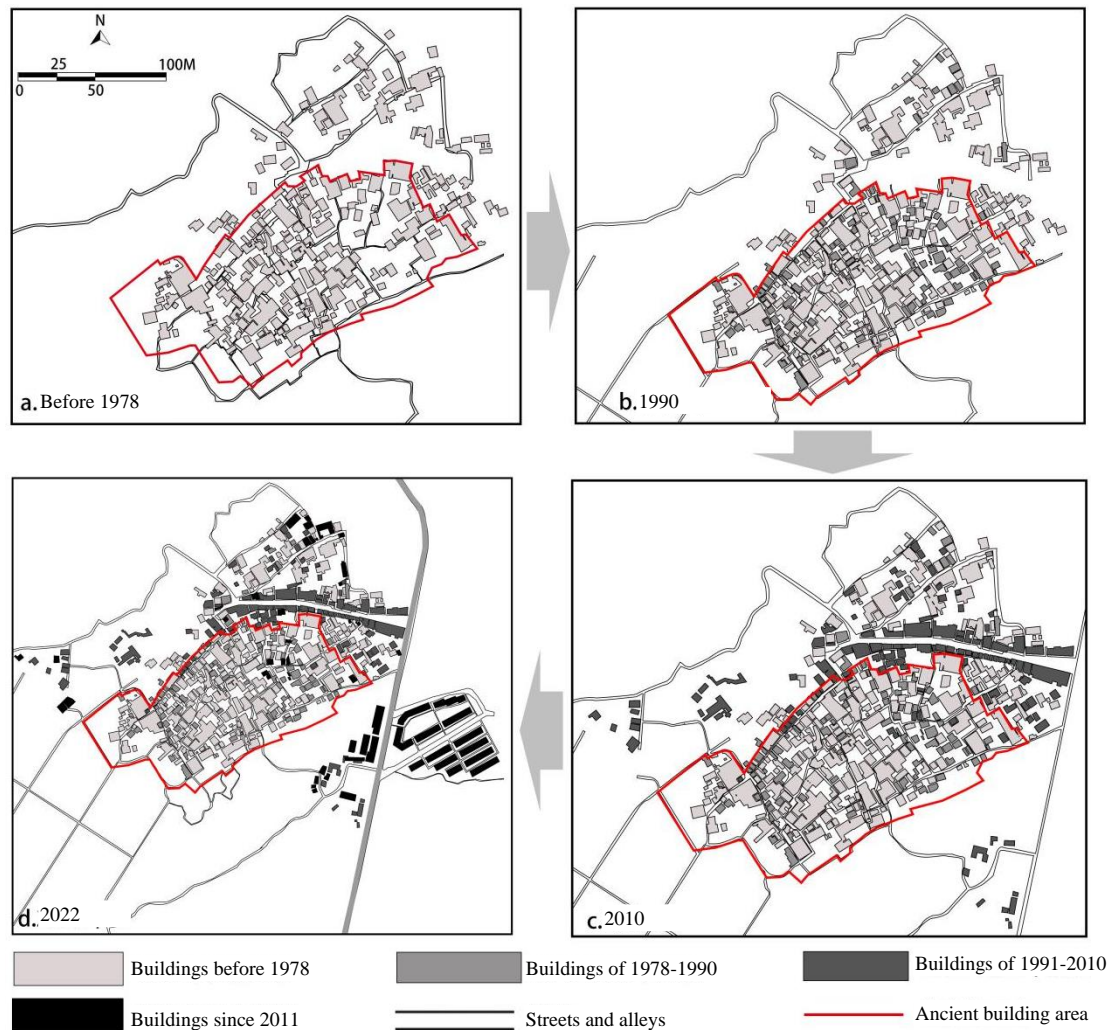


Figure 3 Illustration of the evolution of the spatial form of Sanzhou Village. (Source: drawn by the author)

### 3.1 The Stage of the Internal Filling of the Ancient Building Area (1978-1990)

With the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, a new chapter of national rural development was opened. By 1982, the implementation of the household contract responsibility system with remuneration linked to output became an important turning point in the space production of Sanzhou Village, which gradually transformed it from collectivized control before 1978 to villagers' independent production and living. ("Figure 3, a") At this time, Sanzhou was one of the most serious areas of soil erosion in Fujian Province at that time. Since 1983, Fujian Province has been implementing comprehensive management of soil erosion, of which Changting County was chosen as an experimental unit, and relevant rules and regulations stipulated that the

hillsides should be closed and logging should be banned. However, for the villagers of Sanzhou, it was more important to enter the mountains to cut wood for sale and fire, so the rules and regulations didn't play a substantial role. At this time, the villagers' source of income and livelihood still relied mainly on the traditional farming model and going out to work. Due to the backwardness of the crop production method, the yield was only enough for daily subsistence, so the villagers' income didn't get increased greatly, and the living environment was extremely difficult. Due to the limitation of economic strength and the backwardness of transportation and other infrastructure, the villagers were unable to improve their living space and build new buildings, and only some of the villagers who had some economic strength built new houses around their old houses or ancestral temples. In general, the village space at this stage still maintained the slow filling in the traditional

building area, and there was no breakthrough in the overall spatial flat form. ("Figure 3, b")

### ***3.2 The Stage of the Expansion of the Ancient Building Area to the Outside (1991-2010)***

The root cause of poverty in Sanzhou Village was the soil erosion problem; at this time, the village carried out institutional and economic reforms centered on solving the soil erosion problem, leading to an increase in the villagers' economic level and a shift in their economic sources from the traditional farming model to an industrial structure model centered on waxberry cultivation promoted by the government, society and the villagers. With the improvement of economic level, the villagers' demand for daily life increased and they gradually had the strength to build houses and plan streets, but at this time, the ancient building area was gradually saturated and couldn't meet the villagers' demand for building houses. Therefore, in 1991, the government planned a street on the north side of the ancient building area and the farmland on both sides for the construction of new streets and housing, and most of the housing built on both sides of this street had dual-use functions, namely, the first floor was for stores and the area above the first floor was for living. As Harvey argues, the exchange of goods and services (including labor) is almost always accompanied by a shift in location, resulting in intersecting spatial movements and spatial aggregation of economic activities. [8] In addition, some villagers' houses collapsed due to flood caused by soil erosion, so villagers concentrated on relocating to the open space west of the ancient building area. Thus it can be seen that with the improvement of the soil erosion problem, the adjustment of the village industrial structure and the improvement of the villagers' economic strength, the original space of the village was rapidly saturated, new functional spaces were constantly derived, and the spatial pattern expanded in a regional aggregation manner. ("Figure 3, c")

### ***3.3 The Stage of Unified and Centralized Construction (2011-Present)***

In November 2010, Sanzhou Village was included in the fifth batch of Chinese famous historical and cultural villages; in August 2011, Sanzhou Township was changed to Sanzhou Town, and thus Sanzhou Village was subordinated to Sanzhou Town; in December 2012, Sanzhou

Village was listed in the first batch of Chinese traditional villages, and from then on the space production of the village has undergone a great transformation. In January 2013, Sanzhou Village was awarded the title of "Eco-cultural Village of Fujian Province". In the same year, the Sanzhou Tingjiang Wetland Park was completed. This means that the problem of soil erosion has been successfully solved after decades of joint efforts by many parties, and Sanzhou Village has become a traditional village with good ecological and environmental resources. The recognition of the traditional village and the rise of the ecological tourism industry have promoted the development of rural tourism in Sanzhou Village, and the economic structure of the village has undergone rapid transformation and development. In order to meet the growing interests of government personnel, villagers, tourists and other parties, the scale of productive and living land has been expanding. From 2013 to 2014, the construction and completion of County Road X65 and the ecological landscape road from Hetian to Sanzhou Village not only enhanced the accessibility of Sanzhou, but also made rural tourism more convenient. At the same time, it also made the transportation of agricultural products in Sanzhou Village much more efficient, the circulation of products was enhanced, and the economic level made a big step forward. At this stage, the implementation of construction was limited and unified by the regulations for the protection of traditional villages, villagers had to build within the planning scope, and the concentrated area of the village was strictly controlled; at the same time, the regional space was saturated, and the residential construction could only be scattered around the boundary area of the village. In order to meet the increasing demand of villagers to build houses, the local government planned a vacant land in the eastern part of the village to build a rural residential community in 2014. In summary, at this stage, based on the rich historical and cultural heritage of Sanzhou Village, coupled with the planning and control of the policies and systems, the diversification of the industrial structure of agriculture, culture and tourism, the improvement of the economic level and the continuous improvement of infrastructure such as transportation, the space production of the village gradually transformed to multi function and high quality, and the spatial form of the village expanded to new functional spatial areas in a more uniform and concentrated manner. ("Figure 3, d")



## **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRIADIC SPACE PRODUCTION IN SANZHOU VILLAGE SINCE 1978**

### ***4.1 Gradual Improvement of Institutional Space and Complex Institutional Orientation***

After the reform and opening up in 1978, the traditional clan system in Sanzhou Village gradually lost its authority, thus shifting to the control of the local government and the village committee. Initially, the local government was eager to address the reform of the social and economic system and solve the problem of personal food and clothing, but didn't pay much attention to the implementation of village construction. As the economic problems were studied in depth, soil erosion was found to be the root problem. As a result, the institutional orientation gradually shifted to how to curb the problem of soil erosion. Since 2010, national consciousness and government policies have been implemented in the process of village development, the institutional space has been gradually improved, and its action subjects are increasingly diversified. The institutional orientation has also changed from the initial laxity without authority to the intervention of higher level government focusing on erosion control, and then to the national consciousness and provincial policies such as issuing traditional village protection plans. The institutional orientation is gradually complicated.

### ***4.2 The Production Space Is Broken Up and Reorganized, and the Industrial Structure Is Diversified***

In 1994, villagers obtained the right to use barren mountains, which kicked off the change of living standard. With the gradual solution of ecological and environmental problems, the action subjects of production space change from individual villagers to villagers working together with village committee and township government to promote the development of waxberry industry, so that the production space of Sanzhou Village is deconstructed and reconstructed, transforming from the traditional farming model to the characteristic industry in parallel, and its industrial structure is shifted from the simplification to the route of combining production and marketing, which promotes the development of the village economy. With the improvement of the economic level, the

attention of the higher government and the improvement of the living standard of the villagers, Sanzhou Village has gradually developed a special rural tourism with the medium of history, culture and ecological environment, and the industrial structure has formed a development model of agriculture, culture and tourism combining rural characteristic tourism and agricultural products sales. With the reorganization of the production space, the villagers' way of livelihood has also undergone great changes. Due to the rise of rural tourism and the invasion of foreign tourists' consumption concepts, villagers' employment and livelihoods have changed from the traditional farming model to solve their personal subsistence or go out to work to multiple roles such as tourism service industry, agritainment operation, and agricultural product sales.

### ***4.3 Coexistence of Ancient and Modern Living Spaces and Openness of Social Relations***

At the early stage of reform and opening up, due to the influence of clan concept, villagers' construction of living space tended to gather in the space of ancient building area, maintaining the characteristics of traditional bloodline-type village space center clustering. However, as the internal space and living quality couldn't meet the needs of the villagers, and the economic level improved, the consumption demand of the villagers increased, many villagers chose to find another homestead to build houses, and constructed a new space with market function, which accelerated the spatial expansion of the village and the re-clustering of various elements. With the development of rural tourism and village economy, the influx of foreign elements gradually broke the traditional social relations, which led to the gradual marketization of village living space. The government and related enterprises have made several plans to restrict and guide the orderly change of village living space. In order to better develop tourism, the central space of the village still maintains the bearing of historical culture, while the peripheral space begins to develop and villagers gather to new growth points, eventually forming a state where the ancient building area and modern living space coexist. In this process, unfamiliar elements such as tourists and foreign capital continue to intervene, and the commercialization of the village greatly influences the process of social change, which also results in the reorganization of social relations in the village. [9] As a result, social relations in Sanshu Village

shifted from initially closed and inward-looking to open and outward-looking, leading to the expansion of the scale of productive and living land in the village, and also giving rise to new functional spaces.

## **5. MECHANISMS OF SPACE PRODUCTION CHANGES IN SANZHOU VILLAGE SINCE 1978**

### ***5.1 Bottom-up Demand of Subjects and Top-down Intervention of Other Organizations***

Villagers are the main users of village space and the subjects of production practices, and their individual concepts, individual differences, and individual demands determine the construction of individual space and promote the development and change of the overall spatial form of the village. Due to economic constraints, ecological suppression and the lack of management, the individual demands of villagers in Sanzhou only required food and clothing, so the space production there stagnated at a certain stage. With the intervention of other organizations from top to bottom, including the government, enterprises or other organizations' guiding, controlling, restraining and promoting the Sanzhou Village, it led to the gradual and benign development of the Sanzhou Village space as well as the maintenance and rescue of village resources and the transmission and promotion of history and culture at a later stage. These forces are gradually reflected directly or indirectly in the process of the transformation of Sanzhou Village.

### ***5.2 The Ecological and Environmental Management Forms an External Driving Force***

Man can't change nature, but can change the ecology. Villagers went into the mountains to cut down trees, resulting in barren mountains and soil erosion, and it was difficult for villagers to make a living, and then they continued to cut down forests, constantly forming a vicious circle. Therefore, the government plans and guides the future development direction of the village in terms of land use, behavioral restrictions, benefit subsidies, and spatial control according to environmental needs and market demands, and it also strengthens the construction of the three living spaces, such as living, production and ecology, according to

individual needs and collective needs. With the mutual conduct of multiple forces, the ecological environment of Sanzhou Village continues to be improved until it can be relied upon to develop a characteristic rural tourism industry. The development of ecological agro-tourism further promotes the reshaping of the space of Sanzhou Village.

### ***5.3 The Demand of Spatial Function Transformation of the Traditional Village***

With the identification of the traditional village, Sanzhou's traditional culture and historical resources appeared in the public eye. At this time, the government, out of its responsibility for historical preservation and management, and the village, out of its adaptation to the market and the realistic demand for its own interests, needed to transform the function of the village. Through the input and effort of the villagers themselves in the early stage, and the implementation of national policies, local systems of protection, subsidies and other policies, as well as the development of relevant planning regulations, Sanzhou Village was guided and designed to carry out the development of ancient village tourism. In this process, Sanzhou Village was transformed from a single production and living space for villagers to an integrated space open to the outside world and with the involvement of multiple roles. As a result, a series of actions to promote the development of village space emerged, such as resource protection, style unification, landscape function construction, and settlement transfer. Under the dual constraints of villagers' demand and government management, the characteristic functional transformation trajectory of Sanzhou Village gradually became clear, achieving a functional spatial transformation from a farming model to an agro-tourism model. ("Figure 4")

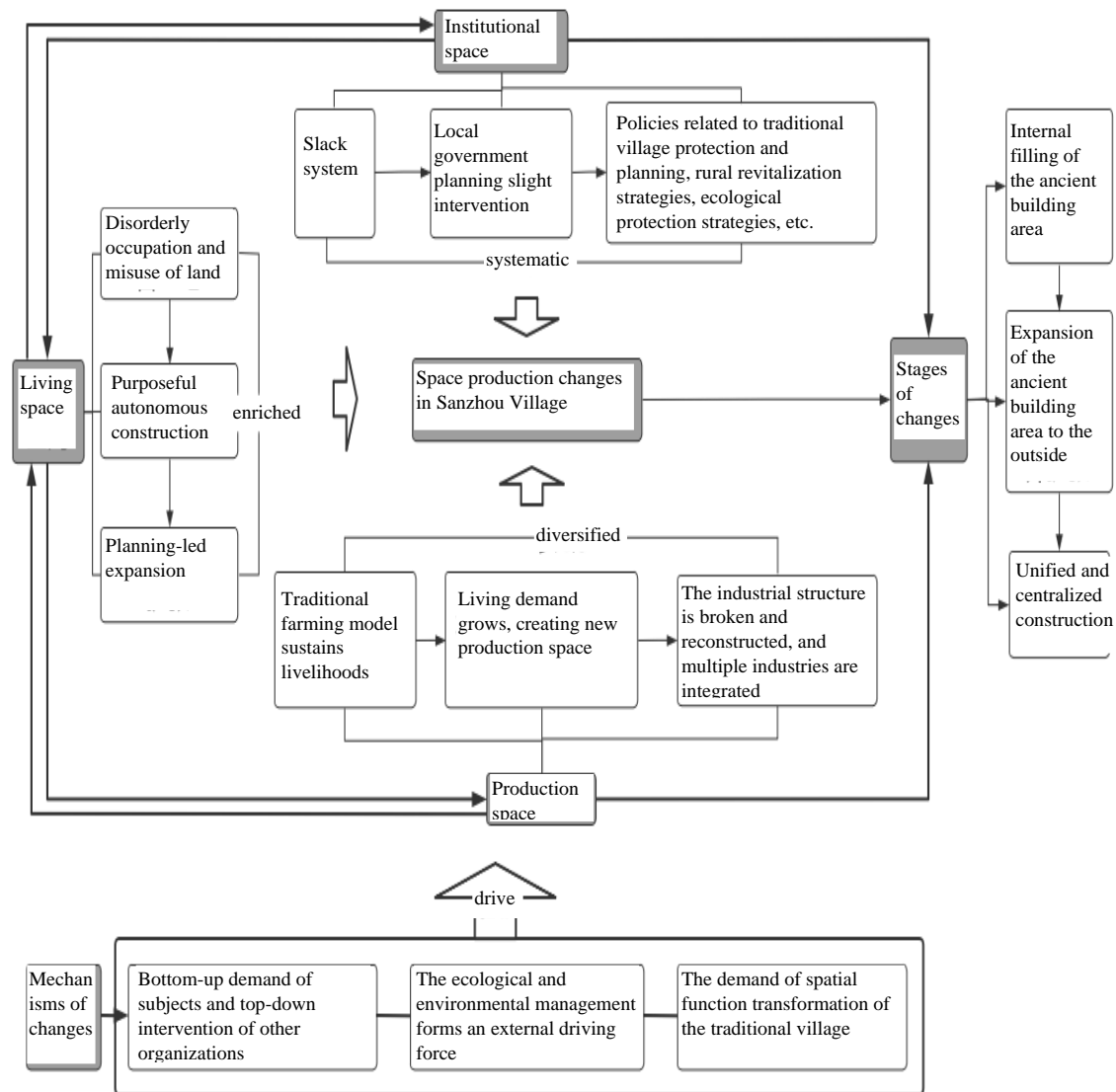


Figure 4 The space production driving mechanism of Sanzhou Village. (Source: drawn by the author)

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper uses the "trialectics" of space production theory to sort out and analyze the process of space production change in Sanzhou Village, dividing its space into three dimensions: living space, production space, and institutional space; through field research, it records the distribution of building ages and the social development of Sanzhou Village since 1978, thus, the process of Sanzhou Village's transformation is divided into three stages. In the process of spatial transformation of Sanzhou Village, it was found that Sanzhou Village, as a typical western Fujian Hakka traditional village, attached importance to clan temples and cohesion, and the houses of

descendants were arranged around the clan temples in order of age. Therefore, the architecture of Sanzhou Village at the early stage after the reform and opening up in 1978 was still built around the scope of the ancestral shrine, thus forming a stage of the internal filling of the ancient building area. With the increase of government control, the village gradually expanded outward in an orderly manner; at the same time, relying on the historical and cultural bearing, Sanzhou Village gradually formed a stable form of ancient building area, and new settlements continuously extended outward, breaking through the traditional spatial overall form. From the development in 1978 to the present, the living space, production space and institutional space of Sanzhou Village have complemented each



other. When the institutional space is gradually improved and the institutional orientation becomes richer, the village living space emerges with different functional demands. In this process, the villagers and investors in the production space transform production capital into commodity capital and then realize the acquisition of monetary capital, while the influx of foreign tourists and the development of tourism industry gradually make the commercial atmosphere of Sanzhou Village emerge. Finally, the production space is broken up and reorganized, the industrial structure of the village is diversified, and the functional transformation of the living space has an economic basis. At this time, the social relations of Sanzhou Village are complicated and the roles of villagers are continuously differentiated.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Lingyu Gao.

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