



An Exploratory Study On Sustainability Challenges Within The Framework Of Cultural Tourism In An Ancient Water Town In China

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Abstract

Chinese Water Villages Are Culturally Important Places That Can't Be Found Anywhere Else In The World. Every Year, Millions Of Visitors Travel To These Cities Because They Are Important Cultural Tourism Destinations Because Of Their Old Buildings, Stone Bridges, And Canals. There Are Several Things That Might Trigger These Kinds Of Worries, Such As Too Many Tourists, The Commercialisation Of Culture, Damage To The Environment, And Social Dislocation. These Challenges Might Cause The Communities To Lose Their Ecological Balance, Cultural Authenticity, And Ability To Survive In The Long Run. This Research Acknowledges That Cultural Tourism Generates And Mitigates Such Pressures; Hence, It Employs An Exploratory Methodology To Examine Issues Related To Sustainability Within This Framework. Cultural Tourism Has Several Advantages, Such As Boosting The Economy, Creating New Jobs, And Providing Money To Protect Historical Sites And Cultural Heritage. There Are Also Certain Challenges That Come With Uncontrolled Expansion, Such As Issues With Sustainability. To Understand Where The Difficulties With Sustainability Come From And How To Fix Them, It Is Important To Think About Both Of These Parts Of Cultural Tourism. The Results Of The Study Emphasise That The Interaction Between Challenges Of Sustainability And The Conservation Of Ancient Water Towns Is Not Linear But Instead Complex. Cultural Tourism Is A Mediating Variable That Is Capable Of Worsening Or Lessening These Challenges. Use Of Integrated Management Approaches Such As Heritage-Sensitive Planning, Community Involvement, And Environmentally Friendly Visitor Practices Is Capable Of Turning Cultural Tourism Into A Sustainability Tool And Not A Danger. Through The Positioning Of Sustainability Concerns Within The Context Of Cultural Tourism, This Study Offers Planners, And Local Communities With Valuable Insights. It Highlights The Importance Of Balanced Measures That Protect, Withstand, And Maintain Vitality For Ancient Water Towns In China.

Keywords: Chinese Water Towns, Cultural Tourism, Ancient Water Towns, Sustainability Challenges, China

1. Introduction

Many Of The Stories That Have Been Passed Down Through The Generations Take Place In China's Historic Water Villages. Classical Buildings, Bridges, And Canals Are Thought To Have Originated In These Neighbourhoods. Both Cultural Tourism And The Preservation Of China's Rich Cultural Legacy Are Based In These Cities. Given How Fragile These Ecosystems Are Already, The Situation Will Only Get Worse As More People Visit. Many People Are Therefore Interested In The Possibility That These Ecosystems Will Survive And Persist In The Future. Traditional Chinese Water Villages May Lose Their Unique Ecological And Cultural Identity Due To A Variety Of Factors. Traffic Jams, People Taking Advantage Of Cultural Traditions For Financial Advantage, Poor Infrastructure, And Environmental Damage Are Just A Few Of The Problems That Must Be Addressed (Xia, 2024).

Cultural Tourism Helps The Economy And Raises The Value Of Cultural Assets. If It Is Difficult To Find A Solution, The Long-Term Problems May Worsen Considerably In The Future. The Problem Is More Serious Than It First Seems Because Tourism May Make It



Worse Before It Gets Better. People Understand How Tourism Affects The Environment, Society, And Culture (Sihombing Et Al., 2024). This Experimental Project's Goal Is To Look Into The Problems Related To Cultural Tourism And Sustainable Development. Researchers Will Be Able To See The Links Between All The Different Issues With This Method. The Objectives Of This Study Are To Examine The Ongoing Changes In The Tourism Sector And Evaluate How These Changes Affect The Environment. The Data May Demonstrate The Information's Relevance To Practitioners And Policymakers Who Are Trying To Preserve And Improve China's Traditional Water Towns.

2. Background Of The Study

Sightseers From All Over The World Come To See China's Historic Water Towns Because Of Its Old Architecture, Stone Bridges, And Canals. Through The Preservation Of Thousands Of Years Of Chinese History And Culture, Visitors Are Able To Establish A Real Link To China's Past. In The Past Several Decades, Cultural Tourism Has Seen A Stratospheric Growth In Popularity. Ecosystems That Had Previously Been Fragile Are Now Under Far Greater Stress Than They Were In The Past As A Result Of This. The Communities Are Undergoing A Lengthy Destabilisation Process As A Result Of Problems Related To Sustainability. The Huge Growth In Tourism And The Consequent Marketing Of Historical Sites Are Two Factors That Are Responsible For This Situation. Liu Et Al., (2025) Assert That Contemporary Society Is Grappling With Significant Challenges, Including Environmental Degradation, The Legal Status Of Infrastructure, And System Stress (Liu Et Al., 2025).

Cultural Tourism And Sustainability Are Inextricably Linked To One Another Due To The Fact That Tourism May Have Both Positive And Negative Effects On These Communities. As A Result, The Two Are Connected By A Significant Relationship. Tourist Spending Is One Component That Contributes To The Continued Operation Of Local Economies And Events. However, These Distinctive Cultural Qualities That Distinguish Them From Other Places May Be Lost If These Communities Become Too Populated And Commercialised. The General Field Of Cultural Tourism Is Starting To Include Environmental Concerns More And More, Rather Than Seeing Them As Distinct Challenges (Sørensen & Grindsted, 2021). The Purpose Of This Experimental Research Is To Increase Knowledge Of The Ways In Which Tourism Impacts The Environment, Culture, And Society. In This Way, It Will Be Of Assistance To Communities, Planners, And Legislators In Making Choices On These Critical Issues That Are Better Informed. This Feature Is The Focus Of The Study, Which Illustrates How Eco-Conscious Visitors May Be Attracted To Ancient Water Villages Without Compromising Their Visual Appeal.

3. The Purpose Of The Research

The Primary Purpose Of The Research Is To Investigate Sustainability Issues In The Context Of Cultural Tourism In China's Ancient Water Towns. Instead Of Addressing Issues Of Sustainability As Independent Problems, The Research Situates Them In The Interplay Between Tourism Development, Heritage Protection, And Community Development. The Goal Is To Examine How Cultural Tourism Causes Or Reduces Pressures Such As Environmental Degradation, Loss Of Authenticity, And Social Tensions. By Taking An Exploratory Stance, The Study Aims To Identify Underlying Patterns, Relationships, And Implications That Cannot Be Addressed In Full In Current Research. This Aim Stems From The Acknowledgment That Cultural Tourism Is Both A Challenge And An Opportunity, Which Affects The Resilience And Longevity Of Heritage Towns. Finally, The Study Hopes To Generate Applicable Lessons That Can Aid Policymakers, Tourism Planners, And Local Stakeholders In Embracing Viable Sustainable Strategies That Safeguard Cultural Identity While Facilitating Sustainable Tourism Development.



4. Literature Review

The Site Of Intersection Among Sustainability Problems And Cultural Tourism Has Been A Growing Topic Of Research, Especially In Heritage Contexts Like China's Ancient Water Towns. Sustainability In Tourism Literature Tends To Mention Three Dimensions: Environmental, Socio-Cultural, And Economic. These Dimensions Form A Perspective From Which To View The Pressure On Ancient Water Towns. Environmental Sustainability Studies Observe That Intense Tourist Growth Has Brought Water Pollution, Natural Resource Exhaustion, And Weakening Of Delicate Ecosystems In Heritage Areas. In Water Towns Whose Identity Is Defined By Rivers And Canals, Such Degradation Presents Tremendous Danger (Chen Et Al., 2021).

Socio-Cultural Studies Emphasize The Balance Between Maintaining Authenticity And Meeting The Expectations Of Tourists. Studies On Cultural Tourism In Heritage Towns Often Highlight The Risk Of Cultural Commodification, Where Traditions, Architecture, And Local Practices Are Repackaged For Consumption. While This Can Generate Revenue And Visibility, It Often Dilutes Cultural Value, Reducing Heritage To Performance Rather Than Lived Practice. In The Chinese Water Towns, This Tension Is Apparent In The Conversion Of Old Homes Into Commercial Establishments And The Staging Of Cultural Festivals With Tourist Appeal (Chen, 2023). Economic Viewpoints, However, Contend That Tourism Has Been A Key Driver In Reviving Old Towns, Offering Livelihoods, Enhancing Infrastructure, And Financing Conservation Initiatives. However, Dependence On Tourism Also Contributes To Weaknesses Since Shocks In The Form Of Pandemics Or Changes In Visitor Demand Can Unsteadiness Local Economies (Schubert, 2021).

Current Research Stresses The Need For Holistic Management Strategies, Balancing Development With Preservation. This Is Made Possible Through Joint Efforts By Stakeholders Such As Governments, Private Investors, And Local Communities. It Is Also Seen In Literature That Sustainable Tourism Practices Like Eco-Tourism, Education On Cultural Heritage, And Participatory Governance Are Avenues Through Which Sustainability Issues Can Be Addressed (Thi Et Al., 2024). Still, There Is Limited Research On Ancient Chinese Water Towns, Particularly On How Cultural Tourism Is Both A Driving Force And Mediator Of These Challenges. This Exploratory Study Endeavours To Fill That Gap, Providing Contributions That Enrich The Present Debate On Cultural Tourism And Sustainability In Heritage Contexts.

5. Research Question

- What Is The Influence Of Sustainability Challenges On Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism?

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The Quantitative Data Analysis Was Conducted Using Spss Version 25. Through The Computation Of The Odds Ratio And 95% Confidence Interval, The Researcher Determined The Strength And Direction Of The Statistical Association. The Researchers Established A P-Value Threshold Of Less Than 0.05 For Statistical Significance. The Data Was Examined With A Descriptive Methodology To Identify Its Most Significant Characteristics. Data Enhanced By Computational Tools For Statistical Analysis, Including Data Collected By Questionnaires, Surveys, And Polls, Is Often Assessed Using Quantitative Methods.



6.2 Sampling

Participants Were Requested To Complete Questionnaires As A Component Of The Research. Following The Selection Of 530 Individuals For The Research With The Rao-Soft Technique, 650 Questionnaires Were Sent. The Researcher Obtained 634 Questionnaires; However, 589 Responses Were Maintained As The Final Sample Size After Excluding 45 Incomplete Submissions.

6.3 Data And Measurement:

The Primary Instrument Used To Collect Data In The Research Was A Questionnaire Survey. Part B Of The Survey Used A Five-Point Likert Scale To Collect Feedback On The Attributes Of Online And Physical Channels, While Part A Solicited Fundamental Demographic Information. Numerous Additional Sources, Including Internet Databases, Supplied The Secondary Data.

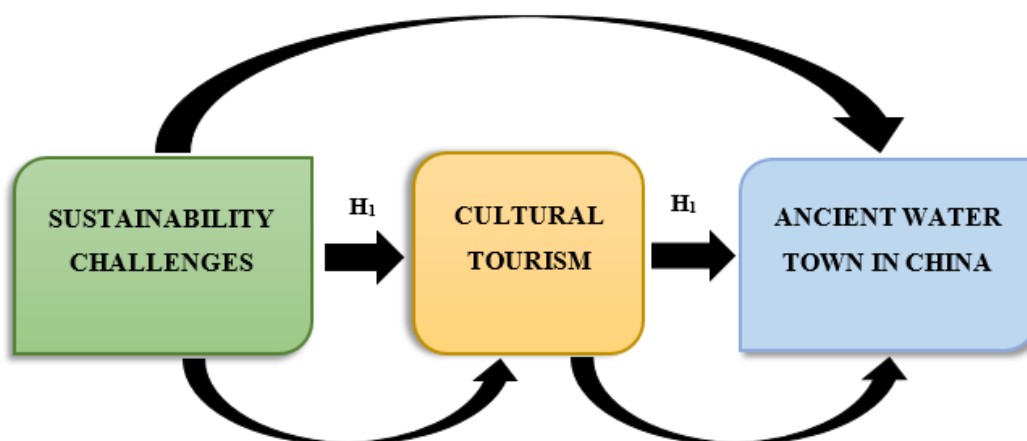
6.4 Statistical Software:

With The Help Of Spss 25 And Ms-Excel, The Researcher Ran The Statistical Analysis.

6.5 Statistical Tools:

The Researcher Used Descriptive Analysis To Comprehend The Data At A Fundamental Level. The Researcher Also Must Analyse The Data Using Anova.

7. Conceptual Framework



8. Result

• Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (Fa) Is Often Used To Examine The Fundamental Component Structure Of A Set Of Measurement Items. It Is Theoretically Feasible For Non-Obvious Causes To Influence The Scores Of Observable Variables. A Model-Driven Methodology Is The Fa Technique. The Primary Aim Of This Research Is To Elucidate The Links Between Observable Phenomena, Their Underlying Causes, And Measurement Errors.

To Assess The Appropriateness Of Data For Factor Analysis, One Might Use The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (Kmo) Method. The Researcher Verifies Whether The Participant Count Is Enough To Appropriately Represent The Whole Model And All Its Variables. Multiple Variables May Exhibit Shared Variation, And Statistical Measures Evaluate This Likelihood. Factor Analysis Often Produces Superior Outcomes With Less Hierarchical Data.

Kmo Generates Integers Ranging From Zero To One. A Kmo Score Ranging From 0.8 To 1 Indicates Adequate Sampling.



Insufficient Sampling Requires Remedial Measures If The Kmo Is Below 0.6. Formulate An Informed Estimate; The Majority Of Writers Often Choose 0.5 For This, Hence A Range Of 0.5 To 0.6 Is Prevalent.

A Significant Proportion Of The Overall Correlations Are Partial Correlations When The Kmo Value Approaches Zero. The Presence Of Significant Correlations Severely Impedes Component Analysis.

The Following Are The Approval Criteria Established By Kaiser:

The Outcomes Within The Range Of 0.050 To 0.059 Were Unsatisfactory.

Significantly Below The Industry Average (0.60-0.69).

A Mediocre Grade Often Ranges From 0.70 To 0.79.

Quality Marks Are Denoted By A Value Ranging From 0.80 To 0.89.

There Is A Significant Variance Between 0.90 To 1.00.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.867
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

This Substantiates The Assertions On The Sample's Execution. Researchers Assessed The Statistical Significance Of The Correlation Matrices Using Bartlett's Test Of Sphericity. The Sample Is Considered Adequate According To The Kmo Criteria When The Value Surpasses 0.867. Bartlett's Sphericity Test Yields A P-Value Of 0.00. Bartlett's Sphericity Test Findings Demonstrate That The Correlation Matrix Deviates From An Identity Matrix And Is Statistically Significant.

❖ **Independent Variable**
Sustainability Challenges

Challenges Of Sustainability Are A Major Issue In The Conservation And Management Of China's Ancient Water Towns. The Towns Are Subject To Various Pressures Emanating From Fast Urbanisation, Growing Inflows Of Tourists, And Changing Socio-Economic Dynamics. Water Pollution, Waste Management Problems, And Excessive Exploitation Of Natural Resources Pose Environmental Challenges That Undermine The Ecological Balance Of Vulnerable Canal Systems. Similarly, Cultural Issues Arise As Cultural Practices And Genuine Heritage Are Threatened With The Prospect Of Commodification, Tending To Be Altered To Fit The Requirements Of Tourists Instead Of Preserving Their Native State. Social Issues Also Abound, With Communities Losing Their Ability To Uphold Traditional Ways Of Life As Demands From Commercial Tourism Continue To Increase. Strain On Infrastructure, Seasonal Overpopulation, And Loss Of Cultural Authenticity Contribute To The Complexity. These Sustainability Pressures Are Not Independent But Interlocking And Determine The Long-Term Sustainability Of Water Towns. Without Regulation And Community Action, These Stresses Threaten To Erode The Historical, Cultural, And Environmental Significance That Makes Ancient Water Towns Important (Wantzen, 2024).



❖ **Mediating Variable** **Cultural Tourism**

Cultural Tourism Has A Double-Edged Influence On Determining Sustainability Outcomes For Ancient Water Towns. On The Other Hand, It Has Significant Advantages Through Income Generation, Local Job Support, And Conservation Funding For Heritage. Tourism Presents The Opportunity To Promote Customs, Architecture, And Cultural Activities, Allowing Increased Understanding And Appreciation Of Heritage Among National And Foreign Visitors. Cultural Tourism Also Generates Pressures That Enhance Concerns Around Sustainability. Over-Commercialization Frequently Results In Heritage Areas Being Changed Into Consumerist Attractions, Undermining Authenticity And Depoliticizing Heritage To Performance. More And More Visitors Are Putting A Strain On The Local Infrastructure, Making Life Harder For The People Who Live There, And Making The Environment Worse. Cultural Tourism, However, May Be A Useful Tool For Promoting Long-Term Sustainability If It Is Handled Well. It May Be Able To Get Both Inhabitants And Visitors To Help With Conservation Efforts By Including Environmental Measures, Working Together On Plans, And Teaching History. The Administration Of Cultural Tourism Significantly Impacts The Long-Term Sustainability Of Water Cities. The Management Of Cultural Tourism Has The Capacity To Either Exacerbate The Existing Challenges Faced By These Cities Or Provide Solutions To These Issues (Gocer Et Al., 2024).

❖ **Dependent Variable** **Ancient Water Town In China**

The Structures That Are Hundreds Of Years Old, The Canal Networks, And The Stone Bridges Make The Cultural Landscapes Of Ancient Chinese Water Cities Distinctive. These Places Are Real Places In China That Are Important To History And Culture. They Are Known As "The Venice Of The East." These Buildings Are Worth A Lot More Than The Buildings Themselves Since They Have Been Handed Down Through Many Generations And Are Linked To Rituals, Festivals, And Ways Of Life That Can't Be Seen. Because Millions Of People Visit These Cities Every Year, They Have Become Important Places For Cultural Tourism. Yet, Their Existence Is More And More Determined By The Way Sustainability Issues And Tourism Forces Are Addressed. Overcrowding, Environmental Degradation, And Cultural Commodification Threaten To Lessen Their Authenticity And Long-Term Appeal. Meanwhile, Tourism Funds Finance Restoration Efforts, Infrastructure Improvements, And Cultural Promotion. Therefore, Ancient Water Towns Are At A Crossroads Of Preservation And Transformation As Their Destiny Lies In The Marriage Of Economic Gains With The Preservation Of Cultural Integrity And Environmental Sustainability (Thiele, 2024).

• **Relationship Between Sustainability Challenges On Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism**

The Connection Between Sustainability Challenges And Ancient Water Towns Is Explained More Clearly When Viewed Through Cultural Tourism. Sustainability Issues Like Pollution, Congestion, And Cultural Commercialization Have A Direct Influence On The Ecological And Cultural Heritage Of These Towns. However, Cultural Tourism Acts As A Mediator Of This Influence By Determining The Manner In Which Challenges Manifest And Are Managed. For Example, Uncontrolled Tourism Tends To Heighten Environmental Stress, Compromise Authenticity, And Put Pressure On Local Society. Conversely, Well-Planned Cultural Tourism Can Serve As A Mitigating Force, Supporting Eco-Friendly Practices, Funding Conservation, And Strengthening Heritage Awareness Among Visitors. The Link Between Sustainability Challenges And Ancient Water Towns Is Therefore Not Linear But Shaped By The Strategies Embedded Within Tourism Management. If Cultural Tourism Remains Profit-Driven Without



Regulation, It Accelerates Decline. Yet, If It Is Managed As A Tool For Sustainable Heritage Conservation, It Can Be Turned Into A Strength. This Symbiotic Relationship Highlights The Importance Of Holistic Strategies Where Cultural Tourism Is Framed As A Bridge, Reconciling Economic Growth With Long-Term Survival And Recovery Of Ancient Water Towns (Liang Et Al., 2022).

Based On The Above Debate, The Researcher Established The Following Hypothesis To Evaluate The Relationship Between Sustainability Challenges On Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism.

“H₀₁: There Is No Significant Relationship Between Sustainability Challenges And Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism.”

“H₁: There Is A Significant Relationship Between Sustainability Challenges And Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism.”

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39457.736	235	5629.993	1048.025	.000
Within Groups	568.832	353	5.372		
Total	40026.568	588			

This Investigation Yields Remarkable Results. The Value Of F Is 1048.025, Attaining Significance With A P-Value Of .000, Which Is Below The .05 Alpha Threshold. The Hypothesis ***“H₁: There Is A Significant Relationship Between Sustainability Challenges And Ancient Water Town In China From The Context Of Cultural Tourism”*** Is Accepted, Whereas The Null Hypothesis Is Rejected.

9. Discussion

The Research Findings In This Study Demonstrate That Sustainability Issues In Ancient Water Towns Are Closely Related To The Dynamics Of Cultural Tourism. The Increase In Visitors Is Putting Stress On The Ecosystem, Which Is Causing Problems Like Dirty Water, Trash, And Pollution. This Shows That The Ecosystems Of These Populations Are At Risk Of Being Harmed. Marketing Also Makes Cultural Problems Worse Since It Changes Monuments To Make Money Off Of Tourists, Which Lowers Their Historical Worth. To Begin With, Living In The Country Is Already Hard, And This Is Made Worse By The Challenges Caused By Too Many Tourists And Other Socioeconomic Issues. These Long-Term Problems Show How Easily Historic Water Towns May Be Hurt By The Sudden And Uncontrolled Expansion Of Tourism. That Being Stated, Cultural Tourism Is Another Way To Deal With The Problems That Were Just Addressed. To Make Towns More Resilient, It Is Possible To Use Money From Tourism To Pay For Projects That Help The Environment, Build Infrastructure, And Improve The Health Of The Community. If Historical Planning Is Used Carefully, Cultural Tourism Might Make Water Towns More Important To Culture And Efforts To Protect Them Could Gain More Attention. Visitors Who Engage In Ecotourism And Heritage Education May Get



A More Profound Understanding Of The Local Culture While Mitigating Their Adverse Environmental Effects. Because Of This, The Cultural Tourism Mediator's Job Is Quite Important. It Will Be Much Harder To Deal With Sustainability Issues If A Business Is Run Solely For Profit. However, If The Business Is Run With An Emphasis On Sustainable Principles And Includes Stakeholders, These Problems Will Be Easier To Solve. This Issue Highlights The Need For Tourism Strategy To Include Measures That Promote The Advancement Of Sustainable Practices. It Is Also Necessary To Stop Thinking Of Cultural Tourism And Environmental Issues As Two Things That Can't Work Together And Start Thinking Of Them As Two Parts Of The Same System That Benefit Each Other.

10. Conclusion

In Conclusion, Relationship Between The Challenges Faced By China's Ancient Water Towns And Their Potential For Long-Term Development Is Facilitated By Cultural Tourism. The Future Of These Villages Is Currently Uncertain. There Are Several Reasons For This, Such As The Decline Of The Environment, The Commodification Of Culture, And Social Unrest. Conversely, It Is The Responsibility Of Cultural Tourism Management To Ascertain If It Is An Obstacle Or An Opportunity. There Are Several Benefits To Employing Ethical Tourism Methods. Some Of These Advantages Include Giving Tourists Historical Information, Encouraging Eco-Friendly Activities, And Giving Additional Money To Conservation Organisations. It Is Possible That All Of These Advantages May Come True Because To Ecotourism. On The Other Hand, Unrestricted Development Speeds Up The Process Of Degeneration By A Considerably Larger Amount. Ancient Water Villages Should Be Allowed To Stay As Long As The Growth Of Tourism Is Managed In A Way That Takes Environmental Issues Into Consideration. To Achieve This Objective, It Is Essential That The Fundamental Elements Of Any Law Aimed At This Purpose Include Environmentally Responsible Development, Community Involvement, And Sustainable Visitor Management. Integrating Cultural Tourism Into Current Tourist Projects Might Be One Way To Solve Problems Connected To Sustainability. Historic Water Towns May Keep Their Distinctive Character And Ecological Balance While Still Making Money From Visitors By Adding Cultural Tourism To Their Programs. Finally, It Is Possible That Using Sustainable Cultural Tourism Methods Might Help Keep These Historic Sites Safe For Future Generations. This Would Make Sure That They Stay Vibrant Cultural Landscapes.

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