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# Continuity of Everyday Living Spaces in the Conversion of Vernacular Dwellings into Homestays: A Case Study of Caigai Village, Heishui County, China

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## Abstract

Converting inhabited vernacular dwellings into homestays requires the introduction of accommodation facilities while retaining the spatial conditions that support everyday household life. This study examines adaptation proposals for 23 dwellings in Caigai Village, Heishui County, Sichuan Province, China. Existing-use records and proposed functional arrangements are classified, and the existing and proposed plans of Dwellings 8 and 12 are compared. Guest rooms are proposed exclusively on upper levels in 11 dwellings, on both ground and upper levels in 11, and exclusively on the ground floor in one. This classification describes the location of guest-room insertion rather than the extent to which existing domestic functions are retained. Dwelling 8 primarily retains its ground-floor layout and introduces guest rooms on the upper levels, whereas Dwelling 12 combines selective ground-floor insertion with dining-space improvements and functional adjustments across multiple levels. The comparison indicates that guest rooms, sanitary facilities, and shared reception spaces should be located with reference to existing household functions. The study develops an analytical approach linking functional classification with plan comparison and proposes conditional strategies for determining the scope of adaptation according to existing space use. The findings concern the spatial arrangements represented in design proposals; continued resident use and actual operational outcomes require subsequent verification.

## Keywords

Vernacular Dwellings; Adaptive Reuse; Homestay Conversion; Living Spaces; Functional Continuity; Caigai Village

## 1. Introduction

Inhabited dwellings accommodate everyday living, cooking, storage, social visits, and some activities supporting agricultural production. Converting part of a

dwelling into visitor accommodation changes who uses its spaces, how they are accessed, and when they are occupied. Homestay conversion therefore involves more than adding guest rooms and bathrooms: it also concerns whether existing household activities retain appropriate spaces within the adapted building.

The value of vernacular architecture includes the relationships of everyday life that develop through continued use. He and Zhou describe vernacular architecture as a dynamic place connected to local life and emphasize the relationship between people and buildings beyond measured documentation [1]. This perspective suggests that analyses of homestay adaptation should consider both architectural space and resident activities; the continuity of everyday life cannot be assessed solely through the preservation of physical form.

In research on rural homestays in western Sichuan, Li and Liu examine regional character through the surrounding environment and architectural appearance, emphasizing respect for rural lifestyles alongside improvements in contemporary functionality [2]. Guo analyzes the contemporary adaptation of traditional dwellings in western Sichuan through spatial, structural, and material interventions[3]. Tian examines neo-vernacular architecture in southwestern China through form and function, structure and construction, materials and technology, and craftspeople and craftsmanship[4]. These studies offer complementary perspectives on the contemporary use of traditional buildings. The present study focuses more specifically on the relationship between new accommodation functions and existing household spaces within a single project.

Wu et al. identify relationships between plan functions, vertical spatial organization, and changes in productive and domestic life in Qiang plank houses in the river valleys of western Sichuan[5]. Their study suggests that floor arrangements should be examined in relation to specific uses and their evolution, rather than only through storey counts and room distributions. As their case-study buildings differ from those in Caigai Village, this study draws on their approach to relating function and space without transferring the ethnic practices or architectural characteristics of those cases directly to Caigai.

The Caigai proposals combine existing residential and storage functions with new homestay uses. This study addresses two questions: how are new guest rooms distributed in relation to existing floor functions, and what spatial continuity strategies are evident in two contrasting adaptation arrangements? The analysis concerns spatial decisions documented in design materials, rather than measurements of visitor satisfaction, household income, or post-occupancy performance.

## 2. Case Study and Methods

### 2.1. Village Context and Data Sources

Caigai Village is located in Kalong Town, Heishui County, Sichuan Province. Project

drawings show a settlement extending along valley roads and waterways, with dwellings occupying adjacent slopes and terraces and a visitor centre forming a relatively concentrated service node. These spatial relationships provide the village context for homestay conversion. However, the visitor centre's actual capacity to serve individual homestays is outside the scope of this study.

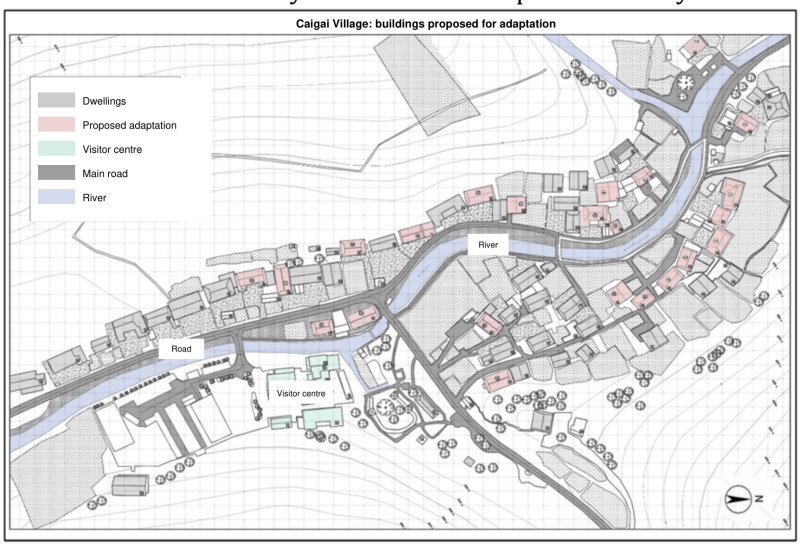



**Figure 1.** Village context and distribution of dwellings proposed for adaptation in Caigai Village. Source: project drawings supplied by the author, with English annotations.

## 2.2. Sample and Comparative Procedure

The study uses records for Dwellings 1–23 from the author's thesis materials, the corresponding adaptation schedule, and two sets of detailed existing and proposed floor plans. The sample comprises 13 two-storey dwellings, nine three-storey dwellings, and one single-storey dwelling. All belong to the same design project and do not constitute a random sample of the entire village. Original dwelling numbers are retained to allow the classification and case studies to be cross-checked.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, existing floor uses are distinguished from proposed changes. Second, the dwellings are classified by the floors on which guest rooms are proposed. Third, Dwellings 8 and 12 are compared in terms of existing function retention, guest-room arrangement, sanitary facilities, and shared spaces. The two cases explain contrasting arrangements and are not treated as statistically representative of the entire sample. Dwelling 8 retains its ground-floor layout and locates guest rooms on upper levels, whereas Dwelling 12 distributes guest rooms across all three levels while reorganizing dining and shared spaces.

In this study, the ground floor corresponds to Level 1 in the drawings, while Levels 2 and 3 are collectively termed the upper levels. The classification records whether guest rooms are proposed on a given floor, rather than their number, area, or occupancy rate. Floor plans are used for qualitative comparison; precise dimensions, structural load-bearing capacities, and performance scores are not inferred from

raster images.

**Table 1.** Distribution of guest rooms by floor in the 23 adaptation proposals(Source: Author)

| Guest-room location | Dwelling numbers | Count | Share |
|---|---|---|---|
| Upper levels only | 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 23 | 11 | 47.8% |
| Ground and upper levels | 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22 | 11 | 47.8% |
| Ground floor only | 16 | 1 | 4.3% |
| Total | 1–23 | 23 | 100% |

### 2.3. Analytical Concepts and Evidential Scope

Spatial continuity is defined here as the provision of identifiable spaces for existing activities, together with the retention of relevant spatial connections, within a design proposal. This is a criterion for design analysis rather than a measured social outcome. Retaining a room does not demonstrate that its associated activity continues after adaptation. Likewise, providing a shared living space does not establish resident acceptance, adequate privacy, or effective management. Existing uses are drawn from the available records; no additional interviews, monitoring, or field surveys were conducted for this study.

Two analytical levels are therefore distinguished. The floor location of guest rooms is a descriptive variable that can be recorded for all 23 dwellings. Assessing the extent of domestic function retention requires individual checks of the existing and proposed locations and connections of resident accommodation, cooking, storage, and production-support functions; this is discussed qualitatively only for Dwellings 8 and 12. Twelve dwellings, or 52.2% of the sample, include ground-floor guest rooms, including the single-storey Dwelling 16. This figure cannot be interpreted as the proportion of existing domestic functions displaced.

Functional checks use four recording categories: retained in place, retained after relocation, reduced or converted to another use, and insufficient information. These categories organize drawing-based evidence without generating an aggregate score or estimating retention rates from unverified areas. Unlabelled rooms, unspecified destinations for relocated storage, and the intended users of shared spaces remain matters for verification.

## 3. Differences in Proposed Functional Arrangements

### 3.1. Existing Uses and Opportunities for Adaptation

The existing-use schedule shows differences among the dwellings. Ground-floor uses include residence, partial storage, storage of firewood and fodder, reception, and disused dining spaces. Upper levels are predominantly residential, with some also accommodating storage or reception. Reusing vacant rooms has different implications from adapting spaces that continue to support household activities. Converting every ground floor into visitor reception space would overlook these

differences.

Some original classifications combine current use, utilization status, and adaptation potential. Rather than treating these labels as mutually exclusive building types, this study classifies the proposals by the directly verifiable floor distribution of guest rooms. Existing uses are retained as contextual information explaining adaptation conditions. This avoids placing a design judgment such as “adaptation potential” in the same category system as specific uses such as residence or storage.

### 3.2. Three Patterns of Guest-Room Distribution

Eleven dwellings provide guest rooms exclusively on upper levels, and another 11 provide them on both ground and upper levels. Upper-level-only provision excludes the ground floor from guest-room allocation but does not establish that all existing functions remain intact. Changes to kitchens, storage, entrances, and shared spaces still require examination. Conversely, ground-floor guest rooms do not necessarily imply the wholesale displacement of household life. Selective guest-room insertion can coexist with resident accommodation and household facilities where existing spaces and their connections remain usable.

The single-storey configuration of Dwelling 16 precludes vertical separation, requiring resident and visitor functions to be coordinated on the same level. It is included in the overall classification but is not used to support the strategy of upper-level guest-room insertion. This difference demonstrates the need to consider storey count and existing functional distribution when assessing guest-room arrangements.

### 3.3. Reception and Sanitary Facilities

Reception functions are accommodated through existing living rooms, entrance halls, small waiting areas, localized reception spaces, and, in some cases, the visitor centre. These arrangements indicate opportunities for distributed provision; a ground-floor lobby is not a common requirement adopted in every proposal. They represent design intentions, while the responsibilities and actual capacities of shared or external services remain to be established.

Sanitary interventions include modifying existing bathrooms, combining bathrooms with guest rooms, and locating facilities in relation to existing service areas. These arrangements can be compared at plan level, but drainage efficiency, waterproofing, ventilation, and the extent of structural disturbance require further technical evidence. The study therefore analyzes the spatial arrangement of sanitary facilities without equating it with verified engineering performance.

## 4. Comparison of Two Dwelling Adaptation Proposals

### 4.1. Dwelling 8: Ground-Floor Retention and Upper-Level Insertion

Dwelling 8 is a three-storey building whose adaptation centres on retaining mixed

ground-floor functions and reorganizing accommodation on the upper levels. Before adaptation, the upper levels had insufficient guest-room provision, inadequate sanitary facilities, and underused areas. The proposal addresses these issues by retaining residential, storage, and production-support functions on the ground floor and concentrating guest-room provision and additional sanitary facilities on Levels 2 and 3, improving the conditions for visitor accommodation within the existing building.

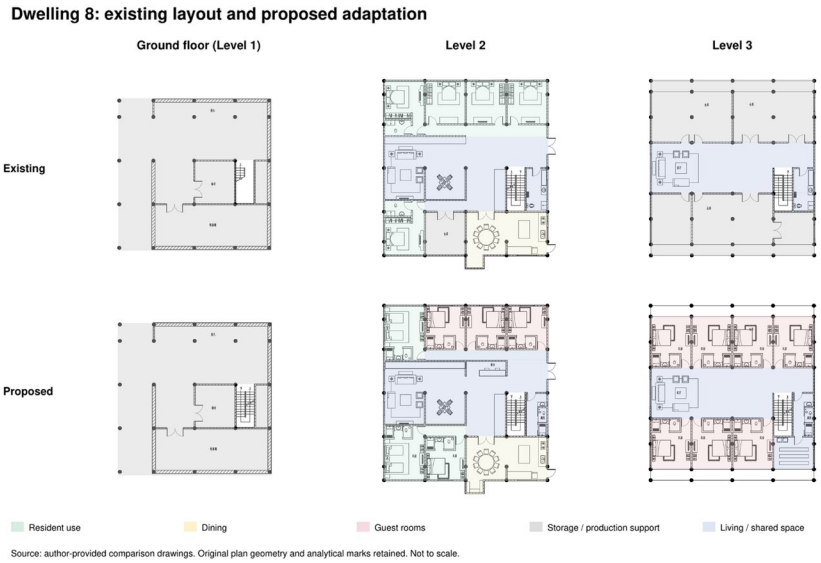



**Figure 2.** Existing and proposed floor plans of Dwelling 8. (Source: Author)

The changes to Levels 2 and 3 do not convert all upper-level spaces into areas reserved for visitors. Instead, room subdivisions are adjusted and guest rooms and bathrooms are inserted while retaining some resident accommodation and shared spaces. Level 2 combines resident accommodation, dining, and guest rooms, while Level 3 organizes guest rooms around a central shared space. New accommodation functions are thus integrated into the existing vertical arrangement, while the ground floor continues to accommodate mixed uses closely associated with residents' everyday lives. The proposal embodies an approach of maintaining ground-floor domestic functions while introducing accommodation above.

Reception is introduced on a small scale, using the existing entrance hall for arrival and short stays rather than extensively reorganizing ground-floor domestic and productive spaces to create a centralized lobby. Existing living and shared spaces accommodate resident–visitor interaction through limited sharing, with household activities taking priority. Reception provision therefore complements guest-room insertion, adding homestay services while limiting their occupation of existing household spaces.

The adaptation of Dwelling 8 illustrates how an existing vertical arrangement can guide the location of new functions. The ground floor retains residential, storage,

and production-support uses; upper levels are selectively reorganized to improve accommodation facilities; and reception is accommodated through limited insertion into existing spaces. This strategy follows the established spatial organization, providing suitable locations for visitor accommodation while retaining the spatial basis of household life.

## 4.2. Dwelling 12: Functional Reorganization across Multiple Levels

Dwelling 12 is also a three-storey building, with existing records identifying disused dining space on the ground floor. Its proposal combines dining improvements with guest rooms on all three levels, extending adaptation opportunities beyond upper-level rooms. The ground-floor plan retains resident accommodation and shared spaces while selectively introducing guest rooms and reorganizing dining functions. It thus distinguishes localized insertion from converting the entire ground floor into visitor-service space.

**Figure 3.** Existing and proposed floor plans of Dwelling 12. (Source: Author)




Changes on Levels 2 and 3 focus more closely on guest-room subdivision and associated sanitary spaces. The original drawings relate these changes to underused space and inadequate facilities. Plan comparison demonstrates functional redistribution but does not quantify increases in usable area or confirm actual accommodation capacity. Such figures require dimensioned drawings and a room schedule.

This case suggests that everyday living spaces can be maintained through selective reorganization rather than only through an entirely unchanged ground-floor layout. Nevertheless, the retention of dining and shared spaces also depends on whom they serve and residents' rights to use them. The presence of a space on a plan does not establish residents' priority of use during operation. Interpretation of the proposal should therefore be informed by household-use records, and corresponding use arrangements should be established during implementation.

### 4.3. Comparative Findings and Conditional Design Strategies

Both proposals introduce accommodation into existing buildings, but their main intervention locations differ. Dwelling 8 retains the ground-floor layout and concentrates adjustments above, whereas Dwelling 12 uses opportunities across several levels and reorganizes some ground-floor functions. Guest-room floor locations alone offer limited insight into impacts on everyday life. More informative questions concern which household functions are retained, where they are located, and whether the spaces connecting them remain usable.

**Table 2.** Comparison of the adaptation proposals for Dwellings 8 and 12 (Source: Author)

| Dimension | Dwelling 8 | Dwelling 12 |
|---|---|---|
| Recorded ground-floor use | Storage of firewood and fodder | Includes disused dining space |
| Guest-room levels | Levels 2 and 3 | Ground floor and Levels 2 and 3 |
| Main spatial intervention | Retain ground-floor layout; adapt upper-level rooms | Insert guest rooms selectively across levels; reorganize dining and shared spaces |
| Spatial conditions for continuity | Retain ground-floor support spaces and some upper-level resident accommodation | Combine resident accommodation with dining, shared spaces, and guest rooms |
| Further verification needed | Storage accessibility and privacy along shared upper-level circulation | Residents' rights to shared dining space and access to retained residential rooms |
| Technical evidence | Bathroom locations are identifiable; facility performance is unverified | Bathroom locations are identifiable; facility performance is unverified |

The comparison yields three design considerations. First, existing household functions should be identified before guest rooms are allocated. Storage and production-support spaces should not be treated as vacant merely because they lack a conventional residential room layout. Second, the distribution of occupied, underused, and vacant spaces should inform the scope of adaptation, allowing either concentrated upper-level insertion or selective insertion across multiple floors. Third, sanitary and reception facilities should be organized around retained household spaces so that new service requirements do not automatically lead to a comprehensive rearrangement of the dwelling.

More specifically, ground-floor storage of firewood and fodder in Dwelling 8 is explicitly identified for retention in the adaptation schedule, but its extent is not delineated in the plan. It can therefore be recorded only as a use proposed for retention, with its spatial extent still to be verified. In Dwelling 12, disused dining space is proposed for improvement, but the relationship between household use and commercial service remains unclear. Resident accommodation is identifiable from the functional labels in both cases, but existing household sizes and room requirements are not recorded. The adequacy of residential provision therefore cannot be assessed. These differences define the evidential limits of the functional continuity analysis.

The strategies are conditional. Upper-level insertion requires suitable circulation and technical feasibility, whereas ground-floor insertion requires documented

vacant space or functional reorganization acceptable to existing users. Both must address the relationship between household activities and visitor access. The two cases do not support a universal ranking of one arrangement above another.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. From Floor Retention to Functional Continuity

The two cases help clarify what "retaining the ground floor" means. An unchanged plan outline or partition arrangement is an observable spatial fact, but it is insufficient to fully assess the continuity of everyday life. If visitors must pass through retained household rooms, or if guest occupation restricts access to storage, functions retained on paper may be difficult to sustain in practice. Conversely, selective adjustments may allow existing activities to continue where suitable alternative locations and connections are provided. The available drawings identify these issues but do not provide behavioural evidence to resolve them.

Everyday living space is therefore understood here as a combination of functions and their connections. In the Caigai proposals, guest-room locations need to be read alongside resident accommodation, dining, storage, and shared circulation. This offers a more precise explanation of proposal differences than treating all upper-level insertion as conservative and all ground-floor insertion as disruptive. The interpretation remains limited to the available design materials and requires further examination through resident interviews and observations of use.

The continuity of living spaces and the transmission of material character should also be assessed separately. Zhang examines the regional expression of local materials through natural, cultural, and technological dimensions, identifying materials and their construction methods as a distinct field of analysis[6]. Retaining household functions therefore does not establish continuity in traditional materials or craftsmanship, just as preserving external appearance does not establish that household life remains unaffected. This study focuses on functional and spatial relationships and does not use visual or material compatibility as a substitute for evidence of domestic function retention.

### 5.2. Contribution and Limitations

The study contributes a traceable approach linking dwelling-use records with comparative design analysis. Classification of the 23 proposals describes overall differences in guest-room floor distribution, while comparison of two sets of plans explains the relationship between contrasting arrangements and existing uses. With a clear distinction between existing conditions and proposals, and consistent dwelling identifiers, this approach can support the organization and analysis of other residential adaptation materials.

Four limitations should be acknowledged. The sample comes from one project and cannot establish the distribution of types in other villages. The existing-use schedule

combines survey descriptions with design interpretations, and household activities were not independently audited. The drawings primarily communicate proposals rather than complete measured surveys or construction documentation. Implementation and operation have not been verified, so no claims are made that income, satisfaction, privacy, thermal comfort, or structural safety have improved. Subsequent evaluation could combine resident accounts, observations of actual circulation, and technical inspections to test the proposed spatial arrangements.

## 6. Conclusions

Guest-room provision in the 23 Caigai adaptation proposals follows three patterns: upper levels only, ground and upper levels, and ground floor only. Comparison of Dwellings 8 and 12 reveals two approaches: retaining the lower-level layout while adjusting upper-level rooms, and selectively reorganizing functions across multiple levels. Together, the cases support a design process that begins by identifying existing household functions, determines the scope of adaptation according to space use, and coordinates guest rooms, sanitary facilities, and reception spaces. Retaining everyday living spaces is an important criterion for homestay conversion, but continued use cannot be demonstrated through floor plans alone. The strategies should be understood as spatial conditions for continuity and tested further during implementation and occupation.

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