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The Inherent Malleability of Heritage: Creating China's Beautiful Villages

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Abstract

The Beautiful Villages policy is a major policy initiative to secure the socio-economic and environmental development of China. Tracking the development of this policy at a local level reveals the intricacies of policy making, the extent of local autonomy, and the ways in which rural development is delivered. Contained within this is an examination of the evolving role of heritage within a policy framework that primarily focuses on the natural environment. This article traces the ways in which heritage became a component of this policy in one village in Zhejiang Province. It examines how the value of heritage was gradually realised by government officials and villagers, and how the concept of ecology was broadened to include built heritage, which ensures that funds can be accessed to stimulate rural development. In so doing the article investigates the concept of adaptive governance advanced by Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry in the context of the inherent malleability of heritage as both a concept and a process. Focusing on the ways in which institutions recognise and then mobilise heritage to secure instrumental goals enables us to examine the inherent malleability of heritage and how this is aligned to meet specific policy goals in China, as it is around the world.

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Introduction

That heritage ‘is continually subject to interpretation and reinterpretation, claim and counter claim, and negotiation’ (Harrison 2005, 7) is axiomatic. However, less is known about the complexity of intra-governmental relations and how this affects the processes of re-interpretation and therefore the future of historic buildings. This article examines how the concept of heritage is re-interpreted at the provincial, county, town, and village levels in China and how this informs rural development. More specifically, the article explores the processes through which heritage is mobilised as part of a broader desire to secure the socio-economic development of the village of Shuangyi near Hangzhou in eastern China. In so doing it calls for a greater emphasis to be placed on the role of heritage within broader social, economic, and environmental policies. Moreover, it focuses on the place of heritage within environmental and ecological policies, and so engages with Winter’s belief that we need to consider the ways in which heritage ‘has a stake in, and can act as a positive enabler for, the complex, multi-vector challenges that face us today, such as cultural and environmental sustainability...’ (2013, 533). Rather than see heritage as located purely within the domains of cultural heritage protection, museums, World Heritage Sites, and tourism this article demonstrates the ways in which heritage has been reconceptualised to fit a range of policy agendas that at first glance may not appear to be directly concerned with heritage.

To engage with this context, this article explores the process of heritage conservation in Shuangyi within the context of the *Zhongguo meili xiangcun* (Chinese Beautiful Villages, hereafter CBV) policy. It explains the wider policy environment, explores how it is implemented at the local level, and investigates how heritage is conceived within its context. We argue that in Anji County heritage is subsumed within the wider notion of ecology as set out in CBV. The fact that this policy is not explicitly designed to protect heritage means that it is open to interpretation by different actors and reveals the ways in which heritage is moulded to fit different agendas. While both policy context and the political culture in which the discourses of history and heritage are conceived in China are top down, there is space for local actors. Such local policy developments are often seen in the context of economic growth, and mobilized to support the idea of a corporate or entrepreneurial Chinese state (Duckett 1998;

Oi 1992, 1999). We do not seek to deny that economic development is a key objective of CBV, but instead focus on the ways in which heritage is mobilised to align with a range of different policy agendas.

Case study site and methods

The village of Shuangyi in Anji County to the northwest of Hangzhou City in Zhejiang Province comprises 810 households with 2610 people, nearly 500 of whom are over the age of 60. It boasts a two-thousand year old history going back to the Han Dynasty that more recently includes Japanese occupation during World War II and suffering during the political campaigns of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. However, since the beginning of the Reform Era in 1978, the village has prospered, with 2012 per capita income at 22,715 yuan (c. US\$ 3,500). Shuangyi boasts a rich architectural and social history, which are both now being recognised as heritage, and used to support continuing development. The Li, Zhu and Fang families have long lived in the village, and although the Li family ancestral hall was destroyed by the Japanese, the Zhu hall survives to this day. Apart from the ancestral hall, there are buildings surviving from the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), Republican (1912-1949), and Maoist (1949-1976) eras. In addition, the village has a variety of old monuments, including a spring, trees and grave sites. It sits in an area of natural beauty, surrounded by a bamboo forest, and close to a reservoir. This means that bamboo is an important agricultural sideline, and as in the county as a whole, aside from farming it is the most important source of income for villagers (Anji Dipuzhen Shuangyi cun 2013, 1, 5). Shuangyi is rich in resources, and yet like villages across China, it faces the pressures of urbanization. Although its remoteness means that it is not in danger of being swallowed up by the seemingly ever-expanding city of Hangzhou, scarcity of jobs in the village poses risks to its ongoing sustainability. Many old houses were abandoned when families moved out, and some have already been demolished because they were seen as too dilapidated. The village leadership gradually came to recognise the value of heritage, and with county and provincial government support, is looking to develop this, along with industry and agriculture, to ensure that the village has a sustainable future.

In order to examine our overarching research question, the place of heritage within CBV policy, we adopted a qualitative methodology. This took the form of semi-structured interviews which lasted,

on average, 1.5 hours. In total we interviewed five government officials and four villagers. Government officials were recruited through a gatekeeper at Hangzhou Normal University based on the authors' criteria that each official played a key role in the delivery of CBV in the province and an awareness of heritage policy. A snowball approach was then adopted as government officials purposively selected the villagers on the authors' pre-condition that each of the villagers had lived in Shuangyi for the entirety of their lives. All the interviews took place in the same month and therefore at the same stage of the development of CBV in Shuangyi. To inform both the interviews and the analysis the researchers analysed a large body of extant archival material including planning documents, guidelines, laws, and exhibition materials. Our thematic analysis of both the archival material and the interview transcripts was based on inductive reasoning in which codes were assigned and agreed by the authors. We begin by outlining the inherent malleability of heritage in the context of Heilmann and Perry's work on guerrilla policy style and adaptive governance. We then describe the development of CBV, exploring how heritage has been incorporated into the policy's ecological objectives, consider the kinds of tensions that this process of recognition and reconceptualisation has produced, and finally conclude by discussing their negotiation within the context of adaptive governance.

Malleable Heritage and Adaptive Governance in China

Whilst it is axiomatic that heritage is malleable, it is the ways in which the past can be moulded to fit the present that is the subject of this article. To achieve this, we centre the analysis on the traditions of governance within China and in particular within Zhejiang Province. Existing research concerning the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006) and the belief that heritage is a 'mental construct' (Logan *et al* 2016, 1) remain relevant but the focus is on understanding the processes through which heritage can be moulded to fit policy agendas within a specific mode of governance in China.

In China, this process of constructing the AHD has been underway for longer than many acknowledge. In the first half of the twentieth century, often at the behest of government officials, temples, ancestral halls, shrines, pagodas, and other vestiges of history became tourist sites or educational institutions (Yue-Dong 2003, 90-97; Nedostup 2010, 67-108; Lincoln 2015, 46-49). After 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was more intrusive than the Republican Government

that preceded it, repurposed these spaces, and they were often damaged during the Cultural Revolution. In the Reform Era, despite government opposition, tangible heritage such as temples and ancestral halls have once more been used for religious and other long-practised communal purposes. In many cases though, heritage has been adapted and utilised to facilitate social change (Svensson 2006, 12-18; Zhang and Wu 2016). However, despite the overbearing nature of the Chinese state, at least in comparison with liberal democracies, heritage is still malleable, and offers the opportunity for different actors to assert their claims to its meaning (Silverman and Blumenfield 2013, 4). Part of the reason for this is the traditions of governance that have emerged within the Chinese Communist Party. Acknowledging their importance in the process of producing heritage highlights how recent tensions between theorising heritage across east and west can be seen as part of a move to decentre the Anglo-centric and Global North focus of many established theories (Winter 2012). Moving beyond these totalising theories necessitates that scholarship attempts to ground any perceived differences within the traditions of governance apparent within each country instead of speculating on broad theoretical differences across and between continents. Rather than seek to universalise heritage practices around the *how* and the *why* this article instead engages with the traditions of governance at play within the specific rural Chinese context in which the case study is located. To be sure, policies governing heritage in China have been partly defined by Anglo-centric norms as evidenced through the increasing number of World Heritage Sites in the country, although of course these also serve Chinese political and economic agendas. Beyond this, the Chinese government has surveyed heritage sites, and established government institutions to protect both tangible and intangible heritage (Silverman and Blumenfield 2013, 5-7).

It is clear then that the malleability of heritage means that it diverges from Anglo-centric norms, even when its AHD is defined in part by those very norms and international organizations that exist to ensure its conservation. However, Shuangyi is not a UNESCO world heritage site, while its buildings do not have the same level of protection as nationally important sites, or even those that municipal governments in Shanghai and other large cities may deem worthy of protection. This means that heritage conservation in this village and thousands of others like it across China, happens within a policy context that may not be specifically designed to deal with it. This occurs because of the particular traditions of governance in China, and, in line with Winter's belief on the need to see heritage as part of broader

global issues (2013), it links rural heritage to a growing emphasis on ecological development. In Shuangyi, what constitutes heritage is broad and open to multiple interpretations within the context of the needs of CBV, while the process of re-using historic structures is shaped by the nature of policy making and implementation in China. The recognition and reconceptualization of heritage to align with CBV is, we argue, an example of what Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry have termed a guerrilla policy style. This has its roots in the CCP's history of guerrilla warfare and revolutionary mobilization in the 1930s and 40s, and is characterized by pragmatism, adaptability, experimentation, and minimization of risk through the launching of new campaigns. It leads to a dictatorial style of governance, but also allows for considerable local autonomy (Heilmann and Perry 2011). A key aspect of this type of policy making and delivery rests with what Heilmann and Perry term adaptive governance which 'depends upon people's readiness to venture forth into unfamiliar environments to act, experiment, and learn from changing circumstances' (Heilmann and Perry 2011, 8). Furthermore, this style of policy making requires a high degree of fluidity and manoeuvrability, the ability to continually improvise and adjust policies, the use of practical experience of existing policies as a guide to determining future action, local officials having significant scope to implement decisions from the higher levels, and above all, the ability to search out new initiatives for development (Heilmann and Perry 2011, 12-13). Each of these aspects can be seen within the trajectory of CBV in Shuangyi and form the basis for the analysis.

The Beautiful Villages Policy

CBV was originally proposed by Anji County in 2008, and like any policy initiative it has its antecedents and inspirations. Ecological aspects of the policy, and the general trend towards ecological development in twenty-first century China, bear some resemblance to ideas in Europe and the USA, which have their origins in the nineteenth century, when scientists first began to use the term ecology. However, it should be born in mind that ideas that would now be included within the concept of ecology have been discussed for centuries around the world, and scholars in China and the West have been drawing on classical Chinese thought for inspiration in thinking about contemporary environmental problems (Egerton 2012; Miller, Yu and van de Veer 2014). Indeed, a concept of beautiful villages

emerged in France in 1982, culminating in the creation in 2012 of a formal organization entitled *Les Plus Beaux Villages de la Terre* (the most beautiful villages in the world) to which villages in France, Italy, Québec and Japan are signatories (LPBVT). However, there is no mention of international connections within the policy documents we analysed, and there is no sign that China wishes to join this international organization. Moreover, there is no sign that officials in Anji sought to engage with broader discussions on ecology, although they did acknowledge that the county had long emphasized the importance of its natural environment. Officials also did not comment on whether previous state policies aimed at developing the countryside had been effective in Shuangyi, or mention the new rural reconstruction movement, an intellectual campaign to develop the countryside with roots in the 1930s (Day and Schneider 2017).

Ideas and government policies can have many possible origins, and so it is important to trace the development of CBV in detail to understand how heritage can be part of a policy that is not designed specifically for this purpose. The concept of ecological development was first proposed in Anji in 1996. Environmental protection was gradually incorporated into county policy, and Anji was the first in China to be designated a county of ecological status by the central government in 2006. This indicates not only how the central government recognises and rewards local initiatives, but also how far the concept of ecological development has taken hold in China as part of the policy to develop the New Socialist Countryside (Marsden, Yu and Flynn 2011, 195-196, 203, 208). In 2010, two years after CBV was formulated by the Anji Government, the Zhejiang provincial government announced that by 2015, 70 percent of counties should have implemented the policy (Wang Weixing 2014, 2). From then on, what became known as the Anji pattern, grew in popularity. In November 2012, at the eighteenth National Congress, ‘Beautiful Village,’ became ‘Beautiful China.’ This expanded the scope of the policy by applying it to cities as well as villages and by incorporating it into national policy, and therefore shifted the emphasis from the speed of the country’s development to its quality (Liu Linfang 2013, 166-167). Then, in 2017 at the nineteenth National Congress, Xi Jinping again emphasized the importance of constructing a Beautiful China, although this part of his speech focused on the environment, with heritage appearing in the discussion of socialist culture (Xi Jinping 2017, 39, 45-46).

Meanwhile, CBV has been adopted in other provinces such as Anhui, Guangdong and Jiangsu, and in 2013 the Ministry of Commerce announced 3 billion yuan of funding, which was aimed at seven provinces to trial the policy. By the end of that year, 1,146 villages in 130 counties were involved in the trial. In addition to this, provinces provided their own funding. Anhui made 1 billion yuan available per year, Fujian invested 700 million, and Guizhou 175 million (Wang Weixing 2014, 2). Finally, in a further indication that CBV has support at the highest levels of government, it was one of 35 clauses in the *guanyu jiakuai tuijin shengtai wenming jianshe de yijianyi* (Concerning thoughts on increasing the pace of undertaking the construction of ecological civilization), which was released by the State Council in May 2015. While this focused on infrastructure development, improvement of agricultural methods, and reduction of pollution, environmental protection in general was important, as well as nurturing the culture and customs of villages, which help to create a civilized society (Guowu yuan 2015).

As mentioned above, CBV is part of the wider policy to develop the New Socialist Countryside (NSC), which was approved and written into the eleventh Five Year Plan in 2006. The NSC has its roots in rural reconstruction movements of the 1930s and more recently the former campaign to construct a new socialist countryside under Mao in the 1950s and 60s, although given that policy's link to among other things the disastrous Great Leap Forward, the central government has been at pains to emphasize the twenty-first century iteration as something different. NSC aims to improve rural infrastructure and public services, such as education and healthcare, while also committing local officials to agricultural modernization, ecological sustainability, the creation of a civilized village life, and urbanization. Despite these differences NSC bears the imprint of its Maoist forebear. Policy implementation is top down, with provincial or city governments setting out the guidelines, the county formulating a plan of implementation, and township and village cadres choosing which projects are eligible for funding. Money is often distributed to those villages that aim to or have achieved model status, itself a legacy of earlier campaigns, the most famous being the village of Dazhai, which was celebrated nationally throughout the Cultural Revolution as an example of efficient Communist agricultural production. Models allow for a policy to be first trialled, and then spread more broadly across the country. Unsurprisingly, the injection of funds is an important motivating factor, even if villages have to find matching support. The success of individual projects within this policy is judged

through the award of points. This could result in promotion for individual cadres and extra funds for those projects deemed to have been a success (Perry 2011, 35-38; Schubert and Ahlers 2012, 70-79, 82-84). The impact of NSC across China is undeniable. In many areas, it has resulted in real improvements, but the way in which the policy has been implemented has been overbearing and is reminiscent of former campaigns. First, propaganda teams spread the message, local officials undertake study programs, and often homes, lineage halls and other buildings are forcibly demolished to make way for new roads and housing (Perry 2011, 38-42).

CBV certainly shares many of the same objectives as NSC. Moreover, the process of evaluating its success depends on exactly the same top-down management and points system. However, this does not invalidate the motives behind the policy, nor some of the very real changes that have been experienced at village level. Beyond this, the fact that it has several components means that in line with Heilmann and Perry's thesis on adaptive governance, local officials can choose which aspects of the policy to emphasize, although all seek to channel money into infrastructure investment and to leverage local resources to increase rural income. These can include natural resources such as forests and lakes, local products, and tangible and intangible heritage (Wang Weixing 2014, 2; Wu Licai and Wu Kongfan 2014, 15-17).

Adaptive Governance in Practice

Shuangyi underwent a number of changes that were directly linked to the financial incentives and policy guidelines within CBV. These ranged from physical changes such as turning the Zhu Ancestral Hall into a museum, rehabilitating historic houses and re-inserting cobbled paths to subtler psychological changes such as seeing bamboo as intangible heritage, and proposing changing the name of the village to accord with its new status as a 'Beautiful Village'. This section considers the practice of adaptive governance in the context of implementing the CBV policies. The focus is on how heritage is treated within the practice of adaptive governance and how this affects the physical transformation of the village. The negotiations between officials at different levels, and between village officials and residents, reveal the ways in which heritage was gradually seen as important within the context of rural

change, and how the core CBV concept of ecology broadened to include heritage in order to obtain the necessary funds to stimulate socio-economic development.

Changing Mindsets 1: Value of Heritage

The pragmatism of the officials in seeing the opportunities that heritage could bring in the context of CBV was demonstrated by official A in stating

Before 2012, I didn't pay much attention to conservation. Since Beautiful Villages, I started to attach importance to conservation. For Beautiful Villages, I needed to find the features and characteristics of our village. The features of Shuangyi are bamboo culture and history. They can be utilised in various ways.

This narrative was however couched within the broader discourse surrounding China's turn to embrace their heritage. The Cultural Revolution and more recently the rapid pace of economic and social change had 'disturbed and destroyed' 'historical resources' and ensured that a 'number of historical cities and villages vanished forever' (Official B). Each interviewee expressed their view of the value of heritage, often through the lens of 'loss'

If we lose our history, we lose ourselves. During the period of rapid development, we copied a lot of foreign culture. Eventually we suddenly found out that we do not have our own cities. Cities, streets and our daily life are the carriers of traditional Chinese culture. This is our spiritual ballast (Official B).

We should know the process of our own history. If we lose all the ancient houses, there must be a disconnect within our culture. We are not talking about going back to the past. We are talking about the return of ideology, of architecture, of humanity. I think China can't exist if there are no ancient houses (Official D).

In expressing these views, officials were consistent in their belief that villagers did not yet recognise the importance of heritage. As such, a dominant theme in the interviews was the perceived need of the officials to educate the villagers. This permeated each level of government as officials stated that 'common people had not reached the stage that they would spontaneously protect historical remains' as

the villagers 'did not keep pace with our consciousness' (Official B) or rather they 'lack awareness and foresight. They are different from us' (Official A). That China, a one-party state, should have a top-down government controlled process of managing heritage is not surprising. This does not mean that there is no room for local interpretation, and no space for officials and the people to express their understanding of the past. Indeed, a key hallmark of adaptive governance is the appearance of a dictatorial style implemented from above, but in reality, a style of governance that leaves local officials with sufficient flexibility to broadly interpret the policies. This flexibility allowed local officials on the one hand to use the villagers' lack of knowledge as a way to legitimate their policies and on the other hand to draw on the villagers' intimate knowledge of their history to help them meet the criteria for CBV. In reality, the process of adaptive governance was not a top-down education of villagers, but was rooted in a complex process of negotiation and pragmatism which had some contradictory consequences for the restoration and re-use of built heritage within the village. The tensions are highlighted most clearly in local attempts to meet the criteria for funding under CBV.

As with other policies, which aim to create a new socialist countryside, CBV uses a points-based system in which funding is apportioned based on the number of points won. To achieve the status of premium model village, Shuangyi had to obtain 950 points out of a total of 1,000 (Anjixian shengji shehuizhuyi xin nongcun jianshe shiyan shifanqu gongzuo lingdao xiaozu 2013). There were over 40 criteria on which the village would be judged, the maximum income available was 2 million yuan, and there was the possibility of applying for additional funds from the county development zone (Official A). Out of 1,000 points, heritage was mentioned in just 25, although various aspects of cultural improvement could also include protection and promotion of folk customs and handicrafts (Anjixian shengji shehuizhuyi xin nongcun jianshe shiyan shifanqu gongzuo lingdao xiaozu 2013). The flexibility and manoeuvrability of adaptive governance was evident here in the physical manifestations of the CBV policy. For example, points were available if plans considered local characteristics and sought to use appropriate materials. Within this, protection of old buildings and trees was worth one point, although their destruction could lose the village points. Government officials thus developed a belief in the need to 'restore the old as the old' (Official C), which was achieved with varying degrees of success within the village.

Firstly, the Zhu Ancestral Hall and the historic cobbled paths were restored in line with this philosophy. The re-use of the Zhu Ancestral Hall as a museum is one tangible outcome of the gradual development of heritage as a central part of CBV, the potential value of which was recognised by official A in 2012. Whilst many ancestral halls have been museumified, (Svensson 2006, 19-20) this was carried out to achieve the status of premium model village. Now, adorning the walls of the Zhu Ancestral Hall are exhibition boards that relate the village's history, with cases displaying important documents, such as records of genealogies, and manuals on bamboo production. The exhibition projects the history of the village outwards, and is designed to showcase its uniqueness, its beauty, and the achievements of its people. It certainly displays the AHD by emphasizing the changes in the village under Communist rule, especially since the beginning of the Reform Era, downplaying the impact of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and highlighting key figures such as party secretary Zhu Yuenian, who brought the village national recognition as a centre of bamboo production throughout the Maoist era.

Figure 1: Front of the restored Zhu Ancestral Hall



Figure 2: Interior of restored Zhu Ancestral Hall, with display boards.



In the opinion of the government officials the restoration of the Zhu Ancestral Hall was catalytic

Through the conservation of the ancestral hall, we publicized the idea of conservation to villagers. It is impossible for villagers to spend their money to protect historical buildings voluntarily... As a result, once we have maintained the hall, villagers were willing to protect it out of a sense of history and family pride (Official A).

However, the process of ‘publicising the idea of conservation’ to the villagers was informed by members of the Zhu family who worked with the Design Company to restore it to its pre-1983 era condition which was deemed to be the ‘most impressive...architectural style’ (Villager W). Indeed, the officials’ assertion that they needed to ‘educate’ the villagers was contradicted by the villagers themselves, who stated that they had advised officials in 2010 that the ‘historical buildings of our village should be protected immediately’ (Villager W). This account places the desire to conserve historic buildings two years prior to Official A’s desire to conserve within the CBV guidelines, and demonstrates the disjuncture between events recalled by people in different positions of power.

The protection of historic houses was, ostensibly, also top-down and often instituted without the knowledge of the villagers: ‘some of these houses are not qualified to be protected. In most cases we labelled the houses by ourselves. Villagers don’t know, they think these houses are protected by the government’ (Official D). Following this, ideas about heritage were ‘promoted to the villagers’ who were also informed as to the benefits of conserving these houses (Official E). These ideas were often put forward during formal meetings with the villagers in which they were asked to sign an agreement about how houses should be protected. It was stated that ‘we hold a meeting of village representatives. We promote and introduce our policies to them, then they sign [the agreement]’ (Official C). However, the process of adaptive governance ensured that concessions were made by the officials with regards to the restoration and re-use of built heritage. For example, the use of concrete in the restoration of the historic buildings, whilst anathema to the requirements of elegance, was explained by villagers’ preferences and the problems with traditional materials: ‘villagers think cement lasts longer, and is stronger than wood. And rain would damage the mud wall’ (Official A). However, on other occasions although the villagers believed walls ‘should be whitewashed’ and roads ‘hardened’ the management strategy was to ‘try to lead them using the Beautiful Villages construction’ (Official A).

Figure 3: Cement wall in front of late Qing Dynasty house



Restoring the historic cobbled paths proved to be even more contentious as the dichotomy between past and present was recognised by officials, who acknowledged that whilst the cobbles were ‘uncomfortable’ (Official A), ‘impractical’ and ‘uneven’ (Official D), returning the paths to their ancient state was, in line with the need to make the village elegant, a necessary requirement of it gaining the points to become a model village (Official E). In reality the compromise position saw a confusing mix of styles and techniques, rather than the expressed desire to ‘restore old as old’ (Official C).

Changing mindsets in terms of recognising the value of heritage was therefore key to the adoption of the CBV policies. However, this was not a one-way, top-down process of educating villagers. In fact, the tradition of adaptive governance saw the continual renegotiation of the value of heritage between officials and villagers.

Figure 4: Restored cobbled paths and new paving around restored pond area in the centre of Shuangyi Village



Changing Mindsets 2: Reconceptualising Heritage as Ecology

The process of changing mindsets was not just restricted to physical changes but also to the mental work of reconceptualising the nature of heritage within the context of CBV. CBV policies were primarily aimed at improving the ecology of villages, and the ability of officials to reconceptualise cultural heritage to fit within this context is a further example of adaptive governance. Just how ecology is understood as the underlying ethos of CBV is set out in the initial proposal from Anji in 2008, and the Zhejiang provincial plan that was published two years later. The policy documents contain three types of ‘ecology’: *shengtai jingji* (ecological economy); *shengtai huangjing* (ecological environment) and *shengtai wenhua* (ecological culture), with heritage having varying levels of importance in each of these areas.

The ecological environment considers the environment in its broadest sense, and encompasses infrastructure such as roads, provision of clean water and sewage, and the control of pollution from agriculture, industry and housing. According to the provincial plan, by 2015, each village and township should have one waste collection centre, hygienic toilets should be provided for 90 percent of villagers, and sewage management should cover 70 percent of the village. Renewable energy, and energy saving

measures such as the use of solar energy hot water heaters should be promoted. The natural environment surrounding villages, particularly forests, should be protected, and trees and other foliage should also be planted within villages themselves. Finally, rural industry such as homestays for visiting tourists should not disrupt the natural environment (Zhonggong Zhejiangsheng wei bangongting 2010). Although not a focus of the ecological environment, heritage has assumed importance in the rhetoric of government officials. This can be seen in three areas.

Firstly, government officials emphasised the symbiotic relationship between the natural environment and cultural heritage. They each expressed similar sentiments such as ‘an ecological environment is the foundation’ (Official C) and that as such ‘ecological protection is slightly more significant than conservation’ (Official D). However, it was also thought that a ‘good ecological environment benefits conservation’ and that ‘natural resources and cultural historical resources ... will be protected at the same time’ (Official B). This was attributed to spiritual values as both natural and cultural historical resources were seen as a ‘valuable treasure of human society which contribute both to social progress and the development of civilization’ (Official B). In addition, it was believed that tourists would be more inclined to visit cultural heritage resources if the air was clean, the water free from pollution and the rubbish cleared.

Secondly, whilst the inextricable relationship between environmental ecology and heritage was highlighted by all officials, they also recognised that this had not always been the case. However, links were made between environmental protection, broadly defined, and heritage protection by highlighting their track record of protecting trees. Shuangyi had ‘always been in the front of ecological protection’ and therefore the ‘tradition of protection’ could be extended from trees to built heritage (Official D). This was further developed by the treatment of moral stelas, or stones inscribed with scripts: ‘We have moral stelas which detail ecological protection, among which the oldest were set up in the Song (960-1271) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties. Ecology is an organic component of our culture, and a part of our historical inheritance’ (Official C). In these ways ecological protection was seen as synonymous with cultural heritage protection, while also being something that was historically embedded in the locality.

Thirdly, drawing a connection between the built and natural environment was a key theme within the interviews as officials discussed built heritage as ‘ecological architecture’ (Official C). This was justified in terms of the environmental sustainability of the historic houses as they were considered to have ‘advantages like retaining warmth, excellent ventilation and natural lighting’ (Official C). In addition, restoring tangible heritage had the added benefit of ensuring the intangible craft skills of traditional building methods could be applied to modern construction. Environmental ecology was thus broadly defined to ensure that both tangible and intangible heritage could become a key part of justifying applications for government funding, and so ensuring the socio-economic and environmental development of Shuangyi under the CBV policy.

Cultural heritage was also reconceptualised to fit within the broad definitions of an ecological economy. This form of economy seeks to increase rural income through supporting agriculture and other activities such as tourism, but not at a cost to the environment. Here the bamboo industry, traditionally a pivotal part of the Shuangyi economy, was reconceptualised as heritage. More specifically, the production of bamboo was seen as intangible heritage, the products of which could be sold to a burgeoning tourist market. However, the plans also stated that the development of the ecological economy should focus on creating a new industry in the form of homestays, which should be linked closely to the protection and promotion of the natural environment. Attracting domestic tourists from within China was central to the longer-term development of Shuangyi. In order to achieve this, officials discussed the need to attract private investment and cited several examples including an entrepreneur, who ‘tried to keep some old buildings in his hometown by running cultural and creative industries, and restaurant and entertainment service industries inside those old buildings’ (Official B). This form of development was considered to be ‘immature’ but in the future, it was perceived to be a ‘new approach of conservation’ (Official B). This was further developed by using examples from Songyang County where 29 traditional villages were given ‘3 million yuan last year’ (2013) as a result of their designated status (Official A). The potential for Shuangyi to attract public and private investment to further its development was clearly tied to a re-appreciation of the historic value of both its tangible and intangible heritage.

Government officials also noted the potential for heritage to become a central part of the ecological economy as they recognised that ‘value comes from scarcity’ and as such the ‘feature of Shuangyi is history and culture’ (Official A). This economic potential was partly connected to the potential for improvement in the external reputation of Shuangyi that officials believed was possible if the village was seen to emphasise its heritage. For example, officials believed that the ‘ancient houses and paths...contribute to our taste and style’ (Official A). This was supported by all levels of government as officials stated they believed that Zhejiang was an exemplar, while for example, ‘Jiangxi Province is a decade behind Zhejiang in this project’ whereas other officials emphasised how ‘in 2012, Anji was the first and the only one that won the “United Nation Habitat Award” as a county’ (Official C). The role of heritage within the ecological economy was therefore crucial to improving the reputation of Anji County as a leader in ecological protection.

The increased role for heritage within the ecological economy was perhaps best exemplified by the desire to change the name of the village to Phoenix Historic Village as Shuangyi was deemed to be ‘unattractive’ (Official D). Furthermore, using bamboo to market the village was an integral element of this rebranding as the slogan ‘Bamboo King of China’ was seen along with Phoenix Historic Village as ‘our development strategies’ (Official D). In 2014, the village formed the Shuangyi Bamboo Share Co-op in partnership with a tourist company in Hangzhou. Its goal was to develop tourism, including homestays, scenic tours of the village and its surrounding area, and to help market local handicrafts. Beyond this, at the beginning of 2016, a businessman invested 50 million yuan in the village, and at least one villager opened a homestay business. The importance of preserving the intangible heritage of bamboo protection was a central element of Shuangyi’s interpretation of CBV. These economic development strategies were again tied to a recognition of the village’s history, since the ‘honour of Shuangyi’ rested with ‘Bamboo Culture’ (Official D). In these examples, the reconceptualisation of heritage to include both tangible and intangible forms was used to meet the needs of CBV.

The definition of an ‘ecological culture’ within the Zhejiang plan of 2010 stated that the specific characteristics of each village should be developed, protected, and enhanced. It is here that there are more explicit references to heritage. Protection and preservation of culture is seen as paramount, and the 2010 provincial plan emphasizes ‘the preservation of ancient villages, ancient public buildings,

ancient architecture, old trees and wood, and folk culture and other cultural heritage' (Zhonggong Zhejiangsheng wei bangongting 2010). The 2008 county document highlights the importance of rural lineages, which as the Zhu Ancestral Hall shows are key to a village's heritage and identity, although it also discusses education, sport, provision of facilities for old people, and explicitly links culture with tourism and economic activity (Zhonggong Anjixianwei bangongshi 2008). Both documents argue that the level of village culture needs to be raised, a tone that as we saw above, was also adopted by government officials in their desire to educate villagers as to the value of heritage.

These definitions were aligned with the pursuit of Shuangyi as an 'Ecological Civilization Model' (Official D). This model emphasised both intangible heritage through protecting traditional handicrafts as well as tangible heritage through the restoration and re-use of historic houses within Shuangyi. Again, the concept of ecology was multi-layered with environment, economy and culture mixed together as demonstrated by the example of giving each family 'three bamboo baskets' to convince them 'to stop using plastic bags' which in turn 'protect the craftsmanship of bamboo wares' which can be sold to tourists (Official D). Within the Ecological Civilisation Model, it was stated that 'we lead villagers to know what is forbidden and lead them to take part in conservation' (Official D). This aligns with the view that villagers needed to be taught the importance of their history. Recognising the importance of selectively conserving the history of Shuangyi was considered a crucial element of the ecological culture. This model also couched the key characteristics of the village in a fluid and plural definition of ecology, which in turn reconceptualised intangible and tangible heritage to align with that more inclusive notion of ecology.

Conclusion

The evolving use of heritage within CBV demonstrates how government officials at different levels are able to mobilize resources to protect and adapt it within a policy environment that is designed to govern rural development as a whole. Despite the fact that heritage, in one form or another, is mentioned in just 25 of the 1000 points available for CBV the desire to improve the ecology of the countryside was seized upon by local officials who skilfully manoeuvred through the various points-based systems, negotiated with villagers, and reconceptualised heritage to fit with the requirements of

various policies and agendas. At each stage officials recognised and reconceptualised selected elements of Shuangyi's past to satisfy the broad agenda of CBV. They achieved this through the tradition of adaptive governance in China, most notably through the significant levels of local autonomy present in the system of rural governance. However, the result of this governmental dexterity was a rather odd mishmash of conservation styles within the village, in which modern materials such as cement are seen as an acceptable way of preserving traditional 'ecological' architecture.

Rather than locate these rather contradictory approaches within the supposed dichotomy between the philosophies of heritage conservation in the east and west we argue that an analysis of the practice of adaptive governance engages with Winter's call for 'fine-grained understandings of regional, cultural, religious and local variations in conservation practice' (2012, 135). Whilst China, and indeed Asia more generally, may be less 'material centric' (2012, 123) and therefore it is more acceptable to use modern materials, this judgement hides the rich complexity of negotiation, pragmatism, and flexibility within the decision-making processes in operation at the local level. The case of Shuangyi demonstrates the need to focus on the ways in which ideas about heritage play out within the reality of policy formation. The reconceptualisation of heritage as ecology concerns ingrained beliefs about the 'inextricable' relationship between 'the physical, human-made components of the heritage' and the 'natural geography and environmental setting of their respective cultures' (Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia 2009, 3) and the need for local officials to use the past to stimulate socio-economic development. As Oakes has argued (2006; 2013) heritage conservation within rural areas is seen as a practice of 'improvement' and integral to 'modernization and development' (2013, 380). Oakes takes this one step further to state that to '*baohu* (preserve) something in rural China these days is not so much to "preserve" it, but to prepare it for development, to turn it into a visitable attraction' (2013, 389). Furthermore, alongside perceived economic gains is political prestige, given that there is a direct relationship between economic growth and an official's place on the political ladder (Zhang and Gao 2008). Changing mindsets in Shuangyi was therefore the product of a complex entanglement of politics, economics, culture, and the environment wrapped up in the container of CBV. In this context, it is not surprising that what can be considered to be heritage is continually subject to 'interpretation and reinterpretation, claim and counter claim, and negotiation' (Harrison 2005, 7).

Mobilising heritage was a key element of the implementation of the CBV policy in Shuangyi, and it was couched within a unanimous belief from the officials that their plans could only work if villagers could also recognise the value of their heritage. This educative process was not solely a top-down imposition of ideas onto the villagers but rather a continual process of negotiation in which some concessions were made and others are still to be resolved. While the CCP is no-longer as overbearing as it was during the Maoist era, and particularly during the Cultural Revolution, it has more power to define the space in which officials and people have the freedom to operate than is the case in countries with more pluralist political systems. However, an often surprising amount of local autonomy allows people to engage with their past. Moreover, as with governments around the world, there is a messiness to policy making and implementation, out of which instrumental value derives. In China, this is because of the tradition of adaptive governance. In the case of CBV, this gives heritage an instrumental value, which subordinates it to other developmental priorities in the countryside, but nevertheless gives local officials the opportunity to mobilize their heritage in the name of ecology, and so gain resources for its protection. In China then, as elsewhere, it is in the messiness of politics at the local level that the complex negotiations between people, officials and legislation, play out. It is out of this continual process of negotiation that the different values of heritage are ultimately determined, only to be re-worked again with each new generation, policy shift, or change in government personnel. At present, the notion of a Beautiful China creates space for heritage protection, and although it may eventually be supplanted, it currently has Xi Jinping's support, and so there is the chance that much rural heritage in China may be protected under this policy.

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