POLITECNICO DI TORINO
MASTER'S DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE FOR HERITAGE
01VMZTE-Degree thesis

# Local Translation of Global Norms:

# Heritage Governance and Architectural Practices in Xidi and Hongcun under UNESCO Influence


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**Abstract:**

Following their joint inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000, Xidi and Hongcun have increasingly operated both as living rural settlements and as internationally recognized heritage sites. This dissertation examines how UNESCO heritage principles—particularly authenticity, integrity, Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and management planning—are interpreted and implemented within China's rural heritage governance system. Rather than treating this process as a linear form of policy transfer, the study uses the concept of governance translation to examine how international principles are reinterpreted across national, local, and community levels.

The research combines policy and document analysis, field observations conducted in 2015 （Ancient Building Renovation Design in Undergraduate Course Project） and 2025 (the main fieldwork), semi-structured interviews with residents and local actors, and architectural analysis of restoration project documentation.

The study finds that UNESCO principles are not directly reproduced in local practice. At the national level, they are incorporated into legal, planning, and administrative procedures and adapted to existing governance structures. At the local level, similar conservation requirements have produced different outcomes in Xidi and Hongcun. Xidi retains a stronger role for village-level consultation and greater continuity of residential use, while Hongcun shows a stronger relationship between heritage conservation, tourism commercialization, and the functional adaptation of traditional buildings. At the community level, residents continue to negotiate conservation requirements through everyday spatial use, building adaptation, and informal social networks.

The comparison demonstrates that heritage outcomes are shaped not only by international principles themselves, but also by the governance structures, economic conditions, and social relationships through which they are implemented. Drawing on Italy's "manual culture" as a reflective reference, the dissertation suggests the importance of more differentiated technical guidance and greater attention to local knowledge, professional judgement, and everyday living needs in the conservation of rural heritage.

**Keywords:**

World Cultural Heritage; Governance Translation; Xidi and Hongcun; Authenticity; Rural Heritage Governance; Spatial Reconfiguration; Community Practices

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# Introduction

Since Xidi and Hongcun were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000, heritage conservation, tourism development, and everyday village life have become increasingly intertwined. While both villages remain inhabited rural settlements, their buildings and public spaces are also shaped by conservation regulations and tourism-related development. This dissertation therefore examines how UNESCO principles such as authenticity, integrity, OUV, management planning, and community participation are interpreted and adjusted across national, local, and community levels, using governance translation as its main analytical perspective.

The research adopts an interpretive and contextualized qualitative approach, structured around a multi-level analytical matrix spanning international, national, local, and community dimensions. Methodologically, it triangulates three primary data sources covering the timeframe from 1982 to 2025:

- Policy and Text Analysis: Systematic analysis of international charters and guidelines, national laws (such as the Cultural Relics Protection Law), provincial/municipal regulations, and county/village level conservation plans and management measures.
- Restoration Project Documentation: Engineering and architectural analysis based on official project files, specifically the 2024 Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex (commissioned by the Yi County Cultural Heritage Administration).
- Semi-Structured Interviews: Fieldwork interviews conducted with community residents, operators, craftspeople, and village committee members in both villages (coded as Series A for Xidi and Series B for Hongcun).

The empirical data of this study relies on on-site field research conducted in Xidi and Hongcun, Yixian County, Anhui Province, China across two main periods:

- 2015 Field Survey: A preliminary two-week on-site architectural and spatial survey conducted for the undergraduate course project Ancient Building Renovation Design, documenting baseline spatial layouts and early post-inscription tourism and conservation conditions.
- 2025 In-depth Fieldwork: The primary collection of core empirical data, including updated spatial and visual documentation, observation of public space regulation and spatial commercialization, and systematic semi-structured interviews with villagers in Xidi and Hongcun.

Additionally, the study draws on Italy's heritage conservation tradition (including the concept of beni culturali and "manual culture") not as a direct parallel, but as a reflective reference to examine institutional translation mechanisms.

The thesis is organized into six chapters, followed by Conclusions, three Appendices (full normative texts, Zhuimutang restoration construction drawings, and full interview transcripts), and the Bibliography.[1]

[1] Declaration on AI-assisted technologies: Generative AI tools were used solely for literature search support and academic English proofreading. All primary field data, analyses, and conclusions were independently conducted by the author.

# Chapter 1: Research Context and Problem Awareness

## 1.1 Global Heritage Governance and China's Institutional Embedding

### *1.1.1 The Formation of the Global Heritage Governance System*

Since the 20th century, cultural heritage protection has gradually evolved from fragmented national practices toward institutionalized international cooperation, shifting from "engineering-based restoration" to a "governance-oriented system." Early international charters, such as the 1931 Athens Charter (an international conference document), the 1960 Italian Gubbio Charter (Carta di Gubbio, a domestic protection declaration), and the 1964 Venice Charter, laid the ethical and technical foundations for cultural heritage conservation. Among these, the Venice Charter first introduced the principles of "authenticity" and "minimal intervention," which became central to modern heritage governance concepts.

The adoption of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) marked UNESCO's formal establishment of a global legal framework for cultural heritage governance[2] . This convention introduced "Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)" as the core assessment criterion, establishing an evaluation system through technical standards such as "authenticity," "integrity," and "management planning." This framework unified the technical language of global heritage governance and facilitated the shift in cultural heritage from monument preservation to social governance .

### *1.1.2 Institutional Embedding and Policy Reconstruction of UNESCO in China*

Since the mid-1990s, particularly following Lijiang's successful inscription in 1997 and the designation of Xidi and Hongcun as cultural landscapes in 2000, China has progressively integrated UNESCO's heritage governance concepts into its domestic policy framework. This has formed an institutional structure centered on central approval, state-led implementation, and performance orientation. In this process, international heritage governance concepts such as authenticity, OUV, and management plans have been institutionalized into administrative procedures, adapting to China's governance logic and policy practices.

China's heritage governance system emphasizes administrative centralization and performance orientation. While this overarching logic promotes national standardization and enhances management efficiency, it also poses adaptive challenges at the local level. Specifically: - Authenticity lacks detailed guidelines and is often implemented as architectural facelifts and visual uniformity; - OUV is incorporated into national cultural narratives, reinforcing ethnic identity and political legitimacy; - Management plans evolve into compliance documents used for project applications and review responses. The refinement of institutional structures has strengthened national governance capacity but simultaneously constrained local and community autonomy. This tension between central and local authorities is amplified during the implementation of regulations, forming a crucial prerequisite for understanding local heritage governance practices and social translation mechanisms.

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[2] UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), arts. 1-6.

*1.1.3 Xidi and Hongcun: Transformation from Rural Settlements to World Heritage Sites*

To explore the translation process and practical tensions of UNESCO heritage governance norms within China's local governance system, this study examines Xidi and Hongcun（Fig.1）n Yixian County, Anhui Province. Listed jointly as a "Cultural Landscape" on the World Heritage List in 2000, these villages represent China's earliest rural settlements to enter the global heritage framework. As historical spaces integrating Huizhou architecture, clan structures, and agricultural ecology, they not only showcase the spatial and cultural characteristics of traditional villages but also constitute a typical arena where global norms, national institutions, and local practices intersect and interact.



*Fig 1- On the left is Xidi, and on the right is Hongcun-Photo by the author（2025）*

The successful inscription brought profound changes to local governance structures. The traditional governance model, originally based on villager self-governance, clan networks, and collective land ownership, was gradually embedded within a top-down World Heritage management system. The local government-led nomination and conservation process drove governance restructuring: establishing specialized heritage management bodies, formulating zoning protection plans, introducing tourism companies and capital entities, and implementing policies for land consolidation, facade restoration, and landscape "reconstruction." While enhancing heritage visibility and tourism appeal, these measures also reshaped the villages' spatial order and social relations.

Through this process, Xidi and Hongcun gradually transformed from historically continuous rural settlements into internationally symbolic "heritage landscapes." World Heritage inscription is not merely a technical procedure or honorary designation but a systemic turning point: it alters local perceptions of space and mobilization logics for development, while also drawing communities into ongoing negotiations between global norms and local interests.

*1.1.4 Research Significance of Rural Heritage Sites*

Compared to urban World Heritage sites like Lijiang and Pingyao, which focus primarily on ancient city renewal, Xidi and Hongcun represent a more locally complex and institutionally embedded "rural cultural landscape." In such heritage sites, traditional clan organizations, village governance structures, and collective land systems persist to varying degrees. This continuity leads to more intricate negotiation pathways and governance responses when confronting global governance norms and national institutional embeddings.

Rural heritage sites are not the mainstream category in global heritage governance, and research on their governance is often marginalized. Yet precisely because of their limited resources, fragmented systems, and diverse practical approaches, rural heritage better reveals the adaptive translation and practical transformation of global governance norms within "non-standard spaces."

Although provincial and municipal levels typically possess planning technical support and policy formulation capabilities, grassroots governance practices in rural heritage sites commonly suffer from a lack of operational guidelines, insufficient professional capacity, and inadequate community consultation mechanisms. The negotiations between local governments and communities regarding compliance, operability, and interest objectives unfold against this backdrop of technical gaps and institutional vacuums, making governance translation issues particularly visible in rural contexts.

Moreover, spatial practices in rural heritage sites are not confined within cultural preservation systems but are deeply intertwined with national development agendas such as tourism development, rural revitalization, and agricultural transformation. Heritage in rural areas is not a static object but a multifunctional resource embedded within developmental logic and daily life. This characteristic of "developmental embedding" makes rural heritage a crucial window for observing how global norms interact with local political cultures, ultimately shaping social structures and community practices.

For these reasons, this paper takes Xidi and Hongcun as case studies to conduct an in-depth analysis of the multi-scale translation process of UNESCO norms within the rural heritage context, as well as the resulting reconfiguration of governance logic and social reshaping. This analysis will be conducted from multiple dimensions: institutional, spatial, and community.

### 1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This study examines the translation, adaptation, and implementation of global heritage governance frameworks—particularly the institutional systems led by UNESCO—within China's rural context. Using Xidi and Hongcun as case studies, the paper traces the transmission pathways of UNESCO norms from the national to local and community levels, analyzing their semantic transformations, institutional embeddings, and practical deviations across different tiers.

Rather than debating whether UNESCO principles are "applicable to China," this study focuses on the structural tensions, negotiation pathways, and logic of governance restructuring that emerge when global institutions become embedded within local governance and community realities. As spatial types characterized by deep cultural imprinting and complex institutional structures, rural heritage sites offer a crucial window for observing multi-scale institutional interactions.

Research questions include:

1. How are global norms proposed by UNESCO—such as authenticity, OUV, management plans, and community participation—institutionalized and absorbed into policy at the national level in China?
2. In Xidi and Hongcun, how are these norms implemented, translated, or reinterpreted at the local and community levels? How do local governance practices get shaped by rural social structures—such as collective land systems, clan networks, and informal negotiation mechanisms?
3. What misalignments, negotiations, and social reconfigurations arise from institutional translation during multi-level transmission?

Research objectives include:

- Mapping the pathways through which UNESCO heritage governance norms are

translated within China's multi-tiered governance system;

- Analyzing the localized practices and governance reconfigurations of these norms in Xidi and Hongcun;
- Enriching the theoretical perspectives of local heritage governance research by centering on "governance translation"—a concept originating from policy studies that refers to the reinterpretation, transformation, and adaptation of global governance norms across different institutional and cultural contexts[3] ;
- Examining the social impacts of heritage governance on community structures and spatial practices;
- Propose more context-specific governance strategies for China's rural heritage sites.

[3] Richard Freeman, "What Is 'Translation'?", *Evidence & Policy* 5, no. 4 (2009), 2–4.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### 2.1 From Charter Tradition to UNESCO: The Evolution and Formation of the Global Heritage Governance System

*2.1.1 Roots of International Heritage Conservation Thought: The Charter Tradition*

Since the 20th century, cultural heritage conservation has gradually shifted from "engineering-based restoration" to a "governance-based system." Prior to this transformation, a series of international charters progressively established conservation philosophies, technical guidelines, and value systems, collectively forming the "charter tradition" preceding the establishment of the UNESCO system.

In the interwar period, Europe experienced extensive damage to historic buildings as a result of armed conflicts and subsequent urban reconstruction, revealing the absence of shared restoration principles. In response, the International Museums Office (Office International des Musées, OIM), operating under the framework of the League of Nations, convened the 1931 Athens Conference on the Conservation of Historic Monuments. The adoption of the Athens Charter marked the first coordinated international effort to articulate common principles for heritage conservation, laying the groundwork for later institutional developments.[4] .

The charter emphasized "restoration over replacement," "minimal intervention," and "respect for authenticity," while establishing principles for archival preservation and international cooperation. It marked the inaugural institutionalization of international heritage conservation. Though primarily focused on individual buildings, it established a technical and ethical framework for cultural heritage preservation.

Beyond the gradual formation of technical standards represented by the Athens Charter on the international stage, Italy's exploration of heritage preservation philosophy began earlier and was more systematic, widely regarded as a significant pioneer in the field. Its indigenous tradition not only possessed a strong sense of historical continuity but also emphasized the preservation of urban integrity and the continuity of social functions, exerting a profound influence on subsequent international systems.

As early as 1883, Camillo Boito proposed the principle of "layered historical preservation" at the Italian Congress of Architects and Engineers, advocating for the retention of historical traces and respect for cultural stratification during restoration. This concept was later inherited and developed by Gustavo Giovannoni, culminating in the 1932 Italian Restoration Charter—a normative document explicitly advocating for "preserving the city's integrity and social functions" while incorporating technical terminology from the Athens Charter. This tradition is considered a foundational intellectual basis for the Venice Charter.

In 1960, the Gubbio Charter, issued by the Italian Federation of Historic and Artistic Centers, first integrated "holistic preservation of historic centers" into urban planning logic. It emphasized that historic district conservation must balance residents' livelihoods, spatial fabric, and urban functional continuity, marking a turning point from architectural restoration to area-based urban conservation[5] .

In 1964, building upon these traditions, the Venice Charter was drafted and adopted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Widely regarded as a milestone in

[4] Carolina Di Biase, "On the 50th Anniversary of the Venice Charter," *Heritage Architecture*, no. 1 (2016): 36.
[5] Ibid., 36.

modern cultural heritage conservation, this charter systematically established principles such as authenticity, minimal intervention, reversibility, and recognizability. Crucially, it elevated "heritage conservation" to an ethical imperative rather than a purely technical operation.

The Venice Charter's philosophy synthesizes multiple traditions: it responds to the engineering standards proposed by the Athens Charter while drawing on Italian restoration principles championed by Giovannoni. More significantly, it inherits the Gubbio Charter's understanding of urban spatial integrity and sociocultural continuity. Thus, the Venice Charter is not merely an institutional document but a key synthesis of European heritage conservation thought and practical experience[6] .

Although these charters lack international legal enforceability, as "soft law" they profoundly influenced the evaluation mechanisms, governance language, and cultural value frameworks of the UNESCO system, providing the theoretical foundation and normative prototype for the subsequent World Heritage Convention.

### *2.1.2 The Formation and Standardization Path of the UNESCO System*

Building upon the ethical principles and technical standards established by the charter tradition, cultural heritage conservation gradually evolved from issues of architectural restoration and art preservation into institutionalized global governance. The adoption of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) in 1972 marked UNESCO's formal establishment of a " " legal framework for global cultural heritage governance. Its core mission was to address post-war realities including severe heritage destruction, lack of transnational coordination, and ambiguous standards[7] .

The Convention established "Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV) as the core criterion for heritage selection, supplemented by key technical specifications such as authenticity, integrity, and management planning. OUV is defined as cultural or natural attributes possessing "uniqueness, universal significance, and outstanding value transcending cultures and time." To qualify as possessing OUV, a heritage site must meet at least one of ten cultural and natural evaluation criteria and undergo dual scrutiny of authenticity and integrity to substantiate its value expression.

Authenticity originally emphasized the preservation of materials, structures, and functions. In 1994, the Nara Document on Authenticity, jointly developed by ICOMOS and UNESCO, expanded its scope to include cultural traditions, spirituality, language, and local knowledge, reflecting institutional respect for "cultural diversity" and "multiple interpretations"[8] . Integrity requires that heritage sites maintain spatial and structural wholeness, possess complete elements necessary to express their value, and avoid compromising integrity through development, loss of function, or destruction. This principle is particularly applicable to cultural landscapes and historic urban sites.

Under the framework of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO has established a

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[6] Ibid., 37.

[7] Marilena Vecco, "A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible," *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 11 (2010): 321-324.

[8] UNESCO, *The Nara Document on Authenticity* (Nara: UNESCO/ICOMOS, 1994), paras. 9–13.

standardized governance mechanism for world heritage protection, encompassing national nomination procedures, technical evaluations by advisory bodies such as ICOMOS and IUCN, and final decision-making by the World Heritage Committee. This process is further institutionalized through ongoing monitoring requirements, including periodic State of Conservation reporting and the implementation of management plans. Sites inscribed on the List must also regularly submit State of Conservation Reports and Management Plans, undergoing continuous monitoring to ensure the long-term preservation of their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), authenticity, and integrity[9] .

Management plans serve not only as essential documentation for nomination but also as core tools for the day-to-day operation and oversight of heritage sites. Their content typically encompasses elements such as conservation objectives, threat assessments, organizational structures, emergency response protocols, community engagement mechanisms, and financial arrangements. As noted by the Getty Conservation Institute, these plans have evolved from technical operational manuals into governance documents integrating social, economic, and cultural policies.

Since 1977, UNESCO has continuously revised the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, advancing the standardization of evaluation criteria and the operationalization of technical specifications. Subsequently, UNESCO's institutional framework has expanded chronologically:

- 1976 Nairobi Recommendations: Proposed integrating historic districts into urban development frameworks (UNESCO, 1976);
- Operational Guidelines for the World Heritage Convention (since 1977): Established and continuously revised operational standards (UNESCO, 2023);
- 1992 "Cultural Landscapes": Formally incorporated into the World Heritage category, expanding the physical and cultural boundaries of heritage assessment (UNESCO, 1992);
- 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity: Addressed Eurocentric biases in authenticity criteria, emphasizing cultural relativity (UNESCO, 1994);
- 2002 Budapest Declaration: First incorporation of "sustainable development" as a heritage governance objective (UNESCO, 2002);
- 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: Established protection mechanisms centered on "community participation" and "cultural transmission" (UNESCO, 2003);

[9] UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), Arts. 8–15; UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, rev. 2019), paras. 28–118.

- 2005 Vienna Memorandum: Highlighted synergies between heritage conservation and modern architectural development (UNESCO, 2005);
- 2011 Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes: Proposed an integrated approach to cultural landscape conservation and urban renewal (UNESCO, 2011);
- 2015 Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SDG 11.4): Incorporating cultural heritage into sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2015).

As Vecco (2010) observes, the understanding of cultural heritage has evolved from the tangible to the intangible, from static to dynamic, and from object preservation to process governance. UNESCO's standardized framework constitutes an institutionalized response to global diversity practices built upon its charter tradition, while also providing universal norms and agenda guidance for institutional translation at national and local scales.[10]

## 2.2 Governance Translation: Theoretical Pathways for Understanding the Implementation of International Institutions

### *2.2.1 From Policy Transfer to Institutional Translation: A Paradigm Shift*

In examining how global governance norms are implemented locally, early mainstream approaches were primarily represented by theories of "policy transfer" and "policy diffusion." These theories emphasize how institutions, technologies, or policy practices flow and are adopted across nations, particularly focusing on how policy importers learn from and draw upon external experiences[11] . Policy transfer refers to "the process by which one political entity draws upon another's institutional experience to guide its own decision-making," while policy diffusion emphasizes the transmission of policies between nations through mechanisms such as imitation, competition, or institutional homogenization[12] .

However, this "linear transfer" perspective has gradually revealed its explanatory limitations when applied to the cross-cultural practices of global governance institutions like UNESCO. First, such models often treat institutions as technically neutral "tool kits," overlooking the underlying cultural logic, value systems, and governance philosophies. Second, these models position recipients as passive "takers" or "implementers," failing to explain why global norms often manifest as selective adoption, symbolic implementation, or even semantic reconfiguration at the local level.

To overcome these limitations, scholars have recently shifted toward "policy translation" and "governance translation" frameworks. These emphasize that institutional diffusion across cultures and levels involves not direct replication but complex processes of semantic reconstruction and practical reorganization[13] . Under this lens, institutional "translation" transcends linguistic conversion; it constitutes a process of meaning construction involving

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[10] Vecco, "A Definition of Cultural Heritage," 323-324.

[11] David P. Dolowitz and David Marsh, "Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making," *Governance* 13, no. 1 (2000): 5-22.

[12] Diane Stone, "Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the 'Transnationalization' of Policy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 3 (2004): 545-566.

[13] Freeman, "What Is 'Translation'?,"2-4.

recoding, adaptation, negotiation, and re-embedding of institutional content within new contexts.

This translation process often involves so-called "strategic adaptation": recipients consciously adjust or repackage institutional content based on their political objectives, capacity constraints, and contextual demands to align with administrative logic or cultural acceptability. Translation is not a misreading of the original institution but a selective reconstruction and active absorption, whose outcomes may preserve core structures while significantly altering institutional functions and operational logic.

Therefore, compared to the traditional "policy transfer-policy adoption" model, "governance translation" offers a theoretical pathway that better explains how global institutions like UNESCO are selectively embraced, performatively implemented, and culturally reinterpreted at the local level. It provides a more flexible and dynamic analytical tool for understanding institutional negotiation in heritage governance across multiple scales and involving diverse actors, laying the theoretical foundation for the institutional analysis of China's rural governance pathways in Chapters 4 to 6.

### *2.2.2 Why UNESCO's Institutional Framework Requires a "Translation" Perspective*

UNESCO's heritage governance system is renowned for its high degree of standardization, institutionalization, and universalism. Since the establishment of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the organization has constructed a global heritage governance framework centered on core principles such as "Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV), "authenticity," and "integrity." Conceptually, this framework emphasizes consistency and universal applicability, striving to establish a common language that transcends national borders, cultural differences, and political systems.

However, it is precisely this universality and normativity that creates significant "translation needs" in the implementation of UNESCO systems across diverse national and local contexts. Unlike traditional international treaties, World Heritage governance relies not on binding legal mechanisms but on voluntary implementation by Member States, expert body evaluations, and multi-level institutional coordination[14] . Consequently, during implementation, nations must reconcile international standards with their domestic administrative cultures, developmental logics, and societal expectations. This reconciliation itself constitutes an ongoing "translation" process—one in which norms are reinterpreted, meanings reconstructed, and objectives redefined.

From a governance perspective, the UNESCO system exhibits three characteristics that render "translation" an inevitable practical logic:

First, linguistic openness and semantic elasticity.

Core concepts such as authenticity, integrity, and participation often carry multiple interpretations across different cultural contexts. Take "authenticity" as an example: the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) represents a reflection on and expansion of its Eurocentric roots, seeking to create interpretive space within multicultural contexts. While this "semantic openness" enhances inclusivity, it also grants member states considerable interpretive latitude

[14] Sophia Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity: International and National Perspectives," in *Heritage and Globalisation*, ed. Sophia Labadi and Colin Long (London: Routledge, 2010), 22-24.

in implementation, leading to the recontextualization of institutional meaning.

Second, the nested governance structure and diversity of administrative systems.

UNESCO systems require joint implementation by multiple levels of government and institutions—national, provincial, municipal, and local. Differences in policy priorities, fiscal structures, and legitimacy logics across these tiers inevitably lead to selective absorption and strategic rewriting of standards during transmission. For instance, some countries prioritize the economic visibility and tourism functions of heritage projects while marginalizing community participation or intangible elements[15] .

Third, the tension between normative objectives and local development demands.

UNESCO advocates for the "non-utilitarian" nature and "cultural value priority" of heritage preservation. However, in many countries—particularly developing nations—heritage projects simultaneously serve as vehicles for development goals, political symbols, and social resource allocation. This dual logic generates persistent tension between norms and practice, giving rise to a classic phenomenon of "strategic translation": while superficially adhering to international norms, they are substantively reshaped into governance tools aligned with local political and economic objectives[16] .

Therefore, understanding the operation of the UNESCO system at the global level requires not only examining its legal texts and technical standards but also focusing on how it is "translated," by whom, and for what purposes within different political-cultural structures. This "translational" perspective not only reveals the adaptability and power dynamics inherent in the system itself but also provides theoretical support for analyzing the multi-level restructuring of China's heritage governance system—from the international to the national, from the national to the local, and finally to the community.

## 2.3 Historical Evolution of China's Heritage Protection: From the Modern Era to the UNESCO Era

China's cultural heritage protection has undergone a long-term transformation from antiquities archaeology and monumental building conservation to comprehensive heritage governance. This developmental trajectory reflects not only shifts in national governance philosophies but also China's institutional path within the global heritage system and the formation of its cultural consciousness[17] . Overall, this historical evolution can be divided into five phases: the modern nascent period, the socialist construction period, the reform, opening-up, and institutionalization phase, the introduction of the UNESCO framework phase, and the contemporary phase of diversification and politicization.

### *2.3.1 The Modern Emergence Period (Late 19th Century–1949)*

Modern heritage conservation concepts in China emerged during the late Qing and early Republican periods, coinciding with the introduction of Western archaeology, architectural

[15] Junjie Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China: A Critical Approach* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2023), .28–31.

[16] Yujie Zhu, "Cultural Effects of Authenticity: Contested Heritage Practices in China," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21, no. 6 (2015): 975-988.

[17] Song Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics of China's Built Heritage Conservation Legislation," *Built Heritage* 6 (2022): 1,14.

history, and museum systems. Foreign scholars' archaeological excavations and artifact collections in China sparked a sense of national cultural crisis, prompting intellectuals to advocate for "self-preservation."

Liang Sicheng, Zhu Qiyin, and others proposed that "preserving ancient sites is preserving the soul of the nation." In 1928, the Nationalist Government established the Institute of History and Philology under the Central Research Institute and the Palace Museum. In 1930, it enacted the "Ancient Relics Preservation Law," China's first cultural heritage protection legislation.

The conservation philosophy of this period, influenced by Europe's "modern conservation movement," emphasized scientific investigation, restoration to original appearance, and state-led initiatives[18] , laying the ideological foundation for later institutional development.

### *2.3.2 Socialist Construction Period (1949–1978)*

After the founding of the People's Republic, cultural heritage preservation was integrated into the socialist cultural development framework. The 1956 Provisional Regulations on the Protection of Cultural Relics and Historic Sites established a nationwide survey system, and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage was established in 1958, gradually formalizing legal frameworks for heritage protection.

[19]D uring this period, conservation efforts remained focused on revolutionary sites and ancient artifacts, reflecting a politically driven orientation. Heritage suffered severe destruction during the Cultural Revolution, yet this period also prompted the state to reassess the historical and social value of cultural heritage in the late 1970s, laying the groundwork for rebuilding the legal framework and policy innovations during the Reform and Opening-up era.

### *2.3.3 Institutionalization Phase: From Cultural Relics Protection to Historic Urban Conservation (1978–1990s)*

Following the reform and opening-up, China's heritage conservation entered a phase where legal institutionalization and urbanization progressed in parallel. The promulgation of the 1982 Cultural Relics Protection Law marked a transformative shift toward institutionalization, establishing a governance framework of "state-led, tiered management"[20] . That same year, the State Council announced the first list of "National Historical and Cultural Cities," expanding the scope of heritage protection from individual cultural relics to encompass entire urban spaces and historic districts.

During the 1980s and 1990s, China progressively aligned with international organizations. Technical training and conceptual support from institutions like UNESCO, ICOMOS, and ICCROM significantly enhanced the internationalization of China's heritage protection efforts[21] . This phase witnessed a shift in conservation philosophy from "static relics" to "dynamic cultural landscapes," initiating a focus on the interactive relationship between heritage and social life[22] .

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[18] Stefan Gruber, "Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites in Times of Rapid Change: Current Developments, Practice and Law," *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law* 10, nos. 3–4 (2007): 6-12.

[19] Guangya Zhu, "China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement," *Frontiers of Architectural Research* 1 (2012): 12–14.

[20] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 10.

[21] Gruber, "Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites," 22-27.

[22] Zhu, "China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement," 18-19.

*2.3.4 Introduction of the UNESCO Framework and Internationalization Phase (1990s–2000s)*

In the 1990s, China formally integrated UNESCO's World Heritage framework into its national policy structure. Accession to the World Heritage Convention in 1985, followed by the successful inscription of Lijiang Ancient Town in 1997 and Xidi and Hongcun in 2000, accelerated China's internationalization in heritage conservation.

The inscription process heightened the public visibility of heritage sites while also sparking a "heritage fever" phenomenon. UNESCO's principles fostered the development of a tripartite policy framework in China centered on "conservation-utilization-display"[23] . However, this also led to controversies over the excessive development of cultural landscapes and the administrative management of heritage sites.

During this phase, World Heritage sites were increasingly integrated into local governments' economic development and political performance frameworks, exhibiting dual attributes of cultural preservation and developmental objectives.

*2.3.5 Contemporary Phase: From Conservation to Governance (2010s–Present)*

Since the 21st century, cultural heritage protection has risen to a national strategic level. National policies such as "cultural confidence," "rural revitalization," and "common prosperity" have deeply integrated heritage protection with political legitimacy, social governance, and regional development objectives[24] . Heritage is no longer merely a cultural symbol or economic resource but is viewed as a core component of sustainable social development.

Conceptually, China's heritage protection has gradually shifted from "static preservation" to "dynamic co-governance." As UNESCO (2011, §24) noted in its Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes, cultural heritage conservation "must be a dynamic process integrating social, economic, and cultural dimensions"[25] . This philosophy has driven China's transition from "physical restoration" to "social system integration," positioning heritage as an intersection of urban planning, social development, and cultural identity.

Concurrently, domestic scholars have proposed the concept of "revitalization-based conservation" to address the limitations of traditional preservation models. Jiang Yulin argues that architectural heritage conservation should transcend mere physical restoration, instead focusing on the symbiotic relationship between heritage and contemporary life, as well as the continuity of community culture[26] . Similarly, Gruber emphasizes that China's heritage conservation must balance the preservation of cultural value with its social functions and community continuity to achieve sustainable development of the cultural ecosystem[27] .

Thus, contemporary Chinese heritage conservation is evolving from "preserving cultural relics" toward "sustaining cultural ecosystems and community life." This transformation not

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[23] Labadi, World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity, 44-52.

[24] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 10–13.

[25] UNESCO, *Proposals Concerning the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscapes*, 36 C/23, August 18, 2011, annex, "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape," paras. 24-27.

[26] Linye Jiang, "An Initial Exploration of the Transformation of Conservation Concepts and Revitalization Strategies of China's Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage" (Master's thesis, South China University of Technology, 2021), 38–42.

[27] Gruber, "Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites," 22–27.

only reflects a deepening of conservation philosophy but also marks China's entry into a new phase of "heritage governance." Conservation efforts are gradually forming a governance framework characterized by multi-level collaboration, social participation, and cross-departmental coordination, providing crucial insights into the re-semantization and institutional reconfiguration of global heritage governance norms within the Chinese context.

Summary and Transition

Reviewing a century of evolution in China's heritage conservation reveals a trajectory that transcends mere technical systems and management mechanisms. It represents a history of continuous interaction between national governance philosophies, international norms, and local practices. From "cultural relics" to "cultural landscapes," and from "conservation" to "governance," China's heritage conservation path embodies a culture of modernity that continually renews itself.

This historical trajectory reveals the dynamic mechanisms of absorption and re-creation of international heritage norms in China, laying the historical and theoretical foundation for Chapter 4's further exploration of the governance translation and localization practices of the UNESCO system.

## 2.4 Fundamental Characteristics and Theoretical Significance of China's Rural Heritage

### *2.4.1 Conceptual Origins and Theoretical Traces of China's Rural Heritage*

The concept of "rural heritage," both academically and in policy terms, gradually emerged within the expanding framework of the international cultural heritage protection system. Early heritage conservation focused primarily on individual buildings and urban monuments, emphasizing the authenticity and integrity of historical structures. However, beginning in the 1990s, following UNESCO's formal inclusion of "cultural landscapes" into the protection framework of the World Heritage Convention in 1992, the definition of heritage began shifting from "static objects" to "holistic systems of human-land relationships" ([28] ).

This shift laid the theoretical foundation for "rural heritage"—viewing rural settlements, agricultural systems, and daily life collectively as components of cultural landscapes.

UNESCO's definition of "cultural landscape" emphasizes three characteristics: (1) the product of long-term human-nature interaction; (2) possessing both ecological and cultural value; (3) embodying the way of life and identity of local communities[29] . Building on this, academia introduced the concept of "living heritage" to describe heritage types that remain in use, transmitted, and continuously reconfigured by communities.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, living heritage is "heritage transmitted from generation to generation within communities and groups, and constantly recreated in practice"[30] . It further states that living heritage "is safeguarded not through static preservation, but through ongoing social change that

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[28] UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: UNESCO, 1992), Section II.B, paras. 23–29.

[29] Ibid., paras. 36–42.

[30] UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 2003), art. 2.

maintains cultural continuity"[31] . This philosophy marks a shift in heritage conservation from "restoring objects" to "sustaining cultural continuity and reproducing social relationships."

Thus, living heritage emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between heritage and contemporary life, advocating that conservation aims to sustain cultural vitality rather than merely "preserving historical authenticity."

In the Chinese context, the introduction of the concept of "rural heritage" is closely linked to UNESCO's category of "cultural landscapes." In 2000, Xidi and Hongcun were inscribed on the World Heritage List as "cultural landscapes," marking the formal establishment of "rural heritage" in China.

*2.4.2 The Uniqueness and Theoretical Positioning of Chinese Rural Heritage*

Within the global heritage governance system, rural heritage has emerged as a significant research topic due to its multifaceted complexity in social structure, economic function, and cultural identity. Unlike urban heritage, rural heritage not only carries historical memory and material forms but also sustains human-land relationships, living practices, and community identity[32] .

In China, this complexity is particularly pronounced, manifesting across three dimensions: the distinctiveness of institutional structures, the continuity of social relations, and the compound nature of cultural ecosystems.

(1) Unique Institutional Structure: Collective Land Ownership and Multi-tiered Governance System

The institutional characteristics of China's rural heritage are rooted in the collective land ownership system and the hierarchical administrative governance structure. Unlike the state-owned property system governing urban heritage, land and buildings in rural areas are predominantly collectively owned. This creates a multi-layered, interwoven framework for heritage governance concerning property rights, management, and responsibility allocation[33] .

Within this institutional framework, heritage conservation involves a five-tier governance structure spanning national, provincial, municipal, county, and village levels, with significant disparities in policy objectives and resource mobilization across tiers. The national level prioritizes cultural image and international compliance, while local authorities lean toward economic development and tourism revenue.

Consequently, rural heritage conservation often requires balancing cultural, economic, and administrative objectives. This complex governance framework provides crucial context for subsequent discussions on the institutional translation of UNESCO norms in China.

(2) Continuity of Social Relations: Clan Networks and Community Autonomy

China's rural heritage preservation extends beyond the restoration of physical spaces, deeply

[31] Ioannis Poulios, "Moving beyond a Values-Based Approach to Heritage Conservation," *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 12, no. 2 (2010): 178.

[32] Ibid., 178.

[33] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 10–11.

rooted in local social structures. Traditional clan networks continue to serve vital social integration functions in many villages, where cultural symbols like ancestral halls, clan temples, and genealogies form the social foundation for heritage conservation and community governance[34] .

In practice, clan authority and village committees often coexist: the former maintains cultural identity and social order, while the latter handles administrative management and policy implementation. This "dual structure" transforms heritage preservation into a process of social negotiation.

When national policies are implemented locally, clan forces frequently reinterpret or symbolically execute external norms through rituals, performances, and negotiation mechanisms, reflecting rural society's cultural adaptation mechanisms in heritage governance. This process of cultural adaptation is also the key distinction between rural and urban heritage.

(3) The Complexity of Cultural Ecology: Continuity of Life and Symbiosis with the Environment

The value of rural heritage lies not only in architectural forms and landscape patterns but also in the interactive relationship between humans and nature. UNESCO's definition of "cultural landscapes" emphasizes that heritage should embody "evidence of long-term interaction between humans and the natural environment."

In China, this interaction manifests as a unique "human-ecological complex": settlement layouts anchored in landscape patterns, production systems based on agricultural cycles, and local cosmologies intertwined with feng shui beliefs ([35] ).

This cultural-ecological multiplicity positions rural heritage as both a component of cultural systems and a node within ecosystems. Conservation efforts must therefore extend beyond architectural restoration or landscape rehabilitation to holistically integrate lifestyles, economic activities, and ecological equilibrium.

As Poulio emphasizes, heritage conservation should achieve "dynamic continuity" through the coexistence of social practices and environmental change[36] . In this sense, rural heritage constitutes the most representative form of "living heritage"—its preservation concerns not only the retention of space but also the continuity of the lived world.

(IV) Theoretical Positioning: Rural Heritage as a Local Laboratory for Global Governance

China's rural heritage exhibits characteristic "multi-level governance": international norms trickle down through national policies to local levels, where they are reinterpreted and re-embedded at the community level. This process reveals the complex pathways of global governance in local practice.

As Su noted in analyzing the "governance translation" of UNESCO frameworks within China's context, a persistent "translation interface" exists between international norms, national policies, and local practices[37] .

Although Su's research focuses on intangible cultural heritage in Lijiang, the theoretical

[34] Zhu, "China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement," 18-19.
[35] Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity," 47.
[36] Poulios, "Moving beyond a Values-Based Approach to Heritage Conservation," 178.
[37] Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China,* 30-32.

framework he proposes similarly reveals the mechanisms through which global governance is selectively translated and reconfigured within local societies.

T hus, rural heritage is not only an object of cultural landscape conservation but also a crucial window for observing the localization mechanisms of global heritage governance, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding institutional embeddedness, cultural negotiation, and social reproduction.

## 2.5 Italy's UNESCO Practice Pathway: As a Reflective Reference

### *2.5.1 Introduction: Why Italy?*

Italy is not presented as a direct counterpart to China for comparative study, but rather as a reflective institutional reference.

As the birthplace of modern cultural heritage preservation thought, Italy developed a relatively comprehensive theoretical and institutional framework long before UNESCO's establishment. Its preservation logic maintains continuity between ethical principles and technical standards: concepts stem from architectural and sociocultural traditions rather than singular administrative logic.

Thus, Italy's heritage governance experience offers a mirror reference for understanding the "governance translation" tensions that emerged in China after introducing the UNESCO system—how differing sociocultural structures shaped the localization pathways of institutions within the same international framework.

### *2.5.2 Italy's Heritage Governance Tradition*

Italy's modern heritage conservation philosophy traces back to the late 19th century. Camillo Boito first proposed the principle of "layered historical preservation," advocating that restoration should respect historical traces rather than pursue exact re-creation of original appearances.

His student Gustavo Giovannoni introduced the concept of "urban conservation" (tutela urbana) in the 1930s, emphasizing the preservation of historical fabric and continuity of social life within urban planning.

Building upon this foundation, the 1960 Carta di Gubbio (Gubbio Charter) introduced the concept of "holistic conservation," advocating for the protection not only of individual buildings but of the integrity of urban structures and cultural functions as a whole[38]. Subsequently, the 1964 Venice Charter further established core principles such as "authenticity" and "minimal intervention," laying the theoretical foundation for UNESCO's institutionalization[39] .

In 1967, the Franceschini Commission introduced the concept of "cultural heritage (beni culturali)" in its Report on Cultural and Environmental Heritage (Relazione sui beni culturali e ambientali), defining it as:

"Tutto ciò che costituisce testimonianza materiale avente valore di civiltà."

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[38] Fabrizio De Cesaris, "Codici di pratica e manuali di recupero. Obiettivi e specificità," in *1960–2020: Riflessioni sulle strategie per la salvaguardia dei centri storici a 60 anni dalla Carta di Gubbio* (Saonara: Il Prato, 2020), 275.

[39] Di Biase, "On the 50th Anniversary of the Venice Charter," 18-21.

("Everything that constitutes material testimony of civilization value.")[40]

This definition expanded heritage protection beyond artworks and monuments to encompass urban spaces, archaeological sites, and living environments, marking Italy's shift toward a socialized and holistic conservation philosophy.[41]

In 1974, Italy established the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and the Environment (Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali). The 2004 adoption of the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio) formally codified the "cultural heritage" system, creating a multi-tiered governance structure encompassing national, regional, municipal, and specialized agencies.

This evolution demonstrates the unique logic of Italian heritage governance: the interconnection of ethical principles (charters), legal systems (cultural heritage), and technical standards (cultural manuals) forms a long-term continuity from theory to practice.

### *2.5.3 Synergistic Mechanisms Between UNESCO and Italy's National/Local Systems*

Italy's heritage governance references UNESCO principles, but its operation is not a direct administrative application; rather, it is a process of "institutional endogenization."

A three-tier governance structure has emerged, featuring vertical decentralization and horizontal collaboration among the national, regional, and municipal levels:

- The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (MiBACT, now the Ministry of Culture) formulates overarching policies and coordinates international affairs.
- Regional and municipal governments undertake daily management, World Heritage nomination, and conservation implementation;
- Academic institutions and professional bodies (e.g., ICOMOS Italia, Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro) serve as intermediaries in translating standards.

Since the 1970s, local governments have collaborated with universities to produce numerous "restoration manuals" (manuali di recupero), such as the Roman Restoration Manual (1989), forming what is termed a "culture of manuals" (cultura dei manuali).

The Italian restoration manuals developed as knowledge-based and methodological tools grounded in the direct study of traditional materials, construction techniques, and structural characteristics. Rather than replacing professional judgement, they provided operational guidance adaptable to specific contexts.[42]

[43]Furthermore, the "Minor Historic Centers" movement led by Marconi and others advocated for "recovering local beauty," promoting the social regeneration of historic settlements through community participation and design education.

This governance structure demonstrates the organic integration of technical rationality,

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[40] De Cesaris, "Codici di pratica e manuali di recupero," 276.

[41] Ibid., 276–290.

[42] Ibid., 280-287.

[43] Paolo Marconi, "Il recupero della bellezza dei centri urbani in via di abbandono e dei centri storici terremotati," in *Centri storici minori: Progetti per il recupero della bellezza*, ed. Francesca Romana Stabile, Michele Zampilli, and Chiara Cortesi (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2016), 9–13.

social recognition, and administrative coordination. UNESCO principles are not imported into Italy as foreign concepts but are absorbed, adapted, and reproduced through long-standing academic traditions and professional culture.

### *2.5.4 Application of This Study*

In this study, the Italian experience is not used to establish direct comparisons but rather as a reflective reference.

Italian practices reveal that the effective localization of global governance concepts depends on the synergy of ethical culture, technical norms, and social participation, rather than a single administrative translation.

The concept of "holistic conservation" reminds us that heritage governance should not aim solely at physical restoration or formal compliance, but rather at achieving the coexistence of historical environments, social structures, and cultural identity.

The concepts of "cultural property" and the "manual culture" system demonstrate how international norms are institutionalized and continuously updated through local knowledge and professional systems.

In contrast, China faces structural tensions between institutional centralization and insufficient public engagement after adopting the UNESCO framework. Italy's experience demonstrates that absorbing international norms is not a technical transplant but a long-term process of sociocultural shaping.

This reflective perspective informs subsequent chapters' exploration of "governance translation" mechanisms: how to establish more resilient interactions between national institutions and local practices, enabling genuine indigenization of global heritage governance within China's context.

# Chapter 3 Research Methodology and Design

## 3.1 Introduction: From Theoretical Framework to Research Approach

Building upon the theoretical and literature foundations established in the preceding chapters, this chapter shifts its focus to research methodology and design.

As noted earlier, cultural heritage governance is not merely a technical management practice but a dynamic process continuously interpreted and negotiated within multi-scalar institutional and social contexts.

Therefore, this study adopts "governance translation" as its core analytical framework, focusing on the mechanisms of localizing UNESCO heritage norms within the Chinese rural context.

This chapter aims to translate the aforementioned theoretical framework into an operational research pathway.

The research adopts an interpretive and contextualized approach overall:

The interpretive approach focuses on understanding how actors construct meaning and action logic within institutional and cultural conditions, rather than conducting quantitative assessments of policy performance;

The contextual approach emphasizes analyzing research questions within specific political, social, and cultural environments,

avoiding the substitution of universal models for local experiences.

The combination of these two approaches enables the study to reveal the multiple mechanisms through which UNESCO norms are reinterpreted, recontextualized, and institutionalized within Chinese rural society.

In terms of research design, this thesis follows a multi-level analytical logic. The analysis will sequentially focus on four levels:

the international level (UNESCO institutional discourse), the national level (policy absorption and institutional translation), the local level (governance implementation and strategic adaptation), and the community level (residents' responses and social action).

This structure provides a clear spatial and institutional framework for the subsequent empirical analysis in later chapters.

## 3.2 Research Methods and Data Sources

### *3.2.1 Methodological Approach*

In terms of methodological choices, the study primarily employs three research methods: policy and text analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation supported by field notes. These methods are used to examine institutional discourses at the international and national levels, action logics within local governance practices, and social responses at the community level, respectively, thereby providing methodological support for the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters.

### *3.2.2 Policy and Text Analysis*

Policy and text analysis forms the foundation of this study, tracking the institutionalization pathways of UNESCO heritage governance norms within China's governance system.

The subjects of analysis are categorized by governance level as follows:

- International Level:
  The World Heritage Convention (1972), Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2021), Recommendations Concerning the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes (2011), etc.;

- National Level:
  Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics (1982, revised 2017),
  Urban and Rural Planning Law of the People's Republic of China (2007),
  Regulations on the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages (2008);

- Provincial Level (Anhui Province):
  Regulations on the Protection of Ancient Dwellings in Southern Anhui (first issued in 1998, subsequently amended);

- Municipal Level (Huangshan City):
  Interim Measures for the Protection and Utilization of Ancient Villages in Huangshan City;

- County Level (Yixian County):
  Management Measures for the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun in Yixian County;

- Heritage Site Level (Xidi and Hongcun):
  Heritage Nomination Text (2000), successive Comprehensive Conservation Plans, Special Remediation Plans,
  Annual Reports of the Management Committee, Hearing Minutes, and Press Release Materials.

The analysis focuses on tracing how global norms—such as authenticity, integrity, and community participation—are reinterpreted and institutionally embedded within China's policy framework. It does so by comparing linguistic strategies and governance orientations between national and local levels of implementation:
The national level emphasizes compliance and standardization, while the local level prioritizes operational management and spatial remediation practices.

*3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews*

This study originally planned to conduct interviews to understand the experiences and perspectives of different governance actors.

but due to access restrictions and time constraints, I was unable to directly interview government officials.

Therefore, a "limited accessibility interview strategy" was adopted, primarily comprising:

- Interviews and meeting minutes published on government websites and mainstream media;
- oral accounts and policy interpretation materials from experts and scholars;
- and informal discussions with select community operators, tour guides, and residents.

The interviews cover topics such as heritage preservation, tourism development, community participation, and spatial governance,
aiming to understand how actors reinterpret global norms and generate practical strategies within institutional frameworks.

*3.2.4 Participatory Observation and Field Notes*

I first gained preliminary insights into Xidi and Hongcun in 2015, when I completed a two-week field survey for my undergraduate course project *Ancient Building Renovation Design*. During the survey, I documented the villages' spatial characteristics and heritage management mechanisms in the early years after their World Heritage inscription, a period witnessing parallel progress in heritage conservation and tourism development. Nevertheless, the majority of core data exclusively collected for this dissertation was obtained in 2025.
Subsequently, by integrating policy documents, official materials, and public video analysis from 2024–2025,
the researchers organized and conducted preliminary comparisons of phased changes in heritage governance structures and community interactions.
I plan to conduct a new round of intensive field research in 2025
to supplement longitudinal observational data and conduct time-series comparisons.
Key observation areas include:

- spatial effects of building renovations and environmental improvements;
- the utilization and regulation of village public spaces;
- Interactions among management bodies, residents, and cultural tourism enterprises;
- Changes in spatial boundaries between residential and exhibition zones.

These observations and data uncover informal governance practices and local negotiation mechanisms that cannot be captured merely through institutional documents, deepening my understanding of the "institution–practice" relationship at the local level.

*3.2.5 Data Sources and Time Frame*

This study's data encompasses both primary and secondary sources, spanning the period from 1982 to 2025:
The upper limit corresponds to the year the Cultural Heritage Protection Law was enacted,

while the lower limit aligns with the upcoming 2025 research plan.

Primary sources

- Field notes, on-site photographs, and videos;
- Village-level meeting minutes and management briefings;
- Publicly available documents and policy bulletins on government websites;
- Xi Di and Hongcun conservation plans and annual implementation reports.

Secondary Sources

- UNESCO and ICOMOS official documents and technical manuals;
- National, provincial, municipal, and county regulations and policy evaluation documents;
- Domestic and international academic papers and policy analysis reports;
- Local regulatory texts such as the Anhui Provincial Regulations on the Protection of Ancient Dwellings in Southern Anhui and the Huangshan City Interim Measures for the Protection and Utilization of Ancient Villages.

Data organization employs thematic coding,
categorizing and analyzing data around five core themes: "norm absorption—institutional translation—local negotiation—community practice—spatial reconfiguration."
thereby revealing the transmission and translation mechanisms of global norms across multi-level systems.

*3.2.6 Methodological Reflection and Transnational Comparison*

As I was unable to conduct formal interviews with government decision-makers,
administrative-level data primarily drew from publicly available documents and media releases.
Nevertheless, the integration of textual analysis and field data still reveals the interactive relationship between institutional logic and social practice,
particularly in the negotiation and bargaining among multiple stakeholders (government, enterprises, and local residents) at heritage sites.
Furthermore, to broaden the institutional reference framework methodologically,
the study draws moderately on the "charter-practice-manual" system experience from Italian heritage governance,
serving as a reflective reference for the analytical framework rather than a parallel comparison.

Summary:
Through a combination of policy text analysis, interviews, and field observations,
this study constructs a systematic qualitative analytical framework spanning four levels: international, national, local, and community.

This approach reveals both the vertical transmission pathways of institutionalization processes

and captures the micro-social dynamics of "institutional translation" at the local level.

It provides a solid empirical and methodological foundation for subsequent chapters (Chapters 4–6) to explore the multilevel translation of UNESCO norms in China's rural heritage governance.

## 3.3 Analytical Framework and Research Steps

### *3.3.1 The Logic of Translation from Theory to Analysis*

This section aims to clarify how the "governance translation" theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 2 is translated into an operational analytical logic and research pathway. "Governance translation" focuses on the dynamic reinterpretation process of global norms when they enter local governance contexts,

emphasizing that international standards are not directly implemented but undergo absorption, reconstruction, and re-semantization within multi-layered institutional and social contexts.

This study translates the theory into four observable analytical dimensions:

| Analytical Dimensions | Corresponding Levels | Analytical Focus | Research Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| Normative Absorption | International–National | The Absorption and Institutionalization of UNESCO Norms within National Policy Systems | Revealing how global concepts are recoded into administrative language |
| Institutional Translation | National–Local | The Reinterpretation Process of National Policies by Local Governments and Cultural Tourism Agencies | Identifying Semantic and Operational Shifts in Policy Implementation |
| Practical Adaptation | Local-Community | Strategic Negotiation Between Local Governance and Social Actors | Analyzing how institutions are reshaped and adjusted in practice |
| Social Reconstruction | Community Level | Community Responses and Cultural Reconstruction within Governance Systems | Exploring the Impact of Normative Translation on Social Relations and Spatial Practices |

The core assumption of this logic is:

The dissemination of UNESCO's global norms in China is not a one-way "policy implementation,"

but rather a process of "meaning translation" and "practical negotiation" across multiple institutional layers.

Therefore, this study's analytical focus lies not in evaluating governance outcomes,

but on understanding how institutions are translated into action and spatial logic across

different levels.

*3.3.2 Case Analysis Matrix*

To systematically map theoretical dimensions to empirical research questions, this study constructs the following analytical matrix (Table 3.1).

| Research Question | Analytical Dimensions | Core Data | Chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| How are UNESCO norms absorbed and institutionalized within China's policy system? | Normative Absorption | World Heritage Convention, Operational Guidelines, National Policy Documents | Policy Text Analysis: Chapter 4 |
| How Are National Policies Reinterpreted in Local Governance and Administrative Operations? | Institutional Translation | Local planning, management regulations, project documents | Institutional Semantics Analysis: Chapter 5 |
| How Do Local Governments and Communities Formulate Negotiation and Adaptation in Institutional Implementation? | Practical Adaptation | Interview Data, Meeting Minutes, Planning Evaluations | Qualitative Content Analysis: Chapter 6 |
| How Do Communities Respond to or Reshape Norms Through Everyday Practices? | Social Reconstruction | Observation notes, visual materials, spatial documentation | Participatory observation: Chapter 6 |

Table 3.1 Case Analysis Matrix

Through this matrix, the research systematically aligns theoretical dimensions, data sources, and analytical tools, ensuring the systematic and traceable nature of empirical analysis.

*3.3.3 Summary*

This section establishes a logical framework from theory to analysis.

The "governance translation" framework constructs a systematic analytical pathway from global norms to local practices through four dimensions: normative absorption, institutional translation, practical adaptation, and social reconstruction.

This framework not only provides an analytical structure for subsequent chapters but also lays a traceable logical foundation for multi-level empirical research.

Chapters 4–6 will develop empirical discussions following the analytical approach outlined in this chapter, sequentially revealing the institutional pathways, local negotiations, and social reconfigurations of UNESCO global norms within China's rural heritage governance.

# Chapter 4: Institutional Absorption and Semantic Reconstruction at the National Level

## 4.1 From the World Heritage Convention to the National Legal Framework

China's formal accession to the Convention in 1985 marked the comprehensive alignment of its national heritage governance system with international norms. However, prior to accession, China had already established a preliminary institutional foundation for heritage protection through domestic legislation, laying both legal and conceptual groundwork for subsequent absorption of international norms.

The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics, promulgated in 1982, established the fundamental framework for national heritage conservation. Although the Law did not directly adopt the abstract terminology of the UNESCO framework, its institutional design demonstrated significant resonance with 20th-century international heritage conservation doctrines. In particular, the statutory mandates established in Articles 14 and 15 —namely, "not altering the original state of cultural relics" and restricting alterations and additions—closely mirrored at the operational level the principles of "authenticity" and "minimal intervention" emphasized in the Venice Charter (1964) and ICOMOS professional guidelines.[44] This conceptual alignment demonstrates that even before formally acceding to the convention, China had maintained intellectual synchrony with international heritage conservation trends through its own modern governance and cultural policy explorations.

### *4.1.1 1991 Revision: Establishment of a Planned and Tiered Management System*

The first revision of the Cultural Relics Protection Law in 1991 marked China's transition from "emergency rescue management" to "planned governance" in heritage conservation. The revised version introduced the systems of "Key Cultural Relics Protection Units" and "Historical and Cultural Cities," establishing a framework for tiered protection and government accountability[45] . This shift aligned with the international requirements outlined in Article 5 of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which requires the integration of heritage protection into comprehensive planning programmes and the establishment of dedicated administrative services "[46] .

This signifies China's initiation of planning and spatial management as key tools for cultural heritage governance, laying the institutional groundwork for the subsequent introduction of the "management planning" concept.

### *4.1.2 2002 Revision: Institutionalization of Management Planning and Public Participation*

The 2002 revision achieved a qualitative leap in both content and structure. For the first time, it explicitly incorporated "conservation planning" into legal provisions, mandating local governments at all levels to develop specialized plans and integrate them into national economic and social development master plans. This institutional design closely aligned with

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[44] Zhu, "China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement," 27.

[45] Zhiguo Liu, "Study on Our Country's World Heritage Protection Legal System" (Master's thesis, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, 2009), 5-12.

[46] UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,* art. 5.

the "management planning" concept proposed in UNESCO's Operational Guidelines (1992)[47] , marking the formal institutionalization of international norms.

Furthermore, the 2002 revision introduced provisions on "public participation" and "rational utilization," propelling heritage conservation from closed administrative management toward open social co-governance[48] . This shift not only enhanced the comprehensiveness of conservation efforts but also demonstrated the localized adaptation of international concepts within national policy.

*4.1.3 2017 Revision: A Responsibility-Based and Performance-Oriented Governance System*

The 2017 revision further refined the legal framework for heritage governance, emphasizing the "establishment of a sound responsibility system for cultural relics safety" and "strengthening of supervision, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms." This reform propelled heritage protection into a new phase characterized by performance-based and accountability-driven governance[49] . This mechanism aligns with UNESCO's Operational Guidelines (2011) requirements for "continuous monitoring and periodic reporting"[50] .

Through this revision, heritage protection has shifted from a culture-department-centered administrative model to a multi-sectoral national governance mechanism, highlighting China's capacity for institutional innovation within the international framework.

*4.1.4 Improvement of Supporting Regulations and the "Three-Level Coordination" Governance System*

Beyond the Cultural Heritage Protection Law, the 2006 Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage and the 2008 Regulations on the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages further institutionalized UNESCO's core terminology.

Specifically, the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage stipulate: "The protection of World Cultural Heritage shall comply with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines," and "Local governments shall establish heritage protection management agencies and develop protection planning and monitoring systems." This marked the first time at the national level that the requirements for "heritage site management agencies" and "monitoring mechanisms" were formally established through legislation[51] .

Building on this foundation, China has progressively developed a three-tiered heritage governance system linking the national, local, and heritage site levels.

Centered on administrative hierarchy, this system creates a vertical transmission mechanism from central guidance to local implementation and on-site execution, integrating UNESCO's core principles with China's governance structure.

Simultaneously, Article 3 of the Regulations on the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages explicitly states: "Maintain and perpetuate their traditional layout and

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[47] UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, Section II.B, paras. 38-46.

[48] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 7-9.

[49] Liu, "Study on Our Country's World Heritage Protection Legal System," 8-9.

[50] UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape,* paras. 169-176.

[51] Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage* (Order No. 41, promulgated November 14, 2006), Arts.1,8,13,18.

historical appearance, preserving the authenticity and integrity of their historical and cultural heritage." This marks the first instance in Chinese legislation where UNESCO's core terms "authenticity" and "integrity" are directly adopted and incorporated into an operational administrative indicator system[52] .

## 4.2 Institutional Embedding and Formation of the Administrative System

Following the establishment of the legal framework, China progressively institutionalized the operationalization of UNESCO heritage governance principles through administrative system development and policy coordination. From the 1990s to the 2010s, China's heritage governance gradually formed an administrative mechanism centered on state leadership, hierarchical management, and performance orientation. This mechanism's emergence reflects not only the localized absorption of international norms within national institutions but also the unique "vertical embedding" logic inherent to China's administrative system.

### *4.2.1 Vertical Division of Labor and Hierarchical Structure in the Administrative System*

Based on the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage (2006) and annual working documents from the National Cultural Heritage Administration, China has established a heritage governance system grounded in a three-tiered structure: "central government—local governments—heritage sites."

| Administrative Levels | Primary Institutions | Core Functions |
|---|---|---|
| National Level | National Cultural Heritage Administration, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development | Responsible for reviewing and evaluating World Heritage nomination projects, formulating policies, coordinating international affairs and communicating with UNESCO, and supervising local management; |
| Provincial/Municipal Level | Provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau, Department of Construction, Municipal Planning and Natural Resources Departments | Responsible for implementing national policies, developing conservation plans, coordinating land and financial resources, and establishing local monitoring and evaluation systems; |
| Heritage Site Level (County/Village) | Heritage Management Committee, Heritage Management Office, or Tourism Development Company | Responsible for daily conservation, maintenance, visitor management, community engagement, and fund utilization at heritage sites; |

This hierarchical system exhibits distinct top-down characteristics: policy objectives are set at the central level, technical standards are refined by provincial and municipal authorities, and final implementation is carried out by heritage site management bodies. This "vertical administrative embedding" model ensures national-level control while establishing a

[52] State Council of the People's Republic of China, *Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages*, Decree No. 524, promulgated April 22, 2008, effective July 1, 2008, art. 3.

dependency relationship at the local implementation level, enabling UNESCO standards to be absorbed and operationalized within the administrative logic.

*4.2.2 Administrative Translation of Policy Instruments*

UNESCO's core concepts—such as authenticity, integrity, and management plans—have been restructured in China into a series of administrative policy tools. This "administrative translation" manifests primarily at three levels:

1. Proceduralization of Management Plans In China, "management plans" are translated into legally mandated "conservation plans," serving as crucial foundations for World Heritage nomination, evaluation, and oversight.

- According to Article 8 of the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage, heritage sites must develop conservation plans, which must be approved by provincial governments and filed with the National Cultural Heritage Administration[53] .
- This transforms UNESCO's technical planning requirements into compliance demands within administrative processes, reinforcing central approval and hierarchical oversight.

2. Quantifiable Authenticity and Integrity

- Through technical indicators such as "historical character assessment" and "character control zones" in policy texts, the state converts cultural concepts into measurable standards[54] .
- Authenticity is transformed from cultural semantics into visual and morphological standards, while integrity is understood as the completeness of spatial layout and environmental protection[55] .

3. Formalization of Community Participation

- Although UNESCO requires heritage governance to incorporate local consultation[56] , within China's administrative context, this mechanism often manifests as procedural forms such as "public hearings," "public notice systems," and "signature solicitation"[57] .
- This reflects the strategic adaptation of international norms within a central-dominated system—participation is institutionalized but lacks substantive decision-making authority.

  This administrative translation grants UNESCO's principles institutionalized enforceability while simultaneously altering their original intent: cultural governance logic yields to administrative performance logic, and social consultation becomes subsumed within bureaucratic procedures.

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[53] Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage*, art. 8.

[54] State Council of the People's Republic of China, *Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages*, art. relevant provisions.

[55] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 10-12.

[56] UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, adopted October 17, 2003, entered into force April 20, 2006), art. 15.

[57] Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China,* 45–46.

*4.2.3 Multisectoral Coordination and Policy Integration Mechanisms*

At the national level, heritage governance involves multiple sectors including cultural relics, planning, natural resources, and tourism. The Study on Major Issues and Legislative Countermeasures for World Heritage Protection in China indicates that the Cultural Relics Bureau and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development serve as dual core management bodies, yet implementation relies on local governments' fiscal and planning authority[58] .

This "multi-departmental co-management" model institutionally forms a policy integration mechanism:

- Cultural heritage departments provide technical standards and facilitate international communication;
- Construction departments oversee spatial control and planning reviews;
- Tourism departments drive industrialization and economic conversion;
- while local governments coordinate funding and land resources.

This mechanism has both amplified the social impact of heritage preservation and progressively integrated cultural heritage into the national development agenda of "cultural industries" and "tourism economy." However, this horizontal integration also brings coordination challenges: conflicts between cultural and economic objectives, overlapping functions among departments, and the local dependency on conservation funding have all become persistent institutional dilemmas.

*4.2.4 Institutional Characteristics of the Administrative System and Differences from the International Context*

Overall, the formation of China's heritage administration system exhibits three core characteristics:

1. Centralization: Heritage governance centers on central authorization, reinforcing vertical state control over localities;
2. Technification: International concepts are translated into technical standards and procedural metrics to ensure quantifiable evaluation;
3. Instrumentalization: Heritage governance is integrated into the national development objectives framework, linking it to political legitimacy and economic performance.

These characteristics indicate that UNESCO's norms have undergone a "functional reconfiguration" within China's administrative system: international concepts are absorbed at the national level, yet their value orientations and implementation logic are redefined into governance practices centered on institutional legitimacy and performance visualization.

*4.2.5 Summary: From Normative Absorption to Institutional Operation*

Through dual legal and administrative embedding, China has achieved institutional absorption and localized reconstruction of UNESCO's heritage governance system at the national level. Legal revisions provide the legitimacy foundation, while administrative mechanisms ensure implementation capacity.

However, this system—centered on hierarchical management and performance

[58] Lin Tao, "Study on Major Problems in China's World Heritage Protection and Their Legislation Strategies" (Master's thesis, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2006), 24-25.

evaluation—has also sown structural tensions for subsequent local governance and community participation.

This tension—the "mismatch between normative intent and administrative logic"—becomes a defining feature of translating UNESCO's ideals within China's institutional context. "Normative intent" refers to UNESCO's advocacy for cultural ethics, community participation, and social sustainability goals, while "administrative logic" represents the rational orientation of state institutions toward efficiency, compliance, and performance in policy implementation. When these two meet, cultural ideals become proceduralized and social objectives quantified, creating a structural misalignment between "ideal-driven principles" and "administrative tools" at the practical level. This will be further illustrated in subsequent chapters (Chapters 5–6) through the practices of Xidi and Hongcun.

## 4.3 Policy Language and Semantic Redefinition

Within UNESCO's heritage governance framework, policy language serves not only as a medium for transmitting norms but also as a field where institutional meanings are reconfigured. When global heritage governance concepts enter national contexts, they are often rearticulated through administrative documents, legal provisions, and policy slogans, thereby completing a "translation of meaning" at the linguistic level[59] . This process is particularly pronounced in China, where international norms are absorbed into the administrative language system while simultaneously being imbued with multiple political, developmental, and cultural connotations, thereby forming the unique structure of the national heritage discourse.

### *4.3.1 Policy Language as a Medium for Institutional Absorption*

Policy texts represent the first step toward institutionalization. Since the 1990s, China's heritage governance documents have gradually formed an administrative discourse logic centered on "protection-development-display."

National documents like the "14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Heritage Protection" (2021) explicitly state: "Strengthen the display and dissemination of Outstanding Universal Value to enhance cultural confidence and promote the creative transformation and innovative development of China's excellent traditional culture."[60] Unlike UNESCO's emphasis on expressions like "cultural diversity" and "community participation," Chinese policy documents focus more on the narrative frameworks of "institutional implementation capacity," "social benefits," and "cultural confidence"[61] .

This formulation indicates that OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) has been semantically redefined in China as a core concept for national cultural image and soft power construction, transcending its original academic and cultural evaluation meaning within UNESCO.

This "re-semantization" of policy language demonstrates that UNESCO norms take effect not merely through institutional embedding but are redefined through discursive

[59] Freeman, "What is 'Translation'?," 3.

[60] General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *The 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Relics Protection and Technological Innovation*, State Council General Office Document No. 43 (2021), October 28, 2021, sec. "value interpretation and dissemination".

[61] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 8-9.

construction. Language becomes the key medium for governance translation—international standards gain legitimacy and enforceability through administrative discourse while simultaneously losing their original value-neutral attributes.

*4.3.2 Semantic Translation of UNESCO Core Concepts*

UNESCO's three core concepts—authenticity, OUV, and management planning—undergo semantic translation and functional transformation within China's policy context:

| Concept | UNESCO Definition | Chinese Policy Semantics | Actual Function |
|---|---|---|---|
| Authenticity | Respect for the cultural context, historical continuity, and social significance of heritage (UNESCO, 1994) | "Preserving historical character," "restoring traditional patterns," and "continuing cultural distinctiveness" | Translated into technical standards for urban design and visual rehabilitation; used to evaluate visual consistency |
| OUV | Representing cultural and natural values for all humanity (UNESCO, 1972) | "Showcasing the unique value of Chinese culture," "enhancing cultural confidence," "shaping the national image" | Politicized as tools for national narratives and cultural soft power objectives |
| Management Planning | Establish long-term conservation, monitoring, and community participation mechanisms (UNESCO, 1992) | "Conservation plans," "specialized plans," "performance-based accountability systems" | Translated into administrative procedures and assessment mechanisms; transformed into compliance documents for project approvals |

(Table 4.1 Semantic Translation of UNESCO Concepts in China's Policy Context)

This semantic translation is not a misinterpretation but reflects the adaptive transformation of international norms within local institutional cultures. As Labadi observes, global heritage governance language is often "reframed" within local political and cultural systems[62] —in China, this reframing manifests as a shift from cultural ethics to administrative techniques, and from global sharing to national narratives.

*4.3.3 Dual Mechanisms of Politicization and Administrative Adaptation*

Within the national policy framework, the redefinition of UNESCO concepts represents not merely linguistic shifts but reflections of institutional power structures. This can be summarized through two-tiered mechanisms:

1. Politicization

[62] Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity," 47-53.

- OUV is imbued with political symbolism in policy texts, such as "cultural confidence," "Chinese civilization," and "telling China's story well."
- "Heritage protection" is integrated into the context of national soft power and ideological construction, becoming an extension of political legitimacy and national image.
- Heritage policy evaluations increasingly prioritize "display impact" over "cultural continuity," exhibiting characteristics of "visual politics".

2. Administrativeization
   - Cultural concepts like management planning and authenticity have been technicized into administrative metrics and performance evaluation factors.
   - Within project application and review systems, authenticity is primarily evaluated through quantifiable metrics such as "number of restorations" and "facade renovation rates."
   - Management plans become compliance documents, losing the "consultative and participatory" characteristics originally advocated by UNESCO[63] .

This dual mechanism of politicization and bureaucratization enables the "effective implementation" of UNESCO discourse in China, yet also leads to "semantic mismatch": the cultural ethics of international standards are absorbed by administrative efficiency and political objectives.

*4.3.4 Summary: Semantic Reconstruction and Institutional Implications*

In summary, UNESCO's core concepts have not been simply transplanted in China but have undergone profound redefinition and functional transformation within the policy language system.

- Authenticity has been transformed from a cultural ethic into a spatial management indicator;
- OUV has been transformed from a globally shared value into a national narrative and state symbol;
- Management planning has transformed from a consultative tool into a performance-oriented document.

This semantic restructuring has granted the UNESCO framework high enforceability and policy legitimacy in China, yet it has also caused "meaning drift" at the institutional level—a divergence between the original intent of the norms and the logic of their implementation.

This "discourse-level governance translation" reveals the reorganization mechanism of global concepts within local political contexts, offering a critical perspective for understanding the localization of UNESCO norms.

## 4.4 Interaction Mechanisms Between the State and International Institutions: Compliance, Display, and Discourse Negotiation

Following its accession to the World Heritage Convention (1985), China gradually emerged as one of the most active members within UNESCO's World Heritage system. According to UNESCO State Party statistics, by 2024 China boasts 57 World Heritage sites, including 39

[63] Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China,* 55–56.

cultural heritage sites, ranking among the world's top nations in quantity.[64] This achievement reflects both the efficient implementation of national institutions and reveals the complex process through which China engages in discourse participation and autonomous construction within the global governance system via a "compliance-display-negotiation" mechanism.

### *4.4.1 Compliance Logic: Institutionalized Implementation of International Obligations*

Under the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage (2006)[65] , the Chinese government has established a rigorous compliance mechanism to meet UNESCO's procedural requirements:

- Nomination dossiers must undergo joint review by the National Cultural Heritage Administration and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development to ensure compliance with the authenticity, integrity, and management planning standards stipulated in the Operational Guidelines;
- Sites already inscribed on the List must regularly submit State of Conservation Reports and undergo monitoring by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and its advisory bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN).

This compliance mechanism reflects the "institutional internalization" of international norms at the national level. However, as Labadi points out, compliance does not imply complete alignment; rather, it often achieves "formal conformity with semantic transfer" through administrative reinterpretation and strategic choices.[66]

[67] In China, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced: compliance texts emphasize "showcasing achievements" and "visible performance," endowing compliance reports with dual functions of political display and diplomatic communication.

### *4.4.2 Display Governance: Visual Politics and Cultural Diplomacy*

In its interactions with UNESCO, China has gradually developed a governance model characterized by "display-oriented compliance."

Zhu points out that World Heritage is not only a matter of cultural preservation but also a stage for national image and cultural diplomacy. China's World Heritage nomination texts and monitoring reports often emphasize a narrative structure centered on "conservation achievements," "development accomplishments," and "cultural confidence," thereby showcasing the nation's governance capabilities and the continuity of its civilization.[68]

This "display-oriented compliance" manifests in three practical dimensions:

1. Textual display: Nomination and monitoring reports emphasize the visualization of "conservation achievements" and "cultural value";

2. Spatial Display: Heritage sites develop visual showcase projects such as visitor centers, exhibition halls, and thematic landscapes;

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[64] UNESCO, "State Party Profiles: China," *World Heritage Convention*, accessed October 2025, https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn.

[65] Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage*, arts. 4, 8.

[66] Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity," 47-49.

[67] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 12-13.

[68] Zhu, "China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement," 29-31.

3. Diplomatic display: Presenting China's heritage governance achievements at UNESCO conferences and international exhibitions.

Thus, the compliance process transcends mere fulfillment of international obligations, evolving into a form of "visual politics"—demonstrating political capability and cultural confidence through formalized texts and spatial practices. This model, where "display" supplants "dialogue," also reflects the shift in heritage governance from cultural cooperation toward national competition.

*4.4.3 Discourse Negotiation: Strategic Redefinition within the Global Framework*

Although China adheres to the UNESCO framework institutionally, its policy language and implementation logic exhibit distinct "discursive autonomy" in international assessments.

This consultative discourse practice manifests as:

- Emphasizing "national particularities" and "social development priorities" in international evaluations;
- Employing dual discourses in project justification—using UNESCO terminology (authenticity, integrity, OUV) externally while translating it internally into policy language such as "cultural heritage preservation," "rural revitalization," and "social stability"[69] .

This "bilingual discourse" ensures compliance while preserving local policy space.

Labadi defines this phenomenon as "discourse negotiation": nations achieve "differences within compliance" through semantic strategies within the UNESCO framework[70] . In the Chinese context, this negotiation expresses cultural sovereignty while serving as institutional adaptation. As Zhang notes, China functions within the World Heritage system "both as a rule-taker and a narrative participant"[71] .

*4.4.4 Institutional Structure of State-International Interaction*

The following table summarizes the institutional structure and discursive mechanisms of China's interactions with UNESCO (Table 4.2):

| Interaction Level | Core Mechanism | Key Features | Representative Documents/Practices |
|---|---|---|---|
| Compliance Level | International Procedure Implementation | Compliance with Convention and Operational Guidelines Requirements | Article 4 and Article 8 of the World Heritage Conservation Management Measures (2006); Periodic Reporting Mechanism |
| Presentation Level | Presentation of Achievements and Cultural Image | Emphasis on Outcomes, Visuals, and Narrative Visibility | Nomination documents, exhibitions, heritage display projects |
| Negotiation Level | Semantic Reconstruction and | Balancing International Terminology and National | Evaluation feedback responses and |

[69] Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China,* 65-68.
[70] Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity," 47-52.
[71] Zhang, "The Development and Institutional Characteristics," 14.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Policy Adaptation | Context | reinterpretation of local policies |

(Table 4.2: Multi-layered Mechanisms for State-International Institution Interaction)

*4.4.5 Summary: From Institutional Compliance to Discourse Leadership*

In summary, China has developed a multi-layered governance mechanism in its interactions with UNESCO:

- At the institutional level, procedural adherence to international norms is ensured through compliance systems;
- At the political level, it has demonstrated cultural confidence and shaped national image through exhibition mechanisms;
- At the discursive level, semantic negotiation safeguards interpretive authority and adaptive space for domestic policies.

This compliance-display-negotiation mechanism not only demonstrates China's institutional flexibility in global heritage governance but also reveals the core logic of "governance translation": the effectiveness of international norms depends on the reorganization of their meaning and strategic reinterpretation by local systems

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## 4.5 Reference to Italy's National Heritage Policy: Comparisons and Implications

Italy is regarded as one of the institutional origins of UNESCO's philosophy within the global heritage governance system. As the birthplace of the Venice Charter (1964) and the Gubbio Charter (1960), Italy has long maintained a tradition of holistic protection for "cultural heritage (beni culturali)" within its legislative, administrative, and professional systems. This tradition not only shaped Italy's own heritage governance logic but also profoundly influenced the formation of UNESCO's World Heritage system[72] .

*4.5.1 The Concept of "Cultural Assets" and the Integrity of the Legislative System*

The concept of "cultural property" was first introduced in the 1967 Franceschini Commission's Report on Cultural and Environmental Assets (*Relazione sui beni culturali e ambientali*), defined as:

"*Tutto ciò che costituisce testimonianza materiale avente valore di civ*iltà"[73]

("Everything that constitutes material testimony of civilizational value").

This definition transcended the narrow scope of "artifacts and architecture," understanding heritage as a comprehensive embodiment of social civilization and historical memory, thereby establishing the cultural-philosophical foundation for Italy's heritage governance.

Guided by this philosophy, Italy has established a multi-tiered legal framework centered on the Constitution as the supreme law and anchored by the Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code (*Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*, 2004).

- Article 9 of the Constitution explicitly states: "The Republic promotes cultural development and safeguards the nation's historical and artistic heritage."

[72] Di Biase, “On the 50th Anniversary of the Venice Charter,” 18-21.

[73] Commissione d'indagine per la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio storico, archeologico, artistico e del paesaggio, *Per la salvezza dei beni culturali in Italia: Atti e documenti*, 3 vols. (Roma: Colombo, 1967), vol. Dichiarazione I.

- The Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code consolidated fragmented legislation from the 20th century, establishing a decentralized yet unified framework for heritage protection coordinated between national and regional authorities;
- The Ministry of Culture (MiC) oversees overall coordination and international communication, while regional governments hold executive authority and supplementary legislative powers, creating a complementary structure of central guidance and local implementation.[74]

This combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches enables Italy to achieve a unified legal framework with flexible local practices at the institutional level.

*4.5.2 National-UNESCO Interaction Mechanisms*

Italy's interaction with UNESCO is reflected particularly in the national adaptation of World Heritage management requirements. UNESCO establishes general requirements for the management of World Heritage properties, while the specific preparation and implementation of management plans remain the responsibility of individual State Parties. In Italy, since 2004 the Ministry of Culture has promoted the drafting of management plans and the monitoring of management systems for World Heritage sites through national guidelines.[75]

Under this system, UNESCO concepts are regarded as "international reference standards" rather than "external binding regulations," and their adoption relies on the knowledge participation of professional institutions and academic groups.

Unlike China's "central control-local implementation" model, Italy's governance emphasizes:

1. Knowledge Co-creation: Collaborative generation of planning and decision-making knowledge through partnerships between academic institutions, local governments, and communities, fostering institutional learning and shared experience building;[76]
2. Continuous Evaluation: In Italy, World Heritage management plans may incorporate performance measurement and periodic review mechanisms, allowing management results to be monitored and evaluated and plans to be adjusted over time;[77]
3. Cultural Diversity: At the level of local practice, Italian conservation approaches increasingly emphasize the social vitality of heritage, understood as the continuity of everyday life, community structures, and lived cultural landscapes rather than purely architectural preservation. This perspective is particularly evident in the conservation and recovery strategies of minor historic centres, where heritage protection is closely linked to reuse, community engagement, and material continuity..[78]

This "dialogic compliance" model integrates UNESCO principles into national institutional logic, maintaining international collaboration while ensuring local autonomy and cultural

[74] De Cesaris, "Codici di pratica e manuali di recupero," 276.

[75] Francesco Badia, "Contents and Aims of Management Plans for World Heritage Sites: A Managerial Analysis with a Special Focus on the Italian Scenario," *ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* 1, no. 1 (2011): 44.

[76] De Cesaris, "Codici di pratica e manuali di recupero," 278,289,290.

[77] Municipality of Florence, *Monitoring of the Management Plan of the Historic Centre of Florence* (2018), 28, accessed December 2025, https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/172625.

[78] Laura Lucarelli et al., "Conservation and Recovery of Minor Historical Centres: The Case of Atina in Southern Lazio," *Tafter Journal*, no. 125 (2025): 9-13.

diversity.

*4.5.3 Comparison and Implications*

A comparison with China reveals fundamental differences between the two governance models:

| Comparative Dimensions | Italy | China |
|---|---|---|
| Core Concept | Cultural Assets (Testaments of Civilization) | Emphasis on Universal Value (National Cultural Confidence) |
| Governance Structure | National Guidance + Regional Implementation | Central Leadership + Tiered Management |
| Implementation Mechanism | Professional Evaluation and Technical Guidelines | Administrative Approval and Performance Evaluation |
| Public Participation | Expert Collaboration + Community Co-governance | Procedural Participation (Hearings, Public Notices) |
| Compliance Model | Dialogue-Based Compliance | Formal Compliance |

This contrast reveals two distinct paths of "governance translation":

Italy relies on professional ethics and knowledge systems to internalize and absorb UNESCO standards;

China institutionalizes the implementation of norms through administrative procedures and performance mechanisms.

For China, the insights from Italy's experience are primarily reflected in the following four aspects:

1. Institutional level: Establish cross-departmental, multi-tiered technical evaluation mechanisms incorporating long-term monitoring and professional independence;
2. Administrative level: Involve professional intermediaries (e.g., expert committees) in decision-making to prevent administrative compliance from supplanting technical judgment;
3. Discourse level: Shift from "display compliance" to "consultative compliance," fostering dialogue between international norms and local semantics;
4. Community level: Strengthen "living heritage preservation" and social participation mechanisms to reintegrate heritage into community daily life.

*4.5.4 Summary: The Reflective Value of Italy's Experience*

Overall, Italy's national heritage governance demonstrates a multidimensional logic centered on expertise, social collaboration, and cultural continuity.

Its success lies not in administrative efficiency, but in translating UNESCO's abstract concepts into technical standards, social practices, and cultural consensus through a long-term accumulation of professional systems.

Compared to China's top-down institutionalization approach, the Italian model offers a "knowledge-mediated" form of institutional translation, providing a reference point and foundation for reflection in the subsequent analysis of local governance mechanisms in Chapter 5.

## 4.6 Summary: Institutional Translation Logic at the National Level

This chapter analyzes China's process of absorbing and reconstructing UNESCO's heritage governance system at the national level, revealing the logic of institutional translation of international norms within the local political and administrative context. Overall, this process has undergone a multi-layered progression from legal absorption to administrative translation, and from discursive reconstruction to international consultation.

At the legal level, China has achieved a transition from "cultural relics protection" to "heritage governance" through multiple revisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law (1982, 1991, 2002, 2017) and the refinement of supporting regulations. Core concepts such as authenticity, integrity, and management planning have been incorporated into the national legal and administrative systems, providing an institutional foundation for the localization of international norms.

At the administrative level, the National Cultural Heritage Administration and local governments have established a vertical governance structure characterized by "central guidance and tiered implementation." International norms are translated into operational administrative mechanisms, manifested in institutionalized processes such as "conservation planning," "performance evaluation," and "supervision and assessment."

This system enhances implementation efficiency but also partially replaces the social and open nature of cultural values with administrative logic.

At the discursive level, UNESCO's core concepts have undergone semantic redefinition and political appropriation.

"Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV) has been reframed as a symbol of national cultural confidence and soft power;

while "authenticity" and "management plans" have been technicalized into administrative evaluation criteria and policy tools.

International discourse thus gained new political legitimacy while losing its original connotations of consultative nature and cultural diversity.

Finally, at the level of international interaction, China has developed a multi-layered mechanism characterized by "compliance-display-dialogue." Compliance ensures the enforceability of international institutions, display reinforces the nation's cultural image, while dialogue embodies discursive autonomy within the global governance system.

Unlike Italy's "technical dialogue-based compliance," China's model emphasizes institutional control and political integration, reflecting a logic of institutional translation guided by national development objectives.

In summary, institutional translation at the national level constitutes the first critical link in the implementation of UNESCO's global norms in China:

it embeds international concepts into the national policy system while providing institutional templates and regulatory frameworks for subsequent local governance.

However, this top-down transmission structure inevitably generates new tensions when extended to the local level—

a mismatch between the administrative absorption of global norms and the diverse responses of local practices.

Chapter 5 will further analyze the operational translation and social negotiation mechanisms of this institutional logic at the local level, using the cases of Xidi and Hongcun.

## Chapter 5: Local Governance Mechanisms and Operational Translation

### 5.1 Case Background: Spatial Form and Heritage Value of Xidi and Hongcun

Xidi and Hongcun are located in Yi County, southern Anhui Province, China, at the southern foothills of the Huangshan mountain range(Fig. 2). Historically, both villages belonged to the Huizhou cultural region. According to the *Gazetteer of Yi County*, Xidi lies in the southeastern part of the county, while Hongcun is situated to the northeast, each several tens of kilometers from the county seat and the urban area of Huangshan City. The surrounding landscape—characterized by rolling hills, stream valleys, and agricultural land—provided stable natural and productive conditions for the formation of traditional rural settlements.[79]

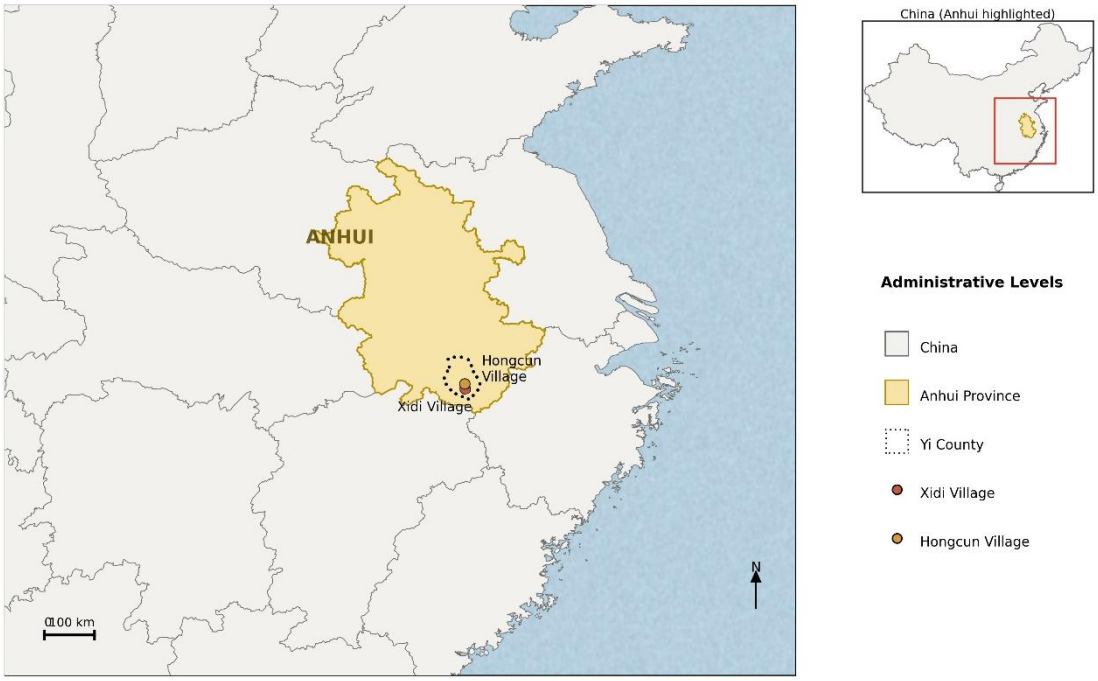



*Fig 2 - Location map of Xidi and Hongcun -Image drawn by the author (based on google map)*



*Fig 3 - Xidi map and main street appearance -Photo from the google map(2025)and author(2025)*

[79] Yixian Local Chronicles Compilation Committee, *Yixian Gazetteer*, ed. Shu Yuling (Hefei: Huangshan Publishing House, 2011), 1437.

Xidi Village was founded during the Northern Song dynasty and developed as a clan-based settlement dominated by the Hu lineage, with a history of more than nine centuries. Local gazetteers record that the village spatial structure unfolded along multiple streams, with the water system directly shaping street orientations and residential layouts, and constituting an essential basis for both the village name and its spatial organization(Fig. 3). By the Ming and Qing periods, the expansion of Huizhou merchant activities led to rapid population growth in Xidi, resulting in a settlement pattern centered on residential houses, ancestral halls, academies, and memorial archways. This spatial configuration vividly reflects the combined influence of clan institutions and commercial wealth on the built environment.[80]

Hongcun took shape during the Southern Song dynasty and is renowned for its highly systematized artificial water infrastructure(Fig.4). The *Yi County Gazetteer: Water Conservancy Section* provides a detailed account of the formation of Hongcun's water system, in which water was diverted into the village to create a network flowing through streets, courtyards, and public spaces, passing through Moon Pond and South Lake before ultimately irrigating farmland south of the village(Fig.5). This system not only served domestic, fire-prevention, and agricultural functions, but also fundamentally structured the village's spatial order, producing a close coupling between building layout, street morphology, and the natural environment.[81]

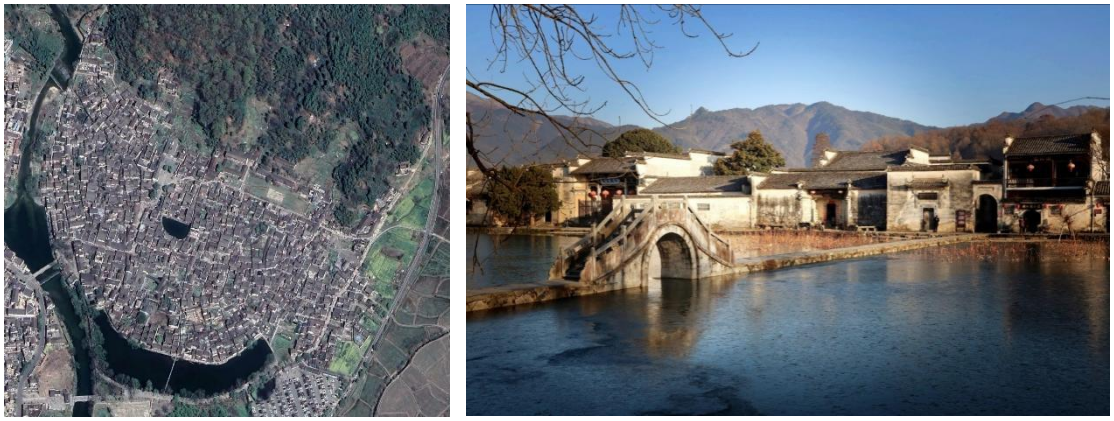


*Fig 4 - Hongcun map and village entrance -Photo from the google map (2025)and author(2025)*

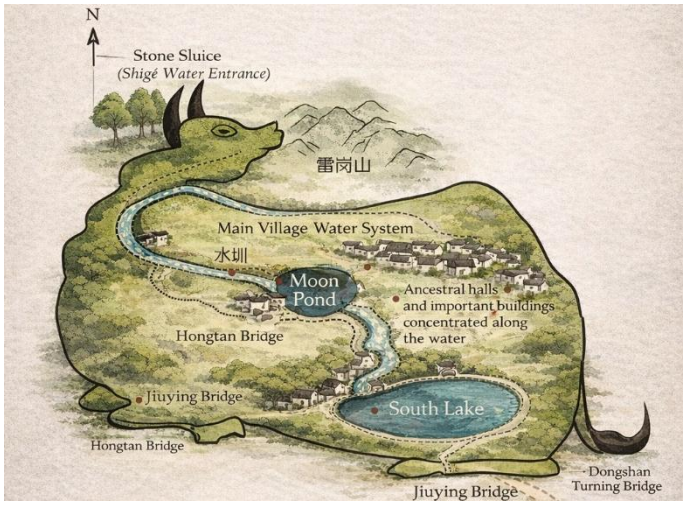



*Fig 5 - During the Yongle reign of the Ming Dynasty (1403), the Wang clan invited Feng Shui master He Keda to plan the village, using the shape of an ox as a blueprint to construct a complete water system: This water system, after more than 600 years, is still in use today and is hailed as a "living fossil of ancient Chinese village water conservancy engineering."*
*-Photo from the internet (https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1872119482436525760&wfr=spider&for=pc)*

[80] Ibid., 1437–1438.
[81] Ibid., 1463.

Architecturally, both Xidi and Hongcun exemplify the defining characteristics of traditional Huizhou residential architecture. Historical records describe the widespread use of timber-frame construction, whitewashed walls, and grey-black clay tile roofs, with internal courtyards (tianjing) providing daylight and ventilation(Fig.6). Decorative brick, wood, and stone carvings are extensively applied to gateways, beams, and structural elements, resulting in an architectural language that is both highly codified and rich in artisanal expression. Ancestral halls, academies, and other public buildings further reinforced clan hierarchy and cultural identity at both spatial and symbolic levels.[82]

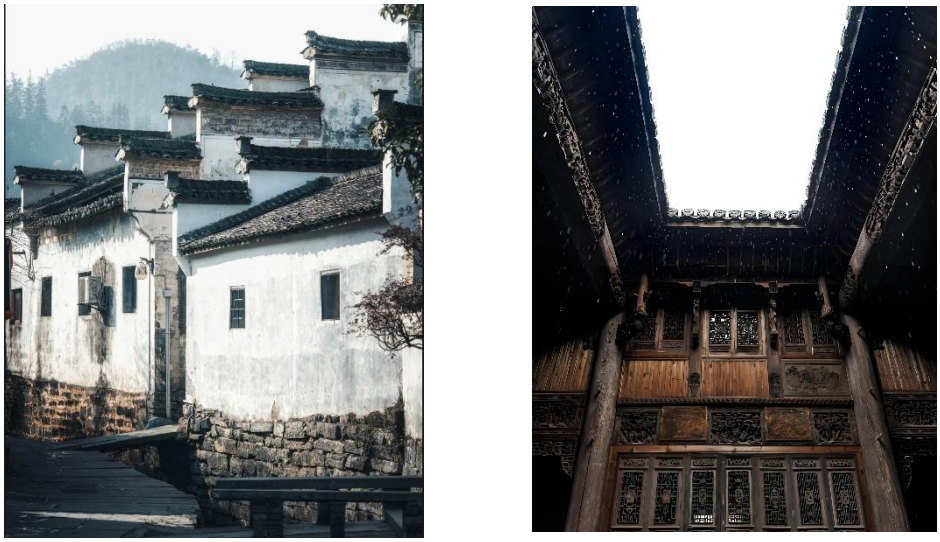


*Fig 6 - The architectural exteriors and interior courtyards of Xidi and Hongcun -Photo by the author (2025)*

In 2000, Xidi and Hongcun were jointly inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List under the title *Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui – Xidi and Hongcun*. The nomination process and inscription outcome are systematically documented in the *Yi County Gazetteer: Cultural Heritage Section*. Their Outstanding Universal Value lies in the exceptional preservation of traditional rural settlement morphology, water-management systems, and architectural ensembles, representing a cultural landscape shaped by long-term interaction between human activity and the natural environment.[83]

World Heritage inscription marked a critical turning point in the developmental trajectories of both villages. Within the framework of World Heritage conservation, local authorities gradually introduced protection principles centered on authenticity, integrity, and management planning, accompanied by a series of heritage regulations and administrative measures. As a result, patterns of spatial use, building conservation practices, and public-space management underwent significant transformation. Residential spaces that had previously been oriented primarily toward everyday life increasingly incorporated exhibition and tourism functions, while construction and repair activities became subject to stricter technical standards and approval procedures. Against this specific spatial and institutional backdrop, Xidi and Hongcun constitute key cases for examining how international heritage norms are absorbed, translated, and operationalized at the local level. The locational

[82] Ibid., 1427.
[83] Ibid., 1434.

conditions, historical evolution, and characteristics of the built environment outlined above thus provide the empirical foundation for subsequent analyses of local governance mechanisms, pathways of institutional translation, and their practical implementation.

## 5.2 The Governance Logic of Local Institutions: Policy Absorption and Reinterpretation

The heritage governance systems of Xidi and Hongcun represent a quintessential product of the interaction between UNESCO global norms, national institutions, and local practices. Since their successful inscription on the World Heritage List in 2000, the Yixian County government has established a locally distinctive heritage management system within the national legal framework. This system's formation is not merely administrative implementation but an ongoing process of absorbing, reinterpreting, and reconfiguring national and international norms. This local governance structure reflects the localized characteristics of "governance translation"—a dynamic mechanism whereby international concepts undergo strategic transformation, semantic reconstruction, and practical implementation within local political and social contexts.

### *5.2.1 From National Institutions to Local Regulations: Local Absorption of Global Norms*

At the national level, the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage (2006) and the Regulations on the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages (2008) established the responsibilities and authority of local governments in World Heritage governance. These documents require local governments to "establish protection plans and monitoring systems in accordance with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines."[8485]

The Yixian County government subsequently began translating UNESCO's core principles—authenticity, integrity, and management planning—into enforceable local regulations and policy tools.

In 2006, Yixian promulgated the "Yixian County Management Measures for the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun" and its implementation rules, establishing a governance system of "county-level coordination and village-level execution." The measures explicitly require:

"Yixian County shall formulate and promulgate the 'Yixian County Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Protection Management Measures' and its implementation rules, sign heritage protection responsibility agreements with users or owners of ancient dwellings, guide villages in establishing village regulations, and enhance villagers' conservation awareness."[86]

Within this framework, local governments not only bear conservation responsibilities but also establish a multi-tiered governance system integrating administrative, technical, and social coordination. The county government oversees master planning and fund allocation,

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[84] Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage*, arts. 4, 7, 13, 18.

[85] State Council of the People's Republic of China, *Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages*, arts. 3, 5, 13, 20

[86] Yixian County People's Government, *Measures for the Protection and Management of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun*, Yixian County People's Government Order No. 3, March 28, 2001, arts. 6, 26.

township governments handle daily supervision and land coordination, while village committees and heritage management offices manage operational implementation and community coordination. This structure exhibits distinct characteristics of "administrative embedding," enabling international norms to achieve institutionalized implementation within the local governance system.

*5.2.2 Local Logic of Policy Absorption: Developmental Embedding*

In local policy discourse, the principle of "promoting development through protection, and safeguarding protection through development" has gradually become the core logic of heritage governance. The *Measures for the Administration of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun* (2015) explicitly state that heritage resources should be transformed into social value "through cultural tourism."[87] This policy orientation reflects a typical form of developmental embedding, in which heritage conservation is no longer treated as an autonomous cultural objective, but is systematically incorporated into local economic performance and broader governance agendas.

According to the *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun* (2010), local authorities did not simply replicate UNESCO's framework of *management planning* when absorbing international heritage norms. Instead, they translated it into a set of parallel and interrelated planning instruments, including heritage conservation plans, tourism development plans, and environmental improvement plans. The planning guidelines clearly state that conservation should serve as a prerequisite for "the socio-economic sustainable use of heritage resources," while simultaneously strengthening construction control in core protection areas and allowing for the rational adjustment of land-use functions.[88] This formulation reveals how conservation and development objectives are institutionally juxtaposed and integrated at the local level.

In this process of translation, key international heritage concepts were redefined and endowed with locally operable meanings. *Authenticity* was rendered into identifiable and inspectable criteria within planning and approval procedures; *integrity* was operationalized as spatial control at the settlement scale, emphasizing street patterns, landscape corridors, and overall environmental coherence; and *management planning* was transformed into an administrative and performance-oriented tool used to regulate construction activities and support governance processes. These institutional reinterpretations established a concrete framework within which architectural and spatial interventions could be implemented.

(1) Key Heritage Buildings: Authenticity as Structural and Historical Continuity

It must first be emphasized that this mode of institutional translation does not apply uniformly to all categories of heritage buildings. For structures designated as cultural relics or key traditional buildings, local governance practices continue to prioritize structural systems, material authenticity, and historical information. According to the *Conservation Plan* (2010) and related implementation documents, the restoration of such buildings must adhere to

[87] Yixian County People's Government, *Administrative Measures for the Conservation of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Sites* (2015), arts. 1, 2, 6, 33.

[88] Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun*. (Huangshan, 2010), General Principles and Implementation Guidelines.

principles such as "not altering the original state of the heritage" and "minimum intervention." Authenticity in this context is primarily realized through the repair, reinforcement, and continuation of original timber-frame structures, traditional materials, and construction logic.[89]

Internal adjustments in these buildings are required to respect the existing structural system and are limited to restorative or reinforcing measures aimed at improving safety and functionality, rather than comprehensive reconfiguration driven by new uses. Here, authenticity is not reduced to visual appearance, but is understood as a technically grounded practice centered on materials, components, and historical stratification, subject to stricter professional review and administrative control.

(2) Ordinary Traditional Buildings: Institutional Separation of External Authenticity, Internal Adaptation, and Functional Transformation

By contrast, for ordinary traditional dwellings that are not classified as cultural relics or key protected buildings, the planning framework adopts a more flexible regulatory approach. Provided that the external appearance and the overall spatial structure of the village are not compromised, the plan explicitly permits adjustments to internal spatial layouts and structural systems.

Within this framework, "improvement" is defined as the modernization of internal facilities, structural safety, and functional organization while retaining original external features and traditional courtyard configurations, in order to accommodate contemporary living standards, safety regulations, and tourism-related needs.[90] For ordinary buildings and structures, the plan further allows the use of new structural systems and modern construction techniques, on the condition that building scale, proportions, roof forms, and façade expressions remain consistent with traditional village character, and explicitly prohibits the use of modern decorative materials such as ceramic tiles and mosaics.[91]

As a result, authenticity is institutionally divided into two dimensions: the stability of visible form ensured through strict control of height, volume, roof typology, and façade materials, and the adaptability of internal space enabled through regulatory flexibility. This "stable exterior–flexible interior" model has become a common pathway for architectural transformation in both Hongcun and Xidi.

In practice, this institutional arrangement further creates space for the commercial reprogramming of building functions. Under policy objectives emphasizing the "rational utilization of heritage resources" and "socio-economic sustainable use," the plan permits the upgrading of internal facilities and the reorganization of interior space—so long as external appearance and village-wide spatial order are preserved—thereby enabling many formerly residential courtyard houses to be converted into guesthouses, restaurants, retail spaces, or exhibition venues.[92] Such transformations are not purely market-driven, but are institutionally guided through approval procedures and façade-control mechanisms: as long as a building meets the prescribed "traditional character" indicators in terms of height, scale, roof form, and façade treatment, internal commercial adaptation is typically regarded as legitimate

[89] Ibid., chap. 12.
[90] Ibid., chap. 12, arts. 3.2.7–3.2.8.
[91] Ibid., chap. 12.
[92] Ibid., chap. 4.

"utilization" rather than heritage degradation. In this way, everyday living spaces are re-encoded as tourism-oriented infrastructure while maintaining visual continuity, and development objectives are directly embedded in architectural operations and patterns of spatial use.

(3) Overall Implications: Differentiated Authenticity and Developmental Embedding

Taken as a whole, heritage conservation practices in Xidi and Hongcun do not negate the technical dimensions of authenticity. Instead, through building classification and differentiated regulatory control, authenticity is embedded within the practical conditions of local development. Key heritage buildings serve as symbolic anchors of historical continuity, professional norms, and international compliance, while the far more numerous ordinary buildings become the primary carriers of tourism development, functional transformation, and spatial adjustment.

In this sense, authenticity is no longer implemented as a single, unified standard, but is strategically distributed across different building categories through institutional layering and operational differentiation. As Tu's research on Xidi and Hongcun demonstrates, such reinterpretation constitutes a key strategy through which local governments balance international heritage compliance with development imperatives, exemplifying the functional translation of international heritage norms within a local governance context.[93]

### *5.2.3 Reinterpretation of Local Regulations and Multi-layered Power Structures*

Heritage governance in Yixian is not a singular administrative process but a dynamic negotiation among government, community, and enterprises. Different actors form multi-layered interactive relationships during institutional implementation, constructing a "multipolar equilibrium" in local governance:

1. Government Leadership and Policy Guidance

The Yixian government maintains core institutional dominance. The County Culture and Tourism Bureau and Heritage Management Office ensure compliance and enforcement of conservation objectives through a "responsibility agreement–evaluation–planning" system.

However, this top-down governance logic often compresses villagers' bargaining space in practice.

2. Corporate Intervention and Economic Transformation

Hongcun's tourism development is led by Hongcun Cultural Tourism Development Co., Ltd., which redistributes resources through ticket revenue sharing and land leasing. Ying's research indicates that this "enterprise-government" cooperation model boosts short-term economic benefits for heritage sites but also intensifies community marginalization, transforming villagers from "property rights holders" into "labor and landscape components."[94]

3. Community Autonomy and Cultural Resistance

In contrast, Xidi Village leverages its village committee structure and clan networks to establish robust internal negotiation mechanisms. Yu observes that Xidi's community

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[93] Li Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms through the Prism of Historic Urban Landscape: A Case Study of the Xidi and Hongcun World Heritage Sites," *Sustainability* 16, no. 12 (2024): Sections. 4.3-5.2, Article 5136.

[94] Ying, Tianyu, and Yongguang Zhou. "Community, governments and external capitals in China's rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages." *Tourism Management* 28 (2007): 101–104.

governance exhibits a "negotiated compliance" characteristic—villagers gradually gain partial say over tourism revenues and spatial planning through sustained interaction with the government, forming a "micro-level governance translation."[95]

This pluralistic power structure indicates that local governance is not a passive replication of central policies, but rather an ongoing process of negotiation and rebalancing among institutional actors.

*5.2.4 The Dual Logic of Local Governance: Compliance and Adaptation*

Yixian's local governance operates between two logics:

- Compliance Logic: Ensuring institutional legitimacy and international image by adhering to the World Heritage Convention and national regulations;
- Adaptive Logic: Flexibly adjusting implementation methods and semantic frameworks within local socioeconomic constraints.

This dual logic constitutes a "governance translation space" at the local level: local governments serve both as enforcers of international norms and as reconfigurers of meaning.[96] Through policy reinterpretation, project implementation, and discourse adjustment, Yixian County seeks a balance between "compliance" and "development."

*5.2.5 Summary*

Yixian's local governance system demonstrates a path of institutional translation from national absorption to local reconfiguration:

1. National laws and UNESCO norms provide the institutional framework;
2. Local regulations proceduralize and operationalize international concepts;
3. Government, enterprises, and communities reshape governance meanings through practical negotiation.

This "multi-layered translation chain" reveals how local governments mediate tensions between international institutional pressures and indigenous political cultures. The experiences of Hongcun and Xidi demonstrate that China's rural heritage governance is not merely an administrative practice, but an ongoing negotiation over semantics, power, and cultural values.

## 5.3 Evolution of Governance Structures in Xidi and Hongcun: The Tripartite Relationship Among Government, Enterprises, and Communities

XiDi and Hongcun epitomize China's rural heritage governance model. Since their inscription on the World Heritage List in 2000, these villages have become not only exemplary "cultural landscape" cases within UNESCO's heritage framework but also experimental grounds for local governments in institutional absorption, policy implementation, and cultural reproduction. Their governance evolution reflects the long-term interplay between national administrative logic, local development demands, and community cultural structures.

Unlike UNESCO's advocacy for "community participation," China's heritage governance tends to prioritize "administrative embedding" for policy implementation. Under the guidance

[95] Yi Yu and June Wang, “Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon? Scale in China’s Heritage Production,” *Built Heritage* 8 (2024): Sections 1-2 and 6, Article 11.

[96] Zhang, “The Development and Institutional Characteristics,” 15.

of the National Cultural Heritage Administration and the Huangshan Municipal Government, Yi County established a multi-tiered management system characterized by "government leadership, corporate collaboration, and community cooperation." Within this institutional framework, Xidi and Hongcun have developed distinct pathways: "village committee-led" (Xidi) and "corporate-operated" (Hongcun). This differentiation reflects both the flexibility of local institutions and reveals the "multidirectional translation" mechanism of global norms within local governance.[97]

*5.3.1 Institutional Reconstruction Post-World Heritage Listing: From Village Autonomy to Administrative Embedding*

Following successful inscription, the Yixian County government established a relatively comprehensive heritage management system across county, township, and village levels. The 2006 "Yixian County Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Protection Management Measures" explicitly stipulated the establishment of a Heritage Protection Management Committee under the county government to coordinate conservation, development, supervision, and planning affairs. Its membership included key county government departments, township representatives, village committee members, and cultural heritage experts. This body, directly subordinate to the county government, assumed functions of "policy transmission—execution oversight—results reporting."[98]

This system signifies that heritage governance is no longer a spontaneous social affair within villages but has been integrated into the hierarchical operations of the administrative system. As stated on the Yixian County Government website (2023): "World Heritage protection adheres to the principles of county-level coordination, departmental collaboration, and local implementation to ensure scientific and institutionalized conservation management." [99]

This top-down institutional embedding reshaped local governance power dynamics—pre-inscription, Xidi and Hongcun centered on clan organizations and village committee autonomy; post-inscription, governance shifted upward, with administrative departments becoming dominant forces and communities integrated into institutional oversight systems.

While this governance restructuring enhanced policy implementation efficiency, it also weakened community agency and local knowledge.

*5.3.2 The Xidi Model: Consultative Governance and Cultural Continuity*

In contrast to Hongcun's tourism-enterprise–dominated governance model, heritage governance in Xidi exhibits a more pronounced consultative character. Its core logic does not lie in weakening administrative control, but rather in introducing continuous negotiation processes within an established institutional framework through village-level organizations and informal social networks. Through these mechanisms, a certain degree of continuity in everyday life is maintained at both architectural and spatial levels. According to the *Protection Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun* and related

[97] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," Sections 4.2–4.4.

[98] *Measures for the Administration of the Xidi–Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Site*, art. 4.

[99] Yixian People's Government. "Conference on the Advancement of World Heritage Protection and Management Work Convened." *Yixian People's Government Official Website,* June 12, 2023, accessed December 2025, https://www.yixian.gov.cn/zwzx/index.html.

implementation documents, Xidi has established a local governance structure centered on the village committee and operating under the guidance of county-level heritage protection authorities, responsible for environmental improvement, historic building restoration, and resident mobilization.

1. The Institutional Role of the Village Committee: Administrative Execution and Mediated Negotiation

At the institutional level, the Xidi Village Committee not only undertakes administrative implementation tasks but also functions, in practice, as an intermediary between government authorities, technical professionals, and local residents. While this role does not alter the fundamentally top-down governance framework, it introduces a degree of negotiation into specific architectural and spatial decision-making processes.

In particular, during the restoration and functional adjustment of traditional residential buildings, renovation proposals are typically discussed with residents through the village committee after meeting the planning guidelines' requirements for building height, volume, and façade control. Negotiations often focus on internal spatial layouts, modes of use, and the scale of intervention. This mechanism helps prevent the wholesale replacement of residential buildings under uniform technical standards, allowing certain dwellings to retain their original living structures while undergoing formal restoration.

In this process, the village committee does not act merely as a passive executor of planning regulations, but rather as a mediating node that balances administrative norms with everyday living needs. Its institutional function is thus better understood as facilitating negotiation rather than transmitting unilateral commands.

2. Clan Networks and Informal Governance: The Social Foundations of Consultation

The operation of consultative governance in Xidi does not rely solely on formal institutional arrangements but is deeply embedded in clan-based social networks, particularly those centered on the Hu lineage. Although clan organizations lack formal administrative authority, their long-standing internal trust relations and social prestige enable them to play a significant informal coordinating role in building restoration, spatial use, and public affairs.

In practice, clan representatives often participate in discussions on planning and construction decisions through ancestral hall meetings(Fig.7), family assemblies, or informal consultations, especially when projects involve ancestral properties, traditional residences, or clan-related public spaces. In this way, clan networks help bridge the social distance between administrative institutions and residents, providing a stable social foundation for the continued operation of consultative governance.




*Fig 7 - Clan representatives met with government officials and expert representatives inside the ancestral hall to deliberate on heritage conservation and the restoration of historic buildings.-Photo from the internet (https://ah.ifeng.com/c/8XZbLQWCHAn)*

3. Social Impacts of Consultative Governance: Spatial Expressions of Continuity

The impact of consultative governance on the built environment is most directly reflected in patterns of spatial use and functional distribution. Compared with Hongcun—where large numbers of residential buildings have been fully converted into tourism-oriented commercial spaces—Xidi has retained a relatively high proportion of everyday residential functions(Fig.8). After façade restoration and infrastructure upgrades, some traditional courtyard houses continue to serve as family living spaces rather than being entirely transformed into guesthouses or exhibition venues. Architectural interventions tend to focus on necessary facility improvements and localized functional adjustments(Fig.9) rather than systematic reconfiguration of overall spatial structures.




*Fig 8 - After restoration, key living spaces of traditional dwellings—such as the main hall—were retained, allowing their original domestic functions to continue.-Photo from the internet (https://www.meipian.cn/52v0v4bb)*



*Fig 9- Key living spaces of traditional dwellings, such as the main hall, were preserved following restoration, while spaces requiring modern utilities—such as kitchens and bathrooms—were upgraded through improvements to water and electrical infrastructure.-Photo from the internet (https://share.ixqdw.com/share/media/1559004)*

At the level of public buildings, certain ancestral halls and communal spaces have been incorporated into the heritage display system without being fully detached from their original social functions. While serving exhibition and visitation purposes, these buildings continue to host community meetings, ritual activities, and semi-public social interactions, resulting in a hybrid condition in which display and everyday use coexist. (Fig.10)



*Fig 10- Public buildings such as ancestral halls retained their original functions for rituals and communal meetings, while simultaneously supporting additional uses such as visitation and exhibition.-Photo from the internet (https://www.sohu.com/a/136142898_319783)*

At the scale of streets and lanes, consultative governance has also imposed a degree of restraint on tourism-driven transformation. Commercial activities are largely concentrated along primary visitor routes, while secondary lanes remain oriented toward residents' daily circulation and have not been comprehensively converted into tourist-oriented consumption spaces. This spatial differentiation does not stem from an explicit anti-commercial policy but rather emerges as the cumulative outcome of long-term negotiation among residents, village authorities, and administrative institutions.

### *5.3.3 Administrative, Commercial, and Landscape-Based Construction of "Authenticity": Architectural Operational Mechanisms in Hongcun*

In contrast to Xidi, where consultative governance practices help maintain a degree of continuity in everyday life, authenticity in Hongcun is more explicitly embedded within governance objectives oriented toward tourism operation and commercial use. At the institutional and planning levels, authenticity is clearly established as a core principle of heritage conservation and implemented through zoning control, building classification, and approval procedures. However, authenticity is not applied with equal intensity across all heritage objects. Instead, through differentiated management practices, it is embedded within distinct governance objectives and use logics. Compared to the stringent requirements imposed on officially protected monuments and key traditional buildings—particularly with regard to structural systems, materials, and historical information—the updating of interior space and functional reorganization in Hongcun is, within institutional limits, primarily concentrated in non-core areas and non-key traditional buildings, where it is closely coupled with tourism-oriented uses.

According to the *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui: Xidi and Hongcun* (2010), the planning framework establishes differentiated conservation and renovation requirements by distinguishing among cultural relic buildings, key traditional

buildings, and ordinary traditional buildings. For traditional residential buildings that are not designated as protected monuments or key conservation objects, the plan permits—subject to approval—adjustments to interior spatial layouts and structural systems, provided that the overall spatial configuration is maintained and established requirements for architectural character and townscape control are met.[100]

At the operational level, this institutional arrangement provides clear legal and procedural grounds for interior structural updating, including the replacement of floor systems, the introduction of reinforced concrete slabs, floor reconfiguration, and functional spatial restructuring(Fig.11). As a result, buildings are able to maintain a "traditional" appearance externally while internally accommodating the practical demands of tourism operation, safety regulations, and efficiency of use. Existing research indicates that this pattern of "stable exterior–restructured interior" has become a routine mode of architectural transformation in non-core areas of Hongcun, driven not merely by technical choices but by the combined effects of institutional flexibility and market mechanisms.[101]

Within this framework, a substantial number of non-key traditional buildings have been systematically converted into tourism-oriented units while maintaining continuity in street interfaces and overall village townscape. Courtyard houses that previously served primarily as family residences have had their interior spaces reorganized to support guesthouse accommodation, catering services, retail display, or mixed-use operations(Fig.12). In this way, architectural form continues to signal "tradition," while function is increasingly embedded within tourism-driven operational logics. This process suggests that architectural transformation in Hongcun is not the result of isolated cases, but rather a reproducible operational model functioning within clearly defined institutional boundaries.

Further at the level of spatial use, the translation of authenticity in Hongcun is reinforced through the landscape-oriented reprogramming of everyday living spaces. Under policy frameworks emphasizing the "rational utilization of heritage resources" and the "development of cultural tourism," planning documents explicitly incorporate portions of traditional residential space into visitor circulation systems and display routes.[102] Spaces that once supported daily domestic life—such as reception halls, courtyards, and ancillary rooms—are gradually transformed into scenic nodes for viewing, photography, and consumption. Through the combined influence of institutional guidance and market forces, everyday practices are compressed, displaced, or rendered performative, producing a process of spatial re-encoding oriented toward visual display and tourism consumption.

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[100] Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun*, chap.12, secs. 3.27-3.28.

[101] Ibid., chap. 4.

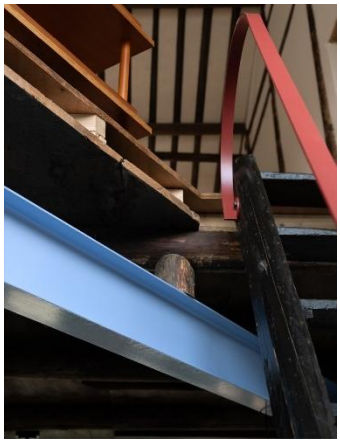
[102] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," secs. 4.2-4.4.



*In newly constructed portions, wood-clad steel members are used as the primary structural elements.*

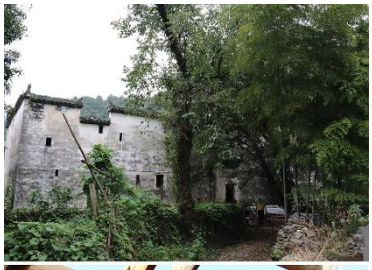


*Aluminum and glass are used to form a transparent roof structure.*



*teel beams are used to reinforce the renovated floor slabs.*

*Fig 11- In the commercial adaptation of traditional dwellings, modern materials such as steel, aluminum, and steel members clad in wood have been introduced for structural upgrading and reinforcement purposes.-Photo from the internet（https://news.sohu.com/a/974036515_121124642）*













*1.As conservation regulations require the external appearance and walls to be preserved, the external walls were treated as an independent load-bearing system, allowing the removal of the original roof, timber structure, and floor slabs. 2.A new timber structure was subsequently introduced to reorganize the interior space and define new functional areas.*

*Fig 12- Renovation of a historic dwelling into a guesthouse in Hongcun.-Photo from the internet（https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/103752896）*

*5.3.4 Integration of Local Government Power and Institutional Negotiation: Heritage Restoration Projects as Operational Nodes*

Within the heritage governance systems of Xidi and Hongcun, county-level governments do not operate solely through macro-level policies or planning documents. Instead, they intervene directly in architectural technical pathways and spatial outcomes through the initiation, tendering, design, and implementation of specific heritage restoration projects. The integration of governmental power is therefore not primarily manifested in abstract institutional discourse, but is continuously materialized through a series of operational nodes centered on "restoration projects," enabling heritage conservation to form a highly coupled governance mechanism across administrative, technical, and spatial dimensions.

This section takes the restoration project of Zhuimutang Ancestral Hall (Fig. 13) in Xidi Village (a nationally protected cultural relic building) as a representative case to examine how institutional objectives are translated into architectural operations through project-based mechanisms.



*Fig 13- Entrance of Zhuimutang -Photo by the author(2015)*

(1) From Government Tendering to Project Initiation:

The Engineering Translation of Institutional Objectives

From an institutional perspective, heritage restoration projects are typically initiated by county-level cultural heritage authorities and formally launched through government procurement and public tendering procedures. Institutional objectives are explicitly defined at the tendering stage. Tender documents routinely specify requirements such as "compliance with conservation plans," "maintenance of historic spatial patterns," and "adherence to the principle of authenticity" as preconditions for both design and construction.

At this stage, heritage conservation does not exist as an abstract ideological principle, but is translated into a legally binding and technically restrictive project brief. Design institutes and construction contractors are not tasked with deciding whether conservation should occur, but rather with determining how updates and interventions can be implemented without compromising exterior appearance or overall spatial structure. Institutional objectives are thus subjected to their first process of engineering translation at the moment of project initiation.

(2) The Construction Drawing Stage:

The Materialization of Institutional Requirements through Text and Drawings

Institutional objectives are fully transformed into executable architectural operations during the construction drawing stage. Construction documentation for heritage restoration projects typically follows a highly standardized textual and graphical structure, shaped not by individual design discretion but by the combined constraints of conservation planning frameworks, technical regulations, and administrative approval procedures.

At the textual level, construction drawings generally begin with a section titled "Restoration Principles and Technical Notes," which articulates principles such as "preservation of original form," "minimum intervention," "legible restoration," and "necessary structural reinforcement."

These principles do not remain at the level of normative declaration, but are further translated into specific restoration contents and construction methods.[103]

Within the section on "Restoration Contents and Engineering Methods," the documentation provides detailed instructions for key components including roof structures, beams and columns, floor systems, and foundations, explicitly distinguishing between different intervention types such as "repair," "reinforcement," "replacement," and "upgrading." For example, the texts typically require maximum retention of original timber elements. Columns, beams, and purlins that exhibit decay or cracking but retain structural capacity are prioritized for repair through techniques such as partial infilling, splicing, footing extensions, and metal fastener reinforcement. Replacement is permitted only when components are severely deteriorated and no longer serviceable, and must follow original materials, dimensions, and construction techniques.

In roof and floor systems, construction instructions specify procedures for dismantling, cataloging, reinstating, and re-laying rafters, sheathing boards, and grey clay tiles, while allowing the introduction of waterproof membranes, concealed reinforcement components, and fire- and pest-prevention treatments, provided that roof form and external appearance remain unchanged. Ground surfaces are often restored by removing later concrete layers and reinstating traditional rammed-earth or timber flooring to recover historic spatial character. For walls and foundations, the documentation further prescribes methods for crack reinforcement, partial dismantling and rebuilding, and traditional plaster repair, with particular attention to non-visible structural elements such as embedded wall columns or auxiliary framing systems.[104] Through these detailed provisions, construction drawings clearly define which components must be preserved, which may be reinforced following inspection, which may be replaced, and where modern materials and techniques may be introduced to meet structural safety and functional requirements. Institutional objectives are thus translated into an operational, reviewable, and replicable technical pathway.

In addition, construction drawings frequently include a section titled "Supplementary Notes," addressing structural defects, material degradation, and safety risks identified during on-site assessment. This section provides justification for the selective introduction of modern materials and technologies under the condition that exterior appearance and historic spatial order are not affected.

Secondly, construction documentation systematically presents an analysis of existing conditions. Through current-condition photographs, pathology annotations, and measured survey drawings, structural damage, material aging, and usage-related risks are objectively recorded (Fig. 14). This process not only supplies the basis for technical decision-making but also establishes a "problem–response" logic within the project documentation, rendering restoration measures both necessary and legitimate.

Thirdly, at the drawing level, restoration schemes are elaborated through plans, elevations, sections, and detailed construction nodes (Fig. 15). These drawings typically demonstrate how, while preserving traditional roof forms, façade proportions, and street interfaces, internal

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[103] Huangshan Damu Ancient Architecture Design Co., Ltd., *Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex* (Xidi, Yi County, Anhui, June 2024), commissioned by Yi County Cultural Heritage Administration, 5-6. (see Appendix 2.)

[104] Ibid., 6–11.

structural nodes are reinforced (Fig. 16), floor systems are updated, or concealed modern structural components are introduced. Such interventions are strictly controlled to remain “invisible” or only weakly visible, thereby technically responding to requirements of authenticity.

Through the combined operation of textual instructions and graphical representation, heritage conservation principles are no longer abstract policy slogans but are systematically translated into an engineering language that directly governs subsequent construction practices.




*Fig 14- Examples of damage status both indoors and outdoors -Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex*

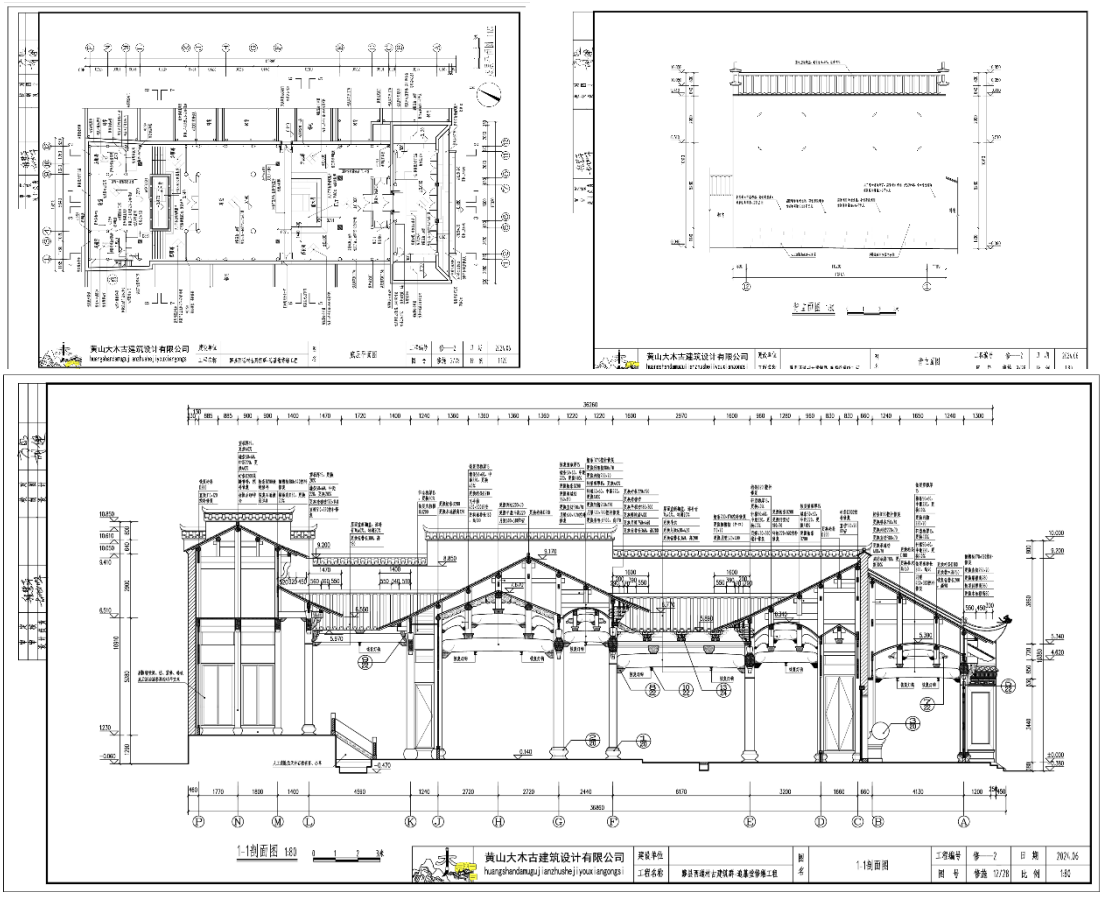


*Fig 15- Examples of plan, elevation, and section drawings For details,-Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex*

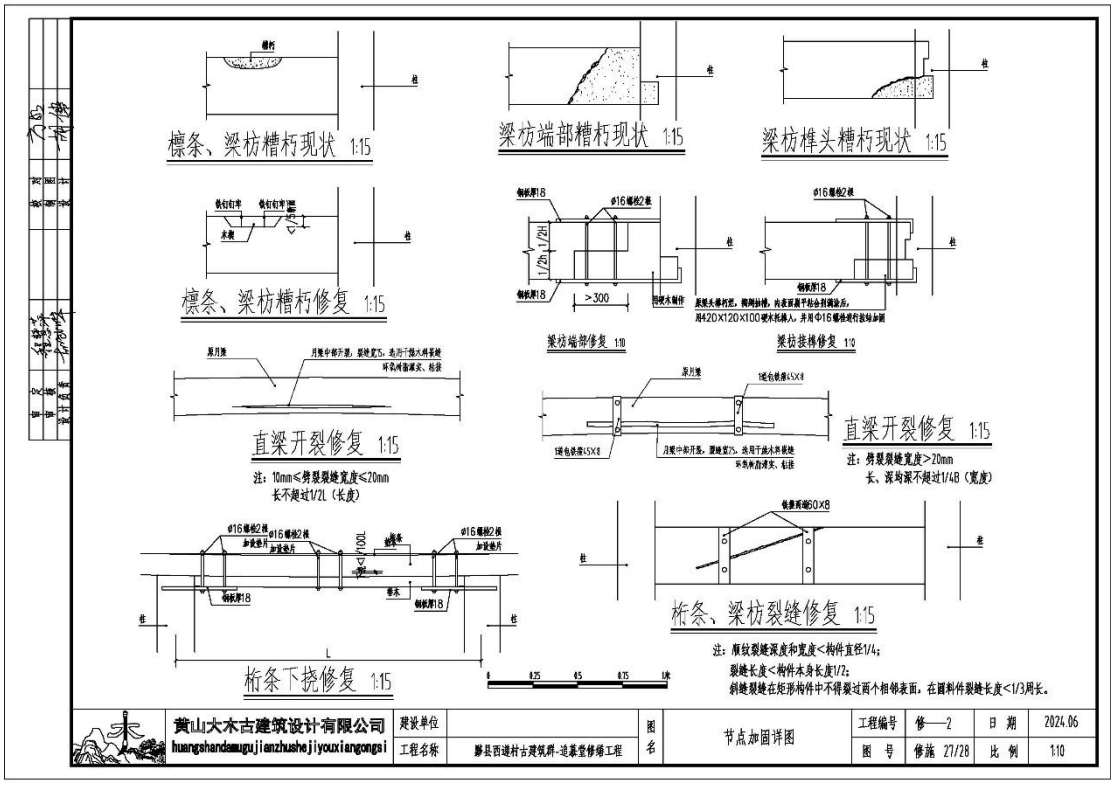



*Fig 16- Examples of Detailed drawing of node reinforcement For details,-Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex*

(3) Construction Implementation:

Replication and Diffusion of Standardized Technical Pathways

Once construction begins, the technical pathways established in the construction drawings are implemented through standardized construction procedures rather than on-site improvisation by individual craftsmen. Heritage restoration projects are typically undertaken by professional contractors holding the required qualifications, with construction processes characterized by high levels of organizational standardization, technical regulation, and quality control（Fig. 17）.



*Fig 17- Photos of the modernized and standardized restoration of Xidi Zhuimutang Hall*

*-Photo from the internet（https://www.sohu.com/a/830961130_267106）*

In practice, this standardized construction model produces a high degree of similarity across restoration strategies: exterior forms and overall spatial configurations remain stable, while internal structural systems are reinforced, replaced, or reorganized according to uniform technical logic. As similar projects are repeatedly implemented in Xidi, Hongcun, and surrounding areas, this technical pathway is continuously replicated and gradually consolidated as a routine approach to heritage restoration at the local level. Restoration projects thus not only resolve issues at the level of individual buildings but also generate a reusable technical paradigm.

(4) Summary:

Restoration Projects as the Materialization of Institutional Negotiation

Overall, the integration of local governmental power is not accomplished through a single institutional document, but is continually “operated” through specific restoration projects across tendering documents, construction drawings, and built outcomes. Heritage buildings function simultaneously as objects of governance and as media through which governance logic becomes materially visible.

Through processes of engineering, technicalization, and project-based operation, international heritage conservation principles are translated into locally executable, assessable, and regulatable spatial practices. Restoration projects thus become materialized forms of institutional negotiation, simultaneously satisfying authenticity requirements while reserving operational space for safety standards, functional adaptation, and tourism-oriented use. In this sense, restoration engineering constitutes one of the most critical institutional–architectural linkages within the heritage governance systems of Xidi and Hongcun.

### *5.3.5 Community Strategic Responses and Cultural Renegotiation*

Despite the dominant role of administrative bodies and enterprises within the institutional framework, the community is not entirely passive. Yu's field research indicates that villagers

partially redefine the system through "the re-spatialization of lived practices." For example:

- Some villagers opened small exhibition spaces outside their homes, re-presenting family memories and local history;
- The younger generation promotes "authentic Hongcun life" through online media to counteract the stereotypical images created by tourism performances;
- The village committee regularly holds "Village Opinion Days" to gather feedback on planning adjustments through public hearings.[105]

These "micro-negotiations" constitute the socialized extension of UNESCO norms at the community level. As Tu observes: "Governance translation occurs not only in administrative documents but is realized within the logic of everyday actions."[106]

*5.3.6 Comparison and Reflection: Institutional Implications of Two Local Pathways*

| Dimensions of Comparison | Xidi | Hongcun |
|---|---|---|
| Dominant Model | Village Committee Leadership, Community Deliberation | Operational Logic |
| Administrative Logic | Flexible compliance | Rigid performance |
| Community roles | Consultative Participation, Limited Autonomy | Passive Execution, Symbolic Participation |
| "Authenticity" Practice | Cultural Continuity and Livability | Landscaping and Display |
| Economic Logic | Balancing Village Revenue and Cultural Heritage Preservation | Ticket Economy and Tourism Performance Orientation |

This divergence reveals two distinct local governance logics:

- "Community-embedded governance": Centered on social consultation and cultural continuity, preserving livability and locality (Xidi);
- "Administrative Performance-Oriented Governance": Prioritizing economic growth and visible outcomes through strengthened policy control and spatial restructuring (Hongcun).

Both approaches seek equilibrium between international norms and local realities. Xidi's flexibility enhances cultural vitality but constrains fiscal sustainability; Hongcun's corporate model boosts resource mobilization yet sacrifices community continuity. This structural contrast reflects the core tension in global heritage governance within China's local context—striking balance between institutional compliance and social continuity.

*5.3.7 Summary: The Logic of Governance Translation at the Local Level*

The governance structure evolution in Xidi and Hongcun demonstrates a "multidirectional translation" mechanism of global governance concepts within China's local politics:

1. Top-down institutional absorption: Local governments assimilate UNESCO norms through regulations, planning, and corporate mechanisms;

2. Bottom-up social responses: Communities redefine the meaning of norms through cultural practices and living spaces;

3. Horizontal institutional negotiation: Enterprises, government, and village committees

[105] Yu, “Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon?” 14–15.

[106] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," 10–11.

continuously adjust between economic, cultural, and governance objectives.

This multi-layered interaction forms a "translation chain" in local governance—from normative input to social re-creation.

## 5.4 Practices of Institutional Translation: Analysis of Local Policy Texts and Implementation Mechanisms

Within Yixian County's heritage governance system, the localization of international norms extends beyond legal or policy frameworks. It is realized through concrete operational mechanisms, planning systems, and evaluation protocols. It is precisely within these institutionalized practices that UNESCO's principles—authenticity, integrity, and management planning—are redefined, technicalized, and embedded within local governance logic. This process constitutes the most "visible" governance translation practice of the UNESCO governance framework within China's local context.

### *5.4.1 Conservation Planning System: From Conceptual Documents to Administrative Processes*

Based on the Protection Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun (2015) and the Management Measures for the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun in Yixian County (2006), Yixian County has established a multi-tiered protection planning system characterized by "county coordination—township coordination—village implementation." This system draws inspiration from the concept of a "management plan" in UNESCO's Operational Guidelines (1992),[107] but has been adapted within the local context into an administrative approval system.

1. Planning Structure and Development Process

The planning system comprises three categories:

- Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Commissioned uniformly by the Yixian County Government and prepared by a design institute, requiring review and filing by the provincial housing and urban-rural development department;
- Special Restoration Plans: For individual buildings or environmental improvement projects, submitted for approval by the Heritage Management Office;
- Village-Level Implementation Plans: Jointly formulated by village committees and the management office to guide residents' daily maintenance and construction activities.

2. Planning Approval and Technical Process

All plans undergo a three-step process: "expert review—public notice—government approval." While this system superficially aligns with UNESCO's emphasis on "multi-stakeholder participation," public involvement often devolves into a formalistic "notice and signature" procedure.[108]

As Yu observes: "In heritage governance planning, technical texts supplant deliberative processes, and expert discourse becomes the authoritative language."[109]

3. Semantic Characteristics of Planning Texts

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[107] UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines*, 1992, Section II.B, paras. 38–46.

[108] Su, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism in China,* 45–46.

[109] Yu, "Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon?" 9.

Terms like "authenticity preservation," "historical appearance restoration," and "cultural landscape rehabilitation" are frequently used in conservation plans. However, these expressions lean more toward visual and spatial dimensions, with less emphasis on social relations and cultural continuity.

Tu (2024, p. 11) defines this phenomenon as "heritage governance through visual uniformity"—a governance logic centered on visual consistency.[110] This technical translation reflects semantic drift when international norms are implemented locally.

### *5.4.2 Approval Mechanisms: Proceduralization and Performance-Orientation of Norms*

The approval system for heritage projects constitutes a pivotal stage in the "proceduralization" of UNESCO norms within local administrative systems. According to the Yi County Heritage Site Construction Project Management Measures (2018)[111] , all projects involving building restoration, environmental modification, and tourism facility construction must adhere to a "three-tier approval system":

| Approval Levels | Competent Authority | Responsibilities and Authority | Corresponding UNESCO Standard |
|---|---|---|---|
| Village Level | Village Committee, Management Office | Initial review of project compliance | Community Participation (UNESCO, 2003, Art. 15) |
| County Level | Yixian County Culture and Tourism Bureau | Review of planning and fund utilization | Management Plan (UNESCO, 1992, §38–46) |
| Municipal/Provincial | Huangshan Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau, Provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau | Final Approval and Filing | Integrity (UNESCO, 1972, Art. 4–5) |

Approval documents employ numerous quantitative indicators such as "restoration area (m²)," "facade improvement rate (%)," and "visitor capacity (visits)." While this measurable management logic enhances administrative efficiency, it also subjects cultural concepts to "performance metrics." [112]

### *5.4.3 Supervision and Evaluation: From Cultural Monitoring to Performance Assessment*

UNESCO requires member states to conduct regular monitoring of heritage sites to ensure their authenticity and integrity.[113] Yi County institutionalized this mechanism administratively, establishing an annual assessment system centered on "evaluation-reporting-rectification."

1. Annual Monitoring Mechanism

According to the Yi County Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Protection Annual Report (2023), the Heritage Management Office must submit an annual report on the

[110] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," 11.

[111] Yixian County People's Government, *Yixian Regulations on the Management of Construction Projects within Heritage Sites* (2018), art. 3.

[112] Tianyu Ying and Yongguang Zhou, "Community, Governments and External Capitals in China's Rural Cultural Tourism: A Comparative Study of Two Adjacent Villages," *Tourism Management* 28 (2007):96-107.

[113] UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape,* paras. 169–176.

conservation status, covering aspects such as restoration progress, visitor reception volume, resident satisfaction, and penalties for illegal construction. This report, after review and approval by the county government, is submitted to the National Cultural Heritage Administration.[114]

While formally reflecting the internationally recognized "periodic reporting system," the implementation emphasizes "visualized outcomes" and "performance metrics" over cultural assessments.

2. Performance Orientation and Administrative Evaluation

In local governance practice, the performance orientation of heritage conservation does not remain at the level of abstract indicators, but is concretely implemented through a series of institutionalized, quantifiable, and visually demonstrable spatial interventions. The *Measures for the Administration of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun* (2015), together with its implementing documents, explicitly incorporates criteria such as "the effectiveness of traditional townscape rectification," "completion of restoration works at key nodes," and "the improvement of the visitor environment" into annual work assessments and project acceptance procedures.[115]

In practical terms, façade rectification projects, building restoration along primary tourist routes, and nodal demonstration projects in Xidi and Hongcun are routinely prioritized within annual construction plans and government investment lists. The *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui: Xidi and Hongcun* (2010) likewise specifies that buildings and environmental townscape within major visitor routes and core scenic nodes should be given priority in rectification efforts, in order to enhance overall visual presentation and visitor experience.[116] The outcomes of such projects are typically reported through before-and-after photographic comparisons, statistics on completed areas, the number of demonstration nodes, and visitor feedback, all of which are directly used for administrative reporting, performance evaluation, and inspections by higher-level authorities.

By contrast, the organization of interior architectural space, improvements to everyday living environments, and life-oriented spaces in non-primary streets are, although mentioned in principle within planning documents, not associated with equally clear or quantifiable assessment indicators. As a result, they rarely enter the core focus of performance evaluation. This institutional asymmetry objectively reinforces an operational logic of "façade priority" and "display priority" in heritage governance, continuously directing administrative attention and resources toward spatial outcomes that can be readily seen, recorded, and exhibited.

As Gruber observes, within China's administrative system, heritage conservation has increasingly been transformed into a "visualized instrument of political performance." Through standardized rectification projects and demonstrable spatial results, local governments are able to simultaneously satisfy upper-level regulatory requirements and international compliance expectations while visibly showcasing governance capacity and

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[114] Yixian County People's Government, "Annual Report on the Protection of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Sites (2023)," *Yixian County People's Government*, 2023, accessed December 2025, https://www.yixian.gov.cn/.

[115] *Measures for the Administration of the Xidi–Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Site*, arts. 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24.

[116] Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun*, arts. 3, 10, 15.

developmental achievements.[117] In this process, architectural space is further transformed from a carrier of cultural heritage into a medium for the display of administrative evaluation and governance performance.

3. Dual Semantics of the Monitoring System

Monitoring and evaluation simultaneously serve dual functions: "protection oversight" and "achievement display." On one hand, it responds to UNESCO compliance requirements; on the other, it becomes a medium for local governments to showcase governance capabilities and cultural accomplishments. This "display-oriented oversight" embodies the "semantic duality" characteristic of governance translation.[118]

### *5.4.4 Community Participation Mechanisms: From Consultation to Formalization*

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage explicitly states that communities should "actively participate in decision-making, safeguarding, and transmission" of heritage.[119] However, in Yixian's practice, community participation has been institutionalized as a procedural step.

1. Hearing and Public Notice System

B efore approval, conservation plans and restoration projects require "village hearings" and "public notices." Yet according to interviews and the Yi County Heritage Management Office Annual Summary (2023), hearings primarily serve as information dissemination platforms. While villagers' opinions are recorded, they rarely influence final decisions.

Tu refers to this "procedural participation" as "ritualized participation"—a symbolic form of consultation.[120]

2. The Governance Function of Village Regulations

Village regulations in Xidi and Hongcun serve a dual role: preserving cultural norms while supplementing administrative oversight. For instance, Xidi's regulations prohibit unauthorized alterations to roof slopes or facade materials, enforced by the village committee. This "soft law" mechanism strengthens local compliance but blurs the boundaries of community autonomy.

3. Social Capital and Informal Networks

Yu's research reveals that at the informal level, communities still influence policy implementation through clan and neighborhood networks. Villagers leverage personal connections, kinship ties, and trust networks to secure "negotiated exemptions" during planning enforcement—such as delayed remediation deadlines or adjusted renovation methods.[121] This informal participation forms a "social buffer layer" in governance translation, enabling local practices to maintain flexibility beyond institutional rigidity.

### *5.4.5 Technological Language of Policy: Semantic Drift and Administrative Translation*

Linguistic analysis of local policy documents reveals the re-semantization of UNESCO norms within institutional texts.

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[117] Gruber, "Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites," chap. 5.
[118] Labadi, "World Heritage, Authenticity and Post-Authenticity," 50-51.
[119] UNESCO, *Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention* (2003), art. 15.
[120] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," 13, .
[121] Yu, "Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon?," 10–11.

In the 2015 Conservation Planning Text, "authenticity" is defined as "consistency in the appearance of historical buildings, traditional layout, and landscape character," while "integrity" is defined as "spatial form and environmental harmony."

Compared to UNESCO's emphasis on cultural continuity and social significance, this formulation clearly exhibits "visual orientation" and "engineering language" characteristics.

Tu notes: "Local policy language replaces ethical expressions with engineering terminology, making conservation actions easier to quantify and monitor, yet losing the complexity of cultural connotations."[122]

This indicates that UNESCO's cultural concepts undergo two transformations during administrative translation:

1. A shift from cultural semantics to technical semantics;
2. From value judgments to compliance metrics.

While this linguistic translation enhances policy enforceability, it diminishes the social consultative nature of heritage governance.

### *5.4.6 Institutional Tensions and Local Responses*

Yixian County's institutional translation practice reveals three levels of structural tension:

- Administrative Efficiency vs. Cultural Diversity: Heightened institutionalization boosts implementation efficiency but sacrifices the spontaneity and pluralism of local culture.
- Policy compliance vs. social participation: Community involvement becomes formalized, creating a disconnect between policy legitimacy and social recognition.
- Visual Consistency vs. Life Continuity: An administrative interpretation of "authenticity" leads to the erosion of heritage's living character.

Local governments mitigate these contradictions through "flexible implementation," "selective interpretation," and "project negotiation." For instance, during its 2021 restoration, Xidi Village permitted residents to self-fund portions of repairs in exchange for spatial design autonomy, while Hongcun Village utilized corporate funds to subsidize residents, bridging conflicting interests. These strategies embody local "strategic adaptation" to international norms.

### *5.4.7 Summary: The "Governance Translation Chain" from Documents to Practice*

Yixian's heritage governance reveals a three-tiered translation logic of UNESCO norms within local systems:

1. Institutional translation—incorporating international norms into administrative regulations and conservation planning systems;
2. Technical translation—converting cultural concepts into engineering standards and performance metrics;
3. Social translation—reinterpretation at the community level through village regulations, consultations, and informal networks.

This "document-procedure-social practice" translation chain reveals that global norms do not undergo linear transmission during local implementation but rather undergo a dynamic process of institutional reconfiguration. As Tu summarizes: "In China's rural heritage governance, the effective of an institution hinges on its ability to be re-semanticized into

[122] Tu, "Optimization of Heritage Management Mechanisms," 9–10.

socially comprehensible and actionable language."

## 5.5 Lessons from Italy's "Manual Culture" for China's Local Governance

Italy has played a foundational role in the development of contemporary cultural heritage governance.

Since the mid-20th century, driven by the Gubbio Charter (1960) and the Venice Charter (1964), Italy elevated cultural heritage conservation from "art restoration" to a practice of social and spatial governance.

More crucially, Italy pioneered institutional pathways integrating local autonomy with professional ethics, extending heritage protection from national regulations to concrete actions at the municipal and community levels.

This institutionalization profoundly influenced UNESCO's heritage governance philosophy internationally and established a local governance tradition centered on "manual culture" domestically.

Unlike China's model dominated by administrative control and performance evaluation, Italy's heritage governance emphasizes consensus-building and local co-governance.

Its core experience lies in transforming abstract international principles into executable local policies through restoration manuals, ethical norms, and community consultation systems, thereby achieving genuine "governance translation" at the institutional, social, and cultural levels.

### *5.5.1 Institutional Foundations and Governance Framework*

Since the 1970s, as heritage protection in Italy has become increasingly complex in terms of spatial management, technical review, and social coordination, a purely centralized model of governance has proven insufficient to address the demands of implementation. In this context, Italy gradually established a three-tier collaborative governance system involving the national, regional (*Regione*), and municipal (*Comune*) levels, through which responsibilities for heritage protection were clearly differentiated and allocated across policy-making, regional oversight, and local execution.

| Hierarchy | Scope of Responsibilities | Representative Body |
|---|---|---|
| National | Policy formulation, funding allocation, international cooperation | Ministry of Culture and Activities (MiC) |
| Regional | Developing regional regulations, overseeing implementation | Regional Cultural Heritage Office |
| Municipalities | Preparing restoration manuals, reviewing projects, coordinating community participation | Municipal Planning Department, Technical Committee |

This structure emphasizes "horizontal consultation" rather than "vertical command," allowing local governments to develop policies within the national framework based on their own historical characteristics and social conditions, thereby achieving flexible institutional embedding.

*5.5.2 "Manual Culture": Integration of Technical Standards and Ethical Consensus*

1. Origins and Philosophy

*The* "*manual culture*" originated in Italy's "urban restoration movement" (*recupero urbano*) during the 1970s and 1980s.

Under the influence of the principles articulated in the Venice Charter and the Gubbio Charter, various regions in Italy progressively developed *Manuali del Recupero* as reference tools, intended to provide local authorities and craftsmen with a shared ethical orientation and a common base of technical understanding for heritage conservation and renewal practices.

2. Core Content and Mechanisms of Manuals

According to De Cesaris[123] , a typical restoration manual comprises four sections:

- Architectural Restoration Standards: systematization of traditional materials, techniques, and structural details;
- Visual and Form Control: Guidelines for roof tile colors, window proportions, street scale, and other indicators;
- Strategies for Integrating New and Old: Conceptual and methodological frameworks that assist professionals in evaluating the relationship between contemporary architecture and historic fabric;
- Community Participation Mechanisms: Regulations governing public hearings, artisan advisory panels, and academic evaluation processes.

For example, the *Manuale del Recupero di Bologna* (1995) identifies the continuity of original materials and construction techniques as a key criterion for evaluating restoration interventions, emphasizing that renewal should give priority to the existing material logic and traditional building practices. Restoration proposals are subject to professional review by technical committees and, in practice, are assessed through procedures that also incorporate consultation and feedback mechanisms at the community level.

By contrast, Florence's *Guida Cromatica di Firenze* (2012) introduces the concept of *archeologia cromatica* ("chromatic archaeology"), advocating the analysis of historical layers of plaster and surface finishes in order to understand the temporal stratification of architectural color. Rather than imposing a single "historical appearance," this approach seeks to preserve the material memory embedded in successive phases of construction and transformation.

These manuals transcend technical documents to become ethical covenants—integrating professional judgment with social consensus to institutionalize heritage preservation as a public cultural practice.

*5.5.3 Local Knowledge and Collaborative Governance*

A defining feature of Italian local governance is knowledge co-creation.

The Manual for the Restoration of Small Historic Towns explicitly states that conservation plans should be developed jointly by "technical experts, community representatives, and academic institutions," with social consultation achieved through hearings and feedback.[124]

In Urbino, the Management Plan was developed through continuous dialogue with the local community, including citizens, public and private institutions, and associations, while

[123] De Cesaris, "Codici di pratica e manuali di recupero," 278–288.

[124] Lucarelli et al., "Conservation and Recovery of Minor Historical Centres," 9-13.

university research contributes technical knowledge to the conservation and management of the city's historic heritage.[125]

The core of this governance model lies in recognizing heritage preservation not merely as an administrative task, but as a "social learning process"—where institutional, community, and academic forces collectively shape local identity and spatial ethics.

*5.5.4 Comparison with Local Heritage Governance in China*

| Comparison Dimensions | Italy (Manual Culture) | China (Examples: Xidi and Hongcun) |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional Nature | Consultative, Co-governance | Regulatory, administratively driven |
| Governance Mechanism | Manual Guidance, Ethical Standards | Planning Approval, Performance Evaluation |
| Knowledge System | Local Experience + Professional Co-creation | External Expert Leadership |
| Community Roles | Participatory Decision-Makers | Procedural Participants |
| Technical Logic | Integration of Technology and Ethics | Technical Standardization and Quantification |

This contrast reveals the fundamental differences between the two institutional logics:

- Divergent Sources of Legitimacy: Italy's conservation legitimacy stems from social consensus and professional ethics, whereas China's originates from administrative authorization and regulatory enforcement;
- Distinct distribution of knowledge power: Italy empowers local artisans and community expertise, whereas China is dominated by higher-level experts and approval mechanisms.

Taking Yixian County as an example, the "Xi Di and Hongcun Conservation Plan" (2010) emphasizes "provincial approval and national filing" [126], whereas Bologna, Florence, and other regions permit communities to provide substantive feedback during the manual drafting phase, reflecting differences in decentralized governance and social participation.

*5.5.5 Implications for China's Local Heritage Governance*

1. Institutional Flexibility

→ Drawing on Italy's "manual mechanism," Chinese localities can develop "local restoration guidelines" alongside administrative planning, creating governance texts integrated with community autonomy.

2. Knowledge Localization

→ Integrate traditional craftsmanship, local materials, and village memory into official evaluation systems by establishing "cultural technology archives" to mitigate cultural discontinuity caused by technological substitution.

3. Collaborative Governance

[125] Laura Baratin et al., "Urbino città Patrimonio UNESCO: un piano per la conservazione, valorizzazione e gestione del patrimonio storico–artistico dell'Ateneo," *Restauro Archeologico* 30, no. 1 (2022): .131.

[126] Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun*, 12-15.

→ Integrate village regulations with professional standards to develop a Chinese "manual culture of informal institutions," achieving multi-stakeholder governance among communities, experts, and government.

*5.5.6 Conclusion: From Institutional Comparison to Cultural Reflection*

Italy's "manual culture" demonstrates how heritage preservation achieves a dynamic equilibrium between institutions, technology, and culture—combining legal underpinnings with local flexibility.

Its core lies not in "heteronomy" but in "co-governance"; not in "performance" but in "ethics."

This experience offers a reflective reference for China's rural heritage governance:

- Preservation should shift from "planning compliance" to "cultural consultation";
- from "technical governance" to "social co-governance";
- from "standard exportation" to "meaning co-creation."

Only then can heritage preservation truly become "institutions in life," rather than "life within institutions."

## 5.6 Summary: Institutional Operation and Cultural Adaptation at the Local Level

Through a systematic analysis of heritage governance in Xidi and Hongcun, this chapter reveals the institutional translation mechanisms and cultural adaptation logic of UNESCO's global norms at the local level. Unlike the legal absorption and administrative implementation at the national level, local governance demonstrates greater flexibility in institutional execution and the reproducibility of cultural meanings. This characteristic of an "intermediary level" positions local governments and communities as the most dynamic actors within the global-national normative system.

*5.6.1 Administrative Logic at the Institutional Level and Local Innovation*

When implementing core UNESCO norms (authenticity, integrity, management planning), local governments typically build upon national regulations to establish localized implementation pathways through planning documents, specialized ordinances, and project approval systems.

The Yi County Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Management Measures (2006) and its Implementation Rules (2008) established a management framework of "government leadership, departmental coordination, and territorial responsibility," institutionalizing tasks such as "conservation planning," "environmental remediation," and "heritage monitoring." [127] However, local governments do not passively comply with central policies during implementation. Instead, they strategically adapt international and national norms based on practical factors such as fiscal capacity, tourism economics, and social stability.

For instance, the Implementation of the Regulations on the Protection of Ancient Dwellings in Southern Anhui (2011) operationalized "authenticity" through facade control and appearance improvement metrics, emphasizing "restoration to original condition" and "uniform appearance," while simultaneously permitting "reasonable reuse" in tourism facility

[127] *Measures for the Administration of the Xidi–Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Site*, arts. 3-7.

construction.[128] This "dual orientation" reveals the compromising nature of local governance: ensuring formal compliance while maintaining economic sustainability.

This operational logic embodies local capacity for "fine-tuning" and "reinterpretation" within institutional frameworks, representing a key manifestation of governance translation at the practical level.

### *5.6.2 Multi-stakeholder Consultation Mechanisms and Power Distribution*

The complexity of local heritage governance also manifests in dynamic negotiations among multiple stakeholders.

Taking Hongcun as an example, the tourism company (Hongcun Tourism Development Co., Ltd.) and the village committee jointly undertake heritage protection and development functions: the former is responsible for scenic area ticketing, infrastructure, and visitor management, while the latter handles village affairs and resident consultations.

This tripartite structure of "corporate operation—community participation—government oversight" forms a typical "hybrid governance" model.[129]

However, in practice, the negotiation relationship is not entirely equal. Project planning dominated by corporate capital often prioritizes tourism revenue, while community demands are proceduralized into hearings or signature campaigns. Local governments play a mediating role, needing to maintain policy compliance while ensuring social stability.

This "consultative authority" reflects the flexibility of local governance within institutional constraints and reveals the redistributive logic of UNESCO's philosophy within social structures: global norms are redefined through local power structures.

### *5.6.3 Cultural Adaptation and the Resemantization of Heritage*

Governance practices at the local level are not merely about implementing systems; they are also a process of reproducing cultural meanings.

In heritage project implementation, "conservation" is often semantically redefined as "restoration" or "rehabilitation," "authenticity" is materialized as visual consistency, and "community participation" is incorporated into administrative procedures.

This translation gradually transforms UNESCO's cultural ethics into localized political and economic language.

Taking Xidi as an example, the 2010 Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun proposed a dual strategy of "protective development" and "display-oriented restoration," emphasizing the reinforcement of cultural identity through visual presentation of "Hui culture." [130]

Through the design of building facades, landscape axes, and visitor experiences, local governments and tourism enterprises reinterpret the "universal value" of heritage as a "local brand." This reflects the re-semantization of global norms at the local level in the cultural dimension, achieving localized expressions of cultural politics through reinterpretation and symbolization.

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[128] *Regulations on the Protection of Ancient Residential Buildings in Southern Anhui* , Arts. 5–9.

[129] Ying, "Community, Governments and External Capitals," 434–437.

[130] *Protection and Development Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui — Xidi and Hongcun*, 12–18.

*5.6.4 Reflections on "Manual Culture" and Adaptive Implications*

Compared to Italy's "manual culture," China's local heritage governance remains in an "administrative-oriented, planning-driven" phase.

While this approach demonstrates high efficiency in institutional implementation, it lacks mechanisms for sustained social consultation and ethical consensus. Italian local restoration manuals achieve institutional flexibility through consensus-building, whereas Chinese local policies predominantly rely on higher-level approvals and performance evaluations.

However, recent explorations in Yixian County indicate a nascent institutional shift: A recent municipal submission draft—*Draft Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Villages in Huangshan City* (2024)—institutionalizes protection through provisions on research support, planning and repair requirements, and expert involvement, creating a regulatory pathway for translating technical knowledge into local implementation;[131] Recent institutional explorations in Yixian County are further reflected in the formulation of municipal-level technical guidance documents. In 2024, Huangshan Municipal Housing and Urban–Rural Development Bureau issued the Technical Guidelines for the Restoration of Traditional Buildings in Huangshan, which institutionalize repair standards, construction procedures, and technical requirements for traditional architecture, providing a regulatory framework for translating technical knowledge into local implementation. [132]

These practices reveal the nascent emergence of a "manual culture" concept in China's local governance—one that combines local knowledge with professional standards to transition governance from administrative enforcement toward social co-governance.

[131] Huangshan Municipal Justice Bureau, "Announcement Soliciting Public Comments on the Draft Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Villages in Huangshan City," *Huangshan Municipal People's Government*, October 21, 2024, accessed December 15, 2025, https://www.huangshan.gov.cn/site/tpl/4564?contentId=9211827&platformCode=huangshan_ex9_4&type=2.

[132] Huangshan Municipal Housing and Urban–Rural Development Bureau, *Technical Guidelines for the Restoration of Traditional Buildings in Huangshan* (Huangshan, 2024), 1-7.

# Chapter 6: Community Responses and Spatial-Social Reconfiguration

## 6.1 Introduction: The Translation Chain from National Institutions to Community Routines

Within the multi-tiered system of World Heritage governance, communities serve both as bearers of heritage value and the ultimate point of institutional implementation. Yet communities are not passive recipients of international or national norms; rather, they continually reinterpret, readjust, and reproduce these norms through daily practices. This chapter explores how UNESCO's heritage governance concepts are "translated" into practical action logics at the community level in Xidi and Hongcun, thereby shaping local social relations and spatial structures.

As analyzed in previous chapters, global norms (OUV, authenticity, integrity), national policies (legal frameworks, administrative mechanisms), and local governance (planning, approvals, project management) form a "top-down" institutional transmission chain.However, when norms reach the community level, this transmission is not linear. Instead, it enters a complex social field shaped by clan networks, neighborhood relations, economic interests, and daily needs. At this level, institutions are inevitably reinterpreted, forming unique governance translation mechanisms.

This chapter has three core objectives:

1. To reveal how norms are understood and redefined by communities.
   How do villagers interpret concepts like "authenticity," "conservation planning," and "cultural heritage value"?
   Do officials, businesses, and villagers share consistent understandings?
2. Analyze how institutions influence community spatial practices and living structures.
   This includes residential use changes, commercialization, employment structures, and public space utilization.
3. Explore how communities respond to regulations through strategic behaviors, informal mechanisms, and cultural practices.
   These responses constitute a "bottom-up logic of translation" that shapes governance outcomes and cultural continuity in heritage sites.

This section also outlines the research materials:

- 2015 fieldwork: primarily spatial documentation and preliminary interviews（Ancient Building Renovation Design in Undergraduate Course Project）;
- 2025 follow-up observations: covering visitor behavior, spatial changes, and public affairs participation;
- Village resident interviews (2025): Covering diverse groups including village committee members, business operators, elders, and returning youth;
- Local archives and public records: including Annual Reports, Heritage Management Regulations, and Community Meeting Minutes.

To facilitate presentation and citation of interview materials, this paper employs a unified interview numbering system: each number consists of a letter representing the village and a digit indicating the interview sequence within that village, where A denotes Xidi and B denotes Hongcun.All interview codes cited herein correspond to 2025 villager interviews and the complete interview transcripts are included in Appendix 2 at the end of the paper for

reference.. By cross-referencing these multi-source materials, this chapter analyzes the phenomenon from socio-spatial-cultural dimensions. It demonstrates how global norms manifest in everyday community practices while revealing that communities are not merely terminal nodes of institutional frameworks. Instead, they constitute the most dynamic and differentiated arena within the governance translation chain. The chapter structure is as follows:

- 6.2 Discussing the reconfiguration of community roles within heritage governance systems and divergences in normative interpretations;
- 6.3 Analyzes transformations in community life and spatial practices driven by tourism economics and gentrification;
- 6.4 Demonstrates communities' strategic responses and cultural reproduction mechanisms within institutional frameworks;
- 6.5 Provides a comprehensive summary.

This chapter will reveal a key argument: Institutional frameworks only truly take effect when communities are "reinterpreted" and integrated into daily life, and this reinterpretation often deviates from normative intentions, forming new social and spatial orders.

## 6.2 The Position and Role Reconstruction of Communities within Heritage Governance Systems

### *6.2.1 From Clan Order to Administrative Embedding: Profound Transformation of Local Governance Structures*

The community governance structures of Xidi and Hongcun underwent significant institutional restructuring before and after their World Heritage designation. This process not only transformed the villages' public decision-making mechanisms but also profoundly reshaped local power structures, spatial governance logics, and daily practices. According to the Yi County Annals: Rural Governance Volume, prior to the late 20th century, both villages largely followed a clan-centered local autonomy model, whose governance characteristics closely mirrored the structure of traditional Chinese rural communities.[133]

Pre-World Heritage: Clan-Centered Local Order:

In Xidi, the Hu clan long controlled the organizational structure of local affairs. The clan hall served not only as a place for ancestral worship but also as the core space for public decision-making. The Yi County Annals describes that "all matters concerning canal repairs, road paving, and the management of clan assets were decided by meetings of the clan heads," with the clan elders overseeing the actual implementation.[134] Public space governance—including river dredging, lane repairs, and ancestral hall property management—was also coordinated through clan ties, with members of the same branch collectively bearing responsibilities.

Hongcun's governance logic followed a similar pattern but placed greater emphasis on collective collaboration around its water management system. The Yi County Annals: Water Management Volume records that since the Ming and Qing dynasties, Hongcun implemented a "six-team rotation system." Villagers were divided into six groups based on alleyways, taking turns to maintain Nanhu Lake, Yuezhou Pond, and the irrigation channels, forming a collective

[133] Yixian Local Chronicles Compilation Committee, *Yixian Gazetteer*, 312–329.
[134] Ibid., 315–318.

responsibility system.[135] This system not only sustained agricultural production but also constituted the foundational structure for managing community affairs.

From a governance perspective, pre-World Heritage inscription Xidi and Hongcun exhibited three defining characteristics:

First, public affairs were collectively managed by villagers; second, authority was grounded in clan ethics and local customs; third, spatial governance was deeply integrated with daily productive activities.

Villagers held substantive decision-making power in local affairs, with governance mechanisms overlapping significantly with daily life practices.

Post-World Heritage Designation: Comprehensive Embedding of Administrative Authority:

Following their inscription as World Heritage sites in 2000, the county government established the Heritage Protection Management Committee under the Yi County Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Management Measures (2006), establishing a management system centered on "government leadership and local implementation."[136] At the community level, however, this system did not enter daily life as abstract regulations but gradually permeated villagers' lives through changes in spatial arrangements, behaviors, and living routines. Compared to the clan-centered self-governance model before inscription, this governance transformation manifested more subtly in the "institutionalization of daily life."

For example:

1. House repairs are no longer decided by "household meetings": Institutionalization of household repair rights:

Although the Management Measures stipulate a three-tier approval process—"Village Committee → Township → County Cultural Relics Bureau"[137]—the system's actual impact on villagers extends far beyond the literal procedures.

Before the World Heritage nomination, house repairs were typically decided by clan head meetings and carried out by clan artisans. The Yi County Annals: Rural Governance Volume records: "All house and canal repairs shall be determined by clan head meetings, with clan elders supervising the work."[138]

However, after the World Heritage designation, three profound shifts emerged in the daily logic of building maintenance:

(1) Shift in Intent: From "Repairing for Ourselves" to "Repairing for Tourists to See"

Unlike pre-inscription renovations focused on "personal use," post-inscription restoration efforts gradually adopted a "display logic." Many villagers clearly recognized that aesthetic standards were no longer determined by their own needs but shaped by "external perspectives" (tourists, management authorities, evaluation systems).

During field interviews, a 62-year-old villager from Hongcun described the shift:

"Before, we repaired houses for comfort—using lime plaster on walls for ventilation and moisture resistance. Now, we repair walls for appearance, for tourists. Whitewash looks nice but isn't durable; it peels off after rain (Fig. 18)." —Interview B5

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[135] Ibid., 221–228.

[136] *Measures for the Administration of the Xidi–Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Site* (Yixian People's Government, 2006), arts. 3–4.

[137] Ibid., art. 37.

[138] *Yixian Local Chronicles Compilation, Yixian Gazetteer,* 320.

Another Xidi villager emphasized: "Now outside construction teams use cement and paint, forcing uniform wall colors and trim—not the walls we know (Fig. 19). They look nice but feel uncomfortable to live in. They also add Huizhou-style horse-head walls atop cement brick houses, though this feature serves little purpose today. Originally, it protected against bandits and fire spreading through wooden structures. Honestly, it's just added to maintain the style (Fig. 20)."—Interview A3

This shift reflects not only changes in material and architectural style choices but also a fundamental transformation in the purpose of restoration—from "for living" to "for exhibition."

Traditional restoration logic:

- Wall breathability and moisture resistance
- Comfortable residential living
- Repairs made according to the rhythm of life, fixing only what is broken
- Materials sourced locally, techniques preserved by family artisans

*Post-World Heritage Restoration Logic:*

- Walls must be uniform in color and trim
- Construction must comply with "heritage restoration" standards
- Restoration is incorporated into planning terminology such as "display routes" and "visual corridors"
- Materials are supplied by government or developer-contracted construction teams

This "shift in intent" exemplifies a classic feature of governance translation:

Repair practices originally serving daily life are redefined as administrative actions serving "cultural display" and "heritage visibility."



*Fig 18 - The newly painted lower section of the wall shows visible cracks -Photo by the author (2025)*



*Fig. 19 - New wall surface -Photo by author (2025)*



*Fig. 20 - New construction with traditional style -Photo by author (2025)*

(2) Time Delay: Repairs Shift from Immediate Action to Waiting for Approval

Before the World Heritage nomination, house repairs were a typical "immediate response" lifestyle practice: leaky tiles were patched, cracked walls fixed the same day, and clogged gutters cleared by neighbors working together. However, once repair rights became part of the administrative system, this flexible rhythm of life was completely altered.

Villagers consistently described this "disruption in temporal logic" during interviews:

"Before, if there was a leak, you'd call a craftsman in the morning and it'd be fixed by afternoon. Now you have to take photos, fill out forms, and wait for approval—at least two weeks."

— Interview A3

Another Hongcun resident added:

"It's not that we can't repair things—it's that we have to follow procedures... Sometimes by the time approval comes through, we've already fixed it ourselves."

—Interview B4

This time delay manifests primarily in three ways:

① Restoration shifts from private affairs to administrative procedures

Historically, repairs were routine household matters; now they require:

- Submitting a repair application form (Fig. 21)
- Uploading photographs

**Application and Approval Form for House Maintenance and Renovation in the Core Protected Area of the World Cultural Heritage Site in Yixian County**

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applicant Name | | Property Owner Name/Title | | Applicant ID Number | | | Contact Phone | | |
| Detailed Address | | | | | | | | Property Ownership | Self-owned ☐ Leased ☐ Other ☐ |
| Implementation Type | Maintenance ☐ Renovation ☐ Other ☐ | Ownership Nature | State-owned ☐ Collective ☐ Private ☐ | House Nature | Ancient Building ☐ Non-ancient Building ☐ Other ☐ | Building Area (㎡) | | Land Area (㎡) | |
| Applied Implementation Content | I hereby promise that the above applied implementation content is true, and I have obtained the consent of all property owners of the house. I will actively cooperate with the management of the town and village, and voluntarily accept penalties if I violate the provisions of relevant laws and regulations.<br>Applicant Signature: Date: / / | | | | | | | | |
| Preliminary Review Opinion of Village Committee | (Seal)<br>Person in Charge Signature:<br>Date: / / | | | | | | | | |
| Approval Opinion of Township People's Government | (Seal)<br>Handler Signature: Leader in Charge Signature: Main Leader Signature:<br>Date: / / | | | | | | | | |

*Fig. 21 - Core Protection Zone Building Maintenance and Repair Application Form System -Photo sourced from Yixian County People's Government official website*

- Undergo three-tiered approval from village committee → township → county cultural relics bureau (Fig. 22)

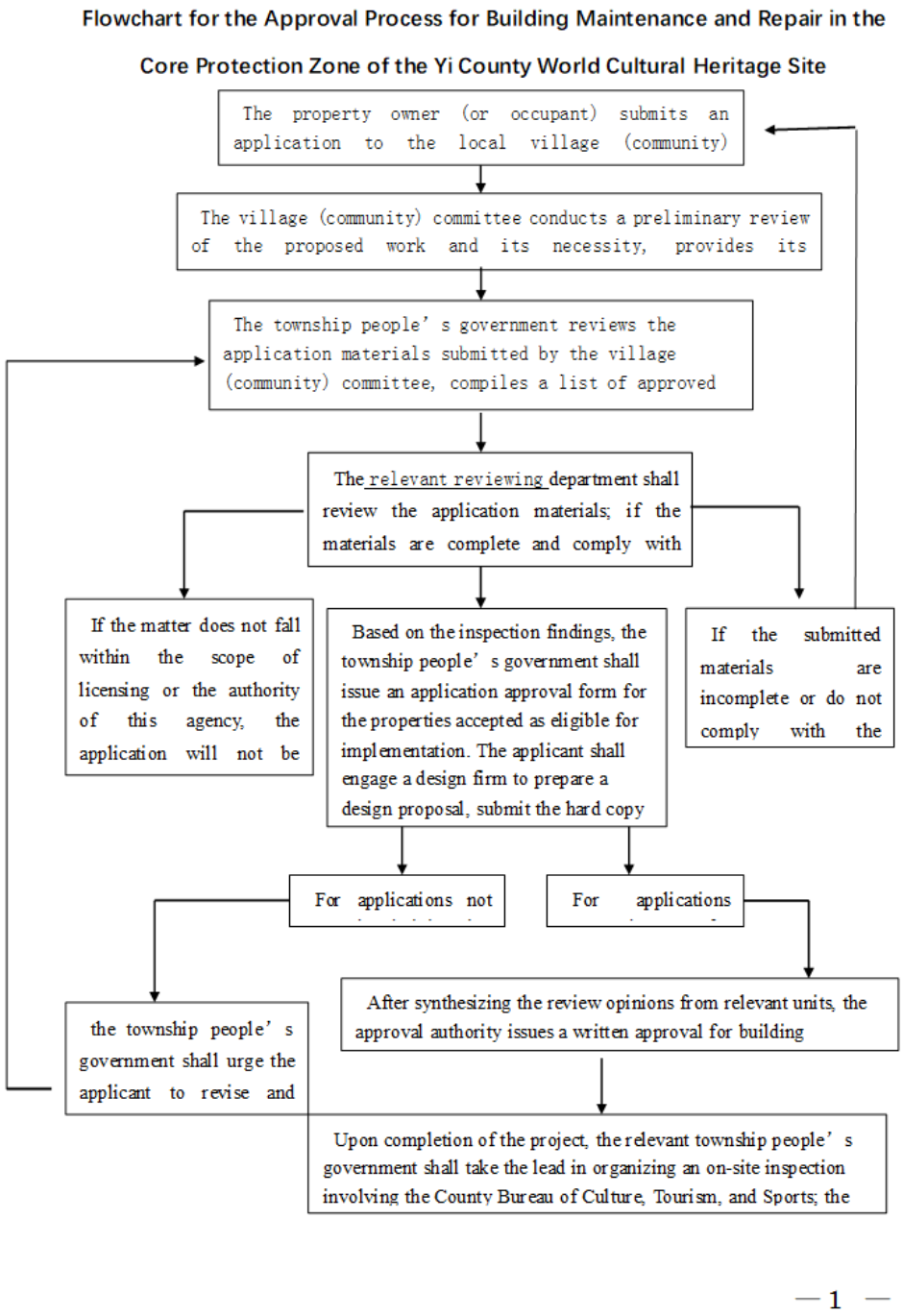



*Figure 22 - Core Protection Zone Building Maintenance and Repair Approval Process -Photo from Yixian County People's Government Official Website*

- Post-construction photography, re-inspection, and archiving (Figure 23)

**Yi County World Cultural Heritage Site Core Protection Zone Building Maintenance and Repair Acceptance**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applicant Name | | Building Location (Address) | | | |
| Application Date | | Start Date Date | | Inspection Date | |
| Overall Evaluation | | | | | |
| Acceptance Status | ☐ Pass ☐ Failed<br>Applicant's Confirmation: | | | | |
| Corrective Action Details | | | | | |
| Signature of the Design Lead | Year Month Day | Signature of Construction Supervisor | Year Month Day | Signature and Seal of the Township People's Government | Year Month Day |
| Signature of Acceptance Inspector | | | | | |

*Figure 23 - Core Protection Zone Building Maintenance and Repair Acceptance Form -Photo from Yixian County People's Government Official Website*

For many elderly residents, this represents a heavy administrative burden:

"I can't read, so I don't understand the forms. I have to wait for my grandson to come back and help me."

—Interview B1

The transformation of repair activities from "common sense" to "administrative capability" reflects the deep embedding of governance logic.

② Repair timing dictated by administrative schedules, not living needs

In the past, the pace of repairs was dictated by daily life itself—fixing whatever broke whenever it broke.

Now, repairs require approval before starting, forcing villagers to navigate between "life schedules" and "administrative schedules":

- Publicly, they wait for approval
- But privately undertaking repairs in advance
- Then retroactively submit applications to meet institutional requirements

This "dual-track strategy" reveals villagers' creative adaptation to the system.

③ Increased living risks due to time delays

Issues like leaks, insect infestation, or structural loosening can lead to more severe damage if not addressed promptly. Approval delays may even pose safety risks:

"Houses can't wait, but approvals can. We have no choice but to repair first and apply retroactively (Fig. 24)."

—Interview A6

In this context, "non-compliant repairs" paradoxically become a necessary strategy to maintain life continuity.



*Fig. 24 - Villagers repairing their homes independently -Photo by the author (2015)*

(3) The Decline of Artisanal Authority: Traditional Craftsmanship Yields to "Standardized Technical Specifications" (Fig. 25)



*Figure 25 - Outsourced workers performing standardized construction -Photo from Yixian County People's Government official website*

Before their UNESCO inscription, house repairs in Xidi and Hongcun were led by local master craftsmen. They understood the local climate, timber, lime, and bricks, making repair decisions based on experience, apprenticeship traditions, and local practices.

I had the privilege of interviewing a 70-year-old master craftsman in Xidi, who recalled:

"Back then, I could tell just by looking how to repair something. Which beam needed which

wood, which patch was needed on the wall—no blueprints were needed."

—Interview A1

After the World Heritage designation, the knowledge power structure of craftsmen underwent profound changes.

① "Planning blueprints" replaced "artisan expertise"

Restoration no longer relies on craftsmen's judgment but must strictly follow standardized:

- Restoration Guidelines
- Official blueprints
- Material catalogs
- Aesthetic control indicators

Veteran craftsmen feel this deeply:

"Back then, I called the shots. Now, the planners do."

—Interview A1

② Materials standardized, local knowledge marginalized

Traditional craftsmen emphasize:

- Lime mortar allows breathability
- Pine and cypress wood suit Huizhou's climate
- Walls must "breathe" to resist dampness

Yet approval documents often mandate:

- Uniformly procured cement mortar (easier to shape but non-breathable)
- Standard-sized timber components
- Uniformly colored paint

A craftsman in Hongcun put it bluntly:

Traditional houses were living structures, but modern ones feel lifeless. The walls can't breathe, the wood lacks vitality—yet we must follow regulations.

—Interview B4

③ Craftsmen transformed from "decision-makers" to "executors"

Before World Heritage nomination:

- Craftsmen were the core decision-makers in restoration
- They determined materials, techniques, and timelines

After World Heritage inscription:

- Planning takes precedence
- Artisans can only execute plans designated by design institutes or management offices
- Even if craftsmen question material choices, they cannot alter them

This has created a governance pattern where "technocratic bureaucracy replaces local knowledge."

④ Declining Young Artisans and Worsening Skill Gap

Local traditional crafts are marginalized by administrative procedures, discouraging young people from continuing to learn them:

This has gradually weakened traditional craftsmanship within institutionalized restoration systems.

⑤ The decline in artisans' power reflects the logic of institutional translation

Artisans transition from authority → executors

Materials shift from local expertise → standardized specifications

Restoration practices shift from lived experience → project management

This directly embodies the "policy-driven, administrative, and technical" restructuring of UNESCO technical specifications at the local level.

2. The Management Office System's Reorganization of Daily Rhythms: From "Self-Managed Living" to "Visual Governance"

The daily inspection system of management offices represents the most direct channel for administrative power to enter communities. The Yixian County Culture and Tourism Bureau Inspection Ledger (2022) documents extensive routine regulatory matters.[139]

(1) Visualization of Inspections: Institutional Power Entering Alleys and Courtyards

Inspectors typically enter alleys three times daily, documenting:

- Laundry drying
- Clutter
- Unauthorized construction
- Non-standard commercial signage (Fig. 26)




*Figure 26 - Villagers routinely washing and drying crops and airing clothes -Photo by the author (2015)*

Villagers describe:

"Before, the village was only for villagers. Now, besides tourists, there are uniformed patrol officers conducting inspections every day."

— Interview B1

(2) Reshaping Social Relationships: Village Committees Transition from "Self-Governors" to "Law Enforcement Collaborators"

The Village Committee's Role Transformation:

Previously:

Organizing festivals, mediating disputes, allocating public resources

After World Heritage inscription:

Conveying government policies and rectification directives

Assisting in inspections

Carrying out administrative tasks

Multiple villagers interviewed noted that the village committee's role has shifted from a community self-governance body to an enforcement arm of the administrative system. One villager remarked:

[139] Yixian County Bureau of Culture and Tourism, *Law Enforcement Inspection Logbook* (2022).

"The village committee now acts like the government's hands and feet, not like our own village committee anymore."

—Interview A3

In their understanding, "the government's hands and feet" means:

- Decisions are made by higher authorities rather than through village assembly deliberation;
- The primary duties of the village committee have shifted from "mediation and coordination" to "promoting policies and enforcing rectifications";
- Responses to villagers' requests require step-by-step approval through higher authorities, eliminating any discretionary power.

Thus, this assessment is not merely an emotional expression but points to the shrinking space for community self-governance—the most prominent and perceptible outcome of administrative embedding at the organizational level.

*6.2.2 Transformation of Community Roles: From "Decision-Makers" to "Implementers"*

Based on fieldwork conducted in 2015(Building Renovation Design in Undergraduate） and 2025, the evolution of villagers' roles can be summarized in three key aspects:

1. Centralization of Decision-Making Authority

Pre-heritage governance centered on village meetings and clan deliberations, with major matters jointly decided by household representatives and villagers. Post-heritage designation, however, decision-making authority gradually shifted upward from the local level to the county government and heritage management agencies.

Multiple villagers expressed similar sentiments in interviews:

"Now major decisions are made by higher authorities; we only see the notifications."

— Interview A7

Another villager elaborated:

"Before, we held meetings to decide what to repair and how; now others tell us what to do, and we just sign our names."

—Interview B2

This centralized decision-making model signifies:

- The decision-making process has shifted from "village-level consultation" to "administrative directives";
- Villagers no longer hold substantive say in planning, repairs, or remediation matters;
- Village residents have shifted from "active participation" to "passive acceptance."

2. Administrative Transformation of Village Committees

The transformation of the village committee's role lies at the heart of community restructuring. Villagers in the field often summarize this shift with a single phrase:

"The village committee now acts like the government's hands and feet, not like our own organization anymore."

—Interview A3

Villagers summarize the administrative transformation of the village committee as follows:

(1) Shifting from "representing villagers" to "representing higher authorities"

In the past, the village committee mediated conflicts and organized affairs such as canal and road repairs, as well as clan activities.

After the World Heritage designation, its primary functions shifted to:

- Conveying government policies
- Assisting management offices in conducting inspections and gathering photographic evidence
- Reporting rectification progress
- Collecting operational data and visitor statistics
- Organizing villagers to "study regulations" and "sign commitment letters"

(2) Administrative tasks crowding out community affairs

One villager remarked:

"They're too busy with meetings, paperwork, and distributing materials to listen to our concerns."

—Interview B5

The gradual transformation of village committees from self-governance bodies into administrative execution structures epitomizes the "administrativization of communities."

Before the World Heritage nomination, the clan system held key authority in public affairs:

- Household heads participated in public decision-making
- Ancestral halls served as practical venues for deliberation and mediation
- Clan networks sustained community mutual aid

But after the inscription, clans gradually withdrew from governance structures, and their functions were redefined.

A member of the Hu clan remarked:

"The ancestral hall has become a tourist attraction; it's no longer where we hold meetings." (Fig. 27)

—Interview A4

Clans transitioned from practical administrators to:

- a symbol of cultural heritage
- "Cultural material" for tourist experiences
- A carrier of "cultural value" in policy documents

Their political function has significantly diminished.




*Figure 27 - Visiting the Xidi Ancestral Hall -Photo by the author (2025)*

*6.2.3 Normative Community Understanding: Local Knowledge, Emotions, and Everyday Logic*

Although the concepts of "authenticity," "integrity," and "management planning" proposed by UNESCO have become standardized language after being institutionalized at multiple levels of national and local government, for communities residing within heritage sites, these terms are not technical standards but rather "concepts of life" closely intertwined with daily experiences, emotional memories, family networks, and economic livelihoods.Consequently, international norms exhibit a distinctive feature of "local re-semantization" at the village level—global concepts are reinterpreted, reorganized, and given new meaning within rural contexts.

Community understandings of heritage governance exhibit three core characteristics: (1) lived experience; (2) relationality; (3) emotionality. These are elaborated below.

**I.** Authenticity in Everyday Life Interpretation: Sustaining Life, Not Preserving Materials

In policy texts, "authenticity" typically signifies respect for original materials, techniques, and structures. For villagers, however, "authenticity" means "whether life can continue as it was."

Lifestyle Continuity as the Core of "Authenticity"

My field notes from 2015 and 2025 also capture similar sentiments, such as:

In community narratives, the continuity of life serves as the primary criterion for judging "authenticity."

Multiple villagers expressed similar views in interviews:

"We've been doing these things for generations here. Whether we can keep doing them—that's what's real." —Interview B3

This "authenticity of life" encompasses two dimensions:

- Whether family rituals can continue

  Such as ancestor worship, birthday celebrations, weddings, and New Year pig feasts, which require the main hall, large stove, and outdoor spaces (Fig. 28).
- Whether core spaces like kitchens and main halls remain functional (Fig. 29)

  Villagers care less about whether materials are "authentic" and more about whether they "still work."



*Fig. 28 - New Year pig feast and outdoor banquet -Photo from the internet (https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1866334551854107507&wfr=spider&for=pc)*



*Fig. 29 - Large stove and main hall-Photo by author (2025)*

Therefore, when facade renovations or "restore to original" projects restrict functionality, villagers often believe:

"Whether the exterior looks the same or not doesn't matter; what matters is whether we can still live in the traditional way."

**II.** Relational Understanding of "Integrity": Not Spatial Layout, but Social Networks

The government views "integrity" as the stability of spatial patterns, road systems, and scenic vistas; villagers, however, understand it as the "integrity of relationships."

Clan Networks Form the Foundation of "Integrity"

Yu (2024)'s field research in Xidi reveals that villagers define an "intact village" as:

- Whether clan members still reside locally
- Whether clan halls remain operational
- Whether festivals can be organized according to tradition
- Whether the bloodline-geographical structure is maintained[140]

This implies that even with uniform architecture, villagers perceive the village as "incomplete" if clans relocate or too many houses are rented to outsiders.

This reveals that the "integrity" valued by villagers is "socio-cultural integrity," not the "physical integrity" implied by planning terminology.

This cognitive discrepancy represents an inevitable semantic misalignment when UNESCO frameworks are applied to rural contexts, highlighting the structural tension inherent in governance translation.

**III.** The Economization and Emotionalization of "Preservation": The Tug-of-War Between Livelihood and Memory

Community understandings of "conservation" exhibit a distinct dual logic:

1. Livelihood Logic

In her seminal analysis of rural heritage sites, Ying (2007) observed:

"Villagers' attitudes toward heritage conservation are directly linked to their household income."[141]

In interviews, villagers consistently expressed:

- "Protection shouldn't cost us money."

[140] Yu, “Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon?” 6.

[141] Ying and Zhou, “Community, Governments and External Capitals,” 100-105.

- "Protection should enable us to do business."
- "The more tourists we have, the more we should protect."

Therefore, conservation is defined as "economically sustainable conservation."

2. Emotional Logic

For communities, "conservation" also concerns the following questions:

- Are families respected?
- Will ancestral homes be altered beyond recognition?
- Will the village still resemble "the village it once was"?

An elder from Hongcun stated in an interview:

"Preservation isn't for tourists; it's for our descendants." — Interview B2

This emotional logic not only shapes villagers' acceptance of preservation but also influences their views on policies regarding planning, restoration, and tourism development.

*6.2.4 Community Meanings of "Protection" and "Development": Multiple Tensions Between Economy, Identity, and Daily Life (Expanded Version)*

In governance practices for rural heritage sites, "preservation" and "development" are not isolated policy objectives but dual logics continually renegotiated within community daily life.While national and local governments often frame "conservation-development" as a matter of policy balance, communities' understanding of this relationship is more emotional, interest-driven, and context-specific. It is precisely within this practical context that rural communities develop unique interpretive frameworks for "conservation" and "development," embodying the most direct and tension-filled manifestations of governance translation at the grassroots level.

**I.** "Preservation" as an Economic Strategy: Instrumental Preservation Driven by Livelihood Logic

Numerous cases demonstrate that villagers in Hongcun and Xidi often interpret "preservation" as a means to enhance household and collective income, rather than as historical conservation in a cultural sense. As Ying (2007) observes: "Community attitudes toward heritage preservation depend on their position within the economic value chain and the distribution of benefits."[1]

1. Preservation = Maintaining Attractiveness to Sustain Income

Multiple homestay operators stated in interviews:

"If we don't protect the village, tourists won't come. If tourists don't come, we won't have food to eat." — Interview B7

"Preservation is about making the village more picturesque; otherwise, people won't come to take photos." — Interview A2

This economic logic fosters a pragmatic approach to conservation within the community:

- Willingness to cooperate with exterior facade renovations (as improved aesthetics benefit business operations) (Fig. 30)



*Fig. 30 - The Huizhou-style architecture in Xidi and Hongcun is uniformly restored and preserved in its original form -Photo by the author (2025)*

- Willingness to preserve traditional architectural details (as "distinctiveness" is a selling point) (Fig. 31)

  Huizhou's "Three Carvings" (wood carving, brick carving, stone carving) represent one of the most iconic architectural elements of Huizhou style.



*Figure 31 - Huizhou's "Three Carvings" (wood carving, brick carving, stone carving) with well-preserved details -Photo by the author (2025)*

- Willingness to participate in cultural displays (e.g., folk performances, family ritual demonstrations) (Fig. 32)



*Figure 32- Family wedding ceremonies and festival folk performances -Photo by the author (2015)*

Yet for the community, "preservation" is never unconditional compliance, but rather strategic cooperation grounded in income expectations.

2. Preservation ≠ Restriction, but rather room for negotiation

When preservation policies restrict business activiti+
es (e.g., banning outdoor stalls, limiting homestay numbers, regulating shop sign sizes) (Fig. 33), villagers often express:

"Protection shouldn't mean we can't put food on the table." — Interview B1

Thus, "protection" is understood as:

Restrictions are acceptable, but not to the extent that they jeopardize livelihoods.

This interpretation starkly contrasts with the government's stance, which views "protection" as technical regulations and cultural missions. It also explains why communities often respond to conservation policies with "conditional cooperation."




*Figure 33 - Villagers engaging in unauthorized street vending for livelihood -Photo by the author (2025)*

**II.** "Development" and Identity Politics: How Conservation Becomes a Resource for Cultural and Generational Identity

Beyond economic dimensions, the community's understanding of "development" also involves shifts in identity, the reconfiguration of intergenerational relationships, and visions for the village's future.

1. The Younger Generation: Heritage as "Opportunity" Rather Than "Burden"

In your 2025 interviews, several villagers aged 20–35 remarked:

- "Working in big cities is unstable. It's better to come back and run a homestay, an influencer-friendly coffee shop, or a bar."
- "There are so many opportunities in the village now—far better than elsewhere. You can do livestreaming, start a business, or set up a studio."
- "We don't see heritage as a constraint; it actually makes this place more valuable." (Fig. 34)



*Young villagers establish homestays*




*Young villagers establish intangible cultural heritage studios*



*Fig. 34 - Young villagers use live streaming and social media to promote Xidi and Hongcun while earning a decent income-Photo from the internet(https://weibo.com/3542468901/Q7x8dlcGS)*

This attitude stands in stark contrast to the previous generation's perception that "heritage is a hassle and cannot be expanded arbitrarily."

Yu also emphasizes that the younger generation views heritage development as "identity capital," redefining "Huizhou lifestyle" through entrepreneurship, new media, and aesthetic expression.[142]

2. Older Generation: Heritage as "Responsibility" and "Continuing Tradition"

In contrast, villagers over 50 predominantly view heritage as:

- The continuation of family memories
- A duty to preserve ancestral homes
- A symbolic space for ancestral halls and clan activities

This generational gap creates divergent moral interpretations of "preservation" within the community, generating underlying tensions.

## 6.3 Reorganization of Community Space: From Living Spaces to Display Spaces

### *6.3.1 Institutional Shift in Spatial Governance: The Displayification and Purification of Living Spaces*

Following their inscription on the World Heritage List, the community spaces of Xidi and Hongcun underwent a systematic restructuring of governance. Spaces originally shaped by daily life practices were progressively transformed into displayable, manageable, and consumable "heritage landscapes." This shift was not merely physical renovation but the concrete manifestation of institutional logic (management planning, facade restoration, tourist flow design) at the village scale.

Local governments articulated in policy documents such as the Conservation Plan (2010):

"Establish a system of display nodes and tourist flow routes to optimize spatial order."[143]

This has reorganized village spaces into narrative structures oriented toward visitors, compelling community life to adapt to this externally imposed institutional framework.

**I.** The Functional Rewriting of "Living Space → Display Space"

Before the World Heritage nomination, spaces like the threshing yard, ancestral hall courtyard, riverbank, and alleyways functioned as quintessential "public spaces for daily life,"

[142] Yu, "Crouching the Tiger, or Hiding the Dragon?" 10.

[143] Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, *Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun* (Huangshan, 2010), chap.15

serving purposes such as drying grain, threshing, laundry, socializing, and collective labor. Post-nomination, however, these spaces were incorporated into the "display routes" and "node-based landscape system"[144] :

- Threshing grounds → Visitor distribution zone
  Paving was standardized, signage systems replaced, and rest facilities added.
  Villagers remarked:
  "Where we used to dry grain, tourists now stand taking photos." — Interview B2
- Waterfront → Photography spot and landscape interface
  A space originally used for household cleaning has been designated as a "no clutter zone."
  "We can't wash clothes by the river anymore—they say it affects the scenery." — Interview B4
- Ancestral Hall Forecourt → Exhibition Node
  Interpretive signs and fixed pathways were added, restricting villagers from gathering or playing cards. (Fig. 35)

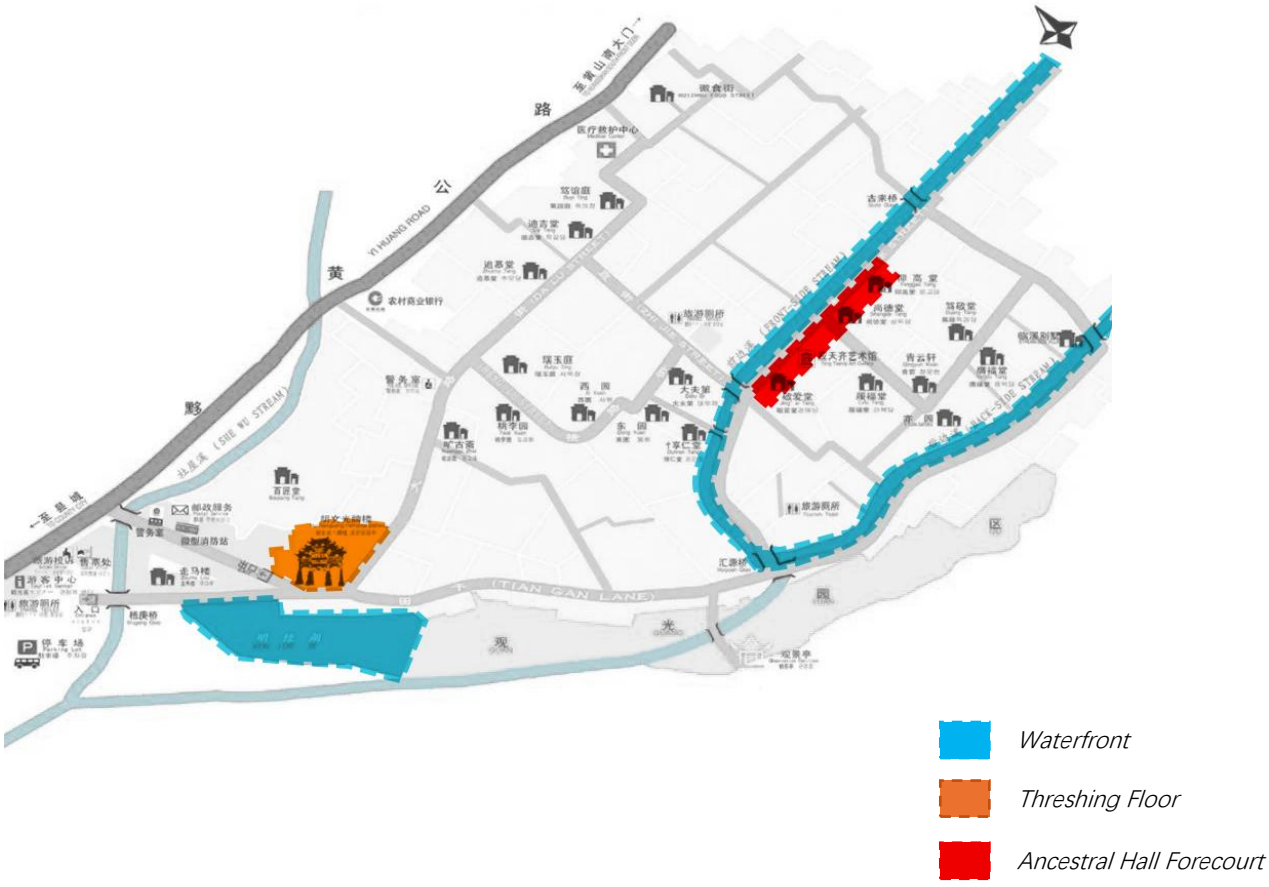



*Figure 35 - Xidi Tourism Node Analysis -Image drawn by the author (based on field research)*

[144] Ibid., pp.22–35.

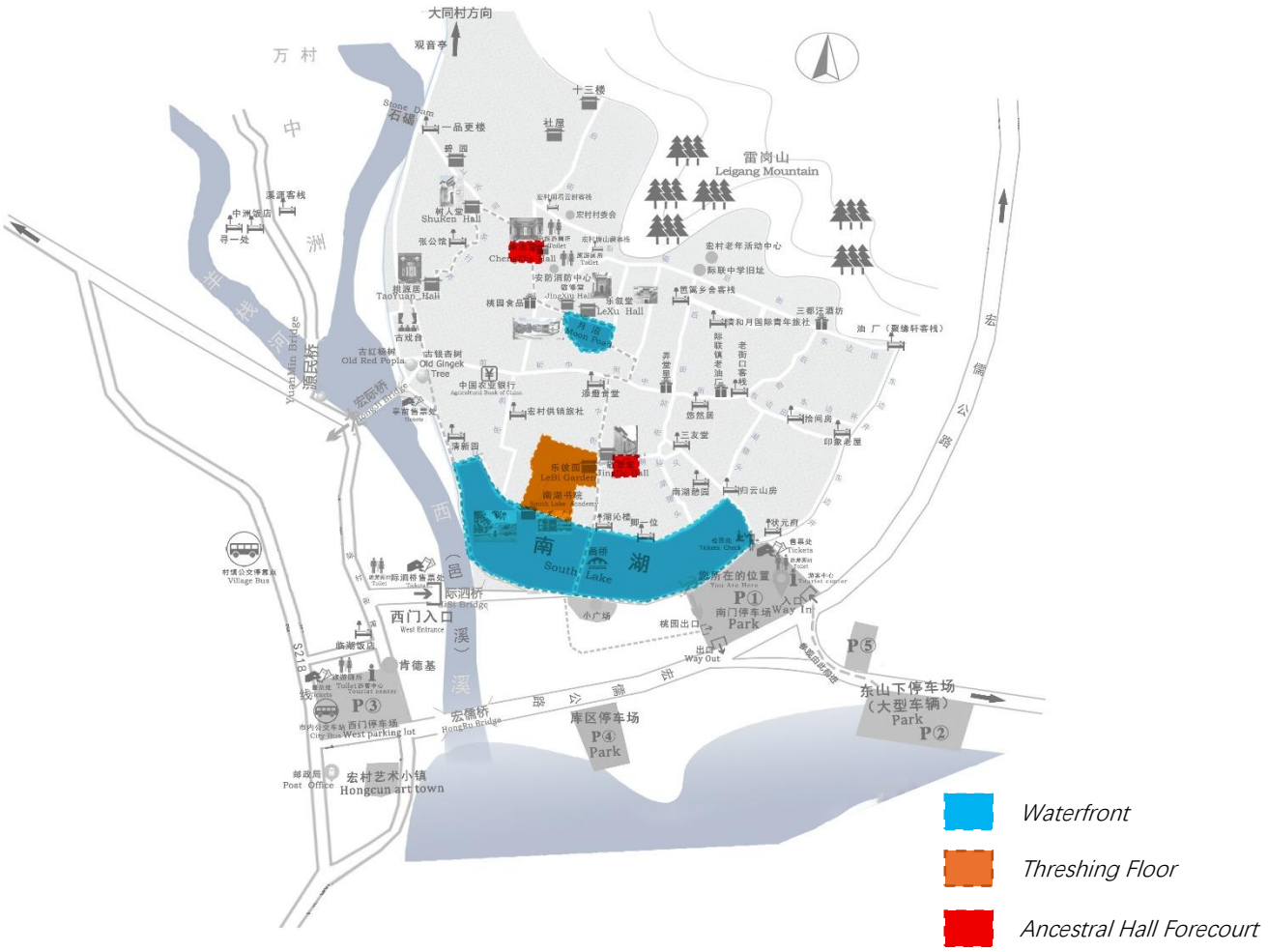



*Figure 35 - Hongcun Tourism Node Analysis -Image drawn by the author (based on field research)*

This transformation embodies the policy requirements of "enhancing aesthetic appeal" and "constructing cultural narratives," shifting the space from "habitable" to "viewable."

**II.** "Spatial Purification": Institutional Removal of Traces of Daily Life

To maintain "uniformity" and "neatness," management authorities enforce strict "trace control" over village spaces. Management office inspection records (2023) indicate[145] :

- Clotheslines and sun-dried quilts must be "retrieved indoors"
- Firewood piles and farm tool stacks must be "covered or cleared away"
- Wheelbarrows, planks, and similar items are deemed "clutter" and must be removed from areas visible to tourists
- Poultry farming is centralized or prohibited for "impacting landscape hygiene"

These activities, integral to daily life, have been redefined as irregularities undermining the "heritage character."

One resident remarked:

"The village used to have a lively atmosphere, but now it's so clean it feels like an exhibition."

[145] Yixian County Bureau of Culture and Tourism, *Law Enforcement Inspection Logbook* (2023).

—Interview A3

This represents a classic case of heritage purification, where regulatory measures compress elements of daily life to conform spaces to "heritage aesthetics."

**III.** Traffic Flow Redesign: From "Convenient Pathways" to "Tourist Routes"

Following the World Heritage designation, local planning adopted "tourist flow design" principles to manage visitor order and enhance interpretive value.[146] The result:

- The shortest path through daily life has been replaced by tourist flow lines (Fig. 36)
  → Villagers are forced to take detours to avoid the crowds

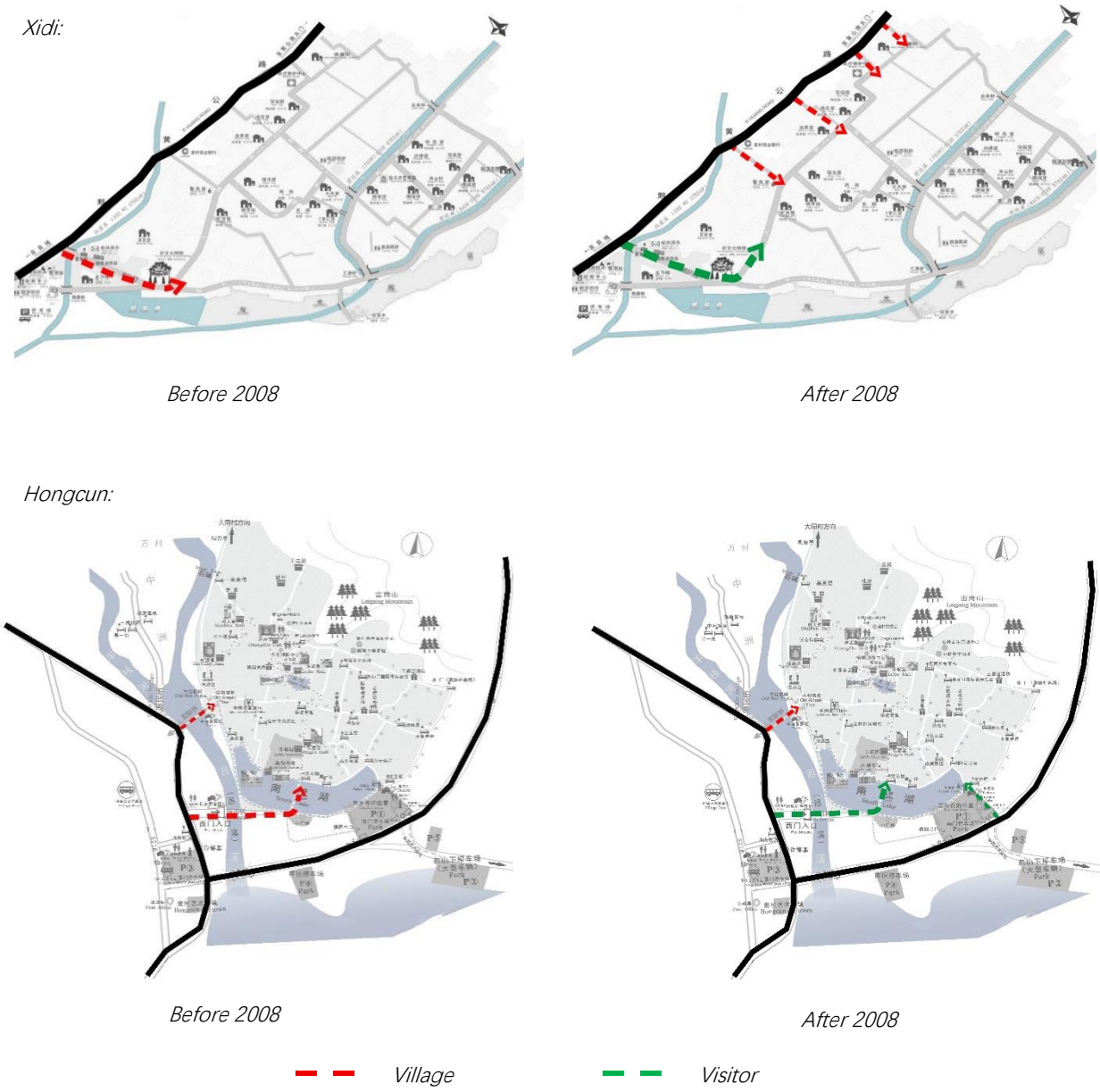



*Figure 36 - Changes in the Entrance/Exit of Xidi and Hongcun -Image drawn by the author (based on field research)*

[146] Huangshan Urban and Rural Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, 22–35.

- Alleyway renovations prioritized "aesthetic appeal" over "practicality"
  → Resulting in difficulty for wheeled carts and severe water accumulation (Fig 37)
- Bridges and junctions expanded for display purposes
  → Young merchants welcomed it, but elderly residents found it "harder to walk"



*Fig. 37 - Staff clearing standing water - Photo by author (2025)*

One woman remarked:

"Now walking feels like yielding to tourists instead of using our own paths."

—Interview B7

Space no longer serves residents first; tourist experience takes priority.

*6.3.2 Spatial Commercialization: Economic Reorganization from Living Spaces to Tourist Spaces*

Following their UNESCO inscription, tourism became the dominant industry in Xidi and Hongcun, prompting a profound commercial restructuring of the villages' spatial fabric. Spaces originally serving daily life were reconfigured into commercial venues catering to sightseeing, consumption, and cultural display. Boundaries between domestic, public, and productive spaces were reshaped, forming a tripartite spatial-economic structure layered as "living-livelihood-landscape."

This process of spatial commercialization emerged from the convergence of institutional logic (planning, licensing, investment promotion) and market logic (traffic, consumption).

**I.** Commercialization of Living Spaces: The Transformation of Family Residences

Interviews and field observations reveal that one of the most representative changes post-World Heritage designation is the transformation of residential spaces from single-purpose living quarters to dual-function "business-residential" arrangements. Many households have partially or entirely converted their homes into:

- homestays
- Tea houses or cafes
- Handicraft experience shops
- Small exhibition and display spaces

This "commercialization shift" not only alters the functional use of the house but also profoundly reorganizes the spatial order and boundaries of domestic life within the household.

During my 2015 fieldwork, I resided long-term in a homestay converted from an old residence in Hongcun. The compound was not fully commercialized but exhibited a typical "half-business, half-residential" state: the front section served as a homestay for guests, while the rear remained the daily living space for the owner's family (Fig. 38). These dual functions coexisted under one roof, maintained through subtle spatial and behavioral demarcations.

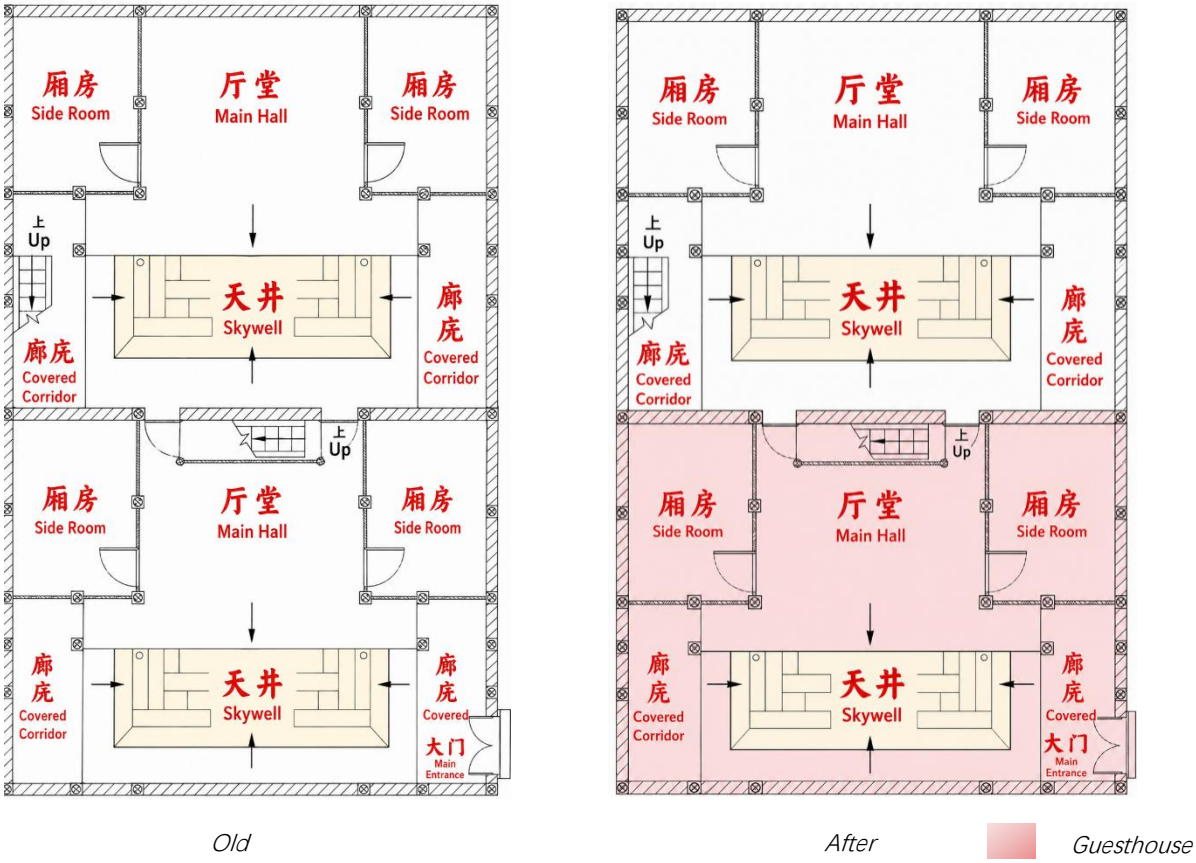



*Figure 38 - Old House -Image drawn by the author (based on field research)*

For instance, the main hall serves as a communal reception and relaxation area during the day, furnished with shared tables, chairs, tea sets, and decorative paintings for guests to linger, take photos, and socialize. At night, the homeowners rearrange some furniture to restore its function as a family living and dining space (Figure 39).The kitchen space also underwent significant functional expansion: the original compact kitchen serving daily family meals was renovated and enlarged to accommodate preparing breakfast and light meals for guests, while retaining a corner as a private cooking area for the family (Fig. 40).




*Figure 39 - Main room of the old mansion - Photo taken by the author (2015)*

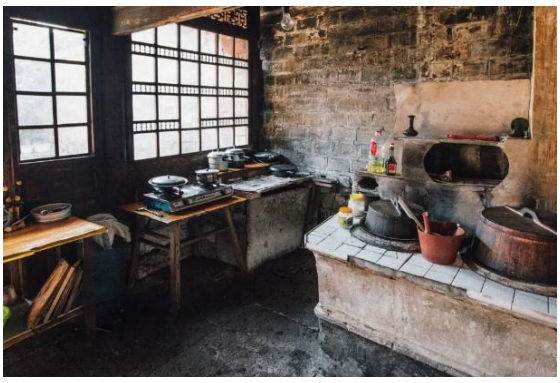


*Figure 40 - Old house kitchen-Photo taken by the author (2015)*

Particularly notable is the functional transformation of the front courtyard area. This section underwent earlier modern renovations and continued serving as the primary living and reception space for the homeowners. As the homestay operation stabilized and became institutionalized, this front area was fully reconfigured into guest rooms and reception spaces. Independent bathrooms and modern amenities were added to meet guests' expectations for privacy, comfort, and standardized services (Fig. 41).Consequently, the homeowners gradually relocated their daily activities to the rear courtyard and non-display secondary spaces.





*Figure 41 - Guest room in the old house -Photo by the author（2015）*

This spatial reorganization was not completed in one go but unfolded gradually during ongoing operations: the front areas were progressively "optimized" into zones accessible, consumable, and presentable to guests, while family life was compressed and pushed to the rear, forming a typical "front-of-house/back-of-house" spatial division.

These transformations were not completed in one go but accumulated gradually during ongoing operations: space was continually redistributed and adjusted between "still habitable" and "more suitable for hosting visitors." It was precisely through this incremental shift that traditional residences gradually evolved into hybrid spaces combining residential, commercial, and exhibition functions, embedding family life within the rhythms of tourism services and aesthetic consumption.

This experience aligns closely with recent interviews. A Hongcun homestay operator reflected on spatial changes in 2025:

"Originally there were three bedrooms. Now one is for us, and two are for guests. The kitchen was expanded, and the main hall became a reception area."

—Interview B6

Combining fieldwork observations and interview materials reveals that this "family-commercial hybrid space" has brought about at least three structural changes:

First, the functional shift of the main hall.

Originally the core space for family rituals and daily gatherings, the main hall now primarily serves as a venue for receiving visitors, taking photos, and brief stays. Its symbolic meaning has shifted from being the "family center" to a "public display interface."

Second, the expansion and differentiation of the kitchen.

To meet operational demands, kitchen space has been enlarged and functionally separated. Domestic kitchens and commercial kitchens now coexist side by side, with family meals and commercial services managed separately within the same spatial system.

Third, the compression of residential privacy.

The number of bedrooms has decreased, compressing family members' private spaces while significantly increasing their communal nature. Many residents describe this change as "the home feeling less and less like home," not because of shrinking space, but because spaces are constantly exposed to others' gaze.

Thus, residences are no longer mere containers for family life but are gradually evolving into a "family-business hybrid." Within this structure, family members must constantly switch roles between "host," "operator," and "observed subject," as daily life is reorganized to align with the rhythms of the tourism economy and heritage display.

**II.** Commercialization of Public Spaces: The "Consumerization" of Streets, Nodes, and Riverbanks

Government-planned "display nodes" and "tour routes" combine with market forces to drive the commercialization of public spaces.

1. Commercialization of Streets and Alleys

Narrow alleys, once serving transportation, drying, and storage functions, now function as pedestrian commercial streets for tourists.

Manifestations include:

- Craft shops, beverage outlets, and food stalls densely lining main alleyways (Figure 42)
- Daily goods stores relocated to village entrances
- Daily activities like drying laundry and storing goods have disappeared

A Xidi villager remarked:

"Before, the alleys were for us to walk through. Now they're for tourists. We have to take the side streets."

—Interview A3



*Fig. 42—Shops line the main street alleys -Photo by the author（2025）*

2. Commercialization of Nodes

Former grain-drying yards and temple courtyards have been transformed into commercial display nodes:

- Market stalls set up
- Photo spots arranged
- Establishing "small-scale cultural performances" (Fig. 43)



*Fig. 43- Exhibitions and markets in Xidi and Hongcun -Photo by the author (2025)*

These nodes become traffic hubs, directly driving consumption.

3. Waterfront Commercialization

is particularly prominent:

- Lakefront areas dominated by tea houses and photo services (Fig. 44)
- Traditional laundry sites and washing areas have vanished entirely

One woman remarked:

"When we were kids, we used to skip stones by the lake. Now that spot is where tourists sit and drink tea."

—Interview B8

Public living spaces have been transformed into tourist consumption venues, with their original functional uses systematically diminished.



*Fig. 44 - The waterfront has become a photo spot and shopping area -Photo by the author (2025)*

**III.** Rising Spatial Rent and the Redistribution of Management Rights

Tourism prosperity has driven rapid increases in "spatial value," leading to distinct spatial stratification within villages:

1. Main tourist routes command the highest rents

For example, the "Archway-Ancestral Hall" axis in Xidi and the "South Lake-Moon Pond" axis in Hongcun (Fig .45) have formed:

- Highest shop rents
- Highest concentration of external merchants
- Villagers are often "squeezed out" of the most central areas

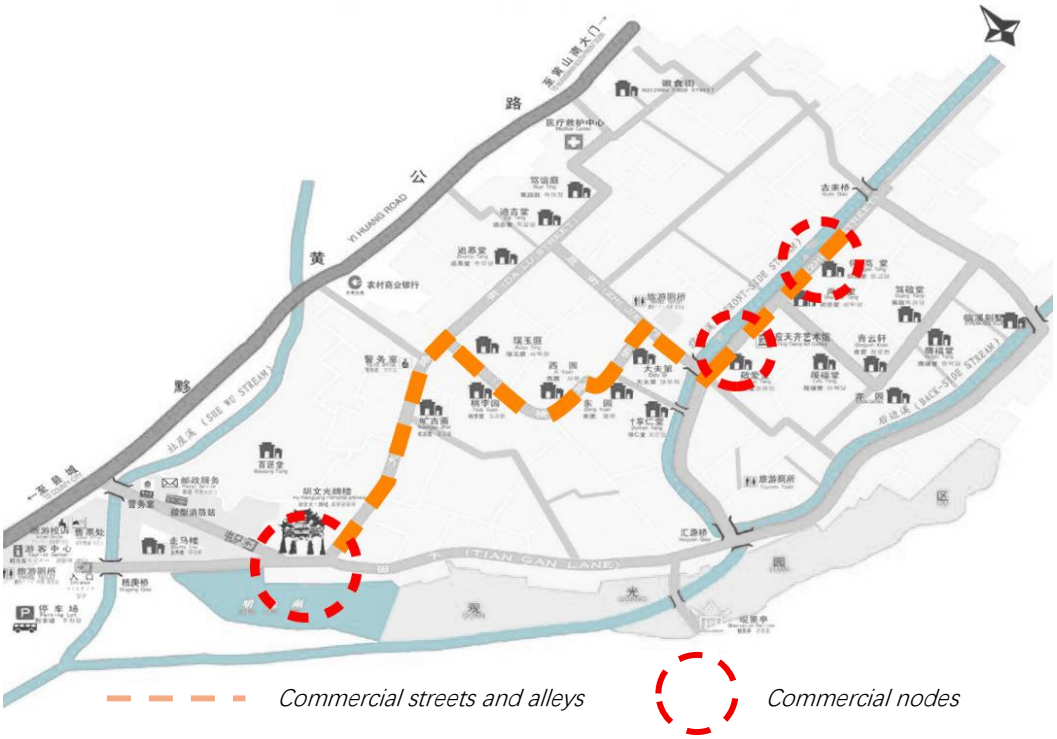



*Fig 45 - Commercial axis of Xidi -Image drawn by the author*

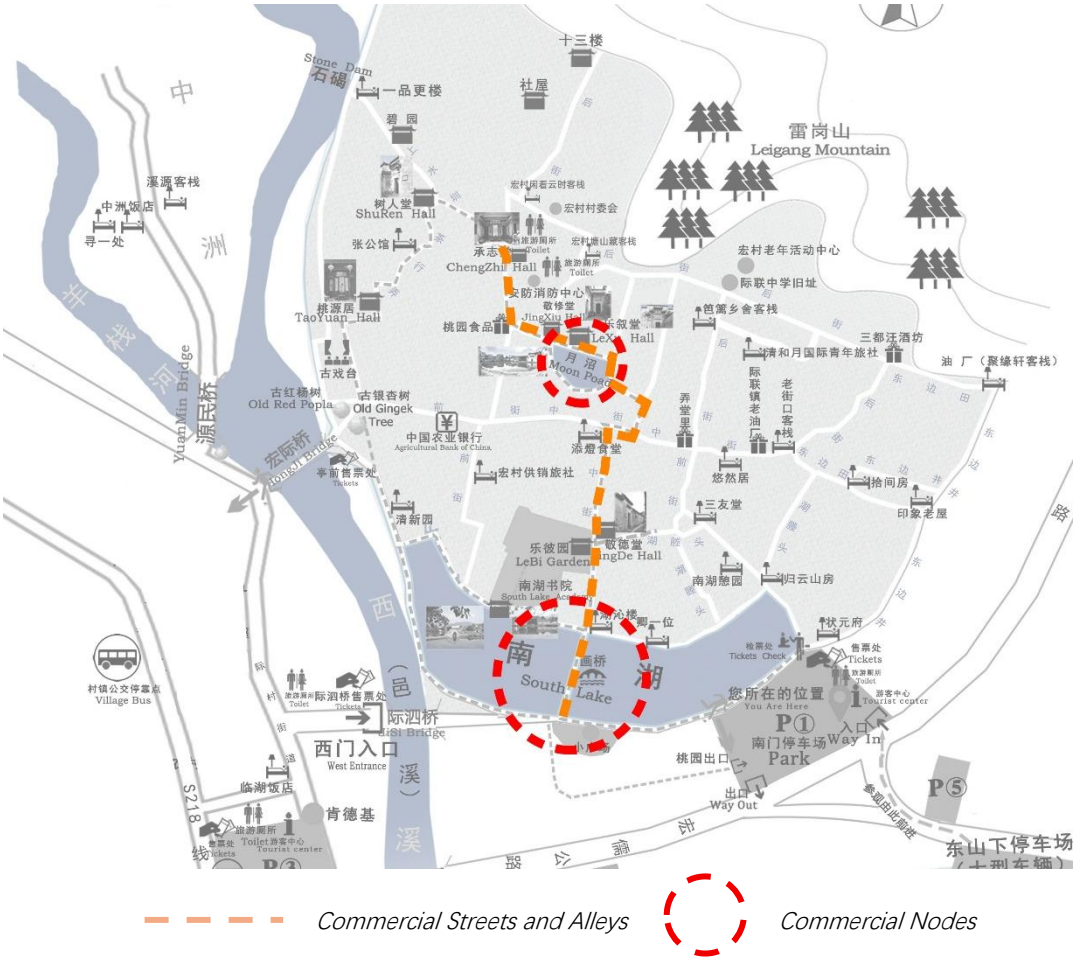



*Fig 45 - Hongcun Commercial Axis -Image drawn by the author*

A villager remarked:

"We can't afford to rent storefronts ourselves; now it's all outsiders doing business here."

—Interview B2

2. Marginalized Living Spaces

Village life has gradually retreated to:

- back alleys
- Narrow lanes in front of homes
- Newly built settlements outside the village (Fig. 46)

Forming a spatial dual structure of "front stage (tourist space) — backstage (resident space)".



*Figure 46 - Commercial axis of Hongcun-Photo by the author (2025)*

3. Externalization of Management Rights

With the influx of capital:

- Some shops are subleased to external merchants
- Scenic area companies control tenant recruitment in core districts
- Villagers gradually transitioned from "business operators" to "landlords" or "employees"

Ying (2007) termed this "the outward shift of business rights"[147], a phenomenon I also observed repeatedly in the field.

**IV.** Commercial Spillover and Peripheral Commercial Zones: Village Peripheries Become New "Consumer Fronts"

As village-based commerce reached saturation, commercial activities began diffusing outward, forming new tourism-oriented commercial zones:

Hongcun South Entrance Commercial District (post-2018) (Fig. 47)

- Newly constructed visitor center, welcome plaza, and parking lot
- Establishing a "consume first, then enter the village" model
- External capital becomes a major operational force




*Figure 47 - New commercial development in Hongcun -Image drawn by the author*

[147] Ying, "Community, Governments and External Capitals," 101-103.

Villagers report:

"Tourists eat and drink at the entrance, then spend little once inside the village."

—Interview B9

Xidi New Street Commercial District (north of Xidi) (post-2018) (Fig. 48)

- New commercial street, dining area, tourism service center
- Numerous storefronts leased by companies or external operators




*Figure 48 - Newly built commercial area in Xidi -Image drawn by the author*

Xidi shop owners say:

"The new street outside is taking away our business. It's getting harder and harder to run small shops in the village."

—Interview A7

This spillover commercialization reinforces the "peripheral benefits, core burden" structure, spatially separating tourism benefits from costs and exacerbating economic imbalances within the community.

### *6.3.3 Gentrification of Heritage Sites: Spatial Reorganization Under Aesthetic Domination*

Following their inscription on the World Heritage List, Xidi and Hongcun did not undergo typical "urban gentrification"—characterized by large-scale displacement of original residents by high-income groups—but instead exhibited a form of "heritage site gentrification" more aligned with the context of heritage governance.This gentrification does not primarily manifest as direct displacement but rather reshapes the spatial uses and social meanings of the villages through the combined effects of aesthetic standards, spatial regulations, and the tourism economy.

Giovanni Semi (2015), in his study of European historic cities, noted that once cultural heritage is integrated into tourism and aesthetic economies, gentrification transcends mere class displacement. It becomes a process of spatial and cultural order restructuring driven by aestheticization, institutional regulation, and consumer logic.[148] In Xidi and Hongcun, this

[148] Giovanni Semi, *Gentrification: Tutte le città come Disneyland?* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), 41-52.

manifests as a systematic shift of village spaces from "places of living" to "aesthetic landscapes."

**I.** The Formation of Aesthetic Domination: Stratified Transfer of Spatial Control

In Xidi and Hongcun, "aesthetic appeal" is not a neutral visual judgment but has progressively evolved into an exclusionary logic of spatial governance. Following UNESCO inscription, heritage site spaces became embedded within an evaluation system jointly shaped by government planning, tourism capital, and external aesthetic groups. The question of "who has the authority to define 'appropriate space'" gradually supplanted the concern of "who actually lives here."

Unlike traditional urban gentrification, which achieves class replacement through rising property prices and resident displacement, rural heritage site gentrification primarily employs aesthetics and norms to enact "soft appropriation":

While indigenous residents are not massively evicted, their spatial practices, rights to modification, and forms of expression are progressively constrained.

As Semi (2015) observes, gentrification today is less about "who moves in" and more about "whose lifestyle is deemed legitimate, appropriate, and worthy of preservation."[149]

**II.** Art and Cultural Innovation Intervention: The Process of "Curating" Space

Another significant manifestation of gentrification is the rewriting of village spaces by artistic and cultural forces. Following their UNESCO designation, Xidi and Hongcun saw the emergence of trendy shops, art studios, photography spaces, design-driven guesthouses, and themed exhibition venues (Fig. 49).

In this process, old residences are no longer primarily understood as "living spaces" but transformed into cultural vessels for display, curation, and consumption. Spatial functions shift from "use" to "presentation," from "containers of life" to "cultural products."

While spaces are now branded with "cultural" labels, their expressions have detached from local lived experiences, instead catering to a nationally standardized aesthetic for cultural tourism.




*Fig. 49 - New spatial functions- Image by the author（2025）*

[149] Ibid., 47–49.

**III.** Spatial Homogenization and the Formation of "Aesthetic Hegemony"

As aesthetic standards become institutionalized, villages gradually adopt a spatial order dominated by external aesthetics. Whether in homestay design, commercial facades, or public node renovations, a visual pattern emerges that is "identifiable, recognizable, and replicable" (Figure 50). This pattern reinforces tourists' sense of familiarity while diminishing local distinctiveness. These spaces often claim to embody "local culture" yet follow highly similar aesthetic paradigms: exposed wooden beams, distressed walls, minimalist furnishings, and uniform color schemes (Figure 51).




*Figure 50 - Homogenized commercial streetfront -Photo by the author（2025）*



*Figure 51 - Homogenized shop interiors- Image from the internet(https://www.meipian.cn/4zhxui6e)*

Semi (2015) summarized this phenomenon as "Disneyfication": local spaces are compressed into a highly standardized aesthetic script, while complex social life is simplified into easily consumable visual symbols.[150]

In my 2025 field notes, I repeatedly noted that while some renovated spaces were labeled "Huizhou cultural spaces," their interior furnishings and exhibition methods bore striking resemblance to other tourist destinations. One villager I interviewed remarked:

"Nowadays, these shops—whether in Xidi, Hongcun, or other scenic areas—all look pretty much the same."

—Interview A7

In Xidi and Hongcun, this aesthetic dominance is not enforced through forced evictions but

[150] Ibid., 259–261.

through spatial access barriers:

Who can operate in the core districts, whose renovations are approved, and whose lifestyle is deemed "appropriate" all hinge on conformity to the dominant aesthetic.

**IV.** Gentle Displacement: From Spatial Exclusion to Concessions in "Modes of Being"

Unlike the explicit displacement in gentrification driven by rising property prices or demolition, Xidi and Hongcun exhibit a more subtle "mild displacement." Villagers are not directly forced out of their villages but gradually adjust and contract their presence in public spaces under the combined influence of heritage regulations, tourist gaze, and aesthetic norms.

This displacement is not merely about "where one lives," but rather concerns how and in what manner one occupies space.

Within the governance framework following the heritage designation, the village's core spaces were assigned explicit display functions and aesthetic expectations. Residents gradually became aware that certain once-ordinary daily activities—such as lingering, gathering, chatting, drying laundry, or casually using public spaces—had become "superfluous," "unsightly," or even "to be avoided" under the new order. Consequently, the changes in the space first manifested as a self-regulated withdrawal.

Multiple interviewees mentioned that they were not explicitly prohibited from using the space, but rather "knew when it was inappropriate to be there":

"It's not that we're not allowed to sit there, but sitting there just feels inappropriate."

—Interview B3

In this process, residents gradually transformed from natural users of public space into highly self-conscious "observed subjects." They began proactively avoiding peak tourist hours, minimizing stays in conspicuous locations, and compressing daily activities into less noticeable times and forms.

Thus, this displacement manifests not in changing residences but in relinquishing spatial agency:

Residents remain "present," yet their existence becomes decentralized and rendered invisible, gradually transforming into background elements within the spatial narrative.

In this sense, gentrification of heritage sites does not empty villages through coercion, but rather shapes a new spatial order through aesthetics and regulation—one where tourists and display functions take precedence in visibility, while residents are expected to maintain a low profile, exercise restraint, and avoid disruption.

This "displacement of modes of existence" constitutes one of the key characteristics distinguishing heritage gentrification from urban gentrification:

it does not expel bodies, but rather reshapes their spatial positioning and meaning.

## 6.4 Transformation of Cultural Practices: From Everyday Life to "Performative Heritage"

The World Heritage system has not only reshaped the physical environments of Xidi and Hongcun through planning, restoration, and spatial control, but has also profoundly altered the organizational modes and meaning structures of cultural practices within these communities. Cultural activities originally embedded in daily life and oriented toward internal

communities have gradually been recoded into "display practices" for external audiences under the combined influence of heritage governance and tourism logic. This transformation is not a simple disappearance of culture, but a systemic reorganization of cultural functions, modes of participation, and subject positions.

This section analyzes the process across three dimensions: first, examining how cultural practices are restructured into "performative heritage" under institutional and tourism mechanisms; second, identifying which cultures are selectively preserved, amplified, or marginalized; and finally, focusing on how this process alters community members' understanding of their identity and cultural belonging.

### *6.4.1 The Formation of Performative Heritage: Institutionalization and Spectacularization of Cultural Practices*

Prior to their UNESCO designation, cultural practices in Xidi and Hongcun primarily served internal community functions. Their timing, spatial distribution, and forms were dictated by local rhythms of life and clan ethics. Activities such as ancestor worship, weddings, annual pig feasts, and festive rituals were not designed to be "watched" but were integral parts of the daily life order.

After the inscription, these cultural practices were gradually incorporated into heritage governance and tourism management systems, exhibiting distinct features of institutionalization and exhibition.

First, the timing of cultural events was restructured. Ceremonies once flexibly scheduled according to agricultural cycles, family arrangements, or local customs were fixed to holidays, peak tourist seasons, or official event calendars to ensure "predictable presentation." Multiple villagers noted that certain traditional rituals now require "advance notification of timing" and "cannot be held casually."

Second, the spatial settings of cultural activities were redesignated. Events once dispersed across ancestral halls, main courtyards, village lanes, or farmlands were concentrated along tourist routes, designated display points, or "cultural experience zones." This shift transformed cultural practices from "actions within lived spaces" into "events within scenic spaces."

Third, the forms of cultural practices have been standardized. In tour scripts, interpretive panels, and event plans, complex, multi-layered local cultures are simplified into easily digestible and disseminable narrative scripts. For instance, ancestral worship ceremonies are summarized as "displays of Huizhou clan culture," while the New Year pig feast ( ) is packaged as a "traditional folk custom experience." This standardization enhances communicability but diminishes the original contextual depth of cultural practices.

In this process, culture does not vanish but is reorganized into a form that is "viewable, interpretable, and consumable." This constitutes the core characteristic of "performative heritage."

### *6.4.2 Selective Preservation and Cultural Filtering: Which Cultures Are Retained?*

Performative heritage does not equally transform all cultural practices; it is a highly selective process. Heritage governance and the tourism market jointly constitute an implicit screening mechanism that determines which cultures are "worthy of display" and which are gradually marginalized.

On one hand, visually striking and symbolically explicit cultural practices are prioritized for preservation. For instance, activities featuring distinct ritual settings, costumes, or spatial symbols are more readily incorporated into display systems (Figure 52). Such practices are often easier to film, narrate, and reproduce.



*Fig. 52 - Xidi Grand Village holds grand celebrations during major festivals -Image from the internet(https://weibo.com/3542468901/Q7x8dlcGS)*

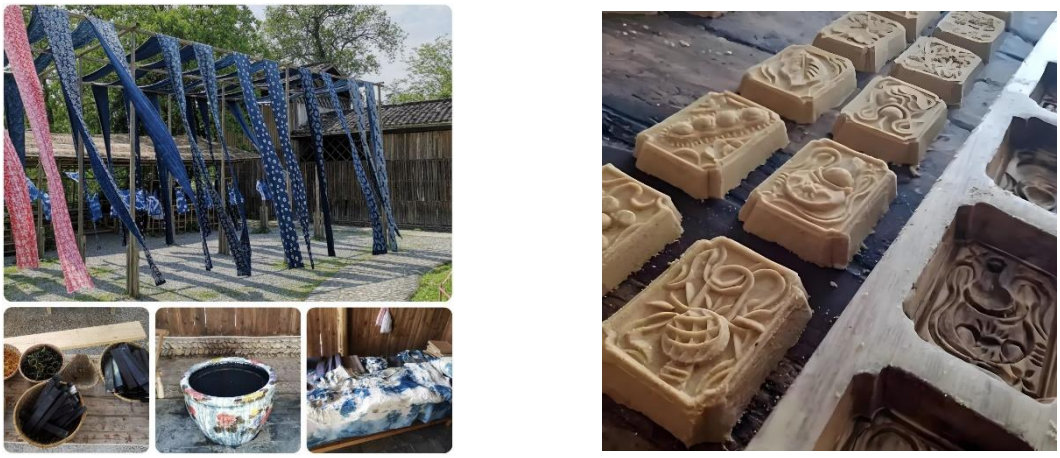


*Fig.53- Hongcun tie-dye and Huizhou carved cakes require accumulated experience and complex processes - Image from the internet(https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1637963823416994320&wfr=spider&for=pc)*

On the other hand, practices closely tied to daily life that are difficult to showcase have gradually receded into the background. For instance, certain cultural customs related to everyday existence, along with local knowledge that requires long-term engagement to comprehend, often fail to meet the exhibition requirement of being "quickly understandable." Consequently, they lack institutional support (Figure 53).

Moreover, cultural selection is influenced by normative and aesthetic expectations. Certain practices deemed "not tidy enough," "not aesthetically pleasing," or "detrimental to the landscape" are restricted or even eliminated under the guise of preservation. This filtering does not directly negate cultural value but rather reconstructs it through the lens of "suitability for display."

The result is a gradual emergence of a "dual-layer structure" in community culture:

The foreground features curated, packaged, and interpreted "heritage culture,"

while the backstage consists of everyday culture that persists yet gradually loses public visibility.

*6.4.3 From "Livers" to "*Spectacles*": Identity Reconstruction in Cultural Practices*

While the previous two sections examined how culture is organized and filtered, this section focuses on how this process alters community members' understanding of their cultural roles.

In interviews, multiple villagers explicitly distinguished between "the culture of the past" and "the culture of the present." This distinction is not based on formal differences, but on shifts in the subjects and meanings of cultural practices.

Many villagers mentioned that when engaging in certain cultural activities today, they naturally become aware that "someone is watching." This awareness is not merely the presence of an audience but a structural state of being watched: cultural practices are placed under the collective gaze of tourists, administrators, and the market.

This shift has led to three dimensions of identity reconstruction:

First, from cultural agents to objects of display.

Culture is no longer merely "something we do for ourselves," but rather "content to be understood and evaluated by others." When practicing culture, villagers actively adjust their behavior to align with external expectations.

Second, from cultural inheritors to cultural performers.

Certain cultural activities no longer rely on long-term apprenticeship but are achieved through training, demonstration, and repeated performance. Participants engage not because of family tradition but because "it's part of the heritage project."

Third, from villager identity to "heritage role."

Community members begin to understand their position through the language of the heritage system, viewing themselves as "heritage site residents," "cultural presenters," or "tourism practitioners." This role consciousness is not entirely negative, but it does alter the relationship between culture and the self.

It is crucial to emphasize that this identity shift is not a one-way passive acceptance. Some villagers maintain a balance between display and daily life through selective participation, reinterpretation, or strategic cooperation. These practices will be further discussed in subsequent subsections.

## 6.5 Community Strategic Responses and Cultural Reproduction Mechanisms

As seen in the preceding analysis, the World Heritage system, tourism economy, and administrative governance profoundly reshaped the spatial structures, cultural practices, and social relations of Xidi and Hongcun. However, this process was not a unidirectional "overwhelming of life by institutions." Instead, communities did not passively accept external norms but selectively absorbed, adjusted, and reinterpreted institutional demands through a series of strategic actions in daily practice.

This section aims to reveal how communities find operational space within institutional constraints and reproduce cultural and social relations through practice. This response is neither overt confrontation nor complete compliance, but rather a "locally negotiated action" situated between the two.

*6.5.1 Selective Compliance: Navigating Flexible Space Between Conformity and Daily Life*

Faced with administrative norms for heritage preservation, villagers generally adopt a

strategy of "selective compliance."

On one hand, for highly visible, frequently inspected matters, villagers often strictly adhere to institutional requirements. For instance, facade renovations, signage styles, and the tidiness of street-facing spaces typically meet planning documents and inspection standards. These elements directly relate to enforcement and penalties, as well as tourists' first impressions of the "heritage landscape."

On the other hand, villagers retain greater autonomy for adjustments within private living spaces and non-display practices. For instance:

- Undertaking "hidden renovations" to kitchens, storage rooms, and internal structures without altering the exterior appearance;
- Continuing traditional daily activities outside tourist hours, such as preparing for ancestral ceremonies or hosting family gatherings;
- Adopting a "do first, document later" approach to certain regulations to address immediate living needs.

As one villager put it:

"We show them the outside, but inside we live our own way."

—Interview A4

This strategy does not negate the system but redefines its boundaries of application. It reflects the community's practical understanding of "compliance": systems should serve life, not entirely replace its rhythms.

*6.5.2 Informal Negotiation Mechanisms: Governance Translation Within Relational Networks*

Beyond formal institutions, an informal negotiation mechanism remains widely operational within the community. Through clan, neighborhood, and acquaintance networks, it moderates the implementation of institutional rules.

In Xidi, while clan networks are no longer formal governance entities, they continue to play a vital intermediary role in practice. For example:

- Clan elders mediate renovation disputes, facilitating communication between villagers and the management office;
- Gaining advance knowledge of policy changes or inspection priorities through personal connections;
- Securing "grace periods" or exceptions for issues with greater flexibility in implementation.

Hongcun, meanwhile, demonstrates a stronger emphasis on neighborhood consultation and the village committee's "buffer role." Multiple interviewees noted that the village committee often does not simply execute higher-level directives but attempts to mediate between policy and public sentiment:

"The village committee is caught in the middle now—they have to report to higher authorities while also reassuring villagers."

— Interview B3

This informal mechanism forms a "soft governance layer," enabling subtle yet critical adjustments to institutional implementation. This exemplifies "governance translation" at the community level: institutions are not executed verbatim but reinterpreted and practiced within relational networks.

*6.5.3 Recontextualization of Cultural Practices: Between Display and Self-Identity*

Culturally, communities do not passively accept externally imposed definitions of "performative heritage." Instead, they strive to preserve internal cultural meanings through recontextualization practices.

Specifically, villagers often distinguish between "external" and "internal" dimensions within the same cultural practice:

- External: Presenting "Huizhou culture" according to predetermined scripts during festivals, guided tours, and official exhibitions;
- Internal: In private settings, they continue to uphold the original ritual logic, emotional expressions, and social significance.

For instance, some clans conduct internal rituals accessible only to family members after ceremonies open to tourists conclude. As one interviewee stated:

"The performance for tourists is just for their eyes; we know how to conduct the real ceremony ourselves."

—Interview B2

This internal-external classification cannot be simply labelled hypocritical or purely performative. Fundamentally, it acts as a grassroots self-preservation mechanism for local culture. By stratifying cultural practices, communities meet the mandatory display requirements of heritage governance while safeguarding the cultural core that sustains their collective identity.

Nevertheless, this balancing strategy is essentially a passive cultural compromise made by local communities to comply with the regulatory rules of the UNESCO heritage list, with prominent inherent cultural limitations. To meet the standardized requirements of cultural tourism display, local groups have to selectively segment, simplify and reconstruct indigenous folk customs: they strip away profound clan ethics, local emotional narratives and private social connotations embedded in rituals, and only extract visually appealing cultural symbols for external presentation, which artificially fractures the complete original cultural context. Although this segmented cultural operation can preserve partial native rituals in the short term, it will continuously dilute the spiritual core of traditional culture over time and deprive folk customs of their complete and consistent cultural logic. Even if villagers retain a small portion of authentic practices through internal private ceremonies, such measures cannot fundamentally eliminate the profound cultural shocks brought by heritage inscription. Alongside gentrification, continuous intervention by tourists and commercial capital shrinks the living space of indigenous culture and leads to the loss of cultural inheritors, ultimately triggering the all-round alienation and reconstruction of living culture, ritual culture and community culture within historic settlements.

*6.5.4 From "Implementation Adjustment" to "Governance Translation": The Theoretical Significance of Community Action*

Previously, this paper demonstrated how the communities of Xidi and Hongcun modulate the implementation of heritage governance systems through informal negotiations, relational networks, and contextualized practices. However, framing these actions solely as "adaptation"

or "adjustment" fails to reveal their deeper significance within governance structures. Theoretically, these practices are not peripheral, incidental behaviors— —but constitute essential mechanisms sustaining heritage governance.

**I.** Transcending the "Compliance/Resistance" Dichotomy: Communities as Governance Translators

Traditional heritage governance studies often frame community actions within a binary "compliance/resistance" paradigm: either emphasizing passive acceptance of state institutions or highlighting conflict and opposition. Yet the experiences of Xidi and Hongcun reveal that communities' more common operational logic defies these paradigms.

Communities neither openly confront heritage regimes nor fully internalize their technical rationality. Instead, they continually reinterpret, reconfigure, and reproduce institutional meanings through daily practices within specific implementation processes. This approach resembles pragmatic institutional adaptation, aiming not to challenge governance structures themselves but to ensure life continuity, social stability, and sustainable livelihoods.

Thus, communities are not merely "objects of governance" but assume the role of governance translators during institutional implementation.

**II.** Low-Visibility Governance Practices: How Institutions Are "Reproduced" in Everyday Life

A key characteristic is that this governance translation often occurs at a low-visibility level. Community actions are not manifested in formal texts, policy statements, or public negotiations, but are embedded in:

- The rhythms of daily negotiation
- Situational judgments during implementation
- The flexible space afforded by relational networks
- The everyday interpretation of institutional language

It is precisely through these seemingly minor, fragmented practices that heritage governance systems sustain their operation, avoiding systemic conflicts that rigid enforcement might provoke. In other words, the stability of these systems does not stem solely from administrative control but relies on the community's ongoing "patching" and "translation" of institutional norms within daily life.

In this sense, communities do not undermine institutional authority; rather, they collectively undertake the function of institutional reproduction through practice.

**III.** The Dual Effects of Governance Translation: Coexisting Stability and Structural Tension

However, this governance translation comes at a cost. On one hand, it maintains overall stability in heritage governance by buffering conflicts between institutions and daily life; on the other, it invisibly obscures the structural inequalities between institutions and communities.

Since much adaptation occurs at the informal level, the institutions themselves remain substantively unaltered, and community influence over rule-making remains limited. This implies that governance translation functions both as a survival strategy and as a practice constrained by structural conditions—it alleviates contradictions without fundamentally altering power configurations.

Thus, community actions simultaneously stabilize governance structures while delaying structural transformation.

## 6.6 Summary: Governance Translation and Everyday Practices at the Community Level

This chapter examines how the World Heritage system, tourism economy, and administrative governance manifest in the daily lives of Xidi and Hongcun from a community perspective. Research indicates that global heritage governance is not merely implemented locally through policy texts or administrative systems but is deeply embedded in community spatial practices, rhythms of life, and cultural activities.

At the community level, heritage governance manifests not as abstract norms but through everyday interpretations of concepts like "authenticity," "conservation," and "development." Villagers absorb, translate, and reorganize institutional demands within daily life through reappropriating spaces, adjusting temporal rhythms, and differentially managing cultural practices.

Simultaneously, this chapter reveals structural transformations under institutional influence—tourism commercialization and gentrification of heritage sites reshape community spaces and social relations, propelling villages from "living settlements" into "performative spaces." Throughout this process, communities do not passively accept external norms but maintain life continuity and social stability through selective compliance, informal negotiation, and cultural reproduction.

Thus, Chapter 6 demonstrates that communities are not merely terminal recipients of heritage governance but crucial sites where global norms are continuously enacted. It is precisely through these everyday, low-visibility practices that heritage governance achieves its ultimate grounding within local societies.

## Conclusions

Through the study of Xidi and Hongcun, this dissertation argues that the central issue is not whether UNESCO heritage principles can be "correctly" applied in China. A more important question is what happens when these principles enter villages that are still inhabited, used, and continuously changing: what is given priority in conservation, what kinds of change are allowed, and who ultimately has the power to make these decisions?

Xidi and Hongcun provide a particularly useful comparison. The two villages share a similar Huizhou architectural tradition, were inscribed together as one World Heritage property, and operate under largely the same conservation plans and administrative framework. Yet their later development has not followed exactly the same path. Xidi has retained a greater degree of residential continuity and room for community negotiation, with the village committee and clan networks continuing to mediate between government authorities, professionals, and residents. Hongcun, by contrast, has been more strongly shaped by tourism enterprises and commercial activities, and its traditional buildings and village spaces have been more extensively incorporated into the tourism economy.

This difference suggests that conservation outcomes are not determined by heritage regulations alone. They are also shaped by the governance structures, economic conditions, and social relationships through which these regulations are interpreted and implemented. Similar institutional requirements can therefore produce different results in different local settings. In this sense, the local implementation of UNESCO-related principles is better understood as a process of translation rather than simple application.

Architectural change provides one of the clearest examples of this process. For officially protected monuments and key traditional buildings, materials, structural systems, and historical information remain subject to relatively strict conservation requirements. For the much larger number of ordinary traditional buildings, however, the regulatory framework allows greater adjustment of interior spaces and facilities, provided that the overall townscape and external appearance are maintained. This approach exists in both Xidi and Hongcun, but in Hongcun it is more closely connected with tourism-oriented commercial adaptation. Traditional houses may retain their roof forms, façades, scale, and other visible characteristics while their interiors are reorganized as guesthouses, restaurants, shops, or other tourism-related spaces.

For this reason, the important question concerning "authenticity" is not simply whether authenticity is protected, but which aspects of authenticity receive the greatest attention in practice. Building façades, roof forms, materials, colours, and the overall village landscape can be relatively easily regulated through planning and approval procedures. Everyday life, patterns of spatial use, and community relationships are much more difficult to measure through standardized criteria. As a result, those aspects of heritage that can be easily seen and inspected often receive more explicit protection, while less visible forms of cultural continuity are more dependent on negotiation and everyday adaptation.

Community practices further demonstrate that heritage governance is not entirely a top-down process. Villagers do not simply accept or reject conservation regulations. Instead, they adjust them according to everyday needs. Residents may closely follow regulations

concerning street-facing façades and external appearance while modernizing kitchens, bathrooms, utilities, and other private interior spaces. They may also negotiate particular issues through village committees, kinship relations, and personal networks. These practices do not fundamentally change the administrative framework, but they create a certain degree of flexibility when formal rules encounter everyday life. They also show that the local meaning of conservation is continuously produced through interaction between regulation and practice.

The Italian experience discussed in this dissertation helps clarify this issue from another perspective. Italian restoration manuals should not be treated as a model that can simply be transferred to China, given the significant differences in legal systems, property relations, and social structures. Their main relevance to this study lies elsewhere: they demonstrate that between general conservation principles and intervention on a specific building, there can be a more detailed intermediate level of technical guidance and local knowledge. Traditional materials, construction techniques, professional judgement, and residents' practical needs can all contribute to conservation decisions rather than relying only on uniform administrative standards. This comparison therefore reinforces the broader argument of the dissertation: conservation principles become effective only through their adaptation to specific institutional, architectural, and social conditions.

This research also has some limitations. Although Xidi and Hongcun provide a useful comparison, they cannot represent all rural heritage sites in China. In addition, the study relies mainly on fieldwork conducted in 2015 and 2025, together with interviews, policy documents, and restoration records. It therefore cannot fully reconstruct every stage of change during the more than twenty years since World Heritage inscription. Future research combining long-term household surveys, changes in building use, and tourism-business data could provide a more complete understanding of the long-term effects of World Heritage conservation on rural communities.

Finally, the comparison between Xidi and Hongcun shows that conserving living heritage cannot be reduced either to preserving historic buildings in a fixed condition or to maintaining a visually coherent historical image. Buildings require repair, residents need improved living conditions, and local economies and social relations will continue to change. The central challenge is therefore how such changes are governed and negotiated. From this perspective, the effectiveness of the local translation of UNESCO principles should not be judged by whether the villages remain completely unchanged, but by whether necessary adaptations can take place without undermining their architectural, spatial, and social continuity. For Xidi and Hongcun, the continuity of heritage therefore depends not only on the preservation of recognizable architectural forms, but also on maintaining the spatial practices, everyday uses, and community relationships through which these villages continue to function as living settlements.

## Appendix 1 : Full Normative Texts Cited in the Thesis

***1***. *Chapter 4.1: Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics [中华人民共和国文物保护法], promulgated November 19, 1982, effective November 19, 1982,*

Article 14

When revolutionary sites, memorial buildings, ancient tombs, historic buildings, cave temples, stone carvings, and other items (including ancillary structures of buildings) designated as protection units of cultural relics are being repaired, maintained, or relocated, the principle of not altering the original state of the cultural relics must be strictly observed.

Article 15

State-owned memorial buildings or historic buildings designated as protection units of cultural relics may, in addition to being established as museums or conservation institutes, or opened as tourist/visitation sites, be used for other purposes if necessary. Such alternative usage shall be submitted by the local administrative department for cultural relics to the people's government that originally promulgated the designation for approval, according to the designation level of the protection unit. If a national primary protection unit of cultural relics must be used for other purposes, it shall be agreed upon by the people's government of the relevant province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government, and reported to the State Council for approval. These entities, as well as specialized institutions such as museums, must strictly abide by the principle of not altering the original state of the cultural relics, assume responsibility for the safety of the buildings and their ancillary cultural relics, and refrain from damaging, altering, adding to, or demolishing them. Entities using memorial buildings or historic buildings shall be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the buildings.

*Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964) (Venice: ICOMOS, 1965).*

Article 9**.**

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and at this point any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration shall in any case be preceded and followed by an analytical and historical study of the monument.

Article 15.

Excavations should be carried out in accordance with scientific standards and the recommendation defining international principles to be applied in the case of archaeological excavations adopted by UNESCO in 1956.

Ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken. Furthermore, every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning.

All reconstruction work should, however, be ruled out a priori. Only anastylosis, that is to say,

the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.

***2**. Chapter 4.1.1: Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics [全国人民代表大会常务委员会关于修改《中华人民共和国文物保护法》决定]. Promulgated June 29, 1991; effective June 29, 1991*

Article 7

Cultural relics such as revolutionary sites, memorial buildings, ancient cultural sites, ancient tombs, historic buildings, cave temples, and stone carvings shall be classified and designated as protection units of cultural relics at different levels according to their historical, artistic, and scientific value. Protection units of cultural relics at the level of a county, autonomous county, or city shall be approved and announced by the people's government of the county, autonomous county, or city, and reported to the people's government of the province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government for the record. Protection units of cultural relics at the level of a province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government shall be approved and announced by the respective people's government, and reported to the State Council for the record. The State administrative department for cultural relics shall select from among the protection units of cultural relics at all levels those possessing major historical, artistic, or scientific value as national primary protection units of cultural relics, or directly designate national primary protection units of cultural relics, and report them to the State Council for approval and announcement.

Article 8 Cities possessing an exceptionally rich collection of cultural relics and significant historical value and revolutionary significance shall be submitted by the State administrative department for cultural relics, in conjunction with the urban and rural construction and environmental protection department, to the State Council for approval and announcement as famous historical and cultural cities.

*UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Art. 5.*

Article 5

To ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, each State Party to this Convention shall endeavor, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country:

(a) to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes;

(b) to set up within its territories, where such services do not exist, one or more services for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage with an appropriate staff and possessing the means to discharge their functions;

(c) to develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural

or natural heritage;
(d) to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage; and
(e) to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field.

***3.*** *Chapter 4.1.2: Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics [中华人民共和国文物保护法] (revised October 28, 2002, effective July 1, 2003, Presidential Decree No. 74).*
Article 4
Cultural relics work shall implement the policy of prioritizing protection, emphasizing rescue, ensuring rational utilization, and strengthening management.
The State shall develop the cause of cultural relics protection. The State encourages scientific research on the protection of cultural relics and aims to enhance the scientific and technological capabilities of cultural relics protection.
The State shall protect the safety of immovable cultural relics.
Article 7
Legal entities, other organizations, and individuals all have the obligation to protect cultural relics in accordance with the law.
The State encourages the establishment of cultural relics protection funds through donations and other methods, which shall be used exclusively for cultural relics protection. No unit or individual may misappropriate or divert such funds.
Article 12
Moral or material rewards shall be given by the State to units or individuals with any of the following achievements:
(1) Consistently enforcing laws and regulations on the protection of cultural relics with outstanding performance in protecting cultural relics;
(2) Resolutely fighting against illegal and criminal acts to protect cultural relics;
(3) Donating important privately collected cultural relics to the State;
(4) Promptly reporting or surrendering discovered cultural relics, thereby enabling them to be protected;
(5) Making important inventions or other significant contributions to the science and technology of cultural relics protection;
(6) Rendering distinguished service in rescuing cultural relics when they are endangered by destruction;
(7) Achieving outstanding results through long-term engagement in cultural relics work.
Article 15
People's governments at or above the county level shall incorporate the cause of cultural relics protection into their respective master plans for national economic and social development, and the required operational funds shall be included in their respective fiscal budgets.
Financial allocations made by the State for the protection of cultural relics shall increase as

fiscal revenue grows.
Business revenue of state-owned museums, memorial halls, and protection units of cultural relics shall be used exclusively for cultural relics protection; no entity or individual may misappropriate or divert such funds.
Article 16
When formulating urban and rural construction plans, people's governments at all levels shall, according to the needs of cultural relics protection, arrange in advance with the urban and rural planning departments in consultation with the administrative departments for cultural relics to determine conservation measures for immovable cultural relics within their respective administrative regions, and incorporate such measures into the plans.
For site designated and announced as protection units of cultural relics, the administrative departments for cultural relics under local people's governments at or above the county level shall formulate conservation plans and incorporate them into urban and rural construction plans.

*UNESCO, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (1992)*
21. States Parties are encouraged to prepare plans for the management of each natural site nominated and for the safeguarding of each cultural property nominated. All information concerning these plans should be made available when technical co-operation is requested.
24. (b)(ii) have adequate legal protection and management mechanisms to ensure the conservation of the nominated cultural property. The existence of protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level is therefore essential and must be stated clearly on the nomination form. Assurances of the effective implementation of these laws are also expected. Furthermore, in order to preserve the integrity of cultural sites, particularly those open to large numbers of visitors, the State Party concerned should be able to provide evidence of suitable administrative arrangements to cover the management of the property, its conservation and its accessibility to the public.
36. (b)(vi) The sites described in paragraph 36 (a) should have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory or institutional protection. They may coincide with or constitute part of existing or proposed protected areas such as national parks. If not already available, a management plan should be prepared and implemented to ensure the integrity of the natural values of the site in accordance with the Convention.
54. (d) State of preservation/conservation … Measures for preservation/conservation (including management plans or proposals for such plans)
54. (f)(iv) Legal information … master plan for historic preservation land-use plan, urban development plan, regional development plan or other infrastructure projects; town planning regulations and orders issued in application of these plans.

***4.*** *Chapter 4.1.3: Eneral Office of the State Council, Implementation Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Further Strengthening Cultural Relics Safety Work [国务院办公厅关于进一步加强文物安全工作的实施意见], Guo Ban Fa [2017] No. 81 (promulgated September 20, 2017).*

Section I. Establish and Improve the Cultural Relics Safety Responsibility System (1) Clarify the main responsibility of local governments. Local people's governments at all levels shall earnestly fulfill the main responsibility for territorial management of cultural relics safety, adhere to the principle of "equal responsibility of party and government, two posts for one responsibility, joint management, and accountability for dereliction of duty", and improve the cultural relics safety responsibility system…
Section V. Adhere to Supervision and Accountability, and Strictly Pursue Responsibilities (2) Strictly pursue responsibility. …Establish and improve accountability mechanisms. Those who fail to perform their duties in cultural relics safety, leading to major safety accidents or heavy losses, shall be held accountable in accordance with the law and regulations…

*UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, WHC.11/01 (Paris: UNESCO, 2011), paras.*
169. Reactive monitoring is the reporting by the Secretariat, other sectors of UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the Committee on the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties that are under threat. To this end, States Parties shall submit specific reports and impact studies each time that exceptional circumstances occur or work is undertaken which may have an impact on the state of conservation of the property. Reactive monitoring is also foreseen in part IV of these Guidelines, for properties inscribed, or to be inscribed, on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
170. When the Secretariat receives information from any source other than the State Party concerned that a property has seriously deteriorated, or that the necessary corrective measures have not been taken within the time scheduled, it will, as far as possible, verify the source and the contents of the information in consultation with the State Party concerned and request its comments.
171. The Secretariat will requested the relevant Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN and/or ICCROM) to forward comments on the information received.
172. The information received, together with the comments of the State Party and the Advisory Bodies, will be brought to the attention of the Committee in the form of a state of conservation report.

***5.*** *Chapter 4.1.4: Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage (Order No. 41, promulgated November 14, 2006)*
Article 1
These Measures are formulated in accordance with the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* in order to strengthen the protection and management of World Cultural Heritage, fulfill the responsibilities and obligations under the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, and pass on human civilization
Article 8
Protection plans for World Cultural Heritage shall be organized and formulated by provincial people's governments. Institutions undertaking the formulation of World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall obtain qualification certificates issued by the State Administration of

Cultural Heritage. Protection plans for World Cultural Heritage shall specify the standards and priorities for protection, determine classified protective measures, and comply with UNESCO's requirements regarding the protection of World Cultural Heritage.
For World Cultural Heritage properties without a protection plan or whose existing plans do not meet the requirements of these Measures, a protection plan shall be formulated or revised within one year from the effective date of these Measures.
World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall be submitted by provincial cultural relics administrative departments to the State Administration of Cultural Heritage for examination and approval. Once approved, the plans shall be promulgated and implemented by the provincial people's governments. The requirements of World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall be incorporated into the national economic and social development plans, general land-use plans, and urban-rural plans of local people's governments at or above the county level.
Article 13
Provincial people's governments shall designate a protection institution for each World Cultural Heritage property. The protection institution shall conduct daily maintenance and monitoring of the World Cultural Heritage property and maintain daily logs. Where potential safety hazards are identified, the protection institution shall take control measures and promptly report to the local people's government at or above the county level and the provincial cultural relics administrative department.
Personnel of World Cultural Heritage protection institutions shall adhere to a work-with-certificate system, and the principal person-in-charge shall obtain a qualification certificate issued by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage.
Article 18
The State implements a monitoring and inspection system for the protection of World Cultural Heritage, with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage establishing monitoring and inspection mechanisms to carry out relevant tasks.
The working regulations for the monitoring and inspection of World Cultural Heritage protection shall be formulated and promulgated by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage.

*Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages*
(State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 524, effective January 8, 2008).
Article 3
The protection of historic cities, towns, and villages shall adhere to the principles of scientific planning and strict conservation, maintaining and continuing their traditional layout and historical features, maintaining the authenticity and integrity of historical and cultural heritage, inheriting and promoting outstanding traditional Chinese culture, and properly handling the relationship between economic/social development and the protection of historical and cultural heritage.

***6.*** *Chapter 4.2.1: Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage (Order No. 41, promulgated November 14, 2006)*

Article 4
The State Administration of Cultural Heritage shall be in charge of the nationwide work concerning World Cultural Heritage, coordinate and resolve major issues in the protection and management of World Cultural Heritage, and supervise and inspect the World Cultural Heritage work in places where World Cultural Heritage properties are located.
Local people's governments at or above the county level and their competent administrative departments for cultural relics shall, in accordance with the provisions of these Measures, formulate management systems, implement work measures, and be responsible for the World Cultural Heritage work within their respective administrative regions.
Article 13
Provincial people's governments shall designate a protection institution for each World Cultural Heritage property. The protection institution shall conduct daily maintenance and monitoring of the World Cultural Heritage property and maintain daily logs. Where potential safety hazards are identified, the protection institution shall take control measures and promptly report to the local people's government at or above the county level and the provincial cultural relics administrative department.
Personnel of World Cultural Heritage protection institutions shall adhere to a work-with-certificate system, and the principal person-in-charge shall obtain a qualification certificate issued by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage.
Article 14 Where a World Cultural Heritage property is opened as a visiting/sightseeing area, full play shall be given to its publicizing and educational role, and comprehensive service management measures for visiting and sightseeing shall be formulated.
The World Cultural Heritage protection institution shall submit the service management measures for visiting and sightseeing to the provincial cultural relics administrative department for filing. The provincial cultural relics administrative department shall supervise and inspect the service management work for visiting and sightseeing at the World Cultural Heritage property.
Article 15
The establishment of service facilities and projects within visiting/sightseeing areas shall comply with the management requirements of the World Cultural Heritage protection plan and be compatible with the historical and cultural attributes of the World Cultural Heritage property.
Service projects shall be specifically implemented by the World Cultural Heritage protection institution. The implementation of service projects shall adhere to the principles of openness, fairness, justice, and priority of public interest, and safeguard the rights and interests of local residents.

***7.*** *Chapter 4.2.2: Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage (Order No. 41, promulgated November 14, 2006)*
Article 8
Protection plans for World Cultural Heritage shall be organized and formulated by provincial people's governments. Institutions undertaking the formulation of World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall obtain qualification certificates issued by the State Administration of

Cultural Heritage. Protection plans for World Cultural Heritage shall specify the standards and priorities for protection, determine classified protective measures, and comply with UNESCO's requirements regarding the protection of World Cultural Heritage.
For World Cultural Heritage properties without a protection plan or whose existing plans do not meet the requirements of these Measures, a protection plan shall be formulated or revised within one year from the effective date of these Measures.
World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall be submitted by provincial cultural relics administrative departments to the State Administration of Cultural Heritage for examination and approval. Once approved by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the plans shall be promulgated and implemented by the provincial people's governments. The requirements of World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall be incorporated into the national economic and social development plans, general land-use plans, and urban-rural plans of local people's governments at or above the county level.

*Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 524, effective January 8, 2008).
Article 14
A protection plan shall include the following contents:
(1) protection principles, protection contents, and protection scope;
(2) protection measures, development intensity, and construction control requirements;
(3) protection requirements for traditional layout and historical features;
(4) core protection boundaries and construction control zones of historic conservation areas, historic towns, and historic villages;
(5) phased implementation scheme of the protection plan.
Article 20
The competent department of construction under the State Council shall, jointly with the competent department of cultural relics under the State Council, strengthen supervision and inspection over the implementation of protection plans.
Local people's governments at or above the county level shall strengthen supervision and inspection over the implementation of protection plans within their respective administrative regions, evaluate the protection status of historic cities, towns, and villages, and promptly correct and handle identified problems.
Article 21
Historic cities, towns, and villages shall be protected as a whole, maintaining their traditional layouts, historical features, and spatial scales, and the natural landscapes and environments that are interdependent with them shall not be altered.
Article 27
Buildings and structures within the core protection boundaries of historic conservation areas, historic towns, and historic villages shall be classified and protected through corresponding measures according to different circumstances.
Historic buildings within the core protection boundaries of historic conservation areas, historic towns, and historic villages shall maintain their original height, volume, exterior appearance, color, and other features.

*UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, adopted October 17, 2003, entered into force April 20, 2006)*

Article 15

Participation of communities, groups and individuals Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.

*Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 524, effective January 8, 2008).

Article 16

Before submitting a protection plan for examination and approval, the organizing agency responsible for formulating the protection plan shall extensively solicit opinions from relevant departments, experts, and the public; where necessary, hearings may be held.

The documents submitted for examination and approval of the protection plan shall include the adoption of opinions and the reasons therefor; if a hearing has been held, the record of the hearing shall also be attached.

Article 29

When examining and approving the construction activities specified in Article 28 of these Regulations, the approval authority shall organize expert demonstrations, publicly announce the approval items to solicit public opinions, and inform interested parties of their right to request a hearing. The publicity period shall be no less than 20 days.

Where interested parties request a hearing, they shall submit such requests during the publicity period, and the approval authority shall hold the hearing in a timely manner after the expiry of the publicity period.

***8.*** *Chapter 4.2.3: Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 524, effective January 8, 2008).

Article 5

The competent administrative department of construction under the State Council shall, jointly with the competent administrative department of cultural relics under the State Council, be responsible for the protection, supervision, and management of historic cities, towns, and villages across the nation. Local people's governments at various levels shall be responsible for the protection, supervision, and management of historic cities, towns, and villages within their respective administrative regions.

***9.*** *Chapter 4.3.1: National Cultural Heritage Administration, The 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Heritage Protection (2021).*

Section 3: Elevate the Exhibition and Communication of Cultural Relics

Optimize the landscape of cultural relics exhibition and communication. Systematically categorize cultural relics resources, deeply excavate and elucidate the historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific/technological, and contemporary values embedded in cultural relics, and

strengthen the promotion and presentation of Chinese civilization identifiers, so as to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture, and enhance cultural confidence. Interpret and promote the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity embodied in World Heritage properties, and comprehensively showcase China's achievements in World Heritage protection and management. Deepen the interpretation and communication of cultural relics, implement the "China Exhibition System Construction Project", and launch a series of high-quality exhibitions that display Chinese civilization symbols, reflect the national cultural image, and possess international influence.

*UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, adopted October 17, 2003, entered into force April 20, 2006)*
Article 15.
Participation of communities, groups and individuals Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.

***10.*** *Chapter4.3.2 : The Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), Section "Values and Authenticity".
11. All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of value and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.

*Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 524, effective January 8, 2008).
Article 3
The protection of historic cities, towns, and villages shall adhere to the principles of scientific planning and strict conservation, maintaining and continuing their traditional layout and historical features, maintaining the authenticity and integrity of historical and cultural heritage, inheriting and promoting outstanding traditional Chinese culture, and properly handling the relationship between economic/social development and the protection of historical and cultural heritage.

*UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted November 16, 1972*
Article 1
For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "cultural heritage":

- monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of

view of history, art or science;

- groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

*National Cultural Heritage Administration, The 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Heritage Protection (2021).*

Chapter VII: Revitalizing Cultural Relics and Enriching People's Spiritual and Cultural Life

Section 1: Elevate the Exhibition and Communication of Cultural Relics

"Systematically categorize cultural relics resources, deeply excavate and elucidate the historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific/technological, and contemporary values embedded in cultural relics, strengthen the promotion and presentation of Chinese civilization identifiers, promote the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture, and enhance cultural confidence. Interpret and promote the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity embodied in World Heritage properties, and comprehensively showcase China's achievements in World Heritage protection and management. Deepen the interpretation and communication of cultural relics, implement the 'China Exhibition System Construction Project', and launch a series of high-quality exhibitions that display Chinese civilization symbols, reflect the national cultural image, and possess international influence."

*UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2021), paras. 108, 111. (Management planning and monitoring requirements were initially established in 1992).*

108. Each nominated property should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which must specify how the Outstanding Universal Value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means.

111. In recognizing the diversity mentioned above, common elements of an effective management system could include:

- a) a thorough shared understanding of the property by all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous peoples;
- b) a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback;
- c) the assessment of the vulnerabilities, risks and capabilities of the property to climate change impacts and other natural or human-made hazards, and the implementation of adaptation, risk management and disaster risk reduction measures;
- d) the involvement of partners and stakeholders;
- e) the allocation of necessary resources;
- f) capacity-building; and
- g) an accountable, transparent, and effective description of how the management system functions.

*Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 42, effective December 1, 2006).
Article 8
The protection plan for World Cultural Heritage shall be organized and formulated by the people's government at the provincial level. Institutions undertaking the task of formulating World Cultural Heritage protection plans shall obtain qualification certificates issued by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The protection plan for World Cultural Heritage shall clarify the standards and priorities for the protection of World Cultural Heritage, and define protection measures by category...
Article 15
Applications for nomination as World Cultural Heritage shall be submitted by the local people's government at or above the county level in the place where the proposed World Cultural Heritage is located to the people's government of the relevant province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government. Upon consent by the people's government of the province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government, the application shall be submitted to the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH). After examination and approval by SACH in conjunction with the competent administrative department of construction under the State Council and other relevant departments, the application shall be submitted to the State Council for approval.
For the cultural heritage part of a dual cultural and natural heritage nominated for World Heritage, the application shall be submitted to the State Council for approval after examination and approval by SACH in conjunction with the competent administrative department of construction under the State Council and other relevant departments.

***11.*** *Chapter4.4.1: Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, Decree No. 42, effective December 1, 2006).
Article 15
Applications for nomination as World Cultural Heritage shall be submitted by the local people's government at or above the county level in the place where the proposed World Cultural Heritage is located to the people's government of the relevant province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government. Upon consent by the people's government of the province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government, the application shall be submitted to the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH). After examination and approval by SACH in conjunction with the competent administrative department of construction under the State Council and other relevant departments, the application shall be submitted to the State Council for approval.
For the cultural heritage part of a dual cultural and natural heritage nominated for World Heritage, the application shall be submitted to the State Council for approval after examination and approval by SACH in conjunction with the competent administrative department of construction under the State Council and other relevant departments.
Article 19
The State Administration of Cultural Heritage shall, in accordance with the requirements of the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, organize the periodic submission of state of conservation reports on China's World Cultural

Heritage.
The State Administration of Cultural Heritage shall be responsible for organizing and carrying out the monitoring of the state of conservation of China's World Cultural Heritage.

***12.*** *Chapter5.2.1:* Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Protection and Management of World Cultural Heritage* (Order No. 41, promulgated November 14, 2006).
Article 4, Paragraph 2: Local people's governments at or above the county level and their competent cultural relics departments shall, pursuant to these Measures, formulate administrative regulations, implement operational measures, and assume responsibility for World Cultural Heritage undertakings within their administrative jurisdictions.
Article 8, Paragraph 1: Conservation plans for World Cultural Heritage shall be organized and formulated by provincial people's governments... Conservation plans for World Cultural Heritage shall clarify conservation standards and priorities, specify conservation measures by classification, and conform to the conservation requirements of UNESCO concerning World Cultural Heritage.
Article 13, Paragraph 1: Provincial people's governments shall designate conservation institutions for World Cultural Heritage. Such conservation institutions shall conduct daily maintenance and monitoring of the World Cultural Heritage and maintain operation logs.
Article 18: The State implements a monitoring and inspection system for World Cultural Heritage conservation, under which the National Cultural Heritage Administration establishes monitoring mechanisms to conduct relevant work.

*Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages (2008).*
Article 3: The protection of historic and cultural cities, towns, and villages shall adhere to the principles of scientific planning and rigorous conservation, maintaining and perpetuating their traditional layout and historical features, and safeguarding the authenticity and integrity of historical and cultural heritage...
Article 5, Paragraph 2: Local people's governments at all levels shall be responsible for the protection and supervisory management of historic and cultural cities, towns, and villages within their respective administrative areas.
Article 13, Paragraph 2: After a historic and cultural town or village is approved and announced, the local county people's government shall organize the formulation of a conservation plan for the historic and cultural town or village.
Article 20, Paragraph 2: Local people's governments at or above the county level shall strengthen supervision and inspection over the implementation of conservation plans within their administrative areas, and conduct evaluations on conservation conditions...

*Yixian County People's Government. Measures for the Protection and Management of the World Cultural Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun. Promulgated March 28, 2001.*
Article 6
Owners and users of houses within the protected area shall comply with management regulations, fulfill protection obligations for the properties they own or use, and sign heritage

protection responsibility agreements with the management authority.
Article 26
The protection and management of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage properties shall adhere to the principle of combining local administrative management with professional management.

***13.*** *Chapter5.2.2: Administrative Measures for the Conservation of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Sites (Yixian County People's Government, 2015),*
Article 1
In order to properly protect, develop, and utilize the World Cultural Heritage of ancient villages in Xidi and Hongcun, these Measures are formulated pursuant to the provisions of laws and regulations including the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, the *Urban Planning Law of the People's Republic of China*, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics*, the *Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China*, and the *Regulations of Anhui Province on the Protection of Ancient Residences in Southern Anhui*.
Article 2
The protection and management of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage properties shall adhere to the working guideline of "giving priority to protection and putting rescue first" and the guiding ideology of "effective protection, rational utilization, and strengthened management".
Article 6
Guiding ideologies and conservation contents for the protection and management of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage properties:
(2) Guiding ideology of active protection: Treating the ancient villages and their surroundings as an organic whole, properly handling the dialectical relationship between conservation and development, as well as between tradition and renewal, in response to continuous social changes. Mobilizing all positive factors, guiding the general public and residents to participate in ancient village protection and management undertakings, actively creating conditions to accommodate modern living demands, and ensuring that heritage protection and economic development mutually reinforce and complement each other.
(3) Conservation contents of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage: Protection of cultural relic sites across all grades; demarcation of graded protection boundaries within the ancient villages; protection of village landscape appearance and features; protection of village spatial layouts; control of building heights within the ancient villages, along with the inheritance of traditional culture and the promotion of economic development.
Article 33
Enterprises, public institutions, and individuals that utilize ancient dwellings to engage in tourism or other service industries and generate economic income must bear the expenses for the maintenance and conservation of ancient dwellings.

*Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun (Huangshan,*

*2010), General Principles and Implementation Guidelines.*

This plan is a specialized plan focusing on the protection of cultural heritage and its surrounding environment. Its primary contents include: further excavating cultural connotations, strengthening conservation and construction control measures in the core heritage area, regulating population size, rationally adjusting land-use functions, and formulating control measures for land and spatial resources; focusing on the protection and management of the overall integrity of village spatial landscapes, street network texture, as well as the authenticity of buildings and historical environments; proposing operational guidelines for preserving heritage components, renovating and improving exhibition environments, establishing service facility systems, and improving infrastructure and safety security systems. Geographical Information System (GIS) technology is adopted to establish a cultural heritage conservation and management information system and database for scientific management.

1.6 Guiding Principles for Planning

Implement the policy of "prioritizing protection, rescuing first, rational utilization, and strengthening management," adhere to comprehensive and active protection, appropriately handle the relationship between heritage conservation and economic/social development, resource management, and environmental protection, and achieve comprehensive sustainable development of the heritage site.

1.7.3 Principle of Rational and Sustainable Utilization

Excavate the social and economic values of historical and cultural heritage. On the one hand, implement reliable heritage protection; on the other hand, rationally conduct cultural exhibitions, tours, and exchanges, promoting the harmonious development of the heritage site's society, economy, and culture.

3.2.5 Architectural Constraints

(1) Plan Constraints: Centered around inner courtyards (skylights), freely configured and laid out according to the terrain;

(2) Elevation Constraints: Dominated by solid walls, whitewashed lime walls, and horse-head gables, complemented by small windows and brick door covers;

(3) Roof Constraints: Traditional small blue tiles, with single-sloped, double-sloped, or inverted four-sloped ("four waters returning to the hall") roofs (1:2);

(4) Story Constraints: Primarily two stories, with strict limitations on three stories;

(5) Structural Constraints: Post-and-beam (*tailiang*) and column-and-tie (*chuandou*) timber frames (specifically for protected buildings);

(6) Door and Window Constraints: Door and window frames made of green bricks or stone, with natural-colored wooden doors and windows;

(7) Exterior Wall Surface Constraints: Lime-plastered white walls; intentional artificial aging treatments are prohibited, and painting with modern materials is forbidden;

(8) Building Material Constraints: Timber, traditional blue tiles, local stone, and green bricks;

(9) Paving Constraints: Local stone, green bricks, and lime-sand-clay mortar (*sanhetu*).

3.2.6 Building Conservation Measures

(1) Daily Maintenance: Preventive measures to promptly mitigate potential damage caused by external forces, primarily involving continuous monitoring of vulnerable components, archiving records, and executing maintenance works in accordance with relevant standards;

(2) Protective Reinforcement: Reinforcement measures implemented for damaged structures. All measures must avoid causing damage to the original physical entity and preserve original environmental characteristics as much as possible. Newly added structures should be functionally modest with minimal aesthetic impact. Protected buildings repurposed as exhibition halls or museums must prioritize conservation requirements;
(3) Status Quo Maintenance: General engineering measures conducted without disturbing existing structures or adding new structural components, maintaining the present condition. Key tasks include straightening leaned, collapsed, or displaced elements, repairing minor damaged parts, and removing non-valuable modern additions. Detailed records must be kept for all removals and replacements;
(4) Major Restoration: Major engineering interventions involving substantial intervention with the original entity. Main tasks include restoring structural stability, adding necessary reinforcing frameworks, repairing damaged components, and replacing missing parts. Total dismantle-and-reassemble restoration must be used with caution; structures restored through dismantling must comprehensively eliminate hidden hazards to ensure long-term stability without re-repair. Restoration work should preserve valuable traces from various historical periods as much as possible, and restored elements must be based on existing physical evidence. Auxiliary cultural relics may only be dismantled when at risk of damage, and must be reinstalled in their original positions post-restoration. Approved off-site conservation projects also fall under this category;
(5) Environmental Governance: Comprehensive measures to prevent external damage, display original conditions of relics, and ensure rational utilization. Major tasks include removing architectural debris that could cause hazards or harm the landscape, halting production or social activities that endanger relics, preventing environmental pollution damage, and creating public service, security, and greening facilities. Service buildings must be located away from core relics, and exhibition/tour facilities should be uniformly designed and placed. Greening should restore historical conditions where possible, avoiding modern landscape techniques and preventing vegetation from damaging relics.
3.2.7 Control of Ordinary Buildings (Structures)
(1) Improvement: Construction activities carried out on historic buildings that adjust and refine internal layouts and facilities without altering external features. It refers to buildings that, despite suffering certain damage, maintain their traditional layout and appearance characteristics. Such buildings should be meticulously maintained and repaired; during restoration, internal improvements may be conducted to meet modern residential requirements while preserving external appearances and typical features.
Internal renovations should be carried out under the condition of preserving original appearances and traditional courtyard spatial composition features, adapted to modern residential requirements. For instance, Huizhou-style inns and guesthouses should be altered and repaired in selected traditional residences to function as family guesthouses exhibiting Huizhou cultural styles.
(2) Renovation: Reconstruction activities conducted on buildings (structures) and environmental elements that conflict with the historic features. It refers to buildings constructed in recent years in Xidi and Hongcun that, despite being incompatible in materials and scale with traditional features, require appropriate elevation adjustments in appearance

and color according to needs.
(3) Demolition: Refers to buildings constructed in recent years that do not conform to the overall landscape features of Xidi and Hongcun and severely impair visual landscape effects.
(4) Buildings (Structures) That Must Be Added for Community, Exhibition, and Other Undertakings:
Pay attention to mutual coordination between new and old buildings in the overall environment; preserve traditional architectural plan features that meet functional and aesthetic requirements, such as inner courtyards (skylights); maintain the characteristic small scale of Huizhou residential buildings, and pay attention to the treatment of courtyard spaces; building heights shall strictly be controlled below two stories; make reasonable and full use of spaces such as streets and lofts; new structural systems are allowed, but the style, proportions, scale, and construction methods are required to be traditional; exterior wall colors shall be lime-plastered white, and modern building materials such as ceramic tiles, mosaics, and colored pebbles are forbidden; adopt traditional horse-head gables, small blue tiles, sloped roofs, stone bases, and brickwork; door covers, window brows, brick/stone lattice windows, or ink paintings should be utilized rationally.
6.1.1 Core Heritage Area: Conservation as the Foundation and Rational Adjustment as the Means
Taking conservation as the prerequisite, protect heritage elements such as traditional spatial layout, street dimensions, and historic buildings, thereby continuing the historical and cultural environment. Curb purely commercial and profit-oriented construction activities, including the restoration, reconstruction, or alteration of construction projects primarily aimed at commercial profit within the core heritage protection area. Basic functional requirements suitable within the heritage area include: community management and service facilities, primary schools and nurseries, senior activity rooms, basic retail stores, cultural exhibition facilities, and municipal public utilities.
12.4 Regulations on Cultural Relics Protection
(1) Interventions on protected objects shall be avoided to preserve the authenticity of the building entities and the integrity of their environments;
(2) The surrounding historical environment and landscape shall be protected, avoiding arbitrary alterations to existing spatial layouts for the sake of highlighting a single historic building;
(3) Overall integrity shall be maintained to prevent potential constructional destruction, and all activities endangering protected cultural heritage units are strictly prohibited;
(4) The majority of ancient residences designated as cultural relics shall maintain their residential functions, and conditional development of Huizhou-style rural inns and guesthouses according to plans is encouraged to sustain the vitality of ancient village life.
12.5 Protection of Historic Buildings and Traditional Residences
(1) Dilapidated traditional residences shall be repaired in accordance with traditional craftsmanship methods and formal style requirements; additions incompatible with traditional features shall be altered or demolished. Repairs to damaged or missing parts of residences must harmonize with the building as a whole, preserving the continuity and integrity of historical forms;
(2) Improvements and alterations of traditional residences in the core heritage area shall

maintain traditional forms and scales. Ordinary buildings that severely damage the overall traditional style shall be demolished. Under the prerequisite of ensuring historical landscape integrity, open spaces may be appropriately created to facilitate public activities and exhibition/viewing events;
(3) The protective measure for historic buildings and traditional residences is "improvement," defined as a conservation measure that adjusts and refines internal layouts and facilities to adapt to modern living demands without altering external appearance characteristics;
(4) Selected areas designated by the plan shall undergo internal renovations of historic buildings and traditional residences according to modern living requirements—while maintaining original appearances and traditional courtyard spatial environment features—to improve and renovate a batch of family guesthouses rich in Huizhou cultural charm, keeping the traditional village living environment perpetually vibrant.
12.6 Renovation of Ordinary Buildings (Structures)
Renovation methods for ordinary buildings (Structures) are categorized into four types: retention, renovation, alteration, and demolition. General requirements for renovating such buildings stipulate that building heights shall predominantly be controlled at two stories, with strict limitations on three-story buildings. New structural systems and modern construction craftsmanship are permitted, provided that building volume, style, proportions, and scale are required to harmonize with the overall landscape. Exterior wall colors shall be controlled within "black, white, and gray," and modern exterior decorative materials such as ceramic tiles, mosaics, and colored pebbles are forbidden.
(1) Retention: Non-traditional buildings with good current structural quality whose architectural style is relatively coordinated with the overall village environment and causes minimal damage to historical integrity shall be retained.
(2) Renovation: Non-traditional buildings with fair current quality whose style is uncoordinated with the overall village landscape—and cannot be demolished immediately due to historical reasons—shall undergo exterior appearance renovation to reduce the degree of damage to the historical environment.
(3) Alteration/Demolition: Buildings causing significant damage to traditional features, those with poor construction quality, and temporary structures shall be demolished according to the plan. Buildings with retention value but significant height and style conflicts with traditional forms may undergo story reduction or roof-to-slope conversions to achieve overall coordination.

***14.*** *Chapter5.3.1: Measures of Yi County on the Protection and Management of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Properties (Order No. 3 of the People's Government of Yi County, 2006)*
Article 4
The county people's government shall lead the protection work of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage properties, and be responsible for formulating and organizing the implementation of the conservation plans for the ancient villages.
The people's governments of Xidi Town and Jilian Town shall strengthen the protection work of the ancient villages and incorporate ancient village protection tasks into the administrative chief executive responsibility system.

***15.*** *Chapter5.4.1: Administrative Measures for the Conservation of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Sites (Yixian County People's Government, 2015),*

4.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage Conservation Measures

Establish specialized conservation and research institutions; increase investment in intangible cultural heritage protection, and deeply excavate the connotations of intangible cultural heritage; construct exhibition platforms for intangible cultural heritage at the heritage sites (including the new area); refine the exhibition system; attach importance to the protection of local indigenous residents, leveraging the role and function of the community in intangible cultural heritage conservation and utilization, and relying on a stable community to safeguard intangible cultural heritage such as local customs, folkways, and regional dialects.

19.1.9 Heritage Site Community Construction and Development

(1) Adapt to future development requirements by strengthening the construction of community self-governance organizations at the heritage site, establishing a new type of community characterized by the heritage site and bound by Huizhou cultural identity, and constructing a new community organizational system;

(2) Expand community services and enrich community construction content, adding service functions in coordination with the new area construction, actively nurturing various non-governmental organizations and non-profit organizations, promoting networked community services, and improving residents' quality of life;

(3) Strengthen community management, improve community functions, reform grassroots management systems, and explore the establishment of community management frameworks and operational mechanisms under new circumstances;

(4) Adhere to the combination of governmental guidance and joint social participation, fully leveraging community strength, rationally allocating community resources, vigorously developing community undertakings, continuously improving villagers' civic literacy and the degree of civilization in the heritage site community, and striving to build a new type of community with orderly management and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

19.2 Legal and Regulatory Safeguards

19.2.1 Formulate village rules and customary agreements to regulate villagers' disorderly construction activities, and enhance villagers' protection awareness and affection for the heritage properties.

19.2.2 Establish non-governmental heritage protection associations and organizations.

*Measures of Yi County on the Protection and Management of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Properties (Order No. 3 of the People's Government of Yi County, 2006)*

Article 14 Construction Approval Procedures

For building extensions or alterations within the protected area, proposals must first be examined by the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Protection Committee of Yi County, and construction may only commence after completing approval procedures with relevant county functional departments.

Important new construction projects within the protected area that are genuinely necessary shall, depending on their scale, be submitted to provincial and municipal planning authorities for examination, and construction may only commence after completing approval procedures

with relevant county functional departments. All types of construction projects within the construction control zone and environment coordination zone shall be examined and approved by relevant county functional departments.

*UNESCO. Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC/2. Revised)[R]. Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1992: paragraphs 21, 24(b)(ii),*
21. States Parties are encouraged to prepare plans for the management of each natural site nominated and for the safeguarding of each cultural property nominated. All information concerning these plans should be made available when technical co-operation is requested.
24. (b)(ii) have adequate legal protection and management mechanisms to ensure the conservation of the nominated cultural property. The existence of protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level is therefore essential and must be stated clearly on the nomination form. Assurances of the effective implementation of these laws are also expected. Furthermore, in order to preserve the integrity of cultural sites, particularly those open to large numbers of visitors, the State Party concerned should be able to provide evidence of suitable administrative arrangements to cover the management of the property, its conservation and its accessibility to the public.

***16.*** *Chapter5.4.2: Yixian Regulations on the Management of Construction Projects within Heritage Sites (Yixian People's Government, 2018)*
Article 1
In order to further strengthen the management of housing maintenance and conservation in the core protection zones of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage sites, safeguard the authenticity and integrity of the World Cultural Heritage, and fulfill responsibilities and obligations under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, these Measures are formulated in accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and policy provisions—including the Urban and Rural Planning Law of the People's Republic of China, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics, the Regulations on the Protection of Historic Cities, Towns and Villages, the Regulations of Anhui Province on the Protection of Ancient Residences in Southern Anhui, the Measures for the Designation and Management of National Historic Cities, the Interim Measures of Huangshan City on the Protection and Utilization of Ancient Villages, and the Measures of Yi County on the Protection and Management of Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage—and in light of the actual conditions of this County.
Article 2
The scope of application of these Measures covers: the core protection zones of the Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui – Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage sites (i.e., the protection boundaries of national key historic building clusters of Xidi and Hongcun), namely the heritage zones. The specific boundaries shall be subject to the published four-cardinal limits set forth in the official announcement file Anhui Provincial Government Secretariat [2019] No. 68 regarding protected areas and construction control zones.
Article 3
Maintenance works referred to in these Measures primarily target routine and seasonal maintenance projects conducted for minor damage to building structures (hereinafter

referred to as "maintenance"). (Referencing Article 5 of the Measures for the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection Engineering) Conservation works primarily target essential structural reinforcement and repair applied to the main entities of building structures, including partial restoration projects carried out in conjunction with structural reinforcement (hereinafter referred to as "conservation"). (Referencing Article 5 of the Measures for the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection Engineering) Emergency reinforcement projects, protective facility construction projects, and relocation projects involving historic building units designated as cultural relics shall be executed in accordance with relevant rules. (Referencing Article 5 of the Measures for the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection Engineering)

Article 4

These Measures apply to the maintenance and conservation of all buildings within the core protection zones of Xidi and Hongcun heritage sites. The examination and approval authority for housing maintenance and conservation within the protected area shall be the local town people's government. Prior to granting approval, the town people's government shall, based on the nature of the building, solicit opinions from departments including the County Culture, Tourism, Sports and Radio Bureau, the County Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau, the County Natural Resources and Planning Bureau, and the County World Cultural Heritage Affairs Center. Construction projects conducted within the construction control zones of protected cultural heritage units shall not impair the historical style and features of the protected units; project design plans shall be agreed upon by the corresponding cultural relics administrative department according to the grade of the protected unit, and subsequently submitted to urban-rural construction and planning departments for approval. (Article 18 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics) Reassignment or delegation of examination and approval authorities shall follow the latest regulations.

Article 8

Application and Examination/Approval Procedures for Maintenance and Conservation Works: (1) Application: Building property owners or users shall submit an application for maintenance/conservation, specifying the proposed maintenance/conservation contents and building usages, to the village committee for preliminary review. (2) Preliminary Review: The village committee shall conduct a preliminary examination of property ownership, supporting documentation, proposed execution details, urgency, and necessity regarding the building, formulate review opinions, and report them to the town people's government. (3) Audit: The town people's government shall audit the application materials reported by the village committee, focusing on evaluating the authenticity, urgency, and necessity of the proposed execution. (4) Site Inspection: The town people's government shall take the lead in organizing joint on-site inspections with the County Culture, Tourism, Sports and Radio Bureau, the County Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau, the County Natural Resources and Planning Bureau, and the County World Cultural Heritage Affairs Center, and issue review opinions on whether to accept the application. (5) Design: For buildings accepted for execution, the town people's government shall issue application approval forms. Applicants shall hire qualified design institutions to draft design proposals, specify designated design and construction supervisors, and bear the design preparation costs. (6) Approval: Upon completion of the design proposal, the town people's government shall perform a preliminary

examination, solicit opinions on the design proposal from the departments involved in the on-site inspection, and then grant approval. Design proposals failing to conform to regulations shall be returned for redrafting. (7) Public Announcement: The town people's government shall forward approval decisions to the village committee for public display on bulletin boards for a duration of 7 days. (8) Acceptance Inspection: Upon project completion, the competent town people's government shall promptly lead joint on-site acceptance inspections involving the County Culture, Tourism, Sports and Radio Bureau, the County Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau, the County Natural Resources and Planning Bureau, the County World Cultural Heritage Affairs Center, as well as the design and construction units, to ensure engineering quality. Works failing to conform to regulations must be rectified according to the approved design proposals.

*UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris: UNESCO, 2003), Art. 15.*

Article 15 –Participation of communities, groups and individuals

"Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management."

*UNESCO, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, WHC/2. Revised (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1992), paras. 21, 24(b)(ii), 54(d)..*

Paragraph 21: "States Parties are encouraged to prepare plans for the management of each natural site nominated and for the safeguarding of each cultural property nominated. All information concerning these plans should be made available when technical co-operation is requested."

Paragraph 24 (b)(ii): "[cultural property nominated should] have adequate legal protection and management mechanisms to ensure the conservation of the nominated cultural property. The existence of protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level is therefore essential and must be stated clearly on the nomination form... the State Party concerned should be able to provide evidence of suitable administrative arrangements to cover the management of the property, its conservation and its accessibility to the public."

Paragraph 54 (d): "Measures for preservation/conservation (including management plans or proposals for such plans); Development plans for the region."

*UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), Arts. 4–5.*

Article 4:

"Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State..."

Article 5:

"To ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and

presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, each State Party to this Convention shall endeavor, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country:
(a) to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes;
(b) to set up within its territories, where such services do not exist, one or more services for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage with an appropriate staff and possessing the means to discharge their functions;
(c) to develop scientific and technical studies and research...;
(d) to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage..."

***17.*** *5.4.3: Administrative Measures for the Conservation of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Sites* (Yixian County People's Government, 2015).
Article 10:
Grade I and Grade II protected buildings, primary streets/lanes, and water spaces must preserve their original appearance; neither exterior modifications nor internal structural adjustments and modern decorations are permitted. Maintenance and upkeep genuinely required must adhere to the principle of "not altering the original state of cultural relics".
Article 12:
Maintenance and repair of ancient residences and appurtenances shall strive to reflect their original appearance, using corresponding original techniques and materials to recover original historic features, embodying the principle of "restoring the old as old".
Article 14:
Reconstruction, repair, alteration, expansion, and major rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings along streets, lanes, alleys, streams, canals, and other water bodies (ponds, lakes), as well as within sightlines, must be based on Ming and Qing Huizhou architectural layouts, techniques, crafts, materials, and styles, featuring traditional elements such as white walls, horse-head walls (matouqiang), pitched roofs, small grey tiles, decorative eave drip tiles, traditional timber lattice windows, historic roof ridges, ancient doorway/window hoods (menzhao), and carved lintels.
Article 15:
Larger discordant and out-of-scale modern buildings shall undergo demolition, volume reduction, or height reduction, and be remodeled into traditional Huizhou architectural styles pursuant to Article 14.
Article 16:
Opening new commercial storefronts along primary streets and lanes is strictly prohibited; non-conforming storefronts must be converted using traditional timber panel doors or folding doors, and security shutter doors, rolling gates, aluminum doors/windows, and concrete drainage slots are banned.
Article 17:
Redevelopment of vacant land within Protection Zones shall be strictly controlled; aside from restoring necessary traditional supporting residential buildings, vacant parcels shall primarily be landscaped with greenery, with tree species carefully selected to harmonize with ancient

village conservation.
Article 23:
Overhead utility lines (electricity, telecommunications, and cable networks) within the ancient villages must be buried underground or installed inconspicuously in accordance with conservation requirements.
Article 24, Item (5):
Hotels, restaurants, and commercial business premises are prohibited from installing external air-conditioning condensing units facing pedestrian alleys along tour routes and primary streets/lanes, or in close proximity to residential windows.

*Huangshan Municipal Planning Bureau and Yixian County People's Government, Conservation Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui—Xidi and Hongcun (Huangshan, 2010), General Principles and Implementation Guidelines.*
Article 3
Environmental Renovation Contents and Measures
Renovation refers to governance activities targeted at non-traditional spatial forms and entities in the heritage sites, urging the rectification of elements that severely impair the authenticity and integrity of heritage landscapes, including measures such as demolition, height reduction, material alteration, color modification, and functional conversion.
Under planning management measures, construction restrictions and governance shall be enforced on the following elements to purify the environment of the historic villages:
(1) Newly built or expanded residential housing;
(2) Construction of general tourism reception facilities and commercial service facilities;
(3) Construction of general community service facilities (such as administrative management buildings, middle schools, etc.).
The fundamental requirement for landscape renovation is the elimination of visual pollution. For heritage protection and exhibition, the absence of visual pollution not only purifies the visual field and refreshes visitors' perception, but also helps them acquire an integral and favorable experience, deepening their understanding, perception, and identification with Huizhou culture. To remove visual pollution, full-scale actions must be taken in space from top to bottom and from inside to outside, eliminating all unreasonable elements that affect visual experience, including: removing rain canopies, exposed overhead cables, haphazardly parked vehicles, and other elements destructive to landscapes. These structures shall be maintained and repaired, and those whose appearance cannot be fundamentally transformed shall be restored to their historic appearance.
However, with social development, economic progress, material prosperity, and cultural diversification, traditional culture in Xidi and Hongcun will inevitably face external influences, posing challenges to Huizhou culture. Myopic practices have resulted in certain features in Xidi and Hongcun that are inconsistent with or even contradictory to Huizhou culture, leading to growing indifference toward Huizhou culture among both indigenous residents and visitors. Therefore, the construction of Huizhou cultural landscapes in Xidi and Hongcun must be strengthened through the following aspects:
(1) Eliminating all unreasonable elements in landscapes that do not conform to Huizhou culture;
(2) Emphasizing landscape details to reflect broader cultural values from minute elements,

preventing subtle flaws from undermining overall conservation;
(3) Integrating landscapes with Huizhou culture by designing a comprehensive interpretive system;
(4) Fully embodying the artistic conception of Huizhou culture through landscape renovation, making the villages an emblem and symbol of Huizhou culture on the one hand, and utilizing Huizhou culture as the primary attraction for tourists on the other
Article 10
Key Areas for Protection and Renovation
(1) Fengshui visual corridor: From Leigang Hill to Pailou Hill. Within the scope of this visual corridor and viewshed slope, new constructions shall be systematically removed;
(2) Moon Pond (Yuezhao): Protecting the surrounding architectural interfaces and spatial landscape;
(3) South Lake (Nanhu) and South Lake Academy: Protecting water bodies and surrounding environments along the lake, including ancient buildings and ancient trees;
(4) Leigang Hill and its southern foot: Protecting forest vegetation and cyclobalanopsis / castanopsis groves;
(5) Village entrance: Renovating the central plaza space around ancient Chinese sweetgum (red poplar) and ginkgo trees and its surrounding environment (including buildings, main street entrance, bridge, and revetments).
Article 15
Exhibition Planning Objectives and Contents
Objectives and Planning Contents
(1) Exhibit unique historical culture and human-ecological landscapes, enhance national pride, stimulate patriotism, promote cultural exchanges, and advance the exploration of World Cultural Heritage connotations;
(2) Understand the state of China's World Heritage and Huizhou culture, strengthening the sense of responsibility for inheriting national culture;
(3) Control reasonable visitor carrying capacity;
(4) Conduct spatial layouts of exhibition functional zoning, configure supporting exhibition service facilities (dining, shopping, and reception facilities), and organize exhibition transportation plans.
Exhibition Thematic Zoning
Concentrated Exhibition:
Geographic environment of southern Anhui; concepts, spatial distribution, and value presentation of ancient villages in southern Anhui; introductions to regional key ancient villages and village history; origins, migration chronology, construction and developmental processes of the Wang lineage, historical celebrities, and the nomination trajectory of World Heritage, etc.
Guided Tour Exhibition:
The two heritage sites shall scientifically and reasonably reintegrate the original visiting and exhibition itineraries, and revise tourist guide commentaries in accordance with World Cultural Heritage principles. Interpretive commentaries must not only accurately explain historical remains, but also integrate real-world narratives explaining the historical process of conservation.

Exhibition Service Facilities

Layout of Exhibition Service Facilities

(1) Exhibition service facilities include visitor centers (specialized venues providing tourism facilities and services such as information, consultation, itinerary arrangements, guided tours, education, and rest);

(2) Install navigational signs including overall tour guide maps, route guides, directional signage, and interpretive plaques for specific landscape features;

(3) Establish public resting facilities for tourists on the west side of the Yitai Highway in Hongcun;

(4) Establish a medical first-aid station in conjunction with the local health center;

(5) Rationally distribute water-flushed eco-friendly public restrooms to meet spatial demands;

(6) Arrange categorized trash receptacles with reasonable layouts harmonizing with the surrounding environment;

(7) Configure telecommunication and postal facilities in coordination with village entrance zones;

(8) Layout shopping facilities in conjunction with visitor centers and rest/exhibition areas;

(9) Arrange the management administrative center in conjunction with the visitor center.

***18.*** *6.2.1: Measures for the Administration of the Xidi–Hongcun World Cultural Heritage Site (Yixian People's Government, 2006).*

Article 3

The protection and administration of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage refer to the management of planning, construction, cultural relics, real estate transactions, markets, municipal public utilities, and comprehensive social security governance within the planned protected zones.

Article 4

The Yixian People's Government shall lead the protection work of the Xidi and Hongcun World Cultural Heritage, and be responsible for formulating and implementing ancient village protection plans.

Article 37

All entities or individuals applying for reconstruction, new construction, renovation, expansion or alteration of buildings within protected zones and construction control zones must strictly complete approval and construction procedures in accordance with relevant provisions:

1. Present original house property certificates and land use right certificates.

2. Submit a housing construction application, together with floor plans, elevations (front and side elevations, sectional drawings), exterior component styles, roof layout, exterior wall finishing specifications and termite prevention plans for the proposed building.

3. After initial inspection by the village committee and scenic area management office, the Heritage Protection Administration shall organize an expert panel on ancient villages to conduct on-site surveys and reviews. Upon approval by the management committee, applicants shall complete formalities with relevant county functional departments and pay prescribed fees to obtain Construction Permits before commencement of construction.

***19.*** *6.3.1: Huangshan Urban and Rural Planning Bureau & Yixian County People's Government.*

*Protection Plan for the Ancient Villages of Southern Anhui (2010).*

Chapter 15 Exhibition Planning:

15.1 Objectives and Content of Exhibition Planning

15.1.1 Objectives and Planning Content

1. Exhibit unique historical culture and humanistic landscapes, enhance national pride, stimulate patriotism, promote cultural exchange and advance the excavation of the connotations of World Heritage.

2. Improve public understanding of China's World Heritage and Huizhou culture, and strengthen the sense of responsibility for inheriting national culture.

3. Control reasonable visitor carrying capacity.

4. Zoning layout for exhibition functions, with supporting catering, shopping and reception services, as well as exhibition transportation planning.

15.2 Thematic Exhibition Zones

15.2.1 Centralized Exhibition

Exhibition contents include: geographical environment of Southern Anhui; definition of ancient villages in Southern Anhui; distribution of ancient villages; value interpretation of ancient villages; introduction of key regional ancient villages; village history; origin and migration of the Wang clan; village construction and development; distinguished figures throughout history; and the World Heritage inscription process.

15.2.2 Sightseeing Exhibition

The original sightseeing routes of the two heritage sites shall be scientifically and rationally restructured. Tour guide scripts shall be revised in line with World Heritage concepts. Scripts shall accurately document historical relics and incorporate narratives about heritage conservation practices.

15.2.3 Participatory Exhibition

1. Ancestor worship activities: clan recognition, genealogy compilation, ancestral hall rituals, tomb sacrifices, etc.

2. Production activities: beam-laying ceremonies, tea picking and processing, the Three Carvings (wood, brick, stone crafts), etc.

3. Daily life activities: weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, etc.

4. Recreational activities: phoenix dances, bird-fighting, cricket-fighting, etc.

15.2.4 Experiential Exhibition

1. Selectively and controllably operate rural folk inns and guesthouses in traditional dwellings within the core heritage zone.

2. Develop leisure and holiday reception facilities consistent with heritage features and the surrounding natural environment in the heritage buffer zone, integrated with county and town construction plans.

15.3 Visitor Capacity Control

Based on questionnaire analysis of local residents' acceptance and spatial carrying capacity measurement (area and road capacity methods), the plan sets a reasonable daily and annual visitor capacity:

1,200–2,000 visitors per day; 350,000–700,000 visitors per year.

15.4 Exhibition Service Facilities

15.4.1 Layout of Exhibition Service Facilities

1. Visitor centers: dedicated spaces providing information, consultation, itinerary planning, guided tours, education and rest services.
2. Directional signage: general site maps, tour route maps, identification plaques and scenic introduction boards.
3. Public rest facilities along the west side of Yitai Highway in Hongcun.
4. Medical rescue centers combined with township health clinics.
5. Well-distributed waterless eco-public toilets to meet visitor demand.
6. Classified waste bins arranged in harmony with the surrounding environment.
7. Communication and postal facilities placed near entrances and exits.
8. Shopping facilities integrated with visitor centers and rest areas.
9. Management centers co-located with visitor centers.

15.4.2 Control Requirements for Service Facilities

1. Height limit: 1–2 storeys.
2. Main entrances and exits shall be built outside the buffer zone; other auxiliary facilities shall be arranged along tour routes. Architectural styles, volumes and color schemes shall complement the landscape and surrounding environment.

15.5 Exhibition Transportation Organization

Sightseeing routes are organized around three core themes:

1. Hongcun's natural environment: a macro landscape embodying the harmony between humanity and nature.
2. Hongcun village morphology: a mesoscale settlement built for clan cohabitation.
3. Hongcun architectural fabric: exquisite micro-scale traditional buildings.

Clean-energy transport vehicles shall be used around the core heritage zone. Transport transfer centers and eco-shuttle stops shall be set at all village entrances and exits.

## Appendix 2 : Construction Design Drawings for the Restoration Project of Zhuimutang, Xidi Village Ancient Architectural Complex

*Construction Design Specifications for the Restoration Project of Zhui Mu Hall within the Ancient Architectural Complex of Xidi Village*

I. Design Basis

1. “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics” (2017)
2. “Regulations on the Implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics” (2017)
3. *Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Historic Sites in China* (2015)
4. *Technical Standards for the Maintenance and Reinforcement of Wooden Structures in Historic Buildings* (GB/T 50165-2020)
5. *Standard for the Design of Timber Structures* (GB 50005-2017)
6. Code for Design of Masonry Structures (GB 50003-2011)
7. Code for Fire Protection in Architectural Design (GB50016--2014)
8. *Standard for Survey and Design of Civil Building Renovation Projects* (JGJ/T 117—2019)
9. Technical Specifications for the Repair of Building Leaks (JGJ/T53-2011)
10. “Guidelines for Fire Protection Design of Historic Buildings (Trial)” (2015)
11. “Administrative Measures for Cultural Heritage Conservation Projects” (2003)
12. “Unified Standard for Architectural Drawing” (GB/T 50001-2017)
13. *Standards for Site Plan Drafting* (GB/T50103-2010)
14. *Standards for Architectural Drafting* (GB/T50104-2010)
15. “Requirements for the Level of Detail in the Preparation of Design Documents for Cultural Heritage Conservation Projects (Interim)” (2013)
16. “Regulations on the Protection of Ancient Residential Buildings in Southern Anhui Province” (2004)
17. Other relevant national standards and technical specifications
18. Design Contract for This Project
19. Local Traditional Practices

II. Scope of Work

The scope of this restoration project covers the entire Zhui Mu Hall and the improvement of its surrounding environment, including the entrance hall, front courtyard and east and west side corridors, ceremonial hall, rear courtyard and east and west side corridors, and sleeping quarters. The total frontage is 11.2 meters, the total depth is 34.5 meters, and the total 474.75 square meters, and a total floor area of 497.18 square meters.

III. Design Principles and Guiding Philosophy

（1）Design Principles

In accordance with the cultural heritage protection policy of “prioritizing preservation, giving top priority to emergency rescue, ensuring rational use, and strengthening management,” the project design and construction must strictly comply with the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics,” the “Measures for the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection Projects” issued by the Ministry of Culture, and other relevant laws,

regulations, and standards. With reference to the "Chinese Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Historic Sites," the following principles are hereby established:

1. Principle of Preserving the Original State of Cultural Relics

To effectively preserve the building's historical information, the primary objective is to protect the existing valuable physical artifacts and preserve the traces of information left by significant events and prominent figures. The original appearance and architectural characteristics of the building must be maintained, and the historical appearance and architectural features of the cultural relic must be preserved as authentically and completely as possible. It is essential to strictly adhere to the principle of not altering the original state of the cultural relic, ensure its safety, and maintain its authenticity and integrity. Restoration shall be based primarily on existing valuable physical evidence, and the original state shall be restored based on such evidence.

2. Principle of Minimal Intervention

For any parts that do not pose significant immediate danger, no intervention beyond routine maintenance shall be performed. When intervention is necessary, conservation measures shall be applied only to the most essential parts, preserving as much of the cultural heritage building's authentic historical information and value as possible. The primary objectives of the conservation measures adopted shall be to prolong the building's life and mitigate damage.

3. Principle of Original Materials, Dimensions, and Craftsmanship To preserve the architectural style and distinctive features of the building, the layout, form, and structure of the cultural heritage site shall be preserved in their original state, with implementation based on thorough analysis and justification. Original building materials shall be used to the greatest extent possible, and existing architectural components shall be fully preserved. During the repair process, the building's existing traditional construction methods shall serve as the primary restoration approach to eliminate existing hazards. Any replacement components used in the repair work shall be restored using original materials, original techniques, and original construction methods. The form, structure, materials, and traditional craftsmanship of the historic building must not be altered.

4. Principle of Identifiability

Detailed records and identification markers shall be maintained for all restored sections. To ensure the unity of the facade and visual appearance after repair, newly added or replaced components shall be distinguished through methods such as engraving, stamping, or ink marking, and the date of repair shall be recorded, thereby upholding the authenticity of the historic building to the greatest extent possible.

5. Principle of Reversibility

The techniques and materials used must be reversible to prevent damage to the cultural heritage site.

6. Proper Application of Aesthetic Standards

Aesthetic standards for cultural heritage sites primarily emphasize historical authenticity; altering the original

condition of a cultural relic in pursuit of completeness or grandeur is not permitted.

7. Principle of Protecting the Cultural Heritage Environment

The historical environment of cultural heritage sites must be protected; no construction activities that destroy the historical character of the environment, pollute the environment, or

compromise environmental safety shall be permitted.

8. Principle of Rational Utilization

On the premise of fully protecting and respecting the cultural relics themselves, and adhering to scientific, moderate, sustainable, and reasonable utilization, cultural relics shall be effectively protected, and their appeal shall be enhanced through appropriate development, thereby ensuring their sustainable development through conservation.

（2）Guiding Principles

1. Eliminate major existing defects, damage, and safety hazards, and carry out evidence-based restoration of altered or damaged features.

2. During repairs, original components should be preserved as much as possible. For weak points in loadbearing components or areas with poor structural rigidity, methods such as patching, splicing, and reinforcement with metal fittings may be used—provided they do not affect the appearance—to address issues such as the reinforcement of columns, beams, and crossbeams that are severely rotten or cracked.

3. When repairing old components, replacing unusable original components, or restoring original components, materials of the same texture as the original components should be used.

4. Repairs should follow the sequence of “foundations first, then timber structures; roof tiles first, then floors.”

5. In conjunction with maintenance works, properly coordinate and improve technical measures such as fireproofing, pest control, and anti-corrosion.

IV. Scope of Repairs

1. Completely re-roof the entire structure. Select standard blue tiles and have them custom-fired by a traditional architecture manufacturer to replenish blue tiles and eave tiles. Re-tile the gable walls, remove weeds, replenish blue tiles and eave tiles, and repair or add roofing materials where necessary after removal.

2. In accordance with the client’s requirements, install a 2mm-thick MAC self-adhesive roll waterproofing membrane on the roof, to be installed by a specialized contractor.

3. Replace rotten wooden rafters with replicas matching the material and specifications of the existing rafters. Replace and supplement the roof boarding.

4. Realign the wooden framework; re-secure dislodged tenoned components; reinforce, patch, and re-tenon; replace rotten beams, joists, and purlins; and splice and patch wooden columns.

5. Reinforce cracks in the walls and cover them with traditional plaster. Demolish the attached exterior corridor; preserve the door opening to the hall as-is; remove the wall and install an electrical meter box.

6. Chisel away the added concrete floor and restore the 420×420 mm diagonal-jointed mixed-soil floor; repair the courtyard stone slab floor, reinstall the step edging stones in their original positions, and restore the wooden flooring in the sleeping quarters and side rooms; preserve the remaining column bases and stone slab marks in the entrance hall as-is.

7. Demolish the outer colonnade along the entrance hall and build a partition wall behind it; restore decorative elements such as the exterior door and floor mats; replace carved components—such as bracket blocks and flatbottomed brackets—that do not conform to the

original style; the red paint added to the rear of the entrance hall's outer colonnade will be preserved as-is due to its age; newly replaced components will not be painted for the time being to ensure their identifiability; the later-added stone lions and carved decorative panels will be removed and handed over to the local cultural heritage authorities for safekeeping; after dismantling the sleeping hall, a shrine platform will be built; the later-applied lacquer and painted decorations will be stripped; the door panels will be restored; and the side rooms' vertical posts, upper sills, and paneling will be restored.

8. Restore missing wooden carved components; repair or replace rotten wooden carved components; and replace wooden carved components that do not conform to the original style.

9. Clear the hidden drainage ditches in the courtyard, organize the surrounding and underground drainage systems, repair the exposed drainage ditches around the perimeter, and remove silt and debris from the drainage channels.

10. Termite control and insect prevention must be carried out by professional teams, taking into full account any potential adverse impacts on the historic timber structures and carved wooden components. Newly installed timber components shall receive two coats of tung oil for anti-corrosion and preservative treatment. Specialized engineering works such as lightning protection and security systems shall have dedicated technical proposals prepared by professional design firms, which are to be submitted separately for review and approval.

11. The traces of water-repellent bricks remaining on the east and west side walls shall be preserved as-is. Structures built against the rear of the east side—such as a washbasin and storage shed—and those against the rear of the west side—such as an outdoor corridor—shall be demolished, and the surrounding area shall undergo environmental improvement.

12. Fire extinguishing equipment shall be provided; lightning protection facilities shall be installed on the roof to safeguard the building; and a surveillance and anti-theft system shall be added. All of these shall be designed and implemented by professional teams; the installation of electrical wiring indoors is not permitted.

13. Following repairs, the building shall be furnished with traditional Huizhou ancestral hall furnishings and opened to visitors as part of the Xidi Ancient Village tourist experience.

14. Original components should be preserved as much as possible. For damaged components that serve a structural function, or for elements that embody aesthetic and historical value, necessary restoration should be carried out where supported by historical evidence.

15. Replaced components shall be documented and made visually distinguishable.

16. Reinforced sections must be securely connected to the original structure and components.

17. During construction, carefully inspect hidden areas such as columns against walls and thatched roof frames; promptly document any damage found and contact the design firm immediately.

V. Construction Methods

（1） Roof Tiles and Wooden Roof Substrate

1. Since all roof tiles, wall-capping tiles, and standing tiles are damaged or missing, repair work must involve removing all roof tiles, adding new tiles, and re-laying, re-spreading, and re-covering them, while maintaining the requirement of a "one-overlap, five-spread" tile pattern. When laying roof tiles, snap lines horizontally and vertically, dividing the area equally

from the center outward. Lay the tiles from right to left, with each course laid from the eaves toward the ridge.

2. The ridge tile groove shall be constructed and compacted using a traditional lime-sand mortar mixture in a ratio of 4:6 (lime to sand). After laying the blue tiles horizontally and leveling them, proceed to construct the vertical ridge. When erecting the vertical ridge, ensure the blue tiles are positioned vertically to meet the standard of 95–10 tiles per meter.

3. Wall-top tile work:

After completely removing the original ridge tiles, lay and compact the tiles using a mortar mixture of white lime to sand in a ratio of 4:6. After laying the blue tiles horizontally and leveling them, proceed to construct the vertical ridge.

When erecting the vertical ridge, ensure the blue tiles are positioned vertically to meet the standard requirement of 95–100 tiles per meter.

4. Wooden Roof Substrate:

Roof construction: Install wooden battens over the wooden purlins. Use 50×60 mm wooden battens with a center-to center spacing of 220 mm. Lay 15 mm thick roof tiles on the battens, nailing them securely across the width of the roof, followed by the blue tiles. After removing all roof battens, reinstall them. For battens that are severely rotten and can no longer be used, or for missing battens, fabricate new ones using the original materials and specifications. When fabricating eave battens, pay special attention to the curved end of the batten.

5. For any missing materials—such as tiles, hook-heads, and drip edges—select existing standard sizes and order them from a manufacturer specializing in historic architecture. Strictly accept only products that meet quality standards before they are brought onto the site to ensure the original condition remains unchanged. For the blue tiles of Zhuimu Hall, select standard pieces from the existing stock; for hook pieces and drip edges, standard components.

（2）Floor Work

1. Three-component soil pavement: The mixture consists of slaked lime, coarse sand, and clay in a ratio of 2:4:4. After adding an appropriate amount of water and mixing thoroughly, let it sit for about 48 hours. When ready for installation, add an appropriate amount of water and mix well. Lay the mixture in layers, tamping it down until it is generally firm. Let it sit for one day, then use a thicker three-component soil mixture to lay and tamp the surface until level, working out any excess slurry, and allow it to air dry naturally. Another method involves evenly applying 3–5 coats of raw tung oil to the surface after it has dried.

2. Wooden Flooring: The wooden flooring consists of 50mm-thick cedar planks, each 200–300mm wide. During restoration, first chisel away the concrete or floor tiles, level the subfloor, reinstall the wooden joists, and renail the wooden planks, ensuring they are level. During installation, place a small amount of desiccant under the floor to prevent excessive moisture.

（3） Wall Construction Method

The walls are constructed as hollow-core walls. Masonry method: Double-layered bricks (dimensions 280 × 140 × 25 mm) are laid on both the inner and outer sides, with bricks laid flush without protruding; red clay is filled in the center. Masonry is performed using a plumb line on both sides, and the mortar used is trowel-consistency mortar. During construction, props should be installed promptly; the prop beams should be fitted with wooden braces. Support posts: 1 meter to 1.2 meters; support materials: use available timber to fully brace

the structure. The exterior retaining walls of Zhimu Hall have developed vertical cracks and hollow spots in some sections due to years of weathering and uneven settlement. The specific repair measures are as follows:

1. For cracks in the walls, after removing dust from the wall surfaces, reinforce them with 30×30×100 mm steel plates spaced 300–400 mm apart.

2. For areas showing expansion, perform localized repairs by removing and re-masoning the affected sections as necessary to correct the issue.

3. For hollow or peeling sections of the exterior walls, remove the affected areas, sweep away loose debris, moisten the wall surface, and apply a traditional plaster finish. The junction between the newly plastered wall and the existing wall should blend naturally, without sharp edges or overly noticeable color differences.

（4）Wooden

Frame 1. Propping and Realignment To address the warping and tilting of the wooden framework at Zhimu Hall, repairs were carried out using the method of propping and realigning. “Propping and realignment” involves using support poles to prop up the structure and realign the wooden framework.

The general procedure is as follows:

① First, prop up the severely warped sections of the building with support poles to prevent further warping or collapse;

② Remove the roof tiles, scrape off the mud backing, dismantle supporting structures such as gable walls and parapet walls, and remove the facing bricks and rafters to expose the main wooden framework;

③ Remove the expansion wedges (wooden wedges) and locking notches from the mortiseand- tenon joints of the timber framework; if there are metal fittings, loosen them;

④ Mark the centerline and plumb line on the outer surface of the columns (if the original lines are clearly visible, they may be used instead);

⑤ Prop up the framework with braces in the opposite direction of the skew, while simultaneously hoisting and adjusting it to realign the skewed framework;

⑥ Secure the braces, reinstall the notches, plug the expansion holes, reattach the metal fittings, pad the column bases, and then lay the sill walls, build the gable walls, nail the purlins and ridge tiles, and lay the roof tiles. Remove the braces once all work is complete. Bracing and realignment is a repair measure used when a building is severely skewed but the main timber components are still intact, requiring no replacement or only the replacement of a few individual pieces.

2. Columns

For drying shrinkage cracks in wooden columns, when their depth does not exceed one-third of the column’s diameter or the cross-sectional dimension in that direction, they may be repaired using the following filling methods: If the crack width is less than 3 mm, it can be filled tightly with putty during the column’s oil-finishing or whitewashing process. If the crack width is between 3 mm and 30 mm, it can be filled with wooden strips and secured with a modified structural adhesive.

When the crack width exceeds 30 mm, in addition to filling the crack tightly with wooden strips secured using modified structural adhesive, 2 to 3 layers of steel hoops or fiber-reinforced composite hoops should be added to the cracked section of the column. If the

cracked section of the column is relatively long, the number of hoops should be appropriately increased.

When the depth of a drying shrinkage crack exceeds the column diameter or one-third of the cross-sectional dimension in that direction, or when longitudinal cracks in the column body are caused by frame tilting or torsion, treatment in accordance with the method described in Item 3) should only be carried out after the frame has been repaired and realigned. If such cracks are located in critical load-bearing areas of the column, reinforcement measures should be taken or the column replaced, depending on the specific circumstances. Load-induced cracks or wrinkles in columns, as well as diagonal cracks that are still developing, must be monitored and subjected to strength verification, and reinforcement measures or column replacement should be implemented based on the specific circumstances. When wooden columns exhibit varying degrees of decay and require repair or reinforcement, the following methods of chiseling and patching or butt jointing may be used If the core of the column is intact, only the surface layer is rotten, and calculations show that the remaining cross-sectional area still meets structural requirements, the rotten portion may be thoroughly chiseled out. After preservative treatment, the area should be neatly repaired with dry timber to match the original shape and dimensions, and bonded with a water-resistant adhesive. When performing perimeter chiseling and patching, 2 to 3 steel hoops should also be added.

When the base of a column is severely decayed but the decayed area extends no more than 1/4 of the column's height from the base upward, the column base may be repaired using a base-spur joint.

When applying a base-spur joint, select one of the following methods based on the extent and location of the decay, as well as the material used for the spur:

① For wooden splicing, first remove the decayed section, then select the appropriate mortise-and-tenon joint style (palm-sized tenon or kop-style tenon) based on the remaining structure. During construction, in addition to ensuring a tight fit between the tenon and mortise, iron hoops or composite hoops made of carbon fiber cloth bonded in a double-cross pattern should be installed.

②. Stone splicing: This method can be used for non-exposed columns or for columns where the height of the decayed section at the base is less than 200 mm. For exposed columns, a stone block can be machined to a diameter 100 mm smaller than the original column. The block should be encased with thick wooden planks and securely nailed in place, and an iron band should be added at the joint with the original column.

When the interior of a wooden column is rotten or hollowed out by insects, but the intact outer layer is at least 50 mm thick, the core may be filled with wood of the same species or similar properties and bonded tightly with structural adhesive. When wood filling is not feasible, reinforcement may be achieved by grouting with polymeric materials, in accordance with the following provisions:

1) Holes should be drilled in areas of the column where stress is low. If the column is hollow throughout its entire length, a square hole may first be chiseled at the base of the column; the width of this hole shall not exceed 120 mm, and additional holes shall be chiseled at intervals of 500 mm until the top of the hollow section is reached.

2) Before grouting, all rotten wood debris and fragments must be thoroughly removed from the hollow section of the column.

3） When the diameter of the hollow section in the column exceeds 150 mm, it is recommended to fill the core of the column with wood of the same species.

4） Resin should be poured until the cavity is fully saturated; each pour should not exceed 3,000 g, and the interval between pours should be at least 30 minutes.

3. Beams and Braces

1） . When repairing rot in beam and brace members by bonding wood patches, first thoroughly remove the rotten sections. After preservative treatment, dry wood should be cut to the required shape and dimensions to form repair blocks, which should be securely bonded using modified epoxy structural adhesive and then fastened with steel hoops or bolts. If replacement is necessary, new members should be fabricated from dry wood of the same species as the original member and should undergo preservative treatment in advance.

2） For shrinkage cracks in beams and joists, the following provisions shall apply:

① When the depth of a horizontal crack in a member (or the sum of two opposing cracks, if present) is less than 1/3 of the beam's width or diameter, the crack may be repaired by filling. First, use wooden strips and a water resistant adhesive to the gap is securely filled and bonded, and then tighten it with at least two layers of steel, fiberglass, or carbon fiber straps.

②. When the crack depth of a member exceeds the limit specified in Paragraph 1 of this section, a load-bearing capacity verification calculation shall be performed. If the verification results satisfy the structural requirements, the repair method described in Paragraph ① of this section may still be used; if the structural requirements are not met, the method described in Section 3 shall be followed.

3） When the deflection of beam or girder members exceeds the specified limit or signs of fracture are detected, the following procedures shall be followed:

①. Support the beam from below with columns;

②. Where conditions permit, reinforce the beam or girder by embedding carbon fiber plates or structural steel within it, or by employing other reinforcement methods;

③ Replace the member.

4） For repairs to beams and joists with dislodged tenons, the following repair methods shall be adopted based on the cause of the problem:

① If the tenon is intact and has come loose solely due to a tilted post, first realign the post, then secure it with metal fasteners.

②. When the beam and joist are intact but have become disjointed solely due to rot or fracture of the tenon, first thoroughly remove the damaged sections, cut a mortise at the end of the beam or joist, treat it with a preservative, and then insert a newly made hardwood tenon into the mortise. During the reattachment process, the tenon should be firmly bonded to the original member using modified epoxy structural adhesive and secured with metal fasteners. The cross-sectional dimensions of the tenon and its embedment length within the original member should be determined by calculation. Additionally, a clamp should be applied along the entire embedment length to ensure a secure fit.

5） For lateral deformation and upward warping of rafter-supporting beams, the following repair methods should be adopted based on the specific manner in which the rafters intersect with the rafter-supporting beams， the following repair methods should be adopted:

① When the rafter end rests on the rafter support beam, a pressure beam may be added to the rafter support beam and secured with bolts.

②. When the rafter end is embedded in the groove on the outer side of the rafter support beam, attach a wooden block to the underside of the rafter. Secure the block to the rafter support beam with bolts, and fasten the rafter end to the block with square-head nails.

4. Purlins

Split beams: Repair as for beam joists; If tenons are pulled out, connect them with flat iron strips, 4–5 mm thick and 300–400 mm long; If the depth of rot is <30 mm, apply preservative treatment on-site; If the rot depth exceeds 30 mm, the affected area shall be chiseled out, patched, and spliced, or the member replaced, depending on site conditions.

5. Wooden

Rafters If the ends of the rafters are rotten and the rotten length is <20 mm, clean the area by chopping and scraping, apply preservative treatment, and then glue and patch; if the rot is severe, remove the affected section and either glue and splice with dry reclaimed wood or replace it.

6. Preservation and Finishing

Newly replaced wooden components shall be treated with two coats of tung oil for preservation; existing wooden components do not require additional preservation treatment and shall be preserved as-is. The existing finish on existing components shall be preserved as-is without further treatment; newly replaced components shall not be finished and must remain clearly identifiable.

（5） Material Requirements

1. The type of wood selected must match the original material. The existing wood at Zhimu Hall consists primarily of pine and Chinese fir. The wood must undergo drying treatment prior to use, and its moisture content must comply with the relevant material selection standards in the *Technical Standards for Maintenance and Reinforcement of Wooden Structures in Historic Buildings* (GB/T 50165-2020). Since pine is not permitted in Huangshan City, it will be replaced with mountain camphor wood.

2. Stone materials should be selected and installed based on the original materials. The existing stone at Zhimu Hall is primarily local bluestone from Yi County; care should be taken to texture when selecting materials, and the materials must be free of defects. The surfaces of stone components must not show any signs of mechanical processing.

3. Both brickwork and roofing components must be selected in advance as standard items and sent to a manufacturer specializing in traditional architecture for custom firing. They may only be used after passing inspection and must be accompanied by a factory certificate of conformity and relevant test data.

（6） Pest and Termite Control

Zhuimu Hall suffers from frequent infestations of wood-boring insects and termites; therefore, all wooden components must undergo pest and rot prevention treatment during project implementation. Newly fabricated components must first be treated with a chemical solution by soaking before installation; special attention must be paid to pest and rot prevention in concealed areas. The specific pest and termite control plan must be formulated by a professionally qualified entity following a site survey, and control measures should be carried out concurrently with the building maintenance work.

（7） Fire Safety

The structure of Zhimutang is primarily wooden. The wooden components have been

exposed to natural weathering for many years, resulting in low moisture content and high flammability. Fire hazards may arise from improper use of electrical equipment, visitors bringing in sources of ignition or flammable and explosive hazardous materials—particularly carelessly discarded cigarette butts—as well as the absence of lightning protection facilities. Therefore, the following fire prevention measures are established:

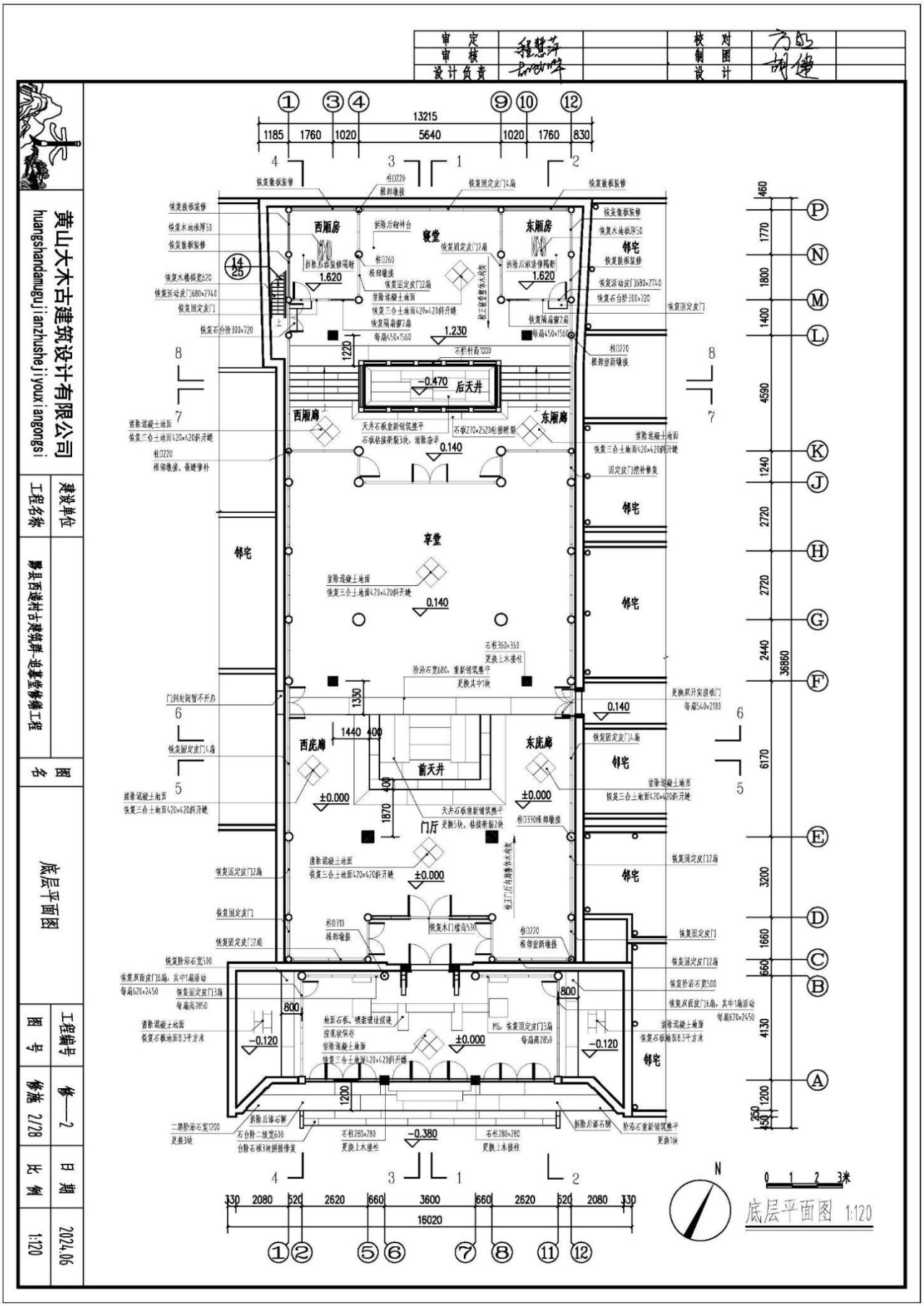
1. Implement a fire safety accountability system by appointing a fire safety officer and strictly enforcing the *Rules for Fire Safety Management of Historic Buildings* and cultural heritage protection regulations; formulate fire safety protocols and fire suppression plans, and establish fire safety records; enhance fire safety awareness among cultural heritage management staff, disseminate fire safety knowledge, and improve collective prevention capabilities.
2. Any major events, film or video shoots conducted within the building, or operations that endanger the fire safety of the historic building must be approved by the public security fire department and cultural heritage management authorities. During such events, a fire brigade must be stationed on-site to ensure protection and prevention.
3. Sources of fire must be strictly controlled: the use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) inside the building is prohibited; smoking is strictly prohibited indoors.
4. Electrical wiring is not permitted inside the building; surveillance wiring must be designed and installed by specialized departments and reviewed by the competent cultural heritage administrative authorities and the public security fire department.
5. During restoration work, the cultural heritage management department and the construction contractor must jointly develop fire safety measures for the project and submit them to the higher-level competent authorities and the public security fire department for approval before work may commence. Woodworking and open-flame operations involving the boiling of tung oil, and asphalt must be conducted in a safe location far from the historic building.
6. Install lightning protection devices to prevent lightning from endangering the safety of historic buildings.
7. The storage of combustible, flammable, or explosive materials and the erection of combustible structures are prohibited within the building and its surrounding protected area; it is recommended that important wooden components be coated with a transparent fire-retardant coating to preserve their original appearance.
8. Equip the site with portable fire extinguishers in accordance with the requirements of the national *Code for Design of Fire Extinguisher Placement in Buildings*.

（8） Supplementary Notes

1. To better ensure the accuracy and scientific rigor of the conservation and repair of historic buildings, during the pre-construction cleanup phase, each part and component should be individually surveyed, recorded, and cataloged.
2. All wooden joints in this project shall be restored using the original architectural mortise-and-tenon techniques; the use of iron nails for fastening is strictly prohibited. All metal reinforcement components and welded joints in this design must be fully coated with two coats of anti-rust paint.
3. Prior to the commencement of repair work on this project, a protective shelter must be erected using steel pipe components to shield the individual buildings and prevent further

damage to the cultural relics caused by rain and snow.
4. During demolition work, photographs of all important concealed areas and their joints must be taken and archived for reference during restoration work. Upon completion, the contractor must submit a complete set of project completion documentation, which shall be archived and preserved.
5. Maintain thorough records throughout construction, including written documentation, photographs, and onsite as-built drawings. Number each component to be dismantled individually and store them in a designated area, sorted by category and by individual building. When stacking components during storage, ensure each layer has adequate spacing and ventilation to prevent damage to cultural relics caused by compression or human error.
6. Prior to the commencement of each project, a drawing review meeting shall be organized to conduct a technical briefing on the restoration design plan.
7. For the walls of cultural heritage and historic buildings, establish settlement monitoring points in accordance with regulations as soon as construction begins on-site. Conduct regular monitoring; if any abnormalities are detected, promptly report them to the supervising and design personnel so that the design plan can be adjusted.
8. Proper drainage must be organized at the construction site, and effective measures must be taken to prevent rainwater from eroding or saturating the walls.
9. In addition to the specific damage conditions and corresponding repair measures clearly indicated on the drawings, there may still be areas that cannot be fully assessed due to coverage, obstruction, or other factors. Once survey conditions permit, the contractor shall notify the design team to visit the site to determine and supplement the repair plan before construction may proceed.
10. Any unaddressed matters arising during construction must be promptly discussed with the design team and may only be implemented after obtaining their approval.
11. When carrying out construction in accordance with this plan, the contractor must comply with the *Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics*, the *Technical Standards for the Maintenance and Reinforcement of Wooden Structures in Historic Buildings*, and other relevant regulations, codes, and ordinances concerning the protection and repair of historic architectural relics. Construction quality shall be implemented in accordance with the requirements of the *Quality Inspection and Evaluation Standards for Cultural Relics Construction Projects*, and the supervising authority shall conduct phased inspections and a final acceptance inspection.
12. Upon completion, a complete set of project completion documentation shall be submitted and archived for preservation.

Huangshan Damu Ancient Architecture
Design Co., Ltd. June 2024

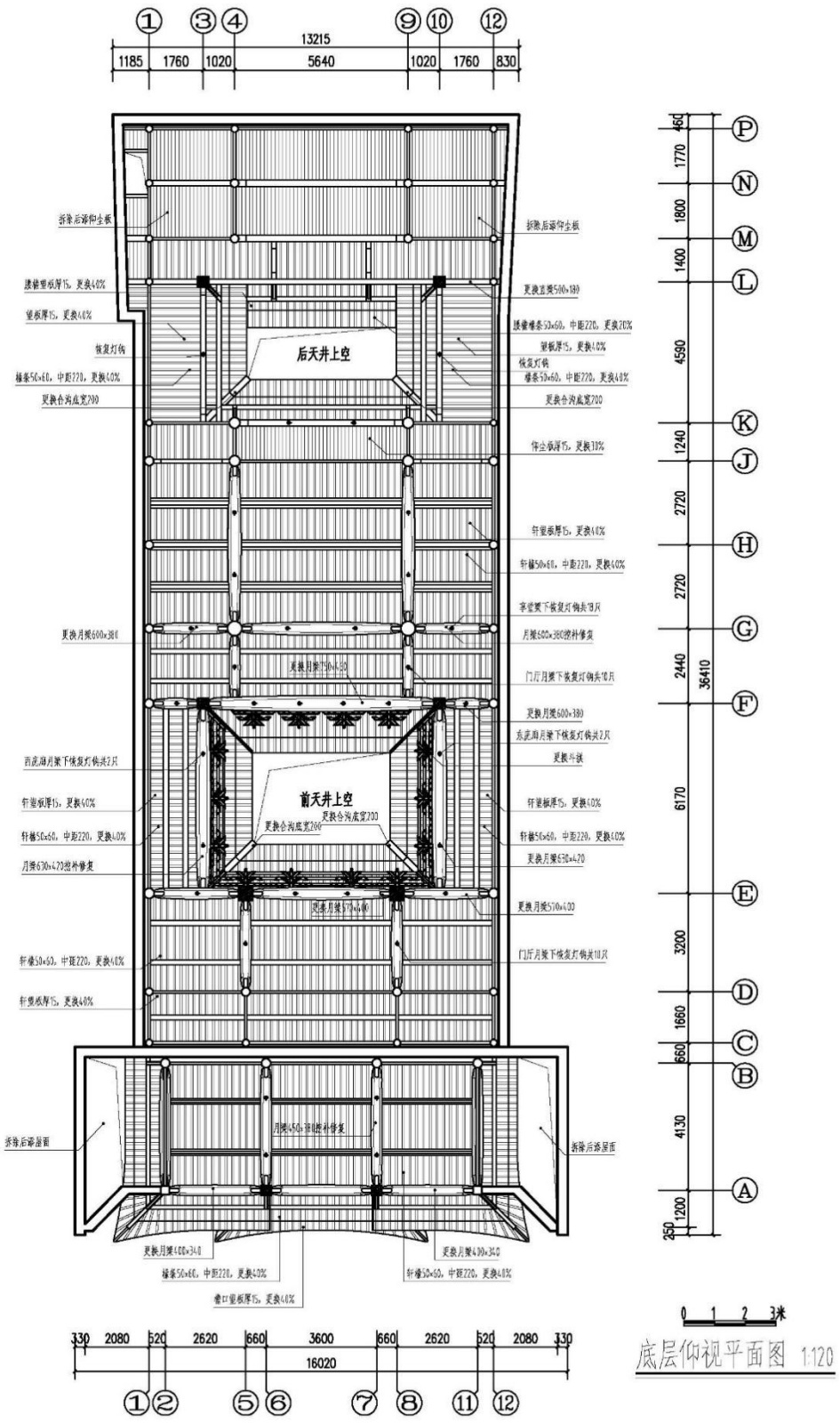

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建设单位
工程名称
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修改 2/28
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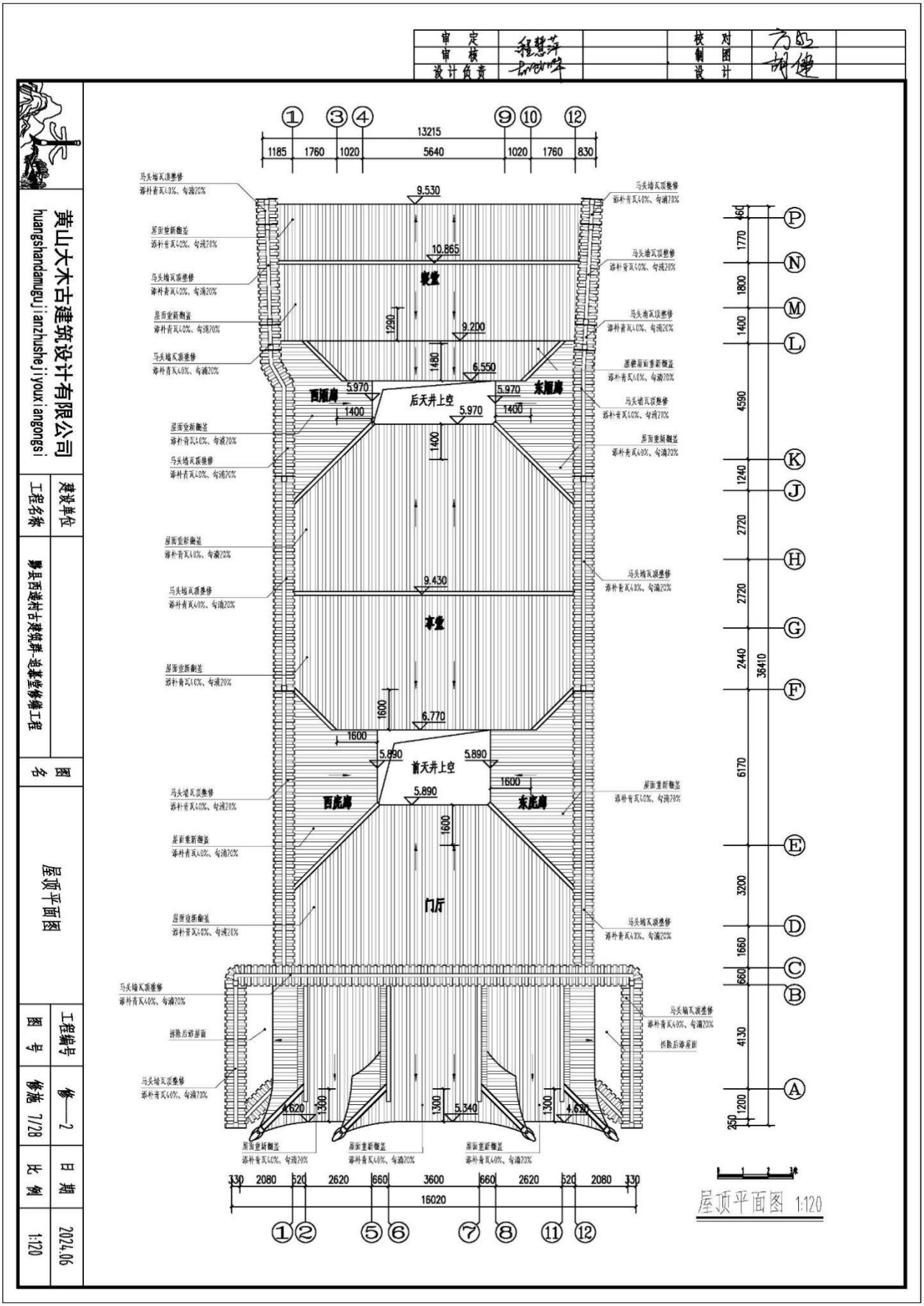
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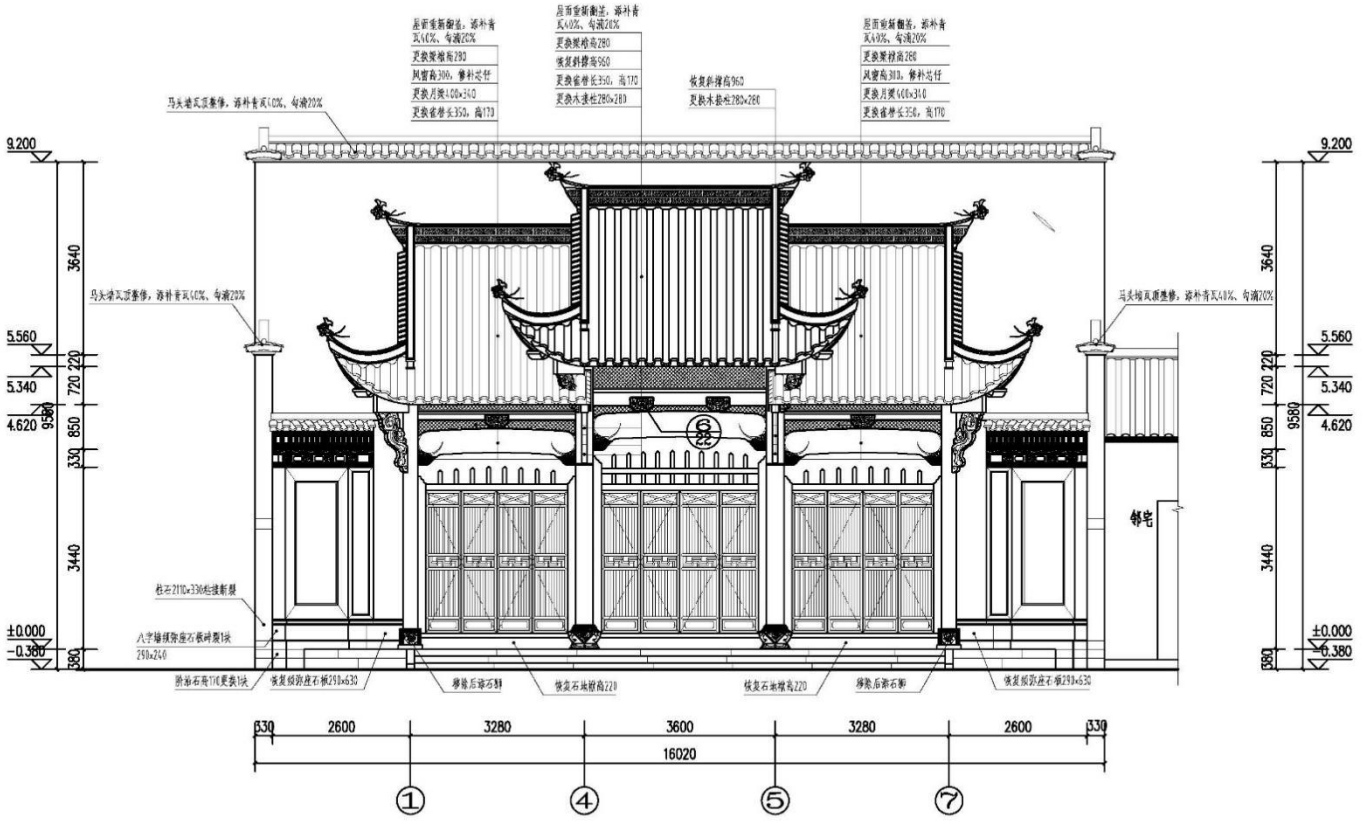
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| 图名 | 底层仰视平面图 |
| 工程编号 | |
| 图号 | 修—2 |
| 修缮 | 4/28 |
| 日期 | 2024.06 |
| 比例 | 1:120 |



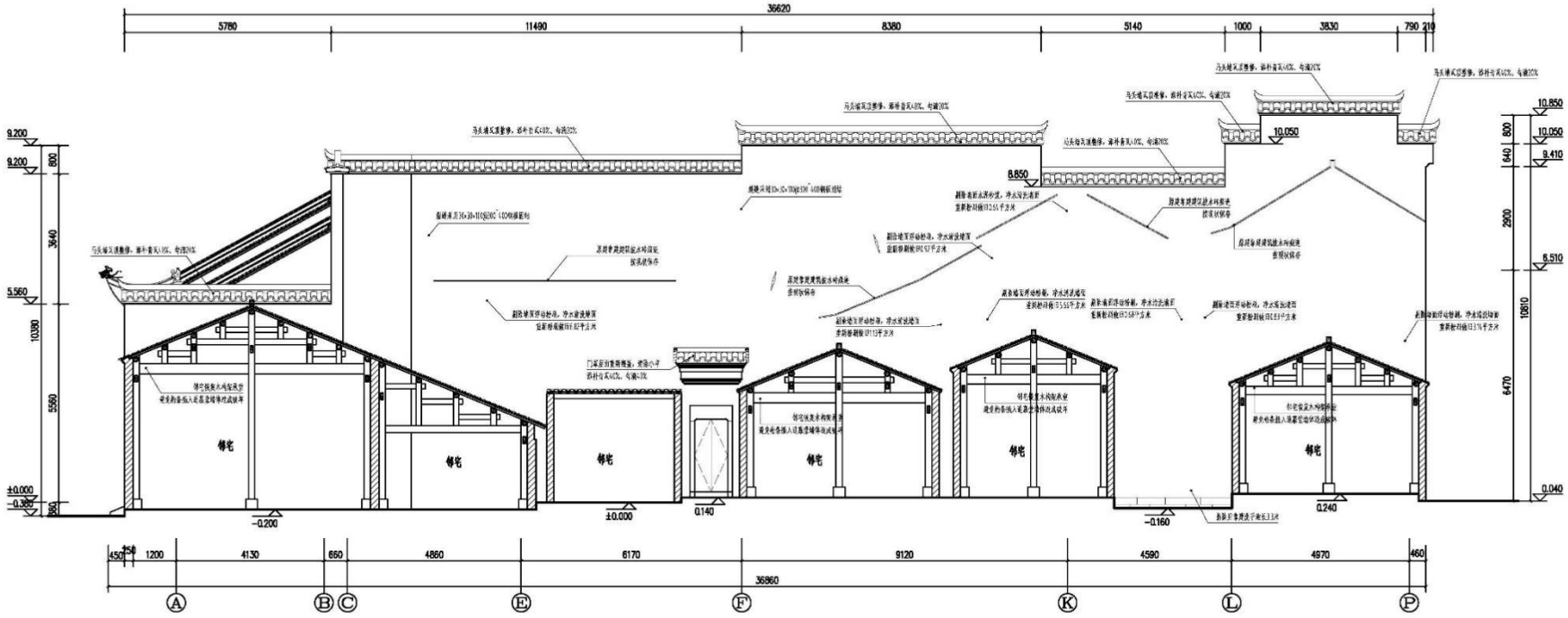

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建设单位
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图号
修—2
修改 7/28
日期
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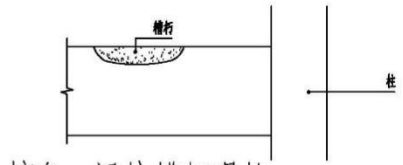

正立面图 1:80　0 1 2 3米

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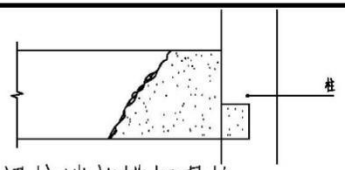



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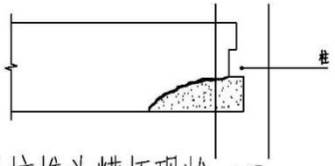
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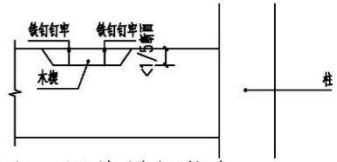

檩条、梁枋糟朽现状 1:15



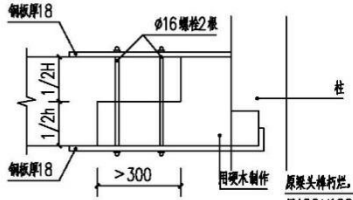

梁枋端部糟朽现状 1:15



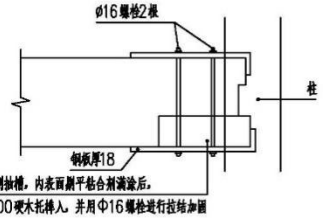

梁枋榫头糟朽现状 1:15




檩条、梁枋糟朽修复 1:15

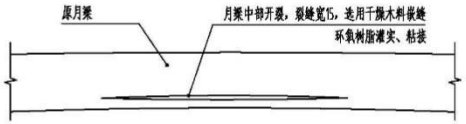



梁枋端部修复 1:10



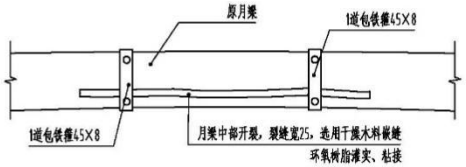

原梁头榫朽烂，掏削抽槽，内表面刷平粘合剂满涂后，
用420X120X100硬木托榫入，并用Φ16螺栓进行拉结加固

梁枋接榫修复 1:10



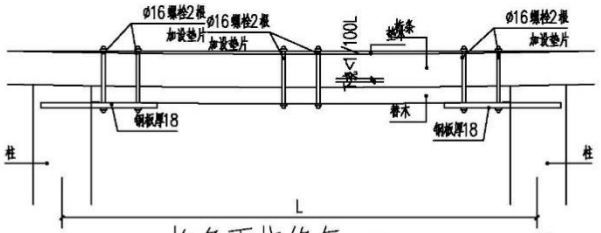

直梁开裂修复 1:15

注：10mm≤劈裂裂缝宽度≤20mm
长不超过1/2L（长度）

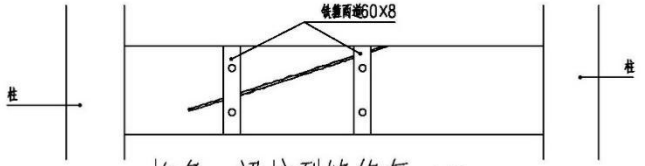



直梁开裂修复 1:15

注：劈裂裂缝宽度>20mm
长、深均深不超过1/4B（宽度）




桁条下挠修复 1:15




桁条、梁枋裂缝修复 1:15

注：顺纹裂缝深度和宽度<构件直径1/4；
裂缝长度<构件本身长度1/2；
斜缝裂缝在矩形构件中不得裂过两个相邻表面，在圆料件裂缝长度<1/3周长。




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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 黄山大木古建筑设计有限公司 huangshandamugujianzhusheji youxiangongsi | 建设单位 | | 图名 | 节点加固详图 | 工程编号 | 修——2 | 日 期 | 2024.06 |
| | 工程名称 | 黟县西递村古建筑群-追慕堂修缮工程 | | | 图 号 | 修施 27/28 | 比 例 | 1:10 |

## Appendix 3 : Full Transcripts of Villager Interviews in Xidi and Hongcun

Appendix Interview Introduction:

The interviews in this appendix are arranged according to the order in which they are cited and discussed in the main text, rather than being grouped by village, in order to facilitate cross-reference between the appendix and the thesis.

All semi-structured field interviews were conducted between July 20 and 25, 2025. Interviewees are divided into two groups: Xidi (interview codes starting with A) and Hongcun (interview codes starting with B). A unified interview outline was designed covering four core themes: renovation regulations for ancient dwellings, restructuring of village space, local perceptions of heritage conservation, and changes in grassroots governance and folk customs. A total of 20 local villagers were interviewed in the initial fieldwork, including farming residents, traditional restoration craftsmen, homestay operators, street retailers, clan elders and long-term village residents with diverse backgrounds.

After all interviews were transcribed, transcripts were screened against the core arguments of Chapter 6 of this paper. Manuscripts with scattered content, highly repetitive information, or weak relevance to chapter arguments were eliminated. A total of 15 valid interviews were retained, numbered A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9. Raw transcripts of discarded redundant interviews are not attached to this paper.

This appendix contains complete question-and-answer transcripts for all 15 interviews. Each record includes the interview code, date, location, interviewee profile and full dialogue. Only excerpted villagers' quotations are cited for argumentation in Chapter 6; complete raw dialogues are consolidated here for cross-reference.

The researcher is uniformly referred to as the author throughout all transcripts, with standardized formatting to facilitate source tracing and textual verification against the main text.

Full Interview Transcripts

Interview No. B5

Interview Date: July 24, 2025

Interview Location: Front lobby of the interviewee's homestay, furnished with tea sets for tourists

Interviewee: 62-year-old native Hongcun resident, has run a homestay in his ancestral house for 12 years with his spouse

Corresponding Sections: 6.2.1 Shift of Renovation Purposes to Display; 6.2.2 Administrative Work Crowding Out Community Affairs; 6.3.2 Spatial Commercialization; 6.4 Performative Heritage

Question: Your entire house was once occupied by your whole family decades ago. Renovations have changed drastically since you opened the homestay, haven't they?

B5: Back then the whole house was purely for family use, with three bedrooms, a main hall and a large kitchen. Before 2013, we renovated only to live comfortably. After turning it into a homestay, all refurbishments must look photogenic for tourists rather than serving our own daily needs.

Question: Could you elaborate on the differences between past and present renovation logic?

B5: We used lime plaster for walls in the old days—it breathes and resists dampness. Now

walls are painted merely for visual appeal. The white coating looks neat in photos yet peels off easily when it rains.

Question: Are exterior facades and internal renovations subject to extremely strict approval standards? Are all rules designed solely for the scenic landscape?

B5: Absolutely. Even minor adjustments to facades, horse-head walls or window colors are prohibited. Construction blueprints need three or four rounds of revisions to gain approval. All higher-level standards prioritize the visual effect of tourist routes, rather than household livability and wall moisture resistance as we used to consider.

Question: You mentioned earlier that traditional wall plastering prioritized durability and moisture resistance, while the unified exterior paint today only looks attractive yet performs poorly over time?

B5: Exactly. In the past we only used local aged lime, which ventilated and kept walls dry. The uniformly purchased white paint nowadays photographs perfectly but traps damp inside walls once washed by rain, causing mold and rot on wooden furniture and roof beams. It looks good but does not serve practical living needs.

Question: Apart from residential renovations, have daily life activities been heavily restricted since Moon Lake and South Lake were designated core sightseeing zones?

B5: Restrictions are severe. Patrol officers make three or four rounds every day. Washing clothes and drying vegetables by the lakeshore are banned. When we were young, we washed vegetables and played on the lakeside stones every day, yet now the waterfront is reserved solely for tourist photo ops, leaving almost no space for local residents to linger.

Question: Village festivals are clearly split into two versions: staged performances for outsiders and private clan feasts for locals, right?

B5: The division is crystal clear. Weddings and pig-slaughter feasts are staged on South Lake Square in designated costumes during daytime to shoot short videos for promotion. After the scenic area closes at night, our clan holds traditional banquets following full ancient rituals of ancestor worship and toasting. The daytime shows are just a facade for visitors; genuine folk customs are passed down within our community.

Question: When you go to the village committee to report troubles with living conditions or business operations, do they have sufficient time to listen to your appeals?

B5: It is tough. Committee members are swamped with meetings, paperwork and document distribution, leaving no spare time to hear our grievances about roof leakage or declining tourist footfall. They cannot spare time to coordinate solutions thoroughly.

Question: When patrols release renovation and landscape rectification notices, do committee staff rarely take shop owners' practical difficulties into account?

B5: They mostly only pass down rectification orders issued by higher authorities. Our feedback about falling visitor numbers and inconvenient living conditions rarely leads to adjusted policies. Major decisions are never open to villagers' negotiation.

Question: Homestay revenue is far higher than farming income, yet your family has lost nearly all private domestic space, hasn't it?

B5: To be honest, earnings are steady, yet tourists fill the hall from dawn till dusk. We have to restrain our speech, laundry and farm tool storage at all times. Protecting the ancient village is certainly worthwhile, but all sacrifices and constraints should not fall entirely on local residents. We ought to retain dedicated zones purely for daily living.

Interview No. A3
Interview Date: July 20, 2025
Interview Location: Courtyard patio of the interviewee's ancestral house, sitting on bamboo stools to cool off
Interviewee: 65-year-old native Xidi resident, has lived in his ancestral house for 52 years, makes a living through farming with no tourism-related businesses
Corresponding Sections: Chapter 6.2.1 Housing Three-Tier Approval; Chapter 6.2.3 Local Understanding of Authenticity; 6.3 Administrative Transformation of Village Governance; 6.4 Alienation of Living Space
Question: Unified exterior renovations are carried out by external construction teams these days. Do you see a massive contrast compared to traditional self-repair?
A3: The difference is enormous. External crews now use cement and ready-mixed paint, mandating identical colors and line details along every alley. These walls bear no resemblance to the old lime walls our elders built.
Question: The standardized facades photograph well yet create poor living experiences. What are the specific drawbacks?
A3: They look clean and white but are terrible to live with. We used local lime plaster in old times, which ventilated and prevented humidity buildup during rainy seasons. Modern paint peels off after rainfall and traps damp inside walls, causing mold and insect infestation on wooden roof beams.
Question: I have seen many newly built cement bungalows artificially fitted with horse-head walls. What do you think of this practice?
A3: It strikes me as unnatural. Horse-head walls once served practical functions: blocking bandits from climbing over walls and containing fire spread between wooden houses. Today the village has sound public security and complete fire-fighting equipment, rendering those original functions obsolete. They are only added to maintain a uniform visual style.
Question: Apart from wall facades and horse-head walls, is the housing approval process extremely cumbersome for residents?
A3: It is an enormous hassle. Applications must pass preliminary village committee review, township re-examination and final county cultural relics bureau approval, requiring seven or eight forms plus photos of every angle of the house. I cannot read written documents and have to wait for my grandson's school holidays for assistance. The approval period takes a minimum of two weeks. In the old days, we called craftsmen in the morning and repairs began the same afternoon. Now waiting for paperwork takes at least half a month. If roof leaks during plum rain season, wooden beams rot irreparably during the waiting period, which pains me deeply.
Question: Many households carry out minor internal repairs before submitting formal applications, right?
A3: Most neighbors do the same. They only fix roof structures and internal partition walls without altering exteriors. Patrol officers will merely issue verbal reminders instead of heavy penalties since we only live here. We cannot stand by and watch our houses decay.
Question: Has the village committee's core work focus shifted greatly compared to previous decades?

A3: The committee now acts merely as an extension of government administration rather than an organization representing villagers. Matters were once discussed collectively among neighbors, yet today they mostly only transmit scenic area and higher-level control regulations, rarely considering residents' housing difficulties.
Question: After decades living here, do you feel the village's overall living atmosphere has changed dramatically?
A3: The village used to be full of life—neighbors visiting each other, drying grain and working farmland everywhere. Now it is uniformly cleaned and standardized yet cold and sterile, like an exhibition stripped of daily domestic vitality.
Question: Is it convenient to walk along main village thoroughfares in daily life?
A3: Alleys once belonged to locals for grocery shopping and farm work. Now main routes are reserved for tourist sightseers, overcrowded with visitors. Local residents must detour through remote side lanes, unable to freely walk the roads right outside their own doorsteps.

Interview No. B4
Interview Date: July 24, 2025
Interview Location: Dwelling beside Hongcun South Lake, the interviewee's own woodworking restoration workshop
Interviewee: 58-year-old native Hongcun ancient architecture restorer with 32 years of experience, undertaking most local residential renovation projects
Corresponding Sections: 6.2.1 Flaws of Standardized Renovations & Redundant Administrative Approval; 6.3.1 Landscape-Oriented Transformation of Living Spaces & Erasure of Daily Folk Activities; 6.2.3 Loss of Authentic Living Heritage
Question: Is the application process cumbersome when walls or wooden beams are damaged? Do many residents carry out unapproved minor repairs privately?
B4: Renovations are not banned, yet all work requires formal procedures. By the time approval is issued, we have often already fixed minor water seepage or peeling walls without paperwork. Full photo documentation and numerous application forms are required for trivial damages, with reviews lasting half a month to over a month. Delays exacerbate structural damage, so homeowners hire us secretly to avoid long waiting periods.
Question: Having worked in restoration for decades, how do traditional handcrafted renovations compare to today's standardized construction?
B4: Ancient houses were living structures that could breathe, yet renovated buildings today feel rigid and lifeless. Walls no longer ventilate, wooden timbers cannot balance ambient humidity, and we can only follow official construction standards.
Question: When you say walls and timber no longer "breathe," does this stem from changed construction materials and techniques?
B4: In the past we mixed local lime and plant ash for plaster, facilitating air circulation and humidity exchange between walls and wooden components to prevent rot. Nowadays uniformly distributed industrial cement coatings seal walls tight, trapping dampness that corrodes beams and columns year after year, requiring constant extra anti-corrosion reinforcement. We master ancient construction methods yet are constrained by fixed blueprints mandating specific materials and linear styles.
Question: South Lake and Moon Lake waterfronts were once villagers' daily washing sites, yet

management has grown extremely strict now?
B4: Waterfront zones are designated no-storage areas. Washing clothes by the lake is prohibited on the grounds of damaging scenic aesthetics.
Question: Tourist viewing platforms take priority, restricting all daily resident activities along the shore?
B4: Exactly. The entire lakeshore is demarcated as a photography corridor with daily patrols banning laundry, vegetable drying and farm tool storage. Generations of waterfront domestic routines are now forced to happen during off-peak tourist hours or relocated to remote ditches outside the village.
Question: Rigid approval workflows and one-size-fits-all landscape renovations harm long-term ancient building preservation, in your opinion?
B4: Ancient village conservation should not only focus on the photogenic outer shell. Dwellings remain intact for centuries only when inhabited and maintained via ancient breathable construction techniques. Current bureaucratic delays block timely emergency repairs, while landscape regulations erase daily domestic life, leaving historic architecture hollow and accelerating internal deterioration.

Interview No. B1
Interview Date: July 23, 2025
Interview Location: Dwelling along Hongcun Main Street, the interviewee's small general store
Interviewee: 72-year-old elderly Hongcun resident running a small daily goods shop; his house suffers wall leakage and aging wooden frames
Corresponding Sections: 6.2.1 Administrative Barriers to Renovation & Literacy Burdens for Senior Villagers; 6.3.2 Full-Time Patrol Surveillance of Daily Life; 6.4 Conflicts Between Conservation Rules and Villagers' Livelihoods; Administrative Embedding of Governance Logic
Question: Is the full renovation application process challenging for elderly residents?
B1: Administrative formalities place a heavy burden on seniors like me. I cannot read forms and must wait for my grandchildren to come home for assistance.
Question: Renovations have shifted from casual daily chores requiring only local craftsmen to bureaucratic paperwork-heavy tasks, haven't they?
B1: Exactly. In the past, leaking roofs were fixed the same day. Now we must submit damage photos, commitment letters and stacks of documents that elderly villagers cannot comprehend without younger family members' help.
Question: Can you feel a stark contrast in the village atmosphere compared to decades ago?
B1: Once only villagers inhabited the village. Now tourists and uniformed patrol officers fill the streets every day.
Question: Patrol staff mainly monitor roadside storage, laundry drying and store operations, correct?
B1: Patrols run in shifts all day along main streets, waterfronts and alleys. Villagers receive constant warnings for storing farm tools or hanging laundry outdoors, making daily life highly restricted.
Question: Strict regulations on homestays, street stalls and shop signage directly hurt your income?

B1: Absolutely. Outdoor vending is prohibited with tight restrictions on storefront displays, which severely cuts our business revenue.
Question: Do you believe landscape control and local livelihoods lack balanced coordination?
B1: We fully support ancient village protection, yet blanket bans on all small-scale commerce are unreasonable. Our small street shops and minor tourist receptions support household expenses. Restricting all outdoor operations and signage sizes slashes income. Conservation policies that ignore residents' livelihoods cannot gain long-term cooperation.
Question: Cumbersome renovation procedures, omnipresent patrols and business limits create heavy daily pressure?
B1: The village was once our home for living, yet now every activity is constrained by administrative regulations. We fill out forms for house repairs and fear violations when going out or operating shops. The village looks beautiful, yet daily life has become increasingly restrictive for locals.

Interview No. A6
Interview Date: July 22, 2025
Interview Location: Main hall of an old rear dwelling in Xidi Ancient Village
Interviewee: 61-year-old long-term Xidi resident whose ancestral house suffers persistent roof leakage and aging wooden frames
Corresponding Sections: 6.2.1 Excessively Long Approval Cycles & Structural Safety Hazards; Residents' Unauthorized Pre-Repair Tactics; Safety Risks Caused by Administrative Delays
Question: Do lengthy full approval cycles create structural safety risks when roofs leak or timber is infested?
A6: Houses cannot wait, yet approval paperwork can. We have to complete repairs first and submit supplementary applications afterward.
Question: Severe structural damage cannot be postponed, forcing residents to repair first and formalize applications later?
A6: During plum rain seasons, continuous seepage rots wooden beams within ten to fifteen days, risking collapse and personal injury. Application, photo documentation and multi-level reviews take a minimum of half a month—far too slow for emergency repairs. Most homeowners hire craftsmen for urgent fixes before completing official paperwork.
Question: Will applicants face penalties for post-hoc applications?
A6: Penalties are usually limited to verbal reminders as long as renovations comply with unified facade standards. However, those altering paint colors or linear details may face mandatory rework, creating extra trouble. Ultimately rigid approval procedures conflict with urgent residential safety needs, forcing villagers to find workarounds.
Question: Repairs could commence immediately before multi-level approval was mandated. What constitutes the core conflict today?
A6: Renovations once prioritized residential safety, yet facade landscape approval now takes precedence over everything. Policy focuses on uniform village aesthetics without accounting for aging dwellings' vulnerability to prolonged waiting, shifting all safety risks onto residents.

Interview No. A1
Interview Date: July 20, 2025

Interview Location: Traditional woodworking workshop in Xidi Ancient Village
Interviewee: 74-year-old hereditary Xidi ancient architecture restorer with 50 years of experience, expert in Huizhou wooden frameworks and traditional wall plastering
Corresponding Sections: 6.2.2 Shifts in Renovation Discourse Pre- and Post-Inscription; Marginalization of Local Folk Knowledge; Standardized Blueprints Replacing Craftsmen's Experience & Restructured Power Dynamics of Craft Knowledge
Question: Before World Heritage inscription, did all renovation decisions rely on craftsmen's on-site judgment?
A1: Yes. One glance allowed me to determine suitable timber and wall repair methods without formal construction drawings.
Question: Renovation logic has completely shifted away from generational on-site experience to standardized blueprints, hasn't it?
A1: In the past I held decision-making authority; now planning documents dictate all construction, a stark contrast.
Question: All renovations must follow official blueprints post-inscription, stripping local craftsmen of decision-making power built on decades of hands-on experience?
A1: Previously I visited damaged houses, instantly determining timber types, plaster ratios and construction schedules to start work immediately. Today even minor repairs require standardized design drawings fixing timber specifications, paint colors and linear styles. My fifty years of practical experience only serve to execute pre-set plans. World Heritage inscription has profoundly reshaped power dynamics for restoration expertise.
Question: How does this transformation affect the inheritance of ancient construction techniques?
A1: Blueprints only unify exterior visuals without differentiating structural aging or timber load-bearing conditions. Many breathable, anti-corrosion ancient techniques are prohibited. Young craftsmen only learn blueprint compliance rather than generational traditional knowledge, which is gradually fading away without recognition.

Interview No. A7
Interview Date: July 22, 2025
Interview Location: Local general store along Xidi Main Street
Interviewee: 65-year-old local shopkeeper operating the store for over twenty years, witnessing Xidi's World Heritage inscription and scenic development
Corresponding Sections: 6.4.1 Top-Down Grassroots Governance & Lack of Villager Negotiation Channels; 6.4.2 Commercial Diversion Eroding Local Small Businesses; 6.4.3 Homogenized Shop Facades & Eroding Regional Features Under Unified Landscape Control
Question: Do villagers get opportunities to participate in negotiations before policies on housing renovations, business controls and stall regulations are finalized?
A7: Major decisions are made by higher authorities; we only receive formal notices.
Question: All control policies are issued top-down without advance consultation with local residents and shop owners?
A7: Housing renovation rules, street business bans and homestay management regulations are released as finalized documents posted publicly. Rarely do officials visit beforehand to gather residents' input, leaving villagers only passively compliant.

Question: Has the newly built external commercial pedestrian street severely impacted foot traffic for village interior shops?
A7: The impact is substantial. The new outer street captures most business, leaving village shops with dwindling customers.
Question: Tourists primarily consume goods and meals outside the village, rarely venturing into inner alleys for secondary consumption?
A7: Tourists stop at the outer commercial zone upon arrival for dining and souvenirs, seldom exploring deep village lanes. Combined with tight limits on outdoor displays and signage inside the village, local shop revenue drops year after year.
Question: Do you notice widespread homogenization of shop appearances and merchandise under unified facade control?
A7: Shops in Xidi, Hongcun and every other scenic spot all look identical nowadays.
Question: Standardized signage, uniform exterior materials and identical tourist merchandise erase unique local commercial characteristics?
A7 Planning blueprints mandate identical storefront doors, windows and wall finishes for all shops in Xidi and Hongcun. Souvenirs and cultural products sold across all sites are indistinguishable, gradually eliminating unique village handicrafts and agricultural retail.
Question: Combined pressure from top-down regulations, diverted tourist consumption and homogenized renovations creates heavy operational burdens for local small merchants?
A7: Once shop and house renovations were entirely self-determined. Now all matters rely on official notices. Customer flow is stolen by external commercial zones while facade rules ban distinctive local styling, continuously squeezing survival space for indigenous small businesses.

Interview No. B2
Interview Date: July 23, 2025
Interview Location: Main hall of a hereditary Hongcun resident's ancestral house
Interviewee: 70-year-old elder native to Hongcun who witnessed its World Heritage inscription and commercialization; once owned a street-side small shop and private threshing ground
Corresponding Sections: 6.2 Shifts in Renovation Decision-Making Power; 6.3 Tourism Occupation of Rural Living Space; 6.4 Displacement of Local Merchants by External Capital; 6.5 Theatricalized Folk Customs & Divided Indigenous Rituals; Conflicts Between Villagers' Inherent Conservation Values and Scenic Sightseeing Logic
Question: Have renovation decision-making processes changed drastically since the village developed into a scenic spot?
B2: In the past we held village meetings to decide renovation locations and methods; now others dictate what we must do, and we only sign documents.
Question: Full decision-making power has been transferred upwards, leaving villagers only the passive right to sign without input on residential living demands?
B2: Previously village-wide assemblies discussed all housing repairs, incorporating each household's structural damage and living needs. Today planning departments finalize all blueprints, construction standards and renovation scopes before distributing formal notices for resident signature, with no room for revisions or negotiations.
Question: What do you believe constitutes the core meaning of ancient village conservation?

B2: Conservation exists for future generations, not merely for tourist viewing.

Question: Villagers' inherent conservation priorities center on clan intergenerational inheritance, distinct from the scenic area's sightseeing-focused logic?
B2: We safeguard ancestral houses, water systems and ancient trees for long-term family habitation. Most current renovations prioritize photogenic visual effects over residential comfort and traditional agricultural functions, creating fundamentally opposing core objectives.
Question: Have tourism developments occupied traditional agricultural public spaces?
B2: Our grain-drying ground is now packed with tourists taking photos.
Question: Traditional farming spaces have been designated internet-famous photo spots, disrupting normal agricultural schedules?
B2: The spacious village threshing ground passed down by ancestors is fully occupied by sightseers every day. During harvest seasons we can only use it briefly before dawn or after dark, unable to conduct normal drying work most of the time.
Question: Has the composition of street-side shop operators changed significantly?
B2: Store rents have skyrocketed; locals cannot afford them, so most shops are now run by outsiders.
Question: Surging scenic area rents displace indigenous small merchants in favor of external business owners with greater capital?
B2: Scenic area management has raised shop rents annually. Local farmers and handicraftsmen earn too little to lease frontage, while outside operators dominate catering and souvenir shops, gradually displacing indigenous small-scale rural businesses.
Question: Are traditional folk rituals now staged exclusively for tourist performances?
B2: What they show tourists is one set of rituals; the authentic ceremonies are preserved only among our own clan members.
Question: Folk customs are split into simplified theatrical performances for sightseeing and complete clan rituals practiced privately among villagers?
B2: Scenic performances cut core clan worship and farming sacrificial segments, retaining only visually striking acts. Full traditional rituals are held privately among villagers during festivals without public performances, creating two entirely separate folk systems.
Question: Cumulative frustrations from lost renovation autonomy, occupied living space, inflated shop rents and theatricalized folk customs create a stark emotional divide among local residents?
B2: The village was once our self-governed homeland for farming, housing and ancestor worship. Today renovations, public spaces, commerce and folk activities are uniformly controlled around tourist sightseeing, subordinating indigenous livelihood and intergenerational traditions to scenic operation logic.

Interview No. A4
Interview Date: July 21, 2025
Interview Location: Dwelling beside the Wang Clan Ancestral Hall in Hongcun
Interviewee: 68-year-old descendant of the Wang clan in Hongcun, long-time participant in clan meetings and sacrificial ceremonies

Corresponding Sections: 6.3 Tourism Displacement of Clan Public Space; Dual Village Spatial Division: Tourist Exhibition Zones vs. Private Resident Living Zones

Question: How has the ancestral hall's function changed compared to the past, when it hosted clan meetings and sacrifices?
A4: The ancestral hall has become a tourist attraction rather than our venue for clan deliberations.
Question: The hall opens to ticketed visitors all day, hindering clan assemblies and sacrificial events?
A4: Previously clansmen could enter freely year-round for weddings, funerals and seasonal ancestor worship. Today the hall operates as a paid scenic site filled with guided tour signage and fixed sightseeing routes. We must submit advance applications and book limited time slots to hold clan gatherings, prioritizing tourist viewing over indigenous clan functions.
Question: The village is split into two distinct visual zones—what are your thoughts on this division?
A4: It makes little difference. The outward-facing version exists for visitors; inwardly we live our own lives.
Question: Front streets and core scenic nodes are uniformly renovated as standardized tourist landscapes, while deep alleys retain authentic rural domestic spaces, creating dual spatial stratification?
A4: Waterfront areas, main ancestral halls and village entrances are fully refurbished for sightseeing and photography. Remote inner alleys and private courtyards remain our genuine living spaces for daily chores and clan gatherings. The packaged scenic village displayed to tourists differs entirely from the multi-generational indigenous life sustained within hidden residential zones.
Question: The core issue is tourism development displacing clan and resident public life, isn't it?
A4: Clan venues and village public land serve tourism first. Villagers can only hold clan events and daily agricultural activities during off-hours or in remote corners, with sightseeing demands overriding all indigenous living requirements.

Interview No. B3
Interview Date: July 23, 2025
Interview Location: Courtyard of a hereditary Hongcun resident's ancestral house
Interviewee: Multiple long-term village residents including farmers, elderly street shop owners and village elders
Corresponding Sections: 6.4 Villagers' Criteria for Judging Heritage Authenticity; Psychological Alienation from Public Space; Dilemma of Village Committees Caught Between Two Sides
Question: In your opinion, what constitutes true authenticity for ancient villages?
B3: The continuity of activities our ancestors practiced for generations—that is what makes the village authentic.
Question: Villagers judge authenticity based on sustainable farming and clan life rather than uniform architectural aesthetics?

B3: Scenic management only concerns intact buildings and tidy streets, while locals view inherited farming, handicrafts and clan social bonds as the village's true foundation. If tourism restrictions interrupt these indigenous routines, well-preserved architecture alone cannot sustain authentic village identity.
Question: Villagers rarely linger on ancestral stone benches near the ancestral hall and ancient wells nowadays, what causes this shift?
B3: It feels inappropriate to sit there now, even without explicit bans.
Question: Core scenic gathering points are constantly crowded with tourists, creating psychological alienation that leads locals to voluntarily avoid shared public facilities?
B3: Stone benches are perpetually surrounded by photography visitors. Villagers feel intrusive occupying sightseeing routes when resting and face constant tourist observation, creating a sense of separation. Even without formal prohibitions, locals naturally avoid these ancestral communal spaces.
Question: Where does the village committee stand amid scenic regulations and residents' grievances?
B3: The committee is caught in the middle, forced to report upward while also calming villagers' discontent.
Question: The committee acts as a dual buffer, tasked with implementing higher-level landscape and business rules while mediating residents' frustrations over restricted living space and rising rents?
B3: Renovation standards, commercial bans and public space controls are issued top-down with mandatory implementation deadlines and written progress reports. Simultaneously, committee staff must mediate resident grievances about damaged ancestral houses, inflated shop rents and seized farmland, caught between administrative targets and community demands.
Question: Combined constraints on daily activities, alienation from public space and committees' dual predicament create profound separation between locals and their village's original social fabric?
B3: Generational indigenous routines can no longer proceed freely; residents hesitate to use shared public venues, and village committees can only compromise on both sides. Top-down tourism control continuously severs the inherent living bonds between villagers and their ancestral village.

Interview No. B7
Interview Date: July 25, 2025
Interview Location: Hereditary resident house & street-side shops on Hongcun Main Street
Interviewee: Indigenous street shop operators
Corresponding Sections: 6.4 Utilitarian Community Perceptions of Conservation Driven by Tourism Livelihood; Inversion of Public Alley Usage Priority; Intergenerational Divergence Between Young Business Owners and Elderly Residents
Question: Many shop owners directly link ancient building conservation to household income—what is your take on this logic?
B7: The reasoning is straightforward: without conservation, no tourists come; without tourists, we cannot make a living.

Question: Residents dependent on tourism view landscape protection purely as a means of securing visitor revenue, forming an economic-centered conservation mindset?
B7: Middle-aged and young street vendors and homestay owners rely entirely on tourist footfall for income. In their view, all facade regulations and renovation work exist solely to attract visitors, prioritizing economic survival above all other conservation values.
Question: Daily travel along village alleys has transformed dramatically under tourism development?
B7: Walking here no longer feels like traversing our own roads; we must yield to tourists first.
Question: Tourists hold absolute priority over local residents for public thoroughfare usage, eroding villagers' sense of ownership over their own neighborhood—an issue felt most acutely by the elderly?
B7: Main streets are perpetually packed with sightseers forcing locals to constantly step aside while running errands or visiting relatives. Younger operators reliant on tourism tolerate the crowds, yet elderly residents feel deeply uncomfortable, losing their sense of belonging to the alleys they have used their whole lives.
Question: There exists a stark generational divide: younger business owners support tourism-focused conservation while elders feel alienated from their own living spaces?
B7: Middle-aged and young merchants gain stable income from tourism and endorse visitor-centered management rules. Elder residents prioritize multi-generational domestic life, forced to cede alleys, public squares and clan venues to sightseeing operations, creating sharp conflicting demands within the village community.

Interview No. A2
Interview Date: July 20, 2025
Interview Location: Homestay operated by local entrepreneurs along Xidi Main Street
Interviewee: Middle-aged and young local tourism business operators
Corresponding Sections: 6.2 One-Sided Tourist-Oriented Community Perceptions of Conservation; Reduction of Conservation to Photogenic Landscapes at the Cost of Residential & Clan Functions
Question: From the perspective of homestay and shop operators, what is the primary purpose of ancient village conservation?
A2: Conservation exists to beautify the village for photos and online check-ins, which drives tourist consumption.
Question: This mindset leads renovation priorities to prioritize visual appeal over domestic, clan and agricultural functionality?
A2: Absolutely. All landscape upgrades target internet-famous photo spots. Courtyards, threshing grounds and ancestral hall interiors must be rearranged to fit sightseeing routes, subordinating daily household needs to tourist viewing demands.

Interview No. B6
Interview Date: July 24, 2025
Interview Location: Local resident's homestay converted from ancestral Hongcun house
Interviewee: Local farmer running a homestay in his own renovated dwelling
Corresponding Sections: 6.5 Restructuring Residential Interior Space; Compression of Family

Living Zones; Disintegration of Traditional Domestic Layouts for Homestay Commercial Use

Question: How drastically has your home's room layout changed after converting it to a homestay?
B6: The transformation is immense. We originally had three bedrooms for family use; now only one remains for us, and the other two host tourists. The kitchen has been expanded, and the main hall turned into a reception lounge.
Question: To accommodate tourist accommodation, families drastically shrink private living areas, repurposing ancestral halls and multi-generational bedrooms into guest facilities, fully commercializing traditional domestic layouts?
B6: Traditional Huizhou houses contained three bedrooms for extended families and a central hall for clan gatherings and festivals. After opening a homestay we retain only one small private bedroom, converting all remaining living space and the main hall to guest use. Kitchen expansion also serves tourist catering rather than family meals.
Question: Spatial restructuring continuously compresses domestic life, relegating family needs to secondary status behind commercial tourism operations?
B6 Renovation planning prioritizes homestay revenue. Family living and clan event spaces are steadily reduced, leaving us only minimal private residential zones.

Interview No. B8
Interview Date: July 25, 2025
Interview Location: Indigenous resident's house along Hongcun South Lake
Interviewee: Middle-aged local woman born and raised in Hongcun
Corresponding Sections: 6.3 Functional Displacement of Riverside Public Space; Transformation of Childhood Communal Recreation Zones into Commercial Tourist Venues, Erasing Indigenous Collective Memory and Traditional Play/Agricultural Sites
Question: Has the lakeside area changed drastically from your childhood memories?
B8: When I was young we hopped stones and played along the lake; now this whole stretch is filled with tea seating for tourists.
Question: Riverside natural spaces once dedicated to local children's play and daily washing have been reconstructed into commercial leisure zones exclusively for visitor consumption, robbing locals of generational shared outdoor space?
B8: The rocky South Lake shore where multiple generations played and washed clothes has been paved with platforms and lined with tea stalls post-tourism development, designated as a paid leisure zone off-limits to casual local recreation.

Interview No. B9
Interview Date: July 25, 2025
Interview Location: Concentrated street shops in central Hongcun Village
Interviewee: Local operators of cultural and handicraft stores, farm restaurants and homestays
Corresponding Sections: 6.6 Conflicts Between Inner-Village and Peripheral Commercial Formats; Diversion of Tourist Spending at Village Entrances Reducing Revenue for Inner-Village Merchants and Generating Local Grievances Over Uneven Tourism Profit Distribution
Question: How do tourists' consumption patterns impact shops inside the village?

B9: Tourists finish all meals and snacks at the village entrance and barely spend money once they walk inside.

Question: Low-cost dining and snack stalls concentrated at scenic entrances capture all initial tourist spending, leaving visitors only sightseeing inside without secondary accommodation, dining or handicraft purchases, steadily shrinking inner-village shop revenue?
B9: Village catering businesses suffer the most from this diversion. Handicraft shops experience milder negative impacts comparatively.

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