

**Finding an ecomuseum ideal for Hainan Province: Encouraging
community participation in intangible cultural and natural heritage
protection in a rural setting in China**

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ABSTRACT

Initiated in France by Hugues de Varine and George Henri Rivière in the late 1960s, the ecomuseum ideal represents a locally-based, holistic approach to heritage protection and sustainable development. China established its first ecomuseums in 1998 in Guizhou Province, as a tool to balance rural development and heritage protection in the economically-weaker ethnic-minority areas. Since then several variations of an ecomuseum-like ideal have been employed in different provinces.

This research project analyses one of the newer approaches to ecomuseology in China, examining the current establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan Province, China. The focus of the ecomuseum ideal in Hainan, the strong connection between ICH and its ecological environments, is new in the Chinese ecomuseum approach. This research analysed the opportunities and challenges of this new ecomuseological approach in China with regards to the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments; sustainable tourism and ecotourism development; and, community participation. Two of the six proposed future ecomuseums were chosen as case studies; namely Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Boating Li and Miao Autonomous County. The data collection process included a combination of literature review, the analysis of laws and guidelines, observation and qualitative interviews with the three main stakeholders of the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan Province: government officials; experts; and, the local population composed of members of the local Hainanese community and Li ethnic-minority members associated with the two case studies.

This research makes a contribution to the field in several respects. It examines the ecomuseum in terms of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments in China. While there is already some literature that investigates ecomuseums and ICH protection in the country, their role in protecting ecological environments in China is largely ignored. This research concludes that a stronger interpretation and focus on natural environments is essential for ecomuseum-like approaches in China. In addition, this research argues that the current ecomuseum principles concentrate on a Western understanding of the ecomuseum ideal and are not applicable to the top-down developmental context of China. Therefore, the research suggests new ecomuseum principles for Hainan, placing a stronger emphasis on education and benefit-sharing.

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RESEARCH MOTIVATION

I have always been interested in China, in particular in Chinese cultural traditions. I registered for Chinese Studies as my undergraduate degree. I studied and worked in China for over two year. During that time I travelled the country extensively and visited many different heritage sites, examples include: the Great Wall of China; the Forbidden City in Beijing; and, Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve. One topic that caught my interest during these visits was the seemingly different understanding of heritage protection, museology and tourism between China and western countries. Intrigued by this topic I analysed the problematic relationship between heritage protection and tourism development in Chinese towns and villages in my master's thesis. This research led me to engage with the ecomuseum ideal that had been established in several villages in China. It seemed to offer a way to overcome the conflicts between heritage protection and tourism development in China that came from the top-down approach to heritage protection. I was therefore interested in investigating if the ecomuseum could indeed contribute to the protection of heritage and give the local population a stronger voice in heritage protection and tourism development in China. Hainan was chosen as a case study, because of the province's relationship with Newcastle University, which made it easier to gain access to the relevant people. Hainan Province and the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) had cooperated successfully before in the En-compass Project, which worked with four different regions, namely China, North-East England, Guyana and Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa to work together in identifying and protecting examples of heritage resources under threat.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIFIC TERMS

Abbreviations

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

CNTA – China National Tourism Administration

E – Expert

ECPZ - Ecological cultural protection zones

GO – Government Official

HPICEC - Hainan Provincial International Cultural Exchange Centre

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage

ICHC - *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage*

LH – Local Hainanese

LICH - *Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China*

LM – Li minority

NCTZ – Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone

PRC – People's Republic of China

SACH – State Administration of Cultural Heritage

SAR – Special Administrative Region

SEZ – Special Economic Zone

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chinese Terms

baohu – preserve

bayin - eight kinds of orchestral instruments

nongjiale – ‘Happy Farm House’

peitong – Research assistant appointed by a Chinese University or government institution to accompany foreign researchers during their field work.

Qilou – arcade architecture

qiongju – Hainan Opera

shengcun – survival

shengtai – ecology

shengtai bowuguan – ecomuseum

yuan shengtai - original ecology

zhenxing – revitalise

ziran shengtai bowuguan – Nature ecological museum

zongzi - glutinous rice stuffed with different fillings and wrapped in bamboo leaves

Please note that the original spelling and grammar has been retained within quoted sources.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research question and themes

“Almost each minute, one kind of Chinese folk art disappears”. This quote by the Chairman of the China Folk Literature and Art Society, Feng Jicai (Zan 2007), illustrates the dire situation of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). While this statement might sound a bit extreme, many Chinese traditional cultural-heritage practices are disappearing rapidly, often because modernisation and urbanisation are making them obsolete and destroying the original environments in which they were practised (Johnson 2014). The disappearance of ICH traditions is a worldwide issue, as impacts of globalisation and modernisation undermine cultural diversity and endanger local, regional and national traditions (Bedjaoui 2004). There is a growing mind-set that if ICH is not safeguarded it will result in an irretrievable loss of cultural heritage traditions (Howard 2012). While most safeguarding steps regarding ICH initially mirrored those used to protect tangible heritage (Stefano 2012), experts have been advocating a more dynamic approach, which promotes safeguarding ICH in bottom-up community-based efforts, within its natural environments (Aubert 2007; Blake 2015; Titon 2009) The idea to safeguard ICH within its natural environments encompasses that ICH safeguarding is not merely a cultural question, but also a question of maintaining a sustainable ecosystem and an area’s biodiversity, as many ICH traditions are linked to their physical environment and its natural heritage (Blake 2015, 140-142). The ecomuseum ideal embraces that idea and offers such an approach.

With a growing number of Chinese provinces establishing their own application of the ecomuseum ideal, this thesis has examined the current plans to establish ecomuseums in Hainan Province, China. It is an exploratory research that aimed to investigate ways for Hainan Province to encourage community participation and strengthen the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments within the framework of tourism management using the ecomuseum concept. The research was guided by the following research question: **How can the use of the ecomuseum ideal in Hainan Province, China, support the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments and the development of sustainable tourism in the region?**

The practical application of the ecomuseum ideal reached China in the late 1990s. It has been employed as a method of balancing the safeguarding of China’s rich and diverse

cultural heritage with the need for economic development (An and Gjestrum 1999), especially through tourism. In that aspect, the ecomuseum ideal relates well to the Chinese situation. Local authorities often see the development of tourism as one of the main reasons for cultural heritage protection (Oakes 1998). Ecomuseum principles encourage: sustainable development; the use of heritage as a resource; and, aim to provide an intersection between heritage and responsible tourism (Corsane 2006a). In other aspects, the ecomuseum ideal is difficult to achieve in China. The 'community' and its participation in decision-making are central to the ecomuseum ideal (Davis 2011; de Varine 2006; Graybeal 2010). However, the idea of community participation is relatively new to China. China has a long tradition of top-down planning in heritage protection and tourism planning (Nitzky 2013). The basic structures of civil society in China are only slowly emerging; its development being engineered by the state in a top-down fashion (Heberer 2012).

Despite the fact that Chinese ecomuseums are struggling to live up to the ideal – in particular in their effectiveness in heritage protection and community participation (Lu 2014; Yi 2011) – the approach has spread and an increasing number of provinces employ the ecomuseum concept as part of their tourism development and heritage protection plans.

The growing number of ecomuseums in China follows a general national and international trend to explore ways of heritage protection that are holistic and safeguard the 'overall ecological environment', including architectural, cultural, intangible and natural heritage. Ecomuseums can be interpreted as one of several projects in China that see the interconnection of the natural and human environments, and, that culture exists within a local context. These projects have grown in relevance since China increased its efforts to safeguard the country's ICH in the early 2000s (Rees 2012).

One of the Chinese provinces that has planned to adopt the ecomuseum ideal as a way to safeguard its cultural heritage and encourage sustainable tourism is Hainan Province. This research analyses two of the six proposed ecomuseums in the province.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

Six aims and objectives were developed to answer the above research question. The first three aims explore the main concepts and topics researched: the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments; ecomuseology; and, sustainable tourism. Aims 4-6 are designed to

investigate and evaluate the current ecomuseum development at the case study sites. The research aims and objectives are as follows.

Aim 1: Critically analyse the framework and measures of safeguarding ICH in China and Hainan Province considering in particular the application of holistic heritage management approaches that safeguard ICH in its original environment.

1.1 Critically examine the national laws and legal frameworks that are important for the protection of ICH in China.

1.2 Explore the importance and the application of holistic heritage management approaches in China.

1.3 Analyse the framework and measures for the safeguarding of ICH in Hainan Province and investigate the importance of a holistic management approach to ICH-safeguarding on the island.

Aim 2: Critically examine the concept of community participation and the application of the ecomuseum ideal in China.

2.1 Explore the concept of community participation in heritage protection and sustainability in China.

2.2 Critically analyse the emergence of the Chinese ecomuseum and the current application of the ecomuseum ideal.

2.3 Examine the influence of ecomuseums on the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments.

2.4 Analyse the opportunities and challenges of the Chinese interpretation and application of the ecomuseum ideal.

Aim 3: Critically analyse the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in rural China and explore the establishment of sustainable and participatory cultural-tourism projects in Hainan Province.

3.1 Critically examine the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in rural China, in particular regarding projects with community involvement.

3.2 Analyse tourism development in Hainan Province, particularly considering ecotourism and sustainable tourism in the context of its becoming an 'International Tourism Island'.

3.3 Investigate sustainable and participatory cultural-tourism projects in Hainan that share characteristics with future ecomuseum sites and examine their challenges and opportunities.

Aim 4: Critically analyse the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups in Hainanese ecomuseum development – namely provincial-government officials, experts and community members – on a holistic approach to ICH and environmental protection, sustainable-tourism developments, community participation using the ecomuseum ideal.

4.1 Investigate the perspectives of provincial-government officials on a holistic approach to ICH and environmental protection, sustainable-tourism developments, community participation and the ecomuseum ideal in Hainan.

4.2 Critically analyse the perspectives of heritage and tourism experts in Hainan on a holistic approach to ICH and environmental protection, sustainable-tourism developments, community participation and the Hainanese-ecomuseum ideal.

4.3 Examine the perspectives of the Hainanese population and Li ethnic-minority members at the respective case studies on safeguarding their ICH, developing sustainable tourism and their potential participation in both activities.

Aim 5: Investigate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province and critically analyse its challenges and opportunities, with particular regards to the two case studies of Baili Baicun and Binglanggu.

5.1. Analyse the on-going process of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province.

5.2 Explore the ICH, natural environments and the development plans of the future ecomuseums Baili Baicun and Binglanggu.

5.3 Explore the unique characteristics of the 'ecomuseum' in Hainan.

5.4 Critically analyse the challenges and opportunities of the Hainanese ecomuseum with regards to ICH-safeguarding and environmental protection; sustainable tourism development; and, community participation.

Aim 6: Develop a new framework of guidelines for establishing and evaluating the Hainanese ecomuseum and critically evaluate the future ecomuseums in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu by employing these guidelines.

6.1 Critically examine the application of the current ecomuseum ideal and principles to the Chinese and Hainanese context.

6.2 Develop a new set of Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines that considers and adapts to the local context.

6.3 Critically evaluate the future ecomuseums in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu using the new set of ecomuseum guidelines and the three ecomuseum pillars.

1.3 An introduction to the ecomuseum ideal and the Chinese ecomuseum development

In order to examine ecomuseum development in Hainan and answer the research question, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the ecomuseum ideal and its application in China.

The ecomuseum ideal took form in the late 1960s in France and was closely connected to the phenomenon of 'new museology', a movement that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Museum literature uses the term 'new museology' to describe at least three different changes in the museum world, however, it commonly refers to the second museum revolution (van Mensch 1993)¹. This new museology emphasised the social development of the museum. It aimed for the museum to be more proactive, to focus on social issues and serve the present and future needs of its communities (Davis 2011; Harrison 2005; van Mensch 1993). Heritage was interpreted as a resource that should be developed and taken care of by communities (van Mensch 1995). In this spirit the initial ideas of the ecomuseum itself, to form a closer link between humanity and the environment and to democratise

¹ Van Mensch (1995) refers to the changes in museum practices at the end of the 19th century as the first museum revolution. During this time period the museum became more focused on education. The third museum revolution occurred during the 1980s and was marked by a stronger concentration on recreation and tourism (van Mensch 1995).

museum processes by taking communities more into account, were developed by Georges Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine (Corsane and Holleman 1993; Su 2008; Davis 2011, 66-68; de Varine 2006; Hudson 1992; Rivière 1973; see also: Rivière 1985). The importance of the ‘community’ for the ecomuseum concept is clearly stated in the following quote by Hugues de Varine (2006, 85).

The “eco” prefix to ecomuseum means neither economy, nor ecology in the common sense, but essentially human or social ecology: the community and society in general, even mankind, are at the core of its existence, or its activity, of its process. Or at least they should be... This was the intuition of the “inventors” of the ecomuseum concept in the early 70s.

(Ibid.)

Today there are over 500 ecomuseums worldwide (Yi 2013b); the movement is especially active in Scandinavia, Italy and Asia (Davis 2007). In China, the first ecomuseums were established in the late 1990s, as a tool to balance rural development and heritage protection in the economically weaker ethnic-minority areas, such as Guizhou Province, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan Province (An and Gjestrum 1999; Nitzky 2012b). Today, China has around 30 ecomuseums and the movement is in constant development, with newer ecomuseums being established in the economically more affluent regions on the east coast including Zhejiang and Fujian Province. All the ecomuseums established in China and identified by me are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Ecomuseums in China (adapted from Davis 2011, 239; Nitzky 2012b, 380 and Yi 2010a, 10)

Province	Ecomuseum	Established	Heritage Exhibit	Generations of ecomuseums	Notes
Guizhou					
<i>4 Ecomuseum of the Sino-Norwegian Project.</i>					
	Suojia Miao Ecomuseum	1998	Qing Miao minority	1st-Generation	-
	Zhenshan Buyi Ecomuseum	2002	Buyi minority	1st-Generation	-
	Longli Ecomuseum	2004	Military fortress design and 200-year-old stone Ming-Dynasty style architecture, Lantern Festival	1st-Generation	-

Province	Ecomuseum	Established	Heritage Exhibit	Generations of ecomuseums	Notes
			dragon dancing celebration and dragon-making craftsmanship		
	Liping Tang'an Dong Minority Ecomuseum	2005	Dong minority	1st-Generation	Model ecomuseum site
	Dimen Dong Minority Ecomuseum	2005	Dong minority	-	Private ecomuseum established by a Hong Kong businessman
Yunnan					
<i>Six Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages established with support of the Ford Foundation.</i>					
	Heshun Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Culture and late Qing, early Republic architecture of overseas Chinese	-	-
	Xianrendong Yi Minority Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Yi minority	-	-
	Yuehu Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Yi minority	-	-
	Keyi Yi Minority Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Yi minority	-	-
	Baka Jinuo Xiaozhai Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Jinuo minority	-	-
	Nanjian Dai Minority Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village	2002	Dai minority	-	-
	Zhanglang Village Bulang Ecomuseum	2006	Bulang minority	-	-
	Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum	2007	Bai minority and the villages over one thousand year's history of	-	-

Province	Ecomuseum	Established	Heritage Exhibit	Generations of ecomuseums	Notes
			salt production		
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region					
<i>1+10 Model of Ethnic Ecomuseum with Guangxi Museum of Nationalities in Nanning at its centre.</i>					
	Nandan Lihu White Trouser Yao Ecomuseum	2004	White Trouser Yao minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Sanjiang Dong Minority Ecomuseum	2004	Dong minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Jiuzhou Ecomuseum	2005	Zhuang minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Lingchuan Changgangling Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum	2005	Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture	2nd-Generation	-
	Hezhou Kejia Ecomuseum	2007	Hakka minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Napo Black Clothing Zhuang Ecomuseum	2008	Black Clothing Zhuang minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Dongxing Ecomuseum	2009	Jing minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Rongshui Ecomuseum	2009	Miao minority	2nd-Generation	-
	Longsheng Longji Zhuang Minority Ecomuseum	2010	Zhuang minority	2nd-Generation	Model ecomuseum site
	Jinxiu Aoyao Minority Ecomuseum	2011	Aoyao minority	2nd-Generation	-
Inner Mongolia					
	Olunsum Mongolian Ecomuseum	2005	Mongolian minority and grassland culture.	2nd-Generation	-
Zhejiang					
	Anji Ecomuseum	2008	She minority, white tea production, ecological environment	3rd-Generation	Model ecomuseum site
Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region					
	Liupanshan Ecomuseum	2010	Ecological environment	-	-
Fujian					
	Sanfang Qixiang Community Museum in Fuzhou	2012	Urban ecomuseum showing the historical culture of Sanfang Qixiang	-	Model ecomuseum site
Anhui					

Province	Ecomuseum	Established	Heritage Exhibit	Generations of ecomuseums	Notes
	Tunxi Ancient Street Community Museum	2012	Urban ecomuseum, old Anhui-style folk houses	-	Model ecomuseum site
Shaanxi					
	Fengyan Immigration Ecomuseum	2012	Fengyan ancient terraces, built during the Qing Dynasty by the Wu family who immigrated from Changsha, Hunan	3rd-Generation	-
Henan					
	Jia County Linfeng Guzhai Ecomuseum	2013	Red stone houses, late Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture	3rd-Generation	-
Sichuan					
	Ya'an Ecomuseum	Not opened yet	Tea culture, panda culture, ecological culture	-	-

It is difficult to give an exact overview, because there is no official list and not all ecomuseum projects have the term 'ecomuseum' in their name. Urban ecomuseums, such as in Fujian and Anhui Province, usually use the term community museum (*Shequ bowuguan*) (Song 2014). It can be difficult to distinguish if a heritage protection project uses ecomuseum principles and therefore can be added to the list, in particular because several ecomuseums in China have not been maintained (Davis 2011). This problem is not limited to the Chinese context. Even Hugues de Varine (1996, 25), the creator of the word, stated:

In France: the word ecomuseum became fashionable and was used for all kinds of technical, ethnographical, touristic so-called museums, as being more modern, and potentially more attractive to visitors. This is why I, personally, refuse to talk anymore of ecomuseums as representing the new museums. I prefer to speak of 'community museums'.

(Ibid.)

Because there is no straight forward way to name and categorise ecomuseums in China, authors have chosen different ways to group ecomuseums. At the International Ecomuseum Forum held in Guizhou in 2005, Su (2006a) divided Chinese ecomuseums established by then

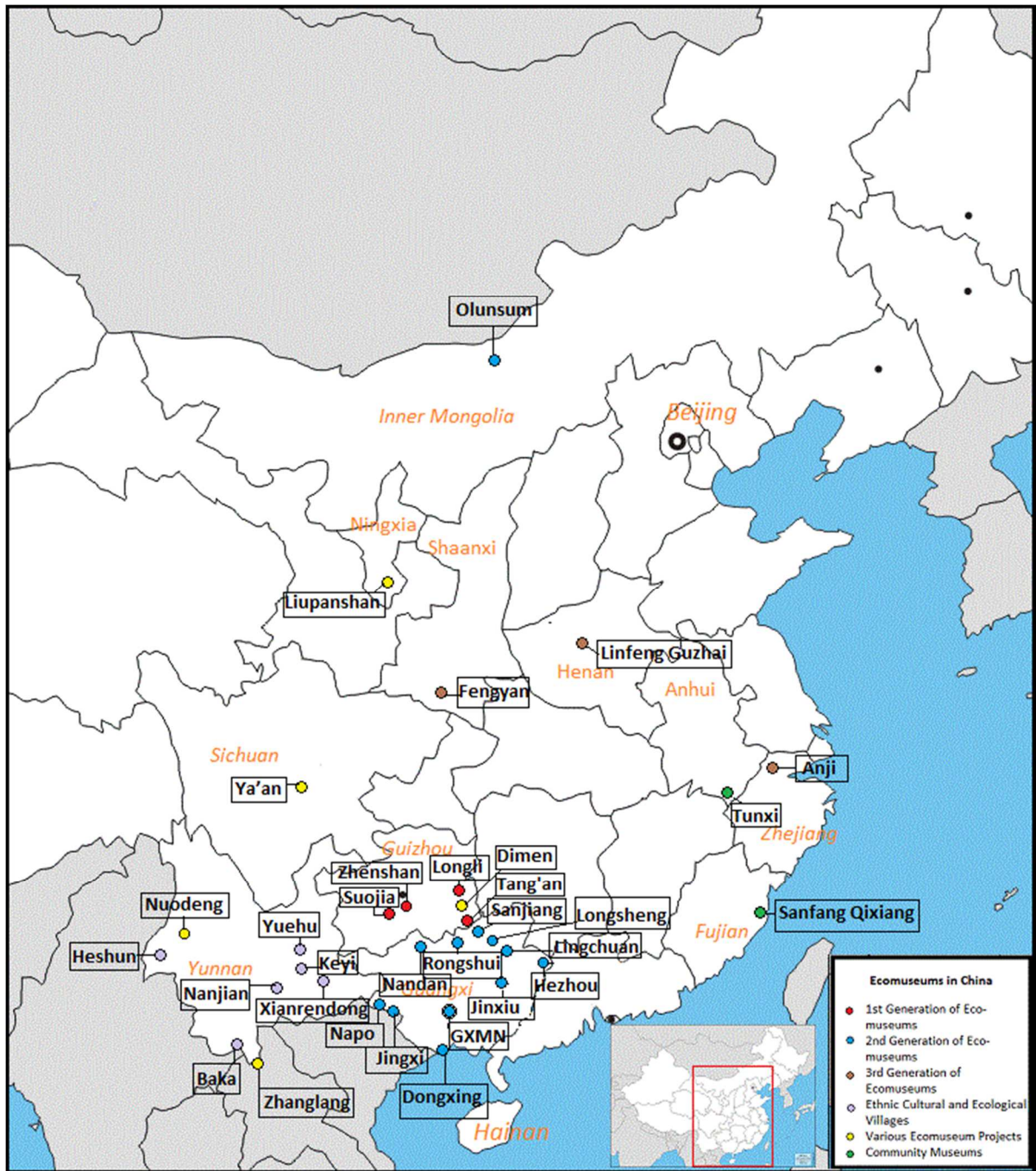
into two generations, counting the first four ecomuseums in Guizhou as the first generation and the ecomuseums in Guangxi and Inner Mongolia as the second generation. According to Pan (2013), Su Donghai suggested counting the newer ecomuseums, established in China's more affluent eastern regions, as the third generation of ecomuseums. In particular the ecomuseum in Anji has been mentioned as a representative of this third generation (see Table 1.1). The generations were not only developed according to the chronology of establishment, but also their different interpretations of the ecomuseum ideal, which will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

While separating the ecomuseums into generations provides a good overview of the ecomuseum development in China, the problem with grouping them into generations is that it does not consider all existing ecomuseum projects. To give a more inclusive picture of ecomuseum projects in China other researchers have developed lists. Davis (2011, 239), Nitzky (2012b, 380) and Yi (2010a, 10) include partial lists of ecomuseums in China in their works.

These partial lists have been used as a starting point for Table 1.1, however, this list aims to be more comprehensive and include all ecomuseum-like projects in China. Table 1.1 summarises all the ecomuseums and community museums known to me up to this point. It indicates the generation they belong to and points out the ecomuseums that were included in the first group of national model eco- (community-) museums by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) in 2011. 'Community museum' is the term used in China to describe the urban ecomuseum, and ecomuseums and community museums share the same ideas. This can be seen in several recent publications by SACH. The correspondence letter *Nr. 1459* that announces the naming of the first group of national model eco- (community-) museums (SACH 2011) and the following SACH news statement note that: "In the countryside the ecomuseum module is applied, in the city the community museums is used, but the principles and the aims are all the same" (Song 2014).

It was also decided to include the 'Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages' in Yunnan Province in the list. Despite the fact that Nitzky (2012b, 380) and Yi (2010a, 10) do not include them in their lists, they use ecomuseum-like principles and are a clear adaption of the ecomuseum paradigm in China (Yin 2003; Xu 2007). Other concepts and museums, that show parallels to the ecomuseum concept and use ecomuseum-like principles, but are not shown in Table 1.1

are the ecological cultural protection zones (ECPZ) mentioned in Chapter 3 and several industrial and agriculture museums (Su 2008). Figure 1.1 illustrates the distribution of the



ecomuseums listed and indicates the category they belong to.

Figure 1.1 Distributions of Ecomuseums in China (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=15272&lang=en)

The ecomuseum terminology is complex. A large body of literature analysing the ecomuseum ideal and its principles worldwide has been produced. The term ecomuseum

was first used by the French Minister for the Environment Robert Poujade at an international museum meeting in Dijon on 3 September 1971. It was created by the French museologist Hugues de Varine who advised the minister before the meeting (Davis 2011, 66).

In its early phase, it addressed very much the wish of the French museum professionals for a radical change.

Poujade, de Varine and Rivière all wanted to provoke the then very traditional and centralised French museums to look beyond their front doors and crusade for both the environment and the renewal of the museum as an institution – to create a new museology.

(Boylan 1992a, 29)

The first ecomuseums in France had two forms. The first, known as the 'discovery ecomuseum', was closely linked to the nature reserves in France and focused on ecological needs. The second was more interested in the well-being of the community and is known as either a 'community museum' or a 'development museum' (Davis 2011, 68). The most important of those early ecomuseums, and indeed often described as the first, is the Le Creusot-Montceau Ecomuseum that was established between 1971 and 1974 by Hugues de Varine. De Varine (1977, 136) described the ecomuseum as:

devoted to the environment, whether cultural or natural, and involving the participation of man himself as an actor rather than as a visitor. In it all the disciplines are represented, and the museum becomes a documentation centre available for the purpose of research and education, not passively, receiving what others find, but by itself seeking, with its own means, by inventing methods of investigation adapted to the environment and local conditions, by working out classification systems in line with a flexible theory and future needs as yet unknown.

(Ibid.)

Today the 'ecomuseum' is a global phenomenon, with principles and definitions still being discussed and redefined to fit local contexts (Davis 2011, 94). Su (2006b, 242) concluded at the International Ecomuseum Forum in Guizhou 2005: "Theories of eco-museums are in the process of constant development. There is no such thing as the standard definition of the ecomuseum". Nevertheless, since the appearance of the word 'ecomuseum' several definitions, approaches and principles have been developed.

Rivard (1988) and Boylan (1992a) defined the ecomuseum by comparing the traditional museum (building + heritage + collection + expert staff + public visitors) and the ecomuseum (territory + heritage + memory + population).

While the traditional museum is confined to a building with collections, curated and interpreted by experts, an ecomuseum often covers the whole territory of a region including the memories and wishes of the local population. In order to illustrate these differences Rivard (1988) also developed the two graphics that became the basis for those presented in Davis (1999; 2011). Figure 1.2 shows that in contrast to the traditional museum, the ecomuseum has no clear defined boundaries and offers a holistic approach to heritage protection that amongst others includes nature, traditions, residents, identity and visitors.

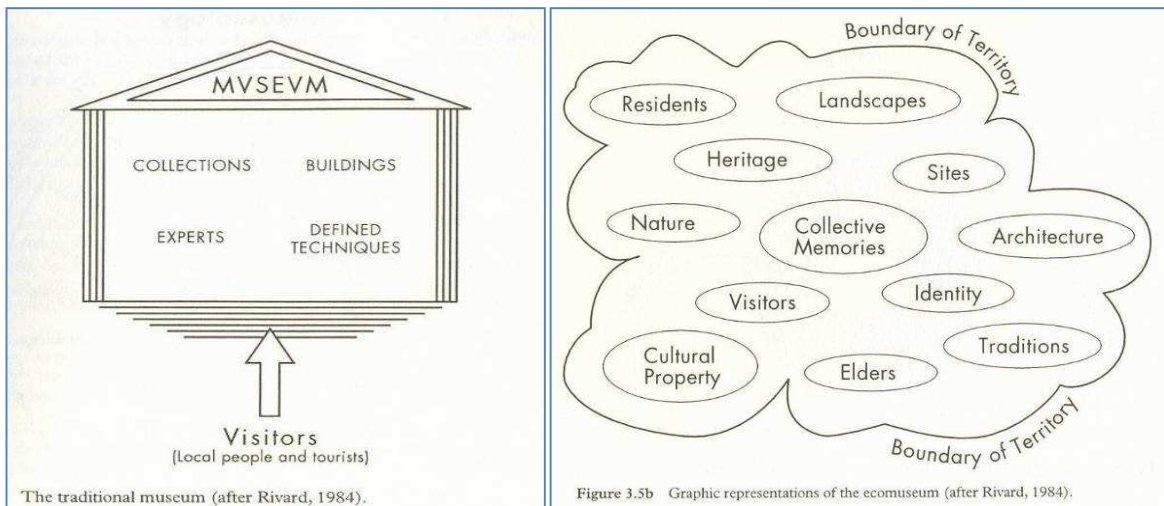


Figure 1.2 A comparison between the traditional museum and the ecomuseum after Rivard (after Davis 2011, 83, 84)

Stokrocki (1996, 35) expresses a similar thought by saying:

Usually we think of a museum as a storehouse of art objects, a temple of goods, and culture in a box. In some communities people regard the museum building itself as only a meeting place and the environment or community as the museum – an ecomuseum.

Another illustration of the ecomuseum is the necklace model. Here the ecomuseum is interpreted as the thread or mechanism that holds different heritage elements of a territory together and combines its various heritage sites (Davis 2005).



Figure 1.3 The necklace model for the ecomuseum (after Davis 2011, 90)

The Natural History Committee of ICOM advocated the following definition in 1978, suggesting that the ecomuseum could make a contribution to heritage protection and community development in a number of different circumstances:

The ecomuseum is an institution which manages, studies and exploits – by scientific, educational and generally speaking cultural means – the entire heritage of a given community, including the whole natural environment and cultural milieu. Thus the ecomuseum is a vehicle for public participation in community planning and development. To this end, the ecomuseum uses all means and methods at its disposal in order to allow the public to comprehend, criticise and master – in a liberal and responsible manner – the problems which it faces. Essentially the ecomuseum uses the language of the artefact, the reality of everyday life and concrete situations in order to achieve desired change.

(Anon. 1978, cited in Davis 2011, 81)

A more recent definition by the European Network of Ecomuseums states that: “An ecomuseum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for sustainable development. An ecomuseum is based on community agreement”

(Local Worlds 2004). Lastly, Davis (2007, 116) defines the ecomuseum as “a community-based museum or heritage project that supports sustainable development”.

While all of these definitions emphasise the vital role of the community, the ICOM definition focuses on the idea of ecomuseums encompassing the heritage of an entire territory and ecomuseums as a potential instrument for social change. The two more recent definitions place their attention on the importance of using heritage resources for sustainable development. The idea of the ecomuseum being a tool for sustainable development is very important for the way the ecomuseum model is applied in China. Here the ecomuseum mainly serves as a mechanism for economic development (Jin 2011; Nitzky 2012a).

The various definitions presented above, and ecomuseum practice in different countries, show that ecomuseums can take very different forms and exhibit anything, from local mining traditions through the natural and intangible heritage of a certain area to rural crafts and arts. Some do cover a large territory while others just encompass a small village (Davis 2004). Whilst many ecomuseums are comprised of a number of ‘antennae’, for instance exhibition halls and natural and historical sites that are connected through interpretive means (Davis 2004), other resemble interpretive centres that guide visitors to other heritage features (Corsane 2014, pers. comm.).

In order to develop Rivard’s (1988) and Boylan’s (1992a) definitions further by determining what separates the ecomuseum from a traditional or community-led museum and what these institutions have in common, the following authors have attempted to develop ecomuseum indicators.

Boylan (1992b, 30) suggested to evaluate the ecomuseum using the following five characteristics on a 1-5 point scale: territory; fragmentation and the nature of the ecomuseum collection; interdisciplinary approaches to interpretation; the nature of the ecomuseum customer; local democracy and community empowerment (Corsane *et al.* 2007a). Boylan (1992b) suggested that a ‘true’ ecomuseum would score at least 20 points.

A similar list was developed by Corsane *et al.* (2007a and 2007b), whose study on ecomuseums in Italy resulted in five tenets that most ecomuseums share (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Ecomuseum Tenets (Corsane *et al.* 2007a, 102)

- The adoption of a territory that is not necessarily defined by conventional boundaries.
- The adoption of a 'fragmented site' policy that is linked to *in situ* conservation and interpretation.
- Conventional views of site ownership are abandoned; conservation and interpretation of sites is carried out via liaison, cooperation and the development of partnerships.
- The empowerment of local communities; the involvement of local people in ecomuseum activities and in the creation of their cultural identity.
- The potential for interdisciplinarity and for holistic interpretation is usually seized.

These five ecomuseum tenets were based on a list Davis (1999) created after carrying out a questionnaire survey of 166 ecomuseums in 25 countries and a list of 18 distinctive ecomuseum features defined by Hamrin and Hulander (1995).

In 2004 Sarah Elliott, Corsane and Davis developed an ecomuseum matrix of enabling conditions, non-ecomuseum characteristics and 21 Ecomuseum Principles that are shared by most ecomuseums, for Elliot's PhD thesis on ecomuseums in Turkey (Table 1.3). This list of 21 Ecomuseum Principles was presented by Corsane at the 2005 International Ecomuseum Forum in Guizhou for the first time and published in a subsequent paper (Corsane 2006a).

Table 1.3 The 21 Ecomuseum Principles (Corsane, Elliott and Davis 2004)

1. Be steered by local communities
2. Allow for public participation from all the stakeholder and interest groups in all the decision-making processes and activities in a democratic manner
3. Stimulate joint ownership and management, with input from local communities, academic advisors, local businesses, local authorities and government structures
4. Place an emphasis on the processes of heritage management, rather than on heritage products for consumption
5. Encourage collaboration with local craftspeople, artists, writers, actors and musicians
6. Depend on substantial active voluntary efforts by local stakeholders
7. Focus on local identity and a 'sense of place'
8. Encompass a 'geographical' territory, which can be determined by different shared characteristics
9. Cover both spatial and temporal aspects, where, in relation to the temporal, it looks at continuity and change over time rather than simply trying to freeze things in time
10. Take the form of a 'fragmented museum', consisting of a network with a hub and antennae of different buildings and sites
11. Promote preservation, conservation and safeguarding of heritage resources *in situ*
12. Give equal attention to immovable and movable tangible material culture, and to intangible heritage resources
13. Stimulate sustainable development and use of resources

14. Allow for change and development for a better future
15. Encourage an ongoing programme of documentation of past and present life and people's interactions with all environmental factors (including physical, economic, social, cultural and political)
16. Promote research at a number of levels – from the research and understanding of local 'specialists' to research by academics
17. Promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to research
18. Encourage a holistic approach to the interpretation of culture/nature relationships
19. Attempt to illustrate connections between: technology/individual, nature/culture, and past/present
20. Provide for an intersection between heritage and responsible tourism
21. Bring benefits to local communities, for example, a sense of pride, regeneration and/or economic income.

Davis (2011) argued that principles 2-4 are especially important. Corsane (2006c) also used these principles to evaluate the museum on Robben Island. These indicators can vary according to the local context and it is unlikely for ecomuseums to display all 21 principles in equal proportion (Corsane 2007b). However, every ecomuseum will ideally rest on the following three pillars (Table 1.4) of the ecomuseum ideal that Corsane and Zheng (2013) developed and presented at the International Academic Conference of Safeguarding of Traditional Li Techniques: Spinning, Dyeing, Weaving and Embroidering.

Even though these ecomuseum tenets and principles were developed taking ecomuseums worldwide into account, they mainly reflect the Western ecomuseum ideal and values. China, for example, developed its own ecomuseum principles in 2000 (Su 2008).

The government decision that Chinese ecomuseums should follow Chinese guidelines was made early on during the development of the first ecomuseums in China, established in four villages in Guizhou in 1995. These ecomuseums were the result of a Sino-Norwegian cooperation, in which Norwegian experts led and supported the ecomuseum establishment (An and Gjestrum 1999).

Table 1.4 Three pillars of the ‘ecomuseum ideal’ (Corsane and Zheng 2013, 13)

1. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ focuses on the sense and spirit of place – through a holistic approach to the integrated management of natural and cultural and tangible and intangible heritage resources within their original and over-layered physical, natural, economic, social, cultural and political environments.
2. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ facilitates ‘stakeholder’ involvement and joint-ownership of the processes and products – where the stakeholders with invested interest may include in certain countries: government bodies at different levels; community groups and representatives, including tradition bearers and ‘transmitters’; heritage management professionals and practitioners; businesses; non-government bodies; and, academic advisors and students. Another important ‘stakeholder’ category includes the groups of users, visitors and tourists who may visit the ecomuseum.
3. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ is not an absolute model, rather it is a ‘malleable’ and flexible outlook and should be responsive to, and ‘shaped’ by, the specific local contexts and needs – no two ecomuseums will ever be the same or limited by the parameters of a model, as each will be unique in its response that will attempt to bring equal benefits to all ‘stakeholders’ involved.

The Chinese government determined that Chinese ecomuseums should rest on three principles. The first Chinese principle was that the concept of the ecomuseum had to be adapted to the local situation in China. Most ecomuseums in China, in particular the first ecomuseums, were located in remote villages that often did not even have access to running water and electricity. Consequently, their situation differed greatly from the ecomuseums in Europe and the concept could not be copied directly (Su 2008). While Chinese ecomuseums had to conform to theories and principles of the international ecomuseum movement it also had to have ‘Chinese characteristics’ (Hu 2006).

The practical consequences of this first Chinese principle for the establishment of ecomuseums in China are difficult to estimate. The notion of ‘Chinese characteristics’ is not a clearly defined concept, but part of the rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For the CCP ideas of patriotism and nationalism, are essential to their ideology and are used to strengthen their political legitimacy. While China’s leaders employ different mechanisms and concepts created in the West to further China’s development, it would go against their idea of patriotism and nationalism, to simply accept these concepts into their ideology. Instead they create their own rhetoric using ‘new’ terms like ‘socialism with Chinese principles’ (Zheng 1999, 90). The first Chinese principle of creating ‘ecomuseums with Chinese

characteristics', therefore, must be interpreted in the CCP tradition of making a Western concept seem more 'Chinese'.

The second and third Chinese principles are objectives of the first principle. The second defines the role of the government, experts and the local population. "The government has to guide, experts to direct and local residents to be involved" (Hu 2006, 26). Due to the political situation in China it would be difficult for the local population to initiate an ecomuseum by themselves. Cultural projects always have to be planned and established by the government (Yang, Wall and Smith 2008).

According to the third Chinese principle the role of the ecomuseum is not only to preserve culture but also to develop the economy of the area (Hu 2006). In China heritage protection and tourism development often go hand in hand (Shepherd and Yu 2013). In addition the remote locations of the ecomuseums make certain developments, such as the construction of roads, necessary.

When establishing the first ecomuseums in Guizhou Province, the inhabitants of the four participating villages also developed their own ecomuseum principles, the 'Liuzhi Principles' (An and Gjestrum 1999). The nine Liuzhi Principles were developed and agreed upon in two seminars in Liuzhi and Oslo, Norway by representatives of the four ecomuseum villages, government representatives from different levels and Norwegian and Chinese experts to establish a common understanding of the values that should guide the four ecomuseums.

Even though these Liuzhi Principles were developed for the first four ecomuseums in Guizhou Province, Myklebust (2006) remarked that these guidelines are essential for establishing all ecomuseums in China and generally relevant for all ecomuseums concentrating on protecting minority cultures.

This thesis employs the definitions and principles discussed above as a basis to evaluate the challenges and opportunities of the proposed ecomuseums in Hainan Province and to analyse the relevance of these indicators for ecomuseums in the Hainanese context. It aims to develop new guidelines to encourage community participation that takes into account the strong government involvement and the top-down approach to heritage protection commonly used in ecomuseums in China.

Table 1.5 Liuzhi Principles (Myklebust 2006, 18)

1. The people of the villages are the true owners of their culture. They have the right to interpret and validate it themselves.
2. The meaning of culture and its values can be defined only by human perception and interpretation based on knowledge. Cultural competence must be enhanced.
3. Public participation is essential to the ecomuseums. Culture is a common and democratic asset, and must be democratically managed.
4. When there is a conflict between tourism and preservation of culture the latter must be given priority. The genuine heritage should not be sold out, but production of quality souvenirs based on traditional crafts should be encouraged.
5. Long term and holistic planning is of utmost importance. Short time economic profits that destroy culture in the long term must be avoided.
6. Cultural heritage protection must be integrated in a total environmental approach. Traditional techniques and materials are essential in this respect.
7. Visitors have a moral obligation to behave respectfully. They must be given a code of conduct.
8. There is no bible for ecomuseums. They will all be different according to the specific culture and situation of the society they present.
9. Social development is a prerequisite for establishing ecomuseums in living societies. The well-being of the inhabitants must be enhanced in ways that do not compromise traditional values.

Ecomuseum practices, the role of the ecomuseum in protecting ICH and encouraging sustainable development and ecomuseum establishment in China, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.4 The study area – China and Hainan

For this research it is essential to understand the country and region under investigation.

This section will give a brief overview of the study area with regards to the geography, population and economy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Hainan. It also provides a brief account of the two case studies analysed.

1.4.1 Geography and Population

China encompasses a diverse geographical territory and has huge regional differences.

Covering 9.6 million km² China is the fourth largest country in the world, closely behind the United States. It is also the most populous country with a population of approximately 1.32 billion. The size and diversity of the country support the decision of this thesis to choose a regional approach. It is difficult to make generalisations on how certain policies and concepts will work and affect different regions and population groups (Saich 2011, 9).

As seen in Figure 1.4 administratively the PRC is divided into 22 provinces and five autonomous regions; Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia Hui and Guangxi Zhang.



Figure 1.4 Map of China (<http://www.mybeijingchina.com/beijing-map/>)

Autonomous regions are provincial-level administrations, mainly populated by non-Han Chinese people - China has 55 ethnic-minority groups, the majority of the population belongs to the Han ethnicity - and have more autonomy from the national government (Starr 2001, 34). In addition, China has two 'special-administrative regions' (SAR), Hong Kong, the former British colony which was returned to China in 1997, and Macao, which was given back by Portugal in 1999 (Joseph 2010). Provinces are essential political and economic units and even though their government structure and party set-up are linked to national policy, they have substantial autonomy (Brødsgaard 2009, 1).

Further administrative subdivisions are prefectures and below that counties (Figure 1.5). Regions with a high concentration of ethnic minorities also have autonomous prefectures and counties (Dillon 2009, 7; Joseph 2010, 10). Figure 1.5 shows a detailed overview on the structural hierarchy of the administrative division of China.

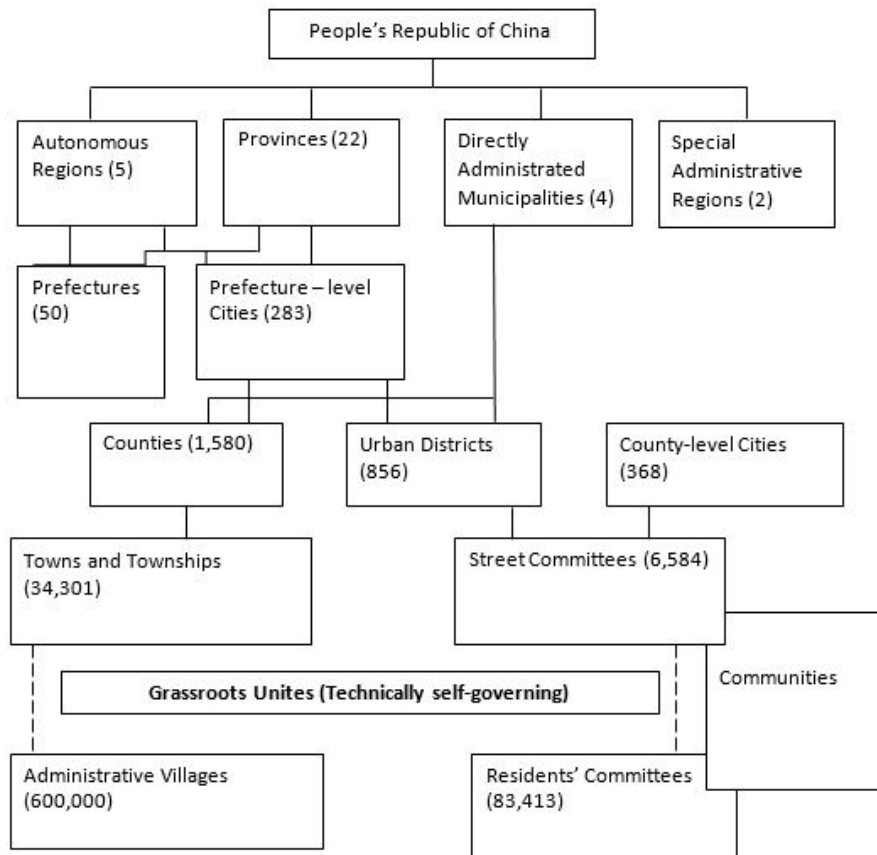


Figure 1.5 Administrative Division of the People's Republic of China (adapted from Joseph 2010, p. 10)

Economic and social developments in China have always been heterogeneous. The biggest cultural divide is between the north and the south of China, due to geographical and geopolitical factors. History enforces this division. Through history, the majority of China's capitals have been located in the north, giving it a much more bureaucratic culture in opposition to the south, which is more open and has a cosmopolitan-trading culture. The biggest economic divide is between the highly developed eastern and south-eastern coastal regions and the economically less developed western and interior provinces (Dillon 2009, 6; Saich 2011, 19).

As mentioned above there is also a division within the Chinese population. China's more remote and often least economically developed areas are home to most of China's 55 official recognised ethnic minorities. They comprise 8.4% of the population; they occupy 60% of the total land mass including sensitive border regions, for example Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia (Saich 2011, 12-13). Ethnic categories were implemented after 1949 by the CCP as part of their modernisation and economic development plans. They defined an 'ethnic

minority' as a group of people with common territory, language, economy, and culture. Out of over 400 applications only 55 were accepted to fit this description (Netting 1997). Several authors have shown that the decisions of the national government on which groups were granted the minority status were neither clear-cut nor objective, but often had political reasons (Gladney 1996; Harrell 1995; Wu 1990). There is also great diversity within the Han Chinese themselves, who have different local traditions shaped by local festivities, deities, cuisine and languages (Dillon 2010, 11; Saich 2011, 15).

One of the regions in China, with a distinctive local culture and several regional characteristics is Hainan Province, the focus of this research. It is located in the South China Sea, around 25 km off the Chinese mainland's south-western coast. Historically, Hainan Province was regarded as the backwater of the Chinese Empire and China did not gain full control over the whole island until the 1950s, despite a steady stream of immigrants from the mainland due to political unrest (Feng and Goodman 1997). Today it is China's biggest Special Economic Zone (SEZ)² and is comprised of two main urban prefectures, seven county-level cities, four counties and six ethnic autonomous regions (Gu and Wall 2007). Figure 1.6 shows a map of Hainan and its administrative divisions including its two major cities and tourism destinations Haikou, the capital in the north of the island, and, Sanya in the south.

Hainan is the only tropical province in China and one of the most biologically-diverse regions in the world. It contains 13% of plant and animal species in China; it is the home of rare and endangered species, such as the 'living fossil' tree fern (*Alsophila spinulosa*) and the cloud leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*). Hainan also has globally-significant mangrove forests, marine communities and tropical forests (Ouyang *et al.* 2003; Stone and Wall 2003). It grows many tropical plants and fruits, for instance coconut, betel nut, jackfruit, coffee and rubber (Brødsgaard 2009, 10).

² To attract foreign technology and capital SEZ were created by the national government in 1978. The first four SEZ Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen got their status in 1979. These SEZ facilitated foreign investment through preferential policies, such as tax holidays breaks and exemptions, access to land and infrastructure and privileges in import and export (Brødsgaard 2009, 33).



Figure 1.6 Map showing the administrative division of Hainan Province (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=21231&lang=en)

Hainan Province covers an area of 34 500 km² and has a population of around 8.2 million people. Hainan's ethnic minorities count 1.4 million people (Brødsgaard 2009, 10; Xie 2010, 68-69). The Li minority, with a population of 1.26 million people are indigenous to Hainan and are the largest of these groups, constituting around 15% of the total population (Xie 2010, 68). Around 60,000 Miao and 7,000 Hui live on Hainan. The Miao, also known as the Hmeng, are distributed all over Southeast Asia. In Hainan most of them are the descendants of a special unit of soldiers sent from Guangxi by a Ming emperor to fight a rebellion of the Li. The Hui³ in Hainan are Austronesian-Chamic-speaking Muslims who migrated from Vietnam in the 12th century (Feng and Goodman 1997).

Han Chinese living in Hainan can be divided into four main groups. The first group are the Hainanese, which encompasses around 2-million Han Chinese. They arrived on the island before 1950 and their mother tongue is Hainanese. The second group is the ca. 1-million 'old

³ The Hui are one of the most controversial groups that have been categorised as an ethnic minority. The Hui minority is extremely diverse, they have no common language (most of them speak Mandarin Chinese), economy or culture. The majority are descendants from Muslims, but not all of them practise Islam (Gladney 1996; Harrell 1995).

mainlanders', who migrated in the Mao-era (1949 – 1976). The third group is formed by around 800,000 'new mainlanders' who came to Hainan during the reform era in the 1980s. The last groups consists of 1.2-million overseas Chinese returning to Hainan from South Asia (Brødsgaard 2009, 11). The ethnic distribution of the population is uneven; the ethnic minorities mainly live in the central-south regions of the island and the Li and Miao Autonomous Counties, while the Han population is concentrated along the coastal regions (Xie 2010, 68).

1.4.2 Economy

China is one of fastest growing economies in the world. Its economy has been growing at around 10% every year since 1978 and in 2010 it became the second largest economic power in the world behind the US (Saich 2011). However, economic growth slowed down in the last couple of years with an estimated growth rate of 7, 1% in 2015 (Xinhua 2015). The rapid economic growth in China also had major negative impacts. The growing differences of living standards between rich and poor leading to social unrest; a high demand of energy and water supplies; the deterioration of the environment and a loss of ICH and tangible heritage are just some of the most important issues (Dillon 2011, 23; Saich 2011, 271).

One of the fastest growing industries that made a very crucial development after 1978 is tourism. Supported by the development of luxury joint-venture hotel and improvements in transportation tourism has enjoyed a rapid expansion (Dillon 2010, 52). According to the 2012 *Bulletin of Tourism Statistics of the People's Republic of China* the total revenue of tourism hit RMB 2.59 trillion (£ 259 billion) in 2012 with a year-on-year increase of 15.2%. The Chinese government sees tourism as an effective means for regional development, in particular in the economically less developed and remote regions like Guizhou Province (Oakes 1998; Schein 2000; Ying and Zhou 2007).

Tourism is also one of Hainan's main industries and its development in Hainan is a priority for all levels of government. The island began its transformation into a vacation spot in 1986, when China included tourism in the national plan for social and economic development. The central government identified Hainan as one of seven priority areas for tourism development (Wang and Wall 2007). Hainan's tourism development was supported by its transition into both a province in 1988 (before that it was an administrative unit Guangdong Province) and a SEZ. As the only Chinese province with that status, the national government

decided to give Hainan more rights than any other SEZ and promulgated the idea of 'small government and big society'. This involved minimal detailed government intervention into economic decisions and very few state-operated enterprises allowing the island to function as a free market economy (Cadario *et al.* 1992).

The development of tourism is still ongoing. In 2009 the central government named Hainan Province as one of the key areas to promote tourism and the State Council released the *Opinions on Propelling the Construction of Hainan as an International Tourism Destination* that announced the national strategy of developing Hainan into an International Tourism Island (*Hainan guoji lüyoudao*) by 2020 (State Council 2009).

Tourism in Hainan is very unevenly distributed. It mainly concentrates on the coastal regions around Haikou and Sanya (Figure 1.6) while the interior areas receive few tourists (Stone and Wall 2003). However, according to the Official Website of the Hainan Government (2014) Hainan plans to promote more rural tourism destinations by 2015 (Official Website of the Hainan Government 2014).

Overall Hainan's economic development has had many ups and downs (Yu 2015, 102) and its economic aggregate totals to less than 1% of the national economy (Tan *et al.* 2013, 322). There have been several incident that hindered the Hainanese economic development, one of them was the 'bubble economy' in the 1990s, which was caused by too much focus on the real estate sector and which effects on the economy could be felt until the early 2000s (Xie 2010, 72). Since 2010 after the government introduced the strategy of 'one province, two bases', that aims to develop Hainan into a high efficiency tropical agricultural base and an International Tourism Island, Hainan's economic growth has been sustainable (Tan *et al.* 2013, 322). At the moment its GDP growth of 8.5 is higher than the national average of 7% (Zhang and Yan 2015). Economic progress in Hainan has been mainly to the benefit of the new mainlanders who live in the cities and are engaged in industry, commerce, real estate, and government work. In contrast the Hainanese, who live and work in the countryside and the 'old mainlanders' who used to dominate the local political scene and who primarily work in the state have been less affected by the economic reform. For the ethnic minorities Hainan's economic progress has made little difference (Brødsgaard 2009, 30-31).

According to interviews with government officials of Hainan Province the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan is part of its development into an International Tourism Island and a

way to create rural tourism destinations. As an essential part of this thesis tourism development in China and Hainan will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.4.3 Case Studies: Baili Baicun and Binglanggu

Currently Hainan Province is planning to establish six ecomuseums in four counties (Wang, B. 2012). There are two future ecomuseum sites in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County ‘Li and Miao Nationalities Ecological Cultural Tourist Zone in Areca Valley of Ganza Ridge’ short Binglanggu and ‘Yanoda Rainforest Cultural Tourism Zone’. One ecomuseum is located in Danzhou City, the Yangpu Ancient Salt Field and one in Ding’an County, Baili Baicun. The Liuke Overseas Chinese Cultural Village and the Wanquan River Tourism Zone are both situated Qionghai City. This research chose two out of the six future ecomuseums as its case studies, Baili Baicun in Ding’an County and Binglanggu in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County. Figure 1.7 shows the location of all the potential ecomuseums and the two case studies in Hainan.

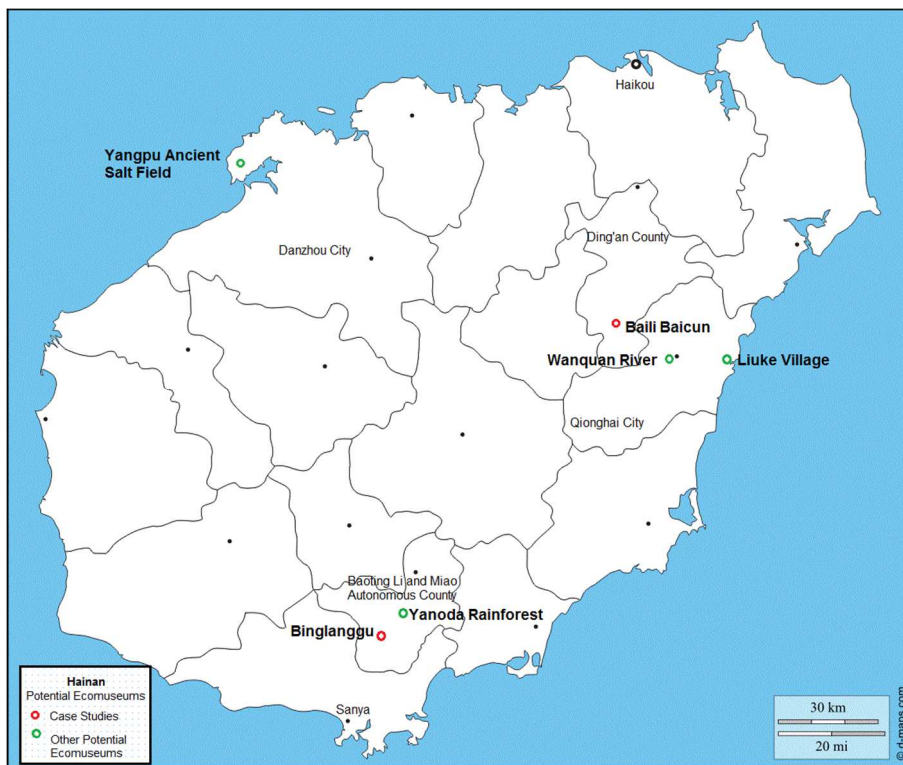


Figure 1.7 Map of potential ecomuseums in Hainan Province (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=21230&lang=en)

The case studies differ greatly from each other. The ecomuseum in Baili Baicun is two hours away from Haikou, the capital city, it displays mainly rural heritage of the Hainanese people including farming traditions and the Hainan Opera as well as natural environments of

northern Hainan. It covers a wide cluster of villages in an area of 590 km² and will be the ecomuseum encompassing the largest territory in Hainan. Before the ecomuseum development started little was done in terms of heritage protection and the area had very few tourists.

The future ecomuseum in Binglanggu, Baoting County is close to Sanya, Hainan's main tourism destination in the south. It protects and displays the heritage of the Li and Miao minorities as well as part of the tropical rainforest representing natural environments of southern Hainan. It is the only future ecomuseum that protects the heritage of Hainan's ethnic minorities. In contrast to Baili Baicun, it is an ethnic-minority theme park with a well-developed tourism structure. Even though the park displays both Li and Miao minority culture, this research focuses on the Li minority for two reasons: very few employees of the park are members of the Miao minority (less than 10) and the exhibition is more commercialised than the Li exhibition, showing few ICH expressions of the Miao. The plans for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province and more detailed information about the heritage and geography of the case studies are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.5 Significance of the research

Research analysing ecomuseum development in China mainly concentrates on the early ecomuseums: the ones established in Guizhou Province; the first three ecomuseums of the 10+1 Ecomuseum Project of Guangxi Autonomous Region (Nandan Lihu White Trouser Yao Ecomuseum, Sanjiang Dong Minority Ecomuseum, Jiuzhou Ecomuseum) and the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan Province (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis of literature). There is little English or Chinese literature dealing with more recently established ecomuseums, including the other seven ecomuseums in Guangxi and the ecomuseums in Zhejiang Province, Shaanxi Province and Hunan Province. A few Chinese publications analyse the newer ecomuseums in Guangxi Autonomous Region. A book by Qin Pu (2009) examines the whole 10+1 Ecomuseum Project and its ecomuseums and an article by Wei Zuqing (2011) looks at the Liantang Hakka ecomuseum in Hezhou. Pan (2013) examines the ecomuseum in Anji. This thesis makes a significant contribution to the analysis of the Chinese ecomuseum development by examining the recent ecomuseum development in China, using two future ecomuseums as case studies in Hainan Province as examples. It is the only research that examines the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. The few articles discussing ecomuseums in the context of Hainan Province, mainly discuss

the possible benefits of establishing ecomuseums, in particular with regards to the protection of ethnic-minority heritage (Corsane and Tawa 2008; Corsane and Zheng 2013; Wang 2013), but do not examine the actual future ecomuseums.

This thesis makes a further contribution to the field by examining the role of ecomuseums for safeguarding ICH within its natural environments in China. There is some literature that looks at ecomuseums and ICH protection (Lu 2014; Qiu 2013; Nitzky 2013), but their role in protecting ICH within its natural environments and in environment protection in China is largely ignored. In addition, this research aims to develop new guidelines for ecomuseums in Hainan. Yi (2013a) created a set for ecomuseum indicators for China in her PhD thesis, however, they are partly not applicable to the newer ecomuseum generations and the Hainan context and pose several issues when used to evaluate the Chinese ecomuseums (see Chapter 9).

The safeguarding of cultural heritage, in particular ICH, in Hainan is generally under-researched. While there is a wide range of literature examining community participation, and ICH and natural heritage protection in China (see for example Gu and Wang 2008; McLaren 2010; McLaren 2011a, McLaren 2011b; Rees 2012; Wong 2009; You *et al.* 2014), there is a gap in literature examining those topics in Hainan Province. Studies that examine community participation in heritage protection and tourism development in Hainan mainly focus on the aspect of tourism and benefit sharing (Li 2003; Li 2004; Li, Y. 2006; Stone 2002; Stone and Wall 2003,) and pay little attention to heritage protection.

To summarise, the significance of this thesis is that it explores the recent ecomuseum development and ecomuseum practises in China, investigating the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan from a unique perspective. It also examines the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments in Hainan (a field that has not been very well researched up to this point) and has developed Hainanese ecomuseum guidelines that can be used to guide and evaluate the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis contains ten chapters, beginning with this Introduction. Chapter 2 presents and justifies the methodology used in this thesis. It examines the case studies and the qualitative methods employed to answer the research question, namely: observation; textual analysis; and, interviews. It addresses issues encountered while doing fieldwork in China and research

ethics. It furthermore discusses grounded theory as the method of data analysis and the limitations of the research.

Chapter 3 -5 are literature analysis chapters. Chapter 3 critically analyses the protection of ICH within its natural environments in China and Hainan. It studies the protection of ICH, arguing that a cultural tradition is inseparable from the natural environments that nurtures it. It examines laws and guidelines concerning the safeguarding of ICH and analyses holistic approaches to heritage management in China and Hainan. Chapter 4 explores the establishment and application of the ecomuseum ideal in China. It investigates participatory approaches in heritage management and sustainable development and studies the opportunities and challenges of the Chinese ecomuseum ideal. Chapter 5 analyses the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan Province as a tool for sustainable development. Understandings of 'sustainable tourism' and 'ecotourism' in China are discussed and forms of sustainable tourism in Hainan are explored. These three chapters build the foundation for answering the research question.

Chapters 6-9 are the key focus of this thesis and provide the answer to the research question. Chapters 6-8 are the data analysis chapters. An overview of the current ecomuseum establishment in Hainan and a detailed analysis of the two case study sites Baili Baicun and Binglanggu is provided in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 examines the different perspectives of the three stakeholder groups interviewed on ecomuseology, ICH and environmental protection, sustainable tourism development and community involvement. Chapter 8 investigates the different opportunities and challenges of the future ecomuseums in Hainan looking at the following issues: the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, sustainable tourism development, community participation, site selection, research, government leadership and financial resources.

Chapter 9 is the discussion chapter building upon all previous chapters, in particular Chapters 7 and 8, to develop new ecomuseum guidelines for Hainan Province that support the island in safeguarding ICH and developing sustainable tourism in its local contexts. The guidelines are used to evaluate the future ecomuseum case studies. Lastly, Chapter 10 summarises the research findings and key arguments of this thesis. It concludes with future recommendations for the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan and suggestions where future research is needed.

The next chapter, the Methodology Chapter, continues with an analysis of the methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological approach used to collect data and analyse it in order to answer the research question by achieving the aims and objectives discussed in the Introduction Chapter. The methods used sought to investigate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province in terms of ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments, while considering local community involvement and sustainable tourism development. They helped to gather the information needed: to explore the motivations and goals behind ecomuseum development in Hainan Province; to examine opportunities and challenges for the future ecomuseums; and, to analyse perspectives on safeguarding ICH within its natural environments and develop ecomuseum guidelines suited for the local context of Hainan Province. The thesis concentrated on three key stakeholder groups in ecomuseum development in China and Hainan Province: the provincial government; heritage experts; and, local communities. It was decided to work with these stakeholder groups, because their involvement is specified in the Chinese ecomuseum principles (Hu 2006, 26), named in the Introduction Chapter (p. 19). In several ecomuseums in China tourism organisations are a fourth important stakeholder. However, since Hainan's ecomuseums are in such an early state of establishment, it is impossible to predict, if and in what way, they would be involved. The research acknowledges their important role though and the Vice-Manager of Binglanggu, one of the case studies managed as a cooperation between a private business man and the provincial government, was interviewed for this research. In addition, I observed a meeting with Gerard Corsane and two members of the Haikou Tourism and Culture Investment Holding Group that has developed several cultural tourism projects in Hainan. The extent to which the stakeholders are involved in the ecomuseum development will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

The research investigated two case studies in Hainan – Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County – using qualitative methods, namely, a combination of textual analysis, observation and interviews. The textual analysis examined: legal texts; official government guidelines and documents regarding the safeguarding of ICH; newspaper articles; plans for establishing ecomuseums in China; and academic literature. This supported evaluating the status of both ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments and potential challenges and opportunities for ecomuseum

development in Hainan Province. The core of the research, however, was to analyse the three stakeholder groups' perspectives on ICH-safeguarding, sustainable tourism and ecomuseum developments in Hainan. To examine local communities' perspectives a combination of observation and semi-structured interviews (one-to-one, as well as in groups) were used in order to allow triangulation and greater accuracy. The perspectives of experts and government officials were explored through semi-structured interviews.

This chapter begins with the selection and analysis of the case studies, discussing the two research fieldtrips and the challenges of doing fieldwork in China. It then introduces the qualitative research methodology used to gather the data in the case studies. The chapter concludes by explaining the methods of data analysis and exploring the limitations of this research.

2.2 Case Studies

This research employed a multiple, or comparative, case-study research design. Two out of the six selected ecomuseum sites in Hainan Province, Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Baoting County, were chosen as the case studies for this thesis. According to Yin (1994; 2009), using a case-study methodology is of advantage when a 'how' or 'why' question is being answered by examining a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has little or no control. Compared to other research methodologies, it has the strength of being able to explore a variety of evidence including documents, artefacts, interviews and observations (Yin 2009, 11). In heritage studies, the case-study method helps to gain a deeper understanding of various factors, such as geographical, social, economic, political and cultural factors that influence the context within which a particular heritage and its stakeholders exist (Keitumetse 2009).

Multiple case studies have the advantage that they produce more evidence than a single case study (Yin 2009, 61) and, similarly to multiple experiments, result in stronger research outcomes (Rowley 2002). In this research, two contrasting case studies were selected in order to examine the viability of two very different ecomuseum-like approaches and enable me to develop new guidelines for the Hainanese 'ecomuseum' by analysing the collected data. According to Yin (2009, 61), in contrasting case studies "if the subsequent findings support the hypothesized contrast, the results represent a strong start toward theoretical replication".

Several criteria were used to select the two case studies out of the six possibilities. The first criterion was that the proposed ecomuseum sites should combine the protection of ICH and the natural environments. Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Baoting County are the two future ecomuseums in Hainan that have a strong focus on both, even though Binglanggu concentrates more on ICH. The other four future ecomuseums highlight the natural environments (the Yanoda Rainforest Tourism Zone and the Wanquan Valley Natural Ecomuseum), ICH (Yangpu Ancient Salt Field), or cultural heritage (Liuke Overseas Chinese Ecomuseum).

The second criterion was for the case studies to represent contrasting cases in their geographical location, in the heritage they protect and in the degree of tourism development and heritage protection that existed before the ecomuseum was established. As shown in the Introduction Chapter (section 1.4.3) Baili Baicun and Binglanggu are such contrasting cases.

Ecomuseums in Hainan are just at the beginning of their planning phase and their development is moving forward at a slow pace. In the time from the second fieldtrip up until now there has been little progress in their establishment. Therefore, the last criterion was that the ecomuseum establishment in the case studies should be as far advanced as possible. This way the initial implementation stages of the ecomuseum could be considered together with the interviews and potential opportunities and challenges were easier to analyse. Baili Baicun was chosen as the pilot ecomuseum for Hainan and is the only site where the ecomuseum development has already started. Binglanggu is most likely going to be the next project. Table 2.1 provides a better overview of all the ecomuseum projects in Hainan and why Baili Baicun and Binglanggu were selected as case studies.

Table 2.1 An overview of the potential ecomuseum sites in Hainan

Potential ecomuseum site	Ecomuseum characteristics	Exhibit	Case Study Potential
Baili Baicun Ding'an County, about 100 km from Haikou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers an area of 590 km², between four cities: Longmen, Lingkou, Longhe and Hanlin Custer of around 100 villages with a mainly Hainanese population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural heritage and history of the Hainanese people and natural environments of northern Hainan Good example of the heritage traditions and the rich ecological 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecomuseum establishment has already begun Materials, such as maps for the ecomuseum, have been produced It is clear which area

Potential ecomuseum site	Ecomuseum characteristics	Exhibit	Case Study Potential
		environment of Ding'an County <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse farming traditions, rice and soybean fields, but also tropical fruits • ICH traditions are still practised by all generations 	the ecomuseum will encompass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on ICH of Hainanese population and natural heritage • Good representation of potential ecomuseums that are not organised by a tourism business and receive few tourists at the moment
Binglanggu Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, 28 km from Sanya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic-minority theme park that exhibits Li and Miao culture • Covers an area of about 333 hectares • Establishment in October 1995, during the initial phase of tourism development in Hainan • Managed as a cooperation between a private businessman and the provincial government • A research base of Li minority culture for several national and international universities • 3000 – 5000 visitors a week • Entrance fee of RMB 169 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible heritage and ICH of the Li and Miao minority • 'National intangible cultural heritage display base' since January 2010 • Lies in the Ganzaling natural preservation area that has a rich environment with rain forest and countless betel nut trees • Exotic wildlife including lizards, spiders and monkeys • Mixture between heritage safeguarding and staged performances for tourism entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only potential ecomuseum that safeguards Li and Miao heritage • The area the ecomuseum will encompass has been decided on • Focus on ICH and natural heritage protection • Good representation of potential ecomuseums that are likely to be run by a tourism business

Potential ecomuseum site	Ecomuseum characteristics	Exhibit	Case Study Potential
<p>Yanoda Rainforest Tourism Zone Baoting Li an Miao Autonomous County, 35 km from Sanya</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers an area of 45 km² surrounded by an ecological protection area of 123 km² Fenced tourism zone Developed by Hainan Sandao Yuanrong Tourism Co. Ltd Entrance fee is between RMB 170 and RMB 312 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tropical rainforest Includes 1400 different kinds of trees, 140 medical plants, 80 ornamental flowers and different kinds of tropical fruit Tourist activities are a zip line, waterfall climbing, tea tasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main focus is on the natural environment and not on ICH No local population to interview Ecomuseum development has not started at this point
<p>Wanquan Valley Natural Ecomuseum Qionghai City close to Bo'ao</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanquan River in Qionghai, also known as the Amazon River of China and with 163 km the third longest river in Hainan Ecomuseum most likely established around Shen Ao Valley Scenic Spot, which include 21 km of the Wanquan River Run by Qinghai Wanquan River Rafting Company Ltd. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River is surrounded by a unique natural environment, it passes along mountain ridges, narrow valleys and cliffs, tropical jungle, betel nut plantations, coconut plantations and ethnic minority villages Adventure tours that include rafting, climbing down waterfalls, jumping into lagoons and swimming through pools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main focus on adventure tours and natural environment, not ICH Still not 100% certain which part of the river will be included in the ecomuseum One of the last sites, to establish the ecomuseum
<p>Liuke Overseas Chinese Ecomuseum Qionghai City close to Bo'ao</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village with strong cultural overseas links to Hainanese people that migrated to South Asia History of 600 years Surrounded by a beautiful scenery such as coconut trees and a lotus pond, the Wanquan River passes by 176 households and 260 permanent residents Overseas Chinese that have influenced the village over time did live in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Architecture, that shows a mix of Western and Chinese elements Cultural heritage of Hainan that is connected to its close links to South Asia The most well-known site in the village is the Cai Family Mansion, that combines eastern and western architecture techniques It has typical Chinese architectural elements such as dragons, but also Roman style inspired statues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bears the most resemblance to the concept of other Chinese ecomuseums in Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangxi, because it concentrates on the history, architecture and culture of one village Mainly exhibits build heritage, no strong focus on ICH or natural heritage Ecomuseum development has not started at this point

Potential ecomuseum site	Ecomuseum characteristics	Exhibit	Case Study Potential
	Thailand, Macau and Hong Kong		
Yangpu Ancient Salt Field Danzhou City, around 150 km from Haikou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological heritage site in Yantian village on the Yangpu Peninsula • History of over 1,200 years that began when a group of salt workers from Putian, Fujian Province decided to settle in Yangpu • Salt field is next to the sea and covered with over 1000 stones that are cut flat on the top • Unclear if this ecomuseum will only consist of the salt field itself or incorporate other sites in Danzhou City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt farming • Around 30 families still use the traditional process to make salt in summer and autumn and sell the end product to the tourists • Salt is gained from evaporating seawater • The stones are flooded with seawater during high tide and the seawater evaporates during low tide due to the excessive sun exposure and the remaining sea salt can be collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretically an interesting case study because of the community participated in ICH safeguarding and tourism development • HOWEVER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Main focus on ICH at the moment ○ Not much to see, the visit takes about an hour ○ Unclear if and which other sites will be included in the ecomuseum ○ Ecomuseum development has not begun yet

The main criticism of case-study research is that it lacks rigor (Campbell 1975; Daft and Lewin 1990; March, Sproull and Tamuz 1991). According to Yin (2009), the most effective way to avoid this problem is to report all evidence as thoroughly as possible. Another common concern is that case studies provide little basis for generalisation, especially when looking at a single case (Eisenhardt 1989). Yin (2009, 15), however, argues that case studies are generalisable to theoretical prepositions and that their goal is “to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)”. This study, while aiming to generalise and develop new guidelines for ecomuseums in Hainan, has mainly concentrated on the local circumstances as one of the main pillars of the ecomuseum is to provide a malleable ideal that is adaptable to the local situation (Corsane and Zheng 2013). The research, therefore, sought to analyse the circumstances in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu and from there develop a set of guidelines for Hainanese ecomuseums. However, it might be possible to adapt these guidelines for other ecomuseums highlighting ICH and environmental protection.

Case studies have to be combined with other methodologies, such as textual analysis, observations and interviews (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton 2000, 81; Punch 2005, 148). These methodological approaches and the fieldtrips in which the data was collected will be discussed in the next sections.

2.2.1 Fieldtrips

During the research two fieldtrips to Hainan were undertaken to collect the data. To provide a better overview of the research schedule, a research timeline (See Figure 2.1) has been created, showing the research development, at which point of the research the fieldtrips were undertaken and when the collected data was analysed.

The first fieldtrip from 29 March to 24 April 2012 was an initial fieldtrip to confirm possible case studies, get an overview of ICH-safeguarding in Hainan, establish first contacts to potential interview stakeholder groups' representatives and establish a relationship with possible research partners on the Chinese side. The importance of having a Chinese research partner will be discussed later on in this chapter. At the time of the first fieldtrip the government had not yet decided on, or gone through the official processes to recognise, the ecomuseum sites. Therefore, I visited potential ecomuseum sites including two villages of the Li and Miao minority in Wuzhishan, the Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone and the Yangpu Ancient Salt Field in Danzhou City, which was later selected as a future ecomuseum site (See Figure 2.2).

During that visit I also participated in two meetings in connection to this research. The first meeting on 5th of April 2012, from now on referred to as M1, was arranged to discuss the possibilities of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province with Gerard Corsane, Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University and researcher on ecomuseology. The other participants were three members of the Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province. This meeting was organised by the Hainan Provincial International Cultural Exchange Centre (HPICEC).

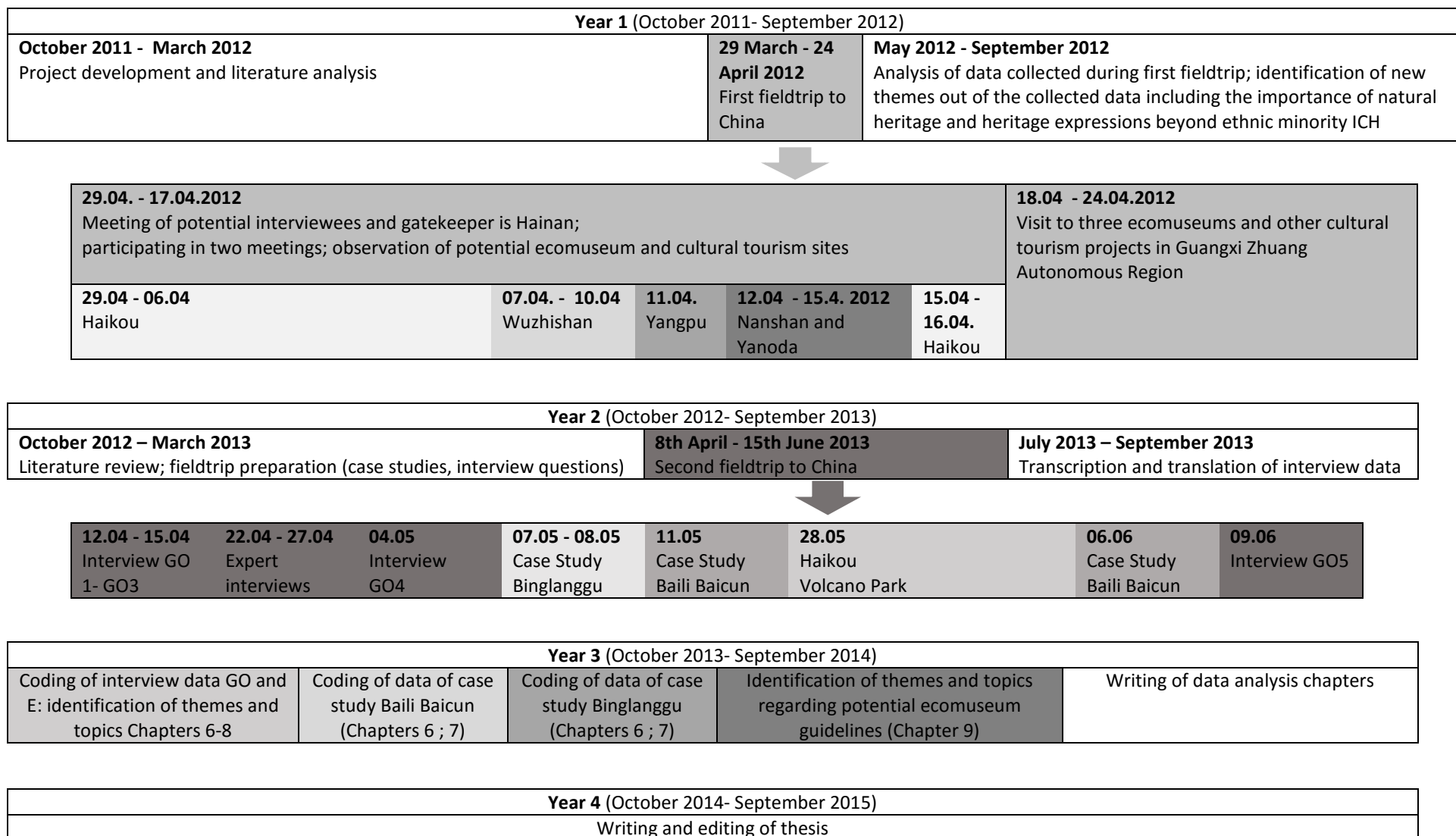


Figure 2.1 Research timeline

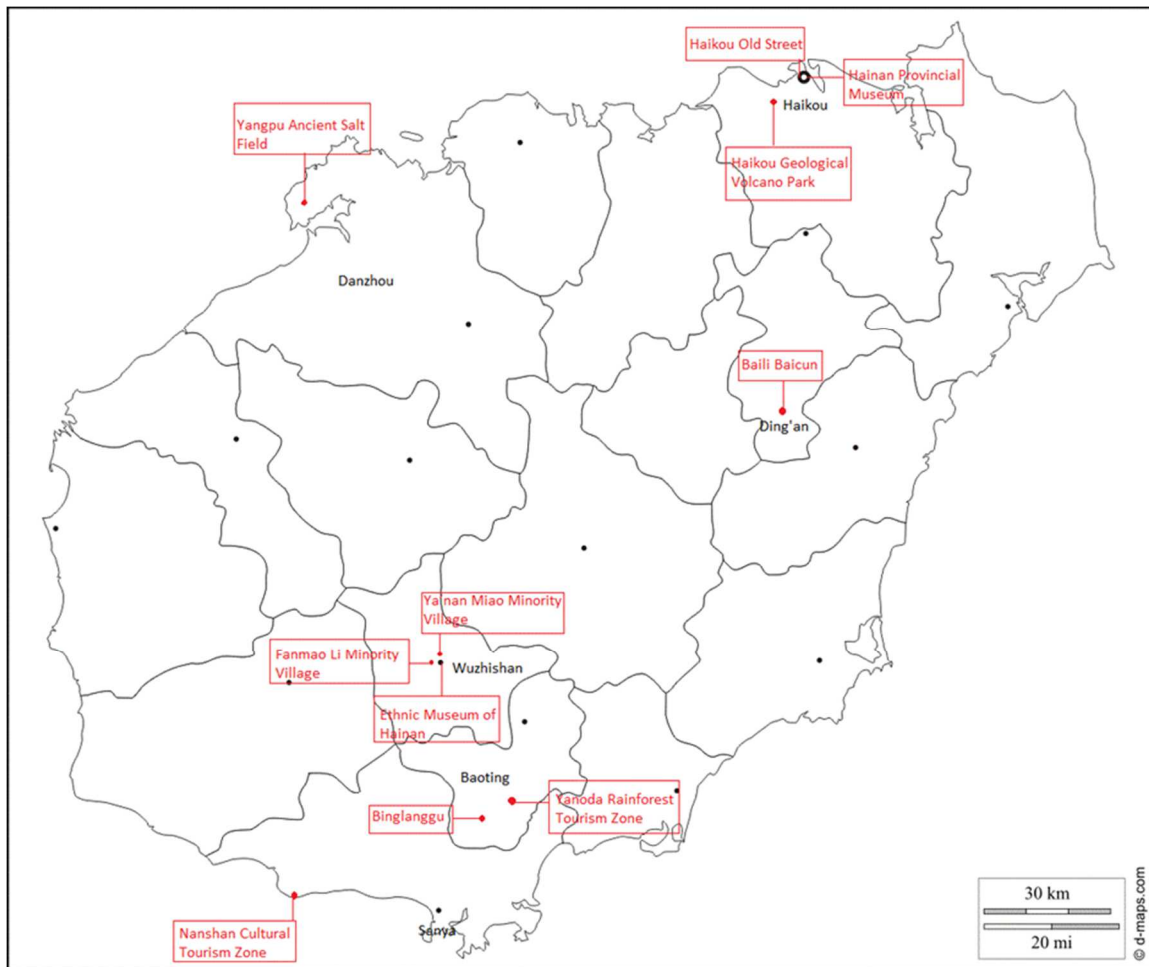


Figure 2.2 Map showing observation sites in Hainan Province (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=21231&lang=en)

The second meeting (M2) between Gerard Corsane, a member of the HPICEC and two members of the Haikou Tourism and Culture Investment Holding Group (HTCIHG) took place on the 6th of April. The HTCIHG regularly works for the provincial government developing cultural tourism projects, for example, the China Haikou Geological Volcano Park (http://www.hkhsq.com/index_en.php). In this meeting, the HTCIHG representatives shared their plans to renovate Haikou Qilou Old Street to turn it into a tourist attraction and discussed possibilities to cooperate with Newcastle University. The records of both meetings will be used and analysed in this thesis.

To gain a better understanding of ecomuseum development in China and observe ecomuseums that were developed more recently, three museums of the 1+10 Model of Ethnic Ecomuseums in Guangxi were visited from 18th April to 21st April 2012. An overview of all the observation sites and dates can be found in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Observation sites

Observation site	Location	Date
Hainan Provincial Museum	Haikou City, Hainan Province	Several visits between April and June 2013
Baili Baicun	Ding'an County, Hainan Province	11.05.2013, 06.06.2013
Binglanggu	Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County	07.05.2013 – 08.05.2014
Yanoda Rainforest Tourism Zone	Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County	14.04.2014
Haikou Geological Volcano Park	Haikou City, Hainan Province	28.05.2013
Haikou Qilou Old Street	Haikou City, Hainan Province	Several visits between April and June 2013
Ya'nán Miao Minority Village	Wuzhishan City, Hainan Province	08.04.2012
Fanmao Li Minority Village	Wuzhishan, Hainan Province	08.04.2012
Ethnic Museum of Hainan	Wuzhishan, Hainan Province	08.04.2012
Yangpu Ancient Salt Field	Danzhou City, Hainan Province	11.04.2012
Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone	Sanya City, Hainan Province	13.04.2012
Jiangtou Ancient Village	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	19.04.2012
Longji Rice Terraces	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	19.04.2012
Guangxi Museum of Nationalities	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	16.04.2012
Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	20.04.2012

The first museum visited, the Guangxi Museum of Nationalities, is the centre of the ecomuseum project, exhibiting the culture of Guangxi's ten ethnic minorities. The other museums visited were the Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum in Changgangling, Lingchuan close to Guilin and the Longli Rice Terraces that are composed of several sites, including the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Minority Ecomuseum (Figure 2.3). I took pictures at the three sites, studied the exhibitions, and talked to the museum staff and the local population.

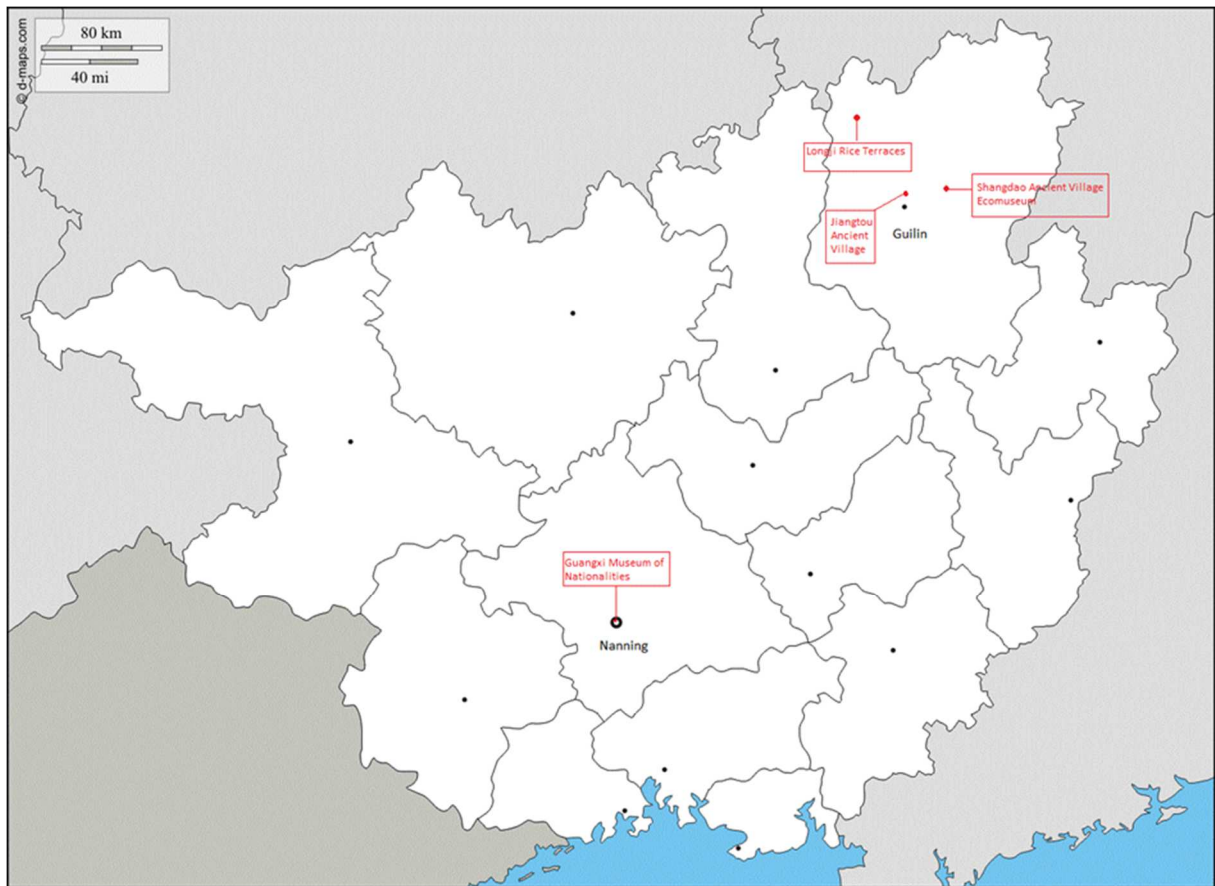


Figure 2.3 Map showing observation sites in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous region (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=22554&lang=en)

The second nine-week fieldtrip took place between 8th April and 15th June 2013. Between the first and the second fieldtrip many changes happened in the proposed ecomuseum development and the government had decided on six ecomuseum sites (Wang, B. 2012). During this fieldtrip I conducted all of the interviews. Altogether these included: five interviews with members of the provincial government; nine expert interviews; as well as, eight interviews with 15 members of the local communities in Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and 11 interviews with 18 members of the Li minority in Binglanggu in Baoting County. The Vice-Manager of Binglanggu was also interviewed. An overview of all the interviews can be seen in Appendix A. Observations were also conducted at other relevant heritage and tourism sites including, the future ecomuseum sites Yanoda Rainforest Tourism Zone in Baoting County, Haikou Geological Volcano Park, as well as the Haikou *Qilou* Old Street (See Figure 2.2).

2.2.2 Doing fieldwork in China – Practical difficulties and ethical issues

Doing fieldwork in China as a foreigner and outsider is often a complicated and difficult process that requires a lot of flexibility from the researcher (Hansen 2006). The status of the researcher as either an 'insider' or an 'outsider', the 'insider' being a member of the researched group and the 'outsider' being a non-member, has been widely discussed in literature. At the same time it has often been noted that the situation is more complex than the initial dualism suggests and that boundaries are often blurry (Herod 1999; Merton 1972). In the case of this research, however, my status as an 'outsider' was clear, partly because of my obvious foreign look as a white European woman and partly because coming from a foreign university, I had to adhere to different rules than researchers from Chinese universities. Being an 'outsider' has both advantages and disadvantages. While some authors argue that outsiders are more objective and can conduct research without prejudices (Burgess 1984; Simmel 1950), others point out that due to a lack of shared experiences, it is impossible for an outsider to fully understand the realities of the researched community (Conant 1968; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Overall, each status can present itself as a double edged sword and 'there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or an outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages, though these will take on slightly different weights depending on the particular circumstances and purposes of the research' (Hammersley, 1993, p. 219).

The most important obstacle the status as an 'outsider' presented in this case, is the requirement for foreign researchers to obtain an official permission for the research and cooperate with a Chinese government institution or a university. This rule applies to all research⁴, but in particular to researching ICH. The 2011 *Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Law (LICH)* clearly states that all non-Chinese citizens conducting ICH research must cooperate with a Chinese institution. Therefore, it was necessary for this research to be linked to Hainan Normal University as a host institution.

How easy it is to get official permission to conduct research in China depends on the topic of the research, the current situation, and how problematic it is perceived that this topic will be investigated by a foreigner. The main issue is that there are no official rules on what

⁴ There are a few cases in which research can be conducted without an official permission that apply mainly to research that attracts little attention from the government side. But, without official permission, access to interviews with government officials, government documents and the possibility of staying long-term in a rural area might be closed (Hansen 2006; Klotzbücher 2014).

foreigners are allowed to investigate in China and local government officials and academic institutions are often not sure what a sensitive issue is. Depending on the political climate and the consequences of the publication, this is often decided after the research is published. Therefore, government officials and institutions tend to play it safe (Thøgersen and Heiner 2006; Yeh 2006). For example, this research seemed originally unproblematic since it was not focussing on a political sensitive area, such as Xinjiang or Tibet (Yeh 2006), or an obviously problematic topic, for instance human rights or democracy. During the first fieldtrip in April 2012 the HPICEC, with which I originally planned to cooperate for this thesis, assured me that the government permission I got for this fieldtrip could be extended to the next one. One year later the situation had changed and the HPICEC was no longer willing to assist with the research. One reason was that the new regulation regarding non-Chinese citizens conducting research in the *LICH*, in combination with a relatively recent change in leadership of the national government at the time (15 November 2012), led to confusion among provincial-government officials on how the national government felt with regards to foreigners researching ICH. In addition, the provincial government, which had just begun establishing the six ecomuseums in Hainan, wanted to avoid potential foreign criticism during the process. The relatively unexpected change of a situation is not an uncommon experience for researchers conducting fieldwork in China. Svensson (2006a, 278), for example, described her experiences as follows:

It is virtually impossible to fully anticipate the problems one will meet during fieldwork, or which aspects of one's research will be regarded as problematic, and by whom, as well as how one then will deal with the situation. Regardless of how well one knows Chinese society, and who can say he or she really does, circumstances change rapidly as do relationships between individuals.

(Ibid.)

In the case of this research, another research partner could be found. A professor and director of the Research Centre of Culture in South China Sea Area at Hainan Normal University, who had cooperated with the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University on the En-compass Project (which is briefly discussed in Chapter 6) agreed to collaborate with me. Whilst working with the university enabled me to conduct research at all, it posed certain restrictions. One issue was that it was not possible for the university to organise interviews with government officials. Five government interviews could be arranged through a personal contact working in the

provincial government. However, it was not possible to interview government officials at county level. The government officials were all part of the provincial government and worked in the Department of Culture, Radio, Television, Publication and Sports of Hainan Province. This department is connected to ICH-safeguarding and ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. One official belonged to the Cultural Division and four officials were part of the Arts Division (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.2, 83).

Cooperating with a Chinese university had the advantage that interviews with experts were relatively easy to arrange. Experts were more likely to agree to participate in interviews when being asked by a colleague, than by an unknown PhD student. At the same time, however, there were several limitations, as I had to interview experts the university perceived as relevant and had little room to influence the choice of interviewees.

Apart from getting the permission to do fieldwork, there were a number of challenges ranging around the host university's tight oversight of the research activity. One challenge was that the university seemed suspicious of the qualitative research methodology selected, especially towards doing interviews. Issues raised by the university concerned the number of interviewees and the length of the interviews, in particular concerning the local communities. Three main issues were brought up. Firstly, since heritage studies is only at its very beginning in Hainan Province and seen as belonging to history, the need for field-research was doubted and it was suspected that the research might have been an excuse for undertaking other potentially illegal activities like 'spying'. Secondly, the idea of me traveling to the countryside and minority areas alone was seen as a safety risk for me. Thirdly, the university doubted that the local communities would agree to in-depth interviews or be able to answer more complex questions.

The first and third worry of the host university were appeased with the explanation that the home university had certain requirements for a doctorate, and the original interview guide for the local population was significantly reduced from 30 questions to ten one-point questions to accommodate the Chinese university's conditions for the research. An English translation of the research questions can be found in Appendix C. To address the host university's second concern, I was accompanied by a student from the university as a research assistant (*peitong*). This is common practice in China. The *peitong* serves as a guide, but also represents his/her organisation (Miller 1995; Mueggler 2001, 17). The *peitong* accompanied me on all case-study

visits, except for one time, when I got permission to go on her own. Except for covering the *peitong's* expenses, I did not have to pay the assistant. In some ways having a research assistant was problematic, mainly because it made the time that could be spent at the case studies very dependent on the busy schedule of the assistant. However, in other ways it was helpful, as people were more willing to participate in interviews when I was accompanied by a Chinese researcher and once the *peitong* was more familiar with the research project she became a big support in formulating follow-up questions. It is also common for the *peitong* to help with translating (Thøgersen 2006), but in the case of this research the *peitong* spoke only Mandarin Chinese and not Hainanese or Li.

My status as an 'outsider' and particular as a foreigner also opened several opportunities when interviewing members of the local Hainanese population and the Li population. In Baili Baicun, foreigners are a rare and people were curious where I was from and why I was there. I was often approached on the street, which made it easy to start a conversation with strangers and recruit interviewees. When interviewing Li minority members in Binglanggu, being an 'outsider' to Chinese society had the advantage that interviewees assumed, that I did not have the same prejudices as Chinese belonging to the Han majority might have towards them. Therefore, they could be more open in interviews and were keen to talk about their culture and the issues they faced as part of an ethnic minority group.

I conducted most of the interviews in Mandarin Chinese. There were a few exceptions when interviewing local community members, which will be explained later in this chapter. I studied Chinese studies in my first university degree and took Chinese classes for six years, also spending one year studying Chinese language at Xiamen University and working one year in Shanghai, communicating mainly in Chinese. I therefore reached translation competence, which Spradley (1979, 19) describes as "the ability to translate the meanings of one culture into a form that is appropriate to another culture". Nevertheless, a Chinese colleague read and corrected the interview guides and supported me during the interview transcriptions.

Working together with a Chinese university and getting research support from personal contacts can create ethical issues. For this research two main issues were pertinent. Firstly, all the interviews with government officials were arranged through a personal contact in the government without official permission, which is strictly speaking against official regulations. However, these breaches of the regulations are common in research practice in China and

rules are often negotiable (Göbel 2014). In particular interviews with government officials are often arranged through unforeseen channels and personal relationships (O'Brien 2006). Nevertheless, I was very careful that this support would not have any personal consequences for the personal contact in the future, especially considering the content of this thesis. Being careful with the content and quotes was also important to protect the experts, participating in interviews, who, despite not mentioning their names, would be easy identifiable. Secondly, a related issue was that there was pressure on me to write positively about the ecomuseums project and the selected case studies. It was mentioned more than once that the university really hoped I liked the ecomuseums project in Hainan and would write positively about it. This brings up the important ethical question "of whom the fieldworker owes loyalty, whether that primarily is to the research agenda, the gatekeeper or official sponsor, or the interviewees, or maybe to one's own moral and ethical values and standards" (Svensson 2006a, 277-278). In this case, it was concluded that while staying objective and voicing critique was important, it was my responsibility to look after the people in the field, who supported the research, to avoid bringing individuals into a problematic position.

The next section of the chapter explores the qualitative methodology used in the research.

2.3 Qualitative methodology

This research employed qualitative methods, which are best used to understand the meaning behind people's actions, shed light on certain issues and explore possible explanations of certain phenomena (Gillham 2000, 10). A multi-method approach was used to allow for triangulation. The main method employed was semi-structured interviews which were complemented by textual analysis and observation. Taking observation and document analysis into account allowed for a more accurate study of the research topic, because what people believe and say and what they actually do often differs (Gillham 2000, 13-14).

2.3.1 Textual analysis

Documents are relevant for almost every case study in order to verify and understand information from other sources. It is important to analyse the context in which each document was produced and who the target audience for each was (Starke 1995, 68; Yin 2009, 101-106). In heritage studies research, the way heritage and tourism are managed and how communities are integrated into the management process are partly the result of the production of texts, such as international instruments, laws, official guidelines, advertising

material and academic literature (Sørensen and Carman 2009). Smith (2006) points out how international organisations and their documents, for example the *2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention (IHC)*, define how heritage is interpreted and managed internationally. She suggests that a document like this 'Authorises Heritage Discourse' by representing a set of social messages, mainly influenced by Western ideology. Despite this view, these documents have a strong influence on laws and documents of national governments and thus contribute to the decision on how practitioners and experts manage heritage at local levels. China's national laws and guidelines, for example, have been strongly shaped by international documents, including the *Burra Charter 1979* and the *IHC* (Pan 2008; Qian 2007).

In order to achieve community participation and include different stakeholder groups in heritage management and tourism development, it is important to analyse the dominant heritage discourse – meaning the laws, guidelines, political statements and experts' opinions, as well as any underlying power relations. These power relations often discourage the participation of groups who have a different understanding of heritage, or are not included in the discourse at all. Another essential point in finding ways to encourage active community involvement is to understand how documents and discourse, establish and/or maintain the 'authority' of certain speakers and institutions while marginalising other groups (Waterton, Smith and Campbell 2006). Consequently, the critical analysis of legal documents, guidelines and notifications produced by the national government, for example the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH): including 2011 *Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (LICH)* (Chapter 3); 2013 *Notification concerning the work of national model eco- and community museums*; and, 2011 *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development* (Chapter 4) were an important part of this research. The research also examined the international guidelines and declarations that influenced these laws, for instance: *UNESCO 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention*; *2013 Hangzhou Declaration*; and, *2005 UNESCO Declaration on the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes* (Chapters 3-5).

The thesis also examined 'grey literature', which in general refers to internal reports, white papers, newsletters and other types of literature that lack high production value, public circulation and/or are not peer-reviewed (Striphos and Hayward 2013). This includes

government reports and statements on the topics of ICH, community participation in heritage management, cultural tourism development in Hainan and ecomuseology, such as the *2010-2020 Hainan International Tourism Island Development Planning Outline* (2010). It also looked at Five-Year Plans that include the establishment of ecomuseums in China, for instance the *11th Five-Year Plan of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region* (2006-2010) and the *12th Five-Year Plan of Hainan Province* (2011-2015), as well as management plans that include ideas for community participation in natural reserves and ecomuseums. Government statements and decisions were found on the webpage of the SACH and the State Council as well as on the websites of the local cultural departments, namely the website of: the Hainan Provincial Government; the Department of Culture, Radio, Television, Publication and Sports of Hainan Province; and, the Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre. Management plans encompass the 2010 provincial level *Overall Plan for ecomuseums in China*, that focuses on the plan to establish the ecomuseum in Anji and the *Proposal for the creation of an Eco-Province in Hainan 1999* (Chapters 4 and 5).

Another source included unpublished reports, for example the 2008 research report for Newcastle University by Corsane and Tawa that suggested several sites for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan (Corsane and Tawa 2008).

The study furthermore analysed tourism brochures and advertising material, for instance CDs, collected at the relevant sites including: Baili Baicun; Binglanggu; Yangpu Ancient Salt Field; Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone; and, Haikou Geological Volcano Park. The research also considered the internet representation of several tourism sites, such as Binglanggu and the Yanoda Rainforest.

In addition, the research also investigated newspaper articles on the topics of ICH-safeguarding, cultural tourism development in China and Hainan and ecomuseology. Relevant newspapers for these topics were the Chinese and English editions of the *People's Daily*, as well as the *Hainan Newspaper* and the *Hainan Today*.

When analysing documents it is vital to remember the weaknesses of this research method. The most important point is that even if they are from an official source, they are not always accurate and may reflect the bias and agenda of the author. It is important to keep in mind who produced the documents and for what purpose (Yin 2009, 103).

2.3.2 Observation

Observation, as a method, aims for the researcher to immerse with the group studied in order to get a rounded in-depth view of the community (Bryman 2003). Literature, in particular regarding ethnological research methods, distinguishes between direct or non-participant observation and participant observation. In direct observation the researcher observes the group studied without interfering with the group's activities, while researchers using participant observation interact with the group and participate in their everyday activities. There are different degrees of participant observation varying in the intensity the researcher engages in the daily-life of the group examined (Gobo 2011). All forms of observation are:

useful in discovering whether people do what they say they do or behave in the way they claim to behave during the interview. It is meant to cross-check information from interviews as well as reveal how people perceive what happens and not actually what happens.

(Bell 1993, 109)

This research employed what DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) describe as moderate participation:

Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer is present at the scene of the action, is identifiable as a researcher, but does not actively participate or only occasionally interacts with the people in it. This level of observation could include structured observation as well as limited participation.

(Ibid., 23)

This approach was chosen, because despite being in the field and interacting with the group, chances for complete participation were limited due to the obvious position of being an outsider and the limited amount of time spent in the field.

Observation in this research was carried out in various settings. Four of the six potential ecomuseum sites in Hainan were visited, concentrating especially on the two case studies Binglanggu and Baili Baicun. While Yangpu Ancient Salt Field and Yanoda Rainforest Tourism Zone were only visited for a couple of hours, I stayed in Binglanggu and Baili Baicun for two days each (See Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2).

Cultural tourism destinations that display ICH within its natural environments were visited and observed (See Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2). I also observed the renovation work in Haikou *Qilou* Old Street. Even though this project deals with urban heritage, it is one of the latest government projects that combines both heritage protection and tourism development. It is an important example of the relations between heritage protection and tourism development in Hainan and also shows government attitudes towards the local communities in Haikou *Qilou* Old Street and ICH safeguarding. It was also one of the projects Corsane and Tawa (2008) suggested could be developed using ecomuseum approaches.

To achieve a well-rounded overview on heritage protection, tourism development and community participation in China and be able to better compare the strategies of other Chinese provinces to Hainan Province, heritage projects with a community-participation element in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region were also visited (Review Table 2.2 and Figure 2.3)

All places were photographed when possible and field notes were taken concentrating on observations and events regarding ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments, cultural tourism development and in community involvement in heritage protection and tourism management.

Observation has its limitations in that it is a highly subjective method that is sensitive to the researcher's attitudes and perceptions. The researcher is engaging and becoming familiar with the group and the organisation studied, which might lead to a strong identification with the group and bias (Yin 2009). In certain countries, like China, there may also be restrictions regarding the cases and events the researcher is allowed to observe and participate in (Göbel 2014). Due to these limitations, observation is often combined with other methods, in this case document analysis and interviews. This combination with other methods also reduces the problem of the researcher not being able to observe all the important events and information (Bryman 2003).

2.3.3 Interviews

This research employed interviews as its main method to collect information on the attitudes and beliefs regarding ecomuseum development, sustainable tourism and ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments in Hainan, specifically from the main

stakeholder groups of government officials, experts and local community members.

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods in heritage studies when conducting research about people's attitudes towards heritage and how those attitudes are developed (Sørensen 2009).

The first group interviewed for this research was the group of five government officials at provincial level. The interviewees belonged to the department in Hainan responsible for cultural heritage protection, museums and the development of cultural tourism products. The original plan of this research was to conduct semi-structured interviews using the same interview guide for experts and government officials. The English translation of the interview guide is in Appendix B. A similar interview guide was chosen, because in China the separation between experts and bureaucrats is not common practice and many studies have the purpose of facilitating policy-making (Hansen 2006). It was planned to send the interview guide and an introduction of the research to the participants beforehand. However, when interviewing government officials this strategy did not work. Interviews were always spontaneously arranged, often within hours on the same day, making it difficult to send the interview guide ahead of time. Most of the government officials were unaware of the research context. Despite taking a lot of time to explain the research, the interviewees were clearly uncomfortable with answering question after question without knowing where the next question would lead. Therefore the interview strategy had to be adapted and instead of asking specific questions, the government officials were given a set of topics I was interested in. They were then given the opportunity to talk about the topics without interruption and a couple of follow-up questions were asked at the end. The interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Government officials made-up the smallest group of interviewees.

The second group of people interviewed for this research was the experts on ICH, tourism, museums and ethnic minorities in Hainan. According to Solinger (2006, 165) in the Chinese context, "Interviewing scholars is often one of the best ways to discover popular reactions and sticking points in the implementation of difficult programs". Overall, ten experts working at Hainan University, Hainan Normal University, Hainan Provincial Museum and ICH protection at Bilingual were interviewed. The interviews were conducted individually, except for one instance at Hainan University where two researchers wanted to be interviewed together. Semi-structured interviews were used in accordance with Bryman's

(2012) definition: an interview guide was used, but the nature of the interviews was still kept flexible. If the interviewees mentioned topics that were not in the guide, they could be followed up if they seemed important. Also, when questions proved not to be relevant during the conversation they would not be asked. At the end experts were encouraged to mention other important information the interviewer had not asked them about. Unlike the interviews with the government officials, these interviews were arranged by the university contact beforehand and so the experts received an e-mail with the interview guide and an introduction to the research. The only exception was the researcher in Binglanggu, who was introduced to me by the Vice-Manager of the tourism zone. Some interviews were more of a conversation about the topic than an interview, because many experts were also interested in an exchange of research ideas. While I was worried at first that giving my own opinion would lead the interview too much in one direction, it turned out that scholars were more open and willing to reveal crucial information that way.

There are no actual experts on ecomuseology on Hainan Island, a problem that was frequently mentioned in the interviews. Even though, the interviewed experts were all familiar with the term and understood the concept, ecomuseology was not their main research field. However, several of the experts participated in 'Hainan Province's first ecomuseum expert evaluation conference'⁵. The conference took place on the 12th of October 2012 and was organised by the Cultural Division of Hainan Province. Nine experts from Hainan University, Hainan Normal University and the Hainan Provincial Museum met with the leader of the Cultural Division of Hainan Province to approve the first batch of ecomuseums and discuss the future of ecomuseums in Hainan Province. The results of this meeting will be further discussed in Chapter 6. The interviews with experts took between 40 and 60 minutes.

Local community members were interviewed at the two case studies of Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Baoting County. To accommodate the wishes of the university and the fact that the local people took time out of their work to be interviewed, they only lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, but followed the interview guide more strictly than in the case of the government officials and

⁵ This information who participated in the conference is not publically available and therefore the names and exact number of the participants interviewed for the research will not be disclosed to protect the identity of the interviewees.

experts, asking ten one-point questions. But I allowed the possibility for different questions and emphasis depending on the answers of each interviewee.

Some of the interviews with local community members were carried out in a group of two to six participants. In literature the term focus group and group interview are often used interchangeably (Punch 2005; Yin 2009). However, while a focus group is always a group interview, a group interview does not have to be a focus group. In a focus group the researcher is interested in how the participants discuss certain topics in a group and in their interaction. The researcher here has a facilitating role (Bryman 2012). A group interview can be more like an individual interview conducted, for example, to save the researcher time and money (Bryman 2012). In this research interviewing people in groups was used as a technique to make them feel more comfortable, taking their own wishes into account. Local people were often hesitant to give individual interviews but were willing to be interviewed in a group, or actively asked to be interviewed together with family and friends. People were asked to answer individually, but dialogue between the members of the group was permitted. One limitation to this interview method is that the interviewees' answers might not be independent from one another and that they can be dominated by one person in the group (Stewart and Shamdasani 2015, 48).

Both case studies had different circumstances and, therefore, how the interviews were conducted and how interviewees were recruited differed. How I proceeded in each case study will be described in the next part.

In the case study in Binglanggu, Baoting County, 18 members of the Li minority working at the tourism zone were interviewed. Overall eight one-to-one interviews and three group interviews in two groups of two and one group of six Li minority members were organised.

The visit to Binglanggu was arranged by Hainan Normal University, which has close connections to the Vice-Manager, who helped me during this visit. A guided tour was organised for me and the tour guides also assisted in arranging the interviews. I was formally introduced to the interviewees and most of them had experience of working with researchers. Due to their work at a cultural tourism zone, they were aware of their cultural heritage and which aspects of it were interesting for tourists. Because the interviews were pre-arranged it was possible to get a good balance in age and gender. To get a better impression of how Binglanggu is managed and to get a business perspective, the Vice-

Manager of Binglanggu was interviewed on its management, its aims and the working conditions of the local Li minority employees.

In Baili Baicun in Ding'an County the situation was very different. Baili Baicun is a cluster of different villages spread over a large area and the best way to get around is by bicycle. It has little tourism development so far. There is no central management structure, so I had to recruit the interviewees personally. During the first and second fieldtrips to this case study, eight interviews were recorded. Four of these were one-to-one interviews, two were interviews in groups of twos, one in a group of three, and one in a group of four. People were recruited randomly, by approaching them on the street or in shops.

In general, it was very difficult to convince local community members to agree to being interviewed. People were very shy and worried about giving the wrong answers. Consequently, I often received the most interesting information once the recording device was turned off and people relaxed more. Men were more open to being interviewed, whereas, the women were willing to show me the sights and to talk about the culture and country-life, but when directly asked did not want to be interviewed or recorded.

After the first fieldtrip it became obvious that introducing the research and doing the interviews with a recording device was less successful than in Binglanggu and that it would make sense to change the approach. On the second fieldtrip I mainly relied a note pad and instead of introducing herself as a researcher approached local people at the sights as a tourist asking about life in the countryside and the nature of the region. The fact that I was studying the traditions of the area was casually mentioned in conversation when asked about my occupation. A similar approach was used by Gold (1989) when researching private entrepreneurs in China, where he approached his interviewees as a customer while at the same time asking questions. He describes this technique as 'guerrilla interviewing'. Guerrilla interviewing can lead to ethical issues, since it has an element of deception and there can be a risk of hurting the interviewees (Gold 1989). In this case it was decided that the ethical issues were minimal. While not specifically identifying the talk as an interview situation, I did mention at one point during the conversations that I was in Baili Baicun to research and write about safeguarding local traditions.

Interviews have several limitations. One limitation is that the position of the researcher and the assumed expectations might shape the answers given and it might be hard to discover

what interviewees really think (Miller and Glassner 2011). This especially proved to be a problem with some of the experts who were often careful in trying to answer in accordance with government lines.

Another limitation was the possibility of misinterpretation and misunderstanding of interview questions and terminology, due to cultural differences and the complexity of the topic, especially when interviewing local community members. Keeping the possibilities of misinterpretation to a minimum required careful thinking about the interview questions and a great sensitivity to this potential problem by the researcher (Hughes 2002). To avoid misunderstandings as much as possible when interviewing the local population, no subject-specific vocabulary was used and questions were kept simple. For example, when talking about ICH the term traditions '*chuantong*' was used, followed by an example of what I was interested in. Instead of being asked about ecomuseums or personal involvement in heritage protection directly, interviewees were asked about their feelings towards their heritage, what they do to protect it now, as well as what the government and they themselves could change. In the case study of Binglanggu this approach worked well. However, local people interviewed in Baili Baicun tended to see their local traditions as part of their everyday life and uninteresting for the rest of the world. Even when the discussion on traditions was supported with an example it did not always lead to usable results. Therefore, prior knowledge of the local culture of the case studies was essential and provided the framework to ask for very specific information. One example that mirrors this is the following conversation:

Interviewer: Please introduce your local traditions to me, for example what special festivals do you celebrate?

Interviewee: We do not really have any special festival, just the usual Chinese festivals like the Spring Festival (*Chun jie*), the Dragon Boat festival (*Duanwu jie*), Mid-Autumn festival (*Zhongqiu jie*), there are no others.

Interviewer: How about your own festivals like the *Junpo* festival [celebrated from the 2 – 26 of February in Hainan, held in respect of local heroes, worshipping of gods]? I heard you celebrate that festival here.

Interviewee: Oh yes, of course we have the *Junpo* festival, this is only one of our customs in the countryside, we worship the gods in our temple in Lingchuan... so you want to know about our life in the countryside?

After several interviewees mentioned that what I actually wanted to know about was their life in the countryside, the word 'tradition' was replaced with 'life in the countryside', which made the interviews easier.

As mentioned above, I conducted all the interviews, with a few exceptions when interviewing the local population, in Mandarin Chinese. During the interviews with the local population the research assistant, helped to formulate follow-up questions by reformulating my sometimes awkward Chinese into questions the local population could understand. In some situations Li or Hainanese interpretation was also necessary. Some of the older population in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu spoke very little Mandarin Chinese and only their Hainanese dialect, or native Li. In those cases, local community members who spoke both languages offered to interpret. Interpreters are an extra link in the communication process and can serve as a filter of what is actually said. To reduce those filters I decided against bringing in a professional translator. Professional translators often standardise language and the interviewees adapt too much to the more educated and politically correct language of the translator (Thøgersen 2006). This is less likely to happen when talking to a family member or neighbour. Another concern was that with two Chinese assistants accompanying me, the interviews would seem even more official and people would feel obligated to give certain answers.

2.4 Data analysis

2.4.1 *Grounded theory*

This research based its method of analysing its data on grounded theory. Grounded theory is a methodology developed by Glasner and Strauss (1967) that seeks to build theory from data (Corbin and Strauss 2008). It can be both an overall approach to research and a set of procedures to construct a theory from data analysis (Punch 2005). According to Glasner and Strauss (1967, 32), this way of constructing theory "puts a high emphasis on theory as a process; that is theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product". Cresswell (2008) states that research examining a phenomenon on which current theories are inadequate or non-existent, for instance the evaluation of the Hainanese ecomuseum ideal, is particularly well suited for the use of grounded theory. In this research the data analysed to develop the theory, namely a new concept of ecomuseum guidelines for the evaluation of ecomuseums in Hainan (Chapter 9), was collected using the multiple methods of interviews,

observation, case studies and textual analysis (Chapters 6-8) discussed above. The coding for this research was done manually. N:Vivo software was not used for two reasons. Firstly, N:Vivo codes are determined according to the participant's speech patterns and serve as symbolic markers of their meaning (Charmaz 2006). Because interview transcripts were translated and the interviewees had very different education backgrounds and speech patterns, even within the same stakeholder group, I felt that a more flexible way of coding, that allowed for a constant revisiting of the recorded interviews was needed. Secondly, computer programmes, such as N:Vivo are most useful with a large qualitative database of over 500 transcribed pages (Creswell 2003, 220); this research worked with a significantly smaller database. In accordance with the systematic design of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998), the data was coded in three steps: open coding; axial coding; and, selective coding (Ibid., 101). Open coding is the initial analytic process to generate overall concepts and categories. The next step 'axial coding' relates categories to their subcategories and answers questions like "when, where, why, who, how and with what consequences, thus giving the concept a greater explanatory power" (Ibid., 125). During the step of open coding, I read through the interview transcripts and coded each sentence or paragraph according to an overall category. For example, under the question or theme of ecomuseum challenges the category 'government leadership' emerged. In the next step I analysed all the sentences and paragraphs belonging one category and divided them into subcategories by organising them into tables (See Appendices 9 and 10). For example, in one paragraph of the category 'government leadership' one expert (E5) stated:

The six ecomuseums in Hainan: they are a bit different from other ecomuseums, but the concept is not finished and we do not have a real model yet... Therefore the understanding of the ecomuseum can be a bit fuzzy. Some places call themselves ecomuseum even though they are not, but they understand themselves as an ecomuseum. I think ecomuseums need to be supervised.

(Ibid.)

This paragraph fell under the subcategory 'guidelines', which encompassed all statements that mentioned the issue that the Hainanese ecomuseums have no clear concept or guidelines at the moment. Examples of 'categories' and 'subcategories' formulated can be found in Appendix 9 and 10. The last step, 'selective coding' integrates and refines the

theory uniting it under one central idea (Ibid., 143). This central idea and theoretical background can remain implicit in the analysis (Charmaz 2006, 65).

Overall, interview transcripts were analysed in different groups. Government interviews and expert interviews were analysed together as well as separately depending on the overall theme. The interviews with the local population at each case study site were analysed separately for each case study site. As a last step the coded data was analysed together to create the 24 Hainanese ecomuseum guidelines. The last part of this chapter analyses the limitations of the research.

2.4.2 *Limitations of the research*

This research had several limitations mainly caused by the geographical access and political restrictions placed on me. Most of them have already been mentioned at several points in the chapter, but will be summarised here to allow for more clarity. One of these limitations was the number and length of the interviews. It would have been helpful for me to interview more government officials, especially at local level in the areas responsible for the ecomuseums. This would have brought more clarity and understanding on how the ecomuseum can be maintained at a local level. Two reasons made this difficult. The first reason, already mentioned, was that I had limited access to government representatives due to the complexities of obtaining 'official' sanction. The second reason was that the ecomuseum development is still at its very beginning and it was unclear in most cases who in the local government would be actually responsible for the ecomuseums.

Another limitation of the research was that I only was able to stay at the case studies for several days instead of a couple of weeks. This would have allowed for more observation, a more intense study of the area and in-depth interviews with the local community members. However, the remote geographical location of the case studies combined with the requirement of Chinese universities for foreign researchers to be accompanied by a research assistant for most of the time made this impossible. Despite these limitations, I still achieved in the collection of significant original datasets.

2.5 Summary

The methodological approach of this study was developed to investigate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province, examining ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments and analysing attitudes of the three main stakeholder groups. To achieve that,

a dual case-study approach was employed using qualitative methods, namely textual analysis, interviewing and observation. The results of this investigation will be discussed in the following chapters, especially in Chapters 6-9. The next Chapters 3-5 are a mixture of literature review and data analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the protection of ICH within its natural environments in China and Hainan Province.

CHAPTER 3 THE SAFEGUARDING OF ICH WITHIN ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS IN CHINA AND HAINAN PROVINCE – HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO ICH MANAGEMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyses the laws, guidelines and practices relating to the safeguarding of ICH in China and Hainan Province. It examines in particular the recent efforts of the Chinese government to develop and apply concepts that combine the protection of cultural diversity and biodiversity. It aims to provide a basis to examine the role ecomuseums could play in the holistic protection of ICH in Hainan Province. One of the central arguments of this chapter is that a cultural tradition is inseparable from the natural environment that nurtures it (McLaren 2011a). Therefore, it is essential to investigate and safeguard them side by side and provide a more holistic management approach. This idea that all forms of heritage are intertwined and consequently, should be protected together is gaining more and more relevance in heritage conservation efforts worldwide. One example is in the *Declaration on the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes* which states that the “conservation of cultural and biological diversity together holds the key to ensuring resilience in both social and ecological systems” (UNESCO 2005). The ecomuseum ideal offers such a holistic approach. According to its principles, it “encourages an integrated approach to the interpretation of the culture/nature relationship” and “attempts to illustrate connections between: technology/individual, nature/culture, and past/present” (Corsane 2006a, 159-160).

This chapter will show that in China, where rapid modernisation and economic development are endangering both heritage traditions and the natural environments, a holistic approach to the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments is particularly relevant. In the last ten years the Chinese government has begun to advocate such an approach, by developing several heritage protection concepts that preserve both its ecosystem and its heritage traditions (McLaren 2011a). This development is notably significant for the situation in Hainan Province. The island’s economy depends on tourism and therefore relies on effectively protecting its natural and cultural heritage resources. However, at the moment, tourism development and modernisation are destroying the environment and endangering cultural traditions (Gu and Wall 2007, 163).

In Haikou and Sanya over the last 10 years, the narrow piece of land abutting the beach and extending the length of the coastline has seen the rapid development of a recreational business district with holiday accommodation, luxury houses and golf courses. In the absence of parallel planning guidelines and controls, these tourism developments have also resulted in the destruction of coastal ecosystems, an overbuilt urban environment of poor standard and scant concern for the livelihoods and welfare of the minority communities displaced from their coastal fishing villages.

(Ibid.)

In order to stay attractive for tourists and achieve a more sustainable tourism, Hainan needs to find a balance between tourism development, modernisation and the protection of both cultural and natural environments. The establishment of ecomuseums on the island could be one way to achieve that.

This chapter begins by analysing the international framework for the safeguarding of ICH and then continues with examining national heritage laws and guidelines that influence how the protection of ICH is practised at provincial and local levels (county level and below, such as administrative villages (see Figure 1.5). It then examines how China has been implementing a holistic approach to safeguarding ICH and natural environments. The chapter concludes by studying the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments in Hainan Province and investigates the possibilities for an integrated approach in heritage management.

3.2 The safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments at national level in China

National guidelines and policies in China influence how heritage protection is practised at provincial and county level. It is therefore relevant to examine national politics on ICH-safeguarding to gain a complex understanding of how decisions at provincial level are made.

In China, cultural heritage and natural environments began to decline at the beginning of the 20th century. Since that time China has gone through several important social and economic changes. It developed from an agricultural to an industrial society, from an industrial to an information society, from a stagnant to a developing society, and from a planned to a market economy (An and Gjestrum 1999). These economic transitions and the

transition into an information society resulted in the development of the creative and cultural industries. The government started to view culture as a resource to generate income (White and Xu 2012). However, these transitions also had a huge influence on people's life-style and led to the abandoning of cultural traditions (An and Gjestrum 1999). First changes of the traditional Chinese society that influenced tangible as well as ICH happened during the modernisation attempts of the late Qing-Dynasty (1644-1911). Later, during most of the Mao-era (1949 – 1976), cultural traditions were suppressed and during the ten years of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) systematically destroyed. Whilst these events contributed to the loss of heritage traditions, a major part of their decline can be attributed to the government-endorsed economic development policies of the last 30 years (Shepherd and Yu 2013, 1).

Policies encouraging rapid economic development and the urbanisation of the countryside started to be implemented in the 1980s, aiming to modernise and industrialise the People's Republic of China (PRC). Economic development became the most important goal; everything else, including cultural and environmental concerns and needs, were often put behind economic aims (Chan and Ma 2004).

The population living in rural areas, as well as ethnic minorities, were particularly affected by these developments. Many younger members of the ethnic minorities began to leave their hometowns and cultural traditions to improve their economic and social situation. Tian Qing (2012), one of China's leading experts in cultural heritage protection and director of the Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre, commented about the PRC's ICH policies in an interview with Ian Johnson for the *New York Review of Books* on the difficulties of protecting ICH in rural China as follows:

The real problem is modernization. It's worse than the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was forced on people. But modernization is yearned for by people themselves, it's their own desire. You can't force the Miao girl to wear traditional garb. If she wants to wear jeans, she will.

(Ibid.)

Consequences of the rapid economic development are not only the disappearance of many cultural traditions, but also serious implications for the nation's ecological balance due to the destruction of natural environments. China's environments are in a dire situation, air

and water pollution have reached critical levels in many cities (Kahn and Yardley 2007; Wainwright 2014) and China's biodiversity is deteriorating (Yardley 2007).

Due to their common cause of decline, it is not surprising that environmental protection and the preservation of cultural heritage have become an increasing concern for Chinese society, and consequently the government (Su 2008). The first law to protect China's cultural heritage, *The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* came into effect in 1982 and the *Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China* followed seven years later in 1989. The first cultural heritage protection law focused mainly on tangible heritage. China's interest in actively protecting ICH was triggered much later by the 2003 UNESCO *Intangible Heritage Convention (ICHC)* and the listing of *kunqu*, a form of Chinese musical theatre that originated in Southern China, as a *World Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage* in 2001 (McLaren 2010).

While it is important to examine the safeguarding of ICH and its natural environments side-by-side, laws and protection measures in China often concentrate just on ICH. This part of the chapter first examines the laws and guidelines for the safeguarding of ICH and how these policies are influenced by guidelines and developments worldwide. It aims to provide an analysis of how ICH is safeguarded in China and what concepts and ideas are important for the Chinese context.

3.2.1 The 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention and its influences on safeguarding ICH in China

As mentioned before the *ICHC* was one of the main reasons that prompted China to join the ICH preservation movement. Since its publication, the protection of ICH has become a government priority in China's heritage protection policies. China's ideas of safeguarding and promoting ICH are strongly influenced by the *ICHC*. Therefore, it is vital to understand the international concept, before analysing ICH protection in China. This part of the chapter will argue that despite its significant role in reviving the protection of ICH in China, the approach of *ICHC* is not nuanced and holistic enough (Stefano 2012) to effectively protect the diverse ICH expressions of China and Hainan Province. It is particularly interested in the role of community participation in ICH and the relationship between ICH and natural environments in the *ICHC*. Before discussing these issues in more detail, it is helpful to provide a definition of ICH and to summarise the main points of the *ICHC*.

ICH can be defined as “heritage that is embodied in people rather than inanimate objects” (Logan 2007, 33) or “the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO ICHC 2003). These definitions show that ICH has a very wide range and is highly nuanced. No two ICH expressions are the same (Stefano 2012). Due to a widespread loss of these traditional cultural expressions, caused by modernisation and globalisation, the protection of ICH gained more importance worldwide. As a result a global framework for the safeguarding of ICH was established, the *ICHC*. The *ICHC* came into effect on April 2006, after Romania signed it as the 30th state (Logan 2007). 163 states had ratified the *ICHC* by April 2015. China ratified the *ICHC* in August 2004; it was the sixth state to do so (UNESCO 2014b).

The purpose of the *ICHC* was to safeguard ICH and to raise awareness of its importance at international, national and local levels. According to the definition in the *ICHC* (Article 2), ICH is “transmitted from generation to generation” and “constantly recreated by communities and groups”. It forms an essential aspect of a community’s “sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. It also stated that ICH should be “compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals and of sustainable development”. To summarise the *ICHC* aimed to safeguard cultural traditions that contribute to the identity formation of a certain community.

The *ICHC* (UNESCO 2003, Article 2) divided ICH into the following five categories:

- (1) Oral traditions and expressions including language
- (2) Performing arts (such as traditional music, dance, and theatre)
- (3) Social practices, rituals, and festive events
- (4) Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- (5) Traditional craftsmanship

Safeguarding measures were intended to ensure the sustainability of ICH and included the “identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage”. State parties were supposed

“to take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in their territory”. This also encompassed defining the various elements of their ICH in cooperation with communities, groups and non-governmental organisations.

UNESCO set up two lists at the international level that were based on the concept of the 1972 *World Heritage Convention* (Blake 2009). The first list was the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*, which aims to ensure better visibility of ICH and awareness of its significance. The second list was the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need for Urgent Safeguarding*. State parties had to request the inscription of their ICH on each list. Today China has 30 items on the *ICH Representative List* and 7 items on the *List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*. It is the country with the most listings (*China Daily* 2013).

Regarding community participation the *ICHC* recognised “that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of the intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity”. Apart from this reference and paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the *ICHC*, the role of communities is also mentioned in Articles 11, 14, 21 and most explicitly in Article 15 where it is stated that:

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.

The implementation of the *ICHC* and the role of communities was further clarified by the *Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (*Operational Directives*) that were first published in 2008 and lastly updated in 2014 for the fifth time. Among others, like the brochures in the ‘toolkit’, they address issues, for instance inscription criteria for the *Urgent Safeguarding List* and *Representative List*, community participation and funding issues (UNESCO 2014b).

The *ICHC* also aimed at “considering the deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage”. While a holistic

approach of safeguarding ICH is reflected in Article 2 and 14 (c), this is the only time the interrelationship between intangible, tangible and natural heritage is directly stated.

Overall the *ICHC* has been seen as an important step to support cultural practitioners in safeguarding their ICH (Blake 2009; Kurin 2003). One major contribution of the *ICHC* to the safeguarding of ICH was that it recognised and strengthened the idea that the practice of one's culture is a human right. It stretched the notion that culture, as a source of identity and creativity, gives meaning and purpose to life and consequently has to be protected. It also asked for government recognition and respect for the diverse cultural traditions practised by people within each country (Blake 2009; Kurin 2004). In particular in the Chinese context, the *ICHC* has had a reviving effect on China's appreciation of past traditions. It led to new endorsements of research activities regarding Chinese indigenous cultures and a greater interest in preserving the ICH of rural communities, which local authorities had perceived as feudal and, consequently, regarded with suspicion for years (McLaren 2010).

Despite the positive contributions of the *ICHC*, many experts question its effectiveness in relation to safeguarding ICH at local level with community involvement, as well as its scope and clarity (Kurin 2003; Labadi 2013; Lixinski 2013; Marrie 2009; Ruggles and Silverman 2009; Stefano 2012). It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all the challenges raised with the *ICHC*; however, it will briefly examine the critique points that are the most relevant for this thesis.

Kurin (2007, 18) argued that "the connection of ICH to the larger matrix of ecological, social, technological, economic and political relationships is too complex, too multi-faced and nuanced to be reduced to the simple formula proposed by the 2003 treaty". As mentioned before, because each ICH tradition is so specific an effective framework for its safeguarding needs to be just as nuanced as the ICH it protects. This is particularly relevant in China. Its 55 ethnic minorities alone have so many different ICH expressions that are difficult to protect in a standardised safeguarding approach.

One major challenge relates to the participation of communities. While some experts argue that the *ICHC* gives a central role to cultural communities (Blake 2009), it is a global safeguarding scheme that is implemented at national level by various institutes. But, ICH is embodied in people and practised by the communities at local level. This top-down

mechanism makes it difficult to involve local heritage practitioners (Stefano 2012). State-parties are responsible to identify relevant community groups and actively involve them (Labadi 2013). In countries with a government-led approach to the safeguarding of ICH and a difficult relationship to some of its ethnic-minority groups such as China, leaving such relevant decisions in the hands of the state-party can be problematic. ICH expressions are often exploited for tourism (Wong 2009) and to promote the image of national unity (Gorfinkel 2012). There also has been a tendency to exclude communities at international level. Their participation is mainly restricted to national level and some states, for instance Norway, argued in the negotiations of the *ICHC* that local communities did not have the expertise to contribute to the cooperations at international level (Lixinski 2013, 53-54).

Another important challenge raised in relation to the *ICHC* is that the separation of the different heritage conventions and lists is artificial. Many ICH practices have a strong connections to tangible and natural heritage, for example the knowledge and skills to produce many tangible items are intangible (Conan 2009; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Kurin 2004; Munjeri 2004). The *ICHC* does not pay enough attention to the interrelationship between people, places and larger contexts that contribute to the diversity of ICH (Stefano 2012). This point is particularly important for this thesis, which argues for an integrated approach of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments.

Another critique point is that the list-based mechanism creates a hierarchy; by deciding what ICH belongs on the list it compares and measures it against each other. This system could also prevent countries from concentrating on the actual protection of ICH and encourage them to work mainly on adding ICH items to the list (Labadi 2013). This is partly the case in China. Including ICH items in the *Representative List* is part of China's cultural 'Soft power' strategy, a means for tourism development and national ideology (Bodolec 2012; Silverman and Blumenfield 2013). The ecomuseum ideal that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, could offer a more effective approach of safeguarding ICH and a solution to many of the challenges of the *ICHC*.

Although the *ICHC* had a strong influence on safeguarding measures in China, in the tradition of the CCP (see Introduction Chapter), the Chinese government also announced that the safeguarding of ICH in China must have 'Chinese characteristics' (*China Heritage*

Quarterly 2006). The influences of the *ICHC* on safeguarding ICH in China and the implication of ICH-safeguarding with 'Chinese characteristics' will now be examined.

3.2.2 Safeguarding ICH at national level in China

This section analyses the protection of ICH at the national level in China. When examining the safeguarding of heritage at provincial and local levels, it is helpful to have an overview of national policies. China's one-party political system is very efficient at enforcing national policies in different parts of the vast territory at various levels. Therefore, national policies strongly influence how heritage is safeguarded at provincial and local levels. Regarding ICH protection in its natural environments, the growing attention paid by the CCP at national level and the aim of establishing more holistic approaches to safeguard it has mobilised the efforts of the whole governmental system. At the same time the power structure, from top-down to grass-roots, in the multi-layered governance system (See Introduction Chapter, Figure 1.5) depends a lot on the motivation and interest of local party leaders. The system is reliant on how effectively they enforce the new guidelines and legislations (Chen 2009, 16-18). One important factor in the effective enforcement of these legislations is the availability of local funds. Local governments carry the main responsibility for finding the financial resources for the safeguarding of heritage in their area (Chan and Ma 2004).

As mentioned before the state's first measures of interest in researching and safeguarding local traditions thrived following the first proclamation of *World Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage* published in 2001 (Bodolec 2012; McLaren 2010). Between 2001 and 2005, UNESCO proclaimed 90 Masterpieces in three rounds, which aimed to: raise the awareness of the importance of ICH expressions; evaluate and list the world's ICH; encourage countries to establish their own ICH inventories; and promote the practice of ICH at local levels. China was successful in all three Masterpiece rounds, in 2001 the *Kunqu* Opera was named a World Masterpiece, in 2003 *guqin* zither music was added to the list and in 2005 the *Uyghur muqam* melodic and modal system (Howard 2012). While ICH was regarded as outdated and irrelevant before, the Chinese government then identified the safeguarding of ICH as a way to strengthen national unity and patriotism, and published several guidelines and laws, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs of this chapter. ICH also became a major tool for tourism development (Pan 2008).

Since 2001, government organs at all levels of the PRC as well as cultural institutions have developed a wide range of projects to raise the awareness and actively contribute to the preservation of the country's ICH. These actions included the organisation of conferences, the publication of ICH journals, ministry-level plans for long-term protection and the issuing of several legal protective measures (Rees 2012). This new importance of the safeguarding of ICH was emphasised by Li Changchun, a former member of the Politburo while visiting the exhibition 'Successes in Conserving China's Intangible Cultural Heritage' in the National Museum of China (NMC) in 2006. He stated that:

The protection of intangible cultural heritage and maintaining continuity of the national culture constitute an essential cultural base for enhancing cohesion of the nation, boosting national unity, invigorating the national spirit and safeguarding national unification.

(In China Heritage Quarterly 2006, 3)

To ensure the safeguarding of ICH, the State Council put three main measures in place. The first measure was to adapt the administrative structure of culture heritage in China, which mainly encompassed the creation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre and the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Rees 2012). The management of ICH heritage at national level is shown in Figure 3.1. Because the Chinese government is divided into functional systems, headed by a state ministry with a functionally-defined hierarchy of government units that exists at all government levels (Lieberthal 1997), the administration of ICH at local level mirrors the national structure. The ICH Protection Centre, for example, is at the top of the hierarchy with its many sub-branches established at provincial, county and township levels.

The complexity of ICH protection in China, with the Ministry and its two state bodies of the ICH Protection Centre and the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, is depicted in Figure 3.1.

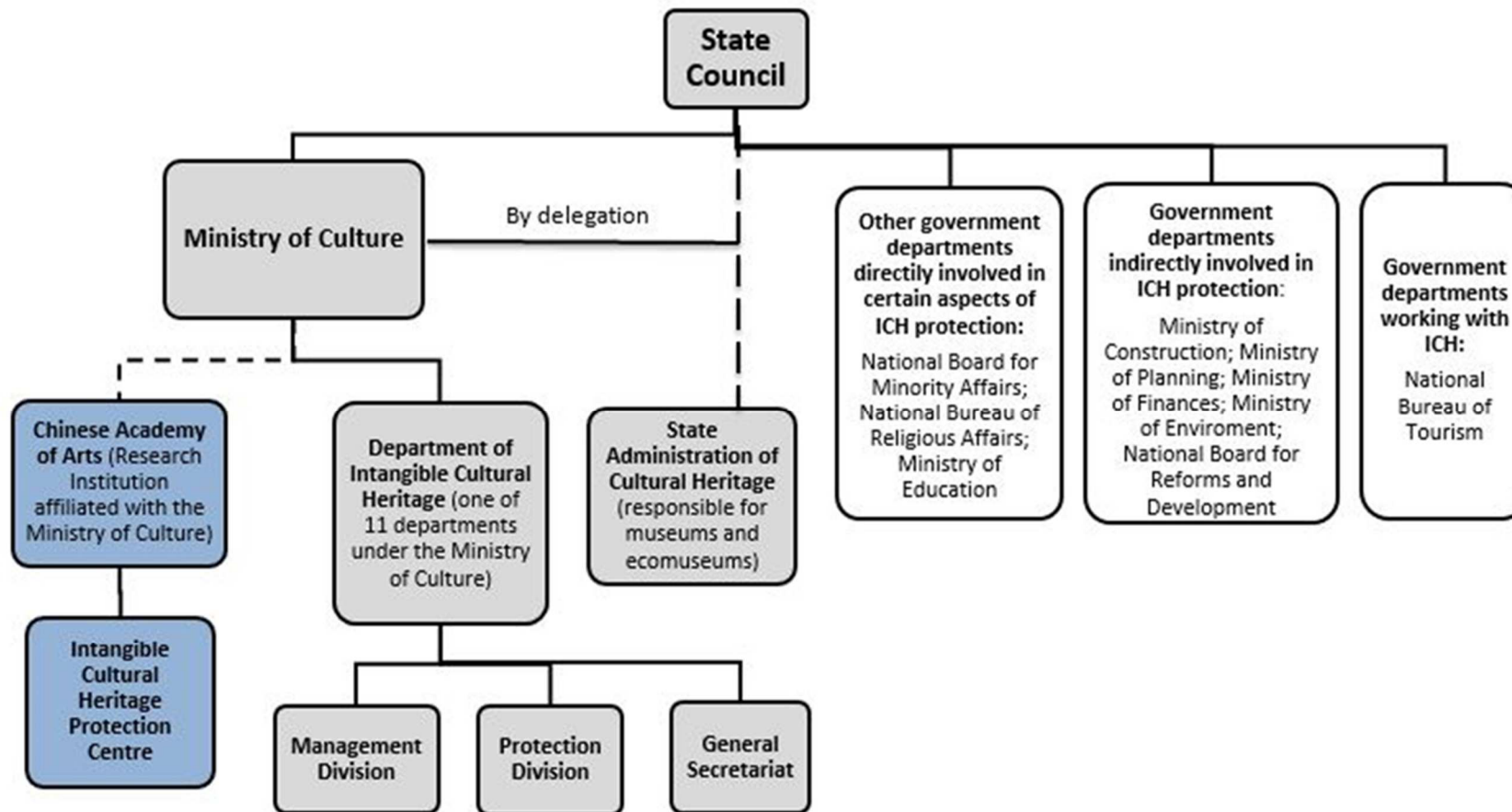


Figure 3.1 Management of ICH at national level

The first organisation, the China ICH Protection Centre was established in September 2006 and belongs to the Chinese Academy of Arts, a Research Institute closely affiliated to the Ministry of Culture. It is a research centre with the responsibility to protect and promote China's ICH (Rees 2012). In more detail, it was created:

to undertake specific work relating to the protection of the entire country's intangible cultural heritage, to carry out policy consultation for intangible heritage protection work; to organize surveys across the whole country; to guide the implementation of the protection plans; to carry out theoretical research on intangible cultural heritage preservation; to organize scholarly, exhibition, performance, and public activities, and to engage in exchange, promotion, and publicizing of the results and experiences of protection work; and to organize and implement the publication of research results and functions such as training of personnel.

(Luo 2007, cited in Rees 2012, 104)

The second organisation, the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, was established in March 2008 under the Ministry of Culture. It is divided in three sections: Management, Protection and the General Secretariat. Its tasks are to manage the *National Representative List of ICH*, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter, and to prepare national protection policies and the legislative regulations. Its main function is to ensure the transmission and promotion of traditional Chinese culture (Bodolec 2012).

Another important government body, associated with the protection of ICH, is the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH), a body supervised by the Ministry of Culture. SACH is in charge of the administration and development of museums (Varutti 2014, 32). Therefore, exhibitions concerning ICH and ecomuseums fall into its responsibility. In addition to these three departments, Figure 3.1 also shows the many other government organisations that are directly or indirectly concerned with the safeguarding of ICH in China. It is important to bear this separation of responsibilities in mind, because it can lead to many problems and ineffectiveness when achieving bigger projects, such as establishing ecomuseums. Provincial-government officials in Hainan Province interviewed for this thesis, mentioned this point as one of the major challenges to establishing ecomuseums in China (Chapters 7 and 8).

The second measure to implement the *ICHC* was the publication of the *National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2006. It listed 518 items at national level distributed across ten categories: folk literature, folk music, folk dance, traditional drama, *quyi* or storytelling performances, acrobatics and sports, folk art, handicraft, traditional medicine and folk customs (*China Heritage Quarterly* 2006).

The Ministry of Culture announced a second list of *National Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage* with 510 entries in 2008, a third one with 349 examples in 2010 and a fourth list with 151 listings in 2014 (State Council 2014). Overall there are four levels of listings with over 70 000 examples: national, provincial, city and county level, depending on the importance of the tradition (Ye and Zhao 2013). The administration of ICH examples that are listed at national or provincial levels and the financial responsibility for the safeguarding of these expressions still rest at the local level. However, the listing passes 'authority' to agree to certain measures and plans regarding the safeguarding of the ICH tradition to the level at which it is listed (du Cros and Lee 2007, 41-42).

In order to compile the first list of national-level ICH traditions, the Chinese government in cooperation with the ICH Protection Centre organised a survey of all the ICH traditions in the country. To support local officials in documenting their ICH, a handbook for conducting surveys was published in 2007. Training classes on how to record an ICH expression, how to survey it and which questions to ask the heritage practitioners were held at national, provincial, city and county levels. The survey revealed that China has 870,000 ICH examples (Tian 2012).

The compilation of representative lists in China not only leads back to these activities stimulated by UNESCO, as the first time China collected and categorised its cultural practices was during the New Cultural Movement in the 1920s (Shepherd and Yu 2013). Creating a representative list is also one of the Korean and Japanese methods of protecting ICH (Rees 2012). Bearing close resemblance to the Japanese system of 'national living treasures', China decided to designate one person as a heritage transmitter for each ICH item on the list. In theory, these heritage transmitters are supposed to receive funding for protecting and keeping the ICH tradition alive. For example, each heritage transmitter was supposed to receive 8,000 yuan (£800) in 2010 and 10,000 yuan (£1000) from the national government in 2011. However, this system has not always worked. The local governments

were supposed to match the money they received from the national government. Many localities do not have the financial resources to do this and thus many heritage transmitters have not been receiving the money (Tian 2012). The issue of financial resources is also a major problem for ICH protection and ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

The creation of the ICH inventory lists received mixed receptions amongst heritage experts. While some experts note that the creation of the list resulted in a deeper understanding and public support for the protection of ICH and argued the list reflects the high priority the government attaches to the protection work (Wang 2006), other conservationists expressed reservations about the large number of listings and the randomness of the selected examples (*China Heritage Quarterly* 2006; Shepherd and Yu 2013, 3).

The third measure was the promulgation of the *Intangible Heritage Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (LICH)* that came into effect on 1 June 2011 (Pan 2008). This law will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-chapter.

3.2.3 The Intangible Heritage Protection Law of the PRC

The *LICH* is the main legal instrument for the protection of ICH in Hainan. While a number of provinces, such as Guangxi, have very clear regional regulations to protect ICH, the guidelines for Hainan Province rely mainly on the national law (Chen Pei 2013, pers. comm.). Therefore it is helpful to give a broad overview of its content. Hereby, this thesis will concentrate on the content of the law that is particularly relevant for community participation and the establishment of the ecomuseums in Hainan.

The *LICH* provides systematic and comprehensive protection measures, legally covering all of China (Li 2012). It defines ICH in line with the 2003 *ICHC*, but as mentioned above, also displays several 'Chinese characteristics' (Bodolec 2012). One of the characteristics that is 'China-specific' and differentiates the Chinese ICH policies from the *ICHC* is the importance of the notion of 'excellence' (Bodolec 2012). Article 1 of the *LICH* states: "This law is formulated to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, to promote the building of the socialist spiritual civilization, and to strengthen the protection and preservation of intangible cultural heritage". This focus on 'excellence'

contradicts the spirit of the *ICHC*. While the ideal of ‘outstanding universal value’ and ‘excellence’ is a part of the *1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention* and was a criterion used in the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2001–2005)* it was specifically decided not to include it in the *ICHC*, which aimed to promote an equal recognition of diverse cultural practices (De Cesari 2012). Another ‘Chinese characteristic’ is the role of ICH to promote national unity and a harmonious society as expressed in Article 4:

The authenticity, integrity and transmission of the ICH shall be respected in its protection, which shall enhance the cultural identity of the Chinese nation, safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity and promote the harmonious and sustainable development of the society.

(Ibid.)

The ‘harmonious society’ is an ideological concept that was coined by former President Hu Jintao (2002-2012) in 2005 and since then has been part of the political jargon of the CCP, even though it has become less prominent under the new leadership of Xi Jinping (2013-present). The ideal of the ‘harmonious society’ correlates to a conflict-free unified Chinese nation (Huang 2014).

These ‘Chinese characteristics’ and their focus on excellence, national unity and harmony have consequences for the way ICH is protected in China and in its ecomuseums. It concerns in particular, but not exclusively, the protection of ethnic-minority heritage. It gives the national government the whole authority to decide on which ICH expressions are worth protecting and ignore ICH that is less consistent with the current political ideology (Lixinski 2013, 128-129). This is particularly problematic for the ICH protection of China’s ethnic minorities, where protection efforts concentrate mainly on those expressions that conform to the official national discourse and image of these groups (Varutti 2014, 142).

The *LICH* also strengthened the role of heritage transmitters, a concept that had been created in connection to the Chinese *National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. It placed heritage transmitters in a stronger position in the protection process, by extending their duties from simply passing on the heritage tradition to: supporting the investigation of ICH made by the departments in charge of cultural affairs and other relevant administrative authorities; the accurate understanding of the situation of local

ICH; the collection of authentic materials; and, the conducting of other necessary preparation work (Article 21).

It is important to note designation of a heritage transmitter has certain limitations. Some ICH traditions, for example, the Hainan Opera cannot be represented by just one or two representatives, because they are a group performance. In addition, the designation of one heritage transmitter might lead to conflicts among local heritage practitioners and limit the way ICH is passed on (Li 2014, 126-127).

The *LICH* also aimed to incorporate the public more in the protection process by raising public awareness. Methods to encourage a stronger public involvement are specified in several articles of the law. Article 20, for example, gives any citizen and organisation the right to file a suggestion for the Chinese *ICH Representative List* to the department in charge of cultural affairs, and, Article 36 “encourages and supports citizens, legal persons and other organisations to build exhibition places and succession places for intangible cultural heritage and do the relevant activities based on law”. Articles 8, 34, 35 are aimed at raising the public interest in and awareness of ICH through promotional and educational activities.

However, despite these important steps to include the public, county-level governments play the most important role at every stage of ICH protection work and the new law gives them compulsory legal responsibility for its protection. The public’s responsibilities are limited to education, research and publicity. Because of this, the *LICH* is mainly intended to control administrative behaviours by government officials and departments at all levels. Government bodies are the main organisers of ICH investigation, recording and the setting up of files. They are the main executors for developing a protection plan and the only organisers and main supervisors responsible for the appraisal of representative ICH expressions and their heritage transmitters (Li 2012; Lixinski 2013, 128-129).

The *LICH* also incorporated policies on the reasonable exploitation of ICH to balance preservation and economic use in its safeguarding and sustainability (Article 37).

Following the international trend the ideal was to not just preserve (*baohu*) ICH, but to revitalise (*zhenxing*) it so that the continuation of ICH can be guaranteed. This ‘revitalisation’ included integrating ICH into the local economy. This allowed provinces,

local governments and businesses to get involved in ICH-safeguarding following economic goals, such as trade and tourism (Mc Laren 2011b). This aspect of the *LICH* is important for ecomuseum development in China. Businesses and local governments often use the ecomuseum ideal to revitalise ICH traditions and encourage sustainable tourism. This can be problematic, because businesses have the tendency to exclude the local population (Nitzky 2012b). However, there are cases of it being an effective way to safeguard ICH, for example, in the Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum (Qiu 2013). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The *LICH* also introduced a change that was particularly relevant for the field research of this thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it restricts the investigation of ICH in China by foreign organisations and individuals by requiring them to cooperate with Chinese organisations (Article 15). The aim of the Article is to avoid random investigations and ensure protection of ICH intellectual property rights (Li 2014, 123-124). It is also a manifestation of the tight control the Chinese government exhibits over its ICH tradition (Lixinski 2013, 129).

The *LICH* is a milestone for the safeguarding of ICH in China and many aspects of ICH protection are now being regulated for the first time (Li 2014, 125). It is still too early to estimate all the impacts the *LICH* will have, but several already observable limitations have been discussed in this chapter. One other issue includes that the measures to protect the ICH are not detailed enough (Tian 2012). As already noted, China has 870,000 very diverse ICH examples and, like within the *ICH*C itself, it is difficult for a national law to promote safeguarding every ICH tradition⁶.

Overall, whilst the *LICH* includes the idea of change and revitalisation, most of China's measures to safeguard ICH, for instance the inventorying and documenting of ICH expressions, rely heavily on traditional museum practice (Interview GO4 2013). This focus on documenting and exhibiting ICH risks its 'fossilisation', which would render it meaningless (Stefano 2012). Whilst the *LICH* is an important step for the safeguarding of ICH and demonstrates the high priority the government places on ICH-safeguarding it is difficult to safeguard China's highly diverse and localised heritage traditions within a

⁶ The new law also offers little protection for private rights and the protection of intellectual property. However, this issue goes beyond the scope of this thesis. A detailed discussion on the intellectual property protection of ICH in China can be found in Li (2014).

standardised national framework. China's ICH is localised and deeply connected to the environments in which it is practised, so that traditional museum practices as 'safeguarding means' can only achieve superficial protection. An example in Hainan Province is the suite of traditional Li textile techniques of weaving, dying, spinning and embroidering that were listed on the UNESCO list of *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* in 2009. The suite differs from village to village, depending on its natural environment. Li minority members interviewed for this research felt that the safeguarding methods used by the government, did not effectively preserve the whole complexity of the heritage tradition. In addition, the law's tendency to exclude the local communities and focus on single heritage transmitters has been an issue for the safeguarding of ICH. Local communities are the experts on their ICH traditions and therefore have to be included in safeguarding processes. The next part of the chapter discussed the importance of a holistic approach to heritage management that safeguards ICH in its original environments. The other issue, the importance of community participation in ICH, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2.4 A holistic approach to the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments

In the last decade, China has adopted several new concepts to safeguard its ICH in a more localised context, such as Ecological Cultural Protection Zones (ECPZ), geoparks and ecomuseums, which recognise the inter-relatedness between the natural and human environment and call for a bottom-up method in safeguarding cultural heritage (Rees 2012).

At international level, the importance of more integrated conservation methods to protect cultural heritage and natural environments has been discussed since the 1990s (see Carlarne 2006; Coccossis & Nijkamp 1995; Dorfman 2012; Jin and Yen 2012; Marafa 2003; Mitchell and Buggey 2000; Phillips 1998). Dorfman (2012) noted that while the field of ICH has been mainly focused on cultural tradition, it contains both cultural and natural elements. Following the same line of argument, Verschuuren (2006) stated that cultural and spiritual values should be integrated in the preservation and management of ecosystems, because people perceive nature based on culturally defined value and belief systems.

The cultural importance of natural ecosystems not only consists of tangible goods and services, but also includes many often intangible, non-material or information services. These non-material and spiritual values are part of local people cosmovision and play a pivotal role in shaping their perception of nature.

(Ibid., 299)

Marafa (2003) similarly reasoned that it is difficult to separate natural heritage from cultural heritage, because natural heritage cannot be divided from community beliefs and perceptions about a particular landscape.

Furthermore, Phillips (1998) argued that the artificial separation of nature and culture has hindered interdisciplinary work and the understanding of complex ecological relations:

The separation of nature and culture – of people from the environment which surrounds them – which has been a feature of western attitudes and education over the centuries, has blinded us to many of the interactive associations which exist between the world of nature and the world of culture.

(Ibid., 36)

In China, human activities are still very much an integral part of the landscape, for example anywhere between 30 to 60 million people live in and around Chinese nature reserves. Many village communities depend on their natural environments for of their livelihoods and it deeply influences their way of life (Xu *et al.* 2012). Several articles (Jin and Yen 2012; Ingram 2011; He 2004) make the link between environment and ICH in China very clear. Ingram (2011), for instance, points out the importance of the environment for the Kam (Dong) big song, a music tradition sung within the Dong minorities of South-eastern Guizhou Province. The Kam (Dong) big song echoes the local environments in different ways: some of the song lyrics have an instructional content regarding environmental management or agricultural practices; they rely upon environmental features in lyrical metaphors; and, they use vocal imitation of sounds from the natural environments (Ingram 2011, 445). This connection has also been expressed by several experts and members of the Li minority in Binglanggu that were interviewed in the context of this thesis. Because most Chinese ICH expressions are practised by communities within particular natural environments and can change and adapt to environmental change, there has been a huge regional interest to not only get single ICH expressions enlisted on the *National Intangible*

Heritage List, but also the cultural or ecological sites in which the tradition originated or is embedded (McLaren 2011b).

An integrated approach to heritage management in China would also be supported by the fact that modernisation and economic development are responsible for both the degeneration of the eco-system and the loss of many ICH expressions. ICH and environmental protection face many similar challenges including a lack of financial resources, professional staff and experts. They are also both a popular resource for tourism development (Lindberg, Tisdell and Xue 2003; OECD 2006). Laws regarding both cultural heritage and environmental protection give leeway with regards to prioritised State economic development projects (Carlarne 2006). Therefore, it is important to shed light on possible parallels between environmental sustainability and the preservation and revitalisation of ICH in the countryside and to protect them together (McLaren 2011a; Zhou and Grumbine 2011).

The growing environmental and ICH movements in China are linked together not only by their fight against the common cause of decline and their overlapping challenges, but also by their similar rhetoric. Both movements share much vocabulary; for example, the concepts of survival (*shengcun*), preservation (*baohu*) and ecology (*shengtai*). Concepts to describe certain forms of ICH also highlight this connection. There is for example the concept of 'original ecology' (*yuan shengtai*) that is often used to describe folksongs. It defines a song sung by a heritage transmitter in local dialect and traditional context, as opposed to a staged performance (Rees 2012). There are also examples of environmental organisations and cultural institutions working together. The Nature Conservancy, for instance, supported the *dongba* training project of the Lijiang *Dongba* Research Institute financially. *Dongba* are indigenous religious specialists belonging to the Naxi minority in Yunnan Province. They are particularly well-known for the pictographic script used to record their chants. The project, which started in 1999, aimed to revive the training of *Dongba* priests (Rees 2012).

In this context, China has begun to develop several integrated concepts of heritage management, focussing on ICH as well as on natural environments. There are three main concepts that are promoted and supported at national level: ecomuseums (see Introduction Chapter and Chapter 4); geoparks; and ECPZs. The role of the ecomuseum in

protecting China's ICH in its original environment will be further discussed in Chapter 4. Both geoparks and ECPZs share similar characteristics to the ecomuseum ideal (Parks 2001; Rees 2012). Geoparks are an international concept that was launched by UNESCO in 1999, as a global development strategy, to create unique geological sites and safeguard important geological environments (Zeng 2014). Geoparks combine conservation, education and sustainable tourism. They place importance on local community involvement. "The establishment of a Geopark should be based on strong community support and local involvement, developed through a 'bottom-up' process" (UNESCO 2014, 3). To date, China has established 27 global and 140 national geoparks (Zhizhong *et al.* 2015).

The concept of the ECPZ was developed in China and the establishment of the first national ECPZ in Fujian Province was announced on 9 June 2007. The region is mainly inhabited by Minnan- and Hakka-speaking Han Chinese and is well-known for its unique performing arts such as the small-ensemble instrumental and vocal genre. It also has several distinctive local operatic and puppet traditions and is famous for its local handicrafts and architecture. By late 2010, the development of ten national ECPZ had been announced (Rees 2012) and, by 2014, 18 had been established (Tang 2014). Hainan Province is currently planning the establishment of several ECPZs. Zhou Heping, the head of the Ministry of Culture, defined the concept as follows:

An eco-cultural protection zone refers to a designated natural and cultural ecological environment region, an area where control and administration are implemented in order to achieve the goal of protection. There is the natural heritage, the 'overall ecological environment'; material cultural heritage such as old architecture, historical streets, towns, traditional dwellings, and historical remains; and intangible cultural heritage such as oral traditions, traditional performing arts, folk customs, rituals, celebrations, and traditional handicrafts. These are all interdependent, and also have a close connection and harmonious coexistence with people's productive lives.

(Zhou Heping 2006, cited in Rees 2012, 6)

Tian Qing (2012) stresses how important the natural environments are for the safeguarding of ICH and that this was one of the main reasons for the development of the ECPZs.

Because the focus and acknowledgement of the inter-relatedness of the natural and human environments as well as the physical context in which culture exists is relatively new to China, results vary in different sites. Due to their recent establishment the influence of ECPZs on the safeguarding of ICH has not been researched yet. Geoparks are facing many challenges including poor management, lack of financial resources and not enough educational programmes and interpretation for visitors (Zhizhong *et al.* 2015). The varied success of ecomuseums will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Up to this point ICH protection in Hainan has not worked with a holistic approach of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments. Most of its ICH-safeguarding measures are in line with the *ICHC* and the *LICH*, and therefore, use traditional museological practices (Interview GO4, 2013). However, as mentioned, Hainan is working on the establishment of several of these concepts. The protection of ICH and natural environments as well as the possibilities of working with a holistic approach in heritage management will be discussed in the next part of the chapter.

3.3 The protection of ICH within its natural environments at provincial and local levels – Implementing national laws in Hainan

Due to its long history and its culturally diverse population, Hainan Province has a rich ICH and unique natural environments. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, several groups contribute to Hainan's ICH: Hainanese, mainland Chinese, and Hainan's ethnic minorities the Li, the Miao and the Hui (Feng and Goodman 1997). In addition to the ethnic-minority culture, many regions in Hainan have their own unique cultural heritage traditions connected to farming, religion and the countryside life-style. Hainanese culture is also influenced by its trade connections to South Asia (Feng 1999). With regards to its natural environments, Hainan Province is one of the most important areas for biodiversity conservation in the world. Hainan has, for example 4200 different species of plants, close to 600 of those are endemic to the island. This biological richness and its high degree of endemism exist because of the unique tropical rain forest, mangrove, marine and grassland ecosystems that shows species structures and ecological processes different from those in other tropical regions (Stone 2002). Compared to the rest of China, the environment is relatively well preserved (Davies and Wismer 2007).

Hainan's ICH expressions are influenced by its unique tropical environment, with certain tropical plants including the betel nut playing an important part in the ICH of the local communities. The chewing of the betel nut, for example, marks the difference between local islander and outsider and is an ICH that all ethnic groups in Hainan share (Anderson 2007). The natural environments also play a vital role in the ICH of the Li and Miao minorities. Many ICH traditions, for instance the Li textile techniques and the tree bark cloth, depend on the natural resources of the island for material and the Li religious belief is deeply connected to the worshipping of nature. So is Daoism, which is practised by many Hainanese on the island.

However many of these ICH traditions, in particular those of Hainan's ethnic minorities are slowly disappearing. While until 1949 the traditional culture of the Li and the Miao minorities was still intact, a lot of their traditional practices, such as their marriage systems or the Li tattooing systems, were forbidden by the CCP. The government regarded them as corrupt practices and forced the ethnic minorities to learn Mandarin Chinese and assimilate to the mainstream culture. Since 1988, with the designation of Hainan as a province and modernisation efforts from the government, the traditional life-style of ethnic minorities has been even more rapidly vanishing (Zhang and Zhan 2007).

Environmental protection measures, for example the establishing of nature reserves, are also partly responsible for the loss of heritage traditions. Resource-access restrictions near nature reserves, which had a positive effect on the natural environments, also led to the issue that certain activities connected to ICH practices including felling trees, hunting, growing crops, gathering mushrooms and medical plants in the mountains, are no longer allowed (Davies and Wismer 2007).

Despite this strong connection between ICH and its natural environments, up to now safeguarding measures of ICH focus mainly on the cultural aspect and concentrate on the documenting and inventorying of ICH expressions. Efforts by the local government to preserve Hainan's ICH began parallel to the national efforts of ICH protection, with the listing of the Li textile techniques on the *National Intangible Cultural Heritage List* in 2006. Although strongly influenced by the state policies, Hainan's administrative system regarding ICH differs from the national system and other Chinese provinces. In Hainan, the two main government divisions responsible for ICH and ecomuseum development, the

Cultural Division and the Arts Division, are within the single Department of Culture, Radio, Television, Publication and Sports (See Figure 3.2).

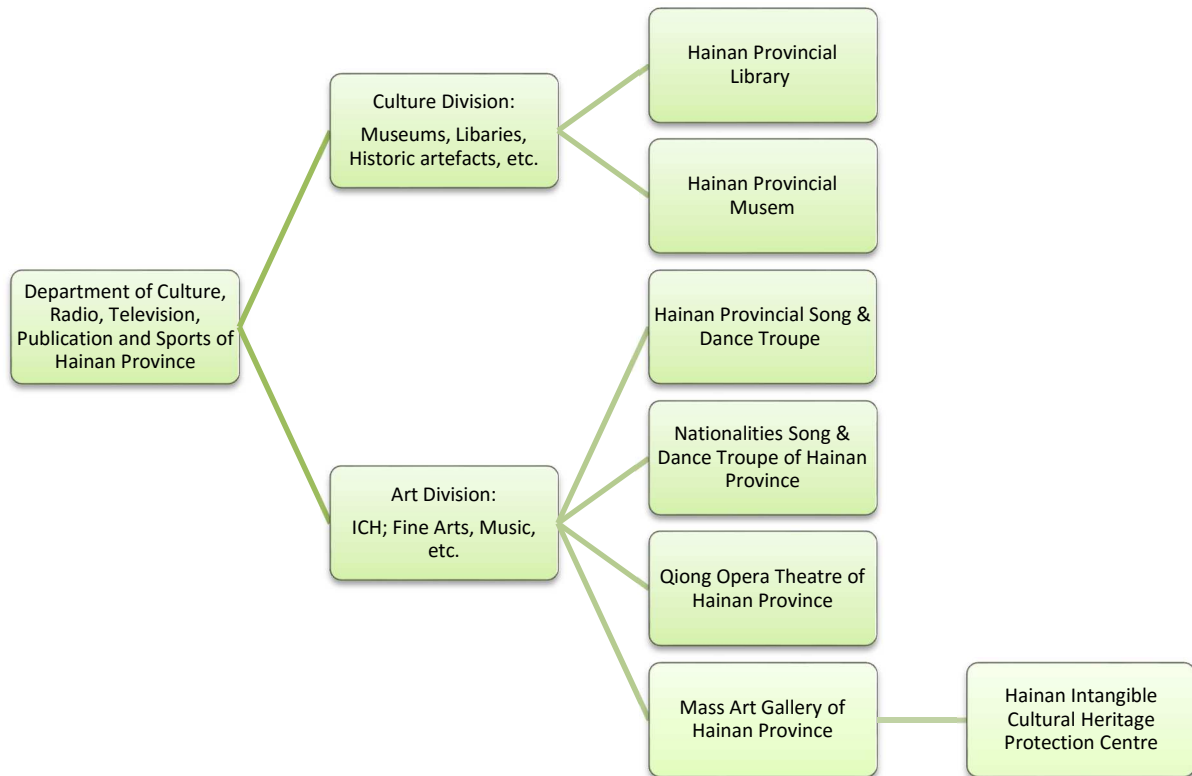


Figure 3.2 Management of ICH at provincial level in Hainan

The cultural division is in charge of the ecomuseum establishment and museums in general, along with the library. The Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre is part of the Art Division and affiliated to the Mass Art Gallery of Hainan Province. The Arts Division is also responsible for establishing Hainan’s ECPZs (Chen 2013, pers. comm.).

This administrative system, in which one department is responsible for so many different areas is unique to Hainan Province. Overall the department is in charge of 13 divisions in the fields of culture, arts, cultural relics, radio, film, television, press, publication, copyright and sports (Department of Culture, Radio, Television, Publication and Sports 2009).

In all other provinces museums and ICH are managed by separate departments of equal rank. This makes it very difficult to organise exhibitions and write up guidelines. Because the divisions in Hainan belong to one department, the communication and coordination of projects, such as the ecomuseums, that stretch across several departments elsewhere should theoretically be easier and in some instances have been successful. Hainan is one of the first provinces that established a permanent ICH exhibition in its provincial museum (Chen 2013, pers. comm.). However, this seems not to be the case in the ecomuseum establishment and research discovered little communication between the divisions regarding the project.

Two museums that have permanent ICH exhibitions are the Hainan Provincial Museum in Haikou and the Ethnic Museum in Wuzhishan. The ICH exhibition in Hainan Provincial Museum displays all ICH traditions of Hainan in five categories: traditional performing arts; folk customs; ritual; festivals and traditional handicraft. The Ethnic Museum in Wuzhishan concentrates on the ICH of Hainan's three biggest ethnic-minority groups, the Li, the Miao and the Hui. It has a fairly simple exhibition that mainly relies on a mixture of photographs and contemporary objects to exhibit ICH expressions, for instance: pottery; paper-cutting techniques; weaving (bamboo, rattan, grass); music; and, dance.

With regards to ICH protection work in Hainan, the ICH of the Li minority receives the most attention and safeguarding efforts mainly concentrate on them. Their customs and traditions are the focus of most research and protection projects. One research group at Hainan Normal University, for example, documents and researches the tattooing traditions of the Li minority.

Another institution that is very involved in the protection of the ICH of the Li minority is the library of Hainan University. The local documentation of Li culture is one of the library's most important projects. It began its collection work, which also includes the support of the production of academic literature, in 2004. A large part of the collection is now digitised (Zhang and Zhan 2007). The Hainan University History and Culture Research Base and the Hainan History and Culture Institute, which were established and integrated into one organisation by the provincial government and Hainan University in 2007, are also located in the library. Their main research topics include the oral history and ICH of Hainan,

Hainan's natural and tangible heritage, Hainan's history, culture and social development, as well as the history and geography of the South China Sea and Southeast Asian culture. The library supported the creation of this research base and is responsible for its collection development, especially regarding the topics of genealogy and oral and ICH collections (Zhang and Zhan 2007). A lot of Li minority ICH-safeguarding work is also done at Binglanggu one of the case studies of this research, which will be further analysed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Most safeguarding measures of Li minority ICH are aimed at the Li textile techniques of weaving, dying, spinning and embroidering also known as Li brocade (Interview E2 2013). Safeguarding measures that have been established since 2006, and have been expanded when the Li textile techniques were listed on the UNESCO list of *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* in 2009, have been described in detail in the listing (UNESCO 2009). According to UNESCO (2009), the following steps have been undertaken. The local government has appointed national-level representative practitioners whose responsibilities have included the receipt of government subsidies and the organisation of training classes. Museums in Hainan held several exhibitions on the Li textile techniques and some of them set up permanent exhibitions. There are regular competitions on producing Li textile techniques and local governments set up five training centres. Each of the five counties or cities where the training centres are located is supposed to host an annual self-funded programme to spread the traditional knowledge and promote the skills among the younger generation. The provincial government provides financial support for practitioners to improve their living conditions. Villages that are famous for their specific skills received the status of 'Villages of Li textiles'. Furthermore, governmental and non-governmental funding is provided for establishing raw material bases consisting of cotton, hemp and indigo plants that are needed to produce the textiles. To promote the textile techniques an archive and a databank are planned, together with an official website, exhibitions, academic research, conferences and publications. It is also planned to introduce local laws and regulations to protect this form of ICH.

However, it is unclear how effective these methods are. I visited one of the textile villages, Fanmao village close to Wuzhishan, in April 2012. The villagers explained that they used

most of the money they received from UNESCO to build a new hall with air conditioning and a TV, where they can produce Li textiles (See Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 Traditional Li brocade production in Fanmao Village

Fanmao village does not produce Li brocade for local use, rather it is exported abroad and most of the textiles are not spun or dyed using traditional methods. This is problematic and several Li minority members mentioned that the quality of the Li brocade is getting lost.

Part of the efforts to transmit the textile skills to the younger generation have included the possibility for young boys to learn the tradition, which used to be exclusively practised by women. ICH adapts and can have a flexible nature, so in theory the opening up of the heritage tradition to a wider group of potential learners is good. However, with Li brocade it does not solve the issue that the skill, which requires constant practice is hard to incorporate into a modern life-style. While many young people start learning the skill, they often do not keep practicing it (see Chapter 7). In addition, the fact that Fanmao produces Li brocade for export, creates a very business-like atmosphere that attempts to preserve the skill but not the meaning behind it.

The discussion above shows that until now few safeguarding measures regarding Hainan's ICH expressions use a holistic management approach that encourages revitalisation and change by protecting ICH within its natural environments. ICH is mainly protected through museum displays, research and databases. However, Hainan has started to explore the

establishment of the integrated safeguarding concepts discussed above, in particular ECPZs and ecomuseums. Once established a big part of Hainan's ICH protection will be carried out there (Interview GO2 2013). However, there are several challenges to establishing these holistic approaches to safeguarding ICH, including a lack of financial resources and experts. The concept and challenges of one of these approaches, the ecomuseum, will be examined in Chapters 4 and 8.

3.4 Summary

This chapter aimed to provide an overview of the legal framework of ICH protection in China and Hainan Province and to demonstrate the importance of protecting ICH within its natural environments. It critically examined the main limitations of current protection methods through the analysis of literature and the current legal framework of ICH protection in China. The chapter built a basis to analyse the role of the ecomuseum in safeguarding ICH within its natural environments in Hainan Province with a holistic heritage-management approach. It pointed the research towards the relevant challenges of safeguarding ICH in Hainan and provided a background for the discussions of safeguarding ICH in the two case studies. While this chapter mainly concentrated on the connection of ICH within its natural environments and the relevance of an integrated safeguarding approach, such as the ecomuseum in China, Chapter 4 will highlight the ecomuseum as a framework for ICH protection with regards to community participation and sustainable development.

CHAPTER 4 ECOMUSEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CHINA

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 examined the safeguarding and interconnection of ICH and its natural environments in China. One of the main ideas expressed in that context was that heritage should be safeguarded in a holistic approach, which is also one of the principles of the ecomuseum ideal. Other ideas included the participation of local communities and the importance of the revitalisation of heritage resources, which also link with principles in the ideal. This chapter mainly examines these aspects under the framework of the ecomuseum.

In the last decade the framework for 'development' has been broadened, including heritage as a key component of sustainable development and making community participation a central part of safeguarding heritage (Galla 2005). International conventions, resolutions and declarations support this development. In 1995 a report of the World Commission on Culture and Development emphasised that culture had a creative and constructive part in development and stressed the fundamental role the community played in this (Blake 2009). The *2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention* recognised the importance of ICH as a guarantee for sustainable development and the vital role of a community which transmits and constantly recreates its ICH traditions. In addition, the *Hangzhou Declaration*, adopted by the Hangzhou International Congress in May 2013, concentrated on culture as the key to sustainable development. It connected sustainable development, heritage and community involvement by stating: "The extraordinary power of culture to foster and enable truly sustainable development is especially evident when a people-centred and place-based approach is integrated into development programmes and peace-building initiatives" (Hangzhou Declaration 2013, 1). This mirrors the principles of the ecomuseum ideal, which aim to empower people, encourage shared ownership and foster sustainable development (Corsane 2006a). The ecomuseum can also be employed as an effective way to manage ICH and natural heritage, because its ideal aims to strengthen the inter-relation between people, heritage and place (Davis 1999).

This chapter investigates the Chinese application of the ecomuseum ideal and how China adapts the vital role of local communities in the safeguarding of heritage and sustainable tourism development to its particular contexts. In the case of China, ecomuseums emerged

as part of small-scale, international donor-funded participatory projects in the countryside, which were established in a development context and aimed to reduce poverty (Plummer 2004). Ecomuseums are part of the government's efforts to achieve sustainable development by using local heritage as a resource. Davis (2010, 1286) connects the rise in numbers of ecomuseums worldwide and in China to "visions for change and of growth, nurturing communities and promoting economic development using cultural and natural heritage". This focus on sustainable development also corresponds to the more recent definitions of the ecomuseum (see Introduction Chapter), which placed development and sustainability at their core.

This chapter provides a background for the analysis of the establishment of future ecomuseums in Hainan Province and for the drafting of the suggested 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines (See Chapter 9.2.2.), by drawing out the unique characteristics of the Chinese ecomuseum ideal and critically examining its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter first examines the role of community participation in the safeguarding of heritage and sustainable development in China. It then discusses the emergence of the ecomuseum ideal in China and its connection to the concepts of community participation and sustainable development. Then its role in safeguarding ICH within its natural environments is analysed, with particular regards to the current situation of ecomuseums in China. It concludes by critically analysing the opportunities and challenges of the Chinese ecomuseum ideal.

4.2 Participatory approaches in heritage protection and sustainable development in China

A bottom-up approach to heritage management and stakeholder participation lie at the core of the ecomuseum ideal (Corsane 2006a). Yet, how these concepts are applied depends on the individual ecomuseum and its particular contexts. Different countries interpret and understand community participation in heritage management in different ways. This part of the chapter examines the role of community participation in the safeguarding of cultural heritage – in particular in China – and how its understanding influences community-led heritage and tourism projects, like the ecomuseum. This section provides the background of the development of ecomuseums world-wide and in China and their role in sustainable development and heritage protection.

Since the 1980s, heritage institutions and governments have begun to place higher value and importance on community participation and local knowledge in heritage protection and sustainable tourism development, especially where indigenous cultures and minority groups are concerned (Aylwin and Coombe 2014, 115; Henkel and Stirrat 2001; Marshall 2002). In developed countries involving local communities in planning and decision-making is central to the successful operation of heritage projects (Hall and McArthur 1998, 57-58).

Governmental and heritage sector initiatives in the UK, Australia and Canada have made significant efforts to move from traditional top-down heritage management practices to working towards stronger community participation in heritage planning and management (Crooke 2008; Hodges and Watson 2000; Perkin 2010). It is seen as crucial for museums and other cultural institutions to engage and work with a range of communities (Thelen 2005). The critical role of local communities in the safeguarding of cultural heritage and tourism development has also been reinforced by academic research (see Gibson and Mallon 2010; Li 2004; Lowenthal 1998; Macdonald 1997; Nepal 2008; Perez and Nadal 2005; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). Community participation is especially relevant for the protection of ICH, which only exists as part of the community, with its continued practice depending on members' interests (Blake 2009; UNESCO 2003).

In China, participatory approaches in development were introduced in the late 1980s aiming to encourage a more people-centred attitude in China's top-down policy making. It was mainly aimed at providing opportunities for poor communities to play a more active role in their own development and turn from simple 'beneficiaries' into 'participants' (Plummer 2004). China had rarely adopted bottom-up approaches before, due to its centralised system of government that regarded grassroots participation with scepticism (Xu 2007). This scepticism was returned by the local communities. In China's political culture "Chinese citizens do hardly conceive of their relation to the state in terms of mutual rights and responsibilities, but rather in terms of moral obligation, incorporation and interdependence" (Martens 2006, 213). In the post-1978 era, the political setting slowly began to change and rural communities went through a democratic reform that made participatory approaches more acceptable and realistic (Ying and Zhou 2007). It is essential to be aware of these changes and developments within the political setting to gain a

complex understanding of how, and in what way and with which purpose the ecomuseum movement took root in China.

The *1987 Organic Law on Village Committees* that set up village level-elections for village committees, giving the rural population more control over choices influencing their livelihoods, was one of the most important changes in China's political setting. The village committees worked as self-governing local-level organisations and were elected for three years. They were responsible for dealing with all concerns of the village, in particular with welfare services, managing land and resolving disputes (Taylor 2004). They aimed to protect the community "against the encroachments of the local governments and to protect their legal rights and properties" (Wang 1997, 1440). The system has several flaws, as elections are often not secret and in poor and remote villages, village leaders obtain limited compensation for their work. In addition, the village committees share authority with local communist party branches. Therefore, their influence differs from village to village, depending highly on individual activism. Nevertheless, village committees have formed a new power basis through grassroots elections and led to a new distribution of power within the villages. More people are involved in decision-making (Sun *et al.* 2013; Taylor 2004). This reform was essential for the development of participatory projects and thus ecomuseums in China, which are mostly in rural locations.

Despite these political changes and an increasing importance of community participation in development, participatory projects in China are typically small-scale and scattered. In the late 1980s in particular, international development agencies were essential in promoting developmental approaches with community participation, due to the limited interest at national level. Most participatory projects were located in Southwest China, especially in Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan, all provinces that adopted the ecomuseum ideal. Therefore, several of the early ecomuseum projects have been established with international support. The Norwegian government supported the establishment of the first four ecomuseums in Guizhou Province (An and Gjestrum 1999) and the Ford Foundation financed the establishment of the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan Province (Xu 2007). However, community participation is not an instant solution to effective safeguarding of heritage and developing sustainable tourism. Without careful planning community-led projects can also be highly unsustainable and lead to a loss of trust and unwillingness from

the community to cooperate in future projects (Perkin 2010). Particularly in developing countries, participatory approaches have faced growing criticism and it has been questioned if the way they are implemented is actually achieving community engagement and empowerment (Blackstock 2005; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Tosun 2000). China is one of the countries where participatory approaches show some success, but also face major challenges. It is important to understand these challenges, because they contribute to issues in development and maintenance of ecomuseums in China.

There are several aspects that are challenging for participatory approaches in general and for China in particular. For China there are three aspects that need to be considered. Firstly, participatory projects are small-scale and do not reach beyond the project itself. Due to their close geographic definition only the participating village or village group profits from the project and it does not spread out to the wider local area (Plummer 2004). Secondly, in China, as opposed to other countries using participatory approaches in development, the socio-political reform follows after the economic reform, and economic rights are more important than social and human rights (Chan and Ma 2004; Wang and Wall 2007). Thirdly, all levels of government lack capacity, especially the ones at local levels that are most important for community participation projects to work. Therefore, most projects with international involvement, including the ecomuseum project in Guizhou Province, have capacity building training for local officials and communities (An and Gjestrum 1999; Plummer 2004).

A common challenge for participatory heritage activities is that they are influenced by government ideas or the social and political movement associated with it (Crooke 2008). In China, heritage projects with community participation, such as the ecomuseum, often reflect the government's goal of poverty alleviation, the interests of tourism organisations and if involved, the agendas of international organisations. The stakeholder groups involved place value on different aspects of heritage, for example: the national government aims for the community project to reflect its political agenda; experts look for authenticity; local communities value personal attachment; and, commercial enterprises and local governments perceive cultural heritage as an economic resource (Svensson 2006a; Yin 2003). In addition, within local community groups people have different views and value different aspects of their cultural heritage. Community-led heritage projects have to be

carefully managed to avoid the exclusion of certain groups (Svensson 2006b). When examining participatory projects, it is therefore essential to analyse the motivations behind their establishment, the groups involved and the heritage protected. To accomplish mutual benefits for all involved, understanding everyone's needs and mediation between the groups is necessary (Perkin 2010).

Another challenging aspect for community-led heritage projects is representation. The exhibition of cultural heritage of community groups can create stereotypes and exclude members and heritage expressions that do not conform to the desired image (Crooke 2008). The creation of stereotypes and selectiveness in exhibiting culture is especially problematic in community-based museums in China that protect the heritage of China's ethnic minorities. Nyiri (2006, 16) observed that in China:

Certain ethnicities, just like a scenic spot, acquire a standard set of cultural references: any representation of the Miao would include a tune on the *lusheng* pipe; Mongolians would always ride horses and wrestle; and Tibetans would always be associated with hada shawls, prayer flags, and the "eternal plateau".

(Ibid.)

To avoid the creation of stereotypes the museums, the organisations and the communities have to have equal rights and responsibilities (Perkin 2010).

However, governments at provincial and local levels and some Chinese heritage experts have an unfavourable attitude towards the poor, rural population. The value and possibilities of participation are regarded with scepticism and it is often believed that there is little foundation and capability for community participation (Oakes 1998; Xie 2010; Yang and Wall 2008; Yi 2013). One quote by Su Donghai, explaining why local communities are not more involved in ecomuseums in China, is a reflection of that attitude:

The idea of an eco-museum, a fruit of the post-industrial society, cannot be bred on its own at a primitive village in China. Eco-museums appeared in China thanks for the government's resolution to maintain the cultural diversity and the expert's thoughts and passions. In fact, a resident of an ancient village has to make efforts to understand the building of an eco-

museum, and to go a longer way to voluntarily help to solidify the eco-museum.

(Su 2005, cited in Lu 2014, 151)

Furthermore, Chinese officials at provincial and county levels are careful not to undertake projects over which they have little control and cannot predict the outcome. Because the promotion of Chinese officials is tied to them successfully encouraging economic growth, they often fear that a potentially unsuccessful participatory project might diminish their promotion chances (Balderstone, Qian and Zhang 2002). Due to the far-reaching powers of the bureaucracy, how much an official is interested in a project can make a big difference. Ideas that are clearly pushed by important authorities can be implemented and achieved very quickly, while ideas that are less evidently favoured are difficult to accomplish, even if the right circumstances exist (Plummer 2004). This is one of the reasons why ecomuseum development in Hainan is moving forward very slowly at the moment. One government official (Interview GO4 2013) mentioned during the interview that one key challenge of ecomuseums in Hainan was, that their establishment was not stated in Hainan's 12th Five-Year-Plan. Due to that, no government department feels responsible and local officials have no reason to push the development forward, a problem that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

In addition, in China community initiatives rarely develop within the community itself and are mostly initiated by the government and the professional sector (Oakes 2006a, Yang and Wall 2008). This includes the ecomuseums in which, as discussed in the Introduction Chapter, the government takes a guiding role. According to Hu (2006, 26): "The guiding role of the government tallies with the situation in China – the government is necessary if activities of different parties involved are to be coordinated". Therefore, while in other countries partnerships in participatory approaches can arise within civil society and can benefit from a diversity of relations, in China the partner is always the government (Qin, Wall and Liu 2011; Ying and Zhou 2007). This is connected to the issue discussed in the last paragraph. While the initial implementation of the participatory projects depends on the motivation of provincial and county level officials, its direction and maintenance highly depend on the capability of local village leaders. Heritage management with community involvement is most successful in China when village leaders and elite have an active

interest in the endeavour, good management skills and are willing to share their decision-making power (for examples see Nitzky 2013; Svensson 2006b; Xu 2007; Zhou and Liu 2008).

Despite these challenges to participatory approaches, China has adopted several new concepts to safeguard ICH within its natural environments and develop sustainable tourism which theoretically call for community participation and a bottom-up approach in heritage management. One of them is the ecomuseum (Nitzky 2013; Rees 2012). In China the ecomuseum ideal is particularly popular, because it combines opportunities for the local population to influence and strengthen heritage protection and sustainable tourism development (Davis 2011). The next part of the chapter investigates the emergence of ecomuseums in China, their current practices and how their applications are influenced by the development and challenges of community participation in China.

4.3 Ecomuseology in China

As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, the first group of ecomuseums in China was established in Guizhou Province in 1995. While like most participatory projects in China the ecomuseums were developed in the context of poverty alleviation, the motivations for their establishment were not purely economic. They were also connected to a growing interest in museological ideas and environmental concerns in Chinese society (Su 2008).

Chinese scholars started to explore new museological approaches and the concept of community involvement in heritage protection in 1986, when the nation's interest in building museums was at a high (Su 2008). The *Journal of the Chinese Society of Museums*, *Chinese Museum* began to publish papers on the relations between museums, ecological and environmental science as well as documents of the international ecomuseum movement, including Chinese translations of articles written by Georges Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine (Su 2006a). Around the same time ethnic-minority villages in economically less developed provinces, for instance Guizhou and Yunnan, started to become attractive tourism destinations (Oakes 1998, Svensson 2006b). In addition, because of the rising levels of pollution, due to rapid economic development, concerns regarding the restoration of natural environments became an important topic for Chinese scholars and the government. Experts and government officials were investigating new ways to protect China's diverse cultural heritage and its natural environments, both threatened by the rapid economic

growth (Su 2008). One of these government officials was Hu Chaoxiang, former deputy director of the Guizhou Cultural Heritage Bureau, who, after visiting the Polynesian Cultural Centre in Hawaii, was interested in developing a similar project for China, combining the protection of cultural and natural heritage. Together with Su Donghai, he would later initiate the establishment of the ecomuseums in Guizhou (Nitzky 2012b). All these different factors created the platform for the emergence of ecomuseums in China.

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter particularly the newer definitions of the ecomuseum place an emphasis on heritage as means for sustainable development and the importance of community participation. The idea of people, communities and democracy; the desire of different groups and individuals to work together and use their heritage for the community in a positive way lie at the core of the ecomuseum philosophy (Borrelli and Davis 2012). It follows an interdisciplinary approach, has strong local characteristics and incorporates the local community in planning, operation and management (Babic 2009). Davis (2007) suggests that one of the basic tenets of the ecomuseum is the “empowerment of local communities”. It can give a voice to groups or individuals who traditionally had little ways to express themselves and be a forum to discuss problems in society (Delgado 2001). Regarding sustainable development the ecomuseum aims to conserve heritage using methods that support the local economy and therefore has the potential to provide a reliable mechanism for sustainability (Davis 2004; Endacott 1992). It safeguards the whole environment including local communities and their way of life. The ecomuseum can also support communities in developing sustainable tourism solutions, such as ecotourism, nature tourism and cultural tourism (Davis 2004).

While the ecomuseum ideal developed in Europe highlights the aspect of the ecomuseum ideal connected to community participation and the democratisation of heritage processes, the Chinese ecomuseum concentrates stronger on the aspect of sustainable development. Section 4.4.1 analyses the current ecomuseum development in China, and examines the development of the different generations and ecomuseum projects, that have influenced ecomuseum development in Hainan.

4.3.1 *The current development of ecomuseums in China*

China has been working with and adapting the ecomuseum ideal to its local situation around 20 years. Each new generation of ecomuseums and each new ecomuseum development has adapted its own approach aiming to improve its ecomuseum practice, maintenance, heritage protection, community participation and connections between people and heritage sites. A list (Table 1.1) and a map (Figure 1.1) of all the different ecomuseum developments in China can be found in the Introduction Chapter.

The establishment of the first four ecomuseums in China, the first generation of Chinese ecomuseums (see Chapter 1.3), began in 1995 in Guizhou Province. It was part of “1995-1996 Sino-Norwegian Cultural Exchange Programs” and thus a cooperation between China and the Norwegian government (Hu 2006).

The province was chosen, because of its unique and well preserved minority cultures and its weak economy. It was an attempt to open ethnic-minority cultures for tourism and balance both heritage protection and economic development in a rural area (An and Gjestrum 1999). A project team selected four villages: Suojia Villages in the Liuzhi District; Zhenshan Villages in the Huaxi District of Guiyang City; Tang’an Villages in the Zhaoqing District of Liping County and Longli old town in Jinping County (Myklebust 2006).

The first ecomuseum that was set up was the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum, which incorporated 12 villages of the Qing Miao people. The Qing Miao are the smallest and rarest branch of the Miao minority and have a cultural identity of their own. Their most unique and famous tradition is a head ornament, traditionally worn by women, that symbolises the long ox horn. They also preserved traditional music, dances and handicraft skills and customs (An and Gjestrum 1999).

Following an approach that is often associated with the Scandinavian version of the ecomuseum ideal, in which a ‘hub’ or information centre reaches out to and links different heritage sites, the Suojia Miao ecomuseum and most of the succeeding ecomuseums in China (except for Baili Baicun in Hainan, see Chapter 6) established a documentation centre. It displays the ‘memory project’ and was opened on 31 October 1998. The memory project is a documentation of collective memories of the village inhabitants and a photograph collection showing the villages’ customs and rituals. It also exhibited objects

that were part of the village life. To encourage a feeling of ownership the centre was designed in consultation with the villagers, who also carried out most of the construction work (Davis 2011, 236-243).

One of the ecomuseum's main goals was to open the region up for tourism and to alleviate poverty. To achieve that and gain the support of the villagers steps to raise the living standards were undertaken. These included the construction of roads, the renovation of houses and the installation of electricity and running water (Yi 2013b). After the first stage of establishing the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum was completed the Norwegian and Chinese project team carried out an investigation of the progress of the project in 1999. The Norwegian experts noticed that not all administrative levels on the Chinese side had a good understanding of the ecomuseum concept. While the administration at national and provincial levels grasped the principles of the ecomuseum, the representatives at the intermediate level thought it was a tourism development project. Nevertheless, they had the impression that the project was working at village level (Myklebust 2006).

To create a common understanding of the ideology and the aims of the ecomuseum a seminar for all Chinese stakeholder groups involved in the ecomuseum project was organised in Norway. Before that a preparatory seminar in Liuzhi, Guizhou was held. Both seminars had a similar list of participants including key people of the Chinese Society of Museums, members of the local and provincial administration and participants of all four future ecomuseums. At the first seminar in Guizhou the Liuzhi Principles named in the Introduction Chapter (Table 1.5), were created. They were revised and enhanced in the second seminar and are essential for all ecomuseums in China (Myklebust 2006).

The first generation of ecomuseums and in particular the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum, are the ecomuseums whose establishment and practical application are most discussed in English and Chinese literature (for a more detailed discussions on the first generation of ecomuseums see An and Gjestrom 1999; Hu 2006; Myklebust 2006; Su 2006a; Su 2006c). Among other topics they have been examined under the aspects of representations of landscape (Chang *et al.*), social capital (Zhou 2010), community-led museums (Wu 2010) and heritage protection in the age of modernisation and globalisation (Hua, Liu and Wang 2011). They are also often used as an example of ecomuseums in China, when comparing

ecomuseological approaches in different countries (Corsane, Davis and Murtas 2009; Davis 2011; Davis 2007a). They are the generation of ecomuseum that had to face the most criticism (Fang 2008; Lu 2014, 140-167). When establishing the first generation China was completely new to the concept of the ecomuseum, and consequently they faced the most challenges, which will be discussed in more detail in part 4.3.3 of this chapter. According to Su (2006c, 9): “The trial and error at the first generation of eco-museums in China has led to the birth of the second-generation of eco-museums in the country, which are more professional in preserving traditions and in displaying and spreading local cultures”. At the moment Guizhou has a total of five ecomuseums. The fifth ecomuseum, the Dimen Dong Minority Ecomuseum is a private ecomuseum and was established by a Hong Kong-based company (Nitzky 2012b). Figure 4.1 show the distribution of ecomuseums in Guizhou.

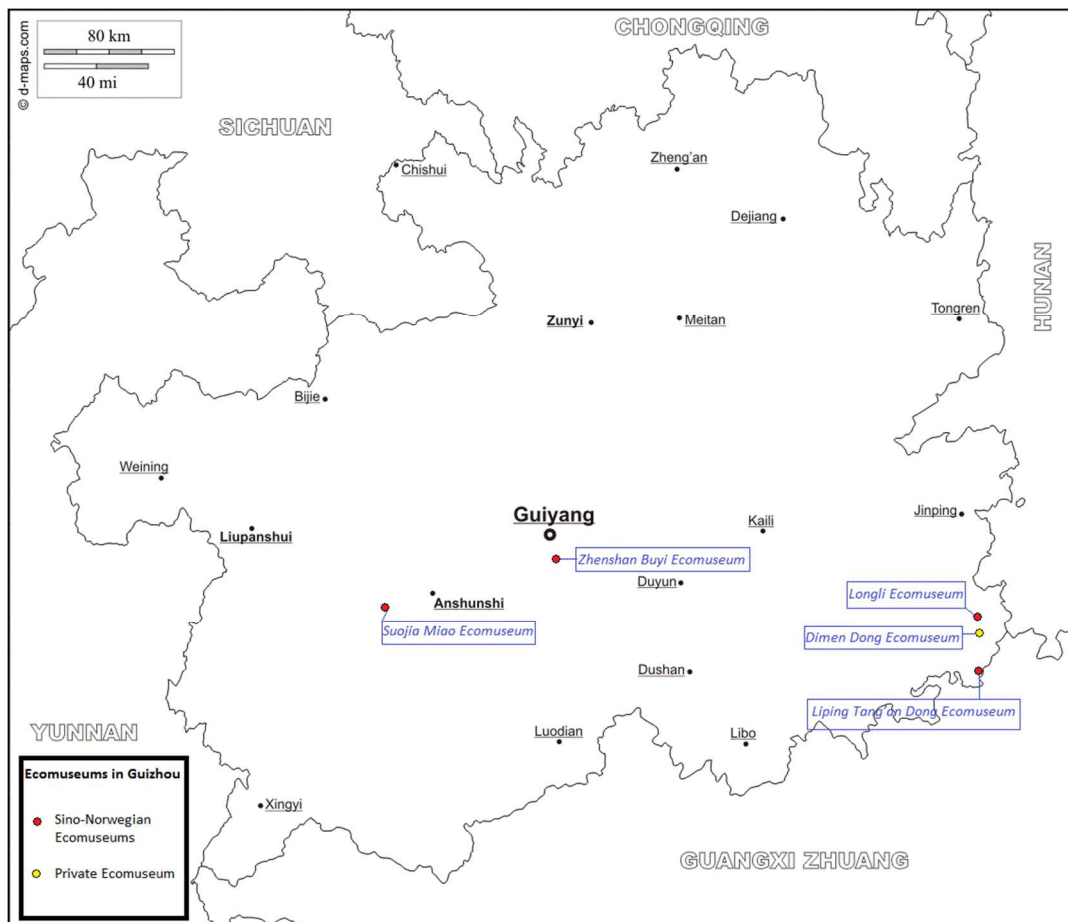


Figure 4.1 Map of Ecomuseums in Guizhou Province (adapted from http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=19763&lang=en)

Since the establishment of the first four ecomuseums in Guizhou Province its ideal has spread nationwide. Figure 1.1 in the Introduction Chapter shows that the strongest concentration of ecomuseums is still in southwest China, but the concept is slowly spreading all over the country.

The next generation of ecomuseums, the second generation aimed at a more professional approach at heritage protection and the maintenance of the ecomuseum (Su 2006c). It encompassed the ten ecomuseums of the 1+10 Ethnic Ecomuseum Model in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and the Olunsum Ecomuseum in Inner Mongolia (see Figure 1.1). The Olunsum Ecomuseum is the only ecomuseum in the north of China. The ruins of Olunsum City are at its centre, one of the most important cities during the Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368). It has a strong focus on ICH and grassland culture (Yu 2006).

In particular the Guangxi 1+10 Ethnic Ecomuseum Model worked on improving the practical application of ecomuseums in China. The pilot-project was formally launched in 2003 and included the Guangxi Museum of Nationalities (GXMN), at the core of the ecomuseum development and the establishment of three ecomuseums. The three pilot-projects Nandan Lihu White Trouser Yao Ecomuseum, the Sanjiang Dong Minority Ecomuseum and Jiuzhou Ecomuseum are the most researched ecomuseums of the 1+10 Model (see Davis 2011; Nitzky 2012b; Rong 2006). After their successful completion seven more ecomuseums were established (see Figure 4.2).

The GXMN was built in form of a traditional bronze drum, a symbol of many ethnic-minority groups in Guangxi. As the centre of the project, it concentrates on collecting, studying, exhibiting and promoting the culture of Guangxi's 12 ethnic groups (Zhuang, Han, Yao, Miao, Dong, Mulao, Maonan, Hui, Jing, Yi, Shui and Gelao). It also provides instructions for the implementation of ecomuseum work, while the ecomuseums themselves are work stations and research bases. This long-time cooperation between the museum and the ecomuseums was planned to solve the problems the first generation of ecomuseums encountered, such as a shortage in leadership and the difficulties of maintaining the project (Wu 2011; Pu *et al.* 2012).



Figure 4.2 Map of Ecomuseums in Guangxi (GXMX, <http://www.gxmb.com/eng/ecomuseum.php>)

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region also incorporated the development of ecomuseums in their *Five-Year Plan* (2006-2010) which gave the cultural authorities in Guangxi the possibility to make the ecomuseum establishment a priority and work on and improve the ideal (Rong 2006).

The first two generations of ecomuseums in China and other ecomuseum projects that followed were located in poor, isolated rural areas and focused mainly on ethnic-minority villages. In the few cases that were located in Han majority villages, the Han were a minority within that region, with most of the surrounding population belonging to other ethnic groups.

This approach changed with the third generation of ecomuseums. In 2006, Shan Jixiang, former Director of SACH (2002 – 2012), proposed to establish ecomuseums in the more developed areas in China, in which cultural heritage was threatened by the fast developing economy, that marginalised heritage traditions and endangered natural heritage (Zhang 2011). Since then, economically more developed provinces have begun to work with the ecomuseum ideal, exploring new approaches, protecting different kinds of heritage and by

that expanding the ecomuseum ideal and its practices in China. Since the third generation of ecomuseums is relatively new, there is little literature that analyses them.

One ecomuseum belonging to the third generation is Anji, in Zhejiang Province, which was established in 2008 (Pan 2013). Anji is located in the north west of Zhejiang Province and is a county in the prefecture-level city of Huzhou. The ecomuseum in Anji adapted the existing Chinese ecomuseum approach in two aspects. Firstly, the ecomuseum in Anji explores the whole heritage of Anji County instead of concentrating only on one village or a village group (see Figure 4.3). Secondly, the Anji Ecomuseum changed the way Chinese ecomuseums protect ICH and nature by including many contemporary heritage aspects, most of them in the category of industrial ecological heritage, for instance the ‘ecological architecture exhibit’ and the ‘modern bamboo industry exhibit’. It is also the first ecomuseum that specifically has exhibits that display and interpret natural heritage. It also protects ethnic-minority culture, but it is not the main focus of the museum (Pan 2013).



Figure 4.3 Map of the master plan Anji Ecomuseum (adapted from http://www.zjuecoplan.com/xiangmu_bak.aspx?id=27)

The distribution of the diverse heritage sites of the Anji Ecomuseum is shown in Figure 4.3. They are divided into the four categories of: natural ecological sites (green); historical cultural sites (orange); folk culture sites (blue); industrial ecological sites (yellow). A detailed plan of the ecomuseum and a specific heritage protection plan for every identified

heritage site have been featured in the *Overall Plan for ecomuseums in China (Anji)* by the Anji People’s Government in 2010. While the plan focuses on Anji, it was also published as an example for other ecomuseums in China. According to the plan there are three development stages for the ecomuseum. Table 4.1 presents the three stages and shows how the Anji Ecomuseum combines ancient and contemporary culture and natural, tangible and intangible heritage protection. In the plan 19 sites are named and 16 examples of these are included in Table 4.1 showing their establishment dates and type. In some sources, the number of sites is given as 22 (Pan 2013), which demonstrates the open and adaptable nature of the project.

Table 4.1 Construction stages of the Anji Ecomuseum, the *Overall Plan for ecomuseums in China (Anji)*, Anji People’s Government (2010)

Stage	Time frame	Construction Plan		Remarks
		Type	Project	
Stage 1	2009-2011		Exhibition Centre for the information material of the China (Anji) ecomuseum	
		Folk Culture	Exhibition area for the culture of the mountain inhabitants	Includes ICH inheritance and protection
			Bamboo culture exhibition area	Includes ICH inheritance and protection
			Tea culture exhibition area	Includes ICH inheritance and protection
Stage 2	2012-2014	Ecological environment	Ecological forest display	
			Ecological wetland display	
		Historic culture	Exhibit of tool from the stone age	
			Exhibit of ancient military defence sites	
			Exhibit of ancient graves	
		Folk Culture	She minority culture display	Includes ICH inheritance and protection
			Painting and calligraphy exhibit	
			Filial piety culture exhibit	Includes ICH inheritance and protection

		Harmony between people and land	Ecological energy source exhibit	
			Ecological architecture exhibit	
			Ecological village exhibit	
Stage 3	2015-2016	Harmony between people and land	Modern bamboo industry exhibit	
			Modern swirl chair industry exhibit	

These sites in Table 4.1 are connected through an information centre or ‘hub’ located in Anji City in Changshou Park. Similar to the function of the GXMN, the responsibilities of the ‘hub’ include to assemble all the different aspects of Anji’s heritage at one place and collect, safeguard and research the heritage of its local area (Pan 2013). However, the information centre in Anji is more localised, linking back to the cultural touchstones of the area and drawing the different heritage expressions together. It has an exhibition space of 15141 square meters, with four main exhibition halls, an ecological hall, a history hall, a bronze mirror hall and a hall for temporary exhibitions displaying 12 topics including bamboo culture, white tea culture and the culture of the Zhang mountain people (Anji Ecomuseum 2015).

This new focus of the third ecomuseum generation on a whole area, the protection of contemporary ICH elements, the display and interpretation of natural heritage and the creation of stronger links between the exhibits, are aims the ecomuseums in Hainan strive for as well (Chapters 6-9). This marks a clear departure from the first two ecomuseum generations.

Apart from the three ecomuseum generations, there are also a few other ecomuseum projects, that contributed to the practical application of the ecomuseum in China. One of them are the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan Province that were established in 2002 with the support of the Ford Foundation. According to Pan (2007, 338) even though the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages are not ecomuseums by name they are “ecomuseums by nature”. Their five guidelines named by Yin (2003), the founder of the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages, follow the principles of the ecomuseum ideal. They

adhere to the main ecomuseum principles, of heritage preservation *in situ*, community participation, sustainable development and an adaptation to local circumstances.

The villages in Yunnan adapted and contributed to the ecomuseum ideal, in their selection criteria. They were selected according to the qualities of their cultural heritage and their ecological environment, the degree to which the villagers supported the idea and were attached to their culture and their access to communication and existing tourism infrastructure to ensure sustainable development (Yin 2003). All together there were five selection criteria for the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological villages:

- (i) The ecological environment is good and must provide a beautiful rural landscape.
- (ii) Unsophisticated old customs remain.
- (iii) The local people have the wish to conserve their culture and ecological environment.
- (iv) The village must be easily accessible from the main tourism destination at national and provincial level.
- (v) The provincial government can get support from the local government and capable local cadres to help develop the village.

(Yin 2001, cited in Han 2010, 1-17)

The selection criteria in Yunnan differed clearly from those in Guizhou Province where “poverty-stricken communities, which have been cut off from the mainstream civilisation” (Su 2006a, 8) were chosen. Han (2010) for example noted in his case study of the Heshun Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Village, that Heshun was a tourism spot before the project. An ecomuseum that has had some exposure to tourism has the advantage, that it already has a tourism structure, needing less financial resources for its establishment and that the sociocultural changes, that come with the exposure of a village to tourism are less extreme. Another important selection criterion for the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages were capable local cadres, which as discussed in section 4.2 of this thesis are essential for the success of a heritage project in China.

The future ecomuseums in Hainan Provinces adopted the changes of the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages and chose similar selection criteria, deciding on ecomuseum sites that already had tourism development and capable local leaders (Chapters 6-9).

Yunnan also has another ecomuseum project that is interesting in the context of this thesis. The Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum, which was established by the Dali Nationality Autonomous Prefecture Museum in 2007. Similarly, to one of the future ecomuseum sites in Hainan it exhibits the village's history of salt production. The Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum adapted the ecomuseum ideal in a way that bases the ecomuseum around one family, who exhibit the village's culture in their home. Other villagers are included in the ecomuseum for example through ham production and the revival of certain festival, but the ecomuseum is mainly run by the Yang family, who own the ecomuseum (Qui 2013; Wei and Daoxin 2012). This has the advantage that there are clear responsibilities for the maintenance of the ecomuseum.

Another relatively new ecomuseum project in China are urban ecomuseums, which in China are called community museums (see Introduction Chapter). One of the first community museums, the Sanfang Qixiang Community Museum in Fuzhou, Fujian Province was completed in 2012. The museum aims to exhibit and protect a combination of "traditional architecture, community history and local intangible culture" (Cao 2011, 99). The urban ecomuseum contributes to the Chinese ecomuseum ideal by incorporating traditional ICH elements into contemporary culture. One example is the Fuzhou Wucai Cartoon Company, which made innovative efforts to incorporate local cultural elements, like the local Fujian dialect, into its cartoon products. In addition, the stories in some of their new comics rely heavily on local legends (Cao 2011).

The strengths and weaknesses of the different ecomuseums in China, will be discussed in the next parts of this chapter. This thesis examines the role of ecomuseums in safeguarding ICH within its natural environments, therefore, opportunities and challenges regarding these topics will be analysed first.

4.3.2 The Chinese ecomuseum and the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments

While most ecomuseums in China place their focus on the protection of cultural heritage of China's ethnic-minority groups, Hainan is one of the first provinces to use the ecomuseological framework as a method to mainly safeguard ICH within its natural environments. Therefore, when examining current ecomuseum development in Hainan, it

is particularly important to examine it in terms of its role in ICH and environmental protection. As discussed in Chapter 3.2.1 using the *ICHC* for the safeguarding of ICH has several limitations to which ecomuseums could provide an effective solution. Due to its inclusive nature and its responsiveness to local needs the ecomuseum ideal can be used as an effective means for the safeguarding of ICH and natural heritage (Stefano 2012). According to Davis (1999, 68) “intangible local skills, behaviour patterns, social structure and traditions are as much part of the ecomuseum as the tangible evidence of landscapes, underlying geology, wildlife, buildings and objects, people and their domestic animals”. Ecomuseums create a link between nature and culture and thus support the interrelationship between ICH and natural heritage (Dahl 2006; Davis 1996).

With regards to ICH-safeguarding the active participation of the community gives ecomuseums the possibility to react to and incorporate changes in heritage practices. Because ICH is embodied in people the possibility for it to change and adapt is important in ICH-safeguarding (Stefano 2012). The ecomuseum “looks at continuity and change over time, rather than simply trying to freeze things in time” (Corsane 2006a).

In China the effectiveness of safeguarding ICH and natural heritage in ecomuseums faces many challenges and depends highly on the individual ecomuseum. According to Lu (2014, 165) who examined three ecomuseums in Guizhou Province, the ecomuseum’s aim to safeguard ICH in China is “likely to prove an uphill and unwinnable battle”. Lu (2014) states that especially the younger generation in ethnic-minority villages in Guizhou had little interest in their cultural heritage due to globalisation and modernisation. Instead of safeguarding ICH the ecomuseums, by initiating more contact to the outside world, have accelerated the loss of ICH traditions (Fang 2008; Lu 2014, 163-166).

However, every ecomuseum is different and in some cases, such as the Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum in Yunnan, the establishment of the ecomuseum has encouraged the villagers to actively safeguard their ICH. Local technologies, like ham-making and salt production, have been safeguarded as a result of the ecomuseum development and the villagers actively kept local religious ceremonies alive. Tourists are welcomed to participate in these ceremonies and are encouraged to buy local products that were manufactured using traditional methods. Several festivals including the Confucius festival have been revived

because the ecomuseum sparked visitors' interest in the custom. The owner of the information centre of the ecomuseum also started to collect the oral history of the village. The fact that the exhibition hall is owned and maintained by a family in the village, seems to have a positive influence on the safeguarding of ICH. The family is a member of the local community which makes it easier to get the community involved (Qiu 2013). Another example of the ecomuseum ideal encouraging ICH-safeguarding is the Longli Ecomuseum in Guizhou Province. The establishment ecomuseum inspired one of its residents Jiang Huayuan to photograph cultural practices and collect historical records on the ancient city and the lineage of 72 Han families. With the help of other villagers he also collects folk legends, customs and rituals (Nitzky 2012b).

The safeguarding of natural environments also faces several challenges in the Chinese ecomuseum. Borrelli and Davis (2012) have stated that ecomuseums are not an answer to all environmental problems. They cannot provide a solution for conflicts between conservation and development and between environmental and economic interests, which are some of the biggest issues in natural heritage protection in China. Xu (2007) identified environmental protection as one of the key challenges of ecomuseums, especially in regard to sustainable tourism development, which can lead to more environmental pollution. Davis, (1996, 111) argued that to effectively safeguard natural environments, ecomuseums has to make the natural world more relevant to people's everyday lives by explaining how local communities use their environmental resources and by listing the natural heritage of the area, including habitats, flora and fauna. However, up to this point ecomuseums in China have made little effort to enhance the environmental education of its local population and its visitors. The ecomuseum in Anji, is one of the few ecomuseums that displays 'natural environment' as a resource and offers some interpretation of it.

4.3.3 Opportunities and challenges of ecomuseums in China

To evaluate ecomuseum development in Hainan and to develop new guidelines for the Hainanese ecomuseums, it is important to have an understanding of opportunities and challenges of Chinese ecomuseums.

The introduction to current ecomuseum development in China in section 4.2.1 showed that ecomuseum projects are very heterogeneous and have individual approaches to the

ecomuseums ideal. In addition the individual ecomuseums in China are constantly changing, and therefore research articles on them are not always up to date. When analysing the opportunities and challenges of the ecomuseum in China considering certain case studies, it is important to remember that the Chinese ecomuseum is a flexible concept that goes through regular changes. However, the overall opportunities and challenges of the ecomuseums remained similar over the last 20 years.

While ecomuseums in China face many challenges that will be discussed later in this chapter, they also has opened up many opportunities for the local population. Su (2008) noted that ecomuseums have heightened peoples' own cultural self-awareness and strengthened the villagers' abilities to interact with the outside world. Rong (2006) observed an increased pride of the local population in their culture and a significant improvement of their life-style through the construction of schools and the installation of sanitation. The ecomuseums furthermore contributed to publicising ethnic minorities and their way of life through media and the internet, in particular the culture of ethnic minorities from very remote areas. This led to an increased financial support for their heritage traditions. In addition, in some ecomuseums tourism has generated income for the local population (Lu 2014, 164-165). Nitzky (2012b) argued that the ecomuseum helped to redefine the relationship between the local people and their heritage and in some cases has created the environment for steps towards more community engagement. One example can be found in the Zhenshan Buyi Ecomuseum in Guizhou Province. One of the residents, Elder Li was dissatisfied with the way the documentation centre represented Buyi culture and transformed his own house into a museum. Even though cases of more community engagement are grassroots activities, it shows that ecomuseums in China influences how people think about their heritage.

One ecomuseum that has been noted as particularly effective is the Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum, which is part of the 1 +10 Model in Guangxi (Davis 2011, 242; Nitzky 2012b; Yi 2013a). The staff members employed in the ecomuseum are local community members who, due to their familiarity with the culture and the region, succeeded in compiling a large data base on Yao culture. They also encouraged community participation and enhanced the knowledge of the younger generation by launching a cultural inheritance class in the primary school (Nitzky 2012b). However, this ecomuseum

also faces several challenges. Local community members are dissatisfied with the benefits they receive from tourism and consequently have a negative attitude towards tourism development in the villages (Yi 2013a).

The issue mentioned above is just one of the many challenges the Chinese ecomuseums are confronted with. In the literature, these challenges often sound like a specifically Chinese phenomenon and several articles have questioned if this European concept of heritage management and sustainable development is suitable for poor Chinese villages and the Chinese top-down political system (Jin 2011; Yi 2013a; Zhang and You 2009). However, many of these challenges are inherent in the ecomuseum concept itself and experienced by ecomuseum all over the world (Bellaigue 1999; Howard 2002; Maggi 2006).

The literature discusses six common challenges for the ecomuseums in China. The first challenge is the maintenance of the ecomuseum. This challenge is faced by ecomuseums worldwide and according to Maggi (2006, 66): "It is difficult to create an ecomuseum, it is maybe even more difficult to give it continuity and sustain it. Also, the best ecomuseum lives a dangerous life and runs a permanent risk of disappearance". De Varine, one of the founders of the ecomuseum ideal, stated that ecomuseums lasted around one generation or 25 years before the project developed into something new (Davis 2011, 265).

In China in particular the first generation of ecomuseums struggles with the maintenance of the ecomuseum (Su 2006c). The information centre in the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum, for example, has largely been abandoned and the ecomuseum is detached from the local community (Davis 2011, 241). The Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan Province experienced similar issues. While Xu (2007) observed that in her case study of the Xianrendong Village, mechanisms created to encourage sustainable community involvement were very successful, Davis (2011, 238) indicated later that the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages have not been maintained after their opening. Nitzky (2012, pers. comm.) stated, that this was partly caused by the interference of the government, which decided to manage three of the six villages due to their success in developing sustainable tourism and protecting cultural heritage. The issue that ecomuseums cannot be maintained, because they grow too quickly or have too much success and through that become a local political instrument can also be found in Europe (Bellaigue 1999, 57). In addition Yin (2003) noted

that the project team struggled to uphold the standards of and maintain the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages due to a lack of education, near-sightedness and the pursuit of quick results.

The second challenge is the lack of community participation, an issue faced by all ecomuseum generations and projects in China (Lu 2014, 163; Pu *et al.* 2012; Yi 2011; Yin 2003). Chinese ecomuseums have been adapted to the local political context and are initiated and led by the government (Hu 2006; Nitzky 2012b). There is often a limited relationship between local communities, visitors and heritage sites. In the Lingchuan Changgangling Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum, one of the 1+10 Ethnic Ecomuseums in Guangxi, which I visited during the initial fieldtrip in April 2012 (see Methodology Chapter), for example, only the key bearer of the information centre interacted with visitors and heritage sites. When I tried to interact with other villagers and converse about the ecomuseum, I was always referred back to the key bearer. In addition, local communities are not informed about or included in decision-making processes (Yi 2011).

The third challenge is the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal. Local community members seldom have an understanding of ecomuseum principles and either assume the ecomuseum is a tourism development project (Nitzky 2012a) or the information centre (Nitzky 2012b; Wei and Daoxin 2012; Yi 2011). The perception of the villagers that the information centre is the ecomuseum itself is a logical one, since the concept of the ecomuseum ideal is rarely explained and the building of the information centre is often the only change the establishment of the ecomuseum brings to the villages. The information centres also do not achieve to draw a connection to the heritage sites (Nitzky 2012b; Yi 2011).

The fourth issue is that tourism development often takes precedence over heritage protection (Davis 2011, 241; Nitzky 2012a) and that ecomuseums mainly work as a catalyst for development (Yi 2013b). It is difficult to assess to what degree the ecomuseums contributed to the protection of heritage in the area. In the Lingchuan Changgangling Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum, for example, the traditional Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture houses were mainly inhabited by homeless people and there were no signs of protection efforts. The ancient Qing-dynasty tomb stones of the village had not been maintained and there was no indication of ICH-safeguarding. When asked about positive

influences of the ecomuseum, several villagers mentioned only the development aspect, the new street to the village that had been constructed for the ecomuseum. This is also a common challenge of ecomuseums in Europe. Howard (2002) argued that ecomuseums often put the future of heritage at risk by concentrating too much on economic development and described two case studies in France, where local communities mainly saw the ecomuseums as a mechanism for tourism development.

The fifth challenge of the Chinese ecomuseum are its financial resources. Ecomuseums everywhere rely on multiple financial resources (Davis 2011, 285) and often struggle with limited funding (Corsane *et al.* 2007b; Davis 2006; Hudson 1996). In China financial resources are problematic on two levels. Firstly, ecomuseum establishment is highly depended on expert help and the government financial support (Davis 2011, 246; Yi 2013). According to Davis (2007, 212) ecomuseums in China “...would never have been possible without outside financial and expert help”. Secondly, if the ecomuseums are financially successful, it is often unclear who profits and how the profits are divided (Lu 2014, 150; Yi 2011).

The sixth challenge is in particular relevant for ecomuseums that exhibit ethnic-minority heritage. It is the danger of stereotyping certain community groups, an issue that was already discussed with regards to the challenges of community participation in heritage protection. Davis (2011, 246) noted that there is a danger of ecomuseums to turn living cultures into mere exhibitions, a phenomenon that is happening in many ethnic-minority parks in China. Discrimination against ethnic minorities has a long history and their culture is perceived and portrayed as ‘primitive’, ‘backwards’ and ‘exotic’ in popular media and museums (Lu 2014, 163-166; Varutti 2014, 130-131). Because of their different kinship patterns and marriage customs, ethnic minorities in southwest China are often characterised as sexually less restrained and eroticised. This is especially exploited by the tourism industry (Hillman and Henfry 2006). In some ways ecomuseums are a symbol of cultural ‘otherness’, where ethnic-minority heritage is being displayed and presented not unlike an ethnic-minority theme park (Lu 2014). This focus on cultural ‘otherness’ is often combined with a ‘freezing’ of cultural heritage expressions (Oakes 1998).

Other challenges include changes in ecomuseum landscapes and socioeconomic changes due to tourism development; conflicts between different villages regarding financial

benefits (Davis 2011 241-242; Xu 2007); and the information centre or 'hub', that is not used by the local population and closed most of the time (Lu 2014, 150; Varutti 2014, 155; Wei and Daoxin 2012).

As mentioned most of these challenges also apply to ecomuseums in Europe and other countries, however challenge two, three and six are particularly common in China. Reasons for that might include that the motivations for establishing ecomuseums in China differ from Western countries. While in Western countries ecomuseums are generally established out of the local communities' interest to safeguard their heritage, in China they aim to raise and encourage interest in heritage protection. In addition, the ecomuseums in China seem to be stuck in the engagement model that assumes the ignorance of the rural population who need the assistance and guidance of the more educated elite. Therefore, it has often a very patronising top-down approach, with the government and experts assessing what communities need and how that can be accomplished (Perkin 2010).

To improve ecomuseum practice and provide better guidelines for new ecomuseums in China SACH named a first group of 'National model eco- and community museums' in 2011 (SACH 2011a). The first five ecomuseums were: the Anji Ecomuseum in Zhejiang Province; the Liping Tang'an Dong Minority Ecomuseum in Guizhou Province; the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Minority Ecomuseum in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region; the Sanfang Qixiang Community Museum in Fuzhou in Fujian Province and the Tunxi Ancient Street Community Museum in Anhui Province (see Table 1.1). These model eco- and community museums should:

strengthen scientific knowledge, try out flexible and effective political measures, combine the practical circumstances with the right development model, take a lead in setting up effective scientific knowledge on safeguarding mechanisms for ethnic-minority and folk culture, effectively safeguard the cultural diversity and local distinctiveness of an area. They should collect experiences, set rich examples and demonstrate achievement.

(SACH 2011a)

In additions SACH (2011b) published *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development* that suggested eight standards or fields of improvement that ecomuseums in China should contribute to. These standards include: the increasing of local knowledge and the strengthening of guidelines; the exploration of the unique features of the Chinese ecomuseum by strengthening the connection between culture and nature; the expanding and strengthening of the holistic protection of heritage in the whole ecomuseum territory; the investigation of new ecomuseum ideas; the strengthening of educational work; the combination of heritage protection and economic development; the strengthening of the cooperation between ecomuseums and their management mechanism; and the strengthening of ecomuseum theory and practice.

In 2013 SACH published a *Notification concerning the work of national model eco- and community museums*, deciding on the evaluation method and criteria for the model ecomuseums, such as the achievement of ecomuseum guidelines and sustainable development (SACH 2013).

The creation of the 'National model eco- and community museums', the ecomuseum standards and the evaluation criteria is a step in the right direction and adheres to the recommendations of other researchers that suggested that networking and international collaborations between ecomuseums to develop a best practice approach could offer solutions to some of their challenges (Maggi 2006; Yi 2013a).

However, there are several issues. In regards to the 'National model eco- and community museums', it is unclear which criteria the government used to select these the five ecomuseums and community museums. Apart from the two community museums, the group includes one ecomuseum from each of the three ecomuseum generations. Theoretically, it would have made sense to choose the ecomuseums that best fulfil the eight ecomuseum standards decided on in the *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development*. But this does not seem to be the case. The choice of ecomuseums listed has been questioned, in particular the listing of the Liping Tang'an Dong Minority Ecomuseum in Guizhou Province (Nitzky 2012b). Tang'an is one of the ecomuseums that excludes the local population from the decision-making processes and that has not benefitted its community. Its exhibition centre remains closed most of the

time and there is a disconnection between the community and the tourism company who manages the ecomuseum (Lu 2014, 146-151; Nitzky 2012b).

Furthermore, I could not verify that the standards developed in the *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development* were actually being worked with in any of the ecomuseums in China. Government officials in Hainan were aware of these standards and said they were planning to work with them, in addition to developing their own standards. During my field research, however, I could find no evidence to support this statement. It would be important for China to develop a mechanism that guarantees and supports ecomuseums in achieving the set standards, for example through creating financial incentives.

4.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to critically analyse the concept of community participation in heritage protection and sustainable tourism development in China and to examine the practical application of the ecomuseum development in China. This analysis provided this research with the background to investigate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. To analyse the history and practice of community participation and ecomuseology in China an extensive amount of literature in combination with my own experience of visiting ecomuseums and community heritage projects in China, was employed. The chapter pointed me towards the issues of participatory projects in China and the opportunities and challenges of the Chinese ecomuseum that are also relevant for the Hainanese situation. The evaluation showed the characteristics of Chinese ecomuseums, in particular with regards to ICH and environmental protection that built the foundation for the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines developed in Chapter 9. It also explored the development and changes of the different ecomuseum generations and projects, demonstrating the strengthening of ecomuseum practice in China and supporting the argument to place the Hainanese ecomuseums in the fourth generation of ecomuseums in China.

CHAPTER 5 THE ECOMUSEUM AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HAINAN PROVINCE

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter examined the emergence of the ecomuseum movement in China. One important insight was that the ecomuseum ideal has often been used as a tool for tourism development in the less developed ethnic-minority regions of China. In Hainan, provincial-government officials see its establishment as a way to develop tourism in the less visited regions and shift the tourism market away from its strong focus on beach resorts to more sustainable forms of tourism. Ecotourism and sustainable tourism have been identified by the provincial government as the cornerstones of tourism development in Hainan (Stone and Wall 2003). In interviews conducted in the context of this thesis all government officials regarded their development as one of the deciding factors in preserving the island's environment and in becoming an 'International Tourism Island' in 2020 and thus one of the main tasks of the ecomuseum. Hereby, the concepts of sustainable tourism and ecotourism were often synonymously used.

According to Berno and Bricker (2001, 11), this synonymous use of sustainable tourism and ecotourism is a common misconception everywhere. "Sustainable tourism is often popularly conceptualised as a more 'elite' form of tourism and the term is frequently used interchangeably with others, for instance alternative tourism, ecotourism, 'soft' tourism, 'green' tourism and the like". However, the perception that ecotourism and sustainable tourism can be used synonymously shows a poor understanding of both terms. Not all forms of ecotourism are sustainable and not all sustainable tourism occurs in natural areas (Wall 1997). According to Honey (1999, 4): "Although 'green' travel is being aggressively marketed as a 'win-win' solution for the Third World, the environment, the tourist, and the travel industry, close examination shows a much more complex reality".

Several authors (Boo 1990; Brandon 1996; Johnston 2000; McLaren 1998; Swarbrooke 1999) have even argued that ecotourism can be the direct opposite of sustainable tourism and that ecotourism is one of the primary forces threatening indigenous cultures. Liu (2003, 479) pointed out that "it is precisely these more remote and pristine areas which ecotourists seek that are extremely fragile and sensitive to human impact, however lightly they tread, and most vulnerable to cultural disruption and environmental degradation".

To make the terminology even more complicated, as will be discussed later on in this chapter China has a very different understanding of 'ecotourism' than the West. Due to the different application of the concept many ecotourism development zones in China, such as the Hainanese ecomuseum sites, would not be perceived as 'ecotourism' according to western definitions (Li 2008).

There is a strong link between the establishment of the ecomuseums and the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in Hainan. Therefore, an understanding of the ideas and applications of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in rural China is essential to analyse the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan. When discussing government officials', experts' and community members' perspectives on both terms the research is referring to the Chinese concepts of the terms, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. Examining these concepts will provide an important viewpoint for the assessment of the research question of this thesis.

This chapter investigates the establishment of ecomuseums in the light of sustainable tourism and ecotourism development in China and in Hainan Province. It begins by discussing ideas of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, with particular regards to their Chinese understanding. It then examines tourism development in China and several tourism forms, including rural tourism and ethnic-minority parks, which are connected to tourism development in Hainan. It concludes by analysing tourism development in Hainan and several cultural tourism projects on the islands that have similar principles to the ecomuseum ideal.

5.2 Tourism development and community participation in China

5.2.1 The concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism

As mentioned before, China's rapid economic development long took precedence over environmental and cultural concerns. However, in the last decade the national government has been trying to find a balance between the two and to tackle the issue of sustainability in all areas of policy making, with sustainable tourism development as one of the priority areas (Sofield and Li 2011).

In Western societies the wish for more sustainable and environmental friendly practices in development grew relevant in the 1980s. A report that drew considerable attention to the idea of sustainable development and ways to promote it was the Brundtland Commission's report *Our Common Future* in 1987 (see discussions in Murphy and Price 2005; Saarinen 2006; Swarbrooke 1999, 4-6; Tosun 2001). The *Brundtland Report* defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, 42) or in the words of Murphy and Price (2005, 169) "sustainable development builds on the old principles of conservation and stewardship, but it offers a more proactive stance that incorporates continued economic growth in a more ecological and equitable manner".

Ways to push sustainable development forward were further discussed at several international conferences; one of the most important was the United Nations 'Earth Summit' in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. A major outcome of the 'Earth Summit' was the UN action plan *Agenda 21*. A second 'Earth Summit' followed in 2002 in Johannesburg. Overall the outcomes of these conferences have been interpreted as limited and disappointing. Nevertheless, despite the poor long-term results they form an important step to re-examine the concept of sustainability (Murphy and Price 2005).

Sustainable tourism aims to apply the ethos of sustainable development to the tourism industry (Butler 1998; Tosun 2001). Although the *Brundtland Report* did not mention tourism directly, it gave the impulse for its subsequent development (Saarinen 2006; Wall 1997). Today sustainability is perceived as a desirable outcome for all tourism activities; it is supported by numerous tourism development plans, policy statements and guidelines. One major organisation that promotes sustainable tourism is the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) that applies its principles in all of its tourism plans and activities (Berno and Bricker 2001).

Due to conceptual problems, disagreements, and the multidimensionality of both the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, there is no widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism (Berno and Bricker 2001; Saarinen 2006). However, there have been many attempts to define it. Swarbrooke (1999, 13) defines sustainable tourism as "tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the

future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community". This definition is very much in line with the idea of sustainable development formulated in the *Brundtland Report*. Butler (1993), one of the harshest critics of sustainable tourism outlines the term as follows:

...sustainable development in the context of tourism could be taken as: tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes. That is not the same as sustainable tourism, which may be thought of as tourism which is in a form which can maintain its viability in an area for an indefinite period of time.

(Butler 1993, 29)

Butler (1993) makes a precise distinction between sustainable development in tourism, which is more complex and aimed at protecting the whole environment and sustainable tourism which mainly sustains itself. According to Liu (2003) this distinction is often missed in sustainable tourism literature.

An important element of sustainable tourism is community involvement. One purpose of sustainable tourism is to sustain communities (Richards and Hall 2005), which is particularly relevant in connection to the ecomuseum ideal. For tourism to be sustainable it is essential to employ a bottom-up approach; local communities should decide on the nature of tourism and participate in its management. This idea is closely related to the ecomuseum principles that advocate a participatory approach to heritage protection and tourism development (Corsane and Zheng 2013; Davis 2004).

Despite its wide application to tourism activities, the concept of sustainable tourism has received lots of criticism; interpretational and practical issues are widely discussed in literature (Boo 1990; Brandon 1996; Butler 1998; Liu 2003; McLaren 1998; Wall 1997). Particularly relevant in the context of this research is Tosun's (2001) critique of sustainable tourism. Tosun (2001) argued that the principles of sustainable tourism have been established in the developed world and therefore, do not recognise the conditions of the developing world. "They fail to provide a conceptual vehicle for policy formulation to

progress sustainable tourism development in those countries owing to limitations that originate from the structure of developing countries and the international tourism system” (Tosun 2001, 289). This issue will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

5.2.2 Ecotourism and its application in China

In Hainan, the establishment of ecomuseums was seen as equivalent to the development of ecotourism by all interviewed government officials. Therefore, it is useful to discuss the Chinese understanding of ecotourism for the purpose of this thesis. As discussed earlier, ecotourism and sustainable tourism differ from each other, even though they are often used synonymously. However, the ideas of ecotourism are linked to sustainable development and tourism in efforts to safeguard protected areas and community development.

Similarly to sustainable tourism there are different interpretation and definitions of ecotourism in Western literature (Fennell 2003; Stone and Wall 2003). One widely accepted definition is offered by the International Ecotourism Society (2001). “Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”.

The *Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism* (UNEP/WTO 2002) names the following five criteria to define ecotourism: nature-based product; minimal impact management; environmental education; contribution to conservation; and contribution to community.

Wallace and Pierce (1996, 848) argue that ‘true’ ecotourism includes the following six principles:

1. Entails a type of use that minimizes negative impacts to the environment and to local people.
2. Increases the awareness and understanding of an area’s natural and cultural systems and the subsequent involvement of visitors in issues affecting those systems.
3. Contributes to the conservation and management of legally protected and other natural areas.
4. Maximizes the early and long-term participation of local people in the decision-making process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur.
5. Directs economic and other benefits to local people that complement rather than overwhelm or replace traditional practices (farming, fishing, social systems, etc.).

6. Provides special opportunities for local people and nature tourism employees to utilize and visit natural areas and learn more about the wonders that other visitors come to see.

To summarise principles and definitions of ecotourism in the West often see it as low impact tourism, small-scale, contributing to conservation, benefiting local people, educational, relying on parks and protected areas and responsible tourism (Fennell 2003; Sofield and Li 2003; Stone and Wall 2003).

In China the understanding of 'ecotourism' is less strict and any form of tourism which is set in the Chinese countryside and uses natural resources and attractions generally falls in the category of 'ecotourism'. Plans for ecotourism in China are characterised by the development of multiple built structures (hotels, restaurants, themed structures, etc.) and do not aim to convey any conservation message for both visitors and hosts (Li 2008). This was also the case when government officials talked about ecotourism and sustainable tourism development in Hainan, even though two experts felt that ecomuseums would need to highlight environmental conservation.

One reason for the different interpretations of ecotourism is that China and Western countries have a different relationship to and understanding of nature. The way Chinese tourists experience nature and tourism, is influenced by traditional Daoist and Confucian ideas of nature. The contemporary Western concept for tourism to natural areas is based on the ideal of a sustainable ecological/environmental biocentric model. "The goal of the biocentric philosophy is to permit natural ecological processes to operate as freely as possible, because [in the Western system of values] wilderness [integrity] for society ultimately depends upon the retention of naturalness" (Hendee *et al.* 1990, cited in Sofield and Li 2003, 18). Humans are merely observers of nature and should interfere as little as possible. In China, tourists want to be part of nature and experience a mutual relationship (Li 2008; Xu, Ding and Packer 2008). "For 'wilderness' to be meaningful to Chinese, humans must be part of the landscape, which is therefore a 'culture-scape' and therefore not 'wilderness' in the idealised western sense" (Li 2008, 494). Scientific education possibilities in nature parks are often of little interest to Chinese tourists, who want to experience the Chinese landscape the traditional Chinese way (Xu, Ding and Packer 2008). Chinese tourists encounter nature through famous poems and paintings, nature often symbolises a certain

attitude and way of thinking. It is a spiritual event and the tourists want to feel integrated in the wilderness. Therefore, it is also acceptable to alter the physical and biological landscape in order to 'improve' it by adapting it to contemporary standards for example through the building of recreational facilities and roads (Sofield and Li 2003, 147-149).

In addition, looking back at Tosun's (2001) critique of sustainable tourism, applying from Western countries originated ideas and principles in China and Hainan Province is also problematic for other reasons. Xu, Ding and Packer (2008) argue that tourism policies and theories from other countries are not directly transferable to China, because its development context is different. For example, China's situation cannot be compared to the one of small island countries, where the national economy depends on international tourism and local communities are perceived as fragile. China also differs from Western countries in its rapid economic development and its huge regional disparities. Furthermore, China is going through a transition from a closed to an open economy, from a planned to a market economy and from a centrally controlled to a more decentralised system. All these factors influence how sustainable tourism and ecotourism are applied.

When considering ecotourism in China and in Hainan Province, it is also important to be aware of the huge demand for access to natural resources. As travel and tourism become more attainable for many Chinese, famous sites are visited by thousands of people a day and the site management is often unable to deal with the numbers. China has huge domestic tourism flows with 2.9 billion recorded visitations in 2012 a 12% increase to the previous year with the revenue exceeding RMB 2 trillion (£200 billion) (CNTA 2012).

Furthermore, China is also a key destination for international tourists. The WTO estimates that China will be the most visited country in the world by 2020 (Qin, Wall and Liu 2011).

For Chinese tourists certain historical sites, such as the Great Wall or Huangshan, form such an important part of Chinese culture and visiting them is such an essential part of being Chinese⁷, that it is impossible to divert the tourist masses to different sites (Xu, Ding and Packer 2008; Sofield and Li 2003). One example of an ecotourism location that receives huge visitor numbers is the nature park Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan Province (Nyíri 2006). Currently it receives around 15.000 tourists every day (CCTV 2015).

⁷ The meaning of visiting the Great Wall for Chinese tourist can be demonstrated by the following quote from Mao Zedong: "If you have not been to the Great Wall, you aren't a real man."

Mass tourism is one logical outcome of the huge economic pressures, the necessity to accommodate cultural values and the huge demand. This stands in sharp contrast to western ideas of ecotourism which actively works towards low visitation levels (Xu, Ding and Packer 2008). It is often based on a strict regulation of numbers through application of the concepts of carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change (Sofield and Li 2003).

Despite different understandings China does strive towards its version of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. The chapter continues with analysing the general development of tourism in China and then investigates sustainable tourism, ecotourism projects and community participation in tourism in China.

5.2.3 Rural tourism and community involvement in tourism management in China

Ecotourism and sustainable tourism projects in China that include community participation can be most commonly found in connection to rural tourism and tourism to nature reserves. For this thesis rural tourism development is of particular importance, since most ecomuseums are established in the rural regions of the country. While most ecomuseums in China have no close connection to national parks the situation in Hainan Province is different. Here the ecological environment and ecotourism are essential parts of ecomuseum planning and therefore relevant for this thesis.

According to Roberts and Hall (2001, 15) tourism to rural areas can include activities, such as: Agri-/Agrotourism (tourism activities in rural areas like festivals, museums and craft shows as well as tourism products that are more closely related to the agrarian environment for example educational visits and the sale of farm products or handicrafts); farm tourism; green tourism (commonly used to refer to tourism development that is seen to be more environmentally friendly than traditional, mass tourism or as a way to market tourism as sustainable and eco-friendly even if this is not the case); and, ecotourism. Other key elements of rural tourism can be found in Lane (1994, 14); and Sharpley and Sharpley (1997, 20) propose that 'rural tourism' may be defined both conceptually, as a state of mind and technically, according to activities, destinations and other tangible characteristics.

In China the development of rural tourism is regarded as one of the most effective ways to encourage sustainable, economic growth, poverty abbreviation and environmental

protection by local governments. It also serves the ideological purpose of presenting China as one 'harmonious' nation (Oakes 1998; Sofield and Li 2011; Schein 2000; Ying and Zhou 2007).

Rural tourism destinations use different features to attract tourists. In ethnic-minority villages it has encouraged a revaluation, reinterpretation and representation of ethnic cultures. They use their language, clothes, hairstyle, way of life and religion to represent cultural uniqueness and attract tourists. Villages with Han population focus on their local characteristics and culture; on family history; lineage and their connection to famous people "heroes" as resources for tourism development (Han 2010). However, while tourism had a positive impact on the revaluation of rural heritage and its safeguarding, tourism also has had negative consequences. McKercher and du Cros (2002, 231) describe tourism as "a double-edged sword: it can be seen both as a threat and a potential saviour". Several of these negative consequences will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Rural tourism was actively promoted for the first time by the Chinese government in 1998, when the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) introduced the China Urban and Rural Tourism Year, followed by the China Eco-tourism Year 1999. Other years that were used by the CNTA to specifically encourage rural tourism were the Chinese Life Tourism Year 2004 and China Rural Tourism Year 2006 (Wang *et al.* 2013). As part of this promotion the CNTA created a series of rural tourism activities and offered financial inducement (Su 2011).

One popular rural tourism pattern in China that is often employed together with ecomuseums is *nongjiale* tourism, meaning 'Happy Farm House' in English. It will also be part of ecomuseum development in Hainan. It is an important concept for community participation in rural tourism and combines the idea of cultural and rural tourism. *Nongjiale* involves getting a taste of rural life-style and traditions, participating in daily farming routines, clean and natural environments, eating local food and buying indigenous products from local families. It is a romanticised version of rural life that stands for an idyllic life of tradition, fresh air, open space, family intimacy and simplicity (Su 2011). While the local population often has difficulties in truly understanding concepts, such as 'ecological', 'ecomuseum' or 'community participation' the term '*nongjiale*' provides a more accurate picture of their understanding of nature and culture and reflects the essence behind the

idea of rural life and tourism (Xu 2007). Villages that offer *nongjiale* are usually distinct rural communities with their own heritage traditions and diverse ecological environments (Su 2011).

The establishment of ecotourism is gaining popularity as well (Lindberg, Tisdell and Xue 2003). It was first introduced to China in the 1980s, and the Chinese Eco-tourism Association was established in 1994. In 1999, the national 'Symposium on Ecotourism in China' was organised in Yunnan Province and named ecotourism one important tourism development strategy for China (Liu, Li and Pechacek 2013). One of the most popular destination for ecotourists in China are nature reserves (Lindberg, Tisdell and Xue 2003). Ecotourism to nature reserves often involves some form of participation from the local population. In China between 30 and 60 million people live in and around nature reserves (Stone and Wall 2003). These local communities around the reserves are involved in the tourism activities. The designation of areas as nature reserves often deprives them of their traditional income resources, for example logging, and tourism is perceived as an alternative source of income (Stone and Wall 2003; Zhou and Grumbine 2011).

Sofield and Li (2011) argue that while China has a different understanding of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, rural tourism has been significantly influential in the safeguarding of natural heritage in China. Their main supporting argument reasons successful tourism to nature reserves has replaced environmentally damaging industries, such as logging and high income through admission fees⁸ have allowed the park administrators to implement strict management plans. While this applies to many nature parks in China, for instance Jiuzhaigou National Park in Sichuan Province, the situation in Hainan Province is different. Up to now tourism in Hainan Province has mainly been sun and beach tourism that had posed several challenges for the cultural and natural heritage of the island. In the coastal areas, the absence of guidelines and controls regarding tourism development led to the destruction of cultural ecosystems, an overbuilt urban environment of poor standard, and

⁸ China's heritage sites and natural parks have relatively high admission fees, in particular when compared to the average income. The admission fee for Jiuzhaigou National Park in Sichuan Province for example is RMB 310 (£31) during peak season and entrance to the Qin Dynasty Terracotta Warrior Museum near Xi'an, Shaanxi Province costs RMB 150 (£15). The GDP per capita in 2011 was \$5,430 (£3776). While the prices might help conservation effort, many experts argue that the high admission fees restrict access for low-income people to their national heritage. Despite these high admission fees, visitor numbers to these heritage sites are rising (Shepard and Yu 2013, 60).

limited concern for the livelihood and welfare of the ethnic-minority communities (Wang and Wall 2007). The development of more community involvement in heritage protection and tourism development through concepts, like the ecomuseum, could bring more sustainability to tourism development.

However, several authors have argued that community participation in the Western sense, which would require the participation of all affected stakeholder groups, is not possible in China's top-down system. Therefore, community participation in tourism in China means participation in benefit-sharing rather than in decision-making (Li 2005; Ying and Zhou 2007). Local communities mainly participate in tourism as employees of the tourism industry, as workers in theme parks and hotels or by running their own small businesses, such as souvenir stands. They are thus receiving economic benefits. There are very few instances in which the community is actually involved in planning or in decision-making processes (Li, W. 2006). One reason for this is that Chinese tourism development understands the tourism-community relationship mainly from the tourism developer's point of view. Contrary to Western approaches of community participation, that aim to sustain the community in the process of tourism development, Chinese tourism development sees community involvement as means to accomplish their projects (Li 2004).

Nevertheless, due to both the current democratic reforms in the countryside discussed in Chapter 4 and the social configurations of rural communities in China, rural communities are able to use the objectives of tourism development to interact with governments and tourism businesses in a more powerful and coherent way. Traditional social and cultural structures in China's rural communities have changed little over the past century giving the communities a strong solidarity and similar priorities. The fact that community participation in China also mainly is a question of mutual benefits in tourism development makes it easier for rural communities to reach agreements (Ying and Zhou 2007).

5.2.4 *Ethnic-minority theme parks and folk villages*

Another form of tourism that is relevant for the establishment of ecomuseums in China and Hainan are ethnic-minority theme parks and so-called folk villages. While the two concepts seem to oppose each other at first glance, in China they do have some similarities. The theme park model is particularly relevant for this research, because one of the case studies

and future ecomuseums in Hainan Province is an ethnic-minority theme park at the moment.

In China ethnic-minority theme parks or folk villages are among the most popular forms of ethnic tourism. Ethnic-minority theme parks are commercial parks that display an overview of the ethnic diversity of a nation or region. Even though they are often accused of contributing to the 'disneyfication' of cultural heritage (Oakes 1998), they differ from amusement parks, because they do not only function as an amusement facility. Most ethnic-minority theme parks aim to contribute to the preservation and safeguarding of the cultural heritage and diversity of a region (Yang 2011b).

Ethnic-minority cultures are an important aspect of cultural tourism in China, which is experiencing a major growth in the domestic tourism market. Several ethnic-minority traditions, such as festivals, religious ceremonies and pilgrimages, ethnic plays and re-enactments of historical events have been revived for tourism purposes. Part of this ethnic tourism boom is the construction of standardised and performance orientated folk villages and theme parks to meet the demands of the domestic tourists (Li and Hinch 1997; Yang and Wall 2008). In the early 1990s China experienced a period of 'theme park fever', however, many of the parks established during that time disappeared again quickly (Xie 2010; Yang 2011a).

The first ethnic-minority theme park was the China Folk Cultural Villages in Shenzhen, which opened in 1991. It presents the cultural traditions, architecture and life-style of 23 ethnic minorities. Each minority lives in a miniature village; dwellings have been either transported from their original site and rebuilt or are replicas of the original buildings. The employees of the park have to belong to the respective minority they represent and possess traditional skills such as playing a music instrument, speaking the language, dance and manufacturing handicraft (Sofield and Li 1998). The park is part of a bigger tourism development complex consisting of three parks. The other two parks are Splendid China (opened in 1989), a miniature scenic spot display, showing China's most important tourist attractions as miniature replicas and World's Window (opened in 1995) displaying miniature replicas of fifty of the world's natural and cultural heritage sites (Hitchcock, Stanley and Siu 2005).

Another example of an ethnic-minority theme park is the Yunnan Folk Cultural Village (Li and Hinch 1997; Yang and Wall 2008; Yang 2011a; Yang 2011b). Similar concepts of the ethnic-minority parks can be found in a small-scale and more localised form elsewhere. Many villages developing rural tourism chose a similar set-up to that of a theme park (Xie 2010; Oakes 1998; Oakes 2006b).

The construction of ethnic-minority theme parks and their ability to protect ethnic-minority heritage have been interpreted differently in literature. Several authors argue that in ethnic-minority theme parks cultural traditions of ethnic minorities are simplified and standardised for entertainment. They aim to offer the visitors something unusual and exotic. Theme parks risk the fossilisation of culture in the sense that there is little dynamic development (Oakes 1998; Smith 2003). MacCannell (1989) describes this process as 'staged authenticity' and argues that tourist performances of ethnic cultural traditions put the performers at risk of "a distinctive form of alienation, a kind of loss of soul" (MacCannell 1992, 168).

While essential elements of cultural heritage that are deemed to be unattractive for tourist consumption, such as certain religious rituals and indigenous practices are excluded from these parks (Yang 2011a), other authors see these ethnic-minority theme parks in a more positive light. Stanley (2002) argues that theme parks in China cannot be compared to the cultural stereotypes shown for example, in Epcot Disney World and the accusation that theme parks contribute to the disneyfication of ethnic-minority culture is simplified. For Stanley (2002), certain elements of Chinese theme parks such as miniaturisation, the creation of water and mountain landscapes, viewing pavilions and performance, are also present in traditional Chinese garden design. Thus ethnic-minority theme parks are a development of Chinese traditional landscape design and have to be interpreted as such.

Critics of the ecomuseum in China often compare it to the ethnic-minority theme parks and problematize the fact that most ecomuseums concentrate on protecting ethnic-minority heritage (Lu 2014). It also has been noted that it has become generally harder to define the lines between theme parks, amusement parks, entertainment centres and museums in China, because they all serve the purpose of entertainment, education and tourism (Ap 2003).

Displays of ethnic-minority cultures in museums, ecomuseums and theme parks in China all show a strong resemblance. This is due to the fact that as mentioned before, the state interprets ethnic-minority culture to fit its own narrative and has an active interest in stereotyping and displaying minorities in a certain way (Varutti 2014, 156).

This is an important challenge when analysing the protection of ethnic-minority ICH in the Hainanese ecomuseum. The next part of this thesis analyses tourism and tourism projects in Hainan.

5.3 Cultural tourism in Hainan – Potential community involvement in different cultural tourism projects on Hainan Island

5.3.1 Tourism Development in Hainan Province

Hainan is a unique case in tourism development in China. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter tourism is the pillar of Hainan's economy. The island received 33.3 million visitors in 2012 with revenue from tourism of RMB 37.9 billion (Zheng 2013). Domestic tourists make up the biggest share; the majority of international tourists are overseas Chinese from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan followed by Russians (Xie 2010, 71).

The most important tourism development factor is the decision by the national government in 2009 to develop Hainan Province an 'International Tourism Destination'. This strategy for Hainan Province aims to turn the island into a high-quality tourism destination that satisfies the standards and demands of the increasing number of rich Chinese domestic tourists and that attracts a higher number of international tourists (Xie 2010, 73).

Hainan has many tourism resources that could be very appealing to international and domestic tourists. It is a region of great cultural and ethnic diversity. The traditional food, cultural performances of the ethnic minorities and Hainanese local communities as well as its distinctive natural environments promise a unique tourist experience (Yu 2011).

However, despite these rich cultural and natural resources and favourable government policies, Hainan receives mainly sun and beach tourists. Most of its tourism occurs in the coastal cities around Haikou and Sanya. The impoverished areas in the interior of the island do not profit from tourism (Stone and Wall 2003). Of the two cities, Sanya, on the south coast is the most important tourism hub, famous for its long, sandy beaches and warm

climate all year around (Gu and Wall 2007). However, even in the coastal areas tourism has been a mixed success with many hotels in the resort zones operating at a loss (Xie 2010, 73). The plans of the provincial government to attract more international visitors have only shown little results so far. Many international tourists are not aware of Hainan as a tourism destination and the ratio of foreign arrivals in Hainan is far behind those of other tourist destinations in China, such as Beijing and Guangdong (Yu 2011). In comparison to other destinations Hainan has made little use of its unique characteristics. The most popular form of tourism in Hainan is mass tourism (Xie and Wall 2002). Leo Hickman (2007) described it as just another beach holiday resort:

Hainan Island, which lies off the southern coast of the Chinese mainland, is often called 'China's Hawaii' due to its silky sand, palm-fringed beaches and year-round tropical climate. That it has attracted this nickname says something about the type of tourism on offer, [*sic*] The main resort's hub, Sanya, with 18 golf courses (and 10 more planned), a thick swathe of beach front and high-rise hotels mean it has the look of pretty much any identikit tropical beach resort in the world - clearly inspired by western hotels.

(Ibid.)

Several authors (Stone and Wall 2003; Wang and Wall 2007; Yu 2011) agree with this assessment and argue that Hainan puts too much emphasis on luxury tourism, such as golf resorts, theme parks and hotels, while tourism projects that would benefit the local communities, in particular ethnic minorities are largely ignored. Stone and Wall (2003) assess that Hainan needs to incorporate the ethnic minority communities more strongly in its tourism development in order to reach its full tourism potential.

Despite its great potential, ethnic minorities in Hainan are only marginally involved in tourism development, therefore there is little research on the topic. The ethnic minority that participates the most in tourism is the Li minority and consequently all research studying ethnic tourism in Hainan concentrates on them (Wall and Xie 2005; Xie 2010; Xie and Wall 2008; Xie 2003). Their cultural heritage traditions and the uniqueness of their culture are heavily advertised in tourism brochures. Whilst their culture is used as a marketing tool, in reality the Li minority mostly participates in the informal tourism sector

by selling fruit and souvenirs (Xie and Wall 2008). Some members of the Li minority work in ethnic theme parks and folk villages.

Xie (2010, 14) sees ethnic tourism in China and Hainan still as a one dimensional process where the decision-making power is firmly in the hands of the government at various levels. According to Xie (2010, 14) ethnic communities have little means to influence tourism development and there are few possibilities for community participation. Many local officials regard ethnic minorities as “backward” with no capacity to manage their own affairs. Because of this, their ICH is often displayed in theme parks, managed and planned by the government or Han businessmen. This lack of control over their heritage and how it is presented to tourists can lead to a loss of meaning and the commercialisation of ICH traditions (Oakes 1998).

One project that has been of particular significance for the development of cultural tourism is the EcoProvince initiative. The EcoProvince initiative in Hainan developed by the Departments of Lands, Environment and Resources (1999) sees ecotourism as one important way to balance economic development and cultural heritage protection. It regards ecotourism as a sustainable form of tourism that lets tourists experience nature and protects the islands environment. The document focuses mainly on the protection and conservation aspect of heritage; however it does include the aim of raising people’s living standard. The plan also identifies several potential ecotourism locations, attributing a high ecotourism potential to protected areas and nature parks. Apart from common ecotourism destinations, such as underdeveloped, wilderness areas, it also suggests facility intensive wildlife and cultural theme parks (Department of Lands, Environment and Resources 1999). According to Stone and Wall (2003), this demonstrates the different interpretations of ecotourism in the Chinese context, already discussed in this chapter. It also might explain why several government officials and experts interviewed for this research saw no conflict with turning an ethnic-minority theme park into an ecomuseum (Chapter 8). One of the potential ecomuseums and ecotourism destinations in Hainan is the ethnic-minority theme park Binglanggu (Chapter 6). This chapter will continue with an analysis of cultural and natural tourism destinations in Hainan. It examines in particular destinations that try to incorporate local communities in tourism planning and benefit-sharing, in order to discuss potential problems of the ecomuseums and sustainable tourism development in Hainan.

Figure 5.1 shows major ecotourism and cultural tourism locations in Hainan, several of them will be further discussed in this chapter.



Figure 5.1 Map of relevant ecotourism and cultural tourism locations in Hainan (adapted from <http://www.chinamaps.info/Hainan/Hainan-Geography.htm>)

5.3.2 Tourism to national nature reserves

As mentioned before, Hainan has rich natural environments including tropical rainforests, mountains, mangroves and a rare and endangered animal and plant life, such as the Hainan gibbon (*Hylobate concolor hainanus*) and the Hainan partridge (*Aborophila ardens*), most of which is protected in nature reserves and parks. The EcoProvince initiative identified several of these protected areas as potential ecotourism development sites (Department of Lands, Environment and Resources 1999). The most interesting and rich nature reserves include Jianfengling National Nature Reserve and Bawangling National Nature Reserve in the western part of the province, Diaoluoshan Hainan Provincial Nature Reserve in the south-

east and Wuzhishan Mountain Nature Reserve in central Hainan. The local communities that live in and around these nature reserves are small and traditionally resource-dependent; their inhabitants mainly belong to the island's ethnic-minority groups (Stone and Wall 2003). Therefore, these small communities provide an excellent opportunity to develop ecotourism combining ethnic-minority culture and natural heritage. The Shuiman village close to the Wuzhishan Mountain Nature Reserve has adopted this strategy linking their cultural heritage and the natural heritage of the reserve (Liang, Umezaki and Ohtsuka 2003; Umezaki and Jiang 2009).

Tourism development in Wuzhishan began in the 1980s, when the Chinese government decided to develop tourism under the slogan: "To develop national parks of tropical forest and tourism resorts as the demonstration sites for release of the inhabitants from poverty" (Liang, Umezaki and Ohtsuka 2003, 1). After several unsuccessful trials in the 1990s, the tourism development in Shuiman and Wuzhishan National Nature Reserve has been operated by a joint venture, Wuzhishan Tourism Limited since 2002. Tourism in the Wuzhishan area is now relatively successful; the county received around 1 million visitors in 2012 (whatsonsanya 2013). The village and area around it have benefited from the tourism development, in particular due to the construction of infrastructure and sanitary facilities as well as economic benefits. However, there are also several issues. One issue revolves around natural environments and plant life in the area. Wild ecological resources, for instance medicinal herbs, edible plants and wild tea leaves that were used freely by the local communities have been exploited by outsiders for economic profits. This might potentially lead to environmental degradation (Umezaki and Jiang 2009). Another issue that is affecting the local environment is the loss of influence of the community to decide over their own environment. Traditionally local knowledge and culture combined with bottom-up decision-making played an important role in protecting the environment. However, tourism development led to changes in decision-making, handing most of the power back to local authorities and tourism companies, which are more interested in profits and have little local knowledge or desire to protect the natural heritage (Liang, Umezaki and Ohtsuka 2003).

Furthermore, the village lost the right of collective land-use, one of the basic components of their cultural heritage. The collective land-use right of the village was transferred to the

tourism company with compensatory payments in order to develop more attractions, for example a butterfly farm (Liang, Umezaki and Ohtsuka 2003).

Wuzhishan has good transport connections and the numbers of tourists are relative high. In other national nature reserves, such as Jianfengling and Diaoluoshan the visitor flow is relatively low and their ecotourism development is even more problematic. Stone and Wall (2003) concluded that neither park is a successful ecotourism location. Issues include that the communities do not profit from tourism and the funds generated through tourism are not used for conservation. In addition there are few education opportunities for tourists. Most of these issues are caused by blurred lines of responsibility and accountability in management. Management is also inexperienced and often fails to recognise that ecotourism resources need reinvestment. They also undervalue the knowledge and abilities of the local communities (Ryan, Gu and Fang 2009; Stone and Wall 2003). Whilst there are no recent studies on the subject, the interviews led for this thesis indicated that not much has changed in the last ten years.

Despite the fact that natural nature reserves, due to their ICH and natural heritage resources, would offer excellent locations to establish ecomuseums, the Hainanese government has not chosen a nature reserve to be one of the potential ecomuseum sites. One reason might be that there are not enough financial resources to establish ecomuseums in the reserves, since that would require substantial investments in infrastructure. The government's choice of ecomuseum locations will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3.3 *Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone (NCTZ)*

NCTZ lies about 40 km west of Sanya (see Figure 5.1) (Li 2003). The privately owned tourist attraction is about 50 km² in size, it includes 19 km² of sea and is one of Hainan's most visited cultural tourism attractions (Hu and Wall 2005). NCTZ is an interesting project for this thesis, because the local government praises it as a model project for environmentally sensitive tourism (Hu and Wall 2005).

Nanshan was selected in 1995 as a cultural tourism development zone, due to its role in the Buddhist mythology of the island. Guanyin⁹, the goddess of mercy, is said to have vowed her twelve oaths to save all living things in Nanshan, her third oath being to dwell permanently near the South China Sea. Another legend surrounds Master Jianzhen, a famous Tang Dynasty monk, who tried to sail to Japan in order to spread Buddhism there. He tried five times in vain and landed in Nanshan, where he preached Buddhism for a year. Afterwards he successfully sailed to Japan. The themes of the park are woven around these legends and the Guanyin cult focussing on Buddhist culture and longevity. NCTZ has two main sites the Nanshan temple and the Buddhist cultural park (Li, Y. 2006) (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Map of Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone (Source: http://www.sanyaweb.com/sight/sanya_nanshan_temple/sanya_nanshan_temple_map.html)

Despite being a Buddhist cultural theme park, Li Yiping (2003, 2006) criticised that NCTZ represents Buddhist culture rather superficially through architecture, such as the Nanshan temple and the Guanyin statue. Li Yiping (2003, 2006) argued that the NCTZ concentrates too much on potential profits from tourism and not enough on the cultural needs of the tourists. One issue are the Western-style villas, resort hotels and golf courses that were built

⁹ Guanyin plays an important role in Buddhism, Daoism and in Chinese folk religion. In Mahayana Buddhism Guanyin or Avalokitasvara in Sanskrit is a bodhisattva that is associated with compassion. She is extremely popular in Chinese Buddhism and praised as a saviour (Yu 1990).

next to the sacred architecture. When I visited the park, the focus of NCTZ was clearly on the tangible aspects of Buddhism and not on the intangible aspects. There also was a lack of interpretation.

Other issues of NCTZ include unrealistic marketing expectations of the project; conflicts between developers and the Buddhist society over the ownership of the park; and a lack of scientific analysis of the environment (Li 2003; Li 2004).

Li (2004) advocated the use of community involvement in NCTZ, in order to incorporate local knowledge, work with the Buddhist community and create a tourism zone that is socially responsible, economically sound and environmental friendly. At the same time Li (2004) concluded that the chances of actually achieving community participation were slim. While the developers were trying to gain a positive relationship with the community, there are no efforts to actively involve the community in the park. Li (2004) identifies three barriers that make community involvement in Nanshan difficult: political-structural barriers, business-operational-barriers and socio-cultural barriers. These are addressed below.

Political-structurally the powerful control of the state and its need to decide over tourism projects, leaving little room for local people to participate, were the main issue. In addition, it is nearly impossible for residents to get information on development plans and consequences of tourism development in their area. They are unable to make informed decisions (Li 2004).

The business-operational barriers stemmed from the developers' unwillingness to let the Buddhist community and villagers be part of the tourism development process. This had several reasons. Firstly, the developers did not think about the needs of the communities and just assumed they would be grateful for the tourism development. Secondly, the local population was regarded as primitive and too uneducated to make any valuable contribution. Thirdly, the developers needed a quick return and community participation takes time. It would require means to negotiate mutual interests between developers and communities. There is little expertise on community participation in China, which makes the implementation of it more difficult (Li, Y. 2006; Li 2004).

The socio-cultural barriers lay in the villagers' limited capacity and their lacking awareness of the impacts of tourism. The villages close to NCTZ are poor and taking time to participate in NCTZ is a luxury for them. Most of them struggle for daily survival. Furthermore, the Li people living in the area speak little Mandarin and have been excluded from decision-making processes by the Han majority for decades. There is little basis for cooperation and experience in participation. The villagers also felt that tourism has little to do with them and rather accepted the short-term benefits of a compensation than the potential long-term benefits participation in tourism could bring (Li, Y. 2006; Li 2004). These barriers for community involvement in the NCTZ exist all over China and in particular Hainan and are therefore important to consider for potential ecomuseum development.

5.3.4 Haikou Geological Volcano Park

The Haikou Geological Volcano Park is located in Shishan and Yongxing Town about 15 km from Haikou. The geopark is the site of more than 40 volcanos and 30 volcanic caves and covers an area of 108 square km. Other sites include two lava caves, old villages build from lava rock and tropical farmland. The geopark features some of the best preserved volcanic heritage in China. Figure 5.3 shows the entire area of the park including all the main sites.



Figure 5.3 Map of Haikou Geological Volcano Park (Source: http://www.hkhsq.com/img/20100617/20100617113247_ofgqabks.jpg)

One of the main attractions is a landscape park called Maanling Crater Scenic Area, which was built around one of the volcanic craters and contains examples of dried lava flow and rock, indigenous plants; traditional hand carved uses of the lava rock. The scenic spots and tourist activities within the scenic area can be seen on the map in figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4 Map of the Maanling Crater Scenic Area (Source: http://www.hkhsq.com/img/20100617/20100617112326_guknstga.jpg)

Outside the scenic area there are three villages in the park that have particularly interesting volcanic heritage: Meishe village, famous for its old lava rock architecture and its new lava rock buildings that have been adapted to modern standard, Rongtang village and caves, an over 800 year old village entirely made out of rocks and Rufu village, which is famous for its pagoda, originally build in the Song Dynasty.

Corsane and Tawa (2008) suggested Rongtang Village as a potential ecomuseum in their report on possible collaborative projects between Hainan Province and Newcastle University. The report deemed the protection of the village as highly desirable due to its distinctive features. As mentioned the village is entirely built of volcanic stone on sloping terrain. It has narrow alleyways fringing houses, village facilities tightly integrated in site contours and walled gardens. Most of the villagers have moved into a newer village and there are only a few older people still living in the original village. The village also has a significant collection of Penzai plants, rocks and other natural specimens within a garden setting, managed by the village leader (Corsane and Tawa 2008). The older population that remains does engage with tourism and leads visitors through the village against a small fee.

The Haikou Geological Volcano Park is one of the most popular tourist sites around Haikou, but most of the visitors only visit the Maanling Crater Scenic Area and the lava caves. The scenic area and caves are very busy, even though I visited during the low season there were many tour groups and tourists. The number of tourists during the low season was well within the carrying capacity of the park and had little influence on the quality of the tourist experience. However, it seemed likely that the number during the high season is significantly higher, which would make it difficult to enjoy the experience in the park. The neighbouring villages receive less tourists than the park itself, despite their interesting and unique architecture.

As discussed in Chapter 3 geoparks and ecomuseums both combine conservation and tourism development and place major importance on community involvement. However, the geopark in Hainan only shows minimal signs of community participation. Most of the surrounding population is not involved in the geopark. Conservation measures mainly concentrate on the natural environments and intangible and tangible cultural heritage receive little attention. Corsane and Tawa (2008) expressed concerns that the heritage of Rongtang village would most likely deteriorate without commitment to a heritage and conservation plan. Up until now, most tourism and heritage protection plans concentrate on the Maanling Crater Scenic Area. Since ecomuseums and geoparks have similar criteria it is likely that ecomuseums in Hainan might face similar challenges as the Haikou Geological Volcano Park.

5.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to critically engage with the concepts of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in relation to their application in China and Hainan Province. It concluded that the Chinese understandings of sustainable tourism and ecotourism differ from the Western concepts. This is essential to keep in mind when engaging with the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan. It also investigated cultural tourism projects in Hainan, in order to identify potential issues ecomuseums in Hainan will face. Chapter 6 will examine the current ecomuseum establishment in Hainan looking at site selection and the ICH of the case studies.

CHAPTER 6 ESTABLISHING ECOMUSEUMS IN HAINAN PROVINCE – CURRENT GOVERNMENT AIMS AND THE SITUATION IN THE TWO CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. It analyses the motivations for the establishment of ecomuseums and the site selection criteria. Furthermore, it gives a detailed description of each case study to build a profile of their ICH and ecological resources. It supports Objectives 5.1 and 5.2 of Aim Five of this thesis: *“Analyse the on-going process of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province”* and *“Explore the ICH, the natural environments and the development plans of the future ecomuseums Baili Baicun and Binglanggu”*.

In order to achieve these objectives this chapter draws predominantly on qualitative interviews conducted with provincial-government officials and the Vice-Manager of Binglanggu, one of the case studies. It also considers field-notes taken during the fieldtrips to the potential ecomuseum locations; interviews with the local population; promotional material collected at the sites, such as: brochures, published tour guides and videos; the internet representation of the sites; and, newspaper articles. This chapter begins by giving a short introduction to the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. It then discusses the provincial government plans for establishing the ecomuseums in greater detail and concludes by analysing both case studies, their ICH and natural environments.

6.2 The process of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province – A documentary of on-going discussions and strategies

This part of the chapter discusses the current plans of the provincial government in Hainan to establish ecomuseums on the island. It mainly relies on interviews with provincial-government officials. Hainan’s ecomuseum development is still in the beginning phase and many decisions and/or comprehensive guidelines for the ecomuseum development, have not been made or created yet. Therefore, this is an exploratory chapter aiming to draw conclusions from interviews with government officials and an analysis of the selected sites.

6.2.1 An introduction to the ecomuseum development in Hainan Province

As already discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 several Chinese provinces have established, or are proposing to create, ecomuseums with an aim to balance tourism development and cultural

heritage protection. Many provinces that established ecomuseums, for example Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangxi, rely on tourism as one of their main industries (Catibog-Sinha and Wen 2008; Oakes 1998); therefore in most instances the ecomuseum development in China is strongly connected to tourism development. This is certainly the case in Hainan, where the strengthening of cultural tourism, is one of the reasons for the establishment of ecomuseums.

The idea of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province was suggested first in the 2008 report by Corsane and Tawa (2008) on *Proposed collaborative projects between Newcastle University & Hainan Province*, which already has been mentioned at several points in this thesis. This proposal has further developed during 'The Encompass-Project', a European Union funded project that aimed to promote the management and the safeguarding of cultural resources internationally. It emphasised on four participating countries: Kenya (and Anglophone Africa); Guyana; UK; and Hainan Province in China (<http://www.encompass.ac.uk/index.htm>). The project was led by three researchers from Newcastle University Gerard Corsane, Aron Mazel and Theresa Webster, who organised in-country workshops and a traveling exhibition. During the in-country workshop in Hainan (17-28 January 2011) Gerard Corsane introduced the ecomuseum ideal and the 21 Ecomuseum Principles to the participants (Corsane 2012, pers. comm.).

The provincial government began to seriously consider the establishment of ecomuseums on the island in the same year in 2011. Between then and the official announcement of the ecomuseum development plans in October 2012, ideas have changed considerably. The first time I discussed the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan Province was in the 2012 meeting with Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication, and Sport of Hainan Province (M1), discussed in Chapter 2. During the meeting government officials demonstrated a good understanding of ecomuseum principles and recognised how important it was for the ecomuseums to develop local characteristics. One of the government officials attending the meeting, had visited other ecomuseums in China before and from there had formed an opinion on which ecomuseum projects Hainan should learn from:

Hainan Province needs a different approach from Guizhou Province, where the ecomuseum is too commercialised. The focus there is on

improving life-style and not on protecting cultural heritage. The ecomuseum in Anji however is a good example of an ecomuseum.

(M1 2012)

In the meeting government officials expressed Hainan Province needed its own ecomuseum ideal and its own set of standards. “We want to develop our own set of standards for Hainan that guarantees the protection of ICH, encourages a more high-class tourism and protects the natural environments”. This idea was repeated by one government official in an interview with me one year later. It summarises the three aspects, ICH, natural environments and tourism, particularly relevant for ecomuseums in Hainan.

By developing their own ecomuseum guidelines, Hainan Province wants to contribute to the improvement of the eight national ecomuseum standards that have been mentioned in Chapter 4. One government official (Interview GO3 2013) stated that: “The Chinese government has clear-cut standards for the establishment and improvement of ecomuseums. Compared to other Chinese provinces, when building ecomuseums, Hainan wants to stand out and to adjust those standards better”. The set of national ecomuseum standards Hainan Province is working with were formulated in the *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development* that was published by SACH in August 2011 (Yang 2014). Another government official (Interview GO5 2013) mentioned the province’s aspiration for the ecomuseums to be listed among the group of national ecomuseum model sites that have been established in connection with this notification.

At the early stage of the ecomuseum development in April 2012 it was suggested to distribute 60 ecomuseums all over the island with Baicha village in Dongfang County, a village of the Li minority that is famous for its boat-shaped traditional houses, as a first model ecomuseum. This village was also one of three suggested ecomuseums in the report by Corsane and Tawa (2008). Another location government officials suggested was Baili Baicun in Ding’an County, one of the case studies of this research. The government had started to initiate a competition between different villages all over the island to decide where ecomuseums should be established. In the process of establishing ecomuseums, they saw two steps as essential:

Firstly, we want to develop a set of standards for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan, which should differ from the traditional museum. Secondly, we will give each village a certain name or identity. This way the villagers will be more committed to protect their heritage in a sustainable way.

(M1 2012)

The officials also found it important that the established ecomuseums should respect the will of the local population and let them maintain their dignity. “We feel the villagers will be more committed to the ecomuseum if we listen to them and develop tourism in a less commercialised way that lets them maintain their dignity” (M1 2012).

On the 12th October 2012, nine experts from Hainan University, Hainan Normal University, and Hainan Provincial Museum met with the leader of Hainan’s cultural division to discuss a first evaluation of the first group of ecomuseums to be established in Hainan¹⁰. At this meeting the participating experts recommended the Liuke Overseas Chinese Cultural Village as one of the sites for the first group of ecomuseums in Hainan. They also made suggestions on how to improve the development of the Hainanese ecomuseum, by giving priority to the ecology, sustainable development and a transformation of the ecomuseum format. They advised the provincial government to follow the national laws and guidelines on ecology, folk customs and culture within the ecomuseum to the letter, to ensure ecological harmony within the ecomuseum, an integration of intangible and tangible heritage, the promotion of economic development and a coordinated development of culture and ecological environments (Xia 2012).

In response to that meeting in November 2012, the initial ecomuseum ideas evolved further and Hainan Province decided on a first group of six ecomuseums in four counties (see p. 152). As mentioned in part 1.5.5 of the Introduction Chapter the ecomuseum that is being established first is Baili Baicun in Ding’an County (Wang, B. 2012). Planned ecomuseums include Binglanggu and Yanoda Rainforest Cultural Tourism Zone in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County; Yangpu Ancient Salt Field in Danzhou City; Liuke Overseas Chinese Cultural Village and Wanquan River Tourism Zone in Qionghai City. It is important to note

¹⁰ The names of the experts as well as the discussed content, beyond what was reported in the newspapers, was considered sensitive information by some of the participants, therefore this research refrains from disclosing further information.

that apart from Baili Baicun these ecomuseums are not established yet and that there were different opinions about their exact locations among government officials and experts. For example, some experts and government officials believed that Binglanggu and Yanoda would be part of one ecomuseum and not two separate museums. I did count them as two ecomuseums, because official statements on the ecomuseum development noted two ecomuseums in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County (Wang, B. 2012). I was also told different versions of what Yangpu Ancient Salt Field and Wanquan River Valley would encompass once established as ecomuseums. It was, for instance, unclear if Yangpu Ancient Salt Field would only contain the salt field or several sites in Danzhou City.

The original idea to build many ecomuseums across the whole province still exists; the first six ecomuseums will function as pilot sites. “We want to build a lot of ecomuseums, but it is not possible yet. First we need to bring the first group of ecomuseums to a good standard, so we have a model” (Interview GO3 2013).

Despite the advice from the experts in the October meeting, Hainan Province has not published official guidelines and plans for the ecomuseum establishment yet or has officially announced the concrete location of any potential ecomuseum except for Baili Baicun. Here the development has started, despite a lack of guidelines. Government officials mentioned that it is likely, that all ecomuseums will be established first and that guidelines will be developed afterwards.

I think this year the ecomuseums just have to be established; afterwards the government can find a definition for what the ecomuseums mean. Then they can moderate regulations and find a standard or common ground.

(Interview GO5 2013)

Another government officials discussed the points these guidelines would need to address.

We also need to have guidelines for the ecomuseums that answer the following questions: why we build them; what standard the ecomuseums should have, how to manage the ecomuseums, the governments’ responsibilities, the responsibilities of each household of the local population, the capital the ecomuseums need to operate and what natural resources are needed.

(Interview GO3 2013)

These are important issues that will be further addressed in Chapters 7-9 of this thesis. The latest step in the ecomuseum development took place in June 2013, when the Department of Culture, Radio, Television, Publication and Sports of Hainan Province drew up three fundamental ecomuseum categories for ecomuseums in Hainan. These categories were developed out of the prior investigation of the ecomuseum potential of the different counties and encompass the following three types: (1) historic architecture; (2) natural and cultural landscapes; (3) ethnic-minority traditions (Yang 2014).

Overall, ecomuseum development in Hainan Province is progressing relatively slowly and it might take several years until the province has formulated and published its own plans and guidelines. There are two main reasons for this. One problem is that Hainan Province has never undertaken a project like this and generally has little experience with community participation in cultural tourism development. According to one government official (Interview GO3 2013): “This way of protecting culture [using a holistic approach that includes community participation] is very new to us and requires a great deal of responsibility and work, because the demands and standards are higher”.

The other issue is that it is unclear which government agency is responsible for their establishment. Therefore, no one feels responsible and the establishment of the ecomuseum does not progress. These two issues are also some of the main challenges ecomuseums face and will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

The next parts of this chapter examine the motivations for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan and the selected ecomuseum sites.

6.2.2 Motivations behind the ecomuseum development in Hainan Province

Chapter 4 of this thesis discussed the motivations for the establishment of ecomuseums in China in detail. It concluded that there were economic motivations, including poverty alleviation through tourism development as well as cultural factors including an overall trend to explore new museological ideas and the need to find a way to protect the cultural heritage of China’s ethnic minorities.

Whilst in particular the economic reasons for ecomuseum development in Hainan Province overlap with the ones of the national ecomuseum movement, Hainan also has its own motivations for the establishment of ecomuseums on the island. In the meetings and interviews with provincial-government officials four main inter-related motivations became apparent. The first two motivations for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan are related to economic development through tourism development. The first motivation is to diversify Hainan's tourism resources and to develop new locations for tourism, for instance through ecotourism. The ecomuseum is part of the cultural tourism development happening on the island at the moment. In that context all interviewees mentioned the development of Hainan as an International Tourism Island (State Council 2009). According to one government official (Interview GO3 2013): "The establishment of ecomuseums is an important step for the economic development of the island, in particular since Hainan is constructing an International Tourism Island". One of the main roles of the ecomuseum is to "establish a high-class ecotourism that does not destroy the natural environments" (M1 2012). The ecomuseums would contribute to diversify Hainan's image from being a purely beach holiday tourism destination into a place for cultural tourism and ecotourism. Another government official also saw cultural tourism as an important motivation for the establishment of the ecomuseums and remarked:

The ecomuseum development in Hainan is mainly linked to the development of cultural tourism. At the moment Hainan develops a lot of cultural tourism destinations, such as Nanshan the restoration of Haikou *Qilou* Old Street. Ecomuseums are part of that development. The goal is to have more culture and less beach tourism.

(Interview GO1 2013)

Another way in which ecomuseums diversify Hainan's tourism resources are that they also encourage tourists to visit new locations that would not normally be visited, because the ecomuseum branding signifies the cultural significance of a place. One government official pointed out the significance of this when talking about tourism planning in Longmen and Lingkou, the two towns closest to the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun.

Longmen and the landscape around it are also part of the ecomuseum. Visiting it without the ecomuseum there might be too expensive. Just

going to Lingkou to travel might not be interesting enough, but when we say that there is an ecomuseum it is worth the trouble.

(Interview GO3 2013)

The second motivation for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan, is also connected to the development of Hainan as an International Tourism Island. The provincial government plans to use ecomuseums to brand Hainan as an ecotourism location that will be visited by international and domestic tourists alike. The development of ecomuseums is a strategy to create a unique tourism experience and to draw more attention to Hainan's cultural and natural heritage resources at an international level.

Hainan's culture is beautiful. We want to create something original, Hainan's natural environments, its history and its people will show them [the tourists] how rich Hainan's whole environment is and make them reminisce Hainan's nature. If the place is unforgettable all Chinese and foreigners will come to visit.

(Interview GO3 2013)

The government official also hoped that the establishment of ecomuseums places Hainan at the same level as other international tourism destinations. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Hainan faces a lot of competition from other Chinese tourism destinations, such as Yunnan Province. The ecomuseum ideal could support Hainan to become more competitive in the international and domestic tourism market.

Hainan is an International Tourism Island. We have to compete with other countries. When foreign tourists come here the ecomuseum will show them that we have many different museums and cultural heritage expressions. If international tourists visit the Hainanese ecomuseums they can see how special Hainanese culture is.

(Interview GO3 2013)

The third motivation for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province is to protect the ICH and natural environments of the island. This reason is related to tourism development, but also to Hainan's growing awareness of environmental issues and its environmental protection policies (Liu and Hao 2013). The protection of Hainan's cultural heritage and its environment are also essential to fulfil the expectations of the tourists when visiting the island. According to one government official (Interview GO3 2013) "for Hainan whose

economy is largely depending on tourism, the preservation of its environments and its culture is essential. When tourists think of Hainan they think of a clean environment”.

The ecomuseum is an important step to combine the protection of ICH within its natural environments and sustainable tourism development. Several government officials expressed that tourism development is vital for an effective protection of ICH and natural environments. One government official (Interview GO2 2013) stated: “ICH... is very important, but at the moment it is not very well protected, therefore we need to combine ICH and tourism”. The government official stated that tourism is the main motivation for most people, local government officials and local community members to protect ICH and natural environments.

The ecomuseum is also a way for the provincial government to demonstrate initiative in tackling the issue of ICH and environmental protection and that is gaining more relevance among the Chinese population and for the central government. One government official stated:

In Beijing the environment and the air are very polluted. But here [in Hainan] the quality of life is improving a lot. Therefore, people are becoming more conscious of the idea that tangible heritage and ICH are very valuable. That also brought along the motivation to improve the environment. Because of that we wanted the first group of ecomuseums in Hainan to come out this year.

(Interview GO3 2013)

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Su (2008) named the growing awareness of heritage and environmental issues of the population as one of the main reasons for the establishment of ecomuseums in China. That the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan is part of the efforts of the province to improve the protection of the environment is also supported by this extract from a news article in the *China Daily* by Liu and Hao (2013):

The Party chief also started a new ecological campaign in 2012 to step up the province's green development. A series of ecology projects - including 10 forest parks, 23 downtown parks and 77 sightseeing orchards - are under development and will be finished on schedule, said the official. In addition, government of Ding'an County in the province built the first ecomuseum to preserve local culture, where visitors can view some local heritage and traditional handicrafts.

(Ibid.)

A fourth motivation for establishing ecomuseums in Hainan was mentioned during the 2012 meeting with provincial-government officials with the directive from the national government, that every province in China had to establish their own ecomuseums (M1 2012). While I was unable to find such a directive and confirm this statement, establishing ecomuseums is certainly in line with ongoing national government policies and efforts regarding the protection of intangible and tangible heritage. One government official (Interview GO4 2013) stated that: “I feel the establishment of the ecomuseums is an extension of the national politics in respect to cultural heritage protection”. This statement is supported by the fact that the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) published several documents concerning the promotion of establishing ecomuseums in the eastern and central provinces including Hainan in 2011. The *Notification concerning the research in the construction of demonstration points for ecomuseum and community museum developed in the eastern and central region* (SACH 2011c) was published in April, the *Notification concerning the promotion of ecomuseum and community museum development* (SACH 2011b) came out in August and the first group of ecomuseum and community museum model sites was announced in October (SACH 2011a). The idea that following national directives by establishing ecomuseums would lead to funding from the national government was certainly part of the reason for their development. It was mentioned in several interviews that without the funding from the national government the protection of ICH and natural environments in Hainan was very difficult to achieve. One government official (GO5) stated: “Relying on our own money [provincial resources for the protection ICH and natural environments] is not enough, we need the national government to invest”. Therefore, establishing national government supported and funded projects are essential for the protection of ICH and natural heritage in Hainan.

6.2.3 The potential ecomuseum sites and their selection criteria

As discussed in the Introduction Chapter and 6.2.1 of this chapter the provincial government decided on six potential ecomuseum sites in October 2012. This part of the chapter will analyse the overall characteristics of the six ecomuseum sites and their potential selection criteria. The characteristics of the two case studies will be evaluated in section 6.3 and 6.4. The possible locations of the ecomuseums can be seen in Figure 6.1.



Figure 6.1 Potential Ecomuseum Sites of Hainan Province (adapted from <http://www.chinamaps.info/Hainan/Hainan-Geography.htm>)

As mentioned in section 6.2.1 of this chapter not all government officials were certain about the exact locations of the ecomuseums and their selection criteria. The reason selection criteria were unclear might be that Hainan Province has not fully decided what they want to achieve with the ecomuseums. According to one government official (Interview GO3 2013): “Every ecomuseum in China has their own specialties and principles. Right now we cannot provide a distinctive ecomuseum model for Hainan”. Despite the fact the concrete selection criteria for the ecomuseums were not discussed, general principles could be gathered from the interviews and by examining the locations and sites themselves.

As discussed (Chapter 4) most ecomuseums in China are located in isolated and poor rural areas. They often encompass one or several ethnic-minority villages and focus on the cultural heritage of that minority. They were chosen as ecomuseums because of their cultural distinctiveness and because they maintained their local culture (Nitzky 2012a). With the exception of the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan most areas received few to no tourists before ecomuseums were established. While the first group of Hainan’s potential ecomuseums displays some of these characteristics, several features differ from other ecomuseum sites in China.

Similar to other ecomuseum sites in China local distinctiveness and a well preserved local heritage were an important selection criteria for the ecomuseum sites in Hainan. The importance for each ecomuseum location to have their own specialism and their own brand was mentioned in the meeting with government officials in 2012 (M1 2012). One government official (Interview GO3 2013) repeated that thought and added that a unique environment was one important selection criteria for ecomuseums in Hainan. “It is also important to choose the right place for the ecomuseum, one that has a specialty and is beautiful. For Hainan the most important feature is the environment”.

The government official (Interview GO3 2013) summarised the most important features of the Hainanese ecomuseum as follows:

1. A unique natural environment;
2. A distinctive culture, ancient villages and traditional houses;
3. Ancient streets and districts, the ecomuseum does not necessarily have to be in the countryside, it could be in the city as well; and,
4. Food as an important part of the culture.

(Ibid.)

When examining the six potential ecomuseum sites, the importance of unique environments and distinctive culture are apparent. All ecomuseums fulfil either feature one or two or both. Five of the ecomuseums display a unique aspect of the local environment; two of these mainly concentrate on ecological features (Yanoda Rainforest Cultural Tourism Zone and Wanquan River), two are a combination of culture and environment (Baili Baicun and Binglanggu) and one mainly concentrates on culture, but also has a unique natural site (Yangpu Ancient Salt Field). The sixth future ecomuseum examines a distinctive part of Hainan's cultural heritage (Liuke Overseas Chinese Cultural Village). Feature three can be disregarded for this thesis, because all the ecomuseums chosen for the first group of ecomuseums in Hainan are in rural locations. However, Hainan Province plans to establish more ecomuseums than these initial six and is therefore considering urban locations as well. If local food is important in all potential ecomuseum sites is difficult to determine but it certainly is part of the experience in Baili Baicun, Binglanggu and Yangpu Ancient Salt Field.

While the ecomuseum locations in Hainan share certain selection criteria like their local distinctiveness and well preserved local customs, when compared to other ecomuseums in China there are also several points of difference:

1. Future ecomuseums in Hainan are not located in the isolated and least developed regions of the province, which in the case of Hainan would be the western and central regions (see Figure 6.1). All future ecomuseums lie within a relatively short distance from a main vacation spot. Four of them are possible day trip locations from either Haikou or Sanya. Both Baili Baicun and Yangpu Ancient Salt field are about two hours away from Haikou. Binglanggu and Yanoda can be reached from Sanya within an hour. The other two ecomuseum in Qionghai are within close proximity of Bo'ao. Bo'ao lies on the east coast of Hainan Province and is connected to both Haikou and Sanya via the high speed bullet train. While it does not have the same importance as a vacation spot as Haikou or Sanya, it is still an important city, as it is the yearly meeting place for the Bo'ao Forum for Asia, a forum attended by many leaders from government, business and academia. It has been mentioned during several informal conversations with government officials and experts, that this played a vital role for the decision to establish two ecomuseum sites in Qionghai close to

Bo'ao. Bo'ao is also starting to develop into a more prominent tourism location, many luxury hotels are being built in and around the city.

2. All future ecomuseum locations in Hainan have been tourist development zones before they were chosen as ecomuseum sites. While they differ in popularity with Baili Baicun being the least visited and developed tourism spot and Yanoda and Binglanggu the most popular sites, they all have been developed for tourism to some extent before the ecomuseum plans were made. This is an interesting fact, given one of the motivations of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan is to develop new tourism resources. When considering the locations of the ecomuseums, it seems a stronger motivation behind the ecomuseum development might be use the ecomuseum name to make already existing scenic spots more interesting for tourists. This might also be a reason why less popular tourist destinations in the central and western parts have not been selected. Other essential reasons were financial considerations. Developing ecomuseums close to popular tourism spots, and selecting sites that already have been partly developed, requires significantly less investments in infrastructure and tourism facilities, for instance running water and electricity, than developing an ecomuseum in a completely undeveloped, isolated location would. The lack of financial resources will be discussed in Chapter 8.

3. Most of the ecomuseums in Hainan encompass a wide territory. This is essential for the balance between tourism development and heritage protection, since ecomuseums in Hainan are close to the major tourism destinations and thus have the potential to attract many tourists.

4. With the exception of Binglanggu, ecomuseums in Hainan do not focus on protecting ethnic-minority heritage. Government officials named this as the main difference between Hainanese ecomuseums and other ecomuseums in China. There were two commonly named reasons for the decision to safeguard other forms of heritage. The first reason was that the national government places less importance on the protection of ethnic minorities in Hainan Province than in other Chinese provinces. This can be seen on the number of key units of heritage protection that protect ethnic-minority heritage at national level.

According to one government official (Interview GO4 2013):

I think the ecomuseums in Hainan differs from other ecomuseums in China, because they do not concentrate on ethnic minorities... Compared to other provinces the protection of Hainan's ethnic minorities does not have priority for the national government.

(Ibid.)

A counter argument to that idea is that the majority of the ICH expressions protected on national level belong to the Li minority. However, if the provincial government is under the impression that ethnic-minority heritage is less important for the national government, it would be a logical step to choose sites that concentrate on other heritage expressions, because they depend on national government funding.

The second reason named by government officials was that the heritage of the Li minority was too complex to fully display in an ecomuseum. As mentioned before other ecomuseums in China often do present the history and the heritage of ethnic minorities in a stereotypical way.

Most ecomuseums in Hainan Province do not protect the ICH of the ethnic minorities. One reason for this is that the ecomuseum has a limited capacity. The Li minority has very longstanding traditions, but also a complicated history that is not always unproblematic.

(Interview GO4 2013)

The problem that ecomuseums have a limited capacity is most likely linked to financial reasons. The site that has been chosen as an ecomuseum to represent the heritage of the Li and Miao minorities in Hainan Province is already developed and does require minimal financial investment.

Another issue that makes it difficult to establish ecomuseums in ethnic-minority villages is the problematic relationship between the Li and Miao minorities and the provincial government. Provincial-government officials mainly belong to the Han majority. Tensions do arise, because ethnic minorities feel these government officials do not always act in their best interests (Xie 2010). This problem exists in many ethnic-minority areas in Hainan, for example in Baicha village, in Dongfang County, which was originally one of the locations the government considered for the ecomuseum. Baicha village was also suggested by Corsane and Tawa (2008) as one potential ecomuseum for Hainan Island due to its traditional boat-

shaped houses. But during my first fieldtrip it was mentioned that the leader of the village was very reluctant to cooperate with the provincial government. To establish an ecomuseum there, the government would have to win the trust of the local population first. This is not the only heritage project in Hainan where the distrustful relationship between government, tourism businesses and ethnic minorities has been problematic. As discussed in Chapter 5 the NCTZ is another example. Because Li communities have been systematically excluded from decision-making processes by the Han community and because tourism developers often regard them as uneducated and primitive, it is difficult to find a basis for mutual cooperation (Li, Y. 2006; Li 2004).

Hainan Province depends on this first group of ecomuseums to be successful. The provincial government is aiming to establish more ecomuseums on the island, wants to progress as an International Tourism Island and hopes for the ecomuseums to be included in the National Eco- and Community Model Sites. Consequently, it did not choose sites that could lead to potential conflicts between government, tourism developers and local population.

5. The strong focus on the environment is relatively new for ecomuseums in China, but it corresponds to Hainan's local situation. Hainan's unique environment is its main tourism asset, which is becoming even more relevant with the deteriorating living quality due to environmental pollution in major Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai.

The strengths and weaknesses of the chosen sites will be further analysed in Chapter 8. The next part of the chapter examines the ecomuseum development of the case studies and their ICH and natural heritage.

6.3 Heritage protection, tourism and ecomuseum development in Baili Baicun, Ding'an County

As mentioned before Baili Baicun is the first ecomuseum that is being established in Hainan. It is a cluster of villages in the south of Ding'an County about two hours away from Haikou, Hainan's capital. Within the ecomuseum there are over 100 cultural ecological villages covering the 590 km² area between four cities: Longmen, Lingkou, Longhe and Hanlin. This part of the chapter examines ICH, natural environments and tourism development of this region and analyses the ecomuseum development plans.

6.3.1 ICH, natural environments and tourism in Baili Baicun, Ding'an County

Baili Baicun is one of the tourism development zones in Ding'an County. Ding'an County is located in northeast Hainan, about 33km from Haikou and one of the provincial government priority areas for tourism development. Apart from the development of the ecomuseum one measure to promote tourism to Ding'an County is the organisation of cultural festivals, for example in June 2013 a cultural festival was held in Haikou *Qilou* Old Street showing the ICH of Ding'an County.

Important ICH traditions of Ding'an encompass the Hainan Opera (*Qiongju*), the music of the eight kinds of orchestral instruments (*bayin*), the Junpo festival and Daoist musical ceremonies. Ding'an is also known for its local cuisine for example black pork and *zongzi*, glutinous rice stuffed with different fillings and wrapped in bamboo leaves, the traditional food of the dragon boat festival. Baili Baicun famous for its unique environment, its ICH traditions and its ancient villages is a particularly good example of the heritage traditions and the rich ecological environment of Ding'an County.

The local population of Baili Baicun are mostly Hainanese, many of them are farmers. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, Hainanese is a term for all Han Chinese, who migrated to Hainan before 1950 and who speak the Hainanese dialect. The region has diverse farming traditions, they plant rice and soybeans, but also tropical fruits. The natural landscape is dominated by farmland and tropical trees, such as banana trees, jackfruit trees, betel nut trees, lychee trees, banyan trees, Indian rubber trees and Chinaberry trees. It is a typical Chinese countryside environment with many animals for example chickens, pigs and dogs, running around freely. The whole area is surrounded by green round hills. Figure 6.2, Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4 show examples of the different kinds of sceneries found in Baili Baicun.



Figure 6.2 Landscape in Baili Baicun 1



Figure 6.3 Landscape in Baili Baicun 2



Figure 6.4 Landscape in Baili Baicun 3

One of the most famous natural sites of the area is the *Aiqing Shu* (romantic love tree). This tree is made up of two Banyan trees that are so intertwined with each other, that it is impossible to tell the two trees apart. Another natural phenomena is the famous Banyan King Tree. A staircase build in the hill next to the tree leads to the top of the massive tree. Local people in particular the older population often enjoy relaxing in the shadow of these trees and playing cards. Figure 6.5 shows the *Aiqing Shu* and Figure 6.6 shows the Banyan King.



Figure 6.5 Aiqing shu



Figure 6.6 Banyan King Tree

Baili Baicun also has hundreds of cold springs, it is the area with the only tropical cold springs in China. The most famous one is Jiuwentang cold spring that runs over volcanic rock into a lake, where tourists and locals can swim all year around. The water is crystal clear, embedded into an idyllic landscape. The water is also supposed to be health beneficial, it is rich in selenium and germanium, which despite inconclusive studies have the reputation of boosting the immune system. Drinking the water is said to improve live expectancy, it has had this reputation since ancient times and the village next to the spring is called Longevity village.

Apart from rich natural heritage Baili Baicun also has a rich cultural heritage. Similar to many Chinese villages (Han 2010) Baili Baicun makes use of its connection to famous Chinese historical figures. It tells the love story of Emperor Wenzong (1328-1332) of the Yuan Dynasty. While still being the crown prince and called Tutiemuer, he was exiled to Hainan by Emperor Zhizhi in 1321. During a visit to Ding'an he fell in love with a local girl called Qingmei. With the help of a local official, they got married and lived together happily until Tutiemuer was ordered back to court three years later in 1324. In 1328 he became emperor himself, now called Emperor Wenzong, but according to the story he never forgot the local official who helped him nor the girl he loved. To honour his friendship and loyalty he granted the local official jurisdiction over more than half of Hainan Island including Qionghai, Baisha and Wuzhishan. Qingmei was called to Beijing as a concubine, but died on

the way in Hangzhou. This legend of love and friendship is still handed down from generation to generation and the local population still maintains the ancient marriage ceremony customs used during that time (Zhang 2013).

Baili Baicun also plays an important part of the history of the CCP in Hainan. It encompasses Murui Mountain, the cradle of the Communist Revolution in Hainan. During the Chinese Communist Revolution (1919 – 1949) the Qiongya Special Committee, the Qiongsu Government and an Independent Division of the Red Army were stationed there and supposedly spread the communist spirit to the rest of Hainan. Today Murui Mountain revolutionary base is a national patriotic education base¹¹.

The ICH and tangible heritage of the region are still very well preserved and people of all ages regard it as part of their life. One important part of the local culture are the traditional Hainanese houses that are built out of volcanic rock and the wood of the jackfruit tree. People are very proud of their traditional houses and enjoy living in them. Other traditional architectural elements include for example traditional water storing systems that can be found next to some of the lakes in Baili Baicun. Figure 6.7 show a traditional Hainanese house in Baili Baicun from the outside and Figure 6.8 shows the inside that is made of jackfruit tree wood.



Figure 6.7 Traditional Hainanese house in Baili Baicun



Figure 6.8 Inside of a traditional Hainanese house in Baili Baicun

¹¹ The Central Propaganda Department announced the first group of 100 heritage sites and museums as bases for patriotic education in 1997. Patriotic education bases have the function to demonstrate China's long history, the struggles of modern China and the CCP revolution (Svensson 2006b).

The jackfruit plays an important part for the culture in Baili Baicun. Not only is it used as building material for the traditional houses, it is also an important agricultural product and part of the culinary heritage. In Baili Baicun people traditionally eat jackfruit as a snack dipped in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic. Figure 6.9 shows the traditional way of eating jackfruit.



Figure 6.9 Traditional way of eating jackfruit in Baili Baicun

Among the traditional folklore of Ding'an County, the Junpo Festival is the one with the greatest influence and the most local characteristics. Other important ICH traditions of the area and the ecomuseums are the before mentioned Daoism, the Hainan Opera and the eight kinds of orchestral instruments (*bayin*). Because these traditions are of particular importance for the ecomuseum and were frequently mentioned by the interviewees the thesis will briefly discuss these traditions at this point.

The Junpo Festival lasts 20 days and is celebrated from February 2nd to 26th of the lunar calendar. It originated during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and is one of the major festivals for the local population in parts of Ding'an County and several towns in Qionghai City and Tunchang County. It is also spread to other parts of Hainan and the way it is celebrated depends strongly on its locality. The festival worships ancestors and local heritage and has been included in the *Fourth List of National ICH Traditions* published in 2014. Depending on the region it can include performances, such as the dragon and lion dance and fair trades (Feng and Zhan 2006). In Baili Baicun, however, it is mainly a time for people to visit the temple and worship local deities with cooked chicken, rice wine, incense and candles. The festival is divided into two time periods, the first period worships male deities and the second period female deities. A male local deity worshiped is Lord Nanyuan, the local official

supporting Emperor Wenzong (Tutiemuer) and Qingmei during his exile in Hainan Province. A female deity is Madam Xian who is worshiped as a local heroine in Hainan. She was an influential tribe leader during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-581). She successfully ended a rebellion against the mainland by convincing the rebellion leaders in Hainan to surrender to the national government. She also introduced the Li brocade to mainland China (Feng and Zhan 2006).

Performances of the Hainan Opera (*qiongju*), another ICH tradition of Baili Baicun, are also part of the Junpo festival, but are also performed on other festive occasions, ceremonies and celebrations. It originated over 300 years ago, most likely in Ding'an County where the grave of its first master has been found (CCTV 2011). The tradition is still relatively popular in Baili Baicun, many famous actors come out of Ding'an County and there is a saying that there is no Hainan Opera troupe without an actor from Ding'an. On special occasions it is performed together with a *bayin* ensemble.

The tradition of Hainan Opera is declining, mainly due to the fact that young people are showing less interest in being part of the Hainan Opera troupes. Ding'an County is working hard on keeping the tradition alive. Since 2008 the local government invested over 1 million yuan every year in promoting the Hainan Opera, for example through building schools and performing in other provinces and countries (CCTV 2011).

As mentioned in connection with the Hainan Opera, the ICH tradition of *bayin* meaning eight sounds, a Hainanese ensemble folk music played with eight instruments is regularly practised at Baili Baicun. It serves an important cultural and social function; the music is performed during celebrations, festival, ceremonies and rituals, for instance weddings and funerals. *Bayin* uses only traditional compositions, employs traditional Han musical instruments and is in traditional Han style. It has developed many local features and it is performed by amateurs. The following eight instruments can be used during a *bayin* performance: 1. *Yehu* or *erhu*, two types of bowed string instruments; 2. *yueqin* (type of lute), *qinqin* (type of lute), *sanxian* (three-stringed lute) and *yangqin* (zither); 3. *di* (transverse flute) or *xiao* (a vertical bamboo flute); 4. *suona* (double-reed woodwind instrument); 5. *houguan* (pipe); 6. *luo* (gong); 7. *gu* (drum) and 8. *bo* (cymbals) (Yang 1990, 270).

Another ICH heritage tradition that is of major importance for Baili Baicun is Daoism. The whole area is dotted with little Daoist shrines, in particular close to important natural sites, such as the Banyan King. According to a local woman worshipping at the Daoist shrine of the Banyan King tree, many local people offer incense at this particular shrine. According to her Daoism is a very important part of the daily-life of old and young people in Baili Baicun. Figure 6.10 shows the Daoist shrine at the Banyan King tree and figure 6.11 a Daoist shrine next to a lake. The pictures show that the shrines are well maintained and local people have recently offered incense and gifts. One central part of Daoism is ancestral worship.

Daoist rituals are highly localised and vary greatly across China. Daoism often mixes with local communal religion and according to Dean (2009, 180) cannot be separated from other aspects of communal life. The close connection between Daoism, nature and local customs shows that in this case it is difficult to separate ICH traditions and natural heritage from each other. The Daoist shrines are all connected to the ecological environment and major natural heritage sites of the area and therefore depend on and nurture each other.



Figure 6.10 Daoist shrine next to the Banyan King Tree



Figure 6.11 One of the many Daoist shrines in Baili Baicun

Despite the many heritage traditions and beautiful natural environments Baili Baicun does currently not receive many tourists. The tourist image Baili Baicun wants to promote is that of an idyllic countryside area, where people and nature live in harmony. Zhang (2013) a reporter from the *Hainan Ribao* gives the following description of visiting Baili Baicun:

Along the route in Baili Baicun, one passes round hills, one village after another, there is a different landscape after every curve, every turn holds something new. From ancient houses made of lava stone, to the Hainan Opera emerging from the green courtyards of little villages over the melody of the eight kinds of orchestral instruments (*bayin*), these experiences let the visitor mutually feel country life and the nourishment of culture. Such a natural world, such profoundness!

(Ibid.)

This account of visiting Baili Baicun is fairly similar to my experience, in particular the description of the natural environments and aspects of tangible heritage. However, while it was very obvious that people still lead a traditional life-style, the description of finding ICH expressions that are often reserved for special occasions at every corner is exaggerated. The overall tone of this article perfectly mirrors the image of Baili Baicun that the provincial government wants to achieve and propagate for the ecomuseum.

6.3.2 Ecomuseum development in Baili Baicun

The establishment of the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun is in the beginning phase. This part of the chapter examines what measures have been put into place up to this point and what plans still need to be established.

The provincial government has invested ten million yuan (£1 million) in the construction of the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun (Luo 2012). In order to set up the ecomuseum the local government has identified the most important sites in the area and published three tourism brochures, one of them about tourism in Ding'an in general including Baili Baicun and two dealing with Baili Baicun specifically.

As part of the ecomuseum development Baili Baicun has established four rural cultural parks: Longmen Cold Spring Rural Cultural Park, Huangpo Wangzi Aiqing Rural Cultural Park, Hanlin Senlin Yangba Rural Cultural Park and Tianchi Fuxi Nongchanpin Rural Cultural Park

and 19 tourist service centres in the whole area. These tourist service centres have different tasks. They hand out maps and brochures of the area, inform the tourist about the most interesting sites and rent out bicycles. The ecomuseum is laid out in a way that encourages visitors to explore the area by bicycle. Cycling is the best way to get around the area, as some of the sites, such as the *Aiqing shu*, are not accessible by car and the area is too big to explore by foot. Each tourist service centre has a kitchen serving traditional local food that has been farmed in the surrounding villages. Dishes include cold spring fish, black pork, *Hanlin* pig foot and nine layer cake. In addition, they sell local agricultural products, including betel nut tea, betel nut wine, red rice, sesame, red skin peanuts, black soybeans and purple potatoes. The tourist service centres serve as links between the different sites in the ecomuseum, they provide rest and information to the visitors. They are also used by local people to relax and play cards. The employees of the service centres are all members of the local population.

Because farming is such a big part of the life-style and cultural heritage of the area, the ecomuseum plans to teach the visitors about the different farming traditions of Baili Baicun by offering the possibility for *nongjiale* in several villages in the ecomuseum. Up to now it is not possible to stay in the area overnight, hotels are still being built and suitable farm houses and farmers for *nongjiale* have to be found. Another way the ecomuseum will display the agricultural traditions of the area is to exhibit farming tools, everyday items and local handicrafts. All the exhibits are owned by local farmers and lent to the ecomuseum. There is a plan to build exhibition halls to display the heritage and explain their history and use. Until then some agriculture tools and everyday items, such as pottery, are show in the tourist service centres. Figure 6.12 shows an example of these exhibits in a service centre.



Figure 6.12 Everyday farming items of Baili Baicun exhibited in a tourism service centre

The local government also developed two maps of the ecomuseum. Figure 6.13 shows the first map that introduces the visitors to the ecomuseum.



“古色古乡 百里百村” 自驾导游图

游百里百村 看古色古乡 赏民俗文化 品生态美食



- ### 图例
- 国、省、县道
 - 乡村道路
 - 自驾车绿道
 - 自行车绿道
 - 旅游景点
 - 县城驻地
 - 乡镇驻地
 - 行政村
 - 水系
 - 龙门冷泉乡村公园
 - 母瑞山红色革命乡村公园
 - 天池富硒农产品乡村公园
 - 龙门冷泉乡村公园
 - 母瑞山红色革命乡村公园

旅游咨询热线:
 定安旅游咨询服务电话: 0898-6382866
 “百里百村”乡村旅游服务中心
 (黄竹岭温泉休闲度假区): 0898-4373378
 定安旅游投诉电话: 0898-6382866 6382258
 定安一日游商家联系电话: 0898-6382866

景点酒店咨询热线:
 海南文笔峰生态文化旅游区: 0898-4373338
 海南国际温泉度假区: 0898-4398888
 海南山舍度假地: 0898-4370034
 龙门龙塘温泉: 李先生 13918000663
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 翰林温泉: 蔡先生 13518000032
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交通咨询热线:
 定安县汽车站电话: 0898-63823495
 海南南航订票热线: 95539

定安县人民政府网: <http://www.dingan.gov.cn>

Figure 6.13 Tourist map of Baili Baicun

It illustrates the four rural cultural parks in different colours and points out the most important sites with pictures. Sites that are highlighted on this map are scenic spots, for example trees; mountains; lakes and cold springs; interesting agriculture traditions; and, villages with traditional volcanic rock architecture. It also includes some of the tourism centres and villages that are planning to offer *nongjiale*. The brochure that includes the map suggests day tours for all four rural cultural parks and gives a short introduction to all the relevant sites. The second map Figure 6.14 is more practical.



Figure 6.14 Map of the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun

It shows all the tourism service centres and is more detailed, so visitors can use it to find their way around the ecomuseum. Its brochure also focuses on the region and the concept of Baili Baicun as a whole, introducing the ICH aspects of Baili Baicun, such as the Hainan Opera and the Junpo festival. It also suggests several one-day and two-day trips for Baili Baicun. Furthermore, as part of establishing the ecomuseum religious buildings connected to Daoism, for instance temples and ancestral halls have been rebuilt. Most recently the Li ancestral hall has been rebuilt by the local population of Longbantang village close to Longmen city. Figure 6.15 and figure 6.16 show the newly rebuild ancestral hall.



Figure 6.15 Newly built ancestral hall in Longbantang village, Baili Baicun



Figure 6.16 One of three ancestral shrines inside the ancestral hall

A video filming the opening ceremony of the ancestral hall that included many local rituals like ancestral worship, *bayin*, the dragon and lion dance and the Hainan Opera has been produced to promote the area and is being distributed among tourists.

According to one government official (Interview GO5 2013) in Baili Baicun, the local culture plays a more important role in ecomuseum development than the environment. “The ecomuseum in Baili Baicun for example focuses on agriculture. When the focus is on agriculture, it can happen that people are a more important factor and the original environmental (*yuan shengtai*) can be a bit less important”. However, as discussed the area has very distinctive natural environments. Many interviewees of the local population felt that tourists were mainly interested in the ecology of the area. This impression was supported by the signposting and maps of the area that mainly point out the natural heritage sites.

The ecomuseum design in Baili Baicun follows a different approach to 'territory' than other ecomuseum generations in China. As discussed, each ecomuseum generation in China adapted the ecomuseum, using their own version that aimed to improve ecomuseum practice in China. Baili Baicun adapted the Chinese ecomuseum approach, by moving away from the information centre or 'hub' model discussed in Chapter 4. Baili Baicun uses a decentralised approach resembling a mosaic that is made up of different pieces including tourist service centres, exhibition halls, rural cultural parks, villages, ICH traditions and natural heritage sites, that together form one picture of the cultural and natural heritage of this region in Ding'an.

The evaluation of the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun will be further discussed in Chapter 8 and 9. The next part of the chapter analyses heritage protection and tourism development in the second case study of Binglanggu.

6.4 Heritage protection, tourism and ecomuseum development in Binglanggu, Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter Binglanggu and Baili Baicun present two very different case studies. Ecomuseum development in Binglanggu has not begun at this point, therefore this part of the chapter is exploratory. It examines how heritage is preserved there today.

Binglanggu (Betelnut Park) or 'Li and Miao Nationalities Ecological Cultural Tourist Zone in Areca Valley of Ganza Ridge' is an ethnic-minority theme park that exhibits Li and Miao culture. It lies in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, around 28km from Sanya (see Figure 6.1), the county with the highest number of Li minority communities. It covers an area of about 333 hectares. Today the park is managed as a cooperation between a private business man and the provincial government. Since its establishment in October 1995, during the initial phase of tourism development in Hainan Province, Binglanggu went through many changes in exhibition concepts and topics (Xie and Wall 2008; Xie 2010). Philip Xie (2010) describes the changes in Binglanggu before I visited the case study. According to Xie (2010, 193) in early 2000 the concept of Binglanggu was to "faithfully portray the life, customs, and conditions of the Li minority". During that time all of the workers of Binglanggu belonged to the Li minority from the neighbouring villages and

presented their knowledge of traditional skills, such as making traditional Li textiles, singing Li songs and playing traditional instruments and dancing to the visitor. The idea behind Binglanggu was to create a living community that gave tourists the opportunity to learn more about Li culture (Xie 2010, 192, 193).

According to Xie (2010, 193- 196), Binglanggu changed its concept in 2005. The theme park management decided to place less focus on the culture of the Li and Miao minorities and concentrate on the themes of wilderness and ethnicity. From interviews with the staff and the owner Chen Tianfu, Xie (2010, 193) identified two main reasons for this transformation. One reason was the local government aimed to develop 'ecotourism' and 'wilderness' tourism in the area and financially supported these changes. The other reason was that tourists started to show less interest in the Li culture and Binglanggu had to set itself apart from the competing ethnic minority theme parks closer to Sanya. To become a more attractive tourism product, Binglanggu shifted away from its previous authentic portrayal of Li minority traditions and created a new ethnic tribe, the 'Chiyou'. This fabricated tribe was understood to have originated in Northern China and to have lived primitively, similar to people in the Stone Age (Xie and Wall 2008). According to Xie and Wall (2008) tourists typically were greeted by a '*Chiyou*' dressed troupe, coming out of the jungle and led on to one of the entertainments that involved the 'tribe members' killing a pig with spears. Actual performances of Li minority traditions lost significance for the park and as a consequence Binglanggu laid-off most of its full-time Li performers and employed part-time performers from neighbouring areas instead (Xie and Wall 2008). Phillip Xie (2010, 195) viewed Binglanggu during that time as a "world of 'kitsch'".

When I visited Binglanggu in April 2013 the concept of the theme park had transformed again and partly returned to a more professional form of its original version. Binglanggu now centres around Li and Miao minority culture again and as mentioned in the Introduction Chapter it is a research base for Li minority culture for several national and international universities. According to an interview with the Vice-Manager of Binglanggu these changes are connected to the government's new interest in ICH protection. Binglanggu's new exhibition concept was launched when the park was named a 'national intangible cultural heritage display base' in January 2010, shortly after the traditional Li textile techniques of spinning, weaving, dyeing and embroidering were listed on the

UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The next planned transformation of Binglanggu will be the establishment of an ecomuseum.

While Binglanggu clearly has a commercial purpose, it also supports research about Li minority culture. Several researchers work at the park and it also liaises with universities in Hainan, China and worldwide to document and preserve Li culture. Binglanggu published three books introducing the culture of Hainan's Li and Miao minorities. In addition, the park specialises in the collection of rare traditional cultural artefacts, for example jewellery, dresses, songs. Binglanggu displays both Li and Miao minority culture, but its focus is on the Li minority. It receives up to 5000 visitors during the high season and around 3000 visitors during the low season a week. The park has an entrance fee of RMB 169 (£17).

Binglanggu shows a mixture of exhibiting genuine heritage traditions, natural environments and fictional entertainment for the tourists. According to the Vice-Manager (2013) it is this mixture that makes Binglanggu unique:

In Binglanggu we present the visitors a display of farmers, villages and agriculture together with our friendly atmosphere. We show foreign and domestic visitors the warm-hearted culture of Hainan's Li and Miao minorities. We also safeguard traditional culture, for example we have several museum buildings that show the traditional culture of the Li minority, traditional objects, photographs; we collected them to display it for the tourists. The tourist see things that are unique and that are not often displayed elsewhere.

(Ibid.)

Not all the employees of the park belong to the Li or Miao minorities, however, they are all dressed up in the traditional suit of the minority they are supposed to represent. About one third of the park employees belong to the Li minority. They are composed of the older local population living in the Li villages around the park and members of Li and Miao minorities coming from other parts of Baoting and Hainan, such as Wuzhishan, Changjiang and Lingshui. When entering the park every time the visitors meet an employee of the park they are greeted with 'bolong' a Li greeting that means welcome. According to the Vice-Manager (2013) it is supposed to show the tourists the warm-hearted and friendly nature of the Li people. Binglanggu is divided into three different areas the cultural heritage village, the Ganza Li village and the Miao village (see map in Figure 6.17).

This chapter will discuss the natural heritage of Binglanggu first, then it will analyse the Li and Miao cultural heritage exhibitions and look at the entertainment side of the park.



Figure 6.17 Map of Binglanggu (<http://www.binglanggu.com/index.php?sn=about&fid=16>)

While the park also protects natural heritage it is clearly not the focus of the park. However, due to its location in the Ganzaling natural preservation area it has a rich environment with rain forest and countless betel nut trees that extend along the valley. The valley also grows tropical fruit trees including coconut palms and banana trees. The park has exotic wildlife including lizards, spiders and monkeys. A 1.2 km staircase leads up the waterfalls along the green jungle. Tourists can also take a zip-wire over the green trees of the betel nut valley. While the natural heritage of Binglanggu has little interpretation, it is seen as an essential element of cultural heritage protection. The Vice-Manager of Binglanggu (2013) stated that: “If you want to protect culture you need to protect its environment as well, you have to protect the ecology, houses (architecture) and the traditional living structure”. Despite this statement the park draws little connection between natural environments and cultural heritage of the Li, even though as discussed in Chapter 3 the two are deeply connected.

The cultural heritage of the Li minority is exhibited in two areas of the valley, the cultural heritage village and the Ganza Li Village. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter the Li minority is indigenous to Hainan Island. They are categorised into five dialect groups Ha, Qi Run, Meifu and Sai that differ in traditions, traditional dress and region. The religious beliefs of the Li minority are animism, ancestral worship and shamanism. The Li language has no written form and is part of the Chinese-Tibetan language family (Xie 2010, 76). Traditionally the Li were farmers practising swidden agriculture. Instead of using the traditional Han Chinese wet paddy-fields, they planted a variety of rice that grows in dry soil. They also cultivated rice using the slash-and-burn method that is normally practised for rice growing on mountain fields (Yang 1995/1996). Their society is organised differently from that of the Han society, inheritance is passed on through the female line and their marriage customs are more open.

Binglanggu introduces Li culture in several museum like exhibition halls showing Li minority heritage traditions, such as pottery, textile techniques, tattoos, music instruments made out of bamboo or coconut, religious beliefs, fire-making and farming. It shows ten ICH expressions that are listed as national ICH: Firewood-chopping dance of Li nationality; Primitive pottery-making technique of Li nationality; embroidering, spinning, weaving and dyeing technique of Li nationality; tree bark cloth-making technique of Li nationality and Li people's technique of drilling wood to make fire; Sanyuesan Festival; Li clothing; musical instrument made of bamboo; Qiongzong area folk songs; and boat-shaped house-making techniques.

In the cultural heritage village the visitors first visit two halls in shape of a turtle introducing the history of the Li on Hainan Island and their religious beliefs. The next hall provides an overview of Li culture in general displaying fire-making, pottery, Li brocade, jewellery and farming traditions and fishing with canoes. There is also one hall each dedicated to tattoos, clothing and pottery skills. Binglanggu also has Li ICH practitioners working at the park that demonstrate the skills of producing Li brocade, bamboo weaving and playing musical instruments, such as the nose flute. These ICH practitioners live in the villages around the park and come there to work and show their heritage to the tourists. Some of the older women also still have traditional Li tattoos. In order to make the environment seem more authentic the park has rebuilt a village for the older people to sit in. Overall I counted

around 15 older Li women who know how to produce Li brocade, eight of which still had traditional tattoos, ten men and two women who had the skill to build bamboo baskets, five men who knew how to play traditional instruments, one of them could play a nose flute and two women who could play the gong. Figure 6.18 shows a couple of Li women with traditional tattoos producing Li brocade and figure 6.19 shows an employee of Binglanggu playing a traditional instrument. There is also a part of the village where traditional marriage customs are explained and visitors can participate in a Li marriage ceremony.



Figure 6.18 Li minority women producing Li brocade in Binglanggu



Figure 6.19 Member of the Li minority playing a traditional instrument in Binglanggu

The area of the Ganza Li village shows an exhibit of the different kinds of traditional Li houses (see Figure 6.20). The houses are authentic houses which have been moved there from other places and have been rebuilt and repaired. The houses lead to a rebuilt Li village containing traditional architectural elements.



Figure 6.20 Traditional Li Minority houses in Binglanggu

The last area of the park is the Miao village, which is significantly smaller than the Li exhibition. Binglanggu has started to expand the exhibition on Miao minority culture, but at the time of the fieldtrip it was difficult to judge the exact nature of the exhibition since the construction work was not finished. Yet, the Miao representation appears to be a lot more commercialised than the Li exhibition. The part that exhibited Miao traditions focused mainly on medicine and the biggest part of the Miao area were souvenir stands.

Regarding visitor entertainment, the park has several shows that differ in how closely they represent actual heritage traditions. One presentation shows the music traditions of the Li minority and consists of Li people from the villages playing their instruments. While this kind of music would normally only be practised on special occasions, the type of music played is traditional Li music.

There is also a more spectacular show of Li and Miao dances several times a day. While some of the dances are similar to the original dances, there is also a fire dance that has little to do with Li or Miao culture. The same is true for the male costumes, which were specially designed for the show. Because Li and Miao minority dances are shown together, it is sometimes difficult for the audience to distinguish which dance belongs to which minority.

Figure 6.21 shows the fire making dance and figure 6.22 the bamboo dance of the Li minority.



Figure 6.21 Fire-making dance in Binglanggu (http://www.binglanggu.com/index.php?sn=en_index#)



Figure 6.22 Bamboo dance of the Li minority in Binglanggu (http://www.binglanggu.com/index.php?sn=en_index#)

The park also has a tea tasting. It sells the products made in the park, for instance Li brocade, bamboo baskets, jewellery, tea, typical Li minority food and alcohol, as well as traditional Miao medicine. It has a wide variety of ethnic-minority food, for example three coloured rice and a rice and meat dish wrapped in bamboo.

Similar to Baili Baicun the future ecomuseum in Binglanggu has a different approach to territory than other ecomuseums in China. As a theme park it safeguards ICH away from its original environment. While this approach to territory is opposed to the ecomuseum ideal that is aimed at safeguarding ICH in its original environment, the concept of the theme park also brings certain advantages like sufficient financial resources. The ecomuseum potential of Binglanggu and the perspectives of the Li minority members working there will be analysed in Chapters 7-9.

6.5 Summary

The goal of this chapter was provide an overview of the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province and to develop a profile of the heritage resources and ecomuseum development plans of the two case studies. It analysed the motivations and plans of the provincial government for the establishment of the ecomuseum in Hainan and examined the future ecomuseum sites. The chapter builds the basis for Chapters 7-9 that investigate the different stakeholder groups of the ecomuseum establishment and evaluate ecomuseum development in Hainan. It links in particular to Chapter 8 that examines the

challenges and opportunities of the ecomuseums in Hainan Province. The analysis of the ecomuseum sites also provided first results on the similarities and differences between ecomuseum development in Hainan and ecomuseum development in other Chinese provinces. These results contributed to the development of the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 7 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON ECOMUSEUMS, ICH AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HAINAN PROVINCE – EXAMINING IDEAS OF GOVERNMENT, EXPERTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 explored the current process of establishing ecomuseums in Hainan Province identifying motivations and plans of the provincial government as well as examining the characteristics of the selected sites. It also presented the heritage and tourism structure of the two case studies. Ecomuseum plans were mainly evaluated from the perspectives of provincial-government officials. Chapter 7 intends to expand this analysis of the future ecomuseums on Hainan Island by examining the perspectives of the three stakeholder groups involved in establishing the ecomuseums up to this point regarding heritage protection, community participation and tourism development in the ecomuseums. These three stakeholder groups are: provincial-government officials; heritage experts; and local community members. One expert explained the current role of these three stakeholder groups in the Hainanese ecomuseum development as follows:

Right now the groups involved in the establishment of ecomuseums are mainly the local government and to a lesser degree the local population that lives in the ecomuseum. The provincial government offers guidance and support through funding and manpower. There are also some experts participating in the ecomuseum.

(Interview E3 2013)

Another potential stakeholder group that was mentioned by two other experts were businesses; however, at this point no business cooperation was actively involved in the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan. While some of the future ecomuseums including Binglanggu, Yanoda and Wanquan River are partially operated by tourism businesses at the moment, they have not been informed about the ecomuseum development and the extent to which they will be involved is unclear. Because Binglanggu was one of the case studies, its Vice-Manager was interviewed for this research. The data of this interview is partly discussed in Chapters 6 and 8. The degree to which businesses influence and contribute to heritage protection in Hainan Province is an interesting topic that will be briefly discussed in Chapter 8. However, analysing the potential role of businesses in the ecomuseum establishment would be very exploratory and a detailed examination would go beyond the

scope of this thesis. To get valid results other cases studies of participatory heritage and cultural tourism projects in Hainan that are operated by tourism businesses, such as the Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone (NCTZ), would have to be included. In addition, several interviewees felt that discussing the involvement of tourism businesses in cultural heritage protection in Hainan was a sensitive topic.

This chapter achieves Aim 4 of this thesis: *“Critically analyse the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups in Hainanese ecomuseum development – namely provincial-government officials, experts and community members – on a holistic approach to ICH and environmental protection, sustainable-tourism developments, community participation using the ecomuseum ideal”*. To analyse these stakeholder perspectives and perceptions, this chapter mainly draws on data collected through qualitative interviews with government officials, heritage experts and members of the local communities and ethnic minorities in the two case studies in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu. Section 7.2 will begin by analysing the perspectives of five provincial-government officials on heritage protection, tourism development and community participation in the ecomuseums. The next part will investigate the views of ten heritage and tourism experts in Hainan on heritage protection, ecomuseum development in Hainan and community participation. The last section of this chapter presents views from 15 local community members in Baili Baicun and 18 members of the Li minority in Binglanggu on how they perceive their cultural heritage and tourism development.

7.2 Provincial government

As discussed in Chapter 4 one of the main stakeholder groups in ecomuseum development in China and Hainan, and arguably the most important one, is the government. Ecomuseums in China have tended to follow a top-down government-led approach to heritage and tourism management (Nitzky 2012a). In Hainan Province, similar to other Chinese provinces the provincial government has been the initiator of ecomuseum development. It was named as the main and most important stakeholder by all interviewees. Provincial governments determine where and in what form ecomuseums are established and they shape the degree to which the community participates, tourism is developed and heritage is protected. Therefore, the perspective of government officials towards these issues are of fundamental importance to evaluate the ecomuseum development on Hainan Island.

7.2.1 Perspectives on heritage protection and sustainable tourism development through the future ecomuseums

A central focus of this thesis is how ecomuseums in Hainan Province could contribute to sustainable tourism development and the safeguarding of the ICH and natural heritage. This part of the chapter analyses the ideas and plans of provincial-government officials towards these topics. As examined in the previous chapter the establishment of ecomuseums are part of the tourism development and heritage protection policies of the provincial government. However, in interviews with provincial-government officials it became apparent that no concrete plans regarding safeguarding cultural heritage and sustainable tourism development in the ecomuseum had been determined. The government officials admitted that the protection of cultural heritage in the ecomuseum was one of the most important questions the government had to work on. “But the biggest question [when establishing ecomuseums] is HOW we can manage to protect the cultural heritage and WHAT methods we will use” (Interview GO3 2013). Despite this lack of concrete plans, several broader ideas on what ecomuseums should contribute to the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments and to the development of sustainable tourism emerged out of the interviews. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the key topics.

Table 7.1 Key topics regarding holistic ICH protection and sustainable tourism development in the future ecomuseums from the perspectives of provincial-government officials

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 5 interviewed government officials)
Ecomuseum tasks regarding the protection of ICH and natural heritage	Holistic safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, ICH and natural-environment protection should be the focus of Hainanese ecomuseums.	5
	Allocate more attention and resources to the safeguarding of the ICH of Hainan’s ethnic minorities.	2 (GO2, GO4)
Strategies to strengthen the safeguarding of ICH	The development of better safeguarding policies with regards to ICH and natural environments.	3 (GO3, GO4, GO5)

within its natural environments in the ecomuseum	Inclusion of the local communities in the safeguarding process by focussing the protection efforts on their needs.	5
	Strengthening the knowledge and appreciation of local communities towards their culture through education.	2 (GO3, GO5)
Ecomuseum tasks regarding sustainable tourism development	Balance tourism development and heritage protection:	3 (GO1, GO3, GO5)
	- Place heritage protection over economic development and include the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments in development plans; and,	1 (GO5)
	- Visitor restriction in fragile areas	2 (GO3, GO5)

With regards to possible contributions of ecomuseums in protecting ICH, two key topics were addressed by provincial-government officials. All government officials agreed that the overall aim of the ecomuseums in terms of ICH protection should be the holistic safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments. One government official stated: “The ecomuseum in Hainan is about natural environments, human environments, history and the native culture of the local people. It is about the entire population from one area participating in the ecomuseum together” (Interview GO3 2013). ICH and natural-environment protection were named as particularly important for the ecomuseum in Hainan as they both need to be strengthened. Two government officials specifically mentioned the need of ecomuseums to safeguard natural environments, which they perceived as poorly protected at the moment. The importance government officials placed on the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments had two main reasons. As discussed in Chapter 6, government officials viewed Hainan’s rich natural heritage as one of its most important tourism resources and therefore had to find effective means to protect it. In addition much of Hainan’s tangible heritage, especially the island’s traditional architecture, has been destroyed, in particular in rural areas. As part of modernisation efforts the provincial government implemented a village reconstruction programme that involved the replacement of traditional houses with modern brick houses. Due to the few tangible

heritage sites left, the safeguarding of ICH alongside natural heritage gains more importance, particularly in the context of cultural tourism development.

The other possible contribution by ecomuseums to the safeguarding of ICH was their potential role in allocating more attention and resources to the safeguarding of Li minority ICH. While out of the currently planned ecomuseums only Binglanggu safeguards Li heritage, government officials felt that Li minority ICH needed to be highlighted in future ecomuseum development.

ICH is mainly protected in museums and in ecological protection zones. For example, we are building an ICH museum and a cultural transmission museum at the moment. This is not enough. I think what we should focus on next is establishing ecomuseums that protect the heritage of the Li minority.

(Interview GO4 2013)

The government official suggested to establish one big ecomuseum that would incorporate all the counties that have a high concentration of Li minority people. This is an interesting notion, but because these regions are less developed with regards to infrastructure and economy, it would require a huge financial commitment. There are several reasons why most ecomuseums in Hainan do not focus on safeguarding the ICH of the Li minority and a lack of financial resources is one of them (see Chapters 8 and 9).

To strengthen and achieve the safeguarding of ICH within natural environments, three key strategies were suggested.

1. The development of new and improved safeguarding policies and guidelines with regards to ICH and natural environments, because Hainan's laws and guidelines are less developed and effective than in other Chinese provinces. One government official suggested that:

We need a well-written law. When it comes to the effectiveness of laws and regulations concerning the protection of cultural heritage and natural environments Hainan Province is still behind. Other provinces, for example Guizhou Province, have policies on safeguarding the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities that are very explicit.

(Interview GO4 2013)

2. The inclusion of local communities in safeguarding processes, by concentrating the protection efforts on the needs of the local population. The main idea behind this suggestion is that the local population in rural areas has the wish for economic development and modernisation. An important step in including local communities in safeguarding processes is to take this wish seriously. One government official expressed that for local communities economic development often takes priority over heritage protection, by saying that:

Because our country is a developing country we want rapid economic development. Most people want to eat well and dress well, they still take cultural and natural heritage protection serious, but they do not grasp the actual meaning of protecting the original ecology. So we have to find a way to balance development and heritage protection. All measures must evolve around the local population and the visitors.

(Interview GO5 2013)

The reference to the visitors in this quote is particularly interesting. The need of ecomuseums to concentrate on visitors' learning and including them in heritage protection processes is also mentioned by several experts.

3. The strengthening of knowledge and appreciation of the local communities towards their culture through education. This suggestion was mentioned by one government official who argued that a lot of natural and ICH heritage was being destroyed, because the local population lacked the knowledge on how to safeguard natural environments and did not value their cultural heritage. The government official stated that:

I think one aspect we must improve is the overall education, because we Chinese people do not pay attention to the protection of old customs. One reason why we do not care about their safeguarding is that many people are unaware of the value of their own culture. And that is a question of education.

(Interview GO5 2013)

While education and the value of cultural heritage, are an issue in one of the case studies, the discussion with members of the local communities discussed in part 7.4 of this chapter shows that there are also other aspects that make the safeguarding of ICH difficult. In the protection of natural environments, however, education plays a vital role.

Another key topic for the establishment of ecomuseums was sustainable tourism development. Despite being named as a main motivation for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan as discussed in Chapter 6 as seen in table 7.1 only three of the five interviewed government official had considered how the ecomuseum could support sustainable tourism development. One relatively generic reply was that ecomuseums could support the island in finding a balance between tourism development and heritage protection. When asked how the government in Hainan was planning to balance tourism and heritage protection, it was answered that they had not developed any guidelines at this point. There were two key suggestions:

Two government officials suggested visitor restrictions in the more fragile environment. One government official commented: “We could classify different areas of cultural heritage and have a visitor restriction for fragile places. We still have think about if you need to buy a ticket for the ecomuseums or not. The whole process will be carried out in cooperation with the tourism department and tourism businesses” (Interview GO3 2013).

In this discussion the government official mentioned cooperating with tourism businesses to decide on the extent of tourism development in the ecomuseums, but not with local communities. Since they live in the ecomuseums, members of the local communities would be the group most affected by tourism development and therefore should be consulted. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 the exclusion of local communities from important decisions, is one of the main challenges for heritage and tourism projects in Hainan Province.

The other suggestion was to incorporate the aspects of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage in the tourism development plans of the ecomuseum. One government official stated:

The government should strengthen the protection aspect whilst they are developing tourism in the ecomuseum. They have to put protection first and development second. It is no use to develop everything and then start safeguarding once it is finished. The environment will already be polluted. You need to look what needs to be protected and then start developing.

(Interview GO5 2013)

This form of long-term planning is an aspect of heritage protection that often gets neglected in China. Heritage and natural environments are often safeguarded with *ad hoc* measures to tackle single issues, instead of examining the reasons behind the problem and looking for long-term solutions (Xu 2001). As discussed in Chapter 4 many ecomuseums in China also priorities tourism development over heritage protection (Yi 2011). Despite this positive and forward thinking comment of the government official, ecomuseum development in Hainan also lacks long-term planning. It has been pushed forward without guidelines and without planning the appropriate safeguarding measures. The next part of the chapter examines the provincial-government officials’ attitudes towards community participation in the ecomuseums in detail.

7.2.2 Perspectives on community participation in heritage management

As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, one of the three pillars of the ecomuseum ideal is community participation in heritage management. The lack of community participation, and, the top-down approach, to heritage management have been one of the main critique points of the ecomuseum movement in China (Chapter 4). Whilst there have been a few examples, for instance the Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum, in which the ecomuseum has encouraged local communities to take on responsibility for heritage protection and the communities were able to participate in benefit-sharing (Nitzky 2012b; Qiu 2012), in most cases ecomuseums have been detached from local communities. The main reason for this is that ecomuseums initiated by governments, do not necessarily value involving local communities in all steps of the ecomuseum development. Since the provincial government carries the main responsibility of establishing the ecomuseums in Hainan, attitudes of local government officials towards community participation will have a huge influence on the extent to which the local communities will be involved in the ecomuseums.

Provincial-government officials expressed a range of views on community participation in the interviews that are summarised in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Provincial-government officials’ attitudes towards community participation in the ecomuseums

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 5)
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		interviewed government officials)
Attitudes towards community participation in the ecomuseums	Community participation is an essential part of the ecomuseum ideal and ICH protection.	5
	The local communities should participate in benefit-sharing.	5
	Community participation in decision-making can be problematic and lead to conflicts.	3 (GO1, GO2, GO3)
	Community participation is irrelevant at this point of the ecomuseum development.	1 (GO4)
	The local population has to be included in the management and decision-making process.	1 (GO5)
Measures to involve the local communities in the ecomuseum development	Financial benefits and an improvement of living standards.	5
	Involvement in heritage management and ownership of their own culture.	1 (GO5)

When examining the perspectives of government officials on community participation in the ecomuseum table 7.2 shows that there is a disjoint in their statements. All government officials initially stated that community participation was an essential part of the ecomuseum ideal and an important aspect of ICH protection. One government official described the role of community participation in the ecomuseum and in ICH protection as follows:

Ecomuseums are about the protection of living things, and the most important thing for this kind of heritage protection is that the local people and their heritage do both participate in the protection process. Ecomuseums and ICH need to be handed down from generation to generation.

(Interview GO3 2013)

However, in the following conversations that discussed the practicalities of how and to what degree local communities should be involved, only one government official supported measures that included local communities in decision-making processes. This government official was very enthusiastic about the idea of community participation and stated that ecomuseums in Hainan should depend less on the government and more on local

communities. “A well-managed ecomuseum does not rely on the government. It depends on the local population... I hope that the local population is strengthened and receives the benefits of every aspect of protection, this way of protection is effective” (Interview GO5 2013).

Other government officials were less open to the idea of community participation in decision-making. Three government officials viewed this topic as highly problematic and worried about potential conflicts that could arise by involving communities into the management of the ecomuseums. One government official noted:

The problem is to figure out what end result [regarding community participation in heritage management] is the best. If we let the people lead the ecomuseum it is possible that a lot of conflicts arise on how to develop the place. Organising tourism is very difficult because it can destroy the place and it also can be problematic for heritage protection... I really want a content society and I welcome the local population to participate in the ecomuseum, in heritage protection and in interpretation. But it is a question of who has the leadership.

(Interview GO3 2013)

The interviews showed that there were worries among government officials that the local population would want to develop the ecomuseums in a different direction from them and that different visions for the ecomuseums could lead to conflicts within the local population. Concerns included that the local population wanted to overdevelop tourism (GO3), had too many expectations regarding the possible achievements of the ecomuseums (GO1, GO3) and expected huge investments from the government (GO2). Furthermore, government officials felt that the local population lacked the ability and education to effectively plan and manage the ecomuseum (GO1, GO3). The opinion that local communities lack the skills to effectively organise heritage protection and tourism development, is common among government officials in China. Therefore, the ideas and wishes of local communities are seldom heard (Oakes 2006a; Wang and Wall 2005). Providing local communities with the skills to actively participate in heritage protection is a long-term investment that provincial governments are often not willing to make (Li 2004). As discussed in Chapter 5, this is an issue that can be observed in many heritage projects that involve community participation in Hainan Province.

One government official deemed the participation of the local population irrelevant at this point of the ecomuseum development. It was stated:

I think right now the question of community participation is not the most important one. The local population are not the most important people, the important people are the powerful officials and ministers. Without their support, their knowledge of the localities and their expertise, the ecomuseums would be very difficult to establish... That is why I think once the powerful officials have done their job well, then we could think about how to encourage community participation.

(Interview GO4 2013)

This perspective on community participation is similar to the views discussed above and excludes local communities from being part of the decision-making process. It underestimates the knowledge and capacities of local communities regarding their own cultural heritage.

While communities are seldom involvement in decision-making in China, their participation in benefit-sharing is more common (Ying and Zhou 2007). Likewise, all government officials supported the idea of community participation in benefit-sharing in the Hainanese ecomuseum. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter one of the 'Chinese ecomuseum principles' is that ecomuseums do not only protect cultural heritage, but are also an agent for economic development and modernisation. In this aspect the ecomuseums in Hainan will follow their predecessors.

In that context, a government official argued that the best measure to encourage local communities to participate in the ecomuseums would be through economic benefits and an improvement of their quality of life.

Our protection aim for the ecomuseums is not only to protect the heritage, but also to develop them and improve the life of the people. To get the local people to agree to the establishment of the ecomuseum it is important to improve the quality of their life. If you only protect the heritage they worry that they will stay backwards and will not agree to the ecomuseum. It is a question of harmony.

(Interview GO3 2013)

Whilst it can be argued that economic development and modernisation are essential to support Hainan's local communities in participating in the ecomuseum, it is problematic that government officials assume that this is their main reason for getting involved. This assumption is one of the reasons why government officials do not find it necessary to explain the ecomuseum ideal to local communities, or to provide training and education to equip the local population with the skills to manage ecomuseums. Training local communities would take more time and funds. It would also involve developing sustainable mechanisms and programmes to ensure local community involvement. Assuming community participation will automatically happen, once the ecomuseum creates economic benefits is easier and takes up less resources. Ecomuseums are often presented as tourism initiatives to the local population, because government officials feel that is the easiest way to explain the ideas behind the ecomuseum and gain the villagers' interest in participation (Nitzky 2012a). This can also be seen in the interviews conducted with local community members (15) in Baili Baicun, discussed in section 7.4.1 of this chapter. While all interviewees were aware of the fact that Baili Baicun was being developed for tourism, no one had heard of the ecomuseum ideal.

However, there was also one very positive outcome that provides hope for the future of community participation in the Hainanese ecomuseums. The government official that supported the idea of community participation in decision-making, also made a strong case for encouraging participation by including local communities in the management process and giving the ownership of ecomuseums to the local communities. The government official believed that it would be most effective to separate the ecomuseums into zones and give the responsibility to manage these zones to local community members. This way, it was argued, the local communities would feel a stronger connection to their heritage and take the initiative in protecting it.

I believe we should take the landscape and let it all be managed by the local population. We should divide the land into zones and give the ownership to the local population. If they regard it as their own property it could be a very fruitful relationship. If we let someone else manage it, it might not be done well. But there needs to be an organised system, a system that leads them... The profits from it have to be given to the local population as well. For the local population to show initiative, the

government should give them autonomy in that aspect. If ecomuseums are supposed to be maintained, it is bad practice of the government to not let the local population participate in their management.

(Interview GO5 2013)

These interviews showed, that the Hainan government officials met have a perspective on community participation that is shared by most government officials in China. Due to this commonplace outlook there is difficulty in achieving deeper levels of community participation. However, as noted above, one government official also expressed more complex ideas of community participation. The ideas of this one government official mirror the opinions heritage experts had on community participation, which will be discussed alongside their views on heritage protection and ecomuseum development in the next part of this chapter. The significance and roles these perspectives of the provincial government play for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan Province will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

7.3 Experts

The importance heritage experts will have in the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan is difficult to estimate. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, the traditional role of experts in China is to guide the ecomuseum development (Hu 2006). Heritage experts in Hainan have been asked to provide input on the first group of ecomuseums (see Chapter 6). However, only three of the ten heritage and tourism experts interviewed for this thesis were directly involved in the ecomuseum development in Hainan. The ecomuseum was a new topic that started to become relevant in the last five years. All experts did have a theoretical understanding of the ecomuseum ideal and were supportive of its establishment. The experts placed particular importance on the principles of *in situ* conservation, the holistic nature of heritage protection and the idea that ecomuseums should benefit the local population in a sustainable way.

Up to now the provincial government has rarely included the experts' input into the ecomuseum development process. When discussing the stakeholder groups involved in ecomuseum development one heritage expert stated: "Experts are a stakeholder group, but they should be involved more in the establishment of the ecomuseum. Right now they participate very little" (Interview E3 2013). Seven interviewed experts voiced the concern

that their opinions and suggestions did not receive enough consideration by the government. They felt that their participation would be vital to research the cultural heritage and to ensure to success of the ecomuseum. This is encapsulated in the comment that:

Experts need to participate to guarantee the quality of the ecomuseums. That is very important. There is a lot of culture in the ecomuseums that needs to be researched by experts. They need to consult what kind of work different places require, on recording techniques for ICH etc.

(Interview E5 2013)

Whilst as mentioned above, only three of the interviewed experts had practical experiences with regards to ecomuseums, they all had studied the ecomuseum ideal to some extent and had their own opinions on establishing ecomuseums in Hainan. Their views were vital to evaluate the planned ecomuseum establishment and to analyse how effective the plans of the provincial government were in protecting ICH within natural environments and developing sustainable tourism in the ecomuseums.

7.3.1 Perspectives on ICH protection and sustainable tourism development

This part of the chapter examines the safeguarding of ICH within natural environments as well as tourism development in relation to the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan from the perspectives of heritage experts. An overview of the key topics can be found in table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Experts’ perspectives on ICH protection and sustainable tourism development in Hainan

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 10 interviewed experts)
Safeguarding of ICH within natural environments	Safeguarding of ICH improved significantly after 2009.	10
	Li brocade is a particular effective and positive example for the implementation of regulations.	10
	Other Li minority ICH traditions than the Li brocade need to be strengthened.	1 (E8)

	The safeguarding of natural environments needs to be strengthened.	5 (E1, E5, E6, E7)
	Safeguarding of ICH is the key to the maintenance of the Hainanese ecomuseums.	5 (E4, E5, E6, E7, E8)
	Holistic safeguarding of ICH within natural environments is particularly important in Hainan. Therefore, ecomuseums should combine the two.	7 (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7)
	Ecomuseums should focus on researching and safeguarding Li minority heritage.	8 (E1, E2, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9)
Sustainable tourism development	The development into an International Tourism Island has led to several positive changes.	10
	Tourism development in Hainan has not been sustainable up to this point.	4 (E4, E5, E6, E7)
	The use of cultural and natural tourism resources need to be strengthened.	3 (E4, E5, E7)
	The interpretation of natural heritage needs to be strengthen.	1 (E4)
	Overrepresentation of business interests in the cultural sector and an underrepresentation of local community needs.	2 (E6, E7)
	Balance cultural heritage protection and tourism development through long-term planning and a restriction of tourism numbers.	2 (E2, E3)

There were six key topics that experts discussed with regards to ICH protection within natural environments and the establishment of ecomuseums. According to the expert interviews, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, in particular ICH, significantly improved since 2009, the same year the Li brocade was listed on the *UNESCO ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding List*. Li minority heritage and Li brocade were consequently often named as the ICH expressions that received the most attention. Li brocade was named as a particular effective and positive example for the implementation of these regulations. Overall experts noted that the government invested a lot of financial and administrative resources in the management and research of cultural heritage:

Since 2009 Hainan's provincial government is very committed to managing cultural heritage. They distributed a large amount of funding to the protection of heritage. They invested manpower, material and financial resources to establish museums. The protection of ICH has also become more important... Since last year we participate in a national level research

study to protect and promote Li brocade. This year is the first year they received funds. This aspect gets a lot of attention.

(Interview E6 2013)

However, one of the experts (E8) also noted that not all Li minority ICH traditions received the same attention and funding as Li brocade. Remarkably, heritage experts had a more positive view on the government success of safeguarding ICH than of some of the government officials. As discussed in subchapter 7.2.1 and Chapter 6 two government officials noted that the safeguarding of Li minority heritage needed to be allocated more attention and resources.

Experts felt that ICH protection was an important task and key to the effectiveness of the future ecomuseums in Hainan. The safeguarding of ICH was seen as an essential requirement for the maintenance of the ecomuseums over several generations. They interpreted ICH as the soul of the ecomuseums that differentiated it from the traditional museum idea. One expert stated:

One important way to achieve this [maintaining the ecomuseum] is to protect the ICH. But how can we protect it effectively? How to encourage the local population to safeguard and practice their tradition? These are the essential questions. If the ICH is not protected well the ecomuseum will not be very good and it will be difficult to maintain it.

(Interview E4 2013)

In agreement with two of the government officials, five heritage experts felt that whilst ICH and tangible heritage were being protected effectively, the safeguarding of natural heritage was cause for concern and that there was a lack of guidelines. They criticised this aspect of heritage saying that protection needed to be strengthened and that a lot of natural heritage sites were being destroyed due to development projects. For example one stated:

There are still government officials who do not support important regulations for the safeguarding of natural heritage. The instructions on safeguarding natural heritage are still lacking. For example, there are places that have very important natural heritage that have not been maintained for a long period of time.

(Interview E6 2013)

Apart from stricter guidelines, the importance to encourage the local population to protect natural heritage was highlighted. One expert (Interview E1 2013) explained that Hainan used to have a very effective safeguarding system that included local communities taking responsibility for protecting the local environment. The expert felt that ecomuseums could hand part of the responsibility for safeguarding natural heritage back to the local communities.

When discussing the safeguarding of ICH and natural heritage seven experts emphasised the inter-relation of these heritage forms and the need to safeguard them together. They noted that this link was especially relevant in Hainan Province. According to one of the interviewed experts:

Many ICH traditions are connected to the environment, in particular the traditions of the Li minority. For instance, the Li brocade is strongly linked to the environment in which it is practised... I really feel ICH and natural heritage rely strongly on each other and complete each other. Therefore, their protection should not be separated.

(Interview E1 2013)

These experts agreed that one essential aim of ecomuseums in Hainan should be to combine the safeguarding of intangible, natural and tangible heritage, not only in a practical sense, but also in an administrative form. One expert explained that even though in Hainan different divisions for cultural heritage protection are combined under one department (see Chapter 3), often the different divisions do not cooperate effectively, stating that:

I think one important goal for the ecomuseums would be to strengthen the cooperation between tangible and intangible heritage protection. Right now they stand on their own. People who work on one do not communicate and cooperate with people who work on the other. It is the same with natural heritage. Ecomuseums would improve that because they protect all the different kinds of heritage together.

(Interview E4 2013)

I also observed this issue. As mentioned in Chapter 3 the government officials responsible for the development of ecological cultural protection zones in Hainan were not aware of the ecomuseum development, even though both follow similar principles. This point will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

In the context of the ecomuseums' role in combining the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments, eight experts expressed that the ICH of the Li minority should be one major focus of the ecomuseums. They felt, because many Li traditions were rooted in natural heritage, ecomuseums should play an essential role in safeguarding them.

Experts also viewed the ecomuseum as a chance to protect the faster disappearing traditions of the Li minority and saw it as an opportunity to encourage research on these topics. They felt that researching heritage traditions would be one of the essential tasks of the ecomuseum in Hainan.

These experts' perspectives on the needs of safeguarding ICH within natural environments in Hainan are in line with two principles of the ecomuseum ideal, Principle 12 "Gives equal attention to immovable and movable tangible material culture, and to intangible heritage resources" and Principle 18 "Encourages a holistic approach to the interpretation of culture/nature relationship" (Corsane, Elliott and Davis 2004). Therefore, these principles are of particular relevance for the ecomuseum development in Hainan.

As mentioned, another theme of the ecomuseum development in Hainan is sustainable tourism development. For this theme six key topics were mentioned (see table 7.3). Experts stated that due to Hainan's development into an International Tourism Island tourism had undergone several positive changes, for instance an improvement of the quality of tourism services and the creation of new scenic spots. However, despite these positive developments, many challenges were noted. Some of these challenges, such as the uneven distribution of tourism, were already discussed in Chapter 5. With regard to sustainable tourism in ecomuseum formation three experts saw the need to strengthen the development of natural and cultural heritage resources. One of them noted:

One thing that needs to be improved right now is cultural tourism. Tourism used to be mainly connected to Hainan's natural environments (beaches), but in the future tourism will have a stronger cultural

component. ICH protection and ecomuseums are all connected to cultural tourism. We are researching how to improve cultural tourism and how to promote cultural products better.

(Interview E5 2013)

In that context one expert felt a stronger interpretation of natural heritage sites was needed in all sustainable tourism projects and in particular in the future ecomuseums in Hainan, an aspect that often gets neglected in sustainable tourism in China. This was represented in the following comment that:

Hainan places a lot of importance on natural environments in its tourism development. I think for the tourism development in the ecomuseums these natural resources also play a major role. We started to employ these resources, but I think we need to do it more and in more depth, for example in the interpretation of natural resources.

(Interview E4 2013)

Experts had different opinions on what constituted the effective interpretation of natural heritage in tourism areas. This is one of the challenges of the ecomuseums in China and will therefore be discussed in Chapter 8.

In that context four experts criticised that tourism in Hainan has not been sustainable so far and mainly focuses on businesses and economic benefits. At the moment tourism developers in Hainan are more interested in profits than in creating sustainable cultural content. This challenge is faced by many cultural tourism projects in Hainan, for example the Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone (NCTZ) which has been analysed in Chapter 5. Most of the cultural tourism sites in Hainan are being developed by businesses and not by the government. According to two experts this leads to an overrepresentation of business interests in the cultural sector and an underrepresentation of local community needs. One expert pointed out:

I think the tourism industry in Hainan is very problematic. It does not have a proper development plan and at the moment only concentrates on financial profits. Therefore it mainly concentrates on the need of the businesses... Hainan is not very good in incorporating the needs of its population in the tourism development and making use of its unique landscape. Therefore, I think tourism in Hainan needs to be reformed. If

Hainan sticks to the original model it will hinder its development into an International Tourism Island.

(Interview E7 2013)

Consequently, experts mentioned the balance between tourism development and heritage protection as one of the major tasks of the ecomuseums. They expressed that in less developed regions, like Baili Baicun and Qionghai, mass tourism could lead to the pollution of nature and the destruction of cultural heritage. Similar to the government officials; the experts had no obvious solution for this issue. One suggestion was to reinvest the income from heritage tourism into the protection of cultural resources (E4). Other suggestions, such as the restriction of visitor numbers and the need for long-term planning in tourism development, corresponded to those of the government officials. One expert stated:

When less economically developed regions start to develop a tourism industry, they sometimes do not pay a lot of attention to heritage protection and only think about developing tourism. If too many tourists arrive, natural environments and cultural heritage get polluted and destroyed. Places that protect their heritage and the environment effectively often restrict the number of tourists. This could be one possibility for the ecomuseum. Hainan has a few places that have been polluted because of the high tourist numbers. Culture has to be protected and utilised in a balanced way.

(Interview E3 2013)

The discussions on sustainable tourism and ICH protection showed that, to avoid common issues in these fields, the future ecomuseums in Hainan have to take the needs of the local population stronger into account and find a way to balance heritage protection and tourism development. Experts argued for more guidelines in heritage protection and a stronger focus on cultural contents in cooperation with local communities. The next part of the chapter discusses issues of community participation in the ecomuseum.

7.3.2 Perspectives on community participation in heritage management

As mentioned before community participation is central to the ecomuseum ideal. While heritage experts are not directly deciding to what extent the community will be involved in the ecomuseums, their attitudes towards community participation are still vital for this thesis. Firstly, they were able to provide me with an important perspective on how the

community is involved in heritage protection in Hainan at the moment. Secondly, due to their advisory function to the government their opinions are relevant in evaluating future possibilities for community participation in Hainan’s ecomuseums. The views of the heritage experts are summarised in table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Experts’ perspectives on community participation in heritage management

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 10 interviewed experts)
Community participation in ICH protection and sustainable tourism development	Community participation is essential for sustainable tourism development and effective heritage protection.	10
	Participation of the Li minority in heritage protection and sustainable tourism is limited.	3 (E1, E5, E8)
	Hainanese population is very engaged in safeguarding cultural heritage.	3 (E3, E4, E6)
Measures to encourage community participation in the ecomuseums	Financial benefits and the improvement of living standards.	5 (E1, E2, E8, E9)
	Attractive job opportunities, training classes and education possibilities.	2 (E3, E5)
	Involvement in decision-making processes right at the beginning of the ecomuseum development.	6 (E1, E4, E5, E6, E7)
The understanding of the ecomuseum ideal	An understanding of the ecomuseum ideal is essential for community participation in the ecomuseum.	9
	Demonstration of the principles of the ecomuseum with practical examples.	3 (E3, E5, E6)

In general heritage experts shared the opinion that, community participation was essential for sustainable tourism development and effective heritage protection in the ecomuseums. Communities play a particular important role in the safeguarding of ICH, because they are responsible for transmitting their heritage traditions. “Our ICH protection relies on the knowledge of the local population. Because it is their culture and we have to learn from them. Therefore, their knowledge in protecting their culture surpasses our knowledge” (Interview E9 2013). When discussing the involvement of the local population in heritage protection at the moment it emerged that the involvement in heritage activities depended on the ethnic group the local communities belonged to. With regards of the safeguarding of

heritage and the development of sustainable tourism of the Li minority, experts remarked that they often worked in the tourism service sector, but seldom participated in actual heritage management. In some instances communities were involved in heritage protection in an advisory function, for example when listing new heritage items on the provincial safeguarding list. This was summarised in the following statement that:

The local population participates mainly in the service sector when it comes to tourism. They work at the scenic spots, that's where most of the jobs are. In ICH protection, normally the people that perform the heritage at the scenic spots belong to the ethnic minorities. The local population rarely participates in the form of management. Another way the local population does participate is in advisory activities.

(Interview E5 2013)

One expert (E1) stated that because heritage management is the responsibility of the government, local community members did not show the initiative to participate in its safeguarding, in particular when the heritage had no direct connection to them. The expert felt that ecomuseums could give all the community members a stronger connection to local heritage and therefore encourage their involvement.

In contrast to that, when talking about the local Hainanese population, experts stated that they were very involved in safeguarding cultural heritage, in particular in the safeguarding of their ancestral halls, their vernacular houses and their ICH. Local communities felt responsible to guarantee the safeguarding of their own heritage. One expert remarked that the attitude of local communities towards safeguarding their heritage is coherent with ecomuseum ideals; for example their wish to protect their heritage *in situ*. This expert expressed that, with the right support through the ecomuseums, local communities could become even more invested in their heritage, by saying:

The local population in Hainan is different from the local population in other places in China. The local population is very active and knowledgeable in terms of safeguarding natural heritage and ICH. They value it and protect it very well without economic considerations. If we establish an ecomuseum and provide the local population with the right leadership, their enthusiasm for heritage protection will grow even more.... The local population insists on protecting their heritage *in situ*,

they do not want it brought somewhere else, this is also one of the ecomuseum principles.

(Interview E4 2013)

Even though some local communities are very invested in safeguarding their heritage, the government has not involved them into the ecomuseum establishment at this point. In discussions how to encourage a more active community engagement in the ecomuseums in the future and how to explain the ecomuseum ideals to the local communities experts expressed several ideas.

To encourage community participation in the ecomuseum experts mainly suggested three measures (See Table 7.4): firstly to point out the financial benefits of participating in the ecomuseum to the local population; secondly to increase the education level of the local population and put them into managing positions to encourage them to stay in their villages; and thirdly to give the local community a more prominent role in establishing the ecomuseum and ensure long term benefits.

Similarly to all government officials five experts argued that the gain of financial benefits and the improvement of the quality of life would be a major motivation for the local communities to participate in the ecomuseums. One expert commented:

The idea that ecomuseums provide the local population with financial benefits must be propagated among them. If they become aware that the ecomuseum benefits them and protects their environment, people from different backgrounds and with different ideas will come together and participate and protect the ecomuseums.

(Interview E1 2013)

Two experts voiced that community participation was not a question of poverty relief, but of creating attractive job opportunities, training classes and education possibilities for the younger generation in the communities to encourage them to stay or even to return to their villages. It was noted that because of their knowledge of local circumstances, local community member would be better suited for managerial positions in the ecomuseums than outside experts. This was articulated in the following statement that:

Many people establishing the ecomuseums have the conviction that the local population is mainly motivated to participate, if they gain financial benefits. But it is not a question of poverty relief. It is a question of how to encourage the young people to return to their home place. And that is a question of training. If they are supposed to come back they need training. If we trained those middle-aged and young people, they could become their own managers and leaders. They can newly develop the area and are aware of the local practicalities... If the local population understands the ecomuseum they can give it their own meaning and their own value.

(Interview E5 2013)

The need to increase the education and awareness of the local population was also raised by one other expert. "To encourage the local communities to participate in heritage protection we need to spread the idea more, increase their education and explain the benefits of the ecomuseum. Cultural heritage is important and we need to explain the reasons to them" (Interview E3 2013).

A strategy that was suggested by six of the experts was to involve the local population in decision-making processes from the very beginning of the ecomuseum development. One expert argued that if the local community had the chance to steer the ecomuseum development, cultural heritage protection would improve and the ecomuseums would strive towards long-term benefits instead of fast profits through mass tourism. The expert stated:

Ecomuseums should be beneficial to our society... It should teach the local population through experience to utilise their cultural heritage to improve their life and give them benefits. This way their enthusiasm towards heritage protection will be strengthened... It would be the best if they establish it themselves. If they could establish the ecomuseum themselves their enthusiasm would get encouraged and their knowledge of cultural heritage protection and their awareness would increase... Most ecomuseums in China right now are too commercialised and are mainly about fast profits. It should be about the long-term profits.

(Interview E6 2013)

One issue that is relevant for community involvement in the ecomuseums is that local communities understand the ecomuseum ideal. Several experts felt that the concept of the

ecomuseum was too far removed from the ideas of museums and safeguarding heritage in China to understand it on a purely theoretical level. However, they perceived an understanding of the ecomuseum ideal as essential to achieving any form of community participation in the ecomuseums. Therefore, they advised to demonstrate the principles of the ecomuseum with practical examples. One expert suggested that the local population should visit the 'ecomuseum model sites' recently established in China, explaining that:

Our country just developed these 'ecomuseum model sites' that maybe could be visited by the local population. If you want to explain the ecomuseum ideal, it does not work just to tell someone about the idea and the principles. You have to get the local population and the leaders to think about what kind of museum the ecomuseum is... The best way to do that would be to show it to them.

(Interview E6 2013)

Another proposal was to establish one very good ecomuseum, as an example in Hainan, instead of using the 'model ecomuseum sites', which are also not always in line with the ecomuseum principles as discussed in Chapter 4.

Overall experts made a strong case for community involvement in decision-making processes in all the steps of the ecomuseum development arguing that it would give the local communities the encouragement they needed to effectively safeguard their ICH and develop sustainable tourism. Despite the different commitment to heritage protection of the Hainanese population and the Li minority in the case studies, experts felt that both groups would benefit from ecomuseum development. The next section of this chapter will investigate the views of the local communities in the two case studies.

7.4 Local Communities in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu

This chapter analyses the perspectives of local community members and members of the Li minority in the two case studies, Baili Baicun in Ding'an County and Binglanggu in Baoting County. In theory the local population is one of the most important stakeholders of the ecomuseum; its principles both in a Western and a Chinese context call for the active participation of local communities in management and decision-making processes (Corsane 2006a, Myklebust 2006). However, as discussed in Chapter 4 and in the previous parts of this chapter, in China, the community is often only marginally involved in ecomuseum

development. In Hainan local communities have not been involved or informed about the establishment of ecomuseums up to this point. Therefore, their opinions have little practical influence on the ecomuseum development at the moment. However, as heritage experts pointed out in their interviews, it would be vital for the future ecomuseums in Hainan to integrate the needs of the local communities in their development. The opinions of local community members regarding ICH and tourism development, consequently, were an important perspective for the development of the possible Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines for this research. The two case studies will be discussed separately beginning with the case study in Baili Baicun.

7.4.1 Perspectives on safeguarding ICH and tourism development in Baili Baicun

As mentioned in Chapter 6, Baili Baicun is a cluster of villages mainly inhabited by Hainanese people. Its population is fairly homogenous, most people are farmers with a similar education background and income level. Overall 15 community members were interviewed. Their views on ecomuseum development, ICH and tourism development are summarised in the table (Table 7.5) below.

Table 7.5 Perspectives on safeguarding ICH and tourism development in Baili Baicun

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 15 interviewed community members)
Ecomuseum development	Unaware of the ecomuseum development in their area.	15
Important ICH traditions	Junpo Festival.	13
	Ancestral worship.	13
	Traditional food and agricultural products.	8
	Traditional dances and songs.	6
	Hainan Opera.	6
Attitudes towards their ICH traditions	Proud of local heritage traditions.	15
	Heritage is an important part of live.	15
	Local traditions are known and practised by all generations.	15
	Communities work hard to safeguard heritage and keep it alive.	15
Safeguarding of ICH and natural	ICH and natural environments are well protected	15
	Protect ICH themselves through recording it,	15

environments	continuing its practice and teaching it to the younger generation.	
	Vandalism at heritage sites and the pollution of the environment has increased.	2
Tourism development and its impacts	Support the tourism development in the area.	15
	Tourism numbers: Many tourists;	8
	No tourists; and,	2
	Only a few tourists, at the moment.	4
	Cultural heritage is important for tourism and tourism development has supported its safeguarding.	4
	Tourists visit because of the natural heritage and not the culture.	10
	Active interest in introducing local culture and natural environments to tourists.	15
Government role in safeguarding ICH and natural environments	Wish to financially benefit from the tourism development.	1
	Government is doing very good work in developing tourism and protecting cultural heritage.	2
	Heritage protection is not the responsibility of the government, but the task of all the community members.	3
	The government needs to improve its efforts regarding: Regulations;	6
	Funding; and, Decision-making.	2 2
No opinion regarding this topic.	3	

To gain an impression of the level of information the local population was equipped with and how the government included them in the ecomuseum development progress, one topic discussed was the ecomuseum development in the area. As seen in table 7.5, despite the advanced stage of the ecomuseum development, local community members were unaware that their area was establishing an ecomuseum. For instance, community members in the Longbantang village, which was designated as an ecomuseum and had received a new Li family ancestral hall due to the ecomuseum development, stated that: “No, I do not know what an ecomuseum is. However, we believe that no matter what kind of ‘museum’ we have, the people should do their best to protect the history” (Interviewee LH3 2013). This statement already hints at the important role cultural heritage plays in the lives of the local communities.

The next themes explored, were the heritage traditions particularly important to the local population and the role these ICH expressions played in their lives. In Baili Baicun the local population was very proud of their ICH traditions, they were so strongly incorporated in their daily-life that the interviewees had difficulties to understand the meaning of the term 'tradition'. They simply perceived them as part of their everyday life on the countryside. Important traditions that were frequently mentioned were ancestral worship, the Junpo festival, traditional food and agricultural products, traditional dances and songs and the Hainan Opera. 13 out of the 15 interviewed community members noted ancestral worship and the Junpo festival as one of their most important traditions. One interviewee stated that the Junpo festival "is a way to remember the dead heroes and the people who made contributions to our area" (LH2 2013). Younger community members pointed out the relevance of historical and local elements in the celebration of the Junpo festival. This is articulated in the following comment that: "One very important part of this area are its local deities for example the emperor Tutiemuer who got married here in Ding'an. We celebrate and worship these deities during the Junpo Festival" (Interviewee LH13 2013).

Another important heritage tradition that interviewees were particularly proud of were the local *zongzi*. "Our *zongzi* are very well-known. In Ding'an we use black pork to wrap our *zongzi*, it is famous everywhere in Hainan. If you come here in the morning you can buy them everywhere. It is a good gift to bring back" (Interviewee LH5 2013).

The interviews also showed that these traditions were practised on different levels by all generations. While not everyone was interested in being an actor of the Hainan Opera or playing an instrument of the *bayin* orchestra, being able to sing local songs and dance farmer's dances was viewed as common knowledge and a regular activity. In particular the younger interviewees stated that they participated in these events on a regular basis. Up to this point, most of the traditions were performed for the community themselves and had no connection to tourism. One local community member commented that:

We have many traditional local dances and songs. Everybody here knows about these traditions. Everybody participates in these dances and traditions, old and young people. These traditions are very important. For example, one local tradition is called *bayin*, which is played with eight

different instruments. Right now mainly local people participate in these dances and music, but theoretically it is open to everyone.

(Interviewee LH13 2013)

Other heritage traditions like the Hainan Opera are practised during special occasions, such as weddings and festivals and “we also like to go to see the Hainan Opera about two or three times a year. It is an important part of our culture” (Interviewee LH12 2012). As discussed in Chapter 6, the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun does concentrate on protecting the heritage traditions named by community members as being particularly important in their life. This supports the ecomuseum in making a meaningful contribution to the safeguarding of ICH in the area.

During the interviews all members of the communities repeatedly remarked how proud they were of their heritage traditions, that they worked hard to safeguard them and that they carefully pass these traditions down to the younger generation. One community member noted:

Of course our heritage is important for the young generation as well. We have an important tradition, if we have men, who achieved great things in our family genealogy we will write down their names and we will worship them every year... Our history is handed down from generation to generation. You can find all of the valuable people in the family tree. This is a great way to encourage the young people to do something good.

(Interviewee LH3 2013)

Another community member (Interviewee LH5 2013) stated: “Heritage protection is very important to us. We have many scenic spots and we work really hard to protect our traditional houses”. A member of the community (Interviewee LH6 2013), who owned one of these traditional houses, expressed how fortunate he felt living there and that he took great care in protecting his house.

This is an interesting contrast to the way Hainan’s ethnic minorities feel about their traditional houses. Many members of the Li minority, for example, prefer to live in modern houses. In one village that still has several traditional Li boat-shaped houses, there have

been reports of houses being burned down by local community members (GO3, pers. comm. 2013).

The next topic discussed was the safeguarding of ICH and the natural environment in Baili Baicun. Overall community members felt that ICH and the natural environment are well protected in the area. They commented that they protected their ICH themselves by recording it, continuing its practice, and, teaching it to the younger generation. A local woman (Interviewee LH9 2013) explained that: “I believe that heritage traditions should be transmitted by us to the future generation. For example we repaint the Buddha every time when we celebrate the festival. I think this is a way of transmission”. One of the younger men (Interviewee LH13 2013) mentioned that he contributed to the protection of ICH by teaching it to the children. “I already protect the heritage. I teach younger people our dances and songs”.

However, despite the overall positive impression of heritage protection in the area, two community members stated that vandalism at heritage sites and the pollution of the environment had increased in recent years. Both of them felt that it was the government’s responsibility to improve this situation. One local woman suggested that:

The government and other institutions responsible should step up their efforts in supervising heritage protection, because the phenomenon of destroying the heritage is getting more and more serious. For example, you can see many inscriptions on the wall of the temple, such as ‘XXX was here’.

(Interviewee LH8 2013)

The other community member (Interviewee LH13 2013) raised the issue of tourists polluting the natural environment. “It would be good if the government would make sure that the tourists are not leaving their litter here. Some of the heritage sites are a bit polluted”. He added: “I am already trying to improve this, when I see tourist throwing things on the ground I tell them to pick it up”.

The interviewed local community members had fairly homogenous views on which ICH is important to them and it’s safeguarding, as shown in Table 7.5. Opinions on tourism development and its impacts were more diverse. Local community members had different

perceptions about the numbers of tourists they received. Eight interviewed community members felt that they had a lot of tourism in the last few years, in particular during the weekend. Two community members stated that there was no tourism and four community members agreed that at the moment they have few tourists. One of the four community members articulated that: “At the moment we have not too many tourists. The tourism development is unsatisfactory right now, but we still have few visitors every day. Most of them come from Haikou. We are establishing *nongjiale* and we think that will increase the number of tourists soon” (Interviewee LH4 2013). This view that there were few tourists every day is consistent with my observations. The different assessments of tourism by community members can be explained through the area in which the interviewees lived and the changes in tourism development in recent years. Whilst compared to other tourism sights in China, Baili Baicun does not get many tourists (I did not encounter more than 10 visitors a day, even during the weekend), it might seem a lot to the local communities who are not used to being a tourism attraction. In addition, community members who felt that there were many tourists lived in closer proximity to the main tourism attractions than those who thought Baili Baicun had no tourism.

Community members also had different opinions on what sights were particularly interesting for tourists and how this had affected the safeguarding of heritage in the area. The community members in the Longbantang village, for example, felt that tourism had contributed to the protection of their culture. One community member stated that the culture of Baili Baicun was important for the tourism development on Hainan Island, saying that: “Our culture is very important for the development of Hainan into an Intentional Tourism Island. We have villages full of cultural heritage and the majority of the leaders in Hainan already recognised that” (Interviewee LH1 2013). They felt that the tourism development could bring their village closer together.

Community members in other villages felt that tourists mainly visited the area because of its interesting natural heritage. They noted that they would welcome more visitor interest in their cultural heritage and were enthusiastic about explaining their cultural heritage traditions. According to one interviewee:

The tourists mainly visit natural heritage like the *Aiqing shu*. But I would like them to be more interested in our traditions. There is a lot we could show them. And our farming traditions could be interesting for people from the city. Especially the older generation knows a lot about our area.

(Interviewee LH13 2013)

These different perspectives also can be explained by the location of the villages. The Longbantang village was not near any natural heritage sights, but had the newly rebuild Li family ancestral hall. Other villages were located around the *Aiqingshu* and the Banyan King Tree. Alongside the interviews, observation supported the impression that tourists mainly visited Baili Baicun because of the natural heritage. During informal conversations with local community members at the sights, they often mentioned that while tourists enjoyed the natural environment there was little interest towards the aspect of Daoist religion that is connected to the natural heritage in the area. It is possible that this focus on the natural environment will shift, once the ecomuseum is completed.

Overall, all the interviewees had a positive attitude towards tourism and supported its development. They felt that their cultural heritage traditions and history would be interesting for tourists and were eager to communicate and talk to tourists. For example, one local community member (Interviewee LH7 2013) living in a traditional Hainanese house stated several times during the interview that he enjoys showing his house to visitors. He said that: "I would welcome people to come and visit my house. If they are on the road they can just come in and have a look, just like you". Similar statements were made in every interview and were supported by my observations. I was approached by local community members at every heritage site and on the road. They explained what they were farming; pointed out Daoist shrines in the area; the local way to eat jack fruit and what trees were particularly interesting.

Remarkably, despite the perception of government officials that the main incentive for the local population to participate in the ecomuseum would be financial benefits, the idea of financial profits was only mentioned by one of the interviewees. One community member (Interviewee LH9 2013), when discussing her view on tourism development in the area, said that she hoped "many tourists will come to Baili Baicun. The more the better. I hope my village will be a lot richer".

The last theme discussed with the community members was the role of the government in the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments. Community members pointed out different aspects that were important to them. Several community members felt that the government was already doing very good work in developing tourism and protecting cultural heritage. “I think the government is already supporting us, for example they built these tourism information centres. It is just difficult to protect everything, because the area is so big. But I feel the protection of the natural heritage is very good here” (Interviewees LH10; LH11, 2013). Other community members argued that heritage protection was not the responsibility of the government, but the task of all the community members. “There is not much the government can do; I think our people should protect the culture consciously. We can only achieve it together” (Interviewees LH9 2013).

Community members who wanted the government to support them felt the government should increase their efforts in the following areas: regulations; funding; and, decision-making. As mentioned earlier, several community members felt that the government should increase regulations and supervisory efforts in connection to heritage sites damaged by tourists. “We just wish the government and the travel companies that come here would be a bit more responsible and make sure that this place stays beautiful” (Interviewee LH13 2013).

Other community members mentioned that it would be helpful if they received more financial support from the government to maintain their heritage. One of them (Interviewee LH7 2013) mentioned that it was very expensive for him to maintain his traditional house. “I think it would be very helpful if the government would give us more financial support to protect our heritage. It is very expensive to repair a traditional house. For example when it has been damaged by a typhoon it would be good if they would help with the repairs”.

Two members of the community were concerned that the government did not consult them in decision-making processes and did not inform them about changes in their villages. One of them stated:

I think when the government is developing the villages it would be good if they inform us of their plans and ask what we think. It would be good if they would convene a meeting and inform us what they want to do and

how it is being done. I really think the government needs to listen more to our suggestions. We live here so it would make sense that we also get to say what we need.

(Interviewee LH5 2013)

The exclusion of the local population from the development processes happening at Baili Baicun has clearly led to discontentment on the site of some local community members and it would be important for the ecomuseum to resolve this. The issue of the involvement of local community members in ecomuseum development is further analysed in Chapters 8 and 9. The next part of this chapter evaluates the views of Li minority members in Binglanggu.

7.4.2 Perspectives on safeguarding ICH and tourism development in Binglanggu

As discussed previously Binglanggu is a theme park aiming to represent the entire heritage of the Li minority. Li minority members working there come from all over Hainan and have very different education and income levels. They include members from the communities located around the park (3 interviewees), managerial staff and tour guides with university degrees (6 interviewees), as well as performers and sales staff with a high-school education (9 interviewees).

Ecomuseum development in Binglanggu had not been officially announced at the time of the interviews, therefore, the first theme discussed with the 18 interviewees was: which heritage expressions were particularly important to them; which ICH traditions they still practised; and, the role ICH expressions played in their daily-life. The results of all the themes of the interviews are represented in table 7.6.

Table 7.6 Perspectives on safeguarding ICH and tourism development in Binglanggu

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 18 interviewed community members)
Important ICH traditions	Traditions still practised by most Li minority members: Festivals, such as <i>Sanyuesan</i> ;	13

	Wedding ceremonies; and, Music and dances.	6 4
	Traditions that are still practised, but slowly declining among the younger generation: Li language.	5
	Important ICH on the verge of disappearing: Traditional Li tattoos; and, Li brocade.	4 18
	Many Li traditions are not part of the daily-life anymore and therefore getting lost.	18
Safeguarding of ICH	Li heritage is well protected.	11
	Binglanggu makes a major contribution to the protection of Li heritage.	15
	The protection of Li heritage is being slowly strengthened by the government.	2
	Li ICH expressions might soon completely disappear.	5
	Some of the heritage traditions displayed at Binglanggu are not really part of Li heritage and only there for entertainment purposes.	10
	Since Li heritage has been commercialised for tourism its safeguarding has improved.	3
Difficulties in transmitting Li ICH	Associated with backwardness and a low education.	6
	Modernisation renders many traditional Li skills obsolete.	7
	Require constant practice and hard physical labour.	12
Tourism development	The interest of tourists towards Li culture has a positive influence on their life.	18
	Tourism encouraged their own interest in Li traditions.	2
	Tourists are interested and knowledgeable with regards to Li culture.	12
	Tourists are only interested in certain aspects of Li culture and only gain a superficial image of Li heritage when visiting Binglanggu.	6
Government responsibilities in safeguarding ICH	More financial support needed for the heritage transmitters.	3
	Teaching Li heritage and culture in school.	3
	Careful documentation of all ICH traditions.	2
	More responsibility of the Li minority in the safeguarding of their ICH.	1
	No opinion on this topic.	9

The interviews showed that, unlike in Baili Baicun, many heritage traditions of the Li minority were not part of their daily-life anymore. Consequently, they had to make a conscious effort to safeguard them. There were three categories of ICH that were important to the interviewees. The first category was traditions still practised by most members of the Li minority. The tradition most often named was the Sanyuesan Festival. One interviewee stated that: “For me the Sanyuesan Festival is our most important tradition. It is a very happy occasion during which we can wear our traditional costumes, sing Li songs and dance traditional Li dances. During this festival we all remember our Li traditions” (Interviewee LM4 2013). Other traditions mentioned by interviewees included wedding rituals, songs and dances.

The second category included traditions that were still practised, but slowly declining among the younger generation; in particular among the more educated members of the Li minority. One example is the traditional Li language. One woman explained that because her parents belonged to two different dialect groups of the Li minority, she never learnt to speak Li before she started working at Binglanggu.

For me the most important tradition is the Li language. I used to not like the Li language or be interested in learning it. My father belongs to the Sai Li, so he was never able to speak Li to begin with. There are many Ha Li working here, so I study the Li language with them and now it is very important to me.

(Interviewee LM1 2013)

The third category was ICH expressions that were important for the interviewees, but were on the verge of disappearing and were not practised by most of them, for example, Li tattoos. Once an essential custom of the Li belief system, it is not practised anymore and most tattooed women are over 70 years old.

Another ICH expression named in that category was the traditional Li brocade. While all of the 18 Li minority interviewees noted the importance of Li brocade, no one from the younger generation interviewed still possessed the skill. Most of them studied it when they were younger, but were only able to do very simple patterns now. Discussions about producing Li brocade often revolved around its importance for Li minority culture, but also

the difficulties of learning and transmitting it in the current situation. Even though interviewees felt that all their traditions were important, many Li traditions were not part of their daily-life anymore and therefore getting lost. One of the interviewees (Interviewee LM7 2013) summarised the situation as follows: “I feel some of our traditions are very important for the younger generation for example wedding traditions and our festivals. But I think traditional Li skills and handicraft are mainly practised by the older generation”.

The next theme investigated was the safeguarding of ICH and natural environments. Overall, the interviewees had different impressions on how effectively Li heritage was safeguarded. In particular, the younger generation thought that Li heritage was well protected and did not see an issue in the fact that Binglanggu safeguards ICH away from its natural environments. According to them, Binglanggu was making a major contribution to the safeguarding of Li minority heritage. One interviewee stated that Binglanggu played an essential role in safeguarding Li heritage. This is expressed in the interviewee’s comment that:

I agree that Li heritage is well protected overall. In addition, many aspects of Li culture from all over Hainan are collected and protected here in the park. I think in most villages you cannot see all the heritage you can see here, therefore this place is very important.

(Interviewee LM17 2013)

Other interviewees had the impression that the safeguarding of Li ICH was slowly improving, but were unsure if it was enough to effectively safeguard Li heritage traditions. One interviewee articulated that:

I think at the moment the heritage protection by the government is being strengthened very slowly. I am not really sure how to judge if it is going to be enough. Our boss and some government officials do a lot for the protection of the Li heritage at this park.

(Interviewee LM1 2013)

Five Li minority members also mentioned the worry that Li ICH expressions would soon completely disappear. One interviewee said that:

I am not sure if my children will have the opportunity to learn about the Li traditions. For me it is important that they will know that their mother belongs to the Li minority. But I am not sure there will be people left to teach them our traditions. I think in 10 or 20 years, once the older population has died, it is quite possible that we will not see most of our heritage expressions anymore.

(Interviewee LM16 2013)

These different answers can mainly be attributed to the different understandings of what effective ICH-protection work constitutes. Those who felt safeguarding actions should mainly consist of collecting and documenting Li minority heritage, argued that the safeguarding of Li heritage was very effective. Those who associated ICH protection with transmission work, in its original context, were worried about the decline of Li heritage.

Despite the overall positive impression of Binglanggu's protection work, ten Li minority members also mentioned that some aspects displayed in the park, such as male costumes and some of the dances, were not actually part of Li culture or were highly altered. One dancer stated (Interviewee LM13 2013) that: "We male dancers wear different things at home. The female costumes are traditional Li, but the male costumes were just designed for the show". Nevertheless, none of the interviewees argued that these inaccuracies had a negative impact on the protection work. Three interviewees noted that since the government started to commercialise Li minority culture, its safeguarding and its appreciation had improved significantly. This is articulated in the following statement that:

I think the government employs a lot of our cultural heritage to improve the economy. But I feel since this is happening the provincial and the national government value our culture more. Since they started to develop the Li minority cultural heritage for tourism, there has been more research.

(Interviewee LM16 2013)

I also discussed the safeguarding of natural environments with the interviewees. However, while they did feel unique environments were important for tourism and had the impression that natural environments were well protected, interviewees did not really know how to respond to this topic. Because Binglanggu safeguards ICH away from its natural environments, it does not achieve in showing the link between Li minority heritage and the

environment in which it is practised and interviewees found it difficult to make the connection.

The discussion above also raised another important theme; the difficulty of transmitting ICH to the younger generation. The interviewees pointed out three key topics connected to the life-style changes of the Li minority, through modernisation and globalisation, which make the transmission of Li ICH difficult. Li brocade was most often used as an example in the discussion, but the same phenomenon also applies to other skills, such as the playing of musical instruments, Li pottery techniques, the tree-bark cloth manufacturing, and, the weaving of rattan and bamboo baskets.

The first reason for the decline of handicraft skills was that while Li minority members were proud of their ICH, they also associated the practice of their ICH traditions with backwardness and a low education. This often shone through in little remarks during the interviews like the following explanation by one interviewee (Interviewee LM16 2013) of why she was not able to speak Li. “When I was a young child my parents used to talk a lot in Li, so I was used to hearing it, but I cannot say very much... Once my parents got a better job as teachers they stopped speaking Li at home”. The association of Li minority heritage with backwardness is supported by government rhetoric which frequently uses terms such as ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’ to describe the ICH traditions of China’s ethnic minorities (Oakes 1998; Varutti 2014).

The second reason was that the life of the Li minority has changed in ways that make it unnecessary for the younger generation to learn these skills. This reason was mainly mentioned by the older generation still able to practise traditional skills. One interviewee pointed out:

...the problem is we really seldom still use these things [traditional handicrafts]. Most of the younger people move to the city and they really do not need these skills. Our life is developing; we have everything we need, so it is hard to understand why we still need these traditions... Even if I explain to the young people why these traditions are important to me, they do not really understand it. It is sad, but it is mainly the old people who are interested in these heritage traditions.

(Interviewee LM5 2013)

The third reason for the decline of traditional Li handicraft was that they needed to be practised constantly, were difficult to learn and sometimes painful to practise. This made it difficult to incorporate them into a modern life-style. The production of Li brocade, for example, requires the practitioner to sit bent over for long periods of time and is very painful for the back. One interviewee stated:

I know a few patterns, but only very simple ones. I think the old people who are still able to do it are very hard working. It is really exhausting... It takes a long time to learn properly, several hours a day you have to sit bent over, that's why I never liked doing it. The old people here are used to doing it and sitting bent over like that; they can do it really fast! Most young people are not able to do it today and I do not really think it's possible to transmit it anymore. We do not really need it and our life now stops us from getting used to it.

(Interviewee LM2 2013)

One of the heritage transmitters added that if not practised every day it was impossible to retain the skills needed to produce the Li brocade saying that: "When Li brocade is not part of people's everyday life they do not remember how to do it. When my daughter left the village to work and earn money she forgot how to weave Li brocade" (Interviewee LM4 2013).

Since ecomuseum development in Binglanggu has not officially started, it has not been decided on which heritage expressions the museum will place its focus. However, at the moment the park and many of the protection efforts of the government concentrate on safeguarding the traditional Li minority skills that are highly endangered.

The next topic examined was the perspectives of Li minority members on tourism. All interviewees supported tourism and felt that the interest of tourists towards their culture did have a positive influence on their life. This is not a surprising result, since the interviewees depended on tourism for their livelihood, but they also agreed that tourism helped to improve the image of the Li minority. One interviewee (Interviewee LM7 2013) stated that tourism contributed to the understanding between the Li and the Han population, explaining that: "I really think we benefit a lot from the tourists coming here.

Not only financially, but I feel it is good if tourists are interested in our culture and are able to understand it better”.

Two interviewees, who did not have much exposure to Li culture before working at Binglanggu, felt the positive attitude of the tourists towards their culture, did support them in regaining interest in learning about their Li minority tradition. One of them explained that:

When I was little I really had no interest in learning any of this, but now since I work here I learnt that the tourists really enjoy the Li brocade. That’s why I started to study it a little bit, but it is very hard. I am really more interested in learning the Li language. At home my life was very similar to that of the Han majority, so I used to not really know much about the Li tradition. When I came here to work, I discovered that the Li traditions are really very different from those of the Han.

(Interviewee LM1 2013)

Several interviewees expressed that tourists were very interested in Li culture. One Li minority member (Interviewee LM10 2013) described that he often interacted with tourists after performing Li dances. “I think the tourists are interested in Li culture. After we dance they often ask us, how the dances are called and how we do certain things.”

However, in particular, the heritage transmitters thought that tourists were mainly interested in the more exotic aspects of Li heritage and that the park provided visitors with a rather superficial picture of Li culture. This is most likely because they had a more complex understanding of Li culture than the younger park employees. One heritage transmitter stated that while she felt tourism was good for the Li minority, tourists did not get a deeper understanding of Li culture when visiting Binglanggu, arguing that:

I’m really happy about the tourists. I feel they are particularly interested in the Li brocade, but they do not really understand the symbolism on the brocade; they mainly like it because it looks pretty. I think they are not interested to learn the deeper meaning; it is more about experiencing something new.

(Interviewee LM4 2013)

One of the Li minority tour guides explained, that in his experience tourists were only interested in some aspects of Li culture, commenting that:

I think most people who come here do not know much about Li culture. I think they enjoy the dancing and seeing the Li brocade, but they are not really interested in learning more. For example, people ask me very seldom how to use certain agricultural tools and religious objects. There is little interest towards these aspects of our culture.

(Interviewee LM17 2013)

The last theme discussed was how the government could support the Li minority in safeguarding their ICH. There were four points raised during the conversations.

1. More financial support for the heritage transmitters. One of the heritage transmitters (Interviewee LM5 2013) stated: “We old people do still remember all the Li traditions, so it would be helpful if the government would give us financial support to teach these traditions to the younger generation”.
2. Teaching Li heritage and culture in school. In particular the younger generation felt the mandatory study of Li traditions in school could be supportive of their safeguarding. One of the interviewees (Interviewee LM17 2013) expressed that: “It should be mandatory for the young generation to study Li traditions. I think even if they do not want to learn about it, if they have to study it, they will know what it means to belong to the Li minority” (Interviewee LM17 2013).
3. Careful documentation of all ICH traditions of the Li, in particular local characteristics of each heritage tradition. One member of the Li minority stated that:

I think the government should support us in passing on our heritage to the next generation. One way to do this would be to collect all the traditions. So that every family can protect their heritage well. Because every family and every village has their own traditions and we do not have any written documents. If they would document it, the government could carry our culture forward.

(Interviewee LM8 2013)

4. More responsibility of the Li minority in the safeguarding of their ICH. In this context, one interviewee suggested that the Li minority should have more managerial

responsibility in marketing their own heritage. To achieve this she also felt that the government had to raise the education level of the Li population.

...it would be good if the government and the Li minority profited mutually from our traditions, for example if we had our own businesses that show Li traditions. We should have more responsibility in heritage protection. But it is also important for the government to raise the income and education level of the Li people that live in places that are relatively backwards and not only protects the heritage. In a lot of places people do not even get a proper school education when they are children.

(Interviewee LM16 2013)

Despite the heterogeneousness of the case studies regarding local context, ethnicity, economic development and attitudes towards ICH and natural environments, the case studies also had certain parallels. Similar approaches were noted, especially in their positive attitude towards tourism and visitors' interests in local culture and with regards to government responsibilities in the safeguarding of their culture. In both case studies, a small number of interviewees expressed the wish to be more included in safeguarding and tourism development processes and the need for financial support. The opportunities and challenges of the case studies will be further evaluated in Chapters 8 and 9.

7.5 Summary

This chapter aimed to analyse and compare the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups in ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. Employing qualitative interviews and observation, it examined the views of government officials, experts and local community members. It discussed the main themes regarding: the safeguarding ICH and natural environments; developing sustainable tourism; and, achieving community participation in the future ecomuseums in Hainan. Different ideas on ecomuseology and community participation in Hainan Province were investigated and the needs of the local communities examined. These different perspectives and ideas will serve as the basis to evaluate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan and to develop guidelines for the Hainanese ecomuseums. The next chapter continues by analysing opportunities and challenges for the development of ecomuseums in Hainan.

CHAPTER 8 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE ECOMUSEUM DEVELOPMENT IN HAINAN PROVINCE

8.1 Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 critically investigated the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province, focussing on the two case studies in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu. First, the current plans for the ecomuseums, motivations behind their establishment and the heritage and tourism profile of the selected sites were explored. Next, I studied the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups analysing the following topics: ICH protection within its natural environments; sustainable tourism development; and, community participation. These chapters supported me in answering the research question: “How can the use of the ecomuseum ideal in Hainan Province, China, support the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments and the development of sustainable tourism in the region?”

Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 build upon this data and literature regarding ecomuseums, safeguarding ICH and sustainable tourism in China to evaluate the opportunities and challenges for the ecomuseums in Hainan (Chapter 8) and to develop new Hainanese ecomuseum guidelines (Chapter 9).

As mentioned before the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan is just at the beginning stage and is moving forward very slowly. Therefore, it is possible that changes will occur during the later process of the ecomuseum development that either strengthen or weaken certain aspects. Chapter 8 analyses the opportunities and challenges that are existing and can be predicted for the ecomuseum development at this point. It considers experiences with other ecomuseums in China, the local situation in Hainan and the results of the qualitative interviews and observations.

It begins by analysing the opportunities and challenges for the three main areas discussed in this thesis: ICH protection within its natural environments; sustainable tourism development; and, community participation. Then, it examines issues that are more specific to the ecomuseums in Hainan including site selection; research and the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal; government leadership; and financial resources.

8.2 Opportunities and Challenges for community participation, safeguarding ICH and sustainable tourism development

The future ecomuseums in Hainan Province have several characteristics that resemble other ecomuseums in China. The economic profile of Hainan Province, for instance, is comparable to most Chinese provinces that have established ecomuseums in the past including Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan. Similar to Hainan Province these provinces belong to China's economically less developed areas with many impoverished parts, several ethnic minorities and tourism as an important pillar of their economy (Oakes 1998; Xi 2014; Yang 2011a). Another common characteristic is that the ecomuseums in Hainan aim to combine cultural heritage protection and economic development through sustainable tourism. In addition, they are also initiated and led by the government. These common characteristics could cause the ecomuseums in Hainan to face similar issues to other ecomuseums in China (Chapter 4). But Hainan's unique local conditions and ecomuseum plans also lead to new challenges and opportunities. Local conditions that differ from the mainland can be divided into two areas.

The first area that was mentioned by two experts (E4, E6), is economic differences to the mainland, with Hainan's proposed development into an International Tourism Island, its tourism profile and its status as a SEZ. All these factors contribute to the issue that tourism projects in Hainan are developed relatively unsupervised, with little regards for environmental issues or the needs of the local community groups (Gu and Wall 2007; Li 2004). This could present an issue for the ecomuseum development. Because Hainan's development into an International Tourism Island is part of the national policy, the province is under pressure to create new cultural tourism destinations and cannot necessarily afford long-term planning. While many of the provinces with ecomuseums depend on ethnic tourism, Hainan is mainly a beach tourism destination focussing on mass tourism. It is just beginning to invest in cultural tourism resources and theoretically would need more time to research the management of sustainable tourism projects. Furthermore, as a SEZ, Hainan has fewer economic restrictions than other provinces in China, there is less control and tourism organisations have to follow only few guidelines. This could influence the way tourism organisations would work with the community groups of the potential ecomuseums.

The second area discussed by several experts (E3, E6) is cultural and environmental differences, with Hainan's tropical rainforest climate, the cultural influences of the Li minority and its connections to the South Asian Sea.

Then, there are differences regarding the content and sites of the ecomuseums. One key difference named by all government officials and local experts is that the majority of ecomuseums in Hainan do not concentrate on protecting ethnic-minority heritage. According to one government official: "Ecomuseums in Hainan will differ from other ecomuseums in China, because except for the one in Binglanggu, they do not focus on protecting ethnic-minority culture" (Interview GO1 2013).

Furthermore, whilst most ecomuseums in China are located in isolated areas with little contact to the outside world, the Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages in Yunnan being the exception, Hainan's future ecomuseums already have been developed for tourism.

Each ecomuseum also has its individual characteristics that will influence its development. This section analyses the opportunities and challenges of the ecomuseums, in particular the two case studies, regarding the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, sustainable tourism development and community participation. These topics are inter-related and partly depend on each other. For example, the effective protection of ICH and sustainable tourism development depend on the participation of local communities in heritage management. This chapter will discuss each topic individually but draw connections to the other issues if necessary.

8.2.1 Safeguarding ICH within its natural environments

As mentioned before safeguarding ICH in Chinese ecomuseums has achieved mixed results and varied from ecomuseum to ecomuseum. Due to most ecomuseums being established in rather isolated areas, they often have accelerated the loss of ICH traditions by initiating more contact to the outside world. In particular the younger generation living in the ecomuseums has had little interest in practicing and safeguarding their ICH (Lu 2014, 165). But there also have been exceptions. In the Nuodeng Family Ecomuseum in Yunnan, which is owned by one family rather than the government, the establishment of the ecomuseum has encouraged the villagers to actively safeguard their ICH (Qiu 2013).

In Hainan Province an effective safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments would be particularly important, because as discussed, it is the key focus of the ecomuseums. Many ecomuseums in China rely on their build heritage as tourist attractions. Since many of Hainan's vernacular houses have been destroyed, the ecomuseums depend on their rich ICH traditions and their natural heritage to attract visitors.

The opportunities and challenges for safeguarding ICH within its natural environments in the Hainanese ecomuseums depend on the ecomuseum site. As shown in Chapters 6 and 7 the local circumstances and attitudes of the local population are very heterogeneous in the two case studies.

As analysed in Chapter 7 in Baili Baicun ICH is well protected and still part of people's life. In addition, the ecomuseum does focus on protecting heritage expressions that are especially meaningful to the local population. Due to Baili Baicun's focus on Hainanese heritage several issues that concern ecomuseums safeguarding ethnic-minority heritage in China do not apply here and the ecomuseum offers several opportunities.

One example that illustrates these differences well but also shows how the ecomuseum can support the protection of heritage in Baili Baicun is the safeguarding of traditional houses. As mentioned in Chapter 7, unlike many ethnic minorities who preferred living in modern houses, the local population in Baili Baicun was proud of their traditional houses and enjoyed living in them. Many ecomuseums in China that safeguard ethnic-minority heritage faced the issue that their establishment and the raise of income through tourism led to replacement of old traditional houses with modern ones and thus the destruction of the original landscape (Xu 2007). While there are not many traditional houses left in Baili Baicun, interviews indicated that the reason for this were lacking financial resources rather than the unwillingness of people to live in them. Because only few people had the skills to repair traditional houses and the traditional building materials were relatively expensive, only a few house owners had been able to afford to maintain their traditional houses and to continue to live there. Therefore, through generating funds, the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun could contribute to their protection.

In ICH protection, some of the main issues concerning the safeguarding of ethnic-minority ICH do not apply to the mainly Hainanese population in Baili Baicun. Ethnic-minority ICH can

be difficult to transmit, because many members of the younger generation are reluctant to learn it and aim to leave their villages to improve their quality of life. One expert (Interview E7 2013) describes the experiences when researching one Li village in Ledong as follows: “...there was no one left who could learn the ICH traditions, such as the bamboo dance. The village had mainly old people left. I talked to one of the older residents and I asked him where everyone was. His children and his grandchildren had already left the village”. In contrast to that younger community members in Baili Baicun stated that they were very interested in their heritage traditions and many of them contributed to their transmission by teaching it to the children of their communities. They also did not aim to leave their village to move to the city. On the contrary, despite the sometimes difficult economic situation most of them wished to stay in their villages. Consequently, the financial benefits and job opportunities through the ecomuseum could encourage the local population to stay in their villages.

The future ecomuseum in Baili Baicun also supports the practice of Baili Baicun’s heritage traditions in other ways. As mentioned several destroyed ancestral halls and temples have already been rebuilt as part of the ecomuseum development, giving the villages the opportunity to revive their ancestral ceremonies.

While the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun has several characteristics that support the protection of cultural heritage, there is also the danger that the ecomuseum could accelerate the loss of ICH. Compared to the other future ecomuseum sites in Hainan, Baili Baicun, similar to other ecomuseums in China, has been relatively isolated with few visitors coming to the area. The contact between these relatively secluded communities, having a well-protected cultural heritage, with the tourism consumption of their heritage, could have negative impact on ICH protection. It could be possible that the staging of ICH traditions for tourism, such as the Hainan Opera or religious ceremonies, could lead to ‘freezing’ of Hainanese culture and a loss of meaning (Lu 2014; Wall and Xie 2005). In particular, the development of mass tourism could be highly problematic. However, the effects in Baili Baicun could be less dramatic than in other ecomuseums in China, for example, the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum in Guizhou Province, where the arrival of tourism has accelerated the loss of ICH traditions and the way ICH traditions are presented emphasises cultural ‘otherness’ (Lu 2014). Baili Baicun is less isolated and has some experience with tourism. It covers a wider area and

tourism would be more spread out. It also does not focus on ethnic-minority heritage, so the local population is not expected to fit certain stereotypes. They do not face the prejudice of being regarded as 'undeveloped' and 'backwards' (Lu 2014).

The establishment of the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun also poses challenges to the protection of natural heritage. While a major aim of ecomuseums in Hainan is to safeguard the natural environments of the island, tourism has already had negative effects in Baili Baicun. As discussed in Chapter 7, interviewees mentioned that tourists were polluting the environment. These issues are not uncommon for sites that receive many tourists (Ball, Horner and Nield 2007, 107) and have been a key issue for Hainan's main tourism spots (Xinhua 2013). In addition, the development of tourism has led to many environmental changes. In Sanya, Hainan's most popular tourism spot, the pollution through increased human activity has among other issues, impacted inshore habitat. Many plants, for example psammolittoral organisms, coral reefs, mangroves, and seaweed, have been diminished. As a result coastal erosion has become more and more common (Wang and Liu 2013). Due to Hainan's development into an International Tourism Island and its loose economic guidelines as an SEZ, the decision-making process when developing tourism attractions does not always take environmental issues into account (Liang, Umezaki and Ohtsuka 2003). The problems in Baili Baicun are likely to increase once more tourists are visiting. It is, however, positive that local communities are aware of these issues and work on improving the situation. The main problem is that the government does not have specific plans on how to safeguard natural heritage and balance negative effects from tourism. The ecomuseum in Baili Baicun needs strict guidelines regarding the protection of its natural environment to avoid its pollution and deterioration.

The second case study, Binglanggu, faces different opportunities and challenges from Baili Baicun. As the only ecomuseum that protects the heritage of Hainan's ethnic minorities it has several issues that are similar to other ecomuseums in China. But as theme park it also encounters different challenges than other ethnic-minority villages. Binglanggu is already developed for tourism and is an ICH protection base; consequently it is very likely that the labelling of the theme park as an ecomuseum has very little influence on its practices of safeguarding ICH and natural heritage, in particular as the lines between museum, ecomuseum and theme park in China can be blurry (Ap 2003; Lu 2014). At the moment,

Binglanggu contributes to the safeguarding of ICH by documenting and collecting ICH traditions and supporting research. However, there is little effort to transmit ICH traditions to younger generation. Only the older generation from the surrounding villages still has the skills and knowledge to produce handicrafts and keep the Li music traditions alive. Their participation makes up most of the ICH in the park. Without them the main function of the park would be entertainment. This could be problematic for the future of the ecomuseum. A main challenge for Binglanggu is to encourage the transmission of ICH skills to younger generation.

Similar to other ethnic minorities in ecomuseums in China, the younger generation of the Li minority working at Binglanggu is not interested in learning traditional handicraft. While the older generation still practised traditional handicraft, none of them had been able to pass these skills on to their children. The Vice-Manager of Binglanggu stated that the question of how to encourage the younger generation to learn the traditional skills is an issue that all ethnic minorities in China face.

This question is very relevant for us. The Li minority and all the other ethnic minorities in China have the problem of encouraging the younger generation to learn their ICH... This is really a problem, many young people do not know how to speak the language of their ethnic minority, they do not wear the traditional clothing and they want to live in modern houses. They want to transform their life. It is getting more and more difficult to do transmission work.

(Ibid.)

In this context, it is very problematic that the government only concentrates on safeguarding the traditional Li minority skills that are highly endangered, for instance, Li brocade and traditional tattoos. These ICH expressions are the more exotic traditions of the Li that are not part of their daily-life anymore. Other traditions of the Li minority such as language, religious rituals and farming traditions are largely ignored. There are two main reasons why the more exotic traditions receive the most protection efforts. Firstly, they are particularly interesting for tourism. One phenomenon of ethnic tourism in China is the “search for the exotic in one’s own backyard” (Svensson 2006b, 31), which is influencing the choice of ICH that gets protected. Secondly, the decision which traditions are safeguarded is also connected to political reasons. The national government aims to present China as a

unified and harmonious nation while at the same time reinforcing the superiority of the Han culture. The protection efforts of ICH concentrate on heritage expressions that fit into the image of a 'happy' but 'naïve' and 'slightly backwards' ethnic minority. This image favours heritage expressions, such as dances and handicraft and disadvantages heritage practices like languages that evolve and change over time (Varutti 2014, 134-140). This image, however, is not how ethnic minorities want to represent themselves and therefore ICH protection is often not very effective. As discussed in Chapter 7, the heritage traditions focused on by the government and theme parks require constant practice and a big time commitment. Consequently, they are difficult to incorporate into a modern life-style. It is problematic when certain exotic heritage expressions, that are interesting for tourists and fit into the political context, receive a lot of government attention, while other less marketable and presentable ICH expressions get neglected. Five Li minority members in Binglanggu were concerned that only certain aspects of their heritage got protected, while other heritage traditions were slowly forgotten. One of the interviewees elaborated that, in her opinion, all the Li traditions were equally important, but that only certain traditions were the focus of the protection work.

When I started to learn more about Li heritage, it inspired me to think more deeply about our traditions and I feel that they are very important. I think particularly the lesser known heritage traditions are important. They get easily forgotten and therefore are slowly being lost. A lot of people know about Li brocade, Li tattoos and tree bark cloth, a lot of knowledge gets collected on them. And even though I feel it is very important to protect those traditions, I find other traditions also very valuable. I also think the minority traditions cannot be protected without its local context.

(Interviewee LM16 2013)

Here the establishment of the ecomuseum will make little difference, since the government's political agenda and tourism development would still be influencing decision-making on ICH-safeguarding. This situation is unlikely to change as long as non-Li people, as it is the case in Binglanggu, are responsible for safeguarding Li heritage.

Six interviewees in Binglanggu also mentioned that the safeguarding of ICH was too superficial. One member of the Li minority explained, using Li brocade as an example, how difficult it was to protect traditions deeply rooted in their unique local context with a

concept aimed at protecting the Li ICH of the whole province. In her opinion it was not possible to protect the original idea of the Li brocade, because Li society had already changed too much. She stated:

There is not really the environment for Li brocade anymore. In the little textile villages and factories the quality of the Li brocade is not very high. The perception, the feelings are not the same. Originally Li brocade used to be connected to our religious and cultural beliefs. I think the textiles are being only superficially protected. It is difficult to buy good quality Li brocade, because the skill and artistry are very much a family tradition that needs to be transmitted from mother to daughter. If the religious and local background is not there, it is not real Li brocade.

(Interviewee LM2 2013)

Theoretically, the ecomuseum concept would be a good solution for these issues because it uses an individual approach to safeguarding ICH and safeguards heritage *in situ*. However, as a theme park, Binglanggu does not adhere to these ecomuseum principles and aims to collect the heritage of the Li minority not in the local context but in the context of a tourist theme park.

Another issue pointed out by one expert is, that in Hainan most of the research and safeguarding of ICH is carried out by historians. According to the expert, there is not enough focus on the element of change that is inherent in ICH traditions. "I feel the research and safeguarding of Li brocade would need a more contemporary element. I do not see an incorporation of the changes that are happening, they mainly concentrate on the original traditional ways of practicing the tradition" (Interview E5 2013). The element of change is often not present in the safeguarding of Li minority heritage and ICH expressions, for example, dance performances in Binglanggu are static without showing cultural progression (Wall and Xie 2005). To effectively protect the ICH of the Li minority it would be important to incorporate the element of change into the protection progress by including the local population and examine which heritage expressions could be integrated in a modern life-style.

One of the experts also noted that the combination of tourism development and heritage protection does not work very well in Binglanggu.

Another way to protect these heritage expressions is to develop tourism, this happens for example in Binglanggu in Baoting, which is a Li and Miao minority theme park. But I feel it does not really work there, it is difficult to find the real Li culture and also the exhibitions are not quite right. I feel you do not learn enough about the daily-life of the Li population.

(Interview E 7 2013)

The statement also points towards the issue that some heritage expressions in the park, such as the dance performances, have been adapted to make them more interesting for the visitors and that the park not only exhibits Li minority culture for educational reasons, but foremost as tourism entertainment. However, Oakes (2006b) argues that these staged performances as can be interpreted as a way of the ethnic minorities to combine tradition and modernity and therefore contribute to the safeguarding of ICH.

Despite these issues Binglanggu has also encouraged the safeguarding of ICH to some extent. Two of the Li minority employees, who did not have much exposure to Li culture before working at Binglanggu, felt that working in the park and the positive attitude of the tourists did support them in regaining interest in learning about their own culture. Therefore, even though Binglanggu does not follow most ecomuseum principles, it had some positive effects on the safeguarding of ICH. For both case studies the development of sustainable tourism would be important to support an effective ICH and environmental protection.

8.2.2 Sustainable tourism and ecotourism

The development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism is one of the main aims of the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan Province. The province hopes to encourage a high-class tourism to different heritage sites and move away from the mass tourism development that is happening in Sanya. This part of the chapter analyses the opportunities and challenges for Hainan's ecomuseums to develop sustainable tourism or ecotourism.

The ecomuseum ideal encourages the use of heritage resources for sustainable development. According to the 21 Ecomuseum Principles it “stimulates sustainable development and use of resources” (Principle 13) and “allows for change and development for a better future” (Principle 14). For Chinese ecomuseums tourism development is of

major importance, however, tourism often has not been sustainable. In the ecomuseums that receive many visitors, including the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum or Tang'an Ecomuseum, tourism has been poorly managed and over-developed (Murtas and Davis 2009; Nitzky 2012b; Yi 2013). Other ecomuseums only receive few tourists due to their remote location and their poor infrastructure (Nitzky 2012a).

As discussed in Chapter 5 sustainable tourism and ecotourism have been difficult to develop in Hainan. One major issue is that local communities and local governments are not involved in policy-making. The plan to develop Hainan into an International Tourism Island was formed by the national and provincial government; local voices had not been taken into account (Yu 2011). Hainan emphasises the development of luxury physical infrastructure, such as golf courses, resorts and theme parks, while the interests of local communities and the potential for community involvement are often neglected (Li 2003; Li 2004). This is a relevant challenge for both case studies and most tourism development projects in Hainan. Even though the ecomuseum development was just at the beginning stage, local residents in Baili Baicun complained that some of the measures to develop tourism had a negative impact on their life. It would be important to include local communities more to avoid conflict. In other Chinese ecomuseums, for instance Longli and Tang'an, local community members have been very discontent with the tourism development in the ecomuseums (Nitzky 2012b).

The decision to choose Binglanggu as an ecomuseum could also be connected to Hainan's focus on developing luxury products. Another reason to select a theme park to represent Li and Miao minority culture, over actual villages could be that the little regard for community needs in tourism planning impairs the already problematic relationship between local minority communities and the provincial government. In Hainan provincial-government officials mainly belong to the Han majority. Tensions arise, because ethnic-minority communities and also the Hainanese feel government officials do not always act in their best interests (Xie 2010). The Li minority are one of the most marginalised groups in Hainan (Wall and Xie 2005). This influences the communities' willingness to cooperate with the government.

Another reason why the government seldom consults local communities is that many heritage protection projects in Hainan are managed by tourism businesses. There are two main models used in Hainan: joint ventures between local governments and private management companies (Binglanggu; Shuiman Village in Wuzhishan; Nanshan Tourism Zone), and private management contracting (Wanquan River Shen Ao Valley Scenic Spot). If the private management company model is used, the local government responsible for managing the cultural heritage site leases it to a private company for a set fee. The private company is then in charge of developing and managing the cultural heritage site (Shepherd and Yu 2013, 51-53). In the case of Shen Ao Valley Scenic Spot of the Wanquan River in Hainan the Qinghai Wanquan River Rafting Company Ltd. is responsible for developing the scenic spot and has been given a temporary ownership of the valley for 50 years.

Tourism businesses can bring in a lot of revenue; therefore, they seldom have to adhere to government regulations and are relatively free in their decision-making (Shepherd and Yu 2013, 51-53). This is particularly relevant for Hainan whose status as a SEZ involves less government regulations and who is under considerable pressure to become an International Tourism Island. Consequently, the development of mass tourism and fast profits and results is more desirable than the long-term development of sustainable tourism. One Hainanese expert criticised that:

Hainan's tourism industry does not have a proper development plan and at the moment only concentrates on financial profits. The government seldom intervenes. It is the business men who have the most influence. But to preserve and maintain cultural traditions in the ecomuseum it should be the responsibility of the government. I feel under this aspect, the ecomuseum development in Hainan is not ideal.

(Interview E7 2013)

This worry, that these private management models are too profit orientated and will eventually lead to the destruction of heritage sites is shared by other Chinese scholars (Xu 2003).

It is not uncommon that tourist organisations take over the management of ecomuseums, for example, in the Dimen Ecomuseum and in the Tang'an Ecomuseum in Guizhou. In both

cases this has been a challenge for sustainable tourism development. Especially in Tang'an the local population was dissatisfied with the management of the tourism company and felt that they were exploiting their culture (Nitzky 2012b). In the Dimen Ecomuseum the population seemed to be more satisfied with the management of the Hong Kong based tourism organisation, however they were not included in the management or decision-making process as well (Lu 2014).

In Hainan many cultural tourism projects, for example Haikou *Qilou* Old Street, NCTZ and Haikou Geological Volcano Park are managed by tourism companies. In several instances the developers did not consider the needs of community involved and communities were excluded from planning processes (Li, Y. 2006; Li 2004). It is likely that similar issues could arise in the future ecomuseums in Hainan. Binglanggu as a theme park is already managed by a tourism company. While its status as a theme park has certain limits for developing sustainable tourism in particular in terms of community participation, Binglanggu shows several tendencies that are compatible with the ideas of sustainable development.

Unlike other tourism projects in Hainan, in Binglanggu, the management does consider the needs of the communities and they are dedicated to having a good relationship with the local population. While they are not involved in decision-making, they do participate in benefit-sharing. The Vice-Manager of Binglanggu stated:

At the moment we cooperate with the local community, but it is based on a salary. Their salary is composed of four aspects. Firstly, we pay them rent, so we can use their land. Secondly, we employ the local population to pluck the agricultural products here, like the betel nut and litchis. Thirdly, we provide them with housing. Fourthly, they can sell the handicrafts which they produce. We also take care of the health and the welfare of the older population. And if there are any other problems I help out. That's why they agree to work with Binglanggu.

(Ibid.)

The Li minority interviewees confirmed this statement and all of them had a very positive attitude towards the park. As discussed, even though some of them felt the park presented a superficial and partly fabricated display of Li heritage, they all agreed the management was committed to protecting Li minority heritage and to presenting a positive image of the Li minority.

In addition, Binglanggu aims to use tourism as a way that brings the protection of Li minority heritage forward and preserves it for future generations. According to the Vice-Manager:

I think the most important thing is that the Li minority learns to value and like their own culture. They have to like their language, their traditional clothing, their local style houses etc. I think the government has to encourage this. Here at Binglanggu we work on encouraging this and on bringing forward Li culture. This is why we decided to display Li and Miao culture, because the traditional skills depend on the local population. We want to guide them in the mentality of valuing their own culture more. They have to agree to protect the culture themselves, if you force it on them there would be even more problems.

(Ibid.)

Within the park, people have the possibility to educate themselves about the Li minority and unlike in many ethnic-minority exhibitions tour guides are very respectful. Whilst there is a focus on more exotic heritage traditions in particular during the dance performances, the tour guides did avoid using terms, such as 'primitive' and 'backwards', that are often associated with ethnic-minority displays (Varutti 2014). On the contrary, the guide leading me through the park stressed that he was very impressed by the Li minority handicraft techniques and fire-making skills.

While these ideas correspond to sustainable development, as discussed, Binglanggu has also very commercialised aspects and is clearly aimed at entertainment. Not all of the Li traditions are represented correctly and the new extension of the park regarding Miao culture seems to be more commercialised. With a potential increase in tourism numbers through the ecomuseum the park needs to be careful, that its positive elements do not get lost. One way to support tourism in becoming more sustainable would be to strengthen the aspect of education within the park.

In Baili Baicun the tourism development is just at the beginning stage, however, it has many positive aspects that could be an opportunity for the ecomuseum to develop sustainable tourism. Within the ecomuseum, the provincial government has started to develop possibilities for the visitors to educate themselves about the region, in particular in the tourism service centres. The local population is engaging with visitors through working at and using the tourism service centres and through *nongjiale*. Visitors can rent bicycles and

explore the villages freely. However, the opportunities for the visitors to learn about the region still need to be strengthened; up to now there is too little information about the area and its traditions at the sites.

I also observed that the local population in Baili Baicun was very eager to interact with the tourists. While this situation was helped by the lack of foreign visitors in the area and people's curiosity as to why I was there, it showed a contrast to other ecomuseums I visited in China. When I went to the Lingchuan Changgangling Shangdao Ancient Village Ecomuseum in Guangxi the local population was very reluctant to talk to me. All questions about their heritage were redirected to the key bearer of the ecomuseum exhibition hall. The willingness of the local population in Baili Baicun to connect with the visitors is a positive sign for sustainable tourism development in the ecomuseum.

However, due to its poor infrastructural connection to Haikou, it is possible that, like other rural ecomuseums in China, Baili Baicun will receive few visitors in the future. As discussed there have been several instances of ecotourism projects in Hainan that did not achieve to establish successful, financially profitable tourism that benefited the local communities (Stone and Wall 2003).

Another potential issue is that not all villages in Baili Baicun might profit from tourism, because of their different proximity to heritage sites. The villages with the most popular sights might get overcrowded and polluted and other villages might feel that they do not profit from tourism at all. One ecomuseum where conflicts arose out of a similar situation is the Suojia Miao Ecomuseum in Guizhou (Davis 2011, 240-243). It is possible that Baili Baicun will face a comparable challenge; however, because the sights are more spread out over the whole area of the ecomuseum, the issue might be less severe. Nevertheless, it would be important for the ecomuseum to find a mechanism to deal with potential conflicts.

Up to now neither experts nor government officials have decided on a way to balance tourism and heritage protection. Overall, to effectively develop sustainable tourism or ecotourism in Baili Baicun and in the other ecomuseums in Hainan Province, it is vital to include local communities in the tourism development process. The next part of the chapter, therefore discusses the potential for more community participation.

8.2.3 Community participation in decision-making

As discussed at length in the previous chapters, community participation and a bottom-up approach to heritage management are essential for the safeguarding of ICH in its natural environment, sustainable tourism development and the ecomuseum ideal. In China, however, ecomuseums struggle with a lack of community participation and the top-down approach to heritage management (Lu 2014; Pu *et al.* 2012). One major challenge for community participation is that ecomuseums have been adapted to the political context of China and are initiated and led by the government (Hu 2006; Nitzky 2012a). Whilst there have been a few examples in which ecomuseums have encouraged the local community to take on responsibility for heritage protection and the community was able to participate in benefit-sharing (Nitzky 2012a; Qiu 2012), in most cases ecomuseums have been detached from the local population (see Chapter 4).

In Hainan the future ecomuseums seem to struggle with similar issues. While both experts and government officials did realise the theoretical importance of community participation for the safeguarding of ICH and the maintenance of the ecomuseum ideal, in practice the local communities are not involved in the ecomuseum development up to this point. Similar to all ecomuseums in China the planning process in Hainan Province has been very top-down. The ecomuseums were planned without consulting the local population and they do not know that they are living in a future ecomuseum.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter 7, very few of the government officials could imagine the local population participating in decision-making. They saw in particular the lack of education of the local population as a main challenge for community participation in ecomuseums in Hainan. The importance of education was raised by three government officials and six experts. For communities to participate and voice their opinion it is vital to understand the ecomuseum ideal and the principles of ICH and natural heritage protection. Therefore, it would be essential for the ecomuseum to offer education possibilities and training classes for the local communities. This would also include pointing out possibilities to participate in the ecomuseum and explaining financial and social benefits. However, despite the fact that government officials perceived the lack of education as a challenge, up to this point there are no plans of offering training classes to the local population in the

Hainanese ecomuseums. As examined in Chapter 7, plans to involve the local community mainly centre on benefit-sharing.

From the perspective of the provincial government one point that supported community participation in benefit-sharing in ecomuseums in the future, was that all planned ecomuseums had very capable local leaders. Three government officials stated that it would be up to those leaders to manage community involvement and decide to what extent community participation would be appropriate. One government official explained that:

We have very good local government organisations and heads of households in the communities. The local leaders know everyone personally and therefore know the mentality of the population, they know this [heritage] is very valuable and it is important to protect it safely.

(Interview GO3 2013)

While this comment demonstrates that the provincial government is envisioning a top-down approach for the ecomuseums in Hainan, it is also important to note that there are very few examples in China where an actual bottom-up approach to heritage management is employed. Research has shown that capable local government leaders are essential in ensuring any form of community participation in China. Examples where villages and ecomuseums were able to maintain local ownership of their heritage and benefit from tourism, were mainly achieved due to capable local leadership (Svensson 2006b; Xu 2007). Therefore, good community leaders and local government officials are essential for ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. One expert, for example, felt that it was the responsibility of local leaders to choose the ecomuseum personnel and encourage educated members of the villages who moved away to return and work for the ecomuseum.

It depends on the local leaders; they need to choose the people responsible for it. Every village has some residents that are better educated [and left the village]. The local leaders need to cultivate a relationship with the population that left the village and encourage them to return. These local people should be responsible for making ecomuseums work and developing the place.

(Interview E5 2013)

While this is a good idea in principle, it is questionable if local community members can be urged to return to their village, if they have built a life somewhere else. Similar attempts have been made in Baicha village in Dongfang County, Hainan, where locals were offered 300 yuan per household per month and a TV for returning to their old village (Pan 2014). Educating the younger generation who still lives in their villages and giving them a reason to stay is an important strategy for Chinese ecomuseums.

Another challenge for community participation in the ecomuseums is that not all chosen locations have the right conditions to support it. Community participation is in particular difficult in the two areas in Baoting, Yanoda and Binglanggu, which are both managed by tourism organisations. Binglanggu is a theme park with employees and has no actual local community. While some members of the local communities around the park work there, most of the Li minority employees come from villages all over Hainan and many employees belong to the Han majority. Therefore, it would be difficult to decide how people could be included in the decision-making processes of the ecomuseum. Because it is run by a private business, Li minority members have little say in how their heritage is protected. There are other ecomuseums in China, such as Dimen and Tang'an, which are also managed by tourism businesses. As discussed this has led to an exclusion of the local communities from decision-making. However, the situation in Binglanggu, as an artificially constructed theme park, is even more challenging. In order to achieve more participation in decision-making one possibility would be to only employ members of the Li minority as performers and in management positions. However, this would require restructuring the park completely. In addition, due to the low education level of the Li minority, it might be difficult to find enough qualified people who could fill the management positions. The issue of choosing Binglanggu as an ecomuseum will be further discussed in part 8.3.1.

Furthermore, the participation of the local community in the ecomuseum depends not only on government, but also on the local population themselves. Here, a distinct difference between the future ecomuseum sites could be determined. The local population in Baili Baicun already had a very strong interest in ICH protection and tourism development. They tried to involve themselves in the safeguarding processes and tourism as much as possible. The ecomuseum gives them the opportunity to gain more control over the management of their cultural heritage. In Binglanggu, however, the young generation is less interested in

participating and in learning traditional handicraft skills and is mainly interested in benefit-sharing through tourism. This is problematic for the ecomuseum that also depends on ICH protection and transmission work. Therefore, it would be important for the ecomuseum to find ways to incorporate the Li traditions into a more modernised life-style.

Despite these many challenges, the interviews also showed several opportunities for community participation in decision-making. All the interviewed experts supported the idea and felt it was vital for the success of the ecomuseums. On the government side, one government official made a strong case for community participation in decision-making and stated that the ecomuseums in Hainan should depend less on the government and more on the local community. This government official felt that community participation could be achieved in China's top-down system, if the ecomuseums were divided into different zones managed by local community members, while the overall ecomuseum would be controlled by government. The view of one government official will not change the view of the majority right away, but it shows that there are government officials working and developing ideas on how more community participation in decision-making could be achieved in Hainan and China's top-down system.

Overall, it would be important for the effectiveness of ecomuseums and the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments to include the local population in the decision-making processes from the very beginning. As discussed in Chapter 7.4.1 members of the community in Baili Baicun did already criticise that they felt excluded from decision-making processes concerning the safeguarding of their heritage expressions and the development of the area. They worried that the government did not inform them about current developments and did not listen enough to their suggestions. The fact that the local population is unaware of the ecomuseum is also highly problematic and makes participation difficult. For the presentation of ICH traditions, such as the Hainan Opera or local farming traditions, it would be vital to actively involve the local population. Presently, it is unclear how this is going to be achieved and how much influence the local population will have on how their traditions are going to be displayed. One way to achieve more community-participation would be to strengthen the role of experts. Hainanese experts, who made a strong case for the participation of communities in decision-making seem to have little influence on the ecomuseum development at the moment.

As discussed these opportunities and challenges for the three topics in the ecomuseum also depend on local conditions of the ecomuseum. The next part of the chapter examines these local conditions and ecomuseum plans that specifically concern the establishment of the ecomuseums in Hainan. It analyses opportunities and challenges of the ecomuseums regarding their location, research opportunities, government leadership and financial resources.

8.3 Challenges concerning the ecomuseum plans in Hainan

8.3.1 Ecomuseum sites

One criterion that is essential for the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments and the development of sustainable tourism is the locations of the ecomuseums. Regarding ICH-safeguarding and environmental protection it is important that the ecomuseums are located in areas where their protection is particularly relevant. In terms of developing sustainable tourism ecomuseums should be located in areas that offers enough interesting sights for visitors to stay there for up to three days and are easily reachable from the main vacation spots. One expert emphasised the importance of the natural environments and the heritage traditions of an area for the establishment of an ecomuseum.

I think every individual ecomuseum site has to be carefully chosen. When the condition of the natural environments are good, the cultural traditions are well transmitted and the scale is right, then we can establish an ecomuseum... It is better for ecomuseums to have a rather big scale, so that the tourists can spend some time there.

(Interview E 3 2013)

In theory every future ecomuseum site in Hainan represents an important aspect of Hainan's cultural and natural environments. Nevertheless, the locations of the first six ecomuseums and in particular suitability of the case studies as ecomuseums caused some debate among government officials and experts. Both government officials and experts had partly opposing views on which one of the two case studies did make a good ecomuseum site. Two government official and two experts did not support any of the ecomuseum sites and argued different locations would have made better ecomuseums. An overview of the different opinions is shown in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Site selection

Theme	Key topic	Number of interviewees	
		Government officials (out of 5)	Experts (out of 10)
Site selection	All selected sites are suitable ecomuseum locations.	1 (GO3)	-
	The selection criteria were unclear, some sites are suited, others are not.	1 (GO5)	7 (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E8)
	Ecomuseums should focus on ethnic minority safeguarding.	2 (GO4, GO5)	2 (E6, E7)
Baili Baicun	Suitable as an ecomuseum location due to its unique mixture of natural environments and ICH.	3 (GO1, GO3, GO5)	6 (E1, E2, E3, E5, E8)
	Unsuitable as an ecomuseum location due to its lack in cultural content.	-	2 (E4, E6)
Binglanggu	Suitable ecomuseum location.	-	1 (E4)
	As an artificial theme park unsuitable as an ecomuseum.	2 (GO4, GO5)	3 (E5, E6, E7)

Regarding the case studies Baili Baicun was generally perceived more positively than Binglanggu. Three government officials and six experts felt that Baili Baicun was a suitable choice for an ecomuseum. One government official described the area as follows:

Baili Baicun in Ding'an is a region with over 100 villages with an abandoned culture and many natural heritage resources. The Hainan opera is also regularly performed there. Because of its particular combination of natural and cultural heritage resources it would make an excellent ecomuseum site.

(M1 2012)

However, two experts disagreed with that evaluation and stated that Baili Baicun was not suited as an ecomuseum. One expert (Interview E7 2013) argued that Baili Baicun did not represent the unique cultural heritage of Hainan. The other expert (Interviewee E4 2013) agreed with that statement and further criticised that the ecomuseum did not encourage community or visitor participation. The expert explained:

The ecomuseum in Baili Baicun seems to be an ecomuseum but in order to fulfil the ecomuseum principles it has still a long way to go. It is a scenic spot, but it has very little cultural content. The natural environments in Baili Baicun is very well protected and it has many natural scenic spots, but it is missing many fundamental requirements that are necessary for the content and the establishment of an ecomuseum. It does not follow the ecomuseum ideal; it does not have participatory quality for the local population or an interactive quality for the visitors...

(Ibid.)

Despite these critical voices I did conclude that the location of Baili Baicun was suitable for an ecomuseum, however, as discussed there are several aspects that still need to be developed and strengthened. Overall Baili Baicun is an area that has enough interesting sights and is big enough for the visitors to stay for several days. This increases the chances for local community members to financially profit from the ecomuseum. Benefits from tourism are generally greater when visitors stay in an area for several days (Svensson 2006b). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, the region has a rich history and cultural heritage that is still practised by the local population. The ecomuseum has to improve the interpretation for all its contents, in particular its cultural and historical contexts, but also in regards to safeguarding natural environment. With the rebuilding of ancestral halls and temples, the government has started to expand the cultural content of the ecomuseum. Once *nongjiale* is established, the visitors as well as the local population will have possibilities to participate and engage with the ecomuseum more actively. Tourists can learn about farming traditions and agricultural products from the farmers. Over-night stays for tourists could be encouraged through a nightly entertainment programme, like performances of the Hainan Opera.

The second case study Binglanggu faced a lot more criticism than Baili Baicun. Only one expert felt that it was a suitable ecomuseum site while two government officials and three

experts strongly argued against it. According to the expert who supported the choice of Binglanggu as an ecomuseum, the theme park displayed several ecomuseum principles and already had participatory elements. The expert stated that:

I think Binglanggu is not finished yet, but it has the mentality of an ecomuseum. It has some of the principles of the ecomuseum. The plan is not finished yet but I think the overall concept is similar and I think it is better than other ecomuseum projects. It protects the Li minority, the local population participates, the government guides and the experts support the park and businesses invest. It includes people, natural, tangible and intangible heritage. It is very much like an ecomuseum.

(Interview E4 2013)

However, several government officials and experts argued that Binglanggu as a theme park was not suited as an ecomuseum site. One government official (Interview GO3 2013) pointed out that most of the heritage in Binglanggu was artificially created and had little focus on natural environments. "In Binglanggu, for example, there is a strong focus on people; it's not very natural, because it was built by people. But what the ecomuseum should actually focus on is unspoiled nature, where people had little influence".

Experts added that because Binglanggu was a theme park, owned by a business, its protection of cultural heritage was profit-orientated and that it did not have a local population. Therefore, as discussed in section 8.2.3, community participation would be difficult to achieve. In addition, there was no *in situ* preservation of cultural heritage, most traditional objects and houses were brought there from other places in Hainan to be exhibited and rebuilt. One expert stated:

Hainan's ecomuseums have been selected last year. But the selection principles and standards are not clear. Some of the ecomuseum sites that were chosen fit into the ecomuseum concept, but others do not. For example, the potential ecomuseum in Binglanggu has no original environment or culture; it is man-made. It is a Li minority theme park. It exhibits Li culture with the aim for tourists to come and visit it. It also does not have a local population.

(Interview E5 2013)

Binglanggu is indeed a very problematic ecomuseum site. Because there is very little *in situ* preservation of cultural heritage and a limited possibility for community participation two of the three pillars of the ecomuseum cannot be achieved. In addition, as mentioned, it is very problematic that Binglanggu is owned by a tourism business. While the park has some positive aspects as discussed in section 8.2, as a tourism business and a theme park Binglanggu is set up in a way that makes the application of most of the ecomuseum principles extremely difficult.

Several government official and experts also argued that the ecomuseums were not located in the areas, where safeguarding of ICH and natural heritage were most needed. They felt the ecomuseums should have been established in the areas of the Li minority, because the safeguarding of their ICH needed to be more effective. Li heritage was located in areas in which economic development had to take the natural environment and ICH into consideration. Government officials and experts felt that because the Li minority traditions were quickly disappearing and in need for urgent safeguarding, ecomuseum should focus on their traditions. Wuzhishan was suggested as one ecomuseum location. This is reflected in the following statement of one of the experts saying that:

Hainan should establish its ecomuseums in areas with unique cultural expressions... If we invest money in protecting heritage and the ecomuseums, we should start with the heritage expressions that are the most endangered ones. In Hainan these are the traditional houses and the ICH expressions of the Li minority. One area that fits these requirements is Wuzhishan. Wuzhishan has many heritage expressions that cannot be found anywhere else. If we do not take care of them and safeguard them, they will disappear soon.

(Interview E7 2013)

The suggestion that ecomuseums should focus on the quickly disappearing heritage of the Li minorities, equals the understanding and application of the first two ecomuseum generations. These two generations have been the ones that have been most researched in China and in the West. They influence the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal of most Chinese experts. But this understanding of the ecomuseum ideal that tends to freeze ethnic-minority heritage in time (Davis 2011) might not be the best way to safeguard it. Ethnic

minorities are under too much pressure to modernise and fit into China's political agenda for the Chinese ecomuseum to effectively safeguard their quickly disappearing heritage traditions. It is also difficult to apply the ecomuseum in a context in which heritage traditions are already on the verge of disappearing. The heritage of the ethnic minorities is often in need of urgent safeguarding, because the local communities have lost interest in its practice, the ecomuseum ideal, however, requires a certain level of interest from local community members. Therefore, one possibility for the ecomuseums could be to concentrate more on documentation and education and safeguarding heritage traditions that can be integrated into a modern life-style.

The selected sites and their evaluation show that there is still a limited, superficial understanding of the ecomuseum ideal among some of the experts and government officials in Hainan. It indicates that while they could explain the ecomuseum ideal on a theoretical basis, in practice they were still trying grasp the ideology, how to organise the ecomuseum, its use and how to establish it. The ecomuseum ideal was not perceived as a mechanism that could protect different kinds of heritage. There were many discussions on what kind of heritage it should safeguard instead of concentrating on the way heritage expressions should be managed. This lack of expertise and understanding of the ecomuseum ideal was seen as an important challenge by the interviewed experts. For ecomuseums to be effective and encourage community participation a deeper understanding, research and training is necessary. The issue of research and the understanding of ecomuseum ideal will be discussed in the next part of the chapter.

8.3.2 Research and the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal

According to the interviewed experts one of the main issues of ecomuseum development in Hainan could be summarised under the theme of a lack in research and in consequence a limited understanding of the ecomuseum ideal. This issue can be divided into several topics introduced in table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Research and understanding of the ecomuseum ideal

Theme	Key topics	Number of Interviewees (out of 10 interviewed experts)
Lack of research regarding ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments and sustainable tourism development	ICH of Hainan’s ethnic minorities is under-researched.	4 (E1, E8, E9)
	Sustainable tourism research needs to be strengthened.	4 (E1, E3, E5)
Lack of research regarding the ecomuseum ideal	Ecomuseum theory, practice and principles require more research.	10
	Lack of skilled people, because there is no university major in the field of heritage and museums.	1 (E3)
	Stronger exchange of knowledge and expertise at national and international level.	2 (E3; E7)

One issue with regards to research concerns the aims of the ecomuseum development: ICH-safeguarding within its natural environments and sustainable tourism development. Experts argued that the research in Hainan on ICH needed to be improved and that many ICH traditions were under-researched. One expert stated that experts in Hainan in particular needed training in protecting ethnic-minority heritage. “There are very few books on heritage protection, very little research and only very few experts. There is not enough training for the protection of the ICH of the ethnic minorities” (Interview E9 2013). It was added that while there is a lot of research on Li brocade other ICH traditions receive a lot less attention. These experts hoped that the establishment of the ecomuseum would support the research on a broader range of ICH traditions. In Baili Baicun the ecomuseum did already have a positive influence in that direction and Hainan University and Hainan Normal University have started to research the cultural heritage of the area.

Another research area that needs strengthening in Hainan is sustainable tourism. One expert argued that this was particularly essential under the aspect of safeguarding natural environments. The expert stated:

It is important to find a balance between protection and development. We still need to research this question. Sustainable tourism development in general still requires a lot of research. We have to be careful when building big attractions that many people want to visit because they sometimes destroy the environment. At the moment we do not do enough work on researching projects that balance development and the protection of the environment.

(Interview E1 2013)

This will be a main challenge for the ecomuseums in Hainan. Interviewed government officials and experts were still uncertain how tourism development and heritage protection in the ecomuseums could be balanced effectively.

Furthermore, the ecomuseum ideal, its theory, practice and principles require more research. Experts stated that Hainan's government officials and experts needed to urgently improve their expertise if they planned on establishing successful and effective ecomuseums. The interviews supported the analysis and showed that while they could explain the ecomuseum ideal in theory, there was a big gap in applying the theory into practice. One of the experts explained that the field of ecomuseum research was relatively weak in China due to the short period of time that it had been studied. One issue was that there was only limited literature in Chinese on the topic. In Hainan few experts have experience in working with ecomuseums. Therefore, experts were unsure what standards the ecomuseum should have. They felt that to establish ecomuseums in Hainan government officials and experts would need more training. One expert noted that:

The ecomuseum concept in Hainan is in a rather difficult situation. Many experts here have no practice in ecomuseum tradition... The appointed experts are still trying to grasp the ideology, how to organise the ecomuseum, its use and how to establish it... The first problem is that they have not agreed on a standard, the second problem is that the time ecomuseums were studied is too short... This poses a problem for the participation of everyone. There is not enough awareness. To gain enough awareness they need training.

(Interview E6 2013)

Another expert added that one reason for the lack of experts to establish the ecomuseums was that Chinese universities did not have subjects, such as heritage studies or museum

studies. Most experts that chose ecomuseums or heritage management as their area of research were historians. This made it very difficult to train skilled experts. The expert stated:

We are lacking skilled people. There are very few people who have the expertise to establish ecomuseums. China has a large population and many doctoral students, but there are very few people who work in this field. At Chinese university there is no subject area that would include the ecomuseum field. Most ecomuseum experts studied history.

(Interview E3 2013)

The lack of experts and skilled people is a general problem in heritage protection and sustainable tourism development in China (Lindberg, Tisdell, and Xue 2003). In Hainan it slows down the processes of establishing the ecomuseums. Since I visited the island to collect data in 2013 the development has not moved forward. One government official (Interview GO4 2013) guessed that it would take at least eight years for all the six ecomuseums to be established. One key issue is that government officials and experts are unsure how to move forward and what guidelines to establish. One expert suggested that a stronger cooperation between the ecomuseums in China and abroad could be beneficial for Hainan and ecomuseum development in general. The expert suggested that: "The exchange of knowledge and expertise is not enough. It would be better if the people from all the countries who establish ecomuseums, would build a network to work together and exchange ecomuseum practices" (Interview E3 2013).

The ecomuseum establishment in Hainan would benefit from a stronger collaboration with foreign universities and experts. This could support them in developing guidelines and finding a best practice approach. For that to happen, however, the provincial government, which would have to be involved in such collaboration, would have to show a stronger initiative. So far, while the government is very interested in establishing ecomuseums, they have been relatively weak in carrying out actual measures to move the ecomuseum development forward. This point will be discussed in the next part of the chapter.

8.3.3 Leadership

Another area that is problematic for the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan Province can be summarised under the aspect of leadership issues. This area encompasses the responsibilities for the ecomuseums, the development of guidelines and ecomuseum standards, and the information policy of the government. Table 8.3 shows the main issues mentioned by government officials and experts.

Table 8.3 Leadership Issues

Theme	Key topic	Number of interviewees	
		Government officials (out of 5)	Experts (out of 10)
Weak government leadership	Provincial government does not follow up on ecomuseum plans/ unclear responsibilities.	2 (GO3; GO2; GO4; GO5)	5 (E4; E5; E6; E7; E8)
	Ecomuseums are not included in the Five-Year Plan.	1 (GO4)	-
	Lack of preparation and planning.	-	2 (E5; E6)
	Failure to inform the local communities about decision processes, and introduce them to the ecomuseum ideal.	-	2 (E4; E7)
	Lack of ecomuseum guidelines.	3 (GO3; GO4; GO5)	3 (E4; E5; E6)
	Lack of cooperation between departments.	1 (GO2)	2 (E4; E8)

Five experts and four government officials suggested that the provincial government did not display strong leadership and did not follow up on its plans to establish the ecomuseums. The key issue, mentioned by one government official, is that the ecomuseums in Hainan are not included in the province's Five-Year Plan and, therefore, not officially approved by the leaders. Therefore, no department has the official responsibility to carry out the project.

Many government officials in the cultural department are overworked and consequently, do not attempt to work on projects that do not have priority for the provincial government. This government official stated that to successfully establish the ecomuseums more staff was needed.

This situation leads to several other problems. One issue mentioned by two experts was that the government did start to establish ecomuseums without the necessary research and preparation. One expert elaborated this problem in detail, explaining that many leaders have not deeply considered the ecomuseum ideal, which makes the safeguarding of heritage and community participation more difficult. Often government officials think of ecomuseums in terms of traditional museums. The expert felt the idea of the ecomuseum did not get explained enough to the population and the government did not put enough effort into truly establishing effective ecomuseums. The expert argued:

I think one problem is the way we work. The ecomuseum does not work like the traditional museum. When people hear a museum is built in their city they expect to go to a building, to see a collection of objects and that everybody is silent. But the ecomuseum is a very new concept. The leaders, not the experts, have a big influence on how this concept is carried out. But most of them do not study this concept. They still do not really understand what is good about the ecomuseum idea. Carrying out a big project demands a lot of work. They have not figured that out yet. But from there follow a lot of other problems like the focus of the ecomuseum.

(Interview E6 2013)

Two experts also argued that provincial government's lack of leadership in ecomuseum development was the cause for the government's failure to introduce the ecomuseum development and its principles to the local population and for its reluctance towards community participation. One expert criticised the government did not do enough to promote the ecomuseum principles among local leaders and local community members:

The government is not very active in guiding the ecomuseum development and the local population has no knowledge of the ecomuseum and its principles... To promote ecomuseums the government must strengthen its leadership and appoint capable local leaders. There is not a very strong mentality for the necessity of the local population to

participate in the ecomuseum. The government should show a stronger initiative to introduce the idea of participation and steering the ecomuseum to the local communities.

(Interview E4 2013)

This lack of promotion of ecomuseum principles is also connected to the poor understanding of ecomuseum principles (8.3.2) and the attitude of government officials that community participation will mainly happen in form of benefit-sharing (see Chapter 7).

Another issue that is highly problematic for the ecomuseum and demonstrates a lack in leadership is that the provincial government has not decided on ecomuseum standards and guidelines for Hainan Province yet. The establishment of the ecomuseums has already started and six locations have been chosen, but the aims and standards for these ecomuseums are unclear. This makes it difficult to evaluate the ecomuseums in Hainan. It also shows a lack of commitment of the government to fulfil their aim to strengthen and improve the standard of ecomuseums in China. One government official stated:

Because we just started to develop the ecomuseum there is no explicit form and we have no clear-cut standard or definition of the ecomuseum. What kind of regulations will the ecomuseums possess once they are finished? What kind of standard can the ecomuseum reach? Right now there is no standard, Hainan Province does not have any kind of ecomuseum standard that was officially released by the government.

(Interview GO5 2013)

In addition, because there is no responsible department to coordinate the ecomuseum development, government divisions working on projects with similar concepts, do not contribute to the establishment of ecomuseums. One example of this is that the development of Ecological Cultural Protection Zones (ECPZ) in Hainan has no connection to ecomuseum development. Similar to ecomuseums the establishment of ECPZ is at the beginning stage. Because both aim for a holistic approach of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments and for community involvement, they would need similar regulations and guidelines. However, the government department that was planning ECPZ was little aware of and not involved in ecomuseum development, as shown in this statement by one government official:

A big part of our ICH protection, will be carried out in ECPZ. Those are very similar to the ecomuseum. However, we have no connection to the ecomuseum development and I do not have any information on it. We just work on ECPZs...

(Interview GO2 2013)

To achieve a more effective approach of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments it would be useful for government departments to work closer together, when establishing similar projects and to learn from each other. For example, guidelines established for the ECPZ could also be used for the ecomuseums.

The issue of a weak government leadership also influences other areas, for example, the question of financial resources examined in the next section.

8.3.4 Financial Resources

Another key issue for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan mentioned by every government official and five of the experts is the financial resources of the project. A lack of funding is a common problem in cultural heritage protection and ecomuseum development in China (Shepherd and Yu 2013, 31; Svensson 2006b; Yi 2011). Examples of this are the four ecomuseums of the Sino-Norwegian project in Guizhou. Their funding was provided by the Norwegian government, the Chinese national government and the Guizhou provincial government (Jin 2011). However, after the Norwegian funding expired Chinese national and provincial governments have not been providing few funds. Similarly, the ecomuseums of the Guangxi '1+10' model that was funded by local-governmental authorities and the Guangxi Museum of Nationalities (GXMN) have been struggling with a lack of funding (Yi 2011). Hainan has planned to invest ten million yuan (£1 million) into the establishment of the ecomuseums in Baili Baicun (Luo 2012). This is a very low budget. As a comparison the establishment of 16 sites belonging to the Anji ecomuseum not including the exhibition centre (see p. 103-105) had a planned budget of 210 million yuan (£21 million) (Anji People's Government 2010).

As explained by one of the government officials, while finding sufficient funding is generally a problem in cultural heritage protection in Hainan, it is particularly problematic for the establishment of the ecomuseums. While other ecomuseums in China struggle with

continuing the funding once they are established, it is already difficult to find the financial resources to establish the ecomuseums in Hainan. Because the establishment of the ecomuseums is not included in the Five-Year Plan they do not have an allocated budget (Interview GO4 2013). The issues that developed through limited funding will be illustrated further in table 8.4.

Table 8.4 Financial Resources

Theme	Key topic	Number of interviewees	
		Government officials (out of 5)	Experts (out of 10)
Lack of financial resources	Decision to focus on heritage expressions other than Hainan’s ethnic-minority groups.	2 (GO2, GO5)	-
	Ecomuseum depends highly on tourism development as a financial resource.	1 (GO5)	1 (E3)
	No effective system for the distribution of funds.	1 (GO3)	4 (E3, E4, E6, E7)
Improvement of financial resources	Establishment of liaisons.	-	1 (E5)

The issue of limited financial resources also influences the location of the ecomuseums. Almost all of the chosen ecomuseum sites already have a certain degree of tourism structure, which makes their development more cost efficient. Two government officials have mentioned that this might be one of the reasons why most ecomuseums in Hainan do not protect Li minority heritage. Most of the areas with Li minority heritage would have been too expensive to develop into an ecomuseum. One government official stated: “The areas where the Li minority lives are all in the less developed centre and western parts of the island. Establishing an ecomuseum there would be a big engineering project. We do not have enough money and experts to complete a project like this successfully” (Interview GO2 2013).

Another issue is that the funding of the ecomuseums in Hainan will depend on how much financial resource they will be able to generate through tourism at the beginning of the ecomuseum development. One government official explained that:

We hope that people come from everywhere to visit and enjoy their time in the ecomuseums, so that it contributes to people's income and the financial resources of the ecomuseums; because at the moment the government cannot invest a large amount of money into the ecomuseum.

(Interview GO5 2013)

The need of ecomuseums to generate financial revenue to fund heritage preservation and other measures, including education, is problematic. In many cultural heritage protection projects in China this has led to a strong focus on tourism development, while the safeguarding of all forms of heritage was placed on hold. Because lower levels of government are required and to follow and finance central and provincial governments' aims, they are forced to adopt these 'growth-orientated' development methods (Wang, S. 2012). For the ecomuseums in Hainan this could either result in an overdevelopment of tourism or in a situation where the ecomuseums do not have enough funding to maintain themselves, because the tourism development was unsuccessful. As discussed several nature reserves in Hainan have failed to develop successful ecotourism (Stone and Wall 2003).

Another issue with regards to funding is that the government does not have a very effective system to distribute the little funding they have at local level. Often they are unable to tell the local population, for instance the owners of traditional houses or ICH transmitters how much funding they are going to receive. One expert (Interview E4 2013) explained: "The government does not always release all the funding how it was originally planned. If people ask how much money they are going to receive we cannot tell them... We need a better system to manage our financial resources".

One government official added that the funding for the ecomuseums is often not enough to satisfy the needs of the local population and the natural environments. Because the funds are only released bit by bit change often happens slowly. This is influenced also by the fact that the system of distributing these funds is not very effective. Therefore, it would be

important to improve the management system to establish an effective ecomuseum and safeguard ICH and natural environments.

To improve the financial situation of the ecomuseums one expert suggested that similar to the ecomuseums in Guizhou, Hainan Province should aim to form investment liaisons. The expert suggested: “The first ecomuseums in Guizhou were funded by the Norwegian government. So forming liaisons for investment is a possibility” (Interview E5 2013). There would be several possibilities for forming liaisons to support financial resources including partnerships with foreign research institutions and governments as well as the investment of businesses. However, these often only serve as short-term solutions that could be used to establish the ecomuseums. In addition, the investment of businesses can lead to an over-commercialisation of the ecomuseum. To be successful Hainan’s ecomuseums will have to develop a long-term financial strategy.

8.4 Summary

Using interviews, observation and literature this chapter has evaluated the challenges and opportunities for the current ecomuseum in Hainan Province. It concentrated on the challenges and opportunities regarding the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, sustainable tourism development and community participation. It furthermore examined challenges that were specific to the ecomuseum plans in Hainan. Depending on the location of the ecomuseum sites ecomuseum development creates many opportunities in particular for the safeguarding of ICH and sustainable tourism development. However, other areas, such as community participation and the protection of natural heritage, still need to be improved. Some of the major challenges encompassed the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal, the role of the government and the financial resources. Based on the results of this chapter and Chapter 7, the following chapter aims to draw up new ecomuseum guidelines for Hainan Province, that are more relevant for the local situation.

CHAPTER 9 THE 24 HAINANESE ECOMUSEUM GUIDELINES – DEVELOPING A LOCALISED ECOMUSEUM IDEAL FOR HAINAN PROVINCE

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 critically analysed challenges and opportunities regarding the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province. It showed together with the previous chapters that while European and Chinese ecomuseums are facing several similar issues, Chinese and specifically Hainanese ecomuseums also are confronted with individual challenges that are influenced by the political, economic and social situations of China and in Hainan Province. To address them a new and localised approach to the ecomuseum ideal is needed.

Currently the ecomuseum ideal and its principles, for example, the 21 Ecomuseum Principles (Table 1.3), are strongly influenced by European circumstances and the European understanding of heritage and tourism management. Ecomuseums in developing countries and countries with a different political systems struggle to fulfil and apply these principles in their local contexts. Bowers (2013) argued that the ecomuseum ideal and certain ecomuseum principles were better suited for developed countries and suggested that ecomuseum principles should be more inclusive. Several authors (Jin 2011; Yi 2011) have questioned if the ecomuseum ideal is suitable for the Chinese top-down political system and the isolated and poor rural context in which it has been established. This issue was also observed among the interviewed government officials and experts in Hainan Province. One government official explained: “One problem is that the ecomuseum model is not really suitable for Hainan, because we have too many development issues” (Interview GO1 2013). Nitzky (2012b, 371) argued that the ecomuseum in China “exists more as an untranslatable foreign concept because it remains detached from its Western conception”. Therefore, the Western understanding of the ecomuseum ideal, which is best expressed in the 21 Ecomuseum Principles, is difficult to apply to China and other developing countries. While it can be used as a checklist to evaluate ecomuseums and other community-led heritage projects in Europe (Corsane 2006b), China does need a new form of evaluation. Four interviewed experts suggested that Hainan Province needed to develop its own ecomuseum guidelines that were more inclusive to the local situation and Hainan’s cultural context. In response to that, this chapter suggests a new set of 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines that are based on literature review, the analysis of the stakeholder interviews and observations at the case-study sites. This chapter begins by examining the issues of

employing the existing principles and guidelines to evaluate the Hainanese ecomuseums and from there develops a new set of guidelines for the ecomuseums in Hainan Province. It then uses these 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines together with the three ecomuseum pillars (Table 1.4) to evaluate the two case studies and the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan.

9.2 The 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines

9.2.1 Challenges in applying the existing ecomuseum principles and guidelines to the Hainanese ecomuseums

One of the fundamental ideas and pillars of the ecomuseum ideal is its responsiveness to its local context (Corsane and Zheng 2013). Therefore, principles and guidelines employed to guide and evaluate ecomuseums should be flexible and adapt to the local situation. At the moment two sets of principles¹² could be used to evaluate ecomuseum development in Hainan. The first set is the 21 Ecomuseum Principles developed by Corsane, Elliott and Davis (2004). The second set is the 'Liuzhi Principles' that were developed specifically for the Chinese ecomuseum when establishing the first ecomuseum of the Sino-Norwegian ecomuseum project in Guizhou (Myklebust 2006).

The 21 Ecomuseum Principles are adaptable to local context and stress that not all ecomuseums will display or prioritise each principle to the same degree (Corsane 2006a). Nevertheless they were developed with the European ecomuseum in mind. Consequently, not all of the 21 Principles can be adapted to the Hainanese case. At the same time certain aspects of the ecomuseum ideal that are relevant for its development in Hainan are not included in the list.

There are several principles relating to territory (Principle 8); to research (Principles 16 and 17); to the holistic protection of heritage resources *in situ* (Principles 11, 12, 15, 18 and 19), and to improving the life of its local communities (Principle 21) that are also significant for ecomuseums in China and Hainan. However, principles regarding the democratic participation of local community in decision-making processes, such as Principles 1 and 2, face almost insuperable barriers in China's top-down political system. In addition the

¹² A more detailed discussion on the different ecomuseum principles and lists that have been developed since the beginning of the ecomuseum movement can be found in the Introduction Chapter.

economic situation of the local population in Hainanese ecomuseums makes it unrealistic to assume that they can “depend on substantial active voluntary efforts by local stakeholders” (Principle 6). Economic circumstance in Hainan’s rural areas makes it difficult to rely mainly on volunteer work. Because the local community is relatively poor, it is important for the ecomuseum to create job opportunities that encourage them to stay in their villages. It would be more effective for the ecomuseums in Hainan to depend on paid local community staff and be supported by volunteers. While not all ecomuseums have to adhere to the 21 Principles to the same degree, they should have at least a realistic opportunity to reach them.

Several of the 21 Principles are also problematic because of different cultural references and a different prioritisation of cultural and environmental protection and economic development. For example, Principles 4, 13, 14 and 20 that are connected to tourism and sustainable development are often given precedence over principles that are connected to heritage protection. Ecomuseums are established with the aim to enhance development and to combat poverty (Davis 2011, 264). With regards to sustainable tourism development Chinese tourists expect a different form of entertainment from Western tourists (Chapter 5). While experts worry that ecomuseums in China could be confused with ‘Ethnic Villages’ or ‘Minority Parks’ that are described as “parodies of rural minority cultures” (Davis 2011, 265), Chinese tourists enjoy a theme park like atmosphere. They have a different cultural reference, that allows them to see those villages not as ‘inauthentic’ but as what Oakes (2006b) calls “authentic replicas”, that are judged by the quality in which they replicate the original idea and not by their actual realness. Due to that the emphasis in Chinese ecomuseums is placed more on products of consumption and less on heritage management processes. In Hainan the situation is even more complex. Because of the province’s development into an International Tourism Island, it is under pressure to appeal to the dominant domestic tourism market as well as to develop tourism products that attract international tourists. Ecomuseum principles used to evaluate the Hainanese ecomuseums should reflect this focus on development and the different tourism needs.

Furthermore, Principles 7 and 9 concerning local identity and the reflection of continuity and change are problematic with regards to the protection of ethnic-minority heritage. As discussed in Chapter 8, how local identity and ICH of ethnic minorities are represented is

decided by the national party line. Whilst government officials often interpret the protection of tangible heritage in the sense of developing and improving (Oakes 2006a), they tend to attempt safeguarding ICH by 'freezing' it in time, keeping a romanticised version (Oakes 2006b) of the heritage tradition. Therefore, the guidelines for these aspects of the ecomuseums need to be more specific.

Another principle that bears several issues for the ecomuseums in China is Principle 3. It stipulates that ecomuseums "stimulate joint ownership and management, with input from local communities, academic advisors, local businesses, local authorities and government structures". Ownership and the management of heritage resources is a complex topic in the case of China. According to the "Cultural Relics Protection Law" heritage resources are owned and managed by the state (Tang 2013). Heritage sites that are developed for cultural tourism, like ecomuseums, can be managed through three different models: government control (Suojia Ecomuseum); joint ventures between local governments and private management companies (Binglanggu); and, private management contracting (Tang'an ecomuseum). As discussed in Chapter 3, when in government control the management of cultural heritage sites falls under the responsibility of many government agencies. Due to the complexity of ownership and management responsibilities many conflicts can arise, including a lack of coordination; different priorities among state agencies at local, provincial, and national levels; an absence of leadership in planning and managing; and disputes between government officials, private businesses, and local communities. Private management contracting, as stated in Chapter 8, is similar problematic, tourism companies are profit-orientated and the cultural and natural heritage of local communities are turned into commercially exploited private assets, over which community groups have little control (Shepherd and Yu 2013, 51-53). Because holistic approaches to heritage protection, such as ecomuseums, combine natural, tangible and intangible heritage expressions the number of agencies responsible for them multiplies and makes it difficult for Chinese ecomuseums to achieve joint ownership and management over heritage resources.

Principle 10 is also challenging in the Chinese contexts. The 'hub' or information centre which is the centre of most ecomuseums, often fails to connect with its 'antennae' places, spaces, sites, performance areas and buildings and to support the visitors in understanding the territory. As discussed earlier the local population often understands the 'hub' as the

ecomuseum itself (Yi 2011; Nitzky 2012b) and the visitors do not always have access to the 'hub' (Varutti 2014). In many cases the establishment of the 'hub' or 'information centre' is main change when villages are being developed into ecomuseums (Yi 2011) and the word museum is still strongly associated with a building and a collection. Therefore, the 'hub' model is not necessarily the most effective way to link different heritage sites in China.

The other set of principles that could be used to evaluate the ecomuseums in Hainan are the Liuzhi Principles (Table 1.5), which have served as guidelines for the Chinese ecomuseums (Myklebust 2006). According to Su (2005) these principles aimed to enhance the preservation of cultures in their original environment and respect the local communities' ownership of their own culture. While these principles were developed for Chinese ecomuseums and were devised by Norwegian scholars, key people for the Chinese Society of Museums, members of the local and provincial administrations and participants of the first four ecomuseums in Guizhou, most of them mirror the understanding of the Western ecomuseum ideal. The establishment of the ecomuseums in Guizhou was strongly influenced by the Norwegian experts' interpretation of the ecomuseum ideal, being unfamiliar with the Chinese situation (Jin 2011). Out of the nine Liuzhi Principles only Principles 7 and 9 truly reflect the local circumstances. Issues of community engagement (Principles 1-3) and tourism development (Principles 4 and 5) resemble the ideas of the 21 Ecomuseum Principles on these topics. They call for a bottom-up approach and long-term planning that places higher importance on heritage protection than on tourism development. As discussed above this does not correspond to the situation in China. In practice most ecomuseums in China do not achieve most of the Liuzhi Principles. Yi (2013a) suggests that this might be because the original ecomuseums ideal has been too idealistic or advanced for the situation in rural China. In an earlier paper Yi (2010a) advocated that local communities are too poor to value the ecomuseum ideal and that it would be helpful to lower expectations. It was suggested that the Liuzhi Principles might work more effectively in 20 years. While this research agrees that the Liuzhi Principles are not suited to evaluate Chinese ecomuseums, it argues it is more a question of changing to the Chinese perspective than seeing it as lowering the expectations, because it does not achieve the Western ideal. Furthermore, I feel that the Liuzhi Principles are too superficial, advocating general concepts that do not provide ecomuseums in China with enough direction.

In addition to those two sets of principles Yi (2013a) developed a list of 40 ecomuseum indicators in her doctoral thesis that are aimed specifically at evaluating Chinese ecomuseums. These indicators are divided into three themes: the governance and strategies for local sustainable development; local involvement, participation and empowerment; and the interpretation and conservation of heritage resources. They represent a helpful check list and reflect the economic and political situation in China. Consequently, this thesis had partly similar results and some of the guidelines overlap, which will be indicated in due course. But there are also differences. Yi's list has several issues when used to evaluate the ecomuseums in Hainan. Firstly, Yi's indicators focus on the first two ecomuseum generations in Guizhou and Guangxi. The newer generations are not part of the analysis. This is problematic because in the newer applications of the ecomuseum, starting with the Anji Ecomuseum, the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments plays a more important role than in the earlier generations that mainly protected ethnic-minority heritage. Guidelines used to evaluate the ecomuseums in Hainan have to reflect these changes. Secondly, this research finds the range of indicators problematic. They are so detailed, that they leave little room for interpretation and variation of the ecomuseum approach. There is also no weighting of the indicators, which leads to minor details, for instance, regular opening hours being on the same level with essential issues, for example, education programmes for the local population. Thirdly, this research disagrees with some of the indicators used for evaluating the ecomuseum. One indicator, for instance, is the existence of a visitor centre. This research will conclude later on in this chapter, that a visitor centre does not have to be part of a successful ecomuseum in China and might even be obstructive. Fourthly, Yi's 40 indicators do not reliably evaluate the effectiveness of the ecomuseums in China. For instance, according to 'The Comparative Chart of the Selected Cases against the Indicators of Chinese Ecomuseums' (Yi 2013a, 326-338) that compares three ecomuseums in Guizhou (Suoja, Zhenshan and Tang'an) and three ecomuseums in Guangxi (Longji, Sanjiang and Nandan), the ecomuseum that achieves the second most indicators with 20 is the Suojia Miao ecomuseum. Compared to that Tang'an, Zhenshan and Longji fulfil only nine indicators and Sanjiang 12. Nandan achieves with 25 the highest number of indicators. Other research (Nitzky 2012b), however, shows that out of the three ecomuseums in Guizhou Province Zhenshan seems to be the most effective with regards to community engagement and sustainable tourism. In Suojia and Tang'an, the ecomuseum is

detached from the local communities and they are both facing similar issues, such as an accelerated loss of ICH traditions (Lu 2014). Here, the way the indicators are evaluated is part of the problem. For example, because Suojia has the Liuzhi Principles it is the only one of the six ecomuseums that fulfils the ‘formal strategic guidelines’ indicator. However, the category does not ask how effective these guidelines are and if the ecomuseum actually follows them. Therefore, the indicators are not precise and meaningful enough. Lastly, as discussed in Chapter 8, the future ecomuseums in Hainan have different characteristics to the ones in mainland China and therefore need guidelines that consider the local situation in Hainan Province. The next part of the chapter will develop and discuss these new ecomuseum guidelines for Hainan Province.

9.2.2 Developing the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines

This part of the chapter aims to create ecomuseum guidelines for Hainan Province that specifically reflect the local situation in Hainan while still keeping “the vision that went into creating an ecomuseum, based on an exciting interaction between knowledge and tradition, between education and pragmatism” (Sydoff 1998, cited in Davis 2011, 265). The guidelines are aimed to serve as an ecomuseum standard for Hainan that acknowledges the local situation and can be used to effectively evaluate current and future ecomuseums in the province. In order to ensure that the ecomuseum spirit is preserved while adapting the ecomuseum ideal to the local situation this research kept the idea of the three pillars developed by Corsane and Zheng (2013) that include *in situ* preservation, stakeholder involvement and local distinctiveness, with the second pillar slightly amended to match the Chinese situation (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Three pillars of the ‘ecomuseum ideal’ (adapted from Corsane and Zheng 2013, 13)

1. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ focuses on the sense and spirit of place – through a holistic approach to the integrated management of natural and cultural and tangible and intangible heritage resources within their original and over-layered physical, natural, economic, social, cultural and political environments.
2. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ includes its ‘stakeholders’ in all decision-making processes by informing and consulting them in all matters regarding the ecomuseum development, including the safeguarding of heritage, the development of tourism and changes in the

landscape. These stakeholders include – most importantly – community groups and representatives, tradition-bearers and ‘transmitters’; but also government bodies at different levels; heritage management professionals and practitioners; businesses; non-government bodies; and, academic advisors and students.

3. The ‘ecomuseum ideal’ is not an absolute model, rather it is a ‘malleable’ and flexible outlook and should be responsive to, and ‘shaped’ by, the specific local contexts and needs – no two ecomuseums will ever be the same or limited by the parameters of a model, as each will be unique in its response that will attempt to bring equal benefits to all ‘stakeholders’ involved.

These three pillars are at the heart of the ecomuseum philosophy (Corsane and Zheng 2013) and therefore should be achieved by all ecomuseums in Hainan Province in order for them to be effective. The second pillar was revised for the Chinese situation and focuses on informing and consulting stakeholders in decision-making processes rather than ‘stakeholder’ involvement and joint-ownership of the processes and products, which as discussed can be difficult to accomplish in Hainan. In addition to that 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines (Table 9.2) were developed to evaluate the ecomuseums in greater depth.

Table 9.2 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines

1. Are guided by the provincial government. The provincial government is committed to the ecomuseum ideal and shows initiative by including the ecomuseums establishment in the 5-Year Plan; guaranteeing the government departments responsible for establishing the ecomuseums enough time, staff and support; and appointing capable local leaders belonging to the ecomuseum community.
2. Are well researched before being established. Their guidelines, ideas and aims are clearly understood by all the participants including government officials at all levels, experts, local community members and businesses.
3. Have guidelines and aims that are developed together with all the stakeholders before the ecomuseum is established. These guidelines are evaluated on a regular basis and if necessary changed and improved.
4. Empower the local communities and strengthen their ability to communicate and represent their interests. They equip the communities with the tools to voice their opinions and needs. A part of this strategy could be the establishment of management committee that represents the interests of the local community members towards government officials and businesses. This guideline is also closely connected to education and training classes (Guideline 14).
5. Create a list of economic activities in the area. They have clearly defined rules for all

participating stakeholders, in particular businesses that are controlled and revaluated on a regular basis.

6. Are supported by a network of ecomuseums and other community-led heritage projects, nationally and internationally, that collaborate in research, and facilitate exchange. They are committed to finding a best practice approach. Thereby, they contribute to the research and development of ecomuseum theory and ecomuseum practice in China.
7. Develop and ensure long-term financial planning. Enough funding for the establishment, the maintenance and the protection of heritage in the ecomuseum is guaranteed. An effective system to manage and distribute the funds is in place.
8. Strengthen the holistic safeguarding of intangible, tangible and natural heritage by focussing on the connection between different heritage expressions. They encourage cooperation between the departments responsible for the different heritage forms.
9. Create a connection between the different heritage sites and link them to the area through a 'hub' or a decentralised approach with different information points.
10. Support the local communities in protecting all the heritage expressions that are relevant to them. This can be achieved through financial support; ICH workshops and classes; environmental education and the on-going documentation of heritage traditions. Local community members feel their heritage is being effectively protected.
11. Develop guidelines for natural heritage protection within the ecomuseum and encourage local communities, visitors and businesses to feel responsible for safeguarding the natural heritage.
12. Place importance on transmission work by supporting heritage transmitters and developing educational programmes for schools. An important part of this is to avoid 'freezing' ICH in time and encouraging contemporary elements that are compatible with a modern life-style.
13. Encourage the younger generation to learn about their ICH traditions and strengthen people's pride in their cultural heritage.
14. Place a strong focus on education, for local communities and visitors alike. They create education possibilities for local community members. This encompasses improving the education system, regular workshops and ICH and natural heritage protection training.
15. Respect the wishes of the local community to improve their life-style, for example the wish for modern housing and find a way to combine this with heritage protection.
16. Create opportunities to research both ICH and natural heritage and its safeguarding for local and international experts, universities and local community members.
17. Local communities are content with the involvement of tourism businesses and their business practices. It is ensured that the businesses respect the local communities and are not exploiting their cultural heritage. The local communities are happy to engage with tourists and experience tourism in a positive way.

18. Encourage and support local community members to develop and start their own businesses using their heritage as a resource. They create the possibility for local community members to develop their own projects within the ecomuseum framework.
19. Distribute profits fairly and support the local communities to participate in benefit-sharing. One way to achieve this would be to employ different community-based tourism models in the ecomuseum like *nongjiale*.
20. Local culture is not presented as backwards and primitive. The way heritage is displayed is based on the needs of the local communities and not the tourists.
21. Create job opportunities for local community members which involve maintaining and managing parts of the ecomuseum to encourage them to stay in their village. One possibility would be to give them the chance to be responsible for the preservation and management of one part of the ecomuseum, for example, their home village. Travel guides or park rangers should also be recruited from the local population.
22. Establish convenient transportation networks from the main vacation spots to the ecomuseum and within the ecomuseum itself.
23. Consider the different needs of domestic and international tourists. While organising entertainment for visitors, such as dance performances, tourists are also included in the heritage protection processes, in particular with regards to natural heritage. Within the ecomuseum, visitors should have the possibility to educate themselves about the area.
24. Do not depend on sustainable tourism alone, but also find ways to reinvest the money earned (one possibility could be redeveloping traditional agriculture, local products etc.).

The 24 Ecomuseum Guidelines for Hainan are based on the insights gleaned during qualitative interviews conducted for this research, observations at the case studies and an analysis of literature on ecomuseums, community participation and sustainable tourism in China. They can be divided into three categories that link into each other: government leadership and community involvement (Guidelines 1 – 7); safeguarding cultural heritage (Guidelines 8 – 16); and sustainable development tourism (Guidelines 17 – 24).

This system of evaluation has several inadequacies. One of them is the number of guidelines that were limited to the characteristics that were perceived as the most relevant for the Hainanese ecomuseums by this research. I also decided against weighting the guidelines and instead relied on the system of the three pillars as the most important guidelines for the ecomuseum ideal. This decision was made to avoid a complicated weighting system and to create more accessible guidelines.

The guidelines belonging to the first category of ‘government leadership and community involvement’ were developed with regards to the Chinese top-down system. The research concluded in sub-chapter 8.3.3 that due to institutional and political barriers ecomuseums in Hainan cannot work effectively without strong government leadership and interest in the project. This conclusion corresponds to one of three principles of the Chinese ecomuseum discussed in the Introduction Chapter stating that in the ecomuseum development in China “the government has to guide, experts to direct and local residents to be involved” (Hu 2006).

While the ecomuseum ideal originally promotes a bottom-up approach to heritage management, there have been few heritage protection projects in China that truly have achieved a bottom-up approach in safeguarding cultural heritage and managing tourism¹³. As discussed before most projects with effective community participation and in which the community was able to keep the control over their local heritage in China, have been facilitated by strong local leadership through experts (Nitzky 2013) and local village leaders (Svensson 2006; Xu 2007). Because of the immense political pressure on Hainan’s government officials to develop the island into an International Tourism Island, the lack of business guidelines as a SEZ and the attitude of most of the interviewed government officials, it seems unlikely for the ecomuseums to develop a bottom-up approach in the future. While this top-down political system and the government-led approach to heritage protection can be disagreed with and criticised, this does not contribute to a more effective heritage protection in China’s ecomuseums. Therefore, it might be better to work with what is there and aim for actually achievable goals that do not require China to change its complete political outlook.

While other research indicates (Yi 2011) and government officials often assume that the local communities in China due to their lower education levels and poor living conditions do not have the ability to participate and manage the ecomuseum (Oakes 1998), this research found no indication of that in Hainan. On the contrary, most local community members had considered the questions of heritage protection and tourism development, what was

¹³ There are a few exceptions in which local communities have been empowered to manage their cultural heritage, such as the Jin Family Fort in Guizhou. However, these remain the single cases and the more successful their tourism development get, the more likely it is for the power situations to shift and the government to take over (Oakes 2006a).

important to them and what improvements could be made. In Baili Baicun two Hainanese community members explicitly stated that they had the most knowledge about their area and therefore, should be consulted in decision-making processes.

In Binglanggu one interviewee stated that she felt the Li minority should be more included in managing their heritage. The way traditional government of the Li minority is structured also supports a participatory approach to decision-making. Their informal governance relies on the village council of elders and communal and kinship bonds. Decisions are made through consensus-building (Xie 2010). Furthermore, local ethnic minorities in Hainan have shown initiative to independently organise presentations of ICH for tourists. For instance, a Li village in Wuzhishan arranged dance performances and tours through their village for tourists travelling by bus from Haikou to Sanya. The project was a success at first, but soon had to be abandoned because villagers refused to cooperate with the bus company. Consequently, it was superseded by competition from professional folk villages working together with the bus companies (Xie 2010). This shows that community participation in the ecomuseums in Hainan is more an issue of political-structural barriers than of the education level of the local communities. Therefore, the guidelines regarding government leadership and community involvement are aimed at ecomuseums supporting community participation within China's political system. The guidelines work towards enabling community participation in the ecomuseums (1-5) and try to ensure an effective establishment and maintenance (1-3; 6-7). The necessity of Guidelines 1 and 2, a strong government leadership and the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal by all the participants have already been discussed in sub-chapter 8.3.2 and 8.3.3. The cooperation with other national and international ecomuseums and exchange programmes (Guideline 6) could in particular help to strengthen this essential understanding and through that ecomuseum practice in Hainan. This was supported by one of the experts interviewed for this research (sub-chapter 8.3.3). Yi (2013a) also concluded that ecomuseums in China need to create national and international links and included this in her 40 indicators.

The understanding of the ecomuseum ideal is also the basis for community participation, which is addressed in Guidelines 3 and 4. While the ecomuseums might not be initiated or led by local communities it is important that stakeholder groups are consulted and informed about the ecomuseum development and have the opportunity to participate in the creation

of guidelines. One possibility to achieve this is would be to install a management committee that maintains the relationship with the local government and tourism organisations, and solves conflicts within the community. This management committee should be comprised of elected representatives from the communities. Its function would be to communicate the wishes of the community, and issues that arise, to the government and tourism organisations (Oakes 2006a). They also would be employed to work out problems within the community and keep the villagers informed. Meetings of the management committee should be open to all residents of the ecomuseums.

Guideline 5 was specifically developed with regards to Hainan's status as a SEZ. Two experts noted that for businesses to effectively participate in ecomuseums strict guidelines were required. Hainan's regulations regarding business practices and investment are lacking and the existing guidelines are poorly implemented, which has led to the destruction of heritage resources in the past (Gu and Wall 2007). One expert stated that: "It would be good to develop a plan that includes all the groups that should participate in the ecomuseum. Clear regulations for everyone are necessary" (Interview E4 2013). Another expert added that a stricter control of businesses investing in the ecomuseums was essential for the future ecomuseums. "We need to make list of economic activities in the ecomuseums. People who invest in the ecomuseum should still have to report back" (Interview E5 2013).

In addition sufficient funding (Guideline 7) to establish and maintain the ecomuseums was crucial. This is an issue for ecomuseums in Western countries and in China and they often depend on outside financial resources (Davis 2007). Yi (2013a) did include the aspect of funding in the 40 ecomuseum indicators used to evaluate several ecomuseums in Guangxi and Guizhou. As discussed in Chapter 8 this aspect is also crucial for Hainan. One way to increase the financial resources would be to encourage and create opportunities for visitors to spend their money in the ecomuseums through tourism facilities and services, for example interpretive facilities, such as programmes and guides and the selling of local food and souvenirs. Furthermore, even a small entrance fee or the possibility to donate money could help the financial resources of the ecomuseums (Stone and Wall 2003).

The next topic concerns the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Hainan Province. As discussed in Chapter 3 Hainan's heritage consists mainly of intangible and natural elements.

Experts felt that Hainan needed in particular new methods to protect its natural environments. In addition they argued that the ecomuseums' emphasis on safeguarding ICH differentiated them from other ecomuseums and made new guidelines necessary. One expert stated:

The ecomuseums in Hainan have its own specialties and its own individual characteristics. Hainan is a tropical rainforest island. Different methods are needed to protect this kind of natural environments... I also think for Hainan the aspect of protecting ICH is very important in the development of the ecomuseums... The protection of ICH is better than the protection of tangible heritage. This is an individual characteristic of the ecomuseums in Hainan.

(Interview E3 2013)

The 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines take this focus into account and centre around these two heritage forms. Guidelines 8 - 10 correspond to the ecomuseum ideal to strengthen the holistic safeguarding of different heritage expressions that is also noted in the 21 Ecomuseum Principles and the Liuzhi Principles. Guideline 8 places importance on the cooperation between different government departments, which is often an issue in holistic safeguarding projects in China and Hainan. Guideline 9 stresses the links between the heritage sites. It recognises that it is possible to create this connection without a central 'hub', for example by using smaller information points and labelling in the territory. This might even be a more effective way for Hainan, because it avoids that of government officials and experts mainly focus on the establishment of the 'hub', which the local population, therefore, perceives as the actual ecomuseum. Guideline 10 aims to ensure that the community feels content on how their heritage is being protected, which is essential for an effective safeguarding of all heritage expressions in the ecomuseums.

Guideline 11 recognises the importance of the protection of Hainan's natural environments. One point that was seen as vital was the development of strong regulations and laws with regards to protecting natural environments in the ecomuseums. One of the experts stated:

In China the politics are the most important. The protection policies of the government are essential, the practices of establishing ecomuseums, the laws and regulations, the principles of the ecomuseum. These principles

should be rather detailed and include what should be safeguarded and what the content of the ecomuseums should have.

(Interview E5 2013)

Guidelines could include the development of zoning system that restricts tourism at particular sensitive sites (Liu and Li 2008), the improvement of the environment through the planting of trees and the establishment of a better waste recycling system (Zhou and Liu 2008). In addition the expert (Interview E5 2013) also stated the need for everyone, in particular businesses and visitors to feel responsible for its safeguarding:

Another point that is very important is a good management mechanism.

To balance natural heritage protection and tourism development it is important that everybody participates in heritage protection.

Ecomuseums cannot do everything. If people do not participate the place will be destroyed. It is not only up to the local population, but also to the visitors to learn about heritage protection.

(Ibid.)

As discussed in sub-chapter 7.4.1 local community members have already complained about visitors destroying natural environments in Baili Baicun. There are several methods how pro-environmental behaviour from tourists could be achieved. Mount Huangshan, for instance, organised promotional drives to different heritage sites that encouraged visitors and local community members to learn about heritage protection (Oksenberg and Economy 1998). Visitors could also be urged to get involved in conservation and volunteer activities (Kim 2012).

Guidelines 12 and 13 concentrate in particular on the safeguarding of ICH. They aim to evaluate if the ecomuseums encourage the transmission of ICH by allowing contemporary elements and changes within the heritage traditions and by getting the younger generation involved. Interviewees felt that part of this would be to establish education programmes in schools. This links into guidelines 14 and 15 that aim for a better education of the local population, but also for the visitors in the ecomuseums and for a dynamic safeguarding and development. It makes sense for ecomuseums in China to go back to the original French roots of being a tool for education and development instead of being merely used for the preservation of heritage (van Mensch 1993). One of the interviewed experts expressed:

It's not enough to just protect the cultural heritage. The place also needs to be developed. How does this development fit into today's society; that is what we need to determine. We cannot leave everything as it is; it has to fit in our society. So it [the ecomuseum] needs to be a place that combines development and traditions.

(Interview E5 2013)

Guideline 16 regards the research of ICH and natural heritage. Experts mentioned that the research in these two areas needed to be strengthened and expressed that this should be one of the ecomuseums' contributions to heritage protection in Hainan.

The third category encompasses sustainable tourism development. The guidelines were composed with Hainan's development into an International Tourism Island in mind and incorporated the wish of Hainanese government officials to develop a higher quality sustainable tourism. It also considered the different understanding of sustainable tourism in China and in the West discussed in Chapter 5. Swain (1989) identified four fundamental questions in sustainable ethnic tourism: whether the ethnic-minority group has sufficient autonomy, how their culture is marketed, what socio-cultural responses they express toward tourism and what the prospects are for future development. These questions and challenges can be generally used to evaluate sustainable tourism in rural China.

Guideline 17 partly addresses the challenge of socio-cultural responses communities express towards tourism. It aims to guarantee that local communities feel tourism has a positive impact on their life, that they welcome the socio-cultural changes and that an exploitation of their cultural heritage is avoided.

Guidelines 18 and 19 cover the autonomy of the local communities. One interviewee expressed that it would be good if local communities had the opportunity to develop their own tourism projects. It is essential that the ecomuseum offers a framework for such activities. In addition, it is vital that local communities profit from the ecomuseums.

Guideline 20 responds to the question on how the local communities are marketed for tourism. One deciding factor is that local communities are not represented as 'backwards' and 'primitive' which is a common problem in ethnic-minority tourism. I feel that this discourages in particular the younger generation from participating in the protection of ICH.

It also leads to the problem that only traditions, which fit into a certain image are being protected. For ecomuseums to be effective, heritage protection needs to consider the communities' needs and the image they want to represent. However, because the representation of China's ethnic minorities is a highly political issue, ecomuseums safeguarding ethnic-minority heritage face many challenges in this regard.

Guidelines 21-23 relate to the challenge of prospects for future development. For sustainable tourism to be effective several aspects are significant. One is the creation of jobs for the local communities to encourage them to stay or possibly return to their home villages. Experts saw the growing migration from villages into the cities as one of the biggest challenges for sustainable tourism development and heritage protection. Therefore, it is important to find attractive employment possibilities including managerial positions. A similar strategy was used in Ak-Chin Indian Community Ecomuseum (Fuller 1992) and in Zhenghe village in Sichuan Province (Zhou and Liu 2008) to include local community members in the tourism development.

Another aspect is infrastructure (Guideline 22), in particular the question of how easy tourists are able to travel to the ecomuseums. Many Chinese ecomuseums have the issue that they are isolated and difficult to visit, therefore, the requirement of a good transportation network has also been incorporated in Yi's (2013a) 40 ecomuseum indicators. Hainan's ecomuseums need to concentrate on establishing a connection between the ecomuseums and the main vacation spots Haikou and Sanya. A better connection to the main cities could also make the living at the countryside more attractive for the younger generation. In addition, ecomuseums should offer environmentally friendly forms of transportation within the ecomuseum.

Guideline 23 is concerned with the need of the ecomuseums in Hainan to cater to domestic and international tourists. One challenge is to offer the form of entertainment that is often expected by Chinese tourists for example singing and dancing combined with a more 'authentic' experience of village life and unspoilt nature that is often wished for by Western tourists (see Oakes 1998; Oakes 2006a; Xie and Wall 2002; Yang and Wall 2009). This could be achieved by strengthening the interpretative and interactive elements of the ecomuseums. Stone and Wall (2003) suggested a similar strategy in the context of offering a

better visitor experience at Hainan's nature reserves, for example the implementation of nature preservation plans. When interpreting cultural and natural heritage the purpose is draw out its meanings and relationships rather than just sharing information. For safeguarding ICH within natural environments, it would be particularly important to focus on the present state of the environment and offer inspiration for the future use of local resources (Davis 1996, 101-122).

Guideline 24 adds to the thought of the ecomuseums encouraging the use of local resources and refers to the issue that not all ecomuseums are able to develop profitable sustainable tourism. Tourism is also an unstable form of revenue depending on many external factors, such as the season or political circumstances (Stone and Wall 2003). Therefore, ecomuseums should not rely on tourism as the only resource of financial revenue and also be understood as an opportunity to market and strengthen other industries in the region, for example, traditional agricultural products.

There are several principles that should be given priority when considering ecomuseum development in Hainan. Overall, for ecomuseums to be established and maintained, the first category of 'government leadership and community involvement' is particularly important. At the moment, the lack of organisation regarding ecomuseum development in the provincial government, is one of the biggest obstacles to their successful establishment. Since the government is responsible for establishing ecomuseums in the first instance, it is vital that they are committed to their establishment, understand the ecomuseum ideal and work with all stakeholder groups on the aims and principles of the ecomuseum to create a solid basis for further development. In particular guidelines 2 and 3, the understanding of the ecomuseum ideal by all participants and the development and evaluation of ecomuseum guidelines and aims are important.

In the second category 'safeguarding cultural heritage' guidelines 13 and 14 aimed at the transmission of heritage traditions and the education of visitors and local communities, should be prioritised. The aspect of education would give the communities more control over their heritage and better tools to manage its safeguarding.

Regarding the third category of 'sustainable tourism development', I find guidelines 18 and 20 especially important. As stated by some of the interviewees, local community members

felt it was essential for them to develop their own business projects (Guideline 18). The way their heritage was presented and displayed for tourism had an influence on how successful communities were in transmitting it to younger generation (Guideline 20).

In Hainan the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines could be utilised as a guide for government officials and experts to work with, when establishing ecomuseums and as a tool to evaluate the established ecomuseums on a regular basis. They also could serve as a starting point to develop more detailed standards for each of the ecomuseums in Hainan, in particular guidelines regarding ICH safeguarding and the protection of Hainan's natural environments.

Achieving these 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines would provide a good basis for the Hainanese ecomuseums to effectively safeguard ICH within its natural environments and encourage the involvement of local communities in sustainable tourism and heritage management. The principles were specifically developed for the situation in Hainan Province, and could also be used to evaluate other projects that encourage community involvement in heritage protection and tourism development in Hainan. It might also be possible to apply them to evaluate other ecomuseums in a top-down political context that focus on ICH and natural heritage.

9.3 The evaluation of the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province

This section uses the developed 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines and the three pillars to evaluate the two case studies, Baili Baicun and Binglanggu. It will first assess if the two case studies achieve the three ecomuseum pillars (Table 9.3) and then evaluate them regarding the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines (Table 9.4). In the context of evaluating the future ecomuseums it is important to consider that Baili Baicun is just beginning stage and Binglanggu has not begun the establishment of the ecomuseum yet. Furthermore, ecomuseum development in Hainan is moving particularly slow. It is therefore possible that some of the guidelines might be achieved at a later stage.

Table 9.3 The three pillars of the ecomuseum – A comparative table of the two future ecomuseum case studies

Ecomuseum Pillar	Baili Baicun, Ding'an County	Binglanggu, Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County
1. The 'ecomuseum ideal' focuses on the sense and spirit of place.	Yes , intangible, tangible and natural heritage traditions are safeguarded and managed holistically in their original environment. The ecomuseum safeguards heritage traditions that are the most relevant for the local population and therefore, captures the spirit of the place.	Largely not , ICH and tangible heritage of the Li and Miao minorities are collected and reconstructed from all over Hainan. Cultural heritage is safeguarded away from its original environment. But community members from the surrounding Li villages work and exhibit their ICH traditions in the park.
2. The 'ecomuseum ideal' includes its 'stakeholders' in all decision-making processes by informing and consulting them in all 2. The 'ecomuseum ideal' includes its 'stakeholders' in all decision-making processes by informing and consulting them in all matters regarding the ecomuseum development.	Largely not , up to this point mainly provincial and local government officials, as well as some experts, are involved in the establishment of the ecomuseums. The local population is unaware of the processes.	Largely not , Binglanggu is managed in cooperation between a private business man and the provincial government. While Li minority members and heritage transmitters are involved, they are not part of the decision-making processes. The park cooperates with universities and researchers.
3. The 'ecomuseum ideal' is not an absolute model, rather it is a 'malleable' and flexible outlook and should be responsive to, and 'shaped' by, the specific local contexts and needs.	Yes , Baili Baicun adopted a unique approach to territory by connecting the ecomuseum through different tourism service centres instead of one information centre. This responds well to the wide area encompassing over 100 villages and supports the visitors in exploring Hainanese culture.	Yes , Binglanggu is the first ethnic-minority theme park that is being developed into an ecomuseum. While it is questionable if this is a suitable model, it is a unique attempt to respond to financially difficult circumstances of developing the Li minority heritage in the central and western regions.

Table 9.4 The 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines - A comparative table of the two future ecomuseum case studies

Ecomuseum Guideline	Baili Baicun, Ding'an County	Binglanggu, Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County
1. Are guided by the provincial government.	Largely not , government officials and experts criticised the weak leadership of the Hainanese government with regards to the establishment of the ecomuseums. While Baili Baicun has capable local leaders they are only marginally involved in the ecomuseum development.	Largely not , government officials and experts criticised the weak leadership of the Hainanese government with regards to the establishment of the ecomuseums.
2. Are well researched before being established.	No , experts criticised that ecomuseum theory and practice was not thoroughly researched by government officials and that there were not enough experts on the topic. Local community members were not aware of the ecomuseum development nor had heard of the ecomuseum ideal.	No , experts criticised that ecomuseum theory and practice was not thoroughly researched by government officials and that there were not enough experts on the topic. Park managers and employees were not aware of future ecomuseum plans nor had heard of the ecomuseum ideal.
3. Have guidelines and aims that are developed together with all the stakeholders before the ecomuseum is established.	No , up to this point Hainan Province has not developed ecomuseum guidelines.	No , up to this point Hainan Province has not developed ecomuseum guidelines.
4. Empower the local communities and strengthen their ability to communicate and represent their interests.	No , there are no plans that would enable the local community members to participate in the ecomuseum and would strengthen their abilities to voice their opinions and needs. The local	No , there are no plans that would enable Li minority members to participate in the ecomuseum and would strengthen their abilities to voice their opinions and needs. The fact that

	communities are unaware of the ecomuseum development.	Binglanggu has many employees, not all belonging to the Li minority, and that all Li minority members work for the park makes empowerment difficult.
5. Create a list of economic activities in the area. They have clearly defined rules for all participating stakeholders, in particular businesses that are controlled and reevaluated on a regular basis.	Unknown , up to this point the economic activities in the area are unclear and it has not been determined which stakeholders, especially which businesses and organisations will be involved in the ecomuseum.	Partly , Binglanggu does not create a list of economic activities nor has clearly defined rules for all participating stakeholders, but its business practices and approach to heritage protection and tourism development get reevaluated and adapted to the Province's needs.
6. Are supported by a network of ecomuseums and other community-led heritage projects, nationally and internationally, that collaborate in research, and facilitate exchange.	No , up to this point Hainan does not collaborate with other ecomuseums or similar institutions. Several experts have expressed that cooperation and exchanges between ecomuseums would be vital for the successful establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan.	No , up to this point Hainan does not collaborate with other ecomuseums or similar institutions. Several experts have expressed that cooperation and exchanges between ecomuseums would be vital for the successful establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan.
7. Develop and ensure long-term financial planning.	Largely not , the government has invested 10 million yuan in the establishment of the ecomuseum at this point. However, infrastructure and the development of hotels and <i>nongjiale</i> still need major investments. It is unclear how funds are distributed. Visitors have few opportunities to spend money, mainly through the renting of bicycles and eating local food. It is difficult to estimate future tourism profits.	Yes , Binglanggu is funded by the government and a tourism company. It is making profits and is reinvesting the money in the expansion of the park and the safeguarding of Li and Miao minority heritage. Tourists have many opportunities to spend money in the park, in addition to the relatively steep entrance fee. This includes the buying of traditional handicrafts and souvenirs, participating in a tea tasting, a zip-wire ride, buying local food, alcohol and traditional medicine. The

		park is building hotels to encourage visitors to stay overnight.
8. Strengthen the holistic safeguarding of intangible, tangible and natural heritage by focussing on the connection between different heritage expressions.	Largely yes , Baili Baicun points out the importance of intangible, tangible and natural heritage in the area and focuses on the connection between them, in particular, with regards to agricultural traditions, Daoism and ancestral worship.	Partly , Binglanggu tries to combine the protection of intangible, tangible and natural heritage expressions, but it does not focus enough on the deep connection between natural and intangible heritage in the Li culture. It also does not safeguard the heritage in its original environment which would be important for the highly localised heritage traditions of the Li minority.
9. Create a connection between the different heritage sites and link them to the area through a 'hub' or a decentralised approach with different information points.	Yes , the different heritage sites in the ecomuseums are linked via four rural cultural parks and 19 tourist service centres.	Largely yes , despite being a theme park Binglanggu does link the park to the Li villages surrounding it and creates a connection between tangible and intangible heritage displays.
10. Support the local communities in protecting all the heritage expressions that are relevant to them.	Largely yes , the ecomuseum concentrates on protecting the cultural heritage that is particular important to the local population by rebuilding ancestral halls, organising dance classes and documenting rural life and history. The local community feels their heritage is well protected, but they would like more financial support for safeguarding their traditional houses.	Partly , it concentrates and finances the protection of Li heritage traditions that are highly endangered and on the <i>National ICH List</i> . These heritage traditions are very important to the Li minority. But, the safeguarding of other aspects of Li heritage like the Li language gets neglected. While Li minority members felt that Binglanggu did effectively document and record their heritage, they also expressed that it was difficult to represent the diverse heritage traditions of the Li minority in a theme park approach.

<p>11. Develop guidelines for natural heritage protection within the ecomuseum and encourage local communities, visitors and businesses to feel responsible for safeguarding natural heritage.</p>	<p>Largely not, no guidelines for protecting natural heritage have been developed. There already have been some issues with tourists polluting the environment. However, local communities feel responsible for safeguarding the environment.</p>	<p>Partly, no guidelines for protecting natural heritage have been developed, but Binglanggu introduces the visitors to the natural heritage of Hainan by exhibiting different tropical plants, including flowers and fruit trees. It responsibly protects the environment in the park.</p>
<p>12. Place importance on transmission work by supporting heritage transmitters and developing educational programmes for schools.</p>	<p>Yes, local community members all contribute to the transmission of ICH by teaching it to the children. They also organise dance classes and regularly practise their ICH. It is still part of their daily-life.</p>	<p>Largely not, Binglanggu mainly works with heritage transmitters to record and document their traditions.</p>
<p>13. Encourage the younger generations to learn about their ICH traditions and strengthen people’s pride in their cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Yes, the younger generation is interested in their heritage traditions and the local communities are very proud of their cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Largely yes, working at Binglanggu encouraged several members of the Li minority to learn more about their culture and it increased their pride in their heritage traditions.</p>
<p>14. Place a strong focus on education, for local communities and visitors alike.</p>	<p>Largely not, no workshops and training on cultural and natural heritage protection have been planned. There have been no efforts to improve the education of the local communities in connection to the establishment of the ecomuseum.</p>	<p>Largely not, no workshops and training on cultural and natural heritage protection have been planned. There have been no efforts to improve the education of the Li minority in connection to the establishment of the ecomuseum.</p>
<p>15. Respect the wishes of the local community to improve their life-style, for example the wish</p>	<p>Partly, the ecomuseum has contributed to the improvement of the communities’ life-style. Interestingly, for the local communities this mainly</p>	<p>Yes, Binglanggu was developed to bring a sense of modernity through tourism to the local minority groups. Ethnic minorities live in modern houses</p>

for modern housing and find a way to combine this with heritage protection.	includes rebuilding part of their cultural heritage such as ancestral halls and temples. However, there also have been some conflicts over changes in the landscape for the ecomuseum with regards to livestock.	and their traditional houses have been rebuilt in the park. They aim to document the heritage that cannot be transmitted.
16. Create opportunities to research both ICH and natural heritage and its safeguarding for local and international experts, universities and local community members.	Yes , experts from Hainan University and Hainan Normal University have started to research the cultural heritage of Binglanggu in connection to the ecomuseum development. They collaborate with some of the local community members.	Yes , Binglanggu cooperates with experts from national and international universities and employs its own researchers. The park has published three books on Li and Miao minority culture.
17. Local communities are content with the involvement of tourism businesses and their business practices.	Partly , there are no tourism businesses involved in the ecomuseum at the moment, but local community members felt very positive about the tourism development. They were happy to engage and inform visitors about their cultural and natural heritage. Several community members felt tourism needed stricter and better enforced guidelines with regards environmental protection.	Yes , Li minority members stated that Binglanggu was committed to protecting their cultural heritage and felt that they profited from tourism financially and socially. They noted that the park did help the Han majority to get a more accurate image of Li culture and the heritage transmitters were happy to engage with the tourists.
18. Encourage and support local community members to develop and start their own businesses using their heritage as a resource.	Partly , the ecomuseum plans to encourage farmers to open their houses for <i>nongjiale</i> and to sell their agricultural products.	Partly , Li and Miao minority members are encouraged to organise the production of handicraft and the selling of their traditional goods.
19. Distribute profits fairly and support the local communities to	Unknown , tourism development is only minimal at this point. The ecomuseum plans to develop	Yes , Li minority members are employees of the park, getting a salary and free housing. The park

participate in benefit-sharing.	<i>nongjiale</i> . Local community members are employed in the tourism centres. The area is big enough for tourists to stay there several days, which makes it more likely for the local population to profit. However, up to this point there are no possibilities for over-night stays.	also pays rent for the use of their land. In addition Li and Miao minorities receive the profits from the handicrafts they produce. Members of the surrounding Li communities are also employed for plucking the agricultural products in the park.
20. Local culture is not presented as backwards and primitive.	Yes , cultural heritage is presented in a way that reflects the pride of the local communities in their culture. There is a focus on the harmonious landscape and agricultural traditions.	Largely not , while Binglanggu tries to create a positive image of the Li minority, it also focuses on the more exotic and historic heritage traditions of the Li minority, such as the Li brocade, the Li pottery and the traditional Li tattoos. In some of the dance performances the Li minority is presented in a sexualised and primitive way.
21. Create job opportunities for local community members which involve maintaining and managing parts of the ecomuseum to encourage them to stay in their village.	Largely yes , the ecomuseum creates job opportunities for local villagers. All of the tourism service centres employ local staff including a cook and someone who runs the shop. It is too soon to determine whether local community members will be involved in other parts of tourism development and in managing the ecomuseum.	Largely not , Li minority members are employed in different positions in the park from lower managerial positions, over tour guides to performers. But, because Binglanggu is not a Li village it does encourage Li minority members to leave their villages and work at the theme park. In addition the majority of the employees (two third) do not belong to the Li minority. There are no members of the Li minority in higher managerial positions.
22. Establish convenient transportation networks from the main vacation spots to the	Partly , there is no convenient transportation to the ecomuseum from any of the main tourism spots. However, in the ecomuseum the visitors can rent	Largely yes , there is no public transportation to Binglanggu, but, many hotels and travel agencies in Sanya (Hainan's main tourism spot) offer busses

ecomuseum and within the ecomuseum itself.	bicycles to explore the area. The road signs need to be improved.	and tours to the park. The park itself is easy to explore alone or with a guide.
23. Consider the different needs of domestic and international tourists.	Largely not , while Baili Baicun is interesting for international tourists as an area and represents the ‘unspoilt’ cultural and natural heritage experience many Western tourists are interested in, it would be very difficult for them to travel to the ecomuseum and find their way around without a Chinese speaking guide. All the information material and the information within the ecomuseum are in Chinese. Domestic tourists enjoy the landscape and the cold springs. The interpretation of natural and cultural heritage and the education possibilities for visitors within the ecomuseum need to be improved.	Largely yes , Binglanggu does aim to become an international tourism destination and already receives international tourists. It shows a mixture of entertainment, information and natural heritage, which appeals to both international and domestic tourists. Tourists have the possibility to educate themselves about Li and Miao minority culture in the park, however, this aspect needs to be strengthened.
24. Do not depend on sustainable tourism alone, but also find ways to reinvest the money earned.	Yes , the ecomuseum tries to brand local products including the natural water. The water from Ding’an and Baili Baicun is supposed to be particularly healthy, so one idea of the ecomuseum is to build a Spring Water Factory.	Not applicable , Binglanggu is an ethnic-minority theme park that was built for tourism development and consequently has no other industries.

After examining the two future ecomuseum case studies in Hainan using the three ecomuseum pillars, it can be concluded that neither case study has reached the ecomuseum ideal at this point. Binglanggu only achieves the third pillar. Overall, it has a limited opportunity to truly achieve the ecomuseum ideal in the near future. As a reconstructed and artificially built theme-park it cannot accomplish the first pillar of *in situ* preservation of cultural heritage. Baili Baicun achieves two out of the three pillars. It is focused on 'sense of place' and is shaped according to local context and needs. Both future ecomuseums fail to inform and include their stakeholders in the decision-making processes. Given the discussions in Chapters 7 and 8 these results are hardly surprising. But when examining the case studies according to the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines both future ecomuseums receive almost the same score. In fact Binglanggu seems even a bit more effective. This is why incorporating the three pillars, that give a weighting to which aspects of the ecomuseum are particularly important, in the evaluation, is essential to correctly evaluate the ecomuseum sites.

Overall, just analysing the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines Baili Baicun and Binglanggu both achieve 'yes' or 'largely yes' answers for nine guidelines and 'no' or 'largely not' answers for nine guidelines as well. Baili Baicun fulfils four of the guidelines 'partly' and two guidelines could not be evaluated due to the early stage of the ecomuseum development and are therefore 'unknown'. Binglanggu 'partly' achieves five guidelines and one guideline is 'not applicable' to the situation. The following two figures illustrate how many 'yes' or 'largely yes'; 'no' or 'largely not' and 'partly' answers Baili Baicun (Figure 9.1) and Binglanggu (Figure 9.2) received overall and in the three categories.

Analysing the results, according to the three categories, shows that both future ecomuseums struggle to achieve the guidelines in the category 'government leadership and community involvement'. At this point Baili Baicun does not achieve any of the 7 guidelines in that category. Binglanggu is slightly more successful achieving the guideline referring to long-term financial planning and partly achieving the guideline concerning the listing of economic activities and a regular reevaluation of business practices. Even though Binglanggu as a theme park is a problematic ecomuseum, it could be one of the few ecomuseums in China that does not struggle with funding issues. This is an advantage for the ecomuseum

establishment because the lack of funding also leads to other issues, for example, the absence of educational programmes and poor heritage protection measures.

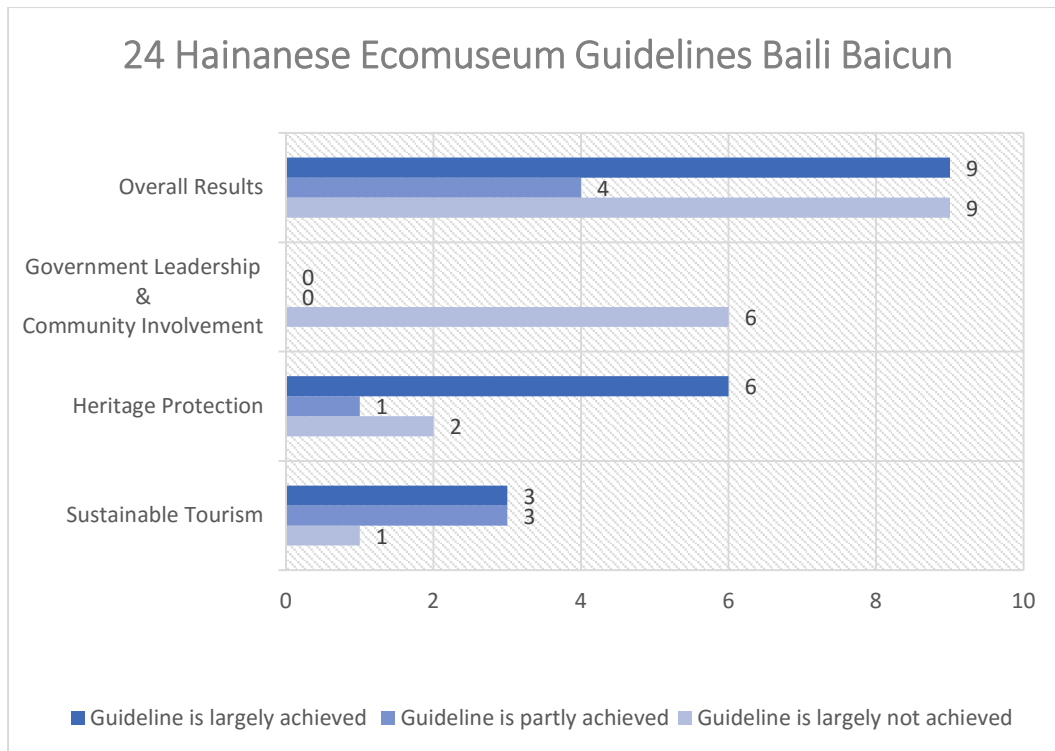


Figure 9.1 Evaluation results of the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines in Baili Baicun

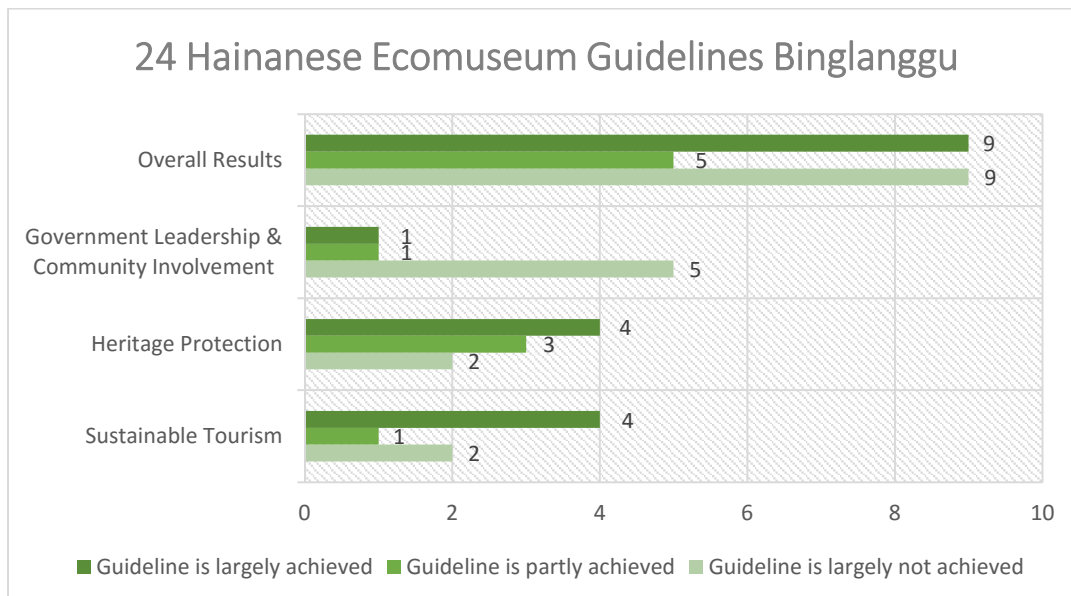


Figure 9.2 Evaluation results of the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines in Binglanggu

The fact that Binglanggu re-evaluates its business practices on a regular basis (Chapter 6.4.1), adjusting them to government policies and local needs is also a positive sign for the ecomuseum establishment. Since 2009, Binglanggu has adopted an approach centring more on the safeguarding of Li minority ICH and less on entertainment and the commercialisation of culture. Therefore, it is possible that once the ecomuseum is established Binglanggu will implement further changes that are more in line with the ecomuseum ideal.

However, both future ecomuseums have not included and informed the local communities in the decision-making processes, have no clear guidelines for the ecomuseum development and a weak government leadership. This corresponds to the issue that neither Baili Baicun nor Binglanggu achieve the second pillar of the ecomuseum ideal and the challenges discussed in Chapter 8.

In the second category, Baili Baicun is more effective than Binglanggu. It achieves six, partly achieves one and fails to achieve two of nine guidelines in that category. This is a promising result, in particular regarding: the safeguarding of ICH; the holistic protection of heritage resources; and, the commitment of the local population towards heritage protection. While Binglanggu achieves fewer guidelines than Baili Baicun, it is still fairly effective in protecting cultural heritage: four guidelines are achieved, three guidelines are partly achieved and two guidelines are not achieved. The main issues in Binglanggu are that the park does not place enough emphasis on the education and transmission of Li minority heritage. Li minority members have mentioned that the safeguarding of cultural heritage traditions does not go deep enough and it is difficult to safeguard the diversity and complexity of their traditions out of its environmental context. In addition, Binglanggu faces issues all projects safeguarding ethnic-minority heritage in China have: the ICH protection is strongly influenced by national and local political goals and ideas.

Both future ecomuseums need to strengthen their efforts to protect and interpret natural heritage and encourage and invest more in the education of local community members. Compared to other ecomuseums in China, they are relatively successful in linking different heritage sites of the whole territory to each other. Even though the local population in Baili Baicun had not heard of the ecomuseum ideal, they did understand that visitors were interested in the whole area and life at the countryside. They did point out different cultural

and natural heritage sites as well as ICH traditions of the area and their connection. For example, several locals pointed out the connection between nature and Daoism and showed me several sites in the area where examples of this could be found. Similarly, in Binglanggu the Li people are aware that the whole area is part of the theme park and not just the Li minority exhibitions. They understand that the different sites are connected to each other.

In the third category 'sustainable tourism development' both future ecomuseums are fairly effective. However, Baili Baicun receives few tourists at the moment and therefore several answers might change once the ecomuseum establishment has moved further forward. Currently, three guidelines are achieved, another three are partly achieved, one is not achieved and one is unknown. The local population feels very positive about the tourism development and seems to be able to get involved and profit from tourism, but there are still many facilities that need to be built, in particular with regards to tourism infrastructure. For Hainan's development as an International Tourism Island it would also be important to consider the needs of international tourists and possibly produce some information material like maps in English. It is very positive that the ecomuseum also tries to encourage other industries and not only focuses on sustainable tourism.

As discussed in Chapter 8, despite being a theme park Binglanggu displays several elements of sustainable tourism. Overall in this category it achieved four guidelines, partly achieved one and did not achieve two guidelines. Since it was built as a tourism attraction the last guideline concerning the development of alternative industries was not applicable. Binglanggu meets the ecomuseum ideal in the regard that the Li minority members agreed with how their interests were being managed and felt they profited from the tourism development. Ten of the interviewees stated that the park did present Li culture in a positive way. Challenges are that Li culture is partly represented as backwards and that the park encourages young people to leave their villages to work there.

When examining the evaluation of the 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines, the reasons why many government officials and experts disagreed on the suitability of the ecomuseum sites (see Chapter 8.3.1) become clearer. Even though Binglanggu is a theme park it achieves the same number of ecomuseum guidelines as Baili Baicun. Depending on the

understanding of the ecomuseum ideal and the weighting of ecomuseum guidelines, either future ecomuseum could be interpreted as a suitable or as an unsuitable site. At the moment Binglanggu is the more effectively functioning heritage site in terms of sustainable tourism development, financial resources and the overall organisation. The site also has the potential to improve and achieve several more of the ecomuseum guidelines, for example by including Li and Miao minority members in higher management positions and recruiting all their employees from the Li and Miao minorities. Furthermore, Binglanggu focuses on ethnic-minority heritage, which according to two government officials and several experts should have been the topic of all Hainanese ecomuseums. However, while Binglanggu has the potential to achieve more of the ecomuseum guidelines and through that improve its contribution to community involvement and heritage protection, it does not have the potential to achieve the ecomuseum ideal. As the interviews with the Li minority members showed it is essential to protect the highly diverse Li minority traditions within their original context. Binglanggu does not achieve that. It mainly contributes to the documenting of ICH; in terms of environmental protection it resembles a park and does not represent a natural environment. While the documentation of heritage expressions is important, it is not enough to effectively safeguard both the ICH of the Li minority and to protect the complex natural heritage of Hainan Island.

Baili Baicun is less developed than Binglanggu and there are still many issues that need to be solved, heritage protection to be organised, hotels and infrastructure to be built, guidelines to be decided on and responsibilities to be divided. It is hard to predict how effective it will be as an ecomuseum, in particular considering its difficult financial situation. But Baili Baicun has the potential and favourable conditions to achieve the ecomuseum ideal, protect its cultural heritage and develop sustainable tourism. Because it does not focus on ethnic-minority heritage local community members have a greater freedom in how they want to protect and present their cultural heritage. Its local population is interested in safeguarding their ICH and natural heritage. They do a lot of transmission work, they are active in their local community and they feel that they have the right and the knowledge to consult in questions of ICH and tourism development. The ecomuseum ideal could provide a mechanism for them to support and strengthen their heritage protection work and tourism development.

9.4 Summary

This chapter aimed to evaluate the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan by analysing the two case studies and future ecomuseums Baili Baicun and Binglanggu using ecomuseum guidelines that corresponded better to the local situation in Hainan Province than already existing evaluation methods. Based on the interviews and observations discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I developed 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines in regards to the ecomuseums' focus on protecting ICH within its natural environments and to Hainan's political and economic situation. It furthermore employed the three ecomuseum pillars, as part of the evaluation process, to ensure that the future ecomuseums were based on the basic concepts of the ecomuseum ideal. The chapter showed that while both case studies are not achieving the ecomuseum ideal, in particular in terms of government leadership and community involvement, both of them showed ecomuseum characteristics in the categories of heritage protection and sustainable tourism development. While the challenges regarding government leadership and community involvement correspond to other ecomuseums in China, the way ecomuseums in Hainan approach territory has been more successful in linking different heritage sites. In addition, the local population in Baili Baicun is genuinely interested in protecting their ICH and natural resources, which could lead to a stronger community involvement in the future. Overall, it is important that Hainan's ecomuseums achieve more community involvement, establish clear responsibilities and develop a stronger government leadership to continue and improve the protection of natural heritage, ICH, and sustainable tourism development long-term. Hainan Province would profit from international and national support, since it lacks expertise in developing community supported cultural tourism and heritage protection projects. It also should strengthen the role of experts and encourage them to research ecomuseum theory and practice further, before continuing with the ecomuseum development. A national and international ecomuseum network could be helpful in this process.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Summary of research findings

The conclusions of this research are presented in this final chapter. It summarises and examines key findings, points out opportunities for further research (section 10.2) and provides some final thoughts on the future of ecomuseum development in Hainan Province (section 10.3). This research sought to answer the research question: How can the use of the ecomuseum ideal in Hainan Province, China, support the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments and the development of sustainable tourism in the region?

Chapters 7-9 answered this question by: analysing the different perspectives of the main stakeholder groups (Chapter 7); examining the opportunities and challenges of the Hainanese ecomuseums (Chapter 8); and, developing new guidelines to support and evaluate the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments through promoting sustainable tourism in the Hainanese ecomuseums (Chapter 9).

This analysis of the research question was guided by six aims, which, together with the main conclusions, gained from achieving these aims, are detailed in table (Table 10.1) below. To collect the analysed data and meet the aims, the research employed a case-study approach using a qualitative methodology including semi-structured interviews, observation and textual analysis.

Overall, this research aimed to analyse the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province and to examine opportunities and challenges for the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, sustainable development and community participation. It concluded that ideas of community involvement and of the ecomuseum ideal have to be re-evaluated and re-examined in China's and Hainan's political and economic settings. Hereby, the third pillar of the ecomuseum, its malleability to local context, is of particular importance. To achieve an effective safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments it is necessary for the ecomuseum ideal to reflect the stronger influence of the government in Hainan and China in its principles, whilst at the same time keeping its overall ideal of being "a community-based museum or heritage project that supports sustainable development" (Davis 2007, 116).

Table 10.1 Research aims and conclusions

Aims	Conclusions	Chapters
<p>1. Critically analyse the framework and measures of safeguarding ICH in China and Hainan Province considering in particular the application of holistic heritage management approaches that safeguard ICH in its original environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safeguarding of ICH in China is linked to the international framework, however, the national policies also includes China specific characteristics that especially influence how the heritage of China’s ethnic minorities is protected. • Chinese and in particular Hainanese ICH traditions are closely connected to the environments in which they are practised and therefore should be safeguarded in a holistic approach that manages ICH within its natural environments. • While the safeguarding of ICH in Hainan relies mainly on traditional tangible safeguarding methods, including documenting and inventorying, Hainan is working on establishing more holistic approaches to ICH management. 	3
<p>2. Critically examine the concept of community participation and the application of the ecomuseum ideal in China.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecomuseums and other participatory approaches in heritage management in China are often established in the context of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. • Chinese ecomuseums are government-led. If community participation is achieved it is mainly in form of benefit-sharing and not decision-making. • Each generation of ecomuseums and each ecomuseum project in China adapted and developed their own version of the ecomuseum ideal in order to improve the previous ecomuseum ideal. • The newer applications of the Chinese ecomuseum have moved away from safeguarding the heritage of one ethnic-minority village or village group to safeguarding different heritage expressions of a whole area. • In some instances ecomuseums have accelerated the loss of ICH traditions and the 	4

	deterioration of natural environments by exposing relatively isolated communities to tourism and modernisation.	
3. Critically analyse the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in rural China and explore the establishment of sustainable and participatory cultural-tourism projects in Hainan Province.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the different cultural context China has a different interpretation of sustainable tourism and ecotourism than the West that is more centred on people and less on unspoiled nature. • As part of its development into an International Tourism Island Hainan aims to strengthen cultural tourism and move away from its current sun and beach mass tourism development • Sustainable tourism and ecotourism projects in Hainan have had mixed success. They face several political-structural, business-operational and sociocultural barriers. 	5
4. Critically analyse the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups in Hainanese ecomuseum development – namely provincial-government officials, experts and community members – on a holistic approach to ICH and environmental protection, sustainable-tourism developments, community participation using the ecomuseum ideal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most government officials and experts see the main task of the ecomuseums in Hainan in the holistic safeguarding of ICH and natural environments. • While government officials and experts understand the principles of the ecomuseum in theory, they often have difficulties to apply the theory into praxis. • All interviewed experts made a strong case for community involvement in decision-making, but are only marginally involved in the ecomuseum development at the moment. • Most provincial-government officials envision community participation in benefit-sharing. • However, one government official supported community participation in decision-making and had developed own ideas on how to achieve community involvement in China’s top-down political system. • The two case studies are very diverse in terms of local context, ethnicity, economic development and attitudes towards ICH and natural environments. 	7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However local communities in both case studies had a positive attitude towards tourism and partly similar ideas with regards to government responsibilities in the safeguarding of their culture. 	
5. Investigate the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province and critically analyse its challenges and opportunities, with particular regards to the two case studies of Baili Baicun and Binglanggu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hainan is one of the first ecomuseum projects in China that focuses mainly on safeguarding ICH and natural environments. • The chosen locations all represent different aspects of Hainan’s rich cultural heritage including its connection to South Asia, its salt farming culture, its unique tropical environment, Hainanese countryside traditions and the cultural heritage of the Li and Miao minorities. • The local population at all ecomuseum sites has not been informed about the planned ecomuseum development. • Ecomuseum development in Hainan is moving forward very slowly due to several challenges regarding a lack in research and understanding of the ecomuseum ideal, no overall concept or guidelines, a lack of financial resources and a weak government leadership. • Both case-study sites present different opportunities and challenges for the ecomuseums, such as the safeguarding of ICH within its natural environments, sustainable tourism development and community participation. • Opportunities mainly regard the aspects of ICH-safeguarding and sustainable tourism development and most challenges are in the areas of community participation and environmental protection. 	6,8
6. Develop a new framework of guidelines for establishing and evaluating the Hainanese ecomuseum and to critically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing ecomuseum principles and indicators to evaluate ecomuseums are not suited the local context of Hainan Province. • New ecomuseum guidelines for Hainan Province were identified in this research considering the local cultural context and the focus on safeguarding ICH and natural 	9

<p>evaluate the future ecomuseums in Baili Baicun and Binglanggu by employing these guidelines.</p>	<p>environments; the leadership role of the government and the importance of tourism development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither of the suggested ecomuseums reaches the ecomuseum ideal at this point. • Hainan’s ecomuseums need to achieve more community involvement, establish clear responsibilities and develop a stronger government leadership to continue and improve the protection of its natural heritage, ICH and sustainable tourism development. • Hainan Province would profit from international and national support, since it lacks expertise in developing community supported cultural tourism and heritage protection projects. 	
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Ecomuseum development in Hainan is just in its infancy and up to this point neither of the future ecomuseums reaches the ecomuseum ideal. In particular with regards to community involvement the ecomuseum establishment has had a difficult start. However, even though, local communities have not been included in the ecomuseum plans up this point, their development has inspired a dialogue and a rethinking of questions such community involvement in ICH protection, ways of safeguarding ICH within its natural environments and developing sustainable tourism, essential questions for Hainan as a province and International Tourism Island. While most of this dialogue is taking place between government officials and experts, the ongoing changes through ecomuseum development and tourism have inspired several local community members to think about the ways they safeguard their heritage and want to be to be included in ICH and tourism development. According to Nitzky (2012b, 408) the ecomuseum ideal in China “triggers new relations, dialogues, and power structures and stimulates new civic capabilities for local villagers to reinterpret their heritage and develop new understandings of a sense of self, community, and place”. Despite many challenges, this is also starting to emerge in the Hainanese ecomuseums. Since the Hainanese local communities are very knowledgeable in safeguarding their ICH and their natural environments, the ecomuseum has the potential to provide them with a mechanism to develop their own projects within the ecomuseum framework and develop a stronger voice in the ICH-safeguarding and cultural-tourism discourse. The discourse around the establishment of the ecomuseums has in particularly triggered the interest in more community involvement in ICH-safeguarding among Hainanese experts and one government official who are relatively new to the ecomuseum ideal. The experts’ support of community participation in decision-making and the very forward thinking government official demonstrated that despite China’s top-down political system there are possibilities to develop a space for communities to voice their needs and be included in decision-making processes regarding ICH and cultural tourism.

10.2 Opportunities for further research

The limitations of this research have been discussed in Chapter 2. One of the main limitations included the examined stakeholder groups. Stakeholder groups that this research did not engage with were local government officials, tourism businesses and

visitors. It would be beneficial to examine these stakeholder groups to complete the picture of opportunities and challenges regarding the Hainanese ecomuseums, once their development has progressed further. Local government officials and tourism businesses influence ecomuseum development in Hainan and would give valuable insight on community participation, tourism development and ICH-safeguarding.

The stakeholder group of visitors has been largely ignored in research on ecomuseums in China in general. Yet, ecomuseums in China often fail to attract enough visitors to be profitable and many visitors are unaware of the links between the ecomuseum 'hub' and the satellite sites (Varutti 2014). Quantitative and qualitative visitor studies, therefore, could support the ecomuseums in improving their tourism facilities and would be an important addition to the research on ecomuseums in China.

Furthermore, since the Hainanese ecomuseums are just at the beginning stage it would be important to reevaluate and revisit the case-study sites and include the other four future ecomuseums in the research, once all ecomuseums have been established and maintained for a few years.

It is also noteworthy, that most data collected and published regarding cultural tourism destinations, ecotourism and community involvement in Hainan is from over 10 years ago (Li 2003; Li 2004; Li 2006; Stone 2004; Stone and Wall 2003). More recent studies (Xie 2010) mainly concentrate on the Li minority and questions of authenticating tourism. Consequently, there are many research opportunities in this field. In particular concerning the recent development of Hainan into an International Tourism Island and the province's efforts to expand its cultural tourism destinations, it would be vital to examine other cultural heritage and tourism projects in Hainan, for example, national nature parks, Haikou Geological Volcano Park and Haikou *Qilou* Old Street. This way a more complete picture on participatory projects in the province could be established.

Another important avenue of research is the safeguarding of ICH in Hainan and Hainanese ICH in general. The very few research articles concentrate on the ICH of the Li minority (Zhang and Zhan 2007). Here, it would be interesting to examine the influences of the *LICH* on the safeguarding of ICH at provincial and local level; the work of the Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre and other ICH-safeguarding projects, including

Ecological Cultural Protection Zones. The roles these organisations and frameworks play in the Hainanese ICH protection are still not fully explored and would be vital information to improving ICH-safeguarding. Many of these gaps in research have been also pointed out by Chinese experts.

This research also prompts further research opportunities in two other directions. Firstly, the safeguarding of natural environments in particular with regards to natural heritage inside and outside ecomuseum development. One of the main tasks of ecomuseum development in Hainan is the safeguarding of natural environments and natural heritage. This is an issue that is gaining more importance due to the fast deterioration of China's natural environments. This research does touch upon the issue by examining ICH within its natural environments, however, further research is needed, in particular to analyse the limitations of the current legal framework and offer guidelines for improvements.

Secondly, the research argued that the current ecomuseum principles and evaluation methods including the 21 Ecomuseum Principles, the Liuzhi Principles and other developed frameworks should be more inclusive of other political systems and economic development contexts (Bowers 2013). The 24 Hainanese Ecomuseum Guidelines have been created for the ecomuseums in Hainan, however, it would be worth to examine if these principles could be used or adapted for other ecomuseums in China and possibly ecomuseums in the developing world that focus on ICH-safeguarding and natural environments.

10.3 The future of ecomuseum development in Hainan Province

Hainan Province explores new ways to apply the ecomuseum ideal to the Chinese context in particular with regards to research and the way the ecomuseums interpret territory and link the different heritage sites within that territory. They included several of the changes developed by the different generations and other ecomuseum groups in China from the first generation of ecomuseum onwards. Similarly, to the 'Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Villages' they chose locations that already had been exposed to tourism. They also incorporated the changes of the third generation by safeguarding the heritage of an entire area, moving away from the strong focus on ethnic-minority groups and including

contemporary elements in the ecomuseum. From this basis the Hainanese ecomuseums develop the Chinese ecomuseum further. Firstly, the focus they chose is on ICH and the natural environment, heritage forms that have been neglected in Chinese ecomuseum development. Secondly, with regards to ethnic-minority heritage, they concentrate on encouraging and moving forward research, by employing their own researchers on site. Thirdly, they interpret territory in a different way. The ecomuseum that has been established up to this point, Baili Baicun, moved away from the 'hub' approach to a more decentralised interpretation of territory that is focused on the interconnection between different heritage sites. The choice of a theme park as an ecomuseum also shows a different understanding of territory that is more in line with traditional Chinese landscape design (see Chapter 5). These new characteristics show clear changes from the third generation of ecomuseums and therefore, support the argument that Hainanese ecomuseums will form a fourth generation.

Overall, this research shows that the ecomuseum establishment in Hainan still needs a lot of work in all areas from legislation and guidelines, through research on ecomuseum theory and practice, to funding and planning of the actual ecomuseums. So far the ecomuseum development has been disorganised and would profit from a clear structure and the development of guidelines, a concept and aims for the ecomuseums. The fact that the ecomuseum development is moving forward slowly is on the one side problematic, because it shows a lack of commitment from the provincial government and it is still questionable if the project will be completed and if so in what time frame. On the other side it has the positive aspect that there are still many possibilities for changes and adaptations. For Hainan the most pressing questions are certainly the lacking expertise to establish the ecomuseums and financial resources.

Several researchers (Bowers 2013; Corsane 2015, pers. comm.; de Varine 2012, pers. comm.) have started suggesting abandoning the ecomuseum name, because ecomuseum philosophy has been often distorted and commodified and as a result has become confused and misunderstood. Therefore, a more flexible approach to the ecomuseum ideal, in which community based heritage projects work with the principles but do not use the name has been suggested (Corsane 2015, pers. comm.). This might be a good

alternative for Hainan, which due to its lack of financial resources has been attempting to use the ecomuseum philosophy in heritage protection projects, such as a theme park, which would go against the original ecomuseum ideal. Whilst it is an issue that Binglanggu does not safeguard the Li and Miao minority heritage *in situ*, as discussed, it does fulfil several of the 24 Hainanese ecomuseum guidelines. One of the main advantages of the theme park model is that, if implemented successfully, it generates enough financial revenue to be reinvested in heritage protection and education programmes. One question is if in the case of Hainan a ‘fenced in’ tourism zone, that costs an entrance fee and is divided into different management zones and uses ecomuseum guidelines, possibly similar to the Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area in Guangxi (Chio 2013), would be the most effective way to safeguard ICH in its natural environment, develop sustainable tourism, involve the local communities and ensure the maintenance of the project.

Appendix 1 – Sample of Field Notes

Baili Baicun, 06.06.2013

After taking two different busses from Haikou, I finally arrive in Longmen at 11am after a two hour journey. From there I have to hire a bike to take me to Baili Baicun, which takes about twenty minutes. The landscape on the way is really beautiful. I ask the driver to drop me off at a tourism service centre near the *Aiqingshu*. On the way there we talk about where I am from and what I am doing in the area. The driver is from Longmen. I tell him about my research and ask him if he has heard that Baili Baicun is an ecomuseum. Like everyone else he has not, all he has heard is that Baili Baicun is going to be developed for tourism. Once we are there he gives me his number, so I can call him when I want to get back to Longmen. Otherwise it is really impossible to get back from Baili Baicun. This is my second visit now and this time I am planning to do less interviews and explore the area a bit more. This is the first field trip I am allowed to do without Jiang Man, my research assistant. I am a bit nervous, because I remember from the last time how bad the signage was and that it was quite difficult to get around and that we had no idea where we were most of the time. I go into the tourist service station, compared to the one in the Longbantang village, where we went to rent bicycles during our first visit this service centre is quite small. Because it is during the week and there is not much to do everything is managed by the cook. Because it is lunch time, I have lunch there, green beans and rice and a vegetable *bing* (similar to an omelet) and while I am eating the cook comes and talks to me. She does not have much to do at the moment and I am the first foreigner she has met. I have to take a picture with her. Since she is really friendly I ask her if she would mind to give me an interview, she agrees, but is really nervous during it. It might be better to be less formal and stick to my notepad for the rest of the visit. Most of the time she talks about the local food in the area. She also does not know that she is living in an ecomuseum, which is not really surprising at this point. But she is very happy about her job at the tourism service centre. To her knowledge only local people get employed in the centres, which is positive. I rent a bike (RMB 30 for the whole day) from her and she hands me a map and tells me how to get to the *Aiqingshu*. It seems easy enough and is only 15 minutes away. On the way there I pass several round hills and rice fields. One of the women working on the rice field comes and to talk to me. She speaks only Hainanese, so it is difficult to communicate but she still tries.

After that I arrive at the *Aiqingshu*. There is nothing that explains why the tree is famous and there are no tourists there. One elderly woman is resting on the bench of the tree. I take a few pictures of the tree and its surroundings and move on.

The next sight I visit is the Banyan King Tree. We could not find the tree on our first visit, so I really want to see it. It takes me about one and a half hours to get there, I think it is actually closer, but the signs are confusing and I have to stop twice to ask for the way. People are really helpful and point me in the right direction. But just like last time there is lots of interesting and diverse landscape on the way, lakes and hills and different kind of fields. I also find many little Daoist shrines on the way. I take lots of pictures, so I can remember it for later. Once I get to the tree there are about twenty elderly people sitting around it in plastic chairs playing cards and drinking tea. The tree is huge and really impressive. One of the older women approaches me and asks what I am doing in Baili Baicun. I tell her that I am a researcher and interested in every day country life. She is really interested and shows me the Daoist shrine close to the tree and demonstrates how she offers incense. She tells me that a lot of local people come here old and young and that it is an important part of their culture. She also said that most tourists are interested in the tree and care little about the Daoist religion in the region. She felt there were a lot of tourist in the area, even though up to this point I still have to meet a single one. She then points out a pass to go up the mountain to get a better view of the tree and the area. I walk up the stairs that lead around the tree and she is right, the view is really amazing. When I get back down it is already quite late and if I want to get the bus back, I only have time for one more sight. I ask the woman what she thinks is the most interesting in Baili Baicun and she tells me of a village with a really beautiful lake and a new temple. After she explained to me how to get there I say goodbye and am on my way. When I arrive at the village with the lake, a few local people pointed out the ancient water storing system at the lake and explain how it worked. Again there is no interpretation here. Villagers say this is because most tourists are interested in the landscape and not in the cultural history of the place. I wonder if this will change once the ecomuseum is established. Since the government decided to encourage tourism in the area, they got a new temple, however it is not open yet, so I cannot visit it. They also do not know about the ecomuseum. I walk around the lake and this is the first time I encounter four tourists in the area. They are from Haikou, but one of them is originally from Baili

Baicun. They say they really enjoy the beautiful environment here. After talking to the tourists for a bit, I ride my bicycle back to the tourism service centre near the Aiqingshu, where I originally got it. It is really inconvenient that the bicycle always has to be brought back to the same tourism service centre. I think it is a really great and sustainable solution for the visitors to get around by bicycle, but it would be really important for the signage and the maps to improve, at the moment it is really hard to find one's way around the main sights.

Just like last time people were open very open and often approached me and talked to me. They were really excited when I told them that I was interested in Hainanese culture and everyday countryside life and happy to talk to me about the area. I think it is really positive that people are so open to talking and interacting with outsiders, completely different from the experiences I had at one of the ecomuseums in Guangxi. It did not really make a difference in that aspect if I was accompanied by a Chinese research assistant or not. But people seem less willing to give formal interviews, they were already not very keen on this the first time. It would really be interesting if there would be an exhibition about all the different natural heritage sites and farming traditions somewhere. The place does need more interpretation, but then again Chinese tourists do not seem to be interested. Also without speaking Chinese it would be almost impossible to get around the area, none of the materials one can get at the tourism service centre are in English.

Interesting for ecomuseum: Daoism and ancestral worship, food and farming traditions, Hainan opera, natural environment

Questions/problems: people protect the intangible heritage traditions very well on their own and they are still part of their daily life. Would the ecomuseum and more tourism do more harm than good? There are very specific sites that are interesting for tourists, so even though it is a big area, how much will the tourists actually be spread out or will they all concentrate on certain points making them less accessible to the local population? What about environment problems, etc. and how much can local population actually participate?

Appendix 2 – List of Qualitative Interviews

Interviewee	Affiliation	Date
Provincial-government officials		
GO1	Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province	12.04.2013
GO2	Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province	12.04.2013
GO3	Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province	15.04.2013
GO4	Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province	04.05.2013
GO5	Department of Culture, Radio, TV, Publication and Sport of Hainan Province	09.06.2013
Experts		
E1		22.04.2013
E2		23.04.2013
E3		24.04.2013
E4		24.04.2013
E5		24.04.2013
E6		26.04.2013
E7		26.04.2013
E8		26.04.2013
E9		07.05.2013
Local Population		
LM1 (One-to-on interview, Li woman, management)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM2; LM3 (Group interview, two Li women, management)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM4 (One-to-on interview, Li woman, who lives in the surrounding villages)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM5 (One-to-on interview, Li man who lives in the surrounding villages)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM6 (One-to-on interview, Li man who lives in the surrounding villages)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM7 (One-to-on interview, Li woman)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM8 (One-to-on interview, Li woman)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM9 (One-to-on interview, Li woman)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM10; LM11; LM12; LM13; LM14; LM 15 (Group interview with six Li dancers, three man and three women)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013

LM 16 (One-to-on interview, Li woman)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LM 17; LM18 (Group interview with two Li tour guides, one man and one woman)	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
Vice-Manager Chen Guodong	Binglanggu	07.05.2013
LH1; LH2; LH3; LH4 (Group Interview, 3 male villagers, including the village leader)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH5; LH6 (Group interview, male villager and his daughter)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH7 (One-to-on interview, owner of traditional house, male)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH8 (One-to-on interview, male villager)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH9; LH10; LH11 (Group interview, three female villagers)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH12; LH13 (Group interview, male villager and his grandmother)	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH14 One-to-on interview, male villager	Baili Baicun	11.05.2013
LH15 (One-to-on interview, cook in one of the tourist stations)	Baili Baicun	06.06.2013

Appendix 3 – Semi-Structured Questions for government officials and experts

Please give a short introduction about your work and how you are involved in the ecomuseum development in Hainan Province.

- 1. Please tell me how tourism development and heritage protection are managed in Hainan Province.**
 - a. What measures are taken to protect the intangible and natural heritage of Hainan Island?
 - b. What role do tourism businesses/local population play in the protection of intangible and natural heritage?
 - c. Do you think there is a connection between the protection of intangible and natural heritage and how would you describe it?

- 2. China has established ecomuseums in several Provinces in China since 1996. What is your understanding of this concept and what is your opinion of it?**
 - a. What are the achievements of ecomuseums in China?
 - b. What challenges do ecomuseums in China face?
 - c. Are there any changes that could be made in ecomuseum development in China and why?

- 3. Please give me an introduction of the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province.**
 - a. What criteria were used to select the sites of the ecomuseums and what makes the selected sites suitable for ecomuseum establishment?
 - b. How and why could the ecomuseums support the protection of intangible and natural heritage in Hainan Province?
 - c. What difficulties exist with establishing the ecomuseums in Hainan Province?

- 4. Which different groups do you think would need to be involved in establishing an ecomuseum in Hainan Province and what role would those groups play?)**

- a. How do you think these groups could work together and how could one manage different agendas?
- b. Do you think it would make sense for Hainan to develop its own ecomuseum principles and what should they be?
- c. What measures would help to ensure that the ideals of the ecomuseum are maintained over a longer time period?

5. How could the local population be encouraged to participate in heritage protection?

Does the local population have a strong enough role in heritage protection?

- a. How do you think the local population could benefit most from the ecomuseum?
- b. How could different villages be encouraged to work together, with all generations being encouraged to participate in the ecomuseum?
- c. What would be the best way to explain the ideas of the ecomuseum to the local population?

6. What do you think would be a good way to promote the ecomuseum and ensure a balance between heritage protection and sustainable tourism development?

- a. How many days could people stay in the area and what could they visit during longer stays?
- b. How could each of partners involved in the project profit from it?
- c. How could you make sure tourism does not damage the environment and culture in the long-term?

Appendix 4 – Questions for local community members at case-study sites

Introduction: Age, Ethnic group, Occupation, How long have you lived in the village?

/Where did you come from and why did you move here? Do you like living here?

Education? Married and children?

1. Please tell me about you heritage traditions.

Examples (Depending on the ethnic group):

What festivals/holidays do you celebrate?

On what occasions do you wear your traditional grab?

Do you know how to make Li textile using traditional hand-made techniques?

On what occasions do you perform your traditional dances, music or songs?

Do you like to watch performances of Hainan opera? How often do you do it? Why?

2. Are there many tourists in your area?

3. What are the tourists interested in seeing?

4. How do you feel about tourism and why?

5. What is done to protect your songs, dances, etc. at the moment? Do you think it is effective? Why?

6. What aspects of nature are especially important to you? Why are they important, or why not?

7. What is done to protect natural environments at the moment?

8. Is there more you or the government could do to help protect your traditions and environment? What do you personally do to protect them?

9. Would you like to make any changes in tourism or heritage protection? If yes, what and why?

10. Have you heard about ecomuseums? If yes, what are they?

Appendix 5 – Interview transcript with government official

Interview transcription of interview with GO3, 15.04.2013

R: Please explain the plan for the ecomuseums in Hainan, how you involve the local population and what criteria you used for choosing the ecomuseum sites.

GO3: The establishment of ecomuseums is an important step for the economic development of the island, in particular since Hainan is constructing an International Tourism Island. Hainan needs to protect its environment well and at the same time develop it. Chinese economic development started 30 years ago. Our fast economic development came at a high environmental cost, in Beijing for example, the economy is very developed, but a lot of the environment got destroyed; a very grief lesson, Hainan cannot follow that example. For Hainan whose economy is largely depending on tourism, the preservation of its environments and its culture is essential. When tourists think of Hainan they think of a clean environment. Therefore, protecting the environment is good for the economy and the people.

We are preparing the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan Province since 2011. The Chinese government has clear-cut standards for the establishment and improvement of ecomuseums. Compared to other Chinese provinces, when building ecomuseums, Hainan wants to stand out and to adjust those standards better. The ecomuseum in Hainan is about natural environments, human environments, history and the native culture of the local people. It is about the entire population from one area participating in the ecomuseum together. This way of protecting culture is very new to us and requires a great deal of responsibility and work, because the demands and standards are higher. The ecomuseum and the traditional museum do have a lot of differences. Ecomuseums are about the protection of living things, and the most important thing for this kind of heritage protection is that the local people and their heritage do both participate in the protection process. If you look at Hainan Island, there are a lot of places like Ding'an, Baoting and Lingshui, which are very beautiful, but in these places the life of the local population is very backwards (*luohuo*). Our protection aim for the ecomuseums is not only to protect the heritage, but also to develop them and improve the life of the people. To get the local people to agree to

the establishment of the ecomuseum it is important to improve the quality of their life. If you only protect the heritage they worry that they will stay backwards and will not agree to the ecomuseum. It is a question of harmony. Other places in Hainan and China are very developed, it cannot be that people drive to the ecomuseum with their car, and the people in the ecomuseum do not even have electricity, that's why this way of protection is important. China has ecomuseums in a lot of different places, in Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan, Zhejiang and Fujian. The Chinese government did a lot of experiments, it used different places and areas. But when you look at all of them there are three characteristics ecomuseums all ecomuseums have in common: 1. all places have a lot of history; 2. they are related ethnic minorities; 3. they are related to developing economically backwards areas. But there are also other cases like Zhejiang and Fujian. The ecomuseum in Zhejiang specialises in handicraft, the production of *baicha* (white tea) and the ecomuseum in Fujian focuses on historical buildings from the Han and Ming Dynasties.

In Hainan ecomuseums mainly focus on ecology, which is not very well protected right now. It is important to improve the protection of the natural environment in Hainan and using a cultural model to do that is a good way of achieving this. We want to build a lot of ecomuseums, but it is not possible yet. First we need to bring the first group of ecomuseums to a good standard, so we have a model. We also need to have guidelines for the ecomuseums that answer the following questions: why we build them; what standard the ecomuseums should have, how to manage the ecomuseums, the governments' responsibilities, the responsibilities of each household of the local population, the capital the ecomuseums need to operate and what natural resources are needed. Ecomuseums and ICH need to be handed down from generation to generation. The local population is very proud of their heritage that was built by their families. They feel very self-confident. One example of the local culture to be protected are regional dishes, the rice in Lingshui tastes very good as well as the pork.

But the biggest question is how we can manage to protect the cultural heritage and what methods we will use. There are several problems in protecting heritage in the ecomuseum in Hainan right now:

- Firstly, right now the expectations of the local population are very high, they are enthusiastic about the ecomuseum, because they think they will receive lots of benefits through it. But that is not the case. They think when the ecomuseum is built the government gives you money. Every year it gives you a new investment. It is impossible to give them all the money at once to repair and build the environment. It happens that the investment of the government does not satisfy the requests of the local population or the needs of the natural environment at once. Also the management of distributing those funds in rural areas is not very good.
- The second problem is the local population themselves. It is their education. No matter if it is heritage in the village, a town or a proper city they have to have the education to be aware of its importance and teach themselves to protect the heritage and invest themselves. This is a very slow process.
- The third problem is to figure out what end result is the best. If we let the people lead the ecomuseum it is possible that a lot of a lot of conflicts arise on how to develop the place. Organising tourism is very difficult because it can destroy the place and it also can be problematic for heritage protection. So if we would let our people manage the ecomuseum there would be several problems. I really want a content society and I welcome the local population to participate in the ecomuseum and in heritage protection and interpretation. But it is a question of who has the leadership. It is a matter of public welfare. We have very good local government organisations and heads of households in the communities. The local leaders know everyone personally and therefore know the mentality of the population, they know this [heritage] is very valuable and it is important to protect it safely.

In Beijing the environment and the air are very polluted. But here the quality of life is improving a lot. Therefore, people are becoming more conscious of the idea that tangible heritage and ICH are very valuable. That also brought along the motivation to improve the environment. Because of that we wanted the first group of ecomuseums in Hainan to come out this year. So why is the Culture Department of Hainan responsible the ecomuseums? Because museums are part of culture. Now the government and public study at the unique features of small towns, their distinctive landscape and its ecological meaning.

We also have the tourism department that plans tourism in Longmen and Lingzhuang. That's all very good, but I want the ecomuseum go above that. Longmen and the landscape around it are also part of the ecomuseum. Visiting it without the ecomuseum there might be too expensive. Just going to Lingkou to travel might not be interesting enough, but when we say that there is an ecomuseum it is worth the trouble. And why is that? That's because people value culture. Hainan is an International Tourism Island. We have to compete with other countries. When foreign tourists come here the ecomuseum will show them that we have many different museums and cultural heritage expressions. If international tourists visit the Hainanese ecomuseums they can see how special Hainanese culture is. Hainan's culture is beautiful. We want to create something original, Hainan's natural environments, its history and its people will show them how rich Hainan's whole environment is and make them reminisce Hainan's nature. If the place is unforgettable all Chinese and foreigners will come to visit.

R: Hainan receives a lot of tourists. Are you worried there could be too many tourists in the ecomuseum and if yes how could the government deal with that?

GO3: We are not sure yet, since we are just at the beginning of the process. I know a lot of ecomuseums have been built in ancient towns, but our ecomuseums will encompass a big area. We could classify different areas of cultural heritage and have a visitor restriction for fragile places. We still have think about if you need to buy a ticket for the ecomuseums or not. The whole process will be carried out in cooperation with the tourism department and tourism businesses. Our ecomuseums should encompass several features:

1. A unique natural environment;
2. A distinctive culture, ancient villages and traditional houses;
3. Ancient streets and districts, the ecomuseum does not necessarily have to be on the countryside, it could be in the city as well; and,
4. Food as an important part of the culture.

R: How do the ecomuseums in China differ from the other ecomuseums in China? Do they have their own principles?

GO3: The ecomuseums in Hainan are respectful of the achievements of the ecomuseum family. Every ecomuseum in China has their own specialties and principles. Right now we cannot provide a distinctive ecomuseum model for Hainan. To encourage tourism in the ecomuseums and protect its environment we have to provide a very high standard. It is true different ecomuseums need to provide different guidelines. Original old town all have a different environment that needs to be developed according to their historical pattern. Right now everybody really wants to establish ecomuseums and thinks it is very necessary to build ecomuseums, but as I said there are many problems with establishing a good ecomuseum. So far the government does not have a model and we did not develop guidelines or laws for the ecomuseums yet. This is the biggest problem. The second problem is to decide who is responsible for the ecomuseum. It is also important to choose the right place for the ecomuseum, one that has a specialty and is beautiful. For Hainan the most important feature is the environment.

R: What criteria did you use to select the sites for the ecomuseum and how will you manage them?

GO: Different ecomuseums have different requests. The big principles are that the government must be welcome to participate in the management and the people who live in the ecomuseum agree. But the most important thing is that they all have something special.

Appendix 6 – Interview transcript with expert

Interview transcript of interview with E4, 24.04.2013

R: Please give a short introduction about your work and how you are involved in the ecomuseum development in Hainan Province.

E4: My work is only marginally connected to the topic, because it is about ICH and natural heritage, but I am an expert on ancient history and archaeology. However, I did some research related to the ecomuseum, for example I researched the history of Baili Baicun and the cultural traditions before the ecomuseum was established there. I made suggestions regarding the content and the organisation of the ecomuseum to the government. I talked about aspects of establishing the ecomuseum, protecting cultural heritage and principles and guidelines, so that the ecomuseum will not destroy the environment.

You also wanted to know about the tourism development in Hainan Province [*the interviewee had read the interview guide beforehand*]. Hainan places a lot of importance on natural environments in its tourism development. I think for the tourism development in the ecomuseums these natural resources also play a major role. We started to employ these resources, but I think we need to do it more and in more depth, for example in the interpretation of natural resources. One example where this is done is Binglanggu in Baoting. I think Binglanggu is not finished yet, but it has the mentality of an ecomuseum. It has some of the principles of the ecomuseum. The plan is not finished yet and does not all the principles of the ecomuseum, but I think the overall concept is similar and I think it is better than other ecomuseum projects. It protects the Li minority, the local population participates, the government guides and the experts support the park and businesses invest. It includes people, natural, tangible and intangible heritage. It is very much like an ecomuseum.

In comparison, the ecomuseum in Baili Baicun seems to be an ecomuseum but in order to fulfil the ecomuseum principles it has still a long way to go. It is a scenic spot, but it has very little cultural content. The natural environment in Baili Baicun is very well protected and it has many natural scenic spots, but it is missing many fundamental requirements that are necessary for the content and the establishment of an ecomuseum. It does not follow the

ecomuseum ideal; it does not have participatory quality for the local population or an interactive quality for the visitors. The government is less active in the aspect of guiding the ecomuseum development and the local population has no knowledge of the ecomuseum and its principles. The natural environment is good and not destroyed yet, but all other aspects need to be adapted to the ecomuseum principles, Baili Baicun needs more leadership, more history and more participation. They are all ecomuseums, but they are at different stages and Baili Baicun will not be finished for a long time. The ecomuseum uses Hainan's natural environment to attract visitors, but this aspect is not very big yet. All of Hainan's indigenous nature is very charming. Hainan also has historical cultural tourism. We have a lot of cultural tourism spots for example in Haikou or Nanshan, but it is still not enough. Hainan has all kinds of different tourism experiences, but it needs to develop more.

R: China has established ecomuseums in several provinces in China since 1996. What is your understanding of this concept and what is your opinion of it?

E4: I do not really know much about this aspect. Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan and now Hainan all established ecomuseums. China established ecomuseums relatively early. Most of what I know about the concept and the principles are what Gerard explained to us in the workshop for the En-compass project. But I think the ecomuseum in China is different from the 21 ecomuseum principles. In China the government influences the idea and the practicalities of the ecomuseum. But the leadership of the government is poor.

One important aspect of the ecomuseum is the participation of the local population, which does not always happen and another important aspect is the funding. The government does not always release all the funding how it was originally planned. If people ask how much money they are going to receive we cannot tell them. The funding is a very important aspect. We need a better system to manage our financial resources.

Another aspect is support in introducing the concept of the ecomuseum to the local population. You have to get the local community to agree to the ecomuseum and introduce the concept to them and discuss with them their thoughts and feelings on benefits and advantages, what kind of benefits they expect from the ecomuseum. I think in that aspect the experts play a very important role. Experts can have many functions. They can develop guidelines and a plan for the ecomuseums. In summary, in China the government has the

biggest role in the development of the ecomuseum and that should be reflected in our principles, but in practice the government does not do enough.

R: Please give me an introduction of the current ecomuseum development in Hainan Province.

E4: The mechanism of the government to establish the ecomuseums is not fully developed yet. It wants the pace in which the ecomuseum development is carried out to be faster. We also want to combine the development of the ecomuseum with the safeguarding of ICH and natural heritage. But the pace in which this is happening is very slow.

R: Which different groups do you think would need to be involved in establishing an ecomuseum in Hainan Province and what role would those groups play?

E4: Ideally one would have as many groups participate in the ecomuseum as possible and include everybody who is concerned with the ecomuseum. Right now the groups that participate are the government, experts, the local population and possibly the people providing the funds. In China another group that participates is the tourism department. It would be good to develop a plan that includes all the groups that should participate in the ecomuseum. Clear regulations for everyone are necessary. It would also be helpful to extend and decide on the products that are being produced in the ecomuseum.

R: Do you think it would make sense for Hainan to develop its own ecomuseum principles and what should they be?

E4: I think for the establishment of ecomuseums in Hainan two aspects are of particular importance. The first important aspect is that Hainan is becoming an 'International Tourism Island'. The development of the 'International Tourism Island' and the ecomuseum are connected. When developing the ecomuseum we have to think about domestic and international travel. The second aspect is that Hainan is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). This how Hainan Province differs from other provinces and might need their own principles.

R: What measures would help to ensure that the ideals of the ecomuseum are maintained over a longer time period?

E4: One important way to achieve this is to protect the ICH. But how can we protect it effectively? How to encourage the local population to safeguard and practice their tradition? These are the essential questions. If the ICH is not protected well the ecomuseum will not be very good and it will be difficult to maintain it. In the last few years the national and the provincial government released many guidelines and laws to protect the ICH. However, the question is if we are really able to explain the content of the guidelines to people. We already have a good protection of tangible heritage and our economy is developed, now the intangible aspects of heritage are becoming more and more important. I think the more developed the economy of a country is the more important history and ICH becomes. This is how it has happened in China. Our economy has been developing rapidly for many years now and we started to attach more importance to all aspects of heritage. I think when the heritage protection in the ecomuseum is well, it can be maintained for a long time.

R: How could the local population be encouraged to participate in the ecomuseum?

E4: The local population in Hainan is different from the local population in other places in China. The local population is very active and knowledgeable in terms of safeguarding natural heritage and ICH. They value it and protect it very well without economic considerations. If we establish an ecomuseum and provide the local population with the right leadership, their enthusiasm for heritage protection will grow even more. I will give you an example. When I did a cultural survey at the countryside the local population was very protective of their cultural heritage and their cultural objects. They would not let me visit certain sacred places and refused to sell their ancient objects. I tried to buy some objects for the museum, but no one would agree to sell them. They were also very knowledgeable about the objects and how to protect them and the environment. When I suggested that they could lend them to the museum and the museum would safeguard them, they refused arguing that they would be able to protect them better. No matter if it is tangible heritage or ICH, both is very valuable to the local population. The local population insists on protecting their heritage in situ, they do not want it brought somewhere else, this is also one of the ecomuseum principles. I think if we support the local population their

heritage protection will be even stronger. I also think there is a deep connection between ICH expressions and the landscape.

R: What do you think would be a good way to promote the ecomuseum and ensure a balance between heritage protection and sustainable tourism development?

E4: I already talked about this a bit. The government is not very active in guiding the ecomuseum development and the local population has no knowledge of the ecomuseum and its principles. To promote ecomuseums the government must strengthen its leadership and appoint capable local leaders. We already have capable local leaders, but when it comes to the practicalities of the ecomuseum their leadership is not enough. We also need a mechanism to distribute the funds. There is not a very strong mentality for the necessity of the local population to participate in the ecomuseum. The government should show a stronger initiative to introduce the idea of participation and steering the ecomuseum to the local communities. The ecomuseum needs to be established faster. Ecomuseums are established everywhere in China now, it is impossible not to do so. We have the laws from the government, we do good work safeguarding tangible heritage and ICH, those aspects are strong, but we need to become better at the other aspects.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?

E4: I think one important goal for the ecomuseums would be to strengthen the cooperation between tangible and intangible heritage protection. Right now they stand on their own. People who work on one do not communicate and cooperate with people who work on the other. It is the same with natural heritage. Ecomuseums would improve that because they protect all the different kinds of heritage together. This is one of the most important principles of the ecomuseum. I hope we can also use this characteristic of the ecomuseum and apply it to the traditional museum; if they work together we can strengthen both the traditional museum and the ecomuseum.

Appendix 7 – Interview transcript with local community members Baili Baicun

Interview transcription of interview with four members of the local population in Baili Baicun (LH1-LH4), 11.05.2013

R: Please introduce yourselves.

LH1: We are all farmers. We are planting rubber trees, betel nuts and rice. They are all traditional crops. We are very famous for our rubber trees and betel nut trees.

R: Please tell me about you heritage traditions.

LH1: Can you see the Li family ancestral temple? It is our important ceremonial site, for example, on the 10th of the second lunar month every year there is a ceremony to worship ancestors in that temple. Everyone in our village joins this ceremony. It's part of the Junpo festival which celebrate 2nd to 26th of the second lunar month every year. This festival is the most famous festival in our area. We will give you a DVD about the culture in our village.

LH2: The festival is a way to remember the dead heroes and the people who made contributions to our area.

R: Can strangers also take part in the ceremony?

LH3: Normally only people with surname Li can join the ceremony. But we welcome visitors to watch the ceremony.

R: Do you think your traditional culture still plays an important role in the younger generation's life?

LH3: Of course our heritage is important for the young generation as well. We have an important tradition, if we have men, who achieved great things in our family genealogy we will write down their names and we will worship them every year. Our ancestor came to Hainan 777 years ago, we really have the perfect family tree. Our history is handed down from generation to generation. You can find all of the valuable people in the family tree. This is a great way to encourage the young people to do something good. Now, we have the 'Baili

Baicun tourism zone', we are building different public place, like, museums, squares, etc. We also have a dance team organized by local people. And other ways to attract young people to learn the traditional culture, such as music groups.

R: Are there many tourists in your area?

LH4: At the moment we have not too many tourists. The tourism development is unsatisfactory right now, but we still have few visitors every day. Most of them come from Haikou. We are establishing *nongjiale* and we think that will increase the number of tourists soon.

(Introduction of several traditional objects they use in their everyday life and that are exhibited in the tourism service centre)

LH1: The building of this temple (points at the newly restored temple) was ordered by the Kangxi Emperor. Our culture is very important for the development of Hainan into an Intentional Tourism Island. We have villages full of cultural heritage and the majority of the leaders in Hainan already recognised that. Hainan University and Hainan normal university also do some researches in our village.

R: What is done to protect your songs, dances, etc. at the moment? Do you think it is effective? Why?

LH4: We write down all of our history and keep it in the Li family ancestral temple, so we can pass our culture from generation to generation. This way our future generations can understand what happened in our times. One tradition like the respect for older people, we teach the young children by asking them to serve the older generation during dinner. I think this is protection.

R: Would you like to make any changes in tourism or heritage protection? If yes, what and why?

LH2: I don't think so. In the past, we believed that the Li family ancestral temple was a symbol to encourage our people to get together and work together to conquer difficulties. And now, we can develop it to become a tourist attraction. We are also proud of our natural

water. We can build the spring water factory. You can see many products in Haikou, that claim their water comes from Ding'an, but in fact, they are all fake.

R: Have you heard that the government plans to build an ecomuseum in here?

LH3: No, I do not know what an ecomuseum is. However, we believe that no matter what kind of 'museum' we have, the people should do their best to protect the history.

Appendix 8 – Interview transcript with Li minority member Binglanggu

Interview transcript of interview with Li minority member (LM16), 07.05.2013

R: Please introduce yourself.

L16: I am from Baisha and I work in a managerial position here in the park.

R: Do you know a lot of Li heritage traditions?

L16: When I was in school I did not know much about Li traditions at all. After I graduated I did not know what kind of work I wanted to do. But I thought that there were many jobs in Hainan that were connected to Li culture. When I started working here I got more informed about the Li culture, I saw a lot of material (documents and objects), so that's how I slowly got to know that our Li culture is very rich.

R: Do you feel the Li heritage traditions are important to you?

L16: When I started to learn more about Li heritage, it inspired me to think more deeply about our traditions and I feel that they are very important. I think particularly the lesser known heritage traditions are important. They get easily forgotten and therefore are slowly being lost. A lot of people know about Li brocade, Li tattoos and tree bark cloth, a lot of knowledge gets collected on them. And even though I feel it is very important to protect those traditions, I find other traditions also very valuable. I also think the minority traditions cannot be protected without its local context.

R: Do you speak the Li language?

L 16: Only very little. When I was a young child my parents used to talk a lot in Li, so I was used to hearing it, but I cannot say very much. I was not really interested in learning it either. Now in our environment we speak more Hainanese and Mandarin. At home I really do not speak much Li at all. Once my parents got a better job as teachers they stopped speaking Li at home. But because of my work here I started to talk a bit more in Li and it is slowly coming back. I study it with my colleagues.

R: Are you interested in the Li brocade?

L 16: Yes, I am very interested in Li brocade and I really want to know a lot about this tradition. I think Li brocade was a very important part of people's life. I can do it a little bit.

R: Would you like your children to learn these traditions.

L 16: I am not sure if my children will have the opportunity to learn about the Li traditions. For me it is important that they will know that their mother belongs to the Li minority. But I am not sure there will be people left to teach them our traditions. I think in 10 or 20 years, once the older population has died, it is quite possible that we will not see most of our heritage expressions anymore.

R: Do you feel the Li traditions are protected well at the moment?

L 16: I think the government employs a lot of our cultural heritage to improve the economy. But I feel since this is happening the provincial and the national government value our culture more. Since they started to develop the Li minority cultural heritage for tourism, there has been more research. Binglanggu published several books. We travel to many places and try to help to protect the heritage there. A lot of things you can find in Li villages we have here as well. But I think a small part is also that the tourist can see our objects, to introduce them to them. This is only a small part of the heritage protection. I think the heritage protection of the Li minority heritage is already good, but it would be helpful if more things would open, for example more businesses.

I think a lot of customs at the countryside are changing, people's lives are changing, and therefore it is important to protect the heritage of the Li minority. It would be good to find a way to transmit these traditions, but it is difficult to pass on every little thing.

R: How do you think the government could support the Li minority in protecting their heritage traditions?

L16: I have not really thought about this question, it would be good if the government and the Li minority profited mutually from our traditions, for example if we had our own businesses that show Li traditions. We should have more responsibility in heritage protection. It also would be good if the government would make festivals of the Li minority, for example Sanyuesan, more internationally known. I think if we had many international

visitors interested in Li customs we could open many businesses. I think Li minority heritage should become world heritage. But it is also important for the government to raise the income and education level of the Li people that live in places that are relatively backwards and not only protects the heritage. In a lot of places people do not even get a proper school education when they are children. I think this is something that the government should do for the Li people.

Appendix 9 – Examples of data analysis

Example of data analysis of ‘Ecomuseum establishment’ theme (Transcripts GO interviews and M1 notes)

Category	Subcategory
Ecomuseum Aims	Ecomuseum Role Models
	Safeguarding Aims
	Development of Standards
	Ecomuseum Content
Motivation	Diversification of tourism resources
	International tourism island
	Safeguarding culture and environment
	National government directive
Selection Criteria	Local distinctiveness
	Natural environments
	No safeguarding of ethnic minority heritage

Example of data analysis of ‘Ecomuseum challenges’ theme (Interview transcripts GO and E)

Category	Subcategory
Site selection	Criteria
	Safeguarding responsibilities
	Suitability of sites
Government Leadership	Weak government commitment/ unclear responsibilities
	Lack of preparation
	Information policy
	Guidelines
Research and understanding of the ecomuseum ideal	Cooperation between departments
	Research heritage protection and tourism
	Research ecomuseums
	Experts
Financial Resources	Knowledge exchange
	Lack of funds
	Management
	Income through tourism
	Liaisons

Appendix 10 – Example of the ‘government leadership’ category within the ‘Ecomuseum challenges’ theme

Ecomuseum challenges			
Category	Sub-category	Quotes GO	Quotes E
Government leadership	Weak government commitment/ unclear responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The second problem is to decide who is responsible for the ecomuseum”. (GO3) • “The political leaders do not pay close enough attention and attach not enough importance to cultural heritage. One example where this is better are the ecomuseums in Guangxi. Guangxi has the GXMN and ten ecomuseums attached to it. All of these ecomuseums are already working. The leaders of Guangxi Province decided to establish the ecomuseums in the 10th Five-Year Plan of the province and they are finished now. Hainan Province already has its 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) and ecomuseums are not mentioned. This is the problem with ecomuseums in Hainan, our leader has not officially approved the ecomuseums. This makes a big difference. If the leader has not officially approved the ecomuseums it is not the responsibility of the Cultural Department. It is an overreaching cultural question, which means that every department is kind of responsible for it. Therefore there is no real leader who is responsible for the project and draws out a plan, no one to coordinate it. So it will be very difficult to complete a project like this”. (GO4) • “There are not enough people who could be responsible for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The government is not very active in guiding the ecomuseum development and the local population has no knowledge of the ecomuseum and its principles. To promote ecomuseums the government must strengthen its leadership and appoint capable local leaders. We already have capable local leaders, but when it comes to the practicalities of the ecomuseum their leadership is not enough....” (E4) • “The mechanism of the government to establish the ecomuseums is not fully developed yet. It wants the pace in which the ecomuseum development is carried out to be faster. We also want to combine the development of the ecomuseum with the safeguarding of ICH and natural heritage. But the pace in which this is happening is very slow”. (E4) • “In summary, in China the government has the biggest role in the development of the ecomuseum and that should be reflected in our principles, but in practice the government does not do enough”. (E4) • “Our museums have a lot of leadership issues. The people responsible for museums and for establishing the ecomuseum have not deeply considered this question”. (E5) • “The Hainan Provincial

		<p>building the ecomuseum. Particularly when it comes to building the ecomuseum the <i>danweis</i> are often not very effective. We are about 10 <i>danweis</i> that are responsible for culture, museums and ICH. It takes so long to establish the ecomuseums, because it takes a lot of work and effort. People are already overworked. I, for example, have to prepare 6 exhibitions this year, the workload is really a lot". (GO4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm not sure who follows the ecomuseum plans right now, the cultural division is responsible for museums, so they must be responsible for the ecomuseum, but it is hard to say, it seems it does not of a high priority at the moment..." (GO2) 	<p>Government is actually not that involved into the ecomuseum apart from the initial establishment." (E7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "To preserve and maintain the cultural traditions in the ecomuseum should be the responsibility of the government. Therefore I feel under this aspect the ecomuseum development in China is not ideal." (E7)
	Lack of preparation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The attitude of the government is problematic. It thinks they it establish an ecomuseum after only a short time of research". (E5) • "I think one problem is the way we work. The ecomuseum does not work like the traditional museum. When people hear a museum is built in their city they expect to go to a building, to see a collection of objects and that everybody is silent; that's the image. Everybody knows what to expect from a museum. But the ecomuseum is a very new concept. The leaders, not the experts, have a big influence on how this concept is carried out. But most of them do not study this concept. So how can they know about this concept, how to continue to protect cultural heritage, how to carry forward ethnic minority culture or

			<p>preserve the meaning of ancestral worship, etc.? They still do not really understand what is good about the ecomuseum idea. Carrying out a big project demands a lot of work. They have not figured that out yet. But from there follow a lot of other problems such as the focus of the ecomuseum". (E6)</p>
	Information policy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There is not a very strong mentality for the necessity of the local population to participate in the ecomuseum. The government should show a stronger initiative to introduce the idea of participation and steering the ecomuseum to the local communities". (E4) • "The local population often does not know what is going on in their own village. The government is establishing projects without informing the local population. It does not matter how good the idea of the project is, it is impossible to establish it well without informing the local population. The information policies in China are lacking". (E7)
	Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So far the government does not have a model and we did not develop guidelines or laws for the ecomuseums yet. This is the biggest problem". (GO3) • "Because we just started to develop the ecomuseum there is no explicit form and we have no clear-cut standard or definition of the ecomuseum. What kind of regulations will the ecomuseums possess once they are finished? What kind of standard can the ecomuseum reach? Right now there is no standard, Hainan province does not have any kind of ecomuseum standard that was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It would be good to develop a plan that includes all the groups that should participate in the ecomuseum. Clear regulations for everyone are necessary". (E4) • "The six ecomuseums in Hainan: they are a bit different from other ecomuseums, but the concept is not finished and we do not have a real model yet... Therefore the understanding of the ecomuseum can be a bit fuzzy. Some places call themselves ecomuseum even though they are not, but they understand themselves as an ecomuseum. I

		officially released by the government". (GO5)	<p>think ecomuseums need to be supervised" (E5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think we need to study how to establish the ecomuseum, what kind of standards to use. The first point is that they have not agreed on a standard... I think this poses a problem for the participation of everyone. There is not enough awareness". (E6)
	Cooperation between departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A big part of our ICH protection, will be carried out in the ECPZ. Those are very similar to the ecomuseum. However, we have no connection to the ecomuseum development and I do not have any information on it. We just work on the ECPZs". (GO2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think one important goal for the ecomuseums would be to strengthen the cooperation between tangible and intangible heritage protection. Right now they stand on their own. People who work on one do not communicate and cooperate with people who work on the other. It is the same with natural heritage. Ecomuseums would improve that because they protect all the different kinds of heritage together. This is one of the most important principles of the ecomuseum. I hope we can also use this characteristic of the ecomuseum and apply it to the traditional museum; if they work together we can strengthen both the traditional museum and the ecomuseum". (E4) • "Different departments often do not work together, when it comes to heritage protection. This is sometimes difficult when it comes to safeguarding ICH, particular the ICH of the Li minority". (E8)

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