Translating Environmental and Development Agendas: Influences of Environmental NGOs on Rural Landscapes in China

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For my father, 王順

Statement of Authorship

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Note on translation: All translations from Chinese of published and unpublished documents and oral statements by informants have been done by the author.

Abstract

Environmental NGOs (eNGOs) have become increasingly important in addressing environment and development issues in China. The majority of Chinese eNGO research views eNGOs as contributing to a democratic society and/or sustainable development. Some studies suggest that eNGOs in China are constrained by Chinese politics. This thesis aims to critically examine how eNGOs play their parts in China's environmental and development issues, particularly in the context of rural resource use, which is central to livelihoods of rural populations. This research, adopting political ecology as the conceptual framework, seeks to understand how interactions among Chinese eNGOs and other institutional actors, including donors, international NGOs, different levels of government, and local communities, influence rural landscapes in China, a country wherein eNGO practices are embedded in their relationships with these actors across scales.

The argument of this thesis is largely drawn from the case study of Green Watershed, a domestic eNGO, and its participatory resource management programme in Yunnan province. Three elements were employed in the methodology: discourse analysis, organisational ethnography and village ethnography. Discourse analysis was conducted to understand both the context within which Green Watershed operates and Green Watershed's practices. The organisational ethnography and the village ethnographies of three villages in the organisation's project area not only revealed interactions between the eNGO and other actors, but also the interactions within the eNGO itself.

The key argument of this thesis is that the influences of eNGO practices on China's rural landscapes are not merely inherited from eNGOs' international linkages or simply

constrained by government policy. Instead, the influences are the outcomes of the interactions between various actors across scales, which arise due to power relations, different world views and different priorities and interests of the various actors. The interactions influence the ways which environment and development philosophies translate from international agendas into local practice through eNGO projects. Rural landscapes, in which social relations and human-nature relationships take place, are consequently shaped by these interactions. The interactions between the projects and the local communities are particularly crucial in translating the agendas into practice, because of the critical roles played by the individual agency of the local communities. Local communities do not simply accept the external agendas. They may selectively adopt, translate or even reject the external agendas and/or philosophies.

As community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) has gradually become popular among eNGOs for addressing resource issues in rural China, this thesis has taken the CBNRM model as a focus in order to produce a deep understanding of eNGOs' influence on the ground. Based on empirical findings from the village case studies, I suggest that limitations exist in participatory CBNRM. First, participation is often complicated by politics and social relations, and therefore there is gap between the theory and the reality. Second, although participation is supposed to achieve empowerment, that empowerment programme may fall short of radically challenging power structure. Finally, there is a paradox in the concept of empowerment. Even when empowerment is achieved by participation, it does not guarantee good environmental governance as often expected in a CBNRM project. This is because that empowerment means enabling individual agents to have wider choices when making decisions, which may not follow environmental principles.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBIK	Centre of Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (Kunming, China)
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
ENGO	Environmental Non-governmental Organisation
FON	Friends of Nature
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GW	Green Watershed
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission (PRC China)
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NFPP	Natural Forest Protection Programme
Oxfam HK	Oxfam Hong Kong
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Service
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Administration (China), later changed to the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SLCP	Sloping Land Conversion Programme
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

WMC	Watershed Management Committee
WWF	The World Wildlife Fund, later changed to World Wide Fund for Nature
WUA	Water Users Association

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Foreword

I commenced this research in 2010, but my motivation for initiating it, combining my academic interests and my personal background, stemmed from a long way back. As a Taiwanese whose parents were born in China, I have always had a great interest in China. For years I have been eager to ascertain how rural China has changed, and to understand the factors that have shaped these changes. Since I was a child, I have made several trips to China, both to visit relatives and as a tourist. Hence, over the past twenty years, I have witnessed the rapidly changing face of China. For example, I now see department stores selling luxury goods, cinemas showing 3D movies, and supermarkets stored with imported foods; while once this was very foreign, it has become commonplace in Chinese cities today. And yet, the changes vary for different people in different places. Many of the ancient towns along the Yangtze River that I visited earlier no longer exist; they are under water due to inundation by large dams. Many rural villagers domiciled in western China, including in my field sites, still lack proper hygiene and health facilities. Their living conditions are strikingly similar to those of eastern China twenty years ago, for example, in my father's home town in a coastal province.

At the same time, I have developed a great interest in China's eNGO sector due to my past experience of working for several eNGOs, experience that exposed me to a network of Chinese eNGOs. I started to understand them from different perspectives. While media promote the eNGO sector as a mechanism that has been improving China's grievous environmental problems, academics discuss eNGOs as facilitators of a democratic society. ENGO staff shared with me the difficulties they experienced when having to conform to the rules of the Chinese government and foreign donors. Ordinary people often expressed their mixed opinions and obscure understandings of eNGOs. While eNGOs appear to be playing important roles in shaping the changes in China, understanding of their roles is hardly holistic in the current discourse surrounding eNGOs in China.

It is why this research set off to explore the influence of eNGOs on rural landscape change, at a time when rural China has dramatically changed in many dimensions and when eNGOs are said to become increasingly influential in environmental and social issues.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Environmental NGOs: Solution for China?

China is facing tremendous environmental challenges, such as severe air and water pollution, high greenhouse gas emissions, and large-scale desertification. China's environmental issues are not only a national but also a global concern. Among the various environmental issues, natural resource use is unarguably crucial because it is closely tied to people's livelihoods, especially in the country's rural areas.

In coping with such challenges, environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) have become increasingly important due to the recent changes in China's social-economic conditions (Economy, 2005; Morton, 2009; Shapiro, 2012). Today, there are approximately 2000 eNGOs operating in China; the exact number is hard to ascertain. Concomitant with the burgeoning of Chinese eNGOs, many scholars have conducted research into the eNGO sector. Studies have concentrated in the main upon eNGOs' international linkages, NGO-state relationships, and particularly upon political influences. The few studies of eNGOs' influence on environmental issues have mostly been concerned with environmental awareness or urban pollution issues. To date, on the ground influences of eNGOs in this era of tremendous environmental challenges remain unclear.

This thesis aims to address the question about how eNGOs are both materially and discursively influencing physical and social landscape change in rural China, a country wherein eNGO practices are embedded in their relationships with actors involved in

environmental governance, including donors, international NGOs, different levels of government, and local communities. This topic, which concerns local people's lives and their relations with environment, has been largely overlooked.

The majority of Chinese eNGO research, for example, Chen (2006, 2010); Cooper (2006); G. Yang (2005), views eNGOs as contributing to a democratic society and/or sustainable development. These arguments are often based on the ecological modernisation narrative that takes NGOs to be solutions to environmental problems without critical analysis. Rather than adopting this approach, I employ the framework of political ecology to analyse how environmental changes are produced through political processes (Robbins, 2004). To this end, this research explores the implications of NGO politics and micro-politics (Fisher, 1997), with particular focus on landscape change in rural China.

Many studies support the argument that NGOs are not apolitical, as evident in the material reviewed later in this thesis. I will suggest that eNGOs in China, especially domestic eNGOs, still enjoy the privilege of being considered "neutral" partly because Chinese eNGOs want to be seen as "apolitical", especially by the government. However, it would be unrealistic to neglect politics and micro-politics, and the ways in which they are shaping all eNGO practices.

Understanding NGO practices requires studying NGOs in their specific contexts, in specific locations and times (Fisher, 1997). Chinese eNGOs operate within a unique context. While on one hand, they have been heavily supported by international donors and NGOs both conceptually and financially; on the other, their operations are constrained by governmental policy and practices. As one senior Chinese NGO worker said at a roundtable forum: "International donor is our father, government is our mother. What is our own way (of NGO practice)?"[1]

Within such a situation, one would envision that Chinese eNGO local projects are determined by their international partners and authoritarian governmental policy. But, the

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[1] NGO roundtable forum held in July, 2009 in Kunming.

reality is often vastly more complicated[2]. Given the different environmental philosophies that distinguish between western and Chinese cultures (Grumbine, 2010; Watts, 2010), are international discourses directly imposed on local projects by their Chinese counterparts? In a vast country like China with its complex political system, does power exercised by higher levels of government override that of lower administrative levels? Moreover, local communities' responses to these eNGO interventions have yet to be explored. As a result, how local projects are carried out, and the nature of the influences on the ground remain unclear.

This research focuses on landscape change to examine the influence of eNGOs because landscapes encompass broader notions than a narrower focus on "resource" or "environment". According to Maginnis, Jakson, and Dudley (2004), a landscape is " a contiguous area with a specific set of ecological, cultural and socioeconomic characteristics" (p.331). According to Fisher, Maginnis, Jackson, Barrow, and Jeanrenaud (2008), landscapes are not simply "fragmented land-use zones" (p.93). Moreover, the boundaries of landscapes are essentially arbitrary; they are "defined by different people for a particular purpose…landscapes "based on different boundaries defined for different people often overlap and are often permeable" (ibid. p.93). Human geographers usually identify landscapes are socially and culturally constructed [See (Cosgrove, 1998) and (Duncan, 2005). Landscape refers to material forms as well as to the discursive construction of land. It addresses the physical areas wherein social interaction takes place. Therefore, understanding landscape change is to understand how human-nature relationship and social relations mutually influence each other. As measuring the physical change of material form is beyond the scope of this research, I examine landscape change as shaped by changing social relations and environmental practices.

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[2] As Tsing (2004) has made a similar point, arguing, with reference to Indonesia, that universal ideas (such as agendas in global environmental politics) are always engaged with by various actors which affects how these ideas are realised in reality.

1.2 Research questions

Specifically, this research intends to address four sets of questions by examining the institutional actors pertinent to eNGO practices. The first and second sets of questions address international linkages and eNGO-government relationships, while the third and fourth sets of questions address the interaction between eNGO projects and local actors. The first two sets of questions serve to provide a context for analysing the third and fourth sets, which constitute the core issue of this thesis.

First, regarding the influence of eNGOs' international linkages, in what ways do discourses and concepts of international donors and international eNGOs and funding priorities shape the agendas and practices of Chinese eNGOs? How are theories of conservation and development, including sustainable development and the CBNRM model, adopted and modified through project implementation? And, how do eNGO relationships with their international partners influence power relations between NGO-government and NGO-local communities?

Second, when looking into how the Chinese political system conditions Chinese eNGO practices, how do eNGOs interact with different levels of administration, including local (township and prefecture), provincial and central governments? And, how do eNGO-government relations affect the interaction between eNGOs and donors, and between eNGOs and communities? In effect, do certain eNGO-state relations influence local attitudes toward eNGOs and their projects?

Third, when looking into the responses of local communities to eNGO projects, to what degree do local communities accept reject or modify the concepts and processes of projects? And, to what degree do eNGO-community relationships have implications for NGO practices, projects and power relations among other actors?

Finally, the crucial question to answer is: how do eNGO practices influence rural landscapes shaped by social relations and human-nature relationships? In terms of social relations, how do eNGO practices influence social relations within the local community

and relations between different communities (such as ethnic groups)? How do changing social relations impact on eNGO practices?

Regarding the last question, in terms of influence on human-nature relationships, to what degree do eNGO projects influence people's perceptions of nature, their knowledge of resources usage, and their environmental practices (including production methods, managing institutions and resource accessibility)?

In exploring these questions, this research addresses several core concepts: scale, debate of structure and agency, and the interaction between social relations and human-nature relationships.

1.3 Locating the case study

As previously stated, eNGO practices need to be understood within a specific context. The analyses in this research project are drawn from the ethnographies of a Chinese eNGO, Green Watershed (GW), and its project area Lashi Lake, which is located in south-west China (see Map 1). I chose GW and its project area as my case study for several reasons. First, the resources issues in the Lashi area reflect the critical and common problems in the environment and development in China. Second, this area has always been a hotspot for international eNGOs to apply their ideologies; thus, the influence of international actors may be expected. And third, while GW applied a participatory approach to addressing resources issues, which has been embraced internationally, just how this approach applies in the Chinese rural context remains unclear.

Map 1. Location of Lashi Lake, where the case study was conducted. Lashi Lake is in
north-west Yunnan, an area bordering Sichuan and Tibet. Source: Google Earth

The resource issues of Lashi Lake have largely resulted from uneven development on
various scales, which is a prevailing problem in contemporary China. On the regional
scale, China's western area has always provided the natural resources (such as timber,
mining, electricity) essential for industry and urban development in the eastern provinces.
The Lashi Lake area, like many other forest ecosystems in south-west China, has been
subjected to state logging concessions for several decades since the 1950s. Particularly,

the "Great Leap Forward" of the late 1950s contributed to the over-exploitation of forests in western China. As a result, the area's forest resources (timber, non-timber and wildlife) have become seriously depleted. In 1999, following the Yangtze River floods which took thousands of lives in eastern China, a logging ban was declared which resulted in a large proportion of farmlands having to convert to forest. Many people who were dependent on logging lost their income sources, and many farmers lost their land. Those who sacrificed their forests due to the state logging policy were later subject to restrictions that prohibited their access to natural resources (forest and land for cultivation). On the local scale, Lashi villages also suffered from development that favoured urban needs. In the 1990s, in response to a thriving tourism industry in nearby Lijiang City, a dam was built to divert water away from rural usage. The policy aimed to serve urban needs, mainly those of tourists, business owners, and city dwellers. The damming of Lashi Lake submerged significant areas of farmland and resulted in dramatic changes in the livelihoods of those who lived around the lake. The combined effects of the logging ban and the submerged farmland triggered more intensive usage of certain resources, including fishery and sloping land farming. The resultant uneven development in Lashi evinced a microcosm of resource issues reflecting the spatial injustice that persists in China today.

Southwest China, the area in which Lashi Lake is located, provides ideal ground for examining the influences of international NGOs and donors, the reason being that this area has served as a laboratory in which international NGOs/donors have experimented with conservation and development agendas in China. The World Wildlife Foundation (WWF, later changed the full name to World Wide Fund for Nature) was first international eNGO in China to work on species conservation during the 1980s-1990s. Its projects included conservation of panda in Sichuan and elephants in Yunnan. Starting in the late 1990s, the Ford Foundation was the first to support research and training programmes on social forestry/community forestry in Yunnan. Carrying on the tradition of protected areas in the US, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) campaigned for and assisted in establishing national parks in Yunnan. Therefore, I deemed this region the best place to trace the influences of international discourses and agendas on China's rural landscapes.

Having benefited from the financial support of a prominent international development NGO, GW, the Chinese eNGO I selected for my case study has been implementing a participatory resource management programme for more than ten years. Thus, it seems suited to addressing a series of resource problems resulting from government policies and projects. As this was among the first eNGO to attempt participatory resource management in China, its projects provided an excellent case through which to examine how theories are challenged, agendas are negotiated, and practices are modified in a specific socio-political context.

1.4 Thesis outline

In Chapters 1 to 4, I discuss concepts, context, theories and the methods employed in the research. In these four chapters, I show why and how I framed and conducted this research project, both theoretically and materially. In Chapters 5 to 8, the ethnographies of an eNGO (Green Watershed, GW) and its project area (Lashi Lake) are presented in order to examine: (a) how eNGO practices are transformed by power relations within the organisation; and (b) how they are modified by interactions with local communities, in the context of the competing power of different governments in China and heavy reliance upon international linkages. In these chapters, I also discuss how transformed NGO agendas influence social relations and environmental practices locally, in the process changing the face of China's rural landscape. Regarding the research questions, the first and the second sets of research questions are mainly addressed in Chapter 5. The analysis of Chapters 6, 7, and 8 provides answers for the third and the last sets of research questions. The final two chapters, 9 and 10, will synthesise the arguments of Chapters 5 to 8, and conclude the thesis.

In Chapter 2, a critical review of NGO practice is undertaken in order to provide a context and clarify the thesis' research problem. Using China's environmental governance as the point of departure, this chapter reviews two strands of research: NGO politics/micro-politics and Chinese NGO studies.

In Chapter 3, I introduce political ecology as the theoretical framework because it argues that environmental changes are political processes involving power, knowledge and

actors. Within this framework, several key concepts are reviewed, including the debate focusing on structure and agency, and concepts of participatory community-based resource management.

In Chapter 4, the methodology I employed to research the context of eNGO practice, the social life of eNGOs and eNGOs' influence on the rural landscape is explained. In order to understand the context, international and national discourses, and state policies are analysed. In this chapter, I also present a multi-sited ethnographic approach, which constitutes the main component of my methodology, including an organisational ethnography of GW and village ethnographies of three villages in the project sites.

In Chapter 5, I introduce the context of my case study. First, I present the background, ideology, and the campaigns/projects of Green Watershed. The trajectory of GW, revealed through its national campaign and the Lashi programme, demonstrates that local NGO practice is influenced by actors across scales. Lashi Lake thus becomes a space representing power negotiations among these actors. In particular, this chapter shows that NGO-government relationships in China are inconsistent. The different levels of governments, which carry various priorities, hold different attitudes towards NGOs in certain times and within certain contexts.

In Chapter 6, I use a fishery resource management project to analyse GW's practice on a local scale. I discuss how GW's agenda, based on certain assumptions of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), has been compromised due to local resource politics, changing social relations, and modified discourses of sustainable development. The participatory approaches adopted by GW in order to establish effective managing institutions as an experimental approach has fell short to change local resource use practices in the ways GW expected.

In Chapter 7, a community development project in a Yi village, a more "traditional" society, is used to analyse how local communities react to GW's project, by selectively adopting eNGO narratives of the people and their relationships to the land, in order to achieve their own agendas. Any discussion of the locals' capability needs to be situated in an historical context and embedded in local social relations. By doing so, the assumption

of empowerment, an important element in participatory development projects, may be challenged.

In Chapter 8, I use an agro-forestry project activity as a case study to examine how local landscapes encompassing the physical environment, the socio-economical lives of villagers, and social relations (within the community and NGO-community relationships) are modified by the interaction between GW's programme and the actions of local agency. While the local community is empowered, the outcome of the empowerment programme may be contradictory to the good environmental outcome envisaged by the GW. The case reveals a trade-off between development and environmental protection, a trade-off that has mainly resulted from the actors' choices, which have been shaped by the socio-economic context in contemporary China.

In Chapter 9, I address the answers to the research questions by providing explanations to facilitate an understanding of how eNGOs influence rural landscapes, in the context of the power dynamics exercised between different institutional actors across scales.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis, discusses limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Environment and eNGOs of China

My research aims to explore how eNGOs shape the rural landscape under the complex interactions between various institutional actors, in the context of the Chinese political system. The starting point of this research is the concern for the rapidly changing environment in contemporary China. In this chapter, I will first discuss Chinese environmental issues as the context of my research. Rather than focusing in detail on physical problems, my intention is to highlight key characteristics and trends of environmental governance, for it is within just such a context that eNGOs have become important in contemporary Chinese society. The second part of this chapter will include an introduction to Chinese eNGO development and a critical review of Chinese eNGO research.

2.1 Challenges in environment and development

It is widely recognised that China is facing tremendous environmental challenges. For example, since 2006, China has become the biggest greenhouse gas emitter in the world. Meanwhile, large-scale desertification resulting in huge dust storms has had impacts domestically and abroad, even extending to Californian cities. Water scarcity in certain areas is affecting agricultural production and livelihoods, and burgeoning hydropower construction is changing the waterscape of western China and downstream countries. These are among the top concerns of environmentalists and the general public. Meanwhile, air pollution has also become a big concern in recent years. Chinese cities are on the top of the World Bank's list of "world most polluted cities", mainly due to large scale coal-burning using outdated technology. Beijing's severe air pollution has become

headline news worldwide, and has stirred up public sentiment requesting a proper monitoring system in 2012.[3] Other environmental issues including continuing loss of biodiversity and rising energy demands demonstrate the urgency for environmental governance in China.

At the same time, China is developing, especially after the reform and open era. The most obvious effect is the significant growth in income and in consumption. However, the development takes various forms, resulting in uneven effects and creating inequality among different regions, between rural and urban areas and even locally (Webber, 2012). The uneven development has been greatly transforming people's lives and often been at the expense on environment. For example, rural farmers perhaps earn higher income by engaging more in market economy activities such as providing agricultural products or working as labourer in factories, but at the same time, they tend to lose autonomy in decision-making or be more easily exploited (ibid.). At the same time, due to decollectivisation and privatisation increasing socioeconomic stratification has intensified environmental degradation (Muldavin, 2000) . Therefore, development and environment issues have to be examined as a whole but not separately.

The rapidly changing environment in China attracts many researchers and media who provide insightful overview of environmental issues in China, such as Economy (2005), Morton (2009), Shapiro (2012) and Watts (2010). All of these works, to some degree, link Chinese environmental issues to the broader international context. For example, the opening of Shapiro's book depicts China as a major polluter responsible for global resources depletion (Shapiro, 2012). At the same time, some consider that China is bearing the responsibility for the industrialised countries, which export their manufacturing industries along with the waste, to China (Shapiro, 2012; Watts, 2010). For these reason, environmental issues in China are not only relevant to the domestic society but also should be the concern of the global society.

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[3] PM (particulate matter) 2.5 was not listed as the substance for air quality monitoring system in China before 2013. In late 2012, the public, including several eNGOs, strongly requested listing PM2.5 as a controlled substance. It was a successful public mobilisation which resulted in government response. From 1st January 2013, 74 Chinese cities established systems, monitoring listed substances for controlling air quality including PM2.5.

Several major trends have shaped China's environment status: population growth, the rise of the middle-class, the globalisation of manufacturing, land use change, and climate change (Shapiro, 2012). These trends are happening on very significant scales. The interaction of these physical trends and governance, culture and public participation inevitably complicates Chinese environmental problems (Shapiro, 2012). Although different authors approach Chinese environmental issues in different ways, all of the work mentioned above represent certain influential rhetoric and patterns regarding environmental governance in China, which I am about to discuss in the following paragraphs.

Since the reform era, "economic growth" has been prioritised by the government over all other agenda, including environmental agendas. Nowadays, even though China's economy has leapt ahead over the last two decades, the government does not intend to pause in its pursuits but to further strengthen this objective, partly for political reasons.[4] The influence of prioritising "economic growth" justifies the slogan of "pollution first, clean up later" (*xian wuran, hou zhili,* 先汙染後治理) , which is now a normal pattern practiced by governmental officials, especially at local level (Shapiro, 2012; Watts, 2010). Despite some central and provincial officials suggesting that "we can't turn back to the old path of pollution first, clean up later" recently, so far it is still the mainstream ideology, especially among local cadres.

This slogan is important when analysing Chinese environmental issues not only because it represents the mentality of the government system which prioritises economic development over the environment. It is also crucial because the slogan implies "poverty" as the culprit of the environmental issue. As Shapiro argues, many governmental branches and local leaders consider "…[t]hey are too poor to prioritise environmental considerations" (Shapiro, 2012, p. 59). I suggest the importance of readers bearing such a

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[4] It is suggested that economic growth since the reform era has resulted in a stronger state and delayed democracy in China (Morris, 2010). This can be also seen from the attitude of the rising middle-class who represents China's prosperity. They do not necessary oppose the regime but instead support the party-state (Roper, 2012). Some argue that nowadays, the Chinese government encourages its people to focus on advancing the economic condition over other "needs" in order to distract people from pursuing democracy.

narrative in mind, because this view is to some degree shared and followed by some Chinese eNGOs.

The second influential strand of rhetoric is the doctrine of "scientific outlook on development" (*kexue fazhan guan*, 科學發展觀) announced by President Hu Jintao in 2003. It is suggested to have a profound influence on leading the policy and practice of development and environmental issues in China (Morton, 2009; Watts, 2010). The goal of the doctrine is to "develop on a people-centred, harmonious and sustainable basis". It seems to provide a balance between economic growth, social stability and environment protection, mainly because the doctrine includes the element of "sustainability". However, in essence, this doctrine still prioritises economic development as its most important task. Furthermore, it follows the ideology of the Maoist era, that is manpower can conquer nature. But the difference now is the emphasis on scientific planning and methods. In line with this doctrine, many mega-projects have been initiated which would result in significant environmental impacts, such as South to North Water Diversion project which is designed to transfer water from the Yangtze watershed to the Yellow River watershed.[5]

Moreover, the structure of the Chinese political system and the decentralisation of the administrative power are suggested to be other key factors contributing to the country's environmental problems (Mol & Carter, 2007; Shapiro, 2012; Watts, 2010). Shapiro suggests that while the central government does a good job in making environmental policy and laws on paper, the problem mainly lies in policy implementation and the conflicting priorities between the central and local governments (Shapiro, 2012). Morton (2009), by detailing the state regulatory control and legal reforms regarding environment issues, also demonstrates the central government's good intentions on environmental problems. It is widely agreed that the problem of deviated national environmental policy and local practice exists due to the financial requirements of local governments that

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[5] The idea of this project was initiated in the 1950s. The current layout is to have three major channels connecting both watersheds from eastern, central and western parts, and the estimated term is approximately 40-50 years. The projected volume of water transferred will be around 44.5 billion cubic metres per year. The budget is more than 60 billion USD, double of the cost of Three Gorges Dam. There are many concerns regarding this mega-project, including exacerbating water pollution, recent droughts in central and south China, and resettlement issues. To date, approximately 445,000 people have been relocated due to the project and the number will be higher.

became responsible for their own revenues following the decentralisation (Tilt, 2007). Local revenues would have been sourced from businesses investing locally rather than from local governments. As a result, policy implementations by local environmental protection bureaus and other agencies (such as the forestry bureaus) are often not effective as intended by policy makers (Morton, 2009; Weller, 2006). Using pollution enforcement by a local environmental protection bureau as an example, Tilt's work demonstrates the dilemma faced by the local environment officials (Tilt, 2007). However, Morton who recognises the gap between policy and the local implementation, dismisses the argument that only local governments should hold the sole responsibility for the failure of policy implementation (Morton, 2009). She suggests that the unevenness of the local financial and institutional capacity across different regions makes it inappropriate to simplify the performance of local compliance.

Although I agree that there is huge gap between state policy and implementation by local governments, and that decentralisation may have resulted in local governments being hijacked by local businesses, I suggest that attributing Chinese environmental problems to the ineffectiveness of policy implementation at the local level runs the risk of neglecting the enormous impact on the environment by state policy and projects, since the large-scale projects resulting in huge environmental impacts are often state-led; for example, the Three Gorges Dam, the South to North Water Diversion, and other mass-planning of dams in China's west. Such state policy and projects usually result in large-scale impacts on both the society and the environment, and are often more difficult for the general public to object to than local/provincial initiatives.

The gap between the environmental policy and environmental performance in China highlights an important characteristic of the government structure, that is the "competing and overlapping bureaucracies" in both the horizontal and vertical administrative systems (Shapiro, 2012). For example, state power may not be able to override local interests when it comes to environmental protection. In other words, due to the complex power dynamics in China it is inappropriate to simplify Chinese governmental system as hierarchical and as absolutely authoritarian. Weller (2006), after exploring environmental governance in China, employs the idea of "heterarchy" which considers the power of

different actors as non-linear from top-down to bottom and that the power relations can be competing and accommodating at the same time. In his work, rather than focusing on a discussion of "dominance" and "resistance", Weller claims that complexities, including direct resistance, accommodation, collaboration, and alienation, are more important when discussing the interactions of actors on environmental issues (Weller, 2006). In Chapter 5, I will show how that this argument corresponds to my observations.

Some suggest there are conflicting ideologies of "nature" between the West and China (Grumbine, 2010; Watts, 2010). When discussing wildlife conservation, Watts argues that western conservationists tend to designate a "wilderness" area for conservation, while Chinese authority rejects such a suggestion (Watts, 2010). Watts also states that the Chinese tend to consider "species" from the utilitarian point of view, and are not interested in conserving species for intrinsic, non-use value. The compatibility of the western conservation philosophy in project implementation in south-west China is also questioned (Grumbine, 2010).

To certain degree, there are differences between western and Chinese philosophies regarding nature. Nevertheless, I suggest that Watts and Grumbine may be biased when they suggest that westerners highly value the intrinsic value of nature while Chinese are only concerned with its use value. It is not always the case. Although the Chinese Communist Party adopts a utilitarian approach towards nature, the traditional Chinese culture appreciates different values including aesthetic value. Representations respecting such values can be seen in ancient Chinese poems and art works.[6]Meanwhile, some western environmentalism, influenced by the economic rationalism, also emphasises on evaluation of the use-value of the nature. Cost-benefit analyses of many environmental policies in western countries are based on such evaluations.

The differences between their concepts of nature and between their ways of protecting the environment are crucial factors influencing the practices of eNGOs in China, due to the

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[6] Whether or not poems or paintings of nature and humans represent harmony is open to debate. Elvin (2004) argues that Chinese practice differently from what they write and draw; therefore, the poems and the paintings showing human in nature do not necessary represent harmony.

strong linkages established between Chinese eNGOs and their international partners, based upon the flows of funding, ideas, human capital and methods. It is within such a context that the topic of the influence of eNGOs on the country's rural landscape becomes significant.

Last, but certainly not least, particular attention is paid to the closely tied interaction between environment and politics, although the Chinese state has been attempted to de-politicise environmental issues. For example, Watts (2010) shows the road and railway constructions connecting to western China were mainly based on the politically strategic plan, but the constructions created tremendous pressure on the natural resources in the west. Dam construction in Yunnan seems to be a natural resource use issue, whereas in fact this issue has encompassed political concern and gave rise to considerable political debate domestically and internationally (Magee, 2006). In Chapter 3, I will explore the theory that environmental issues cannot be viewed separately from political discussion. This will require reviewing political ecology and its application to Chinese environmental research.

In the research concerning environmental governance in China, the rise of civil society has emerged as an important topic. Several studies, including Economy (2005), Morton (2009) and Shapiro (2012), have sought to understand the environmental challenges that China has introduced to the world via its domestic system, from top-down state governance to a bottom-up civil society. For example, Shapiro illustrates the opportunities and limitations of eNGOs in China, and analyses the roles of Government Organised NGOs (GONGOs)[7] and international NGOs (Shapiro, 2012). It is reasonable to argue that NGO sector is important in shaping the current environmental issues in China. In the next section, I will provide an overview of eNGO development in China, and review the relevant research to date. This will provide readers with an understanding of the development of Chinese eNGO research.

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[7] GONGO refers to organization set up by a government in a form of NGO. In comparison, a quasi-NGO (GUANGO) usually refers to an organisation which to has devolved power from government. The GUANGO works more like governmental agencies but is not under the direct administration of the government. This term is more commonly used in the British system, in which the term covers different "arm's-length" government bodies.

2.2 Environmental NGOs in China

In this section, the history and development of eNGOs in China will first be introduced. With the booming NGO presence in China, academic research into Chinese eNGO, in the context of global NGO research has become increasingly popular. Following the introduction of Chinese eNGO development, I will review the study of politics and micro-politics of NGO practice in a global context. Finally, this chapter will provide a literature review of Chinese eNGO studies.

2.2.1 Development of Chinese eNGO

In China, eNGOs were among the first civil social organisations to emerge, and were considered as the most influential group among all types of NGOs (Deng, 2010; Hildebrandt, 2011). "Chinese Society for Environmental Sciences", established in 1978, was the first environmental GONGO in China. The first independent eNGO (as opposed to a GONGO) was Friends of Nature (FON), which was officially formed in 1994 by the late Liang Congjie. The story of Liang and of the establishment of FON can be found in several publications (See: Economy, 2005; Shapiro, 2012). Since then, various types of eNGOs have emerged in China. In 1996, WWF established its first office in Beijing and was the first international eNGO to operate officially in China.

The Chinese NGO sector has developed in an atmosphere in which relationships between NGOs and the Chinese state have posed a dilemma. On one hand, the government needs the help of civil groups to fill in the gap in the delivery of services because government was unable to provide sufficient social services, which have been mainly under control and jurisdiction of the local government, especially after decentralisation since the open and reform era. On the other hand, the government fears that civil organisations could threaten the standing of the CCP. As a result, significant limitations and restrictions have been imposed by the government on NGOs in the legal and political systems. For example, according to the "Regulations on Registration and Administration of Social Organisations", before it can register, an organisation has to acquire permission from a government agency to be its supervisor. In the Chinese NGO circle, people joke about

such agencies, referring to them as "*puopuo*", meaning "mother-in-law". On most occasions, government agencies are reluctant to assume such responsibility.

Research emphasizes that it is important to consider not only whether eNGOs will shape the future of China's environment, but also whether NGOs will play an effective role in the future political change (Economy, 2005). I would argue, however, that it is equally important to ask, *how* are eNGOs shaping China's environment?

The typology of Chinese eNGOs is diverse. Many eNGOs target environmental education in schools or for the general public. Environmental education is deemed less sensitive and therefore is highly tolerated. It even invites the collaboration of the authorities. Some eNGOs conduct environmental campaigns (including policy campaigns) which are generally tolerated even though the campaigns bear the possibility of mass mobilisation. As a result, such eNGOs (such as Greenpeace) are careful not "crossing the line" to be accused of creating public unrest.[8] Some eNGOs implement projects on the ground, either in urban or in rural areas, in order to preserve or improve the environment by physically modifying the landscape. Many eNGOs conduct various projects including more than one type of programme. In sum, eNGOs range across a wide spectrum: some are grassroots-oriented while others are institutionalised. Some are based on activists and others may based on specialists (Ho, 2001).

Currently, the exact number of environmental NGOs (eNGOs) in China is hard to discern: a rough estimation would put the figure at 2000. This blurred estimation of Chinese eNGO numbers is due to the complex process of legal registration (Hildebrandt, 2011) . Although there are more than 6,000 "social organisations" reportedly working on environmental issues according to official statistics (2010), this number does not represent the reality. The majority of registered organisations are Government Organised NGOs (GONGOs), which have been transformed from previous mass organisations and function as part of government agencies. Many scholars opt not to include GONGOs when discussing Chinese eNGOs, claiming they are not "grassroots". Nevertheless, I

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[8] Personal Communication with a campaign leader of Greenpeace, China, 29 December 2011.

agree with Shapiro that GONGOs in fact play important roles in environmental issues in China (Shapiro, 2012). Shapiro suggests that GONGOs sometimes constitute the strong voices within the governmental system. My experience in Yunnan also suggests that GONGOs can be effective in bridging with international NGOs, Chinese governmental agencies, and grassroots groups because they enjoy legal status and more administrative resources compared to other domestic NGOs. For example, GONGOs can distribute resources such as foreign funding among local grassroots organisations more efficiently than other agencies. While critics may claim that GONGO is not the most ideal form of NGO, the role in shaping environmental issues in China should not be overlooked.

Instead of being registered as social organisations, many eNGOs, in the western sense, are often either registered as "non-enterprise civil units" (*minban fei qiye,* 民辦非企業) or not registered at all. The 2009 statistics show that there are approximately 1,000 environmental groups have officially registered as "non-enterprise civil units" (2010). Due to the restrictive regulations, many organisations cannot register officially and hence remain underground. Despite their illegal status, sometimes their operations are tolerated and even supported by the authorities. The difficulty involved in registration of eNGOs attracts other problems, which prohibit the development of Chinese NGOs, such as funding. Without legal status, unregistered organisations cannot apply for or receive funding from donors.

The geographical distribution of eNGOs in China is uneven, with dense concentrations in three major cities: Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Meanwhile, many eNGOs work in west China, where the region is less developed compared to the coastal provinces and there are needs and space for NGOs to operate in. Among them, many are based in Yunnan province, where the government has been more open towards NGOs (Kuhn, 2006), at least until very recently. However, the conditions for eNGOs in west China, as well as in other parts of the country, have become more stringent. Some consider this may be due to the escalating unrest in the region, including the Tibetan area in Sichuan province or in the Uighur communities. Others suspect that it is also to do with the

uprisings in the Middle-East which overthrew the autocratic political bodies.[9] Whatever the reasons, the government is imposing more restrictions on civil organisations, fearing the power emerging from the linkages between NGOs which may threaten China's political stability.

Among all the of China's environmental problems, water resource issues have become the focus of many eNGOs in China due to several factors. First, China is facing an unprecedented water crisis (Ma, 2004) . For example, the Yellow River, which nurtured the Chinese culture for several thousand years, discontinued its periodical flows in 1972 consequently the region has experienced severe period of droughts in the region since late 1990s. The Yangtze River, which has been the source of prosperity in the south-eastern provinces (known as "the home of fish and rice") severely flooded in 1998 causing extreme damage. In recent decades, the geographic distribution of the water issues spread country-wide: continuous droughts in the southwest, oil spills on the east coast, industrial water pollution in central and south China, and the thriving of large-scale dams in the west. Inevitably, the campaigns/ programmes on water resources have involved the public effectively, partly because water is closely tied to people's everyday lives and because water-related issues elicit a response from society more easily compared to many other issues (such as biodiversity).

There are three types of organisational arrangements through which eNGOs can address water issues. First, missions of some eNGOs are strongly tied to water resource protection, such as Green Watershed (GW), Green River, and Guardian of Huai River. They focus on a particular geographic area or a river/lake system. For example, GW has been the most crucial player in the Nu River anti-dam campaign, which stirred up enormous political and environmental debate over large dam construction in China. GW is mainly concerned

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[9] Since the reform era, Yunnan Provincial Government has been quite open to both international and domestic NGOs, up until 2010. In 2011, the government announced at several meetings that it was going to initiate a new regulation affecting international NGOs which would impose more restrictions on their operations. New regulation may come into place nationally later. According to a government official, the Yunnan Provincial Civil Affairs department has suspended the approval of new iNGOs (including foundations and research centres) applications since 2010. It also later suspended the approval of local NGOs.

with the social impact of development and water resource usage in China's West. It was also the first NGO to put participatory water management into practice in China.

The second type includes international eNGOs incorporating water issues in their broader programme portfolios, for example, WWF which prioritises "freshwater" as a key programme and has been working on research and policy advocacy with academics, eNGOs, and different levels of government. In fact, protecting the Yangtze River has been an important task for the WWF since 1999. The Yangtze River programme consists of many projects including drafting wetland conservation regulations, piloting "Integrated River Basin Management" in the upper Yangtze, and evaluation of the impacts of the Three Gorges Dam. In total, the WWF has funded more than RMB405 million (US$61.5 million) in projects in the Yangtze river basin (WWF China, n.d.).

Finally, there have been many cases where several eNGOs have formed an alliance in order to deal with water resource issues. This kind of cooperation has been relatively successful; one example was the famous campaign regarding the incidence of cyanobacterial (blue algae) blooms in Lake Taihu in 2007. The action effected by the eNGOs successfully urged the local government to investigate the causes of pollution and resulted in further response from the central government as well.[10]

2.2.2 Politics and micro-politics of NGOs

Before undertaking a review of Chinese NGO study, an overview of study of NGO practice in general is vital to this research, because this thesis concerns with the complex

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[10] Lake Taihu in Jiangsu Province is the third largest freshwater lake in China. Since 1990s, there have been several outbreaks of algae blooms due to eutrophication. The pollution was particularly serious in 2007 and, eventually resulted in a week-long drinking water crisis in Wuxi City, home to over two million people. The city government attributed the cause to natural disaster and declared that the pollution was not a result of industrial production or any anthropogenic factor. As there are more than 20,000 factories around the lake discharging industrial wastewater, this argument is hardly convincing. Research supports the view that eutrophication was due to industrial infrastructure (Liu, et al., 2011).In response, fifteen national eNGOs signed a petition, pointing out that the crisis was resulted from waste water pollution. ENGOs suggested the government and the industries should control the pollution and disclose relevant information to the public. They also proposed that the civil society take responsibility by monitoring the pollution sources. This proposal was effective. The national government later declared that a master plan of control and management was needed.

power relations between eNGOs and others, as well as within eNGOs. In other words, this research is about the politics of eNGOs.

NGOs have proliferated worldwide in the past few and have been crucial in addressing development and environmental issues at grassroots, intermediary and international levels (Fisher, 1993; Princen, Finger, Clark, & Manno, 1994), for their abilities to fill the gap created by the of governmental failure (Fisher, 1993; Roper, 2012), to enhance capabilities for target groups (Roper, 2012), and form networks tackling international issues (Betsill & Corell, 2008). ENGOs are suggested to played important roles in many fields of environmental governance, such as protected area management (McNeely, 2001). Some argue that eNGOs are particularly beneficial in conservation if participatory approach is adopted (Austin & Eder, 2007; Fisher, 2002a). Because of the nature of resource issues, many NGOs inevitably are involved in both environment and development fields (Atkinson & Scurrah, 2009).

With the growing influence of eNGOs, it is realised that eNGOs are nevertheless not a "magic bullet" for solving environmental problems. Overall, NGOs practices have been examined critically, because they are shaped by the politics and micro-politics of these organizations. Some research are concerned with NGO politics in general, such as Fisher (1997) and Sternberg (2010). Others tend to concentrate on particular countries or cases, such as Lewis (1997),White (1999), and Talāl (2004). While much research is relevant, I first start with an article by William Fisher, whose work (1997) is considered to be valuable and useful because it was one of the first prominent work to signal the importance of studying the political implications of NGO discourses. Then, research at the micro-level, focusing on interactions on the ground, will be reviewed. These studies are in the main based on ethnographic research. The literature reviewed here is not limited to NGO study; rather, much of it concerns development organizations (such as agricultural extension agency). However the concepts are highly relevant when analysing NGO practice. My focus will then turn to the studies of large and/or transnational NGOs and to examining the question in the context of broader scale and layered institutional connections. Overall, research suggests that an NGO is not an apolitical body: its

complex connections with actors could result in impacts on its practice and also on its relationships.

2.2.3 Studying the NGO politics

Fisher's (1997) article is important in as much as it calls for more subtle and fluid analysis of NGO study to examine the political implications of NGO discourses. Although his article was published seventeen years ago, his argument is still highly relevant to my research.

The most critical point of Fisher's (1997) argument was his proposal regarding the power relations resulting from NGOs practices and their impacts at different levels. He suggested that, despite numerous studies of the NGOs' linkages with other actors (for example, other NGOs or state), the study of impacts of NGO practices on power relations among these actors is missing. He argued that it is crucial to look at "how complex sets of relationships have had impacts in specific locales at specific times" (Fisher, 1997, p. 442).

Fisher also pointed out that certain images of NGOs are portrayed as neutral, apolitical and isolated from government and business. This kind of image is inadequate and more studies from different perspectives are needed (Fisher, 1997; Sternberg, 2010). Although many studies worldwide have contributed to making this point, I suggest that eNGOs in China (especially domestic eNGOs) currently still enjoy privilege in academic research, the majority being considered as "neutral" and as isolated from activities other than environmental activities. Ho (2007) also suggests that eNGOs in China tend to be de-politicized. This is partly because in the main, Chinese eNGOs want to be seen as "apolitical", especially by the government. However, the analysis of this research will show that it is impractical to neglect the politics and micro-politics of eNGOs as the politics are not only unavoidable, but also shape every facet of eNGO practice.

Fisher further suggested that most of the research tends to generalise the NGO sector. The generalisation is problematic, partly due to the heterogeneity of NGOs and partly because of the mixed or blurred use of civil society and NGOs in a lot of research (Fisher, 1997). Many authors, for example, Chen, define NGOs and civil society in their works (Chen,

2006);but some use the two terms interchangeably without providing a clear definition. Civil society is a term widely discussed in sociology, and the term has been referred to the realm of social life outside of coercive state and production sphere (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1988). According to the Centre of Civil Society of LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science), "civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values …Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations…" (Centre of Civil Society of LSE, 2004). Usually, NGOs are presumed to be members of civil society, but it is not always the case (Sternberg, 2010). NGOs may also be formed by government or private business; these NGOs often carry special interests rather than serving civil society (ibid). In short, NGOs are a feature of civil society, and are a form of expanding civil society. A borrowed figure (Figure 1) may serve the purpose to illustrate the relationship between civil society and NGOs.
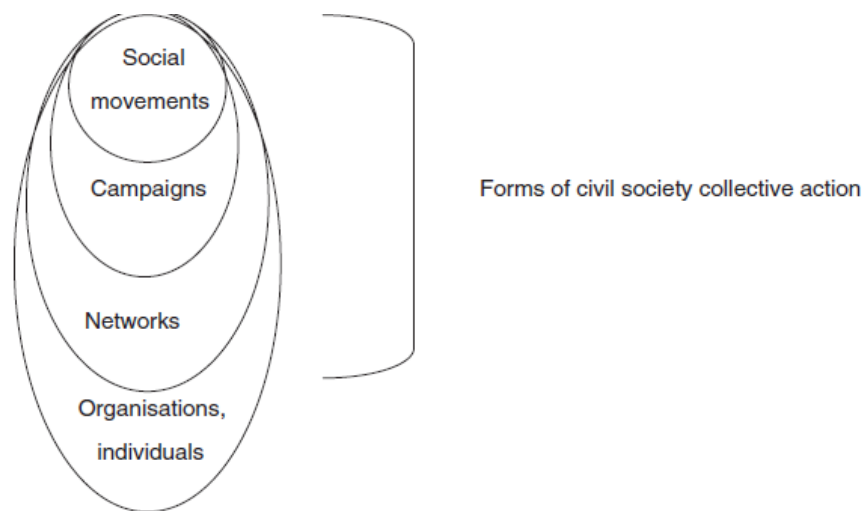
Figure 1: Forms of civil society, borrowed from Wells-Dang (2012, p. 28)

In many parts of the world, NGOs play important roles in linking the local and global by serving as a node. Fisher described such linkages as a fluid web, stressing the need to look at the "flows of funding, knowledge, ideas, and people" (Fisher, 1997, p. 439). He specifically pointed out that NGOs often form different types of relationships with states, relationships that, like states, are too heterogeneous to generalise. For this reason, one can

hardly simplify the story between NGOs and governments as good versus evil (Fisher, 1997). In China, the heterogeneity of the government is particularly obvious in the ways in which different levels and branches of government prioritize various agendas. Fragmentation of the governmental system in China is one reason why eNGOs have been gaining space for survival and development in China's restrictive political atmosphere (Mertha, 2009).

As stated previously, Fisher argued to the effect that power relations resulting from NGO practices and the impacts emerging from such relations are crucial research topics (Fisher, 1997). Following this, Fisher alluded to the prevailing issue of NGO transnational linkage. He argued that stronger international linkages of Southern NGOs could have certain impacts on their relations with the state. He also suggested that the leverage given by the international NGOs to their southern counterparts was not even. For example, some NGOs may be assisted because the international partners want to further their own agendas. As the result,

> These translocal and transnational connections entail risk as well as opportunity, however. On the one hand they may offer Southern NGOs increased leverage and autonomy in their struggle with national governments, while on the other hand, they expose these NGOs to direction or control by other resources. (Fisher, 1997, p. 453)

In short, Fisher called for more attention to be paid to the politics and micro-politics of the NGO sector. Understanding such phenomena requires studying NGOs in their specific contexts, in specific locations and times. In addition, a multi-site research approach should be employed for such fluid research agenda (ibid.). Since my research will involve exploring interactions between eNGOs and other actors on different scales, the adoption of a multi-sited approach is crucial and will be discussed in Chapter 4 on research methodology.

2.2.4 Revealing practice on the ground

After Fisher's influential article, more researchers have conducted ethnographic research into NGOs. To some degree, these latter studies echo Fisher's call for study of NGOs in a specific time and location. I selectively review studies which examine the interactions of

NGOs on the ground, and some literature concerning development works which share similarity with NGO study. The literature suggests that NGOs should not be seen as neutral given that politics and micro-politics are woven into the complex relations that obtain between them and other actors. Most of the literature on NGOs in the past was produced by insiders, and often research into NGOs tended to be instrumental and/or populist rather than critical (Nauta, 2006). Literature also suggests that practices by NGOs or developmental agencies have been the arena for justifying the roles of the likely benefactors (such as developmental workers) rather than for the good of beneficiaries (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006).

Many researchers argue that NGOs significantly contribute to disjuncture, rather than bridging the gap between the policies and their practices, and between project beneficiaries and outside world (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006; Nauta, 2006). It is crucial to understand how the disjuncture is made, a critical issue to explore in this thesis.

It is suggested that the disjuncture is not only the product of external factors, but also result from actions of local NGOs (Nauta, 2006). Nauta calls such actions "strategic translation" as NGOs serve as the translators between communities, governments and NGOs themselves. She identifies research, workshops and reports as strategic tools employed by NGO workers and suggests these tools often incorporate in political intention. Some elements, such as hard science or stereotyped images of local people being "traditional" and "rural", have been used as political instruments in these strategies. Nauta also suggests that even participatory workshops seem to retain hidden agendas. On occasion, NGO workers modify or manipulate the presented results of workshop. Nauta (2006) argues that these political instruments are for justification of the development policy and legitimization of the NGOs' work. Other research (Desai, 2006; Rossi, 2006), though not specifically targeting NGOs, also subscribe to the same argument. For example, Desai's research into the agricultural extension sector in India reveals that development is an arena for development workers to maintain and legitimate their identity (Desai, 2006).

Heaton-Shrestha (2006) contends that the disjunctures are purposely maintained by many field workers, because they face dilemmas when trying to build relationships across the boundaries of organizations and communities. While on the one hand, these field workers have to recognise and transcend any differences in order to show progress and to legitimate their work, on the other; morally they have to respect these differences, which sometimes impede their work on development projects (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006).

If one looks into the interactions between individual actors, "agency" appears to play an important role in making and mediating the disjuncture alluded to above. Although Rossi's (2006) work focuses on aid agencies and development workers rather than on NGOs, her ethnographic work undertaken in Niger is an excellent example of institutional analysis based on examining interactions between individual actors, which challenges the notion of "interface" suggested by Long (2001) . According to Rossi, the concept of "interface" only exists in theory, not in reality; thus, separating project workers and local recipients into different realms is inadequate. She argues that "the roles [of both project staff and local recipients] are more flexible...and are continuously renegotiated depending on the context and intersubjectivity…They are inextricably intertwined with local politics and exchange relations" (Rossi, 2006, p. 46). Moreover, she argues that separating the "world of knowledge", which suggests a boundedness and essentialised individual identity, is misleading since this idea is formulated in narrative rather than in real life. The construction of this narrative is further strengthened by the justifications of project staff, who need to legitimate their roles and positions (ibid.).

In effect, Rossi raises the question: "Are people simply playing the fixed role assigned to them?" I think from Rossi's work, the answer is "no". For example, local recipients sometimes use development discourse to manipulate policy to achieve local agenda. This process of manipulation (involving development workers and local recipients) is mutual, not opposing (Rossi, 2006). Rossi further suggests that "aid recipients and aid workers can hardly be seen as belonging to separate lifeworlds. Rather, they are aware of possibilities…and they unfold strategies commensurate to their status and positioning" (Rossi, 2006, p.41). In some cases, development workers maintain their positions consistent with development narratives and tend to fit local people into the

underdevelopment discourse. Other development workers acknowledge this problem. Thus, development workers do not always oppose a certain system of knowledge or worldview. It is more dynamic than any "interface" that can be applied. In sum, Rossi (2006) argues that the role of the development broker is not fixed but lies along a continuing spectrum. In the case of agriculture extension in India, Desai (2006) suggests that the identities of the extension workers are not only formed passively by assigned roles but also actively constructed by themselves (normally as doctors or social workers).

Actor-oriented research can further advance the understanding of how knowledge and the use of knowledge play out in the process of NGOs's making of power relations. It is suggested that "[A]ctors produce knowledge, and knowledge makes actors" (Desai, 2006, p. 173). She argues that knowledge is "part of power field that is continually transformed and redefined by ongoing discourses and hegemonies" (Desai, 2006, p. 175). Desai's work emphasises the functions and social effects of knowledge in certain contexts. More specifically, she analyses how scientific knowledge is processed and manipulated in the hands of scientists and agricultural extension experts within the development organisations in India (Desai, 2006). She further argues that the process of knowledge is shaped by local context. For example, in the context of agriculture extension, the dichotomy of scientific and practical knowledge has to be created and maintained, so that agricultural experts can legitimate their positions which make them "experts" (ibid.). In short, scientific knowledge is a process between different agents, a process shaped by context.

This process occurs between the organisations and within an organisation as well. The scientists (real experts) transfer knowledge to the field workers, and the latter transfer the knowledge to the local community. This process defines each entity's identity and creates hierarchies, both outside and within an organization (Desai, 2006).Therefore, it is not only crucial to addresses the heterogeneity between different NGOs, but also further explores the heterogeneity "within" an NGO, consequently revealing the micro-politics of the institution (Fisher, 1997; Heaton-Shrestha, 2006). For example, by describing the differences in educational levels, caste, lifestyles, and values between those at management level and field workers, Heaton-Shrestha demonstrates that the ideology of

"maintaining the differences" lies within the NGO itself as well as in its practice (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006).

Ethnographic research on development workers can reveal that the professional lives of development workers are highly related to their social lives. For instance, the success of agriculture extension experts depends on the trust which requires time, successful demonstration and good relationships with the involved communities (Desai, 2006). Researchers' attention paid to the social lives of development workers implies that looking at the social process (such as social relations) of individuals in an institution is important for studying NGO practice. As a result, I consider that an appropriate research method to employ would be participant observation; this method will be detailed in Chapter 4.

Generally speaking, the studies reviewed in this section share some similarities. First, while all of the researchers employ an actor-oriented approach to analysing NGO practice, they suggest that such an approach is insufficient for addressing all of the issues. Second, the studies suggest that development practice is an arena for legitimating the identities of development workers, while some suggest that it is also a place for local recipients to construct their roles according to certain contexts. Finally, it is suggested that a NGO is not an apolitical body; the tools employed by NGOs such as scientific knowledge, workshops, and documents cannot be termed neutral.

2.2.5 Politics of large/ transnational eNGOs

Studies of a broader scope concerning large or transnational eNGOs (Chapin, 2004; Hamilton & Macintosh, 2004) suggest that they are involved in complex interactions with other actors such as state, donors and local communities. Moreover, NGOs' upward connections with governments or donors could have impacts on their relations downward with local communities. Research suggests that independence, thought to be an important element of NGO practice, is of serious concern where funding issues are involved (Chapin, 2004; Hamilton & Macintosh, 2004).

Hamilton and Macintosh's report shows the close relationship between an eNGO and the nation state, and the implications of such relationships (Hamilton & Macintosh, 2004).This article raises the question of how much integrity an eNGO can maintain when it receives substantial financial support from a government. Analysis of documents and statistical data reveals WWF Australia was very close to the Howard Liberal government. It backed up the government policy, and in return, the government increased funding for WWF, at the same time decreasing funding for other eNGOs. The authors suggest that such a close relationship allows the government to use public resources and invest the trust in NGOs for political purposes. Furthermore, this type of relationship not only endangers certain organisations, but also the broader environmental community. This phenomenon is not unique to WWF Australia; it also applied in other NGOs dealing with the Labor government (ibid.) .Therefore, the importance is not about any particular NGO being too close to a particular government. Instead, this article gives rise to several fundamental questions. Is complete independence possible for an NGO? What is the problem with NGOs gaining (or trading) power by favouring alliances (whether with government or business)? Fundamentally, what is the ubiquity and uniqueness of NGOs comparing to other type of institutions?

NGO politics is not only about the power relations between NGO and the government, but also about power relations among other relevant actors. Chapin (2004), with focuses on major international conservation NGOs, challenges the false assumption that eNGOs being neutral or simply doing good. His article criticises several international conservation NGOs for no longer working with indigenous, traditional and local people, but simply working with them for the name, and not with any genuine motive. Chapin suggests that this trend is due to a shift in the priorities and agendas of these eNGOs. He further argues that the challenges for those who work with local people become more difficult when the relationships between NGOs and local communities becomes asymmetrical due to the fact that money and power fall only on one side, that of the big NGOs (ibid.).

Chapin argues that the increasing dependency on funding from bilateral or multilateral agencies (such as USAID, World Bank, GEF) is one reason why large NGOs are no

longer working with local people, because these funding agencies are usually the targets of indigenous opposition. Moreover, as these NGOs become richer and more powerful, the intense competition between them grows, and eventually prevents their cooperation. Receiving more funding from these agencies also gives these big NGOs more power: more money enables them to re-grant to smaller or local NGOs (Chapin, 2004).

I suggest that the importance of Chapin's research lies in its implications as well as its research method. In terms of implications, this study not only demonstrates that NGOs have complex relationships with states, donors and local communities, but also suggests that the NGOs' power relations with states and donors have impacts on local communities and on the ways conservation projects are implemented (Chapin, 2004).

In terms of research methods, Chapin, as an anthropologist, employs participant observation in addition to analysing documents and statistic data. Participant observation in various meetings and conferences, employed by Chapin, resonates with Fisher's suggestion of a multi-site research approach. This is crucial to understanding the interactions between NGOs and other actors, and the implications of such interactions.

Over the past decade, researchers worldwide have gradually paid more attention to the political implications of NGOs politics. Many researchers have adopted the ethnographic research approach to NGOs advocated by Fisher (1997), and several studies have revealed that such an approach is crucial to understanding NGOs practices and their implications in-depth. Given that NGOs constitute a relatively new concept and phenomenon in China, research into NGOs and their political implications has somehow attracted different foci and approaches in China. In the next section, I will explore these differences by reviewing studies of environmental NGOs in China.

2.2.6 Burgeoning field: Chinese NGO study

Studies of NGOs in China have burgeoned in recent years. Among the various types of NGOs, the environmental organisations have received significant attention from academic research. This is because eNGOs are considered to be the most influential group among Chinese NGOs (Deng, 2010). Therefore, even though variations distinguish the different

types of NGOs, it is reasonable to focus on eNGOs when discussing the characteristics of the Chinese NGO sector. In fact, many NGO researchers intentionally choose eNGOs as their study subject due to this representativeness (Chen, 2006).

Several topics are crucial to Chinese eNGO study. First, NGO-state relations have always been an important issue, especially due to restrictive Chinese political system [See: Cooper (2006), Hildebrandt (2013) and (Kuhn, 2006)]. Chinese eNGOs' international connections underpin another important topic, which involves flows of funding, ideas, and agenda, and involves actors across scales. Relevant work includes Chen (2006, 2010), Litzinger (2006) and Morton (2005). While some studies may not explicitly focus on the patterns of eNGOs, such as Hathaway (2007) and Litzinger (2004), they still provide valuable analyses of the complex dynamics that operate between nation state, transnational NGOs and local communities

For this research, the central questions are: what are the inter-relationships between international partners, Chinese eNGOs, different levels of government and local communities? And, how do such relations shape the changes in the rural landscape? I intend to find some of the answers and tools for analysis in the existing literature. First, how do researchers frame Chinese eNGO-state relations? Second, how do eNGOs' international linkages result in various influences? More specifically, what are the influences resulting from the various global environmental discourses, resources and chances introduced into China by the international partners?

2.2.6.1 NGO-government relations

NGO-government relations have been an important research topic worldwide. In the context of China's seemingly authoritarian political control, this topic has drawn extraordinary attention from an increasing number of scholars. Due to the complexity in the Chinese administrative system, I do not intend to confine NGO-government relations within the NGO-state arena. Instead, the scholarly works I review here actually encompass NGO relationships with the various levels of government.

As previously suggested, the overall attitude of the Chinese government towards NGOs is that, on the one hand, the state is keen to establish links with NGOs, while keeping cautious about these organisations (Economy, 2005; Ho, 2001; Kuhn, 2006). In particular, the Chinese government is cautious about horizontal linkages among NGOs (Kuhn, 2006).

Many scholars suggest that improvements in the legal framework and political systems are needed for NGO development in China (Kuhn, 2006; Schwartz, 2004). Having examined the experiences of NGOs operating in Yunnan province, Kuhn further stresses that the current conditions are in favour of large NGOs rather than small or advocacy-oriented grassroots groups (Kuhn, 2006). Less-favoured groups are sometimes either interfered with politically or gain little support. Despite the constraints in the legal and political systems, Kuhn argues there is positive influence of NGO-government cooperation and that both the government and the NGO sector are satisfied with the cooperation (Kuhn, 2006).

Rather than focusing merely on the "cooperation" between eNGOs and the government, Cooper provides a more realistic view of NGO-state relations in China. Taking NGOs in south-west China as the case study, Cooper claims that NGO-state relations are complex, dynamic, and encompass elements of "[c]ompliance and resistance; cooperation and oppositions" , which are defined by "dependency and distance" (Cooper, 2006, p. 135). The argument partly derives from the perspectives of both local officials and NGOs vis-à-vis NGO-state relations (Cooper, 2006). From the standpoint of eNGOs, they hold mixed attitudes regarding cooperation and resistance toward the state. It is the same case for local officials.

Copper suggests that local officials are interested in working with eNGOs mainly for their financial resources and social tools, but only with strong state involvement (Cooper, 2006). Since very often the funding sources of Chinese eNGOs are from international support, it is crucial to examine how international funding has shaped NGO-state relations. ENGOs' international linkages are thus crucial for any discussion of NGO-state relationships. In other words, the scope of analysis should include actors across scales

that influence eNGO practices. As one will see from the following section, the relations between international partners, Chinese eNGOs and the state are woven by more than just funding, as we will see in other literature.

2.2.6.2 International linkages of eNGOs in China

In recent years, a great deal of research has been conducted in order to understand the impacts of Chinese eNGOs' international linkages. A common argument is the literature is that the linkages between international NGOs (iNGOs) and their Chinese counterparts have been beneficial to Chinese NGOs and civil society as a whole, in terms of facilitating NGO work and further promoting a more democratic process for Chinese society (Chen, 2006, 2010; Kuhn, 2006; Morton, 2005). Many authors selectively choose eNGOs for their case studies. For example, in her study based on Tibetan antelope protection, Morton emphasises that local eNGOs utilised the power of international alliance to achieve their goals (Morton, 2005). She describes how local NGOs have established an extensive transnational network, such as collaborating with Flora and Fauna International to develop ways of engaging pastoralists in dialogue with local government officials. I agree that international linkages have been facilitating eNGO development within certain contexts. Nevertheless, a critical analysis of the influence of these international linkages is very much needed, because often the influence is more than just "benefits". I suggest that influences stem from the differences between the concepts, agendas or discourses of international linkages and that the influences are having an effect upon Chinese eNGOs and their practices through their interactions.

International partners create influence by bringing different concepts, agendas or discourses. Chen recognises the many contributions that iNGOs have made to domestic civil society, because iNGOs have brought "new and advanced concepts" (Chen, 2010, p. 512), such as global rhetoric on sustainable development. However, I suggest that this elaboration needs further deliberation. In most cases, new and advanced concepts bring positive influences, but not in all cases. Sometimes new and advanced concepts may have in adverse impacts. For example, the prevailing concept of "protecting the wilderness" in the 1960s and 1970s was later considered problematic which caused huge impacts on

local communities excluded from the protected areas. Therefore one cannot be certain that the new global rhetoric introduced into China, such as "sustainable development", will not have any adverse impacts.

In addition to the different interpretation and use of concepts, agendas and discourse by Chinese NGOs and their international partners, the vocabulary itself makes it difficult to render international discourse on the environment and development into Chinese. There is no direct and precise translation of many western-oriented words, such as "participation" and "empowerment", from English into Chinese. As I will discuss in the case studies, the concept of "community" is particularly problematic. Even the terms "watershed" is one which has many different Chinese translations, each a recent construction devised to translate international concepts into Chinese and each with very different applications and meanings.

Regarding the effect of international discourse, Chen suggests that international discourse may be helpful for domestic compliance. He states that "If the domestic discourse is framed by the norms of the international environmental regimes, it should be easier for compliance-promoting civil society actors to strengthen their positions vis-à-vis the state and achieve broad support for policy change" (Chen, 2010, p. 513).

I suggest this argument is problematic. First, although his assumption is reasonable, there is no substantial proof provided to show that it is actually easier for the Chinese eNGOs to strengthen their roles and positions. Therefore, it is difficult to take his statement without question. Second, sometimes there is hidden danger in following an international environmental regime. For example, nowadays, many development projects tend to be linked with climate change. As long as the projects can be framed as helpful for alleviating climate change, they may be justified. One example is the thriving hydropower development in China's west partly supported by the rhetoric that "hydro power reduces carbon emission" and the carbon market created by Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects. Although the impacts of hydropower and the questionable legitimacy of CDM have raised considerable debates generated internationally, they are accepted in

China by the mainstream (government, media and public) despite lack of sufficient reflection and discussion.

The interactions between Chinese eNGOs and their international partners may have been revealed, however, the influences resulting from these interactions need further exploration. Chen suggests that some conflicts between iNGOs and domestic NGOs occur due to different strategies deployed by iNGOs, whereas others result from different agendas and priorities of iNGOs and their Chinese counterparts (Chen, 2010). For example, the former director of TNC called some activists "radical anti-dam" and difficult to cooperate with (Chen, 2010, p. 516). These "anti-dam" activists she referred to were mainly leaders of domestic eNGOs. Thus, such framing by the director was a strategy used by TNC to distance itself from other grassroots and more rights-based groups.

Regarding different agendas, Chen observes that "A few Chinese activists argue that some INGOs have tried to impose a global agenda on local groups as a precondition for aid, ignoring China's own situation and their own priorities" (Chen, 2010, p. 518). For example, while international partners consider climate change a priority issue, many Chinese NGOs regard other issues such as industrial pollution or large-dam construction as more relevant to China and as more urgent to address (Chen, 2010; S.-h. Wang, 2009). However, Chen regards the overall relationship between the Chinese eNGOs and their international partners as being in harmony, by arguing that "tension between the global and national/local… has been occasional and situational, not persistent and across the board" (Chen, 2010, p. 518).

Notwithstanding, I think that, in respect of Chen's contribution, the relationship between the international partners and domestic eNGOs is far more complex. The relations between the two cannot be dichotomised as harmony or tension, as the position and the leverage of the two sides are not equal. Moreover, such a simple dichotomy overlooks the more subtle interactions, which I find particularly worth exploring. A simple example may illustrate such interactions. During a casual conversation, a well-known Chinese eNGO leader, whose organisation receives considerable funding from the World Bank, expressed his strong dissatisfaction with and complaints about the Bank's social

assessment policy and its practice regarding development projects. Even though the World Bank is not an NGO, this is just an example of the complexity of the relations that obtain exist between Chinese eNGOs and their international support. In effect, the influences resulting from the complex and subtle interactions, and the changes shaped by said influences are core issues of concern to my research.

The unique context in which Chinese eNGOs operate is considered an important feature by Morton (2005), who suggests that foreign governments should understand the different context in China in order to facilitate the political reform process. She maintains that:

> "If misdirected, or overly assertive, international support could well prove to be more of an obstacle than a driving force… Effective international support of civil society development cannot be achieved without a more sophisticated understanding of the complex environment within which Chinese NGOs operate". (Morton, 2005, p529)

Although Morton's work mainly focuses on foreign policy recommendations, I suggest the above quote implies two important messages for eNGO study in China. First, because international support sometimes ignores the Chinese context, it may have an adverse impact. This applies not only to political reform, but could also extend to environmental policy/projects as well. Second, international support may sometimes become an obstacle to Chinese NGOs. Indeed, some NGOs in China have been forced to shut down or are interfered with by the government because their foreign donors have strong political agendas or collide with a particular government agency. I will further elaborate this point when discussing the foreign funding dependency of Chinese eNGOs.

2.2.6.3 Dependency on foreign funds and its implications

As Chen (2010) noted, one distinct feature of Chinese eNGOs is their heavy reliance on foreign funding. According to Chen, many activist NGOs receive considerable amounts of funding for organizational budgets or specific projects from international partners, such as Ford Foundation, Misereor, Oxfam, and the Energy Foundation. I suggest that dependence on foreign funding results from two factors: first, China has been an aid-recipient country until recent years when its economic development has gradually

caught up with that of the industrialised countries. Even today when China is the second largest economy in the world, regional development remains highly uneven domestically. This situation has created a lot of opportunities for foreign donors to operate. Secondly, the Chinese regulations forbid donations from domestic enterprises for NGOs. If a private donation is made, it has to be arranged either through a foundation or as a personal bequest. The regulation therefore constrains NGOs from receiving domestic funding.

Due to the considerable portion of international funding, it is crucial to look at the implications of international support. One implication is that Chinese eNGOs' agendas may be shaped by their international linkages. For example, Cooper (2006) mentions that some Chinese NGOs are forced to change their will and mission in order to fit donor expectations, and calls for more study of both the positive and negative effects of environmental and development projects initiated by multinational institutions (such as the World Bank, the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank). Indeed, even within the NGO field, a lot of NGO practitioners are becoming aware of the funding issues and starting to reflect on the implications.[11]

The important consequence of the heavy reliance on foreign funding of Chinese eNGOs is the possibility of the reinforcement of their international partners' agenda. The agendas of local eNGOs with substantial international links/ funding could be significantly affected by the international development discourse. For example, Kuhn (2006) notes that CBIK (Centre of Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge), a Yunnan-based eNGO which receives about 95% of its funding from international donors (Chen, 2010), re-orientated from its original focus of community-based natural resource management, partly because the shifting priorities of the MDGs (UN's Millennium Development Goals). The re-orientation may have resulted from its high percentage of foreign funding and the response in order to fit the donor's appetite.

Certainly, it is not only Chinese NGOs that are affected by their donors. All NGOs in all countries can be influenced by their donors' agendas. Nevertheless, it is a particular issue

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[11] Personal communications with several Chinese NGO leaders, July 2009

in China because of the conflicts when international donors move into China's unique political system, which involves restrictive government and competing bureaucracies. Discussing an international conservation fund focusing on southwest China, (Litzinger, 2006) suggests that even though the fund was attempting to address common conservation issues using a common approach by supporting civil society groups across national boundaries it had to compromise in China by giving control to the Chinese national government. On the other hand, the Chinese government has to invite international "partners" to assist its environmental crisis and such collaboration creates fears in the state.

Funding issues not only impact on the relations between Chinese eNGOs and their international counterparts, but they also have some implications for eNGOs relationships with other institutional actors.

International funding may impact on the relations between large domestic eNGOs (which usually have more access to international linkage) and small eNGOs (that struggle to compete for limited resources and may rely on larger NGOs). In China, it is common that large eNGOs receive international funds and then allocate them to smaller eNGOs that are not eligible for nor capable of applying for international grants. The restriction that inhibits the legal registration process further exacerbates this situation. Thus, this chain-like connection not only creates spaces for Chinese eNGOs to associate with each other in various ways, but also complicates the NGO politics in China.

As Cooper observes, local officials are attracted to work with eNGOs for their financial resources (Cooper, 2006). I suggest that the variations in the funding for NGOs and the missions of the foreign funding sources may also affect certain influences on the relations between domestic eNGOs and the government. In this way, the net of relationships of Chinese government, eNGOs and the international linkages becomes further complicated and deserves a more sophisticated analysis. For example, an NGO in Guizhou province

was forced to close down because it received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy of USA which is considered unacceptable by the Chinese government.[12]

2.2.6.4 An holistic picture including local communities

Most of the NGO studies in China use the concept of civil society to include NGOs and local communities, as one entity. However, as one can see from the definition given previously, NGOs are merely one part of civil society. Therefore, it is more practical to separate NGOs and local communities as different categories of institutional actors. In some anthropological studies in China, such as works of Hathaway (2007, 2010) and Litzinger (2004), the complex issues between the nation state, eNGOs, foreign partners and local communities are presented.

Litzinger's paper, an exquisite work on political ecology, explores the role of transnational environmental groups and touches upon the issue of the relationship between state, eNGOs and the local communities (Litzinger, 2004). By using ethnographic research, Litzinger thus generated a different perspective on the role of eNGOs. By showing how an *international* eNGO (TNC) is involved in the production of *local* knowledge (ecologically & culturally), his work questions how the state, the eNGO, and local people play their roles in the processes of knowledge production (ibid.).

Rather than a long period research, Litzinger's study used a workshop arranged by TNC as the research focus. The workshop, and the campaign that resulted from the workshop, show that TNC has attracted significant influence of outsiders (experts, international attention, the central government), and acted as a bridge between the minorities and outside resources. Litzinger first analysed how and in what ways TNC negotiated with the government, and how this negotiation process provoked some environmentalists and had implications for the cultural struggle of the local community. He further suggests that, the relationship between state and civil society is more complex than hierarchic, and transnational organizations may be greatly involved in the complex connections. He argues that:

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[12] Personal communication with an NGO leader, 10th October 2011

It is perhaps time to jettison the singular and spatially hierarchical relationship …between state and society… Instead, there is a need to explore the new discourses and practices… as the Chinese state moves both to invite and to collaborate with a range of transnational actors, from multilateral institutions to non-governmental organizations. (Litzinger, 2004, p. 504)

Similarly, by using two international eNGOs, TNC and WWF, as examples, Hathaway (2007, 2010) demonstrates how eNGOs in China and their operations are influenced by the settings of international conservation discourse as well as national and local political contexts. He emphasises the ever-changing dynamics between international eNGOs, local community and state, and further shows how eNGO projects change the ways in which humans interact with their respective environments (Hathaway, 2007). What renders Hathaway's works valuable and differentiated compared to others (such as Litzinger) is the crucial argument depicting Chinese agents as active in shaping international discourse and movements. Having examined the changes in environmentalism in China, Hathaway suggests that: "Chinese agents did not merely respond to international actions, but engaged with and transformed international circulations"[13] (Hathaway, 2010, p. 431). He further argues that iNGOs' project implementation in China is influenced by the social relations (especially of Chinese experts) rather than purely determined by international conservation/development discourse, even though international discourse indeed plays an important role in leading the direction.

2.3 Conclusion

China is facing unprecedented environmental challenges which require significant will to address and action to implement solutions. The responses from the state and from society, in the form of environmental governance, have drawn considerable attention from both academic and non-academic communities alike. In this chapter, I have reviewed the current trends and patterns in environmental governance in China in order to provide an understanding of the context within which eNGOs operate within.

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[13] By using circulations, Hathaway refers to the general description of transitional flows of elements such as ideas, capitals and many others in the fields of economy, and culture.

Along with the trend of environmental governance and eNGO development in China, this chapter also provides a review of studies concerning politics and micro-politics of NGOs. The studies reviewed suggest that the complex NGO relationships would result in influence on practices and power relations among institutional actors. In addition, power relations within an NGO itself as revealed by micro-politics are essential for exploration. Therefore, when researching Chinese eNGOs, it is critical to analyse the power relations resulting from eNGO practices, as well as the potential influence of eNGOs relationships, especially on the landscape.

As the literature presents, Chinese environmental NGOs, international NGOs and agencies, state government and local communities form a complex and dynamic web, woven by flows of knowledge, concepts, and funding. In order to investigate the interactions within the web, and the influences resulting from the interactions, a theoretical framework is needed. To this end, several core concepts will be applied or critiqued in this research, in order to understand what the influences are, and how they are created. I plan to discuss the theoretical framework and core concepts in the next chapter to facilitate an understanding of eNGO influences on the rural landscape in China.

Chapter 3

The political ecology of eNGOs in China

In this chapter, a review on political ecology as the core conceptual framework adopted throughout this thesis will be provided in Section 3.1. Based on the political ecology approach, I employ two theoretical concepts to situate the analysis of eNGO practice, scale and the debate about structure and agency, which will be discussed following the review of political ecology.

Under the framework of political ecology, certain concepts dominating Chinese eNGO discourses including community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), participation and empowerment are reviewed in Section 3.2.These concepts are particularly crucial for this thesis because eNGOs operating in China often adopt these international agendas and practice them in their local projects.

3.1 Political Ecology

Political ecology, which suggests that "environmental change and ecological condition are the products of political process" (Robbins, 2004, p. 11), considers the broader political context within which an environmental issue lies. This approach recognises that changes in the environment and in human-nature relationships are not neutral but socially and politically constructed. The term "political" here encompasses a broader meaning other than formal politics by designating "the practices and process through which power, in its multiple forms, is wielded and negotiated" (Paulson, Gezon, & Watts, 2005, p. 28). I thus considered it suitable to use this framework to analyse the interactions between actors (eNGOs, governments, donors and local communities), within which power,

knowledge and institutions are intertwined, and the consequent influence on the landscape of these interactions.

I consider that political ecology is needed but currently under-utilised in addressing China's environmental and developmental issues. An important feature of political ecology concerns the uneven distribution of the costs and benefits attributed to the environment and development which have been experienced by Chinese society. Here I use alternative energy as an example. China has been depicted as a greening country due to its enthusiastic development of renewable energy (Friedman, 2006; Martinot & Li, 2007); at the same time, local communities endure negative environmental impacts in areas where the factories are located (Liu, n.d.; D. Yu, 2011). As emphasised in Chapter 1, resource issues resulting from uneven development on various scales have proved to be a prevailing problem in contemporary China. While development takes various forms in China, overall development results in uneven effects in many ways (Webber, 2012). For example, it is suggested that the material benefits, such as income generation and service provision, are gained based on the sacrifice of culture and decision-making mechanisms (ibid).

It is therefore important to adopt political ecology to problematise environmental issues. Political ecology is a broadly defined approach and has been adopted by various disciplines including geography, anthropology, and development studies. With the development of political ecology research into different directions over the decades, it is quite impossible to include a comprehensive review of the literature due to the abundant collection. In this chapter, I will focus on several key concepts relevant to my analysis in this thesis. While these concepts are always within the concern of political ecology, the works I am about to review are not exclusively limited to political ecology.

Although the term "political ecology" was used in research undertaken in the 1970s, the concept was not popular until the 1980s (Robbins, 2004) with works combining ecology and political economy, such as Blaikie (1985) and later Bryant and Bailey (1997). Instead of adopting the neo-Malthusian perspective of attributing the causes of environmental problems to population growth, these works situated natural resource issues in the wider

socio-political system when analysing the causes. Earlier works of political ecology were strongly influenced by Marxism, focusing on the material change in the environment, conflicts between the different classes over resources, and citing degradation resulting from the over-exploitation of natural resources as the inevitable outcome of capitalism.

Since then, political ecology, as a conceptual tool, has developed in many directions. In the 1990s, post-structuralism shaped the development of various disciplines, such as development studies. The post-structuralist approach provided a different understanding of dialectic relations between humans and nature. It rejected the premise nature simply "is", instead arguing that nature is constructed by history, economics, technology and other forms of interactions between nature and culture (Escobar, 1996). As a result, concern regarding the impact of certain discourses on development and environment became important. Research sought to understand how the environment (Cronon, 1995; Escobar, 1996, 1998), environmental problems (Fairhead & Leach, 1995; Stott, 1999) and associated knowledge/practices (Goldman, 2001) were discursively constructed. Studies also discussed how various environmental discourses resulted in impacts (Adger, Benjaminsen, Brown, & Svarstad, 2001; Li, 1996; Peet & Watts, 2004b).

Additionally, "critical political ecology" based on the concept of "critical realism" , was developed to advance political ecology research (Forsyth, 2001; Neumann, 2005). Critical political ecology neither denies the importance of environmental discourses, nor the material facts of the changes in the biophysical environment emphasised in the earlier works of political ecology researchers. Rather, this approach "incorporates the construction of biophysical science into the political analysis of environment" (Forsyth, 2001, p. 147). Critical political ecology is crucial for this study because it examines the political framing of the changes in biophysical environment by different social actors. In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, I will discuss how the complex interactions between the institutional actors (government, eNGOs and local communities) clash due to the differences in the their framing of the changing environment.

Taken together, the different emphases of the various approaches along the development of political ecology are all relevant to my research.

3.1.1 Contextualisation across scales

A central assumption of this thesis is that eNGO practices influence rural landscapes as the result of power relations exercised between different institutional actors across scales. Hence, a multi-scalar analysis is necessary.

Political ecology research has always addressed "scale" in its analyses. While concern with scale is not unique to political ecology, the complex politics of environment are often revealed when an environmental issue is unfolded from various scales. Moreover, it is suggested that scale renders environmental change political, because "scale is central to the production and representation of spatio-temporal differences" (Rangan & Kull, 2009, p. 35) . For this reason, addressing scale becomes essential in political ecology. Adopting "chain of explanation" as a form of methodology, earlier research in political ecology situated local environmental change in a multi-layered analysis (including household, local, national and international levels) (Blaikie, 1985; Blaikie, 2006). The term "regional political ecology" was devised as an approach tracing environmental problems along spatial and temporal scales (Blaikie, 2006). A multi-scalar analysis of environmental problem is not only a methodological imperative because it enables the research to unpack complexity. It also challenges the conventional political practice of locating and rectifying problems merely at the local level, a practice that often results in unfair responsibilities on local communities (Gezon & Paulson, 2005).

Since the framework of regional political ecology has developed, two inter-related problems regarding scale have been discussed. First, regional political ecology was criticised as treating "scale" as a fixed category, rather than being socially produced (Rangan & Kull, 2009; Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003). Alternatively, several studies show how scale is constructed and/or imagined. For example, research suggests how "local" administrative units, an arbitrary but often taken-for-granted scale, were created through the long-time territorilization effort by the nation state (Peluso, 2005).

Second, regional political ecology implies an hierarchical socio-economic structure (Rangan & Kull, 2009), as it assumes that local degradation results from the unidirectional impact of factors beyond the local. Recent research has expanded the

concept of scale, suggesting that scale is an analytical tool used for examining power relations in local-global connections, within which neither the local nor the global is prior to the other (Gezon & Paulson, 2005). Therefore, it may prove more suitable to observe the connections across scales as dynamic flows rather than as unidirectional influences.

The concept of scale serves both as an analytical tool and as a lens through which to explore the impacts resulting from power relations. In this research, scale is not just a tool for pre-determined categorization. More importantly, interaction appertaining to environmental change, whether in the form of conflict or negotiation, compromise or rejection often emerges due to differences of scale.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, understanding the international linkages and NGO-government relationships serves to contextualise this study. The political power relations in China, a crucial context for eNGO practice, should not be taken as hierarchical without employing critical examination. Instead, the concept of "heterarchy" elaborated by Weller (2006) provides a better explanation for understanding the structure of different actors' roles in environmental governance in China. Weller suggests that power pertinent to Chinese environmental governance is non-linear and not top-down, and the power relations among the various actors can be both competing and accommodating at the same time. In addition, Lieberthal (1992) argues that the authority of the Chinese political system is fragmented and disjointed, because China's bureaucratic system involves functional division of authority among various bureaucracies and agreement is often needed to be achieved between them. In such situations, no single authority has power to over-ride the others. The decentralisation since the 1980s has contributed to this phenomenon. Lieberthal describes this form of governance as "fragmented authoritarianism".

Relating this concept to environmental governance, Mertha (2009) argues that despite China being an authoritarian state, the diverse political concerns actually create room for various policy entrepreneurs (including eNGOs) to frame issues and gain public support. However, many constraints still exist for Chinese eNGOs in the spheres of regulations and policy (Kuhn, 2006; Schwartz, 2004).Therefore, there are opportunities as well as

constraints for Chinese eNGOs to advance their influence. By situating eNGO practice in a multi-scalar analysis, this thesis will demonstrate that the complex inter-relationships that obtain between actors across scales are representative of the key factors shaping the opportunities and constraints of eNGOs in China.

Moreover, while this research concerns the flow of concepts, knowledge and funding through the operations of eNGO projects, it is crucial to perceive these flows as connections rather than as unidirectional. With its focus on interaction at the local scale, this thesis will provide an understanding of both the process through which local practices are shaped by external influences, and through which global influences (e.g. agenda, discourse) are embedded in the local (interaction).

3.1.2 Discourse and alternative

Several studies that have emphasised the marginality of poor peasants due to state and market programmes, conclude that peasants who are impoverished by the political-economic structure are forced to exploit natural resources unsustainably (see: Blaikie, 1985; Bryant & Bailey, 1997). In other words, the structure imposed on small farmers is suggested to determine the fate of the environment.

As previously suggested, uneven development generated by prioritising of the needs of certain social groups has become a prevailing issue in China. Regarding the context of this research, local resource problems (including forestry, fisheries, agriculture and water usage) result from the marginalisation of the rural communities by limiting and diverting of natural resources to supply urban development. However, as marginality is often constructed by discourse, either by the powerful or by those who are members of "non-marginalised groups" (Cullen & Pretes, 2000), the term "marginality" should be examined critically, not only be taken as a fact resulting from the structure. In addition, the emphasis on marginalisation risks ignoring the possibility that the seemly marginalised groups may refuse to be included in certain processes. For example, small farmers may be unwilling to take up new technologies due to personal will or to rational choice. This is relevant to the role of agency in shaping environmental practice, a concept I will further review in the next section of this chapter.

Research using marginalisation to conceptualise environmental problems often regards poverty as the cause of environmental degradation. While this view gained currency in the 1980s, it has been questioned widely (Fisher, et al., 2008). Following the post-structuralist approach, it is crucial to understand the implication of mainstreaming this narrative. The view of poverty as the cause of environmental degradation has significantly influenced environmental governance globally (Escobar, 1996), as well as in China (Ho, 2006). In China, considering poverty as the cause of environmental problems is a dominant view shared by the government and society generally.

Understanding the impact of discourses is particularly important, because discourse is perceived as having the potential to give rise to significant social and political consequences (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994). In terms of environmental discourse, "(d)iscursive constructions of environmental degradation justify and rationalize all manner of interventions into people's daily lives in the name of 'development' or 'environmental conservation'"(Neumann, 2005, p. 102). One of the pioneering political ecology research works shifting to focus on discourse is Escobar's analysis of biodiversity. From the perspective of social movements, he demonstrates how nature is constructed and how various actors (including eNGOs) become involved in the process of discursive construction (Escobar, 1996, 1998). Escobar argues that "biodiversity ... anchors a discourse that articulates a new relation between nature and society in global contexts of science, cultures, and economies... Technoscientific networks are seen as chains of sites characterized by a set of heterogeneous parameters, practices and actors" (1998, p. 55).

Similar analyses of discourse construction may be seen in a series of works on Indonesia by Li (1996, 1999; T. M. Li, 2002). For example, examining the representation of certain images of community, Li suggests that these representations are in fact strategies of those employed by the "powerless" to advance their claims, despite the fact that these representations may carry risk (Li, 1996; T. M. Li, 2002). Li not only looks at the power of institutions and the state, but also focuses on what happens in the interface between the institutions and the subaltern (Li, 1999). Instead of describing hegemony as simply "power imposing" and "resistance", Li suggests that both the dominant and subordinate

have the power to negotiate. Therefore, the subjects of improvement, rather than being powerless, are agents capable of either making or opposing claims (ibid.).

Alternatives in the forms of resistance or negotiation are therefore possible. Nevertheless, the post-structuralist approach sees the "alternative" as part of, as well as completing, the structure. In Escobar's view, resistance is part of the network which constructs and completes the discourse (Escobar, 1998). In Li's work, the alternative exists within the framework of state institutions and relations of rule, and compromise is the process to accomplish the rules and achieve the (development) project.

3.1.3 Agency

There is no doubt that adopting a post-structuralist approach is valuable when studying development and environmental issues. Nevertheless, treating nature as a discursive production is open to debate. While development is seen by some as a project to complete power by constructing dominant discourses (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994), others espouse an alternative view. While not totally rejecting the post-structural conceptualization of ecological problems, some argue the post-structural approach neglects the nuance modified by individual agency (Bebbington, 2000; Mosse, 2003). Moreover, the structural perspective is also critiqued because it leaves little room for alternatives, without making a radical change in the socio-political system (Bebbington, 2000).

It is suggested that local agency is able to negotiate and accommodate the seeming dominators (Bebbington, 2000). In other words, local people do not just passively become subjects of development, but are capable of utilizing the intervention posed by state (or by other dominant actors) to achieve their purposes. Meanwhile, local context influences how the individuals exercise their agency and determine the outcomes (Bebbington, 2000). In line with the focus on agency, Mosse argues that "beneficiaries" of development projects are not simply subjects of development, but are able to "constitute and manipulate project discourse in managing their own relationship with external patrons and donors"(Mosse, 2003, p. 46). In sum, understanding local contexts and social interaction is important when contemplating development and environment research.

Given that this research concerns how local changes in society and environment are influenced by interaction between local communities and other actors, Mosse's work provides an important framework for understanding the role played by agency.

The concept of agency is critical when examining development and environment issues. Thus, it is important to seek an analytical tool balancing structure and agency. Long suggests an "actor-oriented approach" as a theoretical as well as a practical tool, which reconciles structure and agency while at the same time stressing the interaction between internal and external factors (Long, 1992a). Long argues that employing an actor-oriented approach facilitates analyses of the ways in which "different social actors manage and interpret new elements in their life-worlds" (Long, 1992b, p. 9). The main foci of such analyses are "small-scale interactional settings and their significance for understanding so-called macro-phenomena". (Long, 1992a, pp. 27-28) Long also suggests that one should treat development intervention as an on-going transformation process, through which knowledge is negotiated and power dynamics are produced (Long, 1992b). As an actor-oriented approach stresses studying small-scale interactions that underpin macro-scale phenomena, it calls for methodological consideration of using ethnography. I will explore the relationship between the actor-oriented approach and ethnography in Chapter 4.

Accepting the concept of agency does not mean excluding structure from analyses. Because agency is enabled by structure, and the latter is constituted by actions, micro- and macro analysis are both required and "are not mutually exclusive" (Giddens, 1993, p. 3). Although many studies stress the importance of agency, their analyses are never situated external to the structure. Long observes that actors are positioned in the structure, and that their strategies and choices draw on the available discourses (Long, 1992a).

I have to stress that the works reviewed (Long, Giddens and political ecologists) have different perspectives on the relationship between agency and structure. My thesis does not aim to engage in debate about which perspective is favoured, but to emphasise that within the scope of political ecology, agency provides an insight to configure human-nature relationships.

While much of the research reviewed above addresses the agency of local communities, discussion is not limited to the agency of community members. The agency of other actors is also a subject of study. A considerable body of literature attempts to analyse how professionals in development or conservation fields, as intermediaries, modify and influence the outcome of interventions. For example, a study in India shows forest officers on the one hand represent forest departments, and on the other, interpret forestry policy at the local level according to the local social context by reconciling their professional and social roles (Vasan, 2002). These officers not only represent state power, but also demonstrate the limits of the state's power. As a result, forestry policy is often negotiated in the field (ibid.). Several studies reviewed in Chapter 2 also employ the actor-oriented approach and/or action-network theory to examine how development professionals rationalize their work and maintain their identities through interaction in project implementation and in their daily-lives (Desai, 2006; Heaton-Shrestha, 2006; Nauta, 2006).

3.1.4 Political ecology research on China

Although political ecology has become important for theorising, explaining and analysing environmental issues, only a small number of political ecology studies address issues in China, especially if compared to the abundant collection of political ecology research in other parts of the developing world, such as South-East Asia or Latin America. From my observation, there are two reasons for this neglect. For scholars outside of China, the closeness of the social and political environment has proven an obstruction to such study. For scholars within China, the theory itself, which is concerned with issues such as inequality of resource use or control over resource access, is a sensitive topic. Take my research for example. When I initially discussed my plan to study the influence of Chinese NGO inter-relationships on local environments with several prominent scholars in China (including geographers and conservation scientists), I was advised to change my topic since it is politically sensitive. Clearly, political sensitivity is a crucial factor that Chinese scholars have to take into account when conducting research.

While the collection of political ecology research remains scant, there is still some notable political ecology research dealing with China's various environmental issues: soil erosion (Hershkovitz, 1993) ; industrial pollution enforcement (Tilt, 2007); hydropower construction (Magee, 2006); resource access in border areas (Sturgeon, 2005); the impact of the commodification of certain species (Yeh, 2000); and, state control over pasture resource (Yeh, 2005). Hershkovitz (1993) explores the impact of rural reform on environmental management in China by employing regional political ecology, an approach situating environmental problems in an hierarchical framework. However as suggested in Chapter 2 , an heterachical system provides a more appropriate view of the Chinese power strucutre. As one will see from my analyses in Chapters 5 to 8, the power dynamic over local environmental issues in China is complex with power competing at times and accomodating at others.

Yeh offers an insightful analysis of local environmental issues within a broader political-economy context (Yeh, 2000, 2005, 2009). She suggests interpreting the nation state's green programmes, often framed as "ecological construction" projects as political projects to achieve power rather than environmental goals (Yeh, 2009). Her work directly engages with the debate against ecological modernization theory in analyses of China's greening policy (Yeh, 2009).

Yeh's work emphasises the spatial and temporal context. Exploring how the commercialisation of natural resources could lead to social and environmental change, her work demonstrates that changing social relations and the differences in the interpretations of resource rights result from recent global trade as well as from historical evolving factors (Yeh, 2000). Yeh suggests that China's "ecological construction" projects, especially those in China's west, aim to deepen the state's territorial control and that the design and implementation of these projects serve as technologies of government (Yeh, 2005, 2009). She concludes that ecological construction in China constitutes internal territorialisation, reworks the relationship between the different categories of citizens and the state, and produces subjects (Yeh, 2009). Yeh's argument resonates with

the view that China's development project is a nation-building project. For example, China's "Open Up West" campaign [14], a major development programme which incorporates many "ecological projects", is suggested to be a nation-building project (Goodman, 2004).

Yeh's argument is crucial to my research. Her work builds the understanding of the state's environmental governance as the structure within which eNGOs create and modify their practice. But, most of the Chinese political ecology literature is restricted to discussion of the state, while downplaying the roles of other institutional actors. Yeh's work often focuses on the construction and framing of certain environmental discourse by the Chinese state (Yeh, 2009). Hershkovitz (1993) suggests that "state policy and its implementation…are the primary factors that create context for environmental degradation and management" (p.332). As regards other actors, who are probably equally important in shaping and forming discourse construction and deployment, especially eNGOs, minimal attention has been given. Regarding environmental issues in China, the research gap in applying political ecology to NGO study is precisely what my project aims to bridge, for a better understanding of China's environmental issues through a political ecology lens. My focus on NGOs does not serve to argue that state and state policy are not important. Rather, my research remains concerned with the context created by the state, an analysis that will appear in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 Politics of local resources: Community, participation and empowerment

As stated in Chapter 1, the focus of this research concerns the way international ideology /concepts are adopted by Chinese eNGOs for application to local development and conservation projects. This section will discuss the key concepts promoted by eNGOs in the context of literature adopting a political ecology approach.

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[14] The "Open-Up West" campaign (*xibu da kaifa,* 西部大開發), which started in 2000, is a regional development programme targeting the interior and western provinces of China. The goals are to strive for economic growth and to ensure the social-political stability of these regions in which most non-Han ethnic groups live. The rationale of this programme is that these areas have been left out from the national economic development since the early 1980s and are relatively under-developed compared to eastern China.

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) emphasising the participatory approach has gradually become a popular agenda and is influential in shaping social relations and environmental practices in natural resource issues in rural China. CBNRM has been widely adopted and researched since the 1980s. Its rise was largely due to the failure of state and private power to deliver good outcomes in natural resource management. The model was introduced initially into China by international donors in the 1990s. For example, the Ford Foundation has funded CBNRM research and projects in China since the 1990s, with its initial focus on social forestry in the south-west and grassland management in the west. Currently, the Ford Foundation explicitly states that under a global initiative of "expanding community rights over natural resources", the organization supports "government, researchers, and civil society groups to develop, implement and publicize *sustainable* and *participatory natural resource management* strategies" (Ford Foundation, 2014 , italics added). Many international research institutions have initiated action research into CBNRM in rural China since the 1990s, including, for example, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) projects in Guizhou province.

While some CBNRM research on China has been closely tied to development (Li, Yang, & Liu, 2009), the majority has focused on particular types of resources, such as forestry (He & Weyerhaeuser, N.D) or grassland (Fernández-Giménez, Baival, & Wang, 2012; Zhang, Long, Qi, & Li, 2007).

The rationale behind advocating CBNRM is based on two premises. First, as community members share common interests, ideally they should be mobilized to act collectively and to participate in natural resource management. Second, participation purportedly empowers local communities to become decision makers regarding resource management, which will eventually lead to good environmental outcomes.

However, these premises may not always be sustained. In the following sections, I will address how these premises underpin CBNRM, by reviewing three essential concepts central to the politics of local resources: community, participation and empowerment.

3.2.1 Community

In this section, I will discuss the concept of a "community" as depicted in the literature of development and conservation. First, I will review how the meaning of community is interpreted, and how a community is composed and perceived. More importantly, I will discuss the significance of the assumptions of community in the context of resource management, as assumptions are crucial when analysing eNGO practices and local interaction among institutional actors.

The meaning of community varies in different contexts (Western & Wright, 1994). The provision of a simple definition of community is, however, necessary to initiate the discussion. According to the Oxford Dictionary (3nd edition), community means "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common"(Stevenson, 2010). Thus defined, community means being "local" (living in the same place) or sometimes having a particular characteristic in common. Therefore, these connotations can be problematic in reality; for this reason, they have been widely discussed by scholars.

The notion of the boundary of a community has been critically examined by scholars. Some research denotes a defined boundary of a community, while attending to the exchange activities across the boundary. For example, by showing the economic exchange activities with outside society, Netting (2008) argues that one should extend the attention to regional activities rather than confining study to the local; therefore, a community is sustained not only by a subsistence economy, but also by a market economy. Relating the story of agriculture of East Anglia, Frake (1996) observes that the community is not isolated but interacts with the "outside".

However, notions of boundary, along with the images of communities and the identities of community members, have been constantly challenged by post-structuralist political ecologists. Community is suggested to be socially and politically constructed. The formation of a community is a process of struggle "over resources… meaning and identity" (Li, 2001, p. 158). In addition, the becoming of a particular community is not due to certain granted facts. Rather, a community, like a place, "is constructed out of a

particular constellation of relations (Massey, 1991, p. 28). According to Li (1996, 1999; T. M. Li, 2002), the constructed notions of community are deployed politically for various agendas. In such case, the existence of a defined boundary of community may be challenged, resulting in the boundary being drawn politically based on certain false assumptions. Li (2001) further argues against the notion that community is often defined as subsistence-oriented as outside of market. Rather than situated separately, communities often interact with both the market and the state, and the subsistence-oriented communities are often the result of marginalisation (Li, 2001). In short, Li rejects the assumptions that the community is external to market and state.

Market- community relationships are also discussed by Gudeman (2001), who suggests that community economy and market economy, interacting through the interweaving of activities, are two realms with no clear separation and that they exist in every society. What is shared in a community may be called the "base," that is, what a community economy makes and maintains, such as natural resources, customary laws, and knowledge (Gudeman, 2001). Only with the base can the community survive and even expand over time, and a community may collapse if the base becomes destroyed (debasement) in the process of transforming into capital of market economy (ibid.).

In regards to state-community relationships, a community is neither external to nor counterpoised to the state (Li, 2001). Rather, the formation of state and community are in fact realised through each other engaging in the interaction (Li, 2001). For example, the power of the state is generated and actualized as part of the village through rural development projects (Hirsch, 1989). State power may even facilitate the construction of community rather than destroy the formation.

However, the articulation of the meaning of a community is not simply facilitated by outside forces. The process often moves forward due to the pushing power from within, for as Li (2001) suggests, the articulation of an ethnic group or a community is usually facilitated by local elite. In this sense, one can assume that the articulation of a community may not be fully realised if there is a lack of power from both inside and outside of the community.

Furthering the discussion of the false assumptions/ images of community, Li, examining the significance of the representations of community, suggests that these representations can sometimes be the political strategies of different actors (Li, 1996, 1999). The images are used not only by oppressors such as states to emphasise the responsibility of local communities, but also by strugglers against oppression to access opportunities and advance their claims (Li, 1996, 1999; T. M. Li, 2002; Tsing, 1999). For example, simplified and generalised images of community have been employed to open up space for policy shift, despite the fact that such representation may carry risk (Li, 1999; Walker, 2001a).

In any discussion of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), false assumptions or imaginations of a community may hinder conservation efforts.

The first assumption is that communities are different from the outside world, but in reality, they may host the same mentality as outsiders. Conservationists choose certain communities as project sites, supposing that these sites have different practices, motivations or aspirations from the outside world; however, these projects may fail when implemented in these selected site, just as if they are implemented in other locations (Li, 2001). Rural communities may desire to engage in neoliberal markets rather than in indigeneity, which is mostly constructed by outsiders (Sturgeon, 2007).

Second, while a community is formed through a process of articulation and sometimes mobilisation by outsiders (such as NGOs), it may not be "the" relevant community for managing natural resources (Ahluwalia, 1997). For example, in the case of watershed management in India, the diverse interests among the stakeholders within the community resulted in internal conflict over resource usage and consequently compromised the intention of external interventions to transform the local community into a community managing its own resources (ibid.). Sometimes, natural resource management may not be collectively managed by a community. For example, Geertz (1972) revealed that in Morocco, community members shared the irrigation system run by the principle of individual property rights, a system worked well under its own context of ecological constraints. Geertz's work provides an important message. It implies that a community

need not necessarily share collective system or actions. Where a community does not perform according to collective rules, such community can function well in its own cultural and ecological context. This study is no doubt crucial to any understanding of the concept of community. Therefore, one should be aware of what the term "community" really stands for within certain contexts.

Due to the false assumptions often associated with the concept of community, some scholars suggest an alternative way of addressing resource management, by focusing on the role of institutions rather than community (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Leach, Mearns, & Scoones, 1999) . Communities are "elusive and constantly changing" when considering effective natural resource management (Berkes, 2004, p. 623). However, an effective institution for natural resource management is also conditional. While some multi-purpose institutions may be appropriate for certain aspects of development, they are not necessarily appropriate for natural resource management, especially when they do not reflect the different users of particular resources (Fisher, 2002b).

3.2.2 Participation as empowering?

Participation has been an important element in designing and implementing community-based conservation programmes, for its promises to empower local communities, and eventually better environmental governance. Recognising that communities are local, complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable, participation is expected to reverse the roles of the powerful with those who are powerless, and it allows the poor to analyse and express multiple characteristics (Chambers, 1997). With these promises, participation, as a people-centred approach, was deemed the new paradigm of development in the 1990s.While the concept was originally championed by eNGOs, the willingness of some big eNGOs to co-operate with local communities has declined in the first decade of 2000s. (Chapin, 2004).

Despite its popularity, participation has been subjected to critiques, mainly in two aspects. Some argue that participation is beneficial for improving practice in the development and conservation fields, but they add that implementation could be problematic and result in unwanted outcomes. Others, however, are more critical. They are generally concerned

about the politics of participation and suggest that participation may not be able to offer alternatives to or improvement of developmental and environmental problems.

In order to critically examine the fundamental promises of participation leading to empowerment, two concepts are critically examined. First, how are *power* relations manifested in participation? Second, how is *agency* exercised in the participatory process?

Empowerment is a process "through which people…are enabled to take more control over their own lives, and secure a better livelihood, with ownership of productive assets as one key element" (Chambers, 1983, p. 11). While empowerment originally encompassed the meaning of radical social change, the term was later used by many organisations and agencies without the radical roots (Walker, Jones, Roberts, & Fröhling, 2007). Research also questions whether participation necessarily leads to empowerment, as participation has become a "moral imperative" for NGOs (Green, 2000, p. 69) .

3.2.2.1 Power relations in participation

In his earlier research, Chambers (1997) refers to professionals as "we" who are powerful while others are powerless. In this way, power is defined as an absolute status. However, an alternative view sees power as relational, as emerging from the network of actors. Therefore, such a classification of powerful and powerless can be problematic as "power" does not exist independently. What should be of concern is the power dynamic.

Many have critiqued the concept of participation by addressing power relations vested under this term. Some suggest that participation does not alter power relations (Mosse, 2001; Rahnema, 1992). Others assert that the proponents of the participatory approach are naive about complex power and power relations. The articulations of power may be less visible when embedded in social and cultural pratices (Cook & Kothari, 2001).

It is questionable whether participation can bring new forms of power, knowledge and actions that can change the nature of development (Rahnema, 1992). The use of participation may not necessarily provide alternatives in certain contexts. It is, therefore, important to view participation in a specific context in order to understand the complex

power dynamics (Mosse, 1997), especially when taking into account that a commuity is always heterogenous. Using tank management in south India as an example, Mosse suggests that the establishment of the "customary" tank system in a way reasserted the unequal power relations between two castes since the system was employed to revive the tradition (ibid). Therefore, participatory resource management projects not only re-configure resource management, but also social relations. It is concerned more about "politics" than with natural resources (Mosse, 1994, 1997).

The reassertion of power and social control via participation is even more difficult to challenge, given the participatory process is often considered to be open and liberal (Kothari, 2001). In participatory projects, social differences are sometimes masked behind the internal process of exclusion and discrimination against certain groups (Walker, et al., 2007), that render the latter ineligible to participate (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011). By drawing boundaries and/or making rules regarding who can/cannot access the resources, CBNRM commonly imposes restricted access to resources through the process of "exclusion" (Hall, et al., 2011). The excluded groups are often "others" who are defined as non-local, either spatially or socially; for example, outside villagers, migrants and minorities (ibid.)

The reassertion of power is often achieved through various way of knowledge (re)production (Mosse, 1994) such as collecting local knowledge, building a consensus (Kothari, 2001), and/or making strategic choices about which knowledge is heard and valued (Blaikie, 2006). The participatory approach then legitimises certain "truths" over other conflicting and/or diversified claims. Meanwhile, participation is sometimes a means to achieve pre-determined goals (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003), and local knowledge deemed to legitimitse the participatory approach is often constructed to speak for the pre-set agenda of donors or implementing agencies (Mosse, 2001).

3.2.2.2 Agency in participation

Another crucial issue is the way agency plays out in the process of participation. The important linkage between participation and the concept of agency can be observed in the argument of Chambers (1997). Paradoxically, Chambers highlights, but at the same time,

overlooks, the role of agency. In one way, by arguing that the changes in individuals' behaviour and attitudes can make a difference in development practice, his work recognizes the capability of individual agency. In another, equating the behaviour and attitudes of professionals with the total behaviour of the institutions they belong to simplifies the relationship between individuals and the institutions to which the individual professional belongs.

It is suggested that there is inherent conflict between individualisation and public participation (Cleaver, 1999). Participation aims to mobilise people into joining in social norms and, by extension, enjoying the benefits shared by the community while avoiding being socially irresponsible. In this sense, individuals in a participatory project are treated as a whole whose decisions and actions are defined by the structure. However, this argument is problematic given that such approaches "construct the target communities of development interventions as passive agents awaiting the emancipatory intervention of development organizations" (Green, 2000, p. 68). Nevertheless, because individuals act based on rational choice as well as on unconscious practice, they may or may not opt to participate as sometimes it may be more reasonable for individuals not to participate (ibid.). Moreover, when considering the multiplicity of agency, the different, changing and multiple identities of individuals are crucial to their choices regarding the way (not) to participate (Cleaver, 2001)

Establishing (or restoring) institutions has become essential in CBNRM (Berkes, 2004; Leach, et al., 1999; Ostrom, 1990), and is often seen as part of "empowerment" (Nunan, 2006). However, as discussed earlier, certain social groups who possess less capital for "being empowered" may be marginalised when new institutions are established or traditional institutions are restored (Mosse, 1994, 1997; J.-H. Z. Wang, 2009). Moreover, emphasising formal institutionalization may ignore the fact that social institutions are often informally embedded in social relations (Cleaver, 2001). Therefore, it may be more practical to analyse how "local norms of decision making" are changed and negotiated (Cleaver, 1999, p. 602).

In conclusion, the participatory approach sometimes seems to leave certain community members relatively disadvantaged, particularly because participation sometimes ignores power relations within the group. Nevertheless, in cases where individuals opt to refuse to participate through various acts such as resisting projections of their lives, exclusion can even be empowering (Kothari, 2001). For example, Walker, et al. (2007) show how a group of indigenous people in Mexico inverted the politics of participation by inviting eNGOs to participate in locals' agendas. Such cases of reversal of power, however, would require a long process under certain historical and social contexts.

3.3 Conclusion

Based on an overview of the political ecology literature, I have demonstrated the usefulness of adopting political ecology as the conceptual framework for this study. As this research is concerned with how rural landscapes are shaped by power relations among actors across scales, an understanding of the politics of rural resources is vital. Resource issues in rural China have been de-politicised by the majority of academics addressing the problems (Yeh, 2013).

In searching for eNGOs' influences on rural landscapes, through understanding the interactions between various institutional actors in the unique Chinese context, the long-debated theme of structure versus agency is again highlighted. To what extent are eNGOs' projects and practices determined by the international agenda, mainstream environmental discourses and state policy? How does the uneven development in contemporary China, a phenomenon that mainly results from its overall socio-economic structure, influence local communities' attitudes and actions regarding resource use (and eNGO projects)? Do local communities passively adopt environmental discourses endorsed by government policy or eNGOs agendas? If the agency of local communities is taken into account, in what ways is the agency enabled and expressed? By answering the above questions, this thesis will be able to provide potential analytic tools for addressing the structure versus agency debate.

As CBNRM is the mainstream tool for eNGOs' addressing of rural resource issues, this thesis of necessity engages in discussion of participation and empowerment. It aims to

understand in eNGO projects how communities are being constructed, how the concept of "participation" is being exercised, and how participation is linked to expected outcomes including empowerment and good environmental practices. Exploration of the concepts of power and agency are essential when critically examining the process of participation.

Chapter 4

Methodology

The aim of this research is to understand how Chinese eNGOs and their interactions with other institutional actors have influenced change in China's rural landscapes. While the research focuses on one particular eNGO as its case study, addressing eNGO relationships and their implications will provide insights into the understanding of eNGO dynamics in the Chinese context. The research framework is illustrated in the figure below.
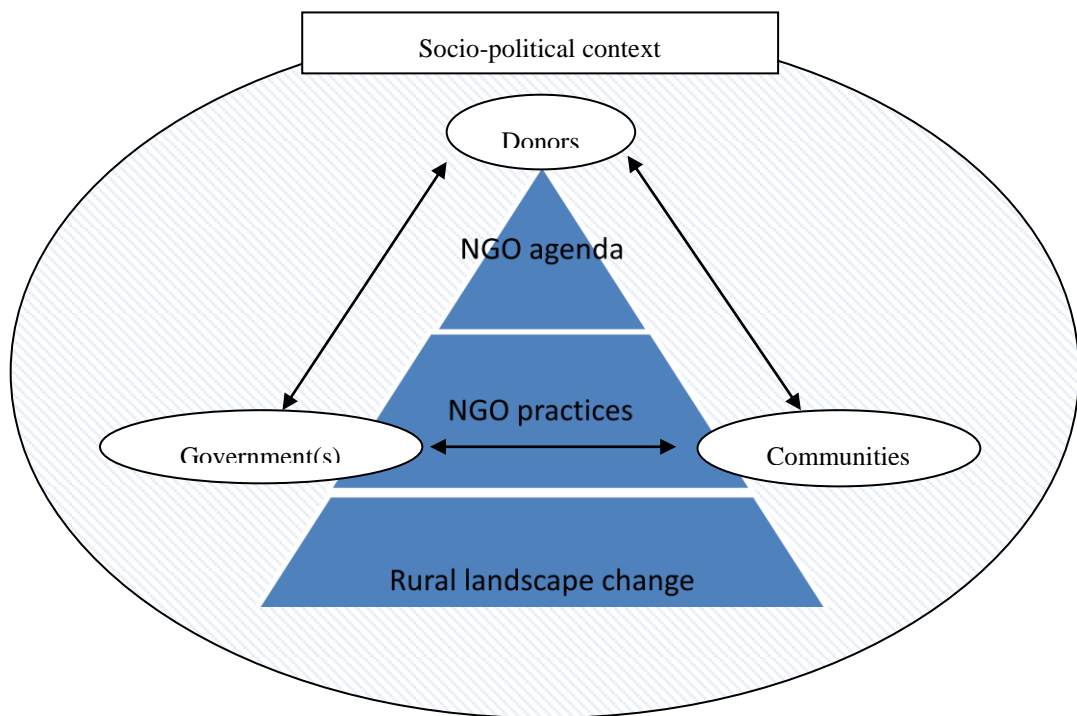
Figure 2 : Research framework

First, an understanding of the broader socio-political contexts in which NGO relationships are situated is crucial. Second, this research examines NGO agendas and practices which are often determined by complex power relations. This level shifts from a structural perspective to a closer look at the interfaces between the actors, as well as at the interactions between actors and institutions. Finally, this research explores how NGO practices have shaped the rural landscape by influencing social relations and local environmental practices. In light of the above complexities, different sets of research methods are required to find the appropriate answers to fulfil the research framework. Discourse analysis is employed for the first and second levels researching context and NGO agendas, while ethnography was conducted to research the NGO practices and their impacts on the local scale.

The following sections provide a detailed explanation of the methodology employed.

4.1 Researching the context of Chinese eNGO practices

It is important to recognize that when researching Chinese eNGOs, multi-scale issues emerge in which participating actors are connected, from international to local scales.

The institutional actors concerned in this research include: local communities, local government agencies, domestic eNGOs, international eNGOs and donors, and provincial and national governments. In identifying the institutional actors, I do not consider the composition of these institutional actors to be homogenous. Therefore, the implications of the concept of agency discussed in the previous chapter are especially important.

4.1.1 Discourse analysis: setting the scene

The context surrounding Chinese eNGO practices has been influenced by various discourses. Discourse analysis has proved to be a useful research method for understanding the narrative context. This method is particularly important in one lineage of political ecology; that is, for understanding the construction of environmental discourses and their impacts given that "environment and environmental problems are

discursively constructed" (Neumann, 2005, p. 7) [See also Escobar (1996) and Peet and Watts (2004a)]. Since the mid-1990s, many research projects have been based on analysing how certain environmental discourses are constructed and exercised; for example, see the work of Fairhead and Leach (1995) on land degradation.

I have employed discourse analysis in an attempt to understand how certain discourses are constructed, and more importantly, how such discourses have resulted in influencing the NGO agendas, practices and their inter-relationships with other actors. Three components are selected for analysis: expression, actor and the social/policy impact (Adger, et al., 2001). My analysis is divided into two interconnected levels: international and national. At the international level, focus is upon the environmental and development discourses, which often determine the agenda of international donors, eNGOs and, by extension, Chinese eNGOs. Chinese NGOs sometimes have to adjust their agendas to fit the limited funding available from international donors. At other times, Chinese eNGOs and their international partners may have competing agendas which may ultimately have different consequences.

My research included reviewing existing academic analyses and analysing certain primary materials, including statements and reports from conservation and development organisations. In particular, I explored the language used by those international NGOs associated with Chinese partners, such as Oxfam and the Ford Foundation. This can reveal the way these international NGOs frame development and conservation ideologies. Although the analyses of the international discourse are mainly presented in Chapter 5, they are included in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

At the national level, the discourse analysis included two parts: environmental/development policy discourse and NGO discourse. Policy discourse analysis, which was conducted through literature research, focused on environmental policy such as the Natural Forest Protection Programme (NFPP, *tianranli baohu gongcheng*) which banned logging on sloping lands in 1999 and development policies such as the "Open Up West" campaign initiated in 2000 that targets development of

western China. My analysis will reveal that such policy discourses are not only used by the government, but also may be used by eNGOs.

In addition to government policy, eNGOs also play important roles in shaping national conservation/development discourse. Therefore, study of NGO discourse is essential. NGO discourse analysis was mainly based on document research (statements, project publication, media presentations) and semi-structured interviews with personnel working for international, domestic and local eNGOs in China. In Appendix 1lists these eNGOs whose staff I interviewed to gain information. Beside the particular eNGO, Green Watershed selected for in-depth case study, I also visited four project sites of two other eNGOs (The Nature Conservancy China and Yunnan Green Development Foundation) and interviewed project partners of these two eNGOs.[15] In the process of examining project material and media representation, attending meetings, visiting project sites and interviewing staff and project partners, I obtained essential information such as stated and unstated project goals, expected and unexpected project outcomes, planned and unplanned strategies, and narratives pertinent to conservation and development.

4.2 A study of the social life of a place, an organisation and the people

As this research seeks to understand how relationships within and around eNGOs influence local landscapes, it is important to study the social lives of eNGOs and of the societies within which they operate. Therefore, an ethnographic approach, including participant observation and other methods, was employed. As ethnography is able to reveal "the differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives on the environment and environmental problems..." (Neumann, 2005, p. 6), this methodology has proven highly useful in political ecology research.

The key element of my ethnographic work was participant observation, a method with certain advantages.

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[15] Certain information for the TNC case study was obtained in 2009 before my PhD research commenced. The relevant information is incorporated into analysis for the purpose of this thesis.

First, by conducting participant observation, I was able to observe the interactions between institutional actors, and within the institutions. Living with the people and immersing myself into their life worlds provided invaluable opportunities for me to observe how they spoke, and how their actions related to what they said. Observing the daily interactions between actors allowed me to understand the relationships that obtained between them, an understanding critical to my analysis. At the same time, these observations allowed me to devise and revise my questions accordingly, since I gradually gained more understanding of the field. The formulation of appropriate research questions and a better understanding of the fieldsite were consequently built.

Second, participant observation enabled me to collect crucial information which may not have been revealed by formal interviews or in any other forms of questioning. For example, when I asked some rural villagers what they thought about their environment and environmental protection, they had nothing to say as the topic seemed too abstract for them. However, details of declining natural resources started to emerge when we were roasting pine nuts for an after dinner snack. I was curious about how and where they collected the pine nuts. The villagers told me that nowadays it is more difficult to collect pine nuts in their area as all of the big pine trees had been logged. This simple example shows that crucial information for analysis can often only be obtained by participating in the daily lives of the research subjects by undertaking participant observation.

Moreover, through my participation in the locals' lives over time, the reactivity issue , the phenomenon that occurs when people change their performance or behavior due to the awareness that they are being observed, was minimized (but not totally excluded), as there was trust building through my daily interactions with my studied subjects. For example, after several months in the field, I was able to participate in fishing activities and observed various legal or illegal, fishing practices. Many villagers showed little (if any) concern about discussing their illegal practices with me, unless other non-locals (such as eNGO staff) were present.

4.2.1 Understanding power relations across scales: multi-sited ethnography

In order to understand how eNGOs operate within sets of power relations, and how rural landscapes have been shaped in accordance with the influence of NGO practices, I undertook a multi-sited ethnography for understanding both the eNGO and a particular rural society. My multi-sited ethnography consisted of an organisational ethnography (NGO ethnography) and village ethnographies undertaken simultaneously. This involved studying a particular eNGO and its project site encompassing several villages within a watershed system. The term "multi-sited ethnography", first coined by Marcus (1995), is now widely used in many fields of social science research. This particular approach focuses on an understanding of a world system rather than a lifeworld in a fixed location (Marcus, 1995). Multi-sited ethnography is not merely about combining several single-sited ethnographies. More importantly, the researcher constructs the context of the research subject(s) by making connections and associations across sites (Marcus, 1995). In other words, this method addresses the implication of "scale", a concept discussed in Chapter 3. I decided to adopt a multi-sited ethnography approach for two reasons: (1) this research is concerned with flows of concepts, discourses and funding across time and space; and, (2) given that relationships between humans and landscapes, and between eNGOs and other institutional actors are the core components of this research, developing a multi-sited ethnography seemed a practical approach for mapping, tracing and analysing these relationships. In other words, I considered a multi-sited ethnography appropriate to producing a deep understanding of the system studied.

While conducting my multi-sited ethnography, "progressive contextualization" (Vayda, 1983) was employed to identify relevant actors located at various scales . It was also used to identify the causes influencing the local phenomena, such as landscape change and interactions between NGO projects and local communities, by exploring the causes from local to wider scales as necessary. The adoption of progressive contextualization neither suggested that the flows of conceptual and material influences were unidirectional, nor that the boundaries of causes and effects were fixed.

An important part of this research has been to understand how eNGOs operate by interacting with other institutional actors. To this end, I employed organisational ethnography by working for an eNGO as a volunteer. The organisational ethnography was originally devised by anthropologists researching industrial organisations as social systems (Schwartzman, 1993). In recent decades, the use of organisational ethnography has been expanded to include various types of institutions. In the area of NGO study, an organisational ethnography is considered a useful tool, essentially because of its "actor-centred, processed-based" characteristics (Lewis, 1999, p. 73). Moreover, ethnography is appropriate for researching NGO inter-relationships. NGO ethnography can reveal in-depth NGO practices, especially in terms of the interactions between NGOs and other actors and in terms of the impacts of such interactions on power relations (Fisher, 1997). NGO ethnography can further reveal the interactions "within" the NGO itself (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006), particularly as interactions "within" are often obscured. Thus, an understanding of these interactions and the power dynamics involved may prove a useful basis for political analyses of NGO practices.

In cases where exploration of the influence on rural landscapes resulting from changing environmental practices and social relations is undertaken, village ethnography is appropriate, because ethnography can elicit information encompassing in-depth and dynamic descriptions of activities affecting landscape change.

I implemented both the organisational ethnography and the village ethnography in parallel by doing participant observation, informal conversations, and a few formal interviews, which were also in the form of dialogues in the context of participation. I visited my field sites for the first time in July 2009 (before commencing my PhD studies) and it was then that I started to build my relationships with the NGO I planned to work with, and with the local villages I planned to study[16]. I returned to Yunnan in December 2010 for further reconnaissance. I then decided on my field sites and re-confirmed my field research methods. I conducted most of my data collection from July 2011 to January

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[16] I was in Kunming for an anthropology conference and later travelled to north-west Yunnan for a month.

2012, and from October to November 2012. In total, I spent approximately eight months doing fieldwork. My ethnographic work will be outlined in the following sections.

4.2.1.1 Organisational ethnography of an NGO

Green Watershed (GW), a domestic eNGO based in Yunnan province, was the focus of my ethnography. There were several reasons for choosing this particular NGO for my case study, the most important being that GW had a ten-year history of interacting with different levels of government, international and domestic donors, other eNGOs, and local communities. Therefore, GW offered a rich story for analysing eNGO practices in China. Second, having adopted a participatory approach to resource management, GW established a close and profound relationship with the locals. Thus working with GW provided me with a great opportunity to observe the impacts of an eNGO locally. Last but not the least, was the long-term relationship between GW and its international partners. Therefore GW is particularly suitable for examining the effect of international ideology and agendas in China

GW has its head office in Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan Province in southwest China, and a project office in Lashi town, Lijiang. I engaged in participant observation while working as a volunteer for GW's Lashi project. By living and working with the project staff in the project office in Lashi, I became involved both in the GW project operation and the everyday lives of the project staff. More specifically, I was involved in planning, organising and facilitating project meetings in project villages. This enabled me to observe the activities within GW and the interactions between GW and the local communities during project meetings. I also participated in project design and evaluation activities. While living with project staff, I often discussed GW operations, its relationship with other institutional actors, village life, interactions between villagers, environmental issues and many other topics. In addition to my daily interaction with the project staff, I had numerous opportunities to discuss topics including environmental philosophy with the director of GW, Dr. Yu, and other headquarters staff, either when they stayed in the Lashi office or when I went to the Kunming head office.

In addition to the above, several other events proved valuable for my research. In the course of its ten-year project in the Lashi Lake area, GW organized several project-based celebrations in villages to review its projects, a programme requested by its donor. During the village meetings, all levels of GW personnel interacted directly with local communities. Thus, there were abundant opportunities for me to observe their interactions. GW also organized a three-day workshop involving government officials, donors and other eNGOs. During the meetings, I observed the interactions between the various actors, and had chances to conduct in-depth interviews with several representatives of key actors.

A lot of research has debated whether case studies can be used for generalization. [See (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gerring, 2004; Ruddin, 2006)]. My primary concern vis-a-vis focusing on one eNGO as the unit of study is not to generalise about Chinese eNGO practices and interactions, particularly due to the heterogeneity of Chinese eNGOs community. Rather, as a case study can provide in-depth analyses of context and process (Flyvbjerg, 2011), my study of GW serves to explain the complexity of its practices and their implications for rural landscapes, an issue often obscured by research based on general and macro analyses. Having said that, as GW operates under a similar socio-political context shared with other NGOs working in rural China, my case study will be able to provide understandings relevant to the study of other Chinese NGOs.

4.2.1.2 Village ethnography

Living in the Lashi area afforded me access to the sites where GW was implmenting its programme. I selected three villages among the project sites, including lakeside Naxi and upland Yi villages, for conducting ethnographic work. The three villages included Dayu village, the site of the GW office, the immediately neighbouring village of Xihu, and the upland Yi village of Yangyuchan.

Dayu village

I made a short-visit to GW's project office located in Dayu village in 2009 for the first time, but had no interaction with the villagers. From July to November 2011, I lived in the GW's project office, sometimes with project staff, with landlords, and sometimes alone.

During that time I had many opportunities to interact with many Dayu villagers and to interact with their daily life activities. When I returned in October 2012, I stayed in the project office with GW's staff for another two weeks.

Xihu village

Being based in the project office in Dayu village enabled me to travel frequently to Xihu village, either by walking (which took thirty minutes) or by biking (which took ten minutes).   Between November and December 2011, I lived with a host family in Xihu, after having become acquainted with many of the Xihu villagers. Living with the family allowed me to gain the villagers' trust and to acquire information by observing their daily activities in depth. I visited Xihu village again in October 2012.

Yangyuchan village

I first visited Yangyuchan village on the occasion of its traditional festival in 2009. The visit was arranged by GW staff. Since then, I have maintained close personal contact with some of the villagers and made a further visit in 2010. During my fieldwork in 2011, I made six trips to Yangyuchan, either by hiking (five hours) or van-sharing (one hour). I returned to Yangyuchan again in October 2012. Each time I stayed for three to five days, living with a host family. Of all my visits, three were organised by GW for (a) project evaluation and (b) to attend GW's ten-year celebration. Through these activities I observed how villagers interacted with GW and outsiders brought in by GW. During my visits, I conducted interviews and participant observation where and when possible. Undertaking participant observation of daily practices in Yangyuchan, however presented certain difficulties that I will detail in a later section of this chapter.

In all three villages, the informants I interviewed included key community leaders involved in the GW projects, community members who were actively engaged in project activities, and other community members. I paid particular attention to both male and female perspectives, as well as to the divergent opinions of the older and younger generations. Initially, I was introduced to a few community leaders by GW staff, including the director or board members of the fishery association. Later, I was able to

reach out to the wider community mainly due to my everyday interactions with the villagers, especially my neighbours. Semi-structured interviews regarding the GW programme were conducted among those deeply involved in the GW programme.

Appendix 1 lists informants for my ethnographic work, and the organisations to which my informants belonged to.

Besides collecting information from interviews, daily conversations and observation, I also conducted archival research. Limited quantitative data were found in academic reports, NGO documents and historical documents. Local governments, such as township government, had potentially useful data but often officials were reluctant to provide me with details.

While this research concerns changes in environment and society over time, short-term research endeavours such as this PhD project can hardly document all of the concrete changes. Therefore, my approach has been to observe some setting conditions for landscape change, such as changing production methods, environmental practices, and institutional arrangements for resource management. Several events proved crucial to marking the difference between "before" and "after". For example, the different stages of policy and interventions as well as entries of various NGO projects are important markers in the time-series analysis.

4.3 Challenges and Limitations

My research faced several limitations and challenges, most of which I had foreseen prior to commencing my fieldwork.

4.3.1 In the field: language and positionality

I encountered two main constraints during my fieldwork in the villages. First was the language barrier. People in my fieldsite were used to speaking their local languages. The second was my positionality. Sometime people simply took me for an intern or a paid staff member of GW, while my positionality is ambiguous between an independent researcher and as an insider working for GW. Some saw me as a rich Taiwanese, who

could not possibly understand their world and its vicissitudes. Thus, conducting participant observation in villages presented certain challenges.

As a Taiwanese national, I am a native Mandarin speaker, a language widely spoken in Yunnan. However, language did pose certain constraints, although I was able to conduct most of the interviews in Mandarin by myself. The Naxi and Yi languages are used in daily life in my fieldsite. In the villages around the Lashi Lake, people can both understand and speak Mandarin so I had no problem communicating with them directly. However, the Naxi villagers communicate with each other in Naxi language in daily life as well as at meetings. Thus, I found it difficult to understand their conversations when conducting my participant observation. During our daily conversations, I sometimes interrupted and asked "what?" in Naxi to show my curiosity about the topic. At the same time, I understood that people often "filtered" information, that they only imparted what they felt I should know, translating only part of the conversations. Similar situations also occurred during meetings conducted by GW. Often the villagers discussed the matter among themselves, and then told the GW staff only part of the story[17].

In the Yi village, not everyone spoke and understood Mandarin. Usually I could communicate with the men without much trouble. However, I needed an interpreter when conversing with the elderly women as they did not understand Mandarin. My original plan was to hire a Yi girl who was in her first year of senior high school. She spoke both Mandarin and Yi fluently. But, this plan did not work out as she was often fully occupied. Therefore, I took another girl who was in her first year of junior high school with me when I went around the village. There were certain advantages and disadvantages associated with working with this girl. On one hand, since I had lived in her home since the first time I visited Yangyuchan village in 2009, a good friendship had developed between us. So, it was easy for me to communicate with her. Moreover, she was the elder daughter of a community leader in charge of GW's project. As her father had a very clear

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[17] In 2011, there were two project staff members in the Lashi office. The staff member in charge of most of the project was unable to understand and communicate in Naxi. Another person, a local Yi, was fluent in both the Yi and Naxi languages. However, he was not present at every meeting with the Naxi communities as he was not responsible for the project.

understanding of the structure and composition of the GW project in the village, it was convenient for me to identify persons for interviews and to map their relations. However, there was one potential disadvantage for me in working with this girl. Because her father's position in the project, it was possible that people would conceal their feelings and opinions regarding the community leader of the project. I am not certain how much this factor impacted on the information I collected during interviews, but I am aware of this possibility.

The Naxi and Yi languages both belong to the Tibeto-Burman language group and are completely different from Mandarin. It would have been impractical to invest time in studying the language prior to undertaking my research. However, during my stay in the Lashi area, I gained limited vocabulary for daily use. Although I was not able to conduct research in either the Naxi or Yi language, being able to speak some words in the local languages enabled me to become more engaged in village life.

As suggested earlier, a further issue which potentially affected the information I collected was my positionality. First was my association with GW. Although I considered myself to be an independent researcher, that is, I was not in the employ of GW, and villagers often assumed that I worked for GW. Indeed, there is genuine ambiguity about my identity in this research project. This was an issue considered prior to going to the field site, so I always tried to explain my work and my relationship with GW whenever I met a new person in the villages. However, many people already "knew" me as a GW intern through word-of-mouth of other villagers before my initial contact with them. This assumption that I worked for GW posed particular concerns. I feared the locals would be reluctant to share their opinions about GW and its projects with me. By extension, this partial understanding of my position sometimes resulted in certain limits to my research, but fortunately, not very often. My repeated explanations of the nature of my work mostly resolved this problem and, with time, most of my informants were willing to impart their various views of GW and its projects.

Being an independent researcher allowed me to observe objectively and to treat my data separately from the perspective of GW. Sometimes, the information I acquired from the

villagers differed from GW's data. However, I do not see the difference between my data and GW's as "true versus false", because all of the information acquired was situated in our different relationships with the villagers. The villagers chose to share some information with me they would not share with GW personnel, and sometimes, they might have chosen not to reveal certain information to me. Irrespective of whether it was GW or me, we were only allowed access to information that the villagers were willing to reveal. However, understanding the difference between my data and GW's information was important. By observing what was told by villagers to GW staff, I was able to observe how the villagers performed in front of eNGOs, and how the villagers wanted to be seen by eNGOs.

Another issue of positionality was my identity as a Taiwanese. Being Taiwanese did not complicate matters of me in terms of political controversy, as some may have imagined. However, the misleading image of being a "rich Taiwanese" did concern me regarding my position as a researcher. I encountered some people who were reluctant to share information with me. They sensed the gap between us and assumed that I could not possibly understand either them or their lifestyles. Moreover, some expected monetary benefit from me.

To sum up, the language barrier and positionality issue imposed certain limits on my research. To be more specific, I could only access the information if people allowed me to, a situation frequently encountered by researchers working in foreign environments. Nevertheless, I had anticipated these constraints to my research and made all efforts to deal with them as they arose. I am, however, fully aware of the limits that could be reflected in my work.

4.3.2 Doing research in the mountains

Conducting participant observation in highland Yangyuchan village presented certain challenges (compared to my work in the lowland Naxi village), due to the weather conditions and the challenging topography of the terrain.

First, it was difficult for me to participate in some village livelihood activities due to safety concerns regarding the rough topography in the mountains. For example, collecting medicinal plants in the wet season required both an excellent level of fitness and a familiarity with the terrain which I did not possess

Seasonality was another concern. During the winter months, villagers tended to leave for work in other places because the weather was unsuitable for farming or NTFP collection. Conducting research during this period proved not as rewarding as in the summer since at least half of villagers were absent. However, there were certain practices that could only be observed at this time (such as fuel wood collection).

Due to these challenges, most of my information resulted from interviews and daily conversations. Regarding the interviews, I often planned them well in advance and conducted them as efficiently as possible. But, it was not as easy as in the Naxi village where there were always people around to talk to.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology I employed to examine how Chinese NGO inter-relationships have influenced rural landscape change in China. I have employed both discourse analysis and ethnographic work to determine the structures in which eNGOs and other actors operate and interact, and the agency revealed through interactions between and within the institutional actors. Utilization of these methods allows researchers to understand the discursive and material construction of the relationships between humans and nature. Moreover, such research interrogates the conceptual and material flows that link institutional actors across time and space. To this end, a multi-scale perspective is therefore required: such perspectives are practiced through discourse analysis at different levels, as well as through multi-sited ethnographies.

Chapter 5

A multi-scalar analysis of eNGO relationships

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of how practices of eNGOs in China are influenced by the power dynamics at play between eNGOs and other institutional actors at various scales. These actors include international donors, international NGOs (iNGOs) and different levels of Chinese government.

The chapter explores the complexity at three levels: international, domestic and local. First, Green Watershed (GW) will be introduced in Section 5.1. In Section 5.2, the international linkages of Chinese eNGOs will be discussed, employing GW as an example of domestic eNGOs and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as an example of international eNGOs in China. In Section 5.3, the interactions between GW and central and provincial governments will be revealed through an analysis of a renowned anti-dam campaign led by GW.

Section 5.4 will analyse how power dynamics beyond the local scale can influence eNGO local practice. In this section, the Lashi programme, a local participatory project of GW, will be introduced to demonstrate how donor-government and NGO-government relations beyond the local scale have significantly impacted on GW's local project.

By revealing the interactions across various scales, I argue that rather than being simply constrained by state regulations and policies as suggested in the literature, Chinese eNGOs are embedded in more complex power relations. First, while the international linkages of eNGOs in China significantly influence eNGO agendas, the implications of the relationships between the international partners and the Chinese government have to

be considered. Furthermore, due to the diverse interests and priorities at play at the various levels of government, NGO-government relations are heterogeneous and constantly changing. As a result, an insight into the power relations of eNGOs beyond the local level is crucial to understanding the influence of eNGO's local practice.

5.1 Green Watershed

Green Watershed, a domestic eNGO based in Yunnan Province, was established by Dr. Yu Xiaogang (hereafter referred to as Dr. Yu) in 2000. Like many other NGOs in China, GW is legally registered as a "non-enterprise civil unit". GW has two offices: one in the provincial capital, Kunming; the other in Lashi town, Lijiang, where the Lashi programme has been implemented since the initiation of GW.

From 2000 to 2007, GW mainly focused on its Lashi programme, with Oxfam US being its initial funding partner. Prior to 2000, Dr. Yu was conducting his PhD research in Lashi while employed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a US-based eNGO. Lashi Lake is located in north-western Yunnan, a region bordering Sichuan and Tibet provinces. This region, which has been identified as a biodiversity hotspot, has attracted many international organisations either operating locally or supporting projects indirectly, including WWF, TNC and Rare[18] (Hathaway, 2007; Xu & Wilkes, 2004). For example, TNC started its China programme in this region, setting up its first office in Lijiang City. The region is not only a hotspot of biodiversity but also of eNGO projects. As a result, the region provides a great opportunity for observing the influence of international agenda and discourses on the environment.

The GW Lashi programme aimed to address resource issues around Lashi Lake, a wetland close to the major tourist city of Lijiang. The lake was dammed in the mid 1990s to supply water to Lijiang. Hydro construction and other land use policies (including the setting up of the Lashi Nature Reserve in 1998 and the national logging ban in 1999) have significantly impacted on the local communities. In response to these impacts, GW initiated several participatory projects in its programme, including a Water User

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[18] Rare is a conservation organisation supporting various campaigns worldwide. See http://www.rare.org/

Association (WUA), fisheries management, community development, and a micro-watershed management project.

Two underlying factors contributed to the establishment of GW. First, Dr. Yu studied for his PhD degree in Thailand, wherein grassroots NGOs work on environmental and social issues. His personal experience and network led him to have faith in the NGO movement. Second, the interests of Dr. Yu and of Oxfam USA matched regarding the concept of participatory watershed management. It was the time when Oxfam USA sought to initiate a cross-border programme pioneering the concept of participatory watershed management. China was a difficult field for the Americans to become involved in, so it was essential for Oxfam USA to work with an insider if they wanted to become involved in watershed management in China. When the head of Oxfam's Mekong Initiative programme encountered Dr. Yu, and was certain of Dr. Yu's determination to practice this concept, he convinced Oxfam USA to grant money to Dr. Yu personally, despite Oxfam's policy of granting money only to NGOs with track records. Meanwhile, he urged Dr. Yu to set up an NGO to continue cooperation with Oxfam USA (personal communication with the former head of the Oxfam Mekong Initiative, May 2013). Oxfam USA soon included the Lashi programme under the broader framework of its "Mekong Resource Strategy".

Besides the Lashi programme, GW also put efforts into advocacy, drawing attention to the social impacts of large dams. From 2003 to 2005, GW took a leading role in the campaign against the dams on the Nu River (upstream of the Salween River). It was through this campaign that GW and its director, Dr. Yu, became internationally well-known.

Since 2008, Green Watershed has initiated two programs targeting not only the local level, but also a broader scale. These programs dealt with disaster management and green banking. The activities included capacity building, campaigning and policy-advocacy.

Before 2012, GW mainly depended on international funding sources, similar to the majority of eNGOs in China. More than 90% of its annual budget came from international donors, primarily from Oxfam. Oxfam USA was the major donor before 2005/2006. After 2006, the Lashi programme was transferred to Oxfam Hong Kong

(Oxfam HK). Other funding sources included the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Prize money awarded to Dr. Yu, including the Goldman Environmental Award and the Magsaysay Award, was also used to support GW projects.

5.2 International linkages of eNGOs in China

The practices of Chinese eNGOs are strongly influenced by the agendas of their international partners. These international agendas and ideologies are in turn modified to fit the Chinese context. In particular, donor-government relationships in China can significantly influence and modify these agendas and ideologies.

The interactions engaged in by eNGOs and their international linkages may be observed in the cases of two different NGOs: GW and TNC. First, the GW case shows how eNGOs' priorities can be significantly influenced by the agendas of their changing donors. In the case of GW, for example, the organisation had to adapt its programme to fit the funding priorities of its various donors. Meanwhile, influences of GW's international donors were also conditioned by the relationship between the donors and the Chinese government. Second, TNC's national park programme shows that, while TNC's agendas were shaped by western ideologies, they were compromised with Chinese politics. Both examples shed light on how complex power relations may result in profound, albeit unexpected influences, both discursively and materially. Moreover, the two cases will show that international NGOs also modify their *modus operandi* in China.

5.2.1 GW and its partners

As previously mentioned, the Lashi programme was initially supported by Oxfam USA based on compatible interests vis-à-vis participatory watershed management between GW and Oxfam's Mekong Initiative at the time. Around 2005/2006, Oxfam USA decided to transfer its funded projects in China to Oxfam HK. Comparatively speaking, it was easier for a Hong Kong NGO to operate in China, although Hong Kong NGOs/donors have been recognized as "outside agencies" (*jingwai zuzhi,* 境外組織). Following the transfer, Oxfam HK gradually withdrew its support due to different priorities and political

concerns. Since 2009, GW has shifted its major funding sources to domestic donors, which have requested GW to work on national policy advocacy rather than pursuing on-the-ground projects. Due to the cessation of funding from Oxfam HK, GW has gradually shifted its focus away from the Lashi programme since 2009.

There were two possible reasons why Oxfam HK stopped supporting the Lashi programme. First, the programme was initially funded by Oxfam USA, which strongly endorsed the concept of participatory watershed management. Oxfam HK took over the project due to an organisational re-structure within Oxfam, rather than supporting the concept as its main objective. In fact, there was even conflict between Oxfam USA and Oxfam HK regarding the Oxfam Mekong programme in China, as the two offices held different ideas about their missions (personal communication with the former director of the Oxfam's Mekong Initiatives, May, 2013). In general, GW staff members considered that Oxfam USA, compared to Oxfam HK, was easier to work with for its understanding of the project ideology and flexibility in project implementation.

The second reason why Oxfam US stopped funding was that friction arose between Oxfam HK and a Chinese state agency (the Education Department) in 2010. Since then, Dr. Yu considered that Oxfam HK has tended to support less aggressive projects, such as poverty alleviation or disaster management and tended to associate with less sensitive groups. And, because GW has been known for its rights-based campaign, it could prove be difficult for Oxfam HK to co-operate with GW. The friction was due to Oxfam HK's campaign of recruiting volunteers and hosting training programmes for labour rights in several universities. This resulted in the issue of a notice by the Communist Party Commission of the Education Department declaring that all universities should terminate any cooperation with Oxfam HK and should be aware that Oxfam HK was an anti-government organisation[19]. Although the Department later withdrew and denied this notice, this incident indeed had an impact on Oxfam's relationship with the Chinese

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[19] Although the original notice was withdrawn, this incident was widely reported by media and the original notice can still be found in the news. See Guan (2010)   and BBC Chinese (2010).

government[20], and by extension, consequently impacted on Chinese NGOs working with Oxfam HK, including GW.

Although the view of Oxfam HK as becoming less aggressive was denied by a former senior staff member (personal communication, October, 2011), I found Dr. Yu's observation reasonable. Compared to programmes in other countries emphasising social justice, Oxfam's projects in China mainly concentrate on livelihood support and disaster management. This does not mean that Oxfam does not support any rights-based or social justice projects. However, Oxfam HK tends to be less aggressive about its work in China. Moreover, as the Lashi area is comparatively better off than many other places in Yunnan due to its close proximity to Lijiang, supporting livelihood activities would not be a priority for funding by Oxfam HK. Oxfam HK's "mild" strategy may be seen as a dilemma peculiar to international NGOs in China. If Oxfam HK acted more aggressively, it could be forced to shut down, as was the case with some domestic NGOs which received significant funding from international donors deemed "sensitive" (*min gan*,敏感)[21]. In order to sustain their survival, international donors often have to compromise. It is therefore questionable if international linkages of Chinese eNGOs create a more open and democratic society in China, an argument supported by some researchers (Chen, 2010; Cooper, 2006; Ho, 2001). Instead, the interactions between GW and its international donors show that international NGOs seem to be more conservative and tend to play safe politically. At the same time, domestic donors are becoming increasingly important in influencing the agendas of Chinese eNGOs.

In certain cases, international NGOs may be particularly cautious about their operations and attempt to avoid any conflict with the Chinese government. The next section will use

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[20] NGOs funded by Oxfam HK are often required to notify the provincial government of their projects, as an unwritten rule. For example, GW was constantly interrogated by the local government regarding their project activities. Due to this complexity, some Chinese NGOs now tend to cooperate with domestic donors to avoid governmental interference.

[21] For example, a domestic NGO based in Guizhou province which supported labour rights was forced to shut down, because it received funding from an American partner National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Chinese authorities believe this foundation intends to overthrow the Communist Party by campaigning for democracy.

TNC as an example showing how international eNGOs operating in China may modify their practice according to the Chinese context.

5.2.2 TNC, an international eNGO in China

My use of TNC as an example is to show that, compared with domestic eNGOs, international eNGOs in China more readily adopt the concepts of their international programmes. But, their operations are probably more restricted by the Chinese political system. I use the national park project of TNC China, which was designed and campaigned for a national park system, to showcase the dilemma for international eNGOs operating in China. While on the one hand, TNC has introduced new conservation concepts and tools into China, on the other it has been required to compromise its conservation goals in line with the Chinese reality.

TNC initiated its China programme with the national park project in 1999. The project aimed to build a country-wide national park system, starting with pioneering projects in Yunnan. Its effort later contributed to several national parks in Yunnan. The boom in national parks resulted from the combined efforts of TNC and the interest in tourism development of provincial and prefecture governments. While the national park system is a popular international conservation tool introduced into China, TNC's project outcome was largely modified because the provincial and prefectural governments prioritised tourism development over other concerns. As a result, the benefits of conservation and local livelihoods were compromised. Although TNC China was aware of the negative impacts, however, it was difficult for the organisation to contend with the governments because as a US-based organisation, it did not want to get into political controversy which would eventually result in problems for its organisational operation.

TNC's effort in establishing a national park system had two rationales. First, the conservation strategy of TNC worldwide, originating from its US headquarters, has been to protect an area by purchasing or accepting donated land. However, this strategy is

impossible in China because in theory there is no private land[22]. Consequently, TNC China had to seek other ways of conserving the environment. The national park system provided a model for conservation, after Yellowstone National Park was established in the US in 1873. Therefore, a national park system seemed to be a suitable alternative for TNC China.

Second, the distinct relationship between NGOs and the Chinese state also encouraged TNC to promote the concept of national parks, as national parks are suggested as tools for patriotic education in China (Zhou, 2008). In China, many NGOs consider that one of the most efficient ways for their operations to succeed is to cooperate with the government. In other words, maintaining smooth relationships with the government is crucial to implementing their projects. Since the establishment of national parks emphasises the state's power and control, the project thus helps to strengthen government influence over the country's natural resources. Under these circumstances, one can understand why TNC has been striving to build a national park system in China.

However, the main purpose of government support for the national parks is not conservation but tourism, one of the major income sources for Yunnan Province. Establishing more national parks was identified as a key strategy for developing tourism in Yunnan during the period 2008-2015 (Huang & Huang, 2009). In a book titled *Yunnan national parks: From theory to practice*, which was co-edited by the Yunnan government and TNC, Jieng and Song (2008) clearly state that "the national park" is a brand which has been successful in attracting several international hotel consortiums in Yunnan.

The government's tourism oriented ideology for establishing national parks has resulted in negative impacts on environment and local livelihoods. These impacts may be observed in Pudacuo National Park, the first national park set up in Yunnan with TNC's support[23]. The area in which Pudacuo National Park is located has suffered from tourism

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[22] Although, theoretically, all land in China is state owned, TNC China is pioneering a project in preserving areas where the use rights are contracted to private owners.

[23] The process of TNC's establishment of Pudacuo National Park as part of the overall national park project is detailed by Zinda (2014).

development due to the lack of a cap on the total number of daily visitors[24] and pollution from park-run vehicles and boats (although all buses operated inside the park are supposed to be electric powered, they are mostly diesel powered). As a result, some express their concern about the impact on the environment. A TNC senior staff member told me that an endemic fish species (*Schizothoracin shudu)* in the area was facing critical survival challenge because the lake has been contaminated since the park was established.

Besides environmental impacts, the local communities within Pudacuo National Park also experience socio-economic impacts. TNC staff members revealed that there was frequent conflict between the local community and the operating company monopolising tourism resources, whose largest shareholder is the provincial government. These conflicts were mainly caused by restrictions on livelihood activities due to park management. There are four villages around Pudacuo Park. Their main economic activities were horseback riding and animal herding prior to the establishment of the park. However, the livelihood opportunities have been restricted[25]. Village L, located within the Park, has been most heavily impacted. Horse trekking is no longer allowed inside the park and was only permitted within a particular lakeside area nearby. The horse-trekking business in that particular area used to be operated exclusively by H villagers. Therefore, the policy of the park not only limited the livelihood opportunities of village L, but also intensified the potential conflicts between village H and others. Moreover, the number of domestic animals grazing within the Park is limited. To compensate for the loss, the operating company agreed to pay the residents in village L 50,000 RMB per household, but the villagers were dissatisfied. They often protested against the operating company, because they considered their sacrifice might be worth more than 50,000 RMB. The conflicts later became a common occurrence.[26]

Pudacuo is not a unique case demonstrating negative impact from tourism development. In 2009, the Yunnan government announced the opening of Laojun Mountain National Park. Initially, TNC intended to preserve the more pristine areas by limiting tourism.

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[24] It is estimated that there are over 3,000 visitors per day during peak seasons (Jieng & Song, 2008).
[25] Interview with TNC staff, several local residents within and oustside Pudacuo National Park.
[26] See Zinda (2011) for the issue of insufficient compensation.

Although TNC's proposal was initially approved, it was later modified and overturned. The ecologically valuable area was again designed to be developed for tourism.

Besides these material impacts on the environment which were unintended by TNC, the concept of national park also had discursive impacts. National parks contribute to a popular Chinese discourse of "ecological resettlement" (*shengtai yimin*,生態移民), a term suggesting the relocation of communities for the purpose of environmental protection, or more broadly speaking, for any development which can be described as environmentally friendly. Common cases in China are relocating herders and limiting grazing to protect grassland, or relocating communities for hydropower construction which is said to be beneficial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But, the discourse of ecological resettlement is highly debatable, both in terms of its ecological benefits and social impacts. [For example, see Klein, Harte, and Zhao (2007); Yeh (2005, 2009)]. The national park project also legitimises this discourse. In an article written by a senior provincial officer who went on a study tour in America arranged by TNC, the author argues:

> After we studied the national parks in US and Canada, we suggest to…promote ecological resettlement in order to minimise human disturbance… there are still many inhabitants in many protected areas in Yunnan, which make it difficult to implement environmental protection. (Zhou, 2008, pp. 156-158)

Although TNC was influential in introducing the concept of national parks, a popular conservation tool among international environmental discourses, the national park project in fact had unintended consequences, consequences that largely resulted from the strong dominance of the different levels of government in designing and operating the national parks.

According to TNC staff, although TNC was highly aware of these negative impacts and of the way the government intervened in modifying the operation and design (which were not agreed by TNC), TNC could not confront the government due to the political reality in China. In order to secure its smooth operation, TNC always tries to be recognised as a good partner of the Chinese government. This can be observed in two cases.

First, TNC declares its position of non-involvement in politics on many occasions. In its meetings with government officials, TNC staff often emphasise the TNC "three-non" policy: non-government, non-profit and non-resistance. Second, TNC tends to avoid co-operating with potential controversial organisations/people. For example, although both TNC and GW have long histories of working in the Lashi area and Dr. Yu was a former staff member of TNC[27], the organisations rarely cooperate with each other. The only project undertaken in cooperation was the alternative energy project which supported biogas installation in the early 2000s. After GW's involvement in the Nu River campaign, it was almost impossible for TNC to cooperate with GW. In fact, the former TNC country director stated that "'radical' anti-dam activists" were difficult to cooperate with (Chen, 2010, p. 516), implying zero possibility of cooperating with GW. However, TNC's "non-resistance" policy also brought its critiques within the eNGO circle. I was told that many domestic eNGOs (especially those in Yunnan) complained that TNC was acting as if it were a government agency.

Nevertheless, TNC does not consider itself close to the government. Despite much collaboration between TNC with various levels of Chinese government, including the Green Olympic campaign with the central government, the long term national park project with the Yunnan provincial government, and various development projects at the local level, many TNC staff consider that TNC still faces difficulties in gaining full trust from the Chinese government because it is a US-based organisation (personal communication with several TNC staff members in the Beijing and Yunnan offices, October, 2011).

The cases of GW and TNC demonstrate that eNGOs in China are influenced by the agendas or concepts of their international partners (either donors or of iNGO headquarters). While GW has been supported by Oxfam due to their matched interests in participatory watershed management, TNC China has adopted the national park model as a priority for conserving China's environment. Nevertheless, the influences of international linkages are limited due to the restrictions imposed by the Chinese political

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[27] See Hathaway (2007) for TNC's work at Lashi Lake.

reality, diverse (sometime conflicting) agendas between donors and Chinese governments, and the growing presence of domestic donors.

5.3 ENGO-government relationship: The Nu River campaign

This section uses a campaign led by GW as an example to demonstrate how actors beyond the local scale can influence eNGO practices, by unpacking the power relations among national government, provincial government and GW that signified this campaign. This campaign also demonstrates the diversity of interests among different levels of Chinese government that renders NGO-government relationship heterogeneous.

The Nu River dam controversy began in 2003 when the development of thirteen cascading dams on the Nu River was announced. The announcement of the Nu River dam project was made almost at the same time that the river was enlisted in the "Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage Site" by UNESCO. Nu River, which is said to be one of the region's last free-flowing rivers, is shared by China, Thailand, and Burma.[28] It had not been previously subjected to hydropower development due to its undesirable geographical features. However, with a thirst for developing the remaining hydropower in the region, a giant hydropower company announced the plan in 2003 which was welcomed by the provincial government.

Following his previous research into involuntary resettlement due to the Man-wan Dam on the Lancang River (upstream of the Mekong), Dr. Yu was particularly concerned with the social impacts on the affected communities. When he became aware of the proposed dams on the Nu River, he considered it necessary to raise his concerns about the environmental and social impacts of the project, which may have eventually benefitted certain interest groups but would negatively impact on the local communities.

In Beijing, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) had agreed with the dams and planned to propose them to the State Council for final approval. But because the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) had not been

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[28] Although there is no completed dam on the mainstream of the Nu River, many tributaries have been dammed.

informed of the proposed plan before 2003, no environmental impact assessment had been done.

Due to the potential profits from the proposed projects, the provincial government was very enthusiastic about the plan. In order to support dam construction, the Yunnan government mobilised the academic community in the province to argue the economic, social, cultural, even environmental benefits. This may be seen in a book (Feng & He, 2004) based on a conference held by Yunnan academics. According to Dr. Yu and others, the standpoints were divided between experts in and outside of Yunnan during these meetings. While experts from Beijing highly doubted the benefits of the proposed dams in terms of economic, environmental and geological concerns, the local academics strongly advocated the decision, with merely a few in opposition[29]. In the book mentioned (Feng & He, 2004), TNC, which was the main force behind establishing the World Heritage Site, was mobilised by the government to support the dam.

In late 2003, another eNGO leader, Wang Yongcheng, joined forces with GW to push the campaign to another level. Wang, originally a journalist, also led an NGO, Green Earth Volunteers, based in Beijing. Drawing on Wang's journalism background, the two NGO leaders successfully drew the attention of both international and domestic societies, by voicing their concerns at international meetings and revealing the controversy in the national media (Yardley, 2005). By this time, the Nu River issue had become well-known. Many environmentalists, academics, and members of the general public expressed their deep concern and requested an environmental impact assessment. As a result, in 2004, Prime Minister Wen announced the suspension of the Nu River dams project pending further investigation, as this project had to be "carefully discussed and decided on scientifically" (Yardley, 2005). This moratorium has been seen as a victory for eNGOs although some considered it only a temporary relief at that time. Indeed, environmentalists found that the construction work never stopped on the Nu River dams despite the rejection of the project by the central government. In China's 12th Five-Year

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[29] A distinguished river expert from Yunnan University was opposed to the plan initially but has remained silent since he received strong attacks from other academics. Of course his view is not included in the record of government-sponsored meetings.

Plan (2011-2015), the project was mentioned again. The pressure of reducing carbon emissions has been used in recent debates to support the dams. The decision to resume the Nu River dams as part of China's 12th Five-Year Plan was confirmed in January 2013, when the State Council announced plans for five of the thirteen dams to start construction by 2015. Regardless of the final outcome of the dam project, the moratorium in 2004 did signal the cautious attitude of the central government towards such large-scale projects which may bring enormous and unexpected consequences, since political stability, after all, is the main concern of the party-state.

The story did not end when the environmentalists gained their victory in 2004. The provincial government started to target Yu and his organisation. GW almost failed its "annual checks" by the overseeing provincial agency and was nearly forced to cease its operations in 2006 and 2007. Meanwhile, Dr. Yu's passport was confiscated by the provincial government and he was banned from international travel for several years. However, when he was awarded the Goldman Prize for environmental achievement in 2006, Beijing authorities requested the provincial government to allow Dr. Yu to attend the award ceremony in the USA.

The tolerance of the central government versus the hostile provincial government is just one example of many, showing the different attitudes of different levels of government towards GW. In China, it is commonly found that different government agencies hold different attitudes toward NGOs, due to the diverse benefits and concerns (Zhu, 2007). In fact, it may also be an over generalisation to state that the provincial government is homogenously hostile to GW and its campaign. According to Dr. Yu, there was hidden wave for reform within the Yunnan provincial government at the time of the anti-dam campaign. The reformists were perhaps more sympathetic towards GW's Nu River campaign. This was possibly the reason why GW survived despite threats to close down the organisation during the annual review.[30]

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[30] NGOs in China have to pass an "annual review" by responsible authorities. The annual review of GW is carried out by the Bureau of Civil Affairs, Yunnan Province.

The Nu-River campaign shows that the diverse interests of different levels of government present both challenges and opportunities for eNGOs. In terms of opportunities, Mertha (2009) refers to "fragmented authoritarianism", meaning that even though China is an authoritarian state, its diverse political concerns actually create room for policy entrepreneurs (such as NGOs) to frame issues and gain support from the public. In terms of challenges, this case also suggests that written rules and regulations from an authoritarian state may not be the only or biggest challenge for eNGO operation in China, despite the fact that the literature on Chinese NGOs often stresses the constraints and limits posed by state regulation and policy (Hildebrandt, 2011; Schwartz, 2004).

In the next section, focus will be upon GW's local project. This will complete the picture of complex power dynamics between actors across scale.

5.4 Lashi programme

The previous sections of this chapter demonstrate the complex power dynamics of eNGOs in China and other institutional actors beyond local, including international partners and central and provincial governments. In this section, I will examine how power relations beyond the local can have significant influence locally. GW's Lashi programme will be used as an example. First, Lashi Lake and the resource issues in the lake area, as the background of GW's Lashi programme, will be introduced. Following this, two projects, the Watershed Management Committee (WMC) and Water Users Association (WUA), will be discussed to show how the relationships between local governments (city, township and village levels) and GW have been changing due to a) different priorities of local government compared to provincial and central governments; and b) power relations involving actors beyond local, including donors and other levels of governments. The complexity of power relations revealed through the interactions between local governments and GW also suggest that a bottom-up, participatory resource management project is unavoidably political.

5.4.1 Lashi Lake

My fieldwork was mainly conducted in three villages (Dayu, Yangyuchan and Xihu) in

the Lashi Lake area, where Green Watershed implements its projects. Lashi Lake, which is located in Lashi town, comes under the administration of Lijiang City. (See Map 2.) Lijiang region borders Sichuan and Tibet provinces, and has been identified as a biodiversity hotspot and has attracted many international agencies and organisations as mentioned earlier. Lijiang, a prefectural-level city, is a famous tourism destination. Old Lijiang city was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Lashi town, like other towns and villages surrounding Lijiang, is predominantly populated by Naxi31. Out of 16,000 people in Lashi town, the Naxi population accounts for 94%, while the Yi, who live in the upper catchment of Lashi Lake, represent only 4% (Green Watershed, 2008). Both Naxi and Yi are declared as ethnic minority groups in China32. Lashi comprises twenty-eight natural villages, which are under six village committees (administrative villages).

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[31] "Naxi" are officially classified as an ethnic minority group. People with the family names "Mu" (木) and "He" (和) are possible descendents from local Naxi. Others are Naxi because their ancestors (either Han or other ethnic groups) migrated to Lijiang and were integrated into the local Naxi over generations.
[32] In China, the Naxi population is around 300,000; approximately 90% of Naxi live in the Lijiang area. The Yi, on the other hand are scattered through several provinces, and the Yi are the seventh largest ethnic group in China with a population of over seven millions (Harrell, 2001).
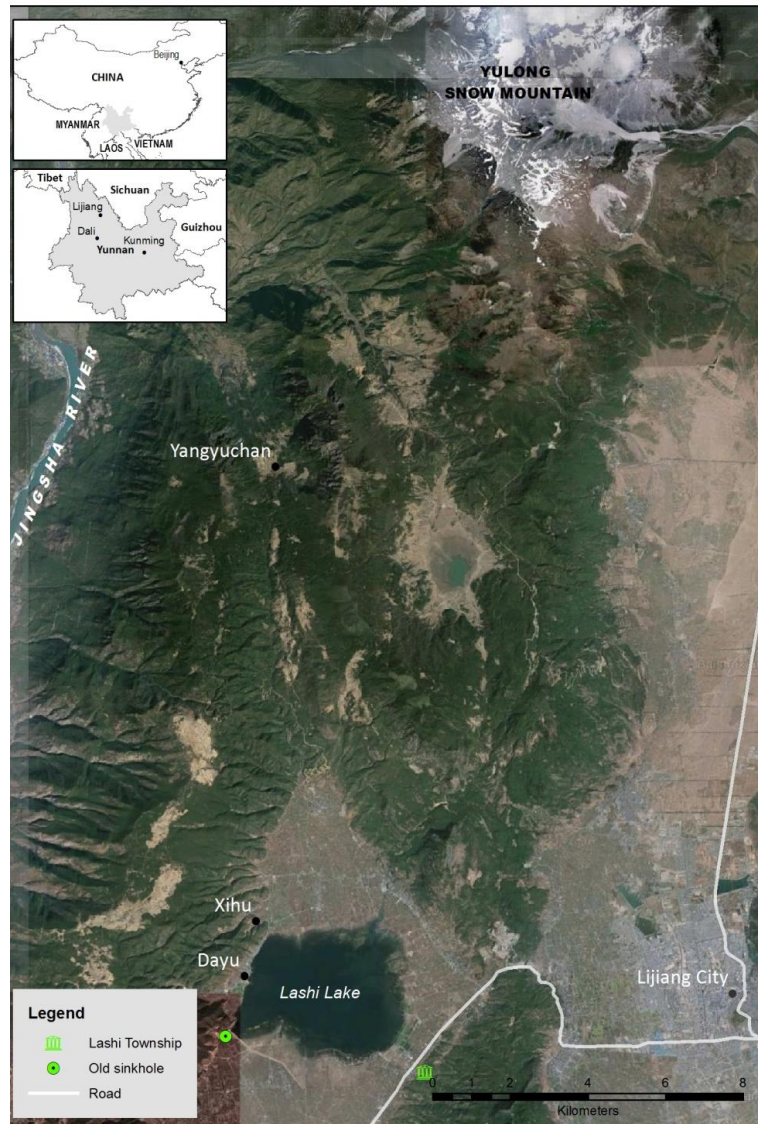
Map 2 Location of Lashi Lake, Yunnan, China. Source: Google Map

Lashi town and Lijiang city are strongly tied to each other. Lashi is located eight kilometres from Lijiang city which has been centre of the local economic activities for centuries. Lijiang is not only important for the local economy but also for the regional economy, as it has been an important stop on the Southern Silk Road, also known as "The Tea-Horse Road" connecting trade through the south-western provinces of China, Tibet, and India.[33] As the closest basin to Lijiang, Lashi has provided considerable resources to

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[33] The route is named "Tea-Horse Road" because Chinese tea and Tibetan horses were the commonly traded goods   (Freeman & Ahmed, 2011).

the city, mainly agricultural and forestry products. In fact, the landscape change of Lashi has been greatly shaped by the development of Lijiang City.

The first time I went to Lashi Lake was in the summer of 2009 before commencing my PhD studies[34]. I was introduced by TNC staff to a Naxi family in Lashi. My host family treated me with fresh vegetables and apples they collected from their home garden, and cooked dinner for me using a bio-gas cooker. The next day I biked to the office of GW located in Dayu, a waterfront village. Before I left my host family, I phoned GW's local staff for directions. A staff member said, when you get close to Dayu village, just ask people, "Where is Yu Xiaogang's place?" This method worked. I was directed by several villagers to the office which was housed in a traditional Naxi residence. I then had lunch with GW staff and watched a video about the Lashi programme. After I left GW's office, I walked to the lakeside alone. There were a few cattle on a stretch of grassland which seemed to extend into the centre of the lake. It was a quiet afternoon stroll. I left Lashi the next day, without knowing that I would conduct my PhD research in this place where the area appeared to be very tranquil. This tranquillity obscured extensive power negotiations among actors resulting from continuous and often controversial development and conservation projects.

Nowadays, Lashi Lake is a freshwater lake with an area of approximately 1,000 hectares. The feature of the Lashi watershed is a basin which drains water from the hill-forests into the lake. The elevation of the watershed ranges from 2,440 to 3,840 metres above sea level. The area has wet and dry seasons. The rainy season usually starts in June/July and finishes around September/October. According to oral history, there was no lake several hundred years ago (at least twenty generations ago). Lashi was a basin with dense forest cover and livestock herding was the main livelihood activity at that time. Later, deforestation due to human settlement resulted in run-off from the slope area and water gradually accumulated and submerged more and more land (Liang, 2002).

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[34] I attended an anthropology conference (the 16th IUAES) in Kunming, Yunnan and later travelled to Lijiang where I sojourned for month.

In the past, the lake flooded and drained annually due to a geological sinkhole located on the south-west of the lake. There were floods and droughts alternatively but no severe disasters. After the1950s, the water level gradually became lower after the Communist PRC constructed many facilities around the area, including small dams and water pipelines. However, it is said that the regular and distinct hydro-cycles still benefited the local livelihoods. When the water receded in the dry season, the lake area became fertile land for farming. Every four to five years, the lake would totally dry up, and that would be the time when the land was most fertile for crops. The agricultural production was diverse: wheat, rapeseed (for oil), barley, broad beans and some other leguminous plants in winter; corn, soy bean and fruits (peach, plum and Chinese plum) in summer. Fishing was a casual activity utilising very simple gears; one could catch fish easily with baskets on the shore due to regular floods. Before the 1980s, Lashi town also produced rice for its own consumption. Later, it was no longer possible to grow paddy rice due to gradually decreased availability of irrigation water. The deceased water resource was mainly due to deforestation, and partly due to the changes caused by small dams and pipelines. Besides farming and fishing, animal raising (horses, cattle, pigs and chickens) was also an important livelihood activity since the wetland provided such good pasture.

In order to supply water to Lijiang city which developed as a popular tourism destination, the Lashi dam was initiated in 1994 and completed in 1998. The method of damming the lake was to block the sinkhole for storing water. Since then, local landscape and livelihood activities have dramatically changed. The lake was no longer a natural wetland maintaining the regular flood-dry cycle. A vast area of land was submerged permanently. Many fields above the designated flooded line have also been submerged in the rainy season more frequently than ever before, and now the water cannot be flushed through the sinkhole anymore. Villagers who lost their farmland and pasture had to seek alternatives for their survival. The pasture disappeared and people were forced to sell their livestock. An old lady in Dayu village told me: "We used to plant barley, wheat, broad beans, and kidney beans… whatever you can think about. All the land now under water used to be our land. We have lost a lot!"

Between 1994 and 1999, logging, fishing, and the harvesting of other natural resources became the area's main sources of cash income.

During that period, there was no longer any good timber around Lashi Lake due to extensive logging over the previous few decades. Young Naxi men had to team up to go to the forests in higher elevations seeking timber which was big and tall enough for sale. Many, if not all, villagers in their thirties and forties could tell stories about their logging days. The higher-level forest in fact belongs to the Yi ethnic group and according to Yi elders, some conflicts arose during the 1990s because of encroaching logging by the Naxi. In other words, deforestation in upland Yi villages has been a concern and was later included in GW's Lashi programme. I will discuss the forest protection project in the Yi village in Chapter 7.

Besides logging, two other types of natural resource use have also gradually become commercialised: bird-hunting and aquatic plant harvesting. In the past, waterfowl were seen as "pests" attacking the winter crops. Thus, the killing of birds was a means of protecting the farms. Although waterfowl were consumed as food, they were not preferred by Lashi locals[35]. In the past, a bird could only sell for one RMB. However, since waterfowls could be sold for a good price in the markets in Lijiang city, people now more often kill birds for cash using chemical poison. In 2011, one bird was sold for 30-40 RMB; some species (such as swans) can even be sold for 100-200 RMB.

The thirst for cash income also resulted in accelerated depletion of aquatic flora. A beautiful plant, *Ottelia acuminata* (Gagnepain) Dandy (*haicaihua*, 海菜花), which used to be consumed as salad by the locals, has become a popular dish for tourists because of its extremely soft texture. In the late 1990s, due to the rising demand from tourists, Lijiang businessmen started purchasing it in very large quantities. A local villager could collect more than 100 kilograms and was paid 50-60 RMB in a day. People considered it to be very profitable. Locals told me many stories about this plant. For example, people described how the lake shone with white radiance in the summer because of the floating

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[35] Some elders told me that waterfowl taste "fishy" and they preferred to eat forest birds.

white flowers, and the mid-autumn festival was the time when the flowers bloomed profusely. They expressed sorrow when they told me that the plant was totally extinct from the lake[36], and regretted collecting the flowers without any limit. The extinction might not be entirely due to over-harvesting, because this species has low environmental tolerance and is sensitive to pollution. Nevertheless, the unsustainable collecting practice certainly contributed to the fact that the plant community is no longer viable.

Since 1998, two other events have significantly changed the environment and livelihoods in Lashi. The first was the national logging ban (NFPP) declared in 1999. This policy covers the sloping area of the Lashi watershed, preventing potential deforestation activities by local government, business, and ordinary villagers. As a result, logging was no longer a viable income source.

The second event was that following TNC's advice, the government declared the Lashi wetland a provincial nature reserve in 1998 (later upgraded to a national nature reserve), and the Lashi Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau was established charged with its management. Since then, the Bureau has been one of the powerful actors in the resource governance in Lashi and has been creating complicated resource politics. In subsequent years, several regulations were declared for wetland protection, including a waterfowl hunting ban and seasonal fishing regulations. These restrictive regulations have made livelihoods more difficult for local villagers.

While fishing used to be a casual activity for men during the raining season, it became an important income source for many Lashi villagers at this point. Since the early 2000s, the increasing demand for fishing, along with other market factors led to the increasing usage of illegal fishing gear as well as the exploitation of more species than ever before. The pressure on fishery resources became intense and the resources decreased dramatically. Fishery resource management was one of the projects of GW's Lashi programme, which I will discuss in Chapter 6.

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[36] Lashi villagers told me that the plant is now totally extinct from the Lake. However, many restaurants in Lijiang still serve this dish and the owners insisted that the plant is from Lashi Lake. I assume that the plant may come from another area. If any exist in the Lashi Lake, the amount would be minimal.

Meanwhile, due to the loss of farmland, some Lashi villagers started to convert sloping land for potato and corn farming, a process that resulted in soil erosion, chemical runoff and flooding. In response to the problem, GW initiated a micro-watershed management project, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

5.4.2 Overview of the Lashi programme

In an attempt to address the resource issues in Lashi, GW set up the Lashi programme including five projects (see Table 1).

Table 1 : Projects of Lashi programme

Project	Characteristic	Major stakeholders	Major activities
Watershed Management Committee (WMC), discussed in Chapter 5	Watershed-based	Government agencies, eNGOs, representatives of local community	Meetings, negotiations
Water User Association (WUA) , discussed in Chapter 5	Inter-village	Community members across ten villages	Negotiations (regarding irrigation)
Fishery management, discussed in Chapter 6	Lake-based, targeting a certain village (Dayu)	Fishermen, especially in Dayu village	Fishing gear management
Community development in Yi community , discussed in Chapter 7	Village-based	Yangyuchan villagers	Livelihood development; environmental education
Micro-watershed management ,d iscussed in Chapter 8	Village - based	Xihu villagers	agro-forestry activities; soil erosion prevention

Dr. Yu, claims that in order to achieve good governance of watershed management, all stakeholders should be included in the negotiation and decision-making process. The values of GW are reflected in its mission statement:

a) promote watershed management concepts for public;
b) promote participatory management as the policy and strategy of governments and other NGOs regarding development and conservation of developing China's West;
c) support local communities to strengthen institutions and capabilities of natural resource management; improve the opportunity for disadvantaged groups to participate in watershed management;
d) promote the development of green industry; and
e) forming a national network to promote watershed protection and sustainable development for China's West. (n.d.-ctranslated)

In short, GW emphasises three key concepts in its overall programme: participatory management, social justice, and sustainable development. Participatory management is seen as a process to achieve the goals of social justice and sustainable development.

Although many people (including GW local staff) perceive the five projects as independent from each other, I found that this portfolio of projects came under a sophisticated framework, especially after I had interacted with Dr. Yu many times. The Watershed Management Committee is the backbone of this framework to support the other localised projects. Other projects may be adjusted according to the real needs of the communities. The existence of the committee demonstrates the fact that the Lashi project is not simply an environmental project, but also a governance project.

In the following paragraphs, I use the Watershed Management Committee (WMC) and the Water User Association (WUA) of the Lashi programme, to illustrate how GW's relationships with actors across scales constitute a key factor informing their practices and shaping the opportunities and constraints of GW's local operations. The discussion shows how GW's practices are embedded in the complex power relationships.

5.4.3 The Watershed Management Committee (WMC)

GW set up the WMC, a basin-wide institution, with the initiation of the Lashi programme. The rationale for this committee was to provide a formal platform for different stakeholders to communicate with each other regarding watershed management. Despite initial success, the function of the committee was later collapsed due to several incidents, mainly pressure from the provincial government and tension between foreign donors and the local government.

The WMC consisted of representatives of county and township governments, various agencies including the Forestry Bureau, the Water Resources Bureau, The Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau, village representatives and several NGOs. Under this committee, there was a management office located inside the township government office, directed by the chairwoman of the Federation of Women (township level). The original focus of the Lashi programme was to strengthen the capacity of the WMC. According to the former director of Oxfam's Mekong Initiative, "the establishment and smooth operation of a Lashi Watershed Management Committee (WMC)… was at the heart of the Oxfam America grant" (Ounsted, 2004b, p. 7).

Initially, the Lashi township government welcomed GW and its programme. The mayor of the time was highly interested in the concept of participatory management and cooperated well with GW until she was promoted to another position. She also joined a tour to other Mekong countries to study participatory watershed management. The first two years of the Lashi programme was a honeymoon for GW and the local government. In the early days of the programme, the committee was functional: many affairs were discussed through this platform, such as the declining fishery resource issues.

However, the relationship between the township government and GW deteriorated afterwards, and the function of the WMC gradually diminished over the years. The worsened relationship resulted from several incidents, arising from interactions among various institutional actors. But the most influential factor between GW and the local government was the Nu River campaign. Although the Nu River campaign was not directly related to the Lashi area, local government (including county and township levels)

were instructed by the provincial government to keep their eyes on GW's operations due to the involvement of GW in the campaign. As the Nu River campaign involved a cross-border resource issue and GW was more closely associated with international NGOs, such involvement was suggested to be counter-productive for GW to work effectively in a Chinese framework (Ounsted, 2004a) .

Moreover, changing donor-government relations have had a significant influence on the Lashi programme. More specifically, the relationship between Oxfam and the local government impacted on the GW-government relationship. Initially, GW was welcomed by the local government because of its ability to attract foreign funding, particularly because Dr. Yu personally had strong connections with his international partners (Hathaway, 2007).This is commonly seen in NGO-local government relations in China, as Cooper (2006) suggests that local officials are often attracted to work with eNGOs for their financial resources.

In fact, governments are not usually considered by Oxfam as primary partners, but Oxfam USA had to adapt to China's political system. So it included both Lashi township and Lijiang city governments as partners (Ng & Fuller, 2001). However, disagreements developed between Oxfam and the local government throughout the project years, particularly concerning the idea of "participatory resource management". As documented, Oxfam USA and local governments had different understandings of the notions of "community-based resource management" and "participation" (Ng & Fuller, 2001, p. 8). For example, Oxfam's original programme target was the Yi villagers, who had been comparatively disadvantaged in the Lashi area. But, the township mayor insisted that Oxfam had to include the Naxi villages in project planning (ibid). On the one hand, it seemed logical to include the Naxi communities as one of the stakeholder groups to complete the goal of "participation". In reality, the mayor had her own political agenda. As the Naxi constitute the main ethnic group in Lashi, she could not ignore the potential benefits for her people. Oxfam later compromised on this point.

In 2002, a change in the regulation regarding the local governments' eligibility for receiving foreign funding significantly changed the attitudes of both the township and city

governments vis-à-vis supporting Oxfam and GW. Due to a corruption scandal, the law was revised to forbid foreign funding being deposited through government agencies. As a result, the township government could no longer charge a commission from the international donor's funding. Some GW staff members considered this a significant reason why the township government was no longer interested in supporting GW. Moreover, the reduction in funding provided by Oxfam over the years also made it difficult for GW to support substantial infrastructure which the local governments were keen to have.

Finally, a local issue contributed to the worsening of the relationship between GW and the township government. The Lashi dam expansion project in 2002 created conflict between the township government and the local community, whose position was supported by GW. The locals became discontented because they had been suffering from the loss of farmland since the dam was built, and they were dissatisfied with the insufficient compensation offered and the unfair process of negotiation. GW, which sided with the Lashi villagers, resisted the expansion project which would flood further areas of land. The interests of the WMC members were divided as governmental stakeholders were forced to support the expansions. In Oxfam's evaluation, WMC lost its function then because the committee could no longer serve as a participatory platform but rather as a tool for local government to force policy implementation (Ounsted, 2004b)

5.4.4 Water User Association (WUA)

After the WMC ceased functioning, the local township government rarely cooperated with GW, except on one particular project, the Water User Association (WUA). The WUA, which was initiated in 2006, was designed as a participatory institution coordinating irrigation usage across eleven villages on the east side of Lashi Lake. Despite certain success in coordinating irrigation affairs, the overlapping personnel between the composition of this association and of the village administration blurred the identity of this participatory institution among rural villagers. The participatory resource management project was certainly influenced by power relations at the local level. This

project is relevant to the context of other GW projects which will be discussed in the following three chapters.

Cooperation between the township government and GW was possible at the time because GW had secured funding from the World Bank. While the central government may have tolerated GW for the Chinese state's reputation and for broader concerns about social stability, the local government appears to have been mainly interested in the material benefits it could gain through eNGOs. Its intention to collaborate with eNGOs on the basis of funding was visible in interactions between township officials and GW. During a meeting in 2011, the party chairman of the township explicitly stated that the government would consider cooperating with GW if the latter could provide material support; that is, funding for infrastructure.

GW was motivated to set up the WUA by its resolve to settle the conflict between farmers on the east side of Lashi Lake, whose fields are connected by irrigation channels. The irrigation water for these villages came from Jizi Dam, which was located approximately twenty kilometres upstream. In the collective period, there was communal management of the irrigation, both in terms of mechanisms and of infrastructure[37]. Since the reform era, the communal mechanism dissolved and lack of coordination has resulted in problems in water allocation and infrastructure maintenance, a common problem in rural China in the post-collective period, according to Muldavin (2000). On the east side of Lashi Lake, the upstream fields received water earlier than the downstream fields; often the farmers in the upper streams did not care if there was enough water for the lower sections. Hence they did not release water, delayed the release of water, or just wasted water on flooding the fields. There was a lack of any formal mechanism for discussion about how to allocate water for farmers in different sections, according to the individual needs, climate conditions and the crop of the season.

By setting up the association, GW attempted to establish a formal mechanism for farmers across eleven villages to negotiate a plan which farmers considered to be fair for upstream

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[37] Communal management was based on the Commune, the lowest level of administration in the collective period.

and downstream villages. A committee was established, and several managers were elected to handle the physical water-releasing work. World Bank funding supported the repair of a major section of the main irrigation channel, and farmers and township government were highly satisfied with the work. The WUA has been functioning and maintaining its role of managing the release of water twice each year. However, the complex politics surrounding the association led to further discussion about whether eNGOs can operate independently from government interference, and whether government power in fact helps to legitimise and strengthen eNGOs' local practice.

In theory, civil organisations would prefer to operate free from governmental interventions. The case of the WUA in Lashi reveals the dilemma facing many eNGOs operating in rural China. Governmental interventions, while sometimes diminishing the degree of autonomy of a civil organisation, may benefit NGO projects in some ways. This dilemma can be observed in the overlapping roles of leaders in both the WUA and in the village-level administration.

In 2011, the director and the deputy director of the WUA were also leaders of the administrative village committee. Both served as managers in charge of the physical work of releasing water in the early days of the WUA. Their efforts were appreciated and consequently they gained popularity among the villagers. Later, both became involved in the village level elections and were elected as the leaders of the administrative village committee.[38] They later became the director and deputy director of the WUA. But, they put little effort into the WUA's affairs and more into their political careers. The real operation of the association was run by Mr. X, the executive director.

Mr. X admitted that when both leaders were present, it was easier for him to mobilise community members and to accomplish the project goal. However, because the two persons failed to take responsibility for the operation and development of the WUA, Mr. X negotiated with them about whether they would step down from the board member election to be held in mid-2011, to create opportunities for others who were interested in

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[38] An administrative village committee includes several natural villages.

taking the responsibility. However, the two leaders not only refused to step down, but also arranged to elect all the village heads as board members of the WUA. The reasons behind the deliberation were due to the coming village committee election. By appointing village heads as board members, the two leaders could secure their support and continue to be elected leaders of the administrative village committee.

Certainly, the independence of this participatory organisation was undermined by the involvement of local politics. However, the responsible GW staff member and Mr. X compromised after negotiating with the two directors. Had the two directors withdrawn from the association, it may have been difficult for GW or Mr X to mobilise the villagers to participate. This is partly because rural Chinese often recognise the power legitimised by government. Because the two directors were village-level officials, the villagers listened to their orders and obeyed them. Therefore, the goal of building a self-regulating autonomous civil organisation by participatory approach was compromised by the goal of achieving an effective project target, which was mainly coordinating irrigation water allocation.

In this sense, government not only has control over water but more importantly, it acquires "a new mechanism to extend its influence in rural society" (Mosse, 1997, p. 265). Villagers participate in an organisation as a form of participation, but the essence of the organisation is no different from that of the government. In this way, the legitimacy of civil and participatory organisations is recognised by rural villagers in the context of the presence of governmental power.

This provides an angle from which to critically examine the meaning of a local participatory resource management institution. Using a participatory water user association project in India as example, Mosse (1997, 1999) argues that the farmers do not perceive (or desire) community management institutions as autonomous village institutions. Instead, for rural farmers, the newly established water user associations mean linkage to external authority and mediating access to external power and resources. WUAs, like other types of community-level resource management institutions, are

fundamentally "political" because they are concerned more with power than with the natural resources governed.

5.5 Conclusion

In the literature addressing Chinese NGOs, there have been many discussions about how state policy and regulation create challenges for Chinese NGO development (Hildebrandt, 2011; Kuhn, 2006; Schwartz, 2004), and how NGOs and their international linkages have worked through these challenges and consequently contributed to democratic space in China (Chen, 2010; Cooper, 2006). Analysis in this chapter shows that the power dynamics among eNGOs, their international partners and different levels of Chinese governments are much more complex in two aspects.

First, it appears that eNGOs in China, both domestic eNGOs and international eNGOs' China offices, have been influenced by their international partners in terms of agenda and ideologies, but their international partners have had to adapt to Chinese politics, and this has consequently modified the agendas and ideologies practiced in eNGOs' projects. For example, shifting donor-government relations, partly due to the incompatibility between the agendas of donors and the Chinese government, influence NGO-government relationships and NGO local operations. While eNGOs in China are seen by some as beneficial for a democratic society, international partners of eNGOs may either have to be less aggressive or completely avoid any sensitive activities. ENGOs in China, especially international eNGOs, are under heavy surveillance by the Chinese government and thus may perform more restrictively compared to their Chinese counterparts. I suggest that democratic space created by eNGOs associated with their international linkages is still limited in China. Moreover, international NGOs, such as Oxfam and TNC discussed in this chapter, are also influenced by their experience of partnering with Chinese eNGOs and different levels of government.

Second, GW's Nu River campaign and its Lashi programme demonstrate the effect of competing power relations between different levels of Chinese government, and the diverse interests of various government agencies. Governments at different levels may treat the same eNGO differently, at different times or due to various incidents. For

example, the national government may choose to tolerate or limit eNGO operations in order to maintain the state's reputation out of political concerns, while local government, on the other hand, may either suppress or cooperate with eNGOs for potential economic profit. The NGO-government relationship is therefore heterogeneous and rapidly changing.

In this chapter, in order to contextualise my case study of GW, I have analysed the power relations among eNGOs and other actors, in an attempt to understand the implications of power for eNGOs' agendas and operation. Situated within this context, the next three chapters will focus on the interactions at the local scale, and the rural landscape changes shaped by these interactions.

Chapter 6

Participatory Project in Practice:

Fishery Management in Dayu Village

This chapter, which is based upon a case study of GW's fishery project in Dayu village, problematises participatory resource management in practice. I will analyse how this particular project, which was structured around an international agenda of participatory approaches and discourses of sustainable development, encountered difficulties in mobilising collective action for fishery management. By analysing the missing links between the assumptions of a well-intended, western-originated conservation/development ideology and on-the-ground practice in rural China, this chapter demonstrates the complexity of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in reality.

Section 6.1 provides the background to Dayu village. This is followed by a geographic and historical account of the area, exploration of fishery resource governance, and of GW's intervention. In an attempt to address depleting fishery resources, GW undertook to institutionalise sustainable fishery management. To this end, the organisation adopted a participatory approach that involved setting up a fishery association and introducing relevant management rules. But, despite all efforts, GW has been unable to sustain the introduced institutions. In general, the participation of local fishers has been minimal, and illegal fishing gear is still being used. The factors contributing to these difficulties will be analysed in subsequent sections.

Section 6.2 will reveal how the participatory fishery project has become largely compromised due to tensions in local resource politics, tensions that have resulted from the conflicting interests of the different stakeholders including the township government, a state conservation agency, two eNGOs, and the local community.

Section 6.3 will demonstrate the degree to which lack of consensus regarding resource management between GW and the local community posed an additional challenge to the participatory project. While GW promoted the concept of sustainable development as the project goal, and proposed a ban on illegal gear as the solution for depleting resources, these ideas were not thoroughly negotiated with local knowledge.

Section 6.4, in which I discuss the reflexive relationship between social relations and participatory intervention, shows how NGO-community relationships have impacted on GW's project and, in the process, have influenced human-nature relationships.

6.1 Dayu village

In Chapter 5, I provided a brief introduction to the landscape of Lashi, and to GW's Lashi programme addressing resource issues. The impacts of the Lashi Dam and other resource use policies on each Lashi village have varied due to different geographic and social conditions, and each village has responded to the changes in different ways. In this section, I will first discuss Dayu village, its response to the changes in projects and policies of resource use, and how these responses have influenced fishery resources in Lashi.

Dayu (which means "fishing" in Mandarin) village was the focus of GW's fishery project due to its high dependency on fishing for livelihoods. Map 3 provides a close up view of Dayu village. Locals call the village "*Wa 'zen*", a Naxi term, meaning swampland/wetland (Mu, 2011). Dayu village, which stretches along the west side of the lake, is approximately seventeen kilometres from Lijiang City. Compared to other lakeshore villages, Dayu and its immediate neighbouring villages are the least accessible, and their dependence on fishery resources is the highest. The year 2003 saw the completion of a paved road connecting Dayu and Junliang village, in which the

administrative village centre is located. Currently, there are approximately 200 households belonging to three major clans: Li, Liang and He.

Map 3 Dayu village. It is evident that the land available for farming is limited. The village boundary is approximate. Source: Google Earth

Before 1994, agriculture and livestock herding were predominant in Dayu village. Some elder villagers mentioned that in the collective era, production was so high that the villagers could depend on a one-year harvest for self-consumption and for payment due to the government for three consecutive years. Thus, they did not have to worry about flooding in subsequent years. Dayu village was also said to own the highest number of sows compared to other Lashi villages, and during the first few years of the reform and open era (early 1980s) the village enjoyed its wealthiest era (Liang, 2002) .

But, since 1994, life in Dayu village has dramatically changed. Along with the neighbouring village of Xihu, Dayu has lost considerable land due to the damming of the

lake.[39] As a result, these villages became the most disadvantaged villages compared to other Naxi villages located around the lake. Nowadays, a household only owns one or two pigs, one head of cattle (if any), and no horses. Agriculture can no longer support the household economy. Whereas in the past, agricultural production was for self-consumption and/or for exchanging rice and feed (corn and potatoes) for pigs, nowadays there is not enough to support the farming family. People, therefore, need cash to purchase food and animal feed.

The dramatic shrinkage of farmland after the Lashi Dam construction (1994), the restrictions placed on waterfowl-hunting and aquatic plants harvesting due to the declaration of wetland reserve (1998) and the national logging ban (1999) resulted in an increasing demand for fishing as the only livelihood source for many Lashi villagers. Subsequently, many villages along the north and east lake shoreline developed tourism as an alternative, but villages such as Dayu in the west could not share the benefits of tourism development due to their remoteness.

Post 2002, pressure on natural resource use in Dayu became greater than ever when the local government announced the expansion project of the Lashi dam due to the rapidly-growing development of Lijiang. After the expansion, the farmland allocated to the Dayu villagers was only 0.8 *mu* per person.[40] In comparison, the area of farmland allocated to the Lashi villagers as a whole declined from 1.8 to 1.4 mu per person from 2000 to 2007 (Xi, 2001, 2002; S.-G. Yang, 2005; Yang, 2006, 2007; Yang, 2003, 2004)[41].

Fishing used to be a casual activity pursued in the wet season. Due to the abundant fishery resource, only a few casual rules were implemented vis-à-vis fishing practice in Lashi (Liang, 2002)[42], unlike forestry resources which was managed under strict customary rules. Since the early 2000s, fishing has become one of the primary income sources. But, the shift to more intensive fishing has put enormous pressure on the fishery

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[39] It was most probably due to the slightly lower altitude of the west side of the lake, so the land on this side was mostly submerged.
[40] "Mu"is a Chinese measure unit of area. 1 mu= 666.67 square metres. 0.8 mu = 534 square metres.
[41] This decline is derived from analysis of the cited documents.
[42] According to documented oral history, Lashi villagers were forbidden to fish in the early summer.

resources. Research shows that at least three species became extinct between 2002 and 2005, and the structure of the fish communities indicates that there will be more endangered species in the next few years (Xie, 2005). The heavy pressure on fishery resources is mainly attributable to fishers starting to harvest more types of fishery resources and using more sophisticated fishing methods.

Initially, the villagers started to catch species that were previously not commercially viable including leeches, small silver fish and some aquatic insects. In 1990s, no one bothered to catch silver fish because the price was too low.[43] In the early 2000s, businessmen from Dali, started to purchase leeches for making traditional Chinese medicine and small silver fish for processing feed. Small silver fish and selected insects were later sold as food for tourist consumption. These changes in production activity were not only economically relevant but also had gender implications. Women who used to spend their time herding, now shifted to collecting leeches and insects. During the summer months, the collecting of leeches had to be done at night; thus, women had to spend several hours collecting, even continuing to collect after midnight. Separating the small silver fish from the net was women's task and was also very time-consuming; therefore, women from neighbouring households helped each other, but the catch was still for one specific household (See Figure 3). Women in Dayu sometimes complained to me that these tasks are tiring and time-consuming.

In the past when fishing was a casual activity, locals fished using hand-made bamboo baskets (Figure 4). In GW's view, the most serious problem after fishing became intense was the increasing usage of more sophisticated fishing gear, including fine mesh nets[44] and cage nets (or trap nets) (Figure 5). The newly introduced gear (mainly different types of nets) has been mainly purchased from Dali city or from other provinces (mainly Hubei). There is no locally made fishing gear. Even today, only one or two people in Lashi know how to make fishing nets. The common fishing practice nowadays is to cast nets under the water surface and retrieve the nets after some time for harvest (See Figure 6). The

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[43] Catching silver fish requires a different type of net from that used to catch carp, which is the main catch in Lashi. Therefore, fishers have to invest in different types of nets. In the past, a kilogram of carp would cost only ten RMB. Nowadays, even tiny silver fish can be sold for 7-10 RMB per kilogram.

[44] The legal size of the net mesh is 5 cm. Net with mesh less than 5cm is considered illegal.

most devastating gear was considered the fine mesh net that extend two to three metres downward from the surface. Because the density of the mesh was extremely high, almost everything, including fish juveniles, risked being caught. In fact, the local fishers told me originally that the fine mesh was not meant to catch fish. Initially, it was used to catch the nymphs of dragonfly which could be sold for 60-80 RMB per kilogram. In a day, a fisher could catch 15-20 kilograms, so it brought in a much better income than fishing.

From 2005 to 2008, the majority of men in Dayu village worked outside due to the declining fishery resources. While some people worked in Lijiang City, others worked in other Lashi villages as daily wage labourers. Only a few people worked in other provinces. Men mostly worked in the construction or transportation industries. Some women worked in food and lodging industries due to prospering tourism in Lijiang. Those women were offered their board and food, so they did not return home often. This situation has created considerable conflict between married couples. Nowadays, teenagers (including girls) also work in Lijiang for cash income, many in entertainment businesses such as bars or karaoke. Most of the teenagers do not finish high school; some even drop out of junior high school.

For people who prefer to stay at home, van driving has become a popular occupation in recent years. Many male drivers were formerly fishers, who experienced low quantities of catch. As well, there were also female drivers most of whom had married into Dayu from other villages. Since the dam project, women who married into Dayu village were no longer allocated land. As a result, they could not work at farming or herding, and had no alternative means of income generation. Since van driving does not require high skill - only some initial investment - (mainly purchasing a vehicle and paying tuition fees at driving schools), it has become popular recently.[45]

The series of development projects and resource use policies have had a significant impact on the fishery resources and livelihoods of the Dayu villagers. In a bid to address

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[45] Because of the low rate of private vehicle ownership and no public transportation serving this area, anyone who needs to travel to Lijiang City or transport goods (mainly fish) has to take the available van from the village.

both problems, GW intervened by implementing a fishery resource management project in the early 2000s. While fishery resource management is a lake-based issue, GW's project mainly targeted Dayu village because of its high dependency on fishing for people's main livelihoods compared to other Lashi villages. Meanwhile, GW set up a project office in Dayu village in 2002.

Figure 3 Women in Dayu village helped each other separating small silver fish. July 2011

Figure 4   Two bamboo baskets. The old fishing gear is no longer used for fishing in Lashi area. These baskets now become decoration or bird nests. December 2011.

Figure 5   Cage nets drying on the shore of Dayu village, October 2012.

Figure 6   A Dayu fishman casting nets. The nets were cast in the afternoon and would be retrieved the next day. The nets were for capturing normal size fish (such as carp). November 2011.

6.2 Participation compromised by resource politics

The major component of GW's Lashi programme was the establishment of the Fishery Association and rules of fishery resource use. The association's operations were inhibited by complex and constantly changing power relations involving local governments, a state conservation agency, eNGOs (GW and TNC) and the local communities. In sum, local resource politics obstructed mobilisation of the local community and by extension, compromised participation. This situation illustrated the degree to which natural resource issues in China are deeply conditioned by local politics. In other words, a community-focused resource management project may not achieve its goal if it fails to address the politics. After all, CBNRM projects often require external political resources to be sustainable in reality (Mosse, 1997), and administrative support from the local level is often essential (Marschke & Berkes, 2005). My analysis in this chapter will show that the experience in Lashi is consistent with the argument that local governments in China, especially township governments, play deciding roles in CBNRM projects (Sun, 2007).

It is essential to understand the context of fishery resource governance in Lashi before going into detail regarding GW's fishery project. I will now summarise the major interventions and events relating to fishery resources in Table 2 which provides a snapshot for the context of the following sections: 6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.

Table 2 Chronology of fishery resource governance in Lashi.

	Critical Events	Fishery Resources Governance
Before 1956	Pre-collective	No customary rules, as fishing was a casual activity
1956-early 1980	Collective production	Fishing operated by production brigades; no private-owned fishing boats/gear

	Critical Events	Fishery Resources Governance
1983-1991	Decollectivisation	Fishing boats and fishing rights allocated to individual household.
1992-1993		Fishery was under the administration of the county's fishery department. Boats were managed by the local police office.
1994-1997	Lashi Dam construction.	
1998	Lashi Dam completed. Lashi Nature Reserve and the Administrative Bureau established. Bird-hunting was banned.	Fishing became more intensive.[46] The Bureau started to take charge of fishery management.
1999	National logging ban	Seasonal fishing ban proposed by TNC
2000	Establishment of GW	
2001		Seasonal fishing ban enforced but suspended after one season.
2002	Lashi Dam expansion project announced.	GW started to set up the lake-based Fishery Association

[46] According to GW's documentation, the official statistics show that the fishery harvest from 1990 to 1995 increased from 30 to 113 tonnes/year. In 1998, the harvest reached 380 tonnes/year, but it gradually decreased post 1998.

	Critical Events	Fishery Resources Governance
2003	Nu-River campaign commenced	
2004		Official launch of the Fishery Association.
2005-2006		Fishery Association proposed to manage illegal gear. Many Dayu villagers quit fishing and left for outside work.
2007		Township government co-operated with the Fishery Association on confiscation of illegal gear. Later, township government allocated management and funding to two powerful individuals. Fish fingerings released.
2008		Fishery returned to be administrated by the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau.
2009		Many Dayu villagers returned to fishing as a profession. GW commenced setting up the village-based Fishery Co-op.

	Critical Events	Fishery Resources Governance
2011		Official launch of the Co-op. Increasing numbers of fishers and the amount of catch. Certain illegal gear still in use.
2012		Increasing rate of cage nets in use observed.

6.2.1 Fishing practice before GW project

Fishery governance in Lashi Lake varied in different eras. As previously mentioned, prior to the communist period, there was almost no regulation of fishing in Lashi, unlike forest management which was subject to customary rules. Fishing was a casual activity rather than a major livelihood activity. Fishing gear was relatively simple: even children could catch fish from the shore using bamboo baskets. In the collective period, fishing was operated by production brigades, with no individual fishing allowed. All catches were communal property and each household was allocated a certain amount of cash and food. After decollectivisation in the early 1980s, the rights to fishing and fishing boats were allocated to individual households. Subsequently, conflict arose due to fishing boats and nets being stolen. In 1992, this chaotic situation encouraged the township government to cooperate with the local villagers in the managing of the boats. The policy required the local police to lock up the boats at night to stop people from going on to the lake. One representative from each village was chosen to serve as a village manager. People told me that fishing practice was well-managed during this period. However, when the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau (hereafter, the Bureau) joined in the business of nature resource management in Lashi in 1998, the situation became complicated.

The Bureau had wanted to take charge of the fishery resource management of Lashi Lake since its establishment. It sought to attract more funding, both from the central government and from international donors and NGOs. For this reason, the Bureau competed for the power to regulate. However, the management practices dissolved soon after the Bureau assumed the responsibility. Local fishers complained that the Bureau's staff could not solve the conflict between fishers effectively, and that the Bureau did not pay the village managers properly. A former village manager suspected the Bureau staff of stealing their boats at night. Poor management gave rise to numerous conflicts between the fishers and the Bureau. Later, a bird-hunting ban declared by the Bureau created another wave of discontent among the villagers, a situation I will detail in a later section.

In 1999, based on a suggestion by TNC, the township government, along with the Bureau, declared a seasonal fishing ban. The primary intention behind this policy was not to protect fish stock, but to prevent migratory birds from being caught in the fishing nets during the winter season (Hathaway, 2007). But, due to the fierce resistance of the villagers, the policy was not enforced until 2001 when the government mobilised the local police to enforce the ban. The discontent among the villagers resulting from the fishing ban and from the dam expansion project later forced the government to abandon this policy. The fishing ban only survived for a year. Subsequently, the chaotic fishing practice in Lashi became a "hot potato" for the authority.

6.2.2 GW's project- the Fishery Association

In response to the problems of depleting fishery resources, GW initiated the Fishery Association in 2002, which was officially registered as a civil organization in 2004. Its full translated name is "Association of Fishery Technology and Economic Cooperation in Lashi Wetland". As there was no formal institution for fishery resource management prior to the collective era, the Fishery Association was an intervention attempted by GW to institutionalise fishing practices. As the time of my fieldwork, the Fishery Association did not have a concrete function. Therefore, my research of the Fishery Association was mainly based on document research, interviews with the GW director and the project staff, the former board members and the board director of the Association, the staff of the

Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau and the most importantly, the ordinary villagers whose households used to or currently depend on fishing as a livelihood activity.

While GW played a significant role in facilitating and coordinating the operation of the association, it expected the fishers around the lake to self-organise and self-manage. One of the major tasks of the Fishery Association was to ban certain fishing gear (including fine mesh and cage nets) deemed as illegal. According to GW documentation:

> The association covered the administrative area of ten natural villages and included all fishers around Lashi Lake. Nine board members were elected democratically... It was the first lake-based fishery resource management community organisation in China…The association is a multi-stakeholder cooperative organisation which gained support from several governmental agencies and attracted fishers into the management process. In 2005, the association drafted a report on the decline of fishery resources and submitted it to the People's Congress of Lijiang. Based on the report, the association appealed to the government to control the illegal fishing gear… the suggestion was accepted and the illegal gear were confiscated in 2007. Finally the illegal fishing was under control and the fishery resource has been recovering… The project of Fishery Association was awarded Ford Environmental Award in 2008. (Green Watershed, 2008, pp. 24-27, translated)

It had always been the intention of GW to manage fishery resources in Lashi Lake since the introduction of the Lashi programme. Initially, the township government was reluctant to allocate rights to the fishers for self-regulation. This was observable throughout the process of the association's establishment. From the beginning, the election of the board members was manipulated by the township government. The township office suggested a list of candidates, and later requested to be put in charge of the financial affairs of the association. Although GW did not agree initially, it eventually compromised. The board members were mainly comprised of the administrative village representatives, who were elected in the Chinese way.[47] As a result, there was clearly an overlap between the government administration system and the social organisation formed by civil society, a situation similar to the Water User Association (see Chapter 5).

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[47] In China, village representatives are often pre-selected by the government, rather than elected in a western-style democratic way.

This overlap weakened the validity and independence of the civil organisation to manage rural resources.

The registration process of the association was cumbersome as well. It took GW two years to gain approval from the various levels of government. Just prior to the registration being granted, the director of the board was accused of corruption, and the township government seized this as a chance to freeze the activities of the fishery association. Later, the association had to elect a new director.

Local project staff and the director of the board mentioned that GW's involvement in the Nu River campaign caused certain difficulties for the fishery project, mainly in the form of hostility from the township government. Notwithstanding, the township government still allowed the association to operate. In 2005 when the fishery resource was seriously depleted, the association proposed to the county and township governments the management of chaotic fishing practices and banning the use of illegal gear. The county and township governments agreed that the association, together with the Fishery Affairs Department, should seize illegal gear. Township government's changed attitude was in its own interests rather than an endorsement of the CBNRM model. At the time, the fishery issue was an embarrassment for the local government because the situation was reported by the media. In addition, the government was reluctant to confront the local villagers regarding the fishery issue, because there had already been conflict between the villagers and township government over the Lashi dam expansion. It would be easier for the government if the association policed the potentially controversial gear ban. As a result, the association started its campaign by persuading the fishers to cease using illegal gear.

Initially, the association suggested compensating the fishers for confiscated nets, but this proposal was rejected both by the government and GW. Consequently, only ten percent of fishers voluntarily abandoned their illegal gear. Some even hired labourers to collect and dispose of the nets. In 2007, the township government shifted the power to seize the illegal nets to two rich Naxi individuals. The township government granted them money, so that they could compensate the fishers, who could claim 30-40 RMB for one confiscated net. Fishers who had already voluntarily abandoned their illegal nets were

furious, because they felt cheated and displeased with the Fishery Association. At this stage, the power of the association became diminished. A township official said to the board members: "I will treat you dinner, you guys don't need to worry about the lake"[48]. According to several former board members, due to constant interference by the township government, the association was eventually paralysed.

After 2007, the two powerful Naxi men used the funds allocated from the government to purchase and release fish juveniles into the Lashi Lake. One of them owned a fish farm on the lake, which was in fact illegal according to the wetland protection regulations. But subsequently, the fishery resource recovered. Ironically, the replenishing of the fish stocks in the lake may have depended on illegal supplies. As juveniles had been released continuously into the lake, it is questionable if the fishery resources recovery could be simply attributed to the illegal gear ban. Moreover, it was uncertain if the growing fishery resources could be maintained given that competition had become fierce in recent years. Starting from 2009, many Dayu villagers, who used to work outside, have returned to resume fishing as full-time work, a trend also confirmed by fishing net traders, who no longer go to other areas for trading.[49]

There was internal conflict within the Fishery Association, conflict between board members, and between GW staff and board members. An example of disagreement between GW staff and the board members of the association is provided. In earlier years, all of the board members were paid monthly stipends of seventy RMB. Later, many board members gradually withdrew from the association, partly because the thriving horse-trekking business along the north shore villages left them no time to participate, and partly due to political pressure from the government. When they resigned, fishers from Dayu village were sought to undertake the responsibility. It was the period during which the association lost its granted power for management, and when Oxfam HK's financial support for the Lashi programme was shrinking. As a consequence, GW project staff

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[48] Personal communication with one former board member, July 2011.
[49] In the past, many traders from Dali came to the Lijiang area to sell fishing nets. In the 1990s, business became very competitive and the price of a net dropped from 120RMB to 30RMB for a normal size net. In the years when fishery resource decreased, traders had to go to other areas for business. It was only after 2009 that net traders returned to Lashi for business.

decided to reduce the stipends without first consulting the board members. This situation led to argument between GW staff and several discontented board members, who subsequently withdrew from the association in 2009.

The Fishery Association was not only under pressure from the government, but also from the local community. The majority of the fishers in fact opposed the campaign because the very nature of this campaign, similar to the failed seasonal fishing ban imposed by government, restricted the fishers' livelihood opportunities albeit in a different way. Moreover, some fishers had lost their heavy investment in the illegal nets.[50] As a result, friction arose between the board members of the association and their fellow villagers. I was told by several former board members that they constantly received complaints from fishers and their family members about the gear ban. The grudges regarding the campaign were also expressed by dissatisfied Dayu villagers towards GW personnel in private. The campaign targeting fishers was certainly a crucial factor influencing the NGO-community relationship, especially when comparing this relationship with the one described by Hathaway (2007) , whose research was conducted almost a decade ago.

Due to external and internal conflicts, the fishery association gradually lost its function over the past few years. As an introduced institution, it could not be sustained, and nor could fishery resource management rules be sustained. Despite the fishery project campaign, and the gradual recovery of fish stock, illegal fishing practices still persist. Although today fishers no longer use fine mesh, cage nets are still widely in use. Moreover, electroshock fishing is also practiced. The two powerful individuals who were granted the right of fishery management were only interested in receiving their commission from the township government, not in addressing illegal fishing practices. The township government eventually had to look to the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau for help.

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[50] For example, an old fisherman, who used to invest heavily in gear, owned 20-30 pieces of fine mesh. One piece (about 33cm long) cost 200 RMB (in 2007). He lost approximately 4,000 to 6,000 RMB due to the ban.

6.2.3 Resource management in the post- Fishery Association era

During my fieldwork, it was common to see many cage nets on the shore during the summer. In winter, cage nets were placed deeply underwater, and not retrieved frequently as the caught fish could survive in water for many days. In 2011, approximately twenty households were using cage nets, most of them in Dayu village. Some people in the neighbouring Xihu village, whose main income came from fruit farming, also practiced cage net fishing for extra income. According to my observations, the usage of cage nets increased in 2012. Although cage nets are listed as illegal gear, some fishers argued that the practice is not as harmful as claimed both by the authority and by GW. I will further elaborate on the diverse opinions on this issue in Section 6.3.2 of this chapter.

Compared to the use of cage nets, electrofishing is far more destructive, because it can destroy entire fish communities in a given area. The locals called this method "cooking fish".[51] The increasing use of electricity may be in response to the higher demand for large-sized fish, since the unit price of fish escalates with the weight of the fish. For example, in the summer of 2011, the unit price of carp was thirty to forty RMB per kilogram for a normal sized fish (up to two kilograms). Large fish such as grass carp, that weight more than ten kilograms, could be sold for sixty RMB or more per kilogram. Normally, a fishing group of four persons is required for catching large fish, due to the man power needed for lifting large nets (seven metres deep) and the higher financial investment in such nets. Electrofishing is a comparatively convenient way of catching large fish. I was told that people conduct electrofishing after dark to avoid being caught, and that the batteries were hidden on fishing canoes covered with blankets in the daytime. When this method was used, large fish were stunned while the small fish died. Thus, only the large fish were collected. Many fishers complained about this practice, because dead

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[51] Fishers told me that the equipment for electrofishing was not available locally, and, that the batteries, which cost approximately 3,800-4,000RMB, had to be ordered from other places.

fish virtually had no market value in Lijiang market.[52] However, people were fearful of identifying those who conducted electrofishing.

Although the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau is the legitimate authority to manage the illegal practices, it has done little but tolerate the offenders. The staff only seized cage nets once in several months to show their authority, events usually reported in local news to publicise the effort. Despite its awareness of the use of electrofishing, the Bureau never took any action to address the problem[53].

In Lashi Lake, fishery is not the only resource issue of concern. Waterfowl hunting, both by fishing nets and poisoning, is still commonly practiced during the winter months despite its illegality. Again, as the management authority, the Bureau has been reluctant to take action, and selectively tolerates certain bird-hunters despite being aware of the practice, even though waterfowl protection has been the major task of the management of the Nature Reserve and the selling point for the Bureau to recruit funding. The importance of bird protection has been explicitly stated in the reserve management regulations. The fifth point in the "Lashi Alpine Wetland Protection and Management Regulation" clearly lists six species of rare waterfowl and one locally endangered plant as targets for protection; the ninth point states that the first week of every October is "bird protection week" when the county and township governments should organise activities to promote public awareness of protecting birds. The Bureau also invested significantly in the bird-watching facility located within its office, in order to show the results of their conservation work, especially to external visitors such as NGO representatives.

Although the Dayu villagers are not the only waterfowl hunters, they account for the majority since waterfowl provide essential income for fishing households in the winter. Due to the hunting ban, most fishers veil their practice by placing fishing nets near the water's surface so that birds casually feeding on fish or aquatic plants will be caught "accidentally". The Bureau staff stated that they had to tolerate such behaviour since they

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[52] If there is a price, it would be so low that fishers would rather keep fish for self-consumption or as gift to their relatives.
[53] Interviews with bureau staff members in 2011.

were not intentional acts. Nevertheless, some locals revealed to me that fishers deliberately place their nets near the surface. Shoals of fish dive to a deep level in search of a warmer temperature in the winter; therefore, nets should be placed in deeper water rather than near the surface. This "passive" hunting practice does not yield a harvest every day. A fisher often catches one or two birds a day, sometimes none. Besides using fishing nets, poisoning is still practiced albeit less commonly. Traditionally, Lashi villagers used a medicinal plant, *Aconitum carmichaeli* Debx, to poison birds. In recent years, people have gradually shifted to commercial poison. The above plant is rarely found in the wild nowadays, and it takes approximately half an hour for the poison to become effective. Sometimes the botanic poison may not be powerful enough to overcome the birds. Commercial poison, on the other hand, is effective in a few minutes, meaning that people can collect the dead birds immediately. Their fast demise lowers the risk of the bird-poisoners being caught.

Nowadays, while bird- hunting is mainly due to the market demand, it is also a form of resistance against control over access to natural resources. Villagers prefer to sell the catch rather than use it for self-consumption, given that one bird can bring at least 30-40 RMB. This is equal to a half-day salary for a paid labourer in Lijiang. Middlemen from Lijiang regularly pick up the catch from the supplying households.[54] Because the waterfowl are expensive, the end consumers are usually rich businessmen or governmental officials in the city. Villagers often joke: "Those who ban the bird hunting are the ones who eat!"

The villagers have been generally displeased with the hunting ban. They have suffered from grain loss because the waterfowl eat their crops in winter, and the meager compensation paid by the government has failed to meet their losses[55]. Therefore, constant conflict between the Bureau and the local communities resulted from the policy (Hathaway, 2007). Nevertheless, it was not the policy alone that triggered the conflict. More importantly, the unfair practices and the ineffective management of the Bureau

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[54] Those who do not supply the businessmen on a regular basis tend to consume the birds by themselves.
[55] The compensation is only eight RMB/person/year. A family of four would only receive twenty-four RMB/year, worth approximately four USD.

have been the main reasons underpinning Dayu villagers' dissatisfaction and disappointment. Despite the declared regulations, there has never been strict enforcement of the resource management rules. While the Bureau staff were aware of the illegal bird hunting practice, they admitted that they pretended to be unaware of the situation as long as there was no "eye-catching" event in Lashi attracting the attention of the media or the higher level of authority. One would think under these circumstances, the Bureau would have good relations with the local communities since it tolerated the illegal practice. However, this was not the case. The Bureau's unfair and corrupt practices created considerable friction with the local community. The Bureau staff selectively punished some bird-hunters but tolerated others due to their personal relationship (*guan xi,* 關係). For example, Mr. J, a Dayu villager, would be notified before the seizing of illegal hunting gear and therefore avoid being caught, because his brother has maintained very good relationship with the Bureau staff. Moreover, sometimes the Bureau staff orally abused the local villagers. In short, most of the villagers are deeply dissatisfied with the Bureau, for its restrictive and ineffective natural resource management. As one elder fisher told me: "The Nature Reserve Bureau only cares about birds not people, and yet, they cannot even manage the birds well!"

Out of resentment, many fishers actually poisoned the birds without collecting the dead bodies for sale, in order to irritate the Bureau by exposing the dead birds to the patrol team. This was an act of "everyday resistance" (Scott, 1985), by which villagers resisted the control over resource access by claiming their ownerships of the lake, and expressing their will and ability through actions of sabotage. This type of silent (but visible) protest is not uncommon in resource conflict. In China there are also other examples of peasants' everyday resistance against control over natural resources. Farmers in other parts of Yunnan practice illegal logging as a means of expressing their discontent (Zackey, 2007). Such resistance is also commonly observed in protected areas. In Caohai Nature Reserve, another national wetland reserve also in south-west China, peasants conduct non-compliance practices in showing their resentment and resistance (Herrold-Menzies,

2006).[56] Conflict between the resource users and the management authority is, therefore, more than simply an issue of social relations, it negatively impacts on human-nature relations. The rural landscape, in effect, is shaped by the interaction between the governing and those who refused to be governed.

6.2.4 Participation trapped in local politics

In this section, I have demonstrated how local resource politics can significantly compromise participatory resource management projects by exemplifying GW's fishery management project, a project that has been an arena of power negotiations regarding the control of access to fishery resources between various institutional actors including local governments, the Nature Reserve Bureau, eNGOs, and local communities.

Any enquiry into a community-based participatory project needs to consider the political conditions under which the project is negotiated, rather than focusing on the internal conditions of the local communities (Blaikie, 2006). The politics arose primarily due to the different interests of the local actors. And, while the interest of a certain actor may change over time, so do the relationships with other actors. For example, the relationship between the township government and GW changed over the years in tandem with the changes in the socio-political context and shifts in the degree of interest shown by the township government. At a certain point, fishery management became a primary concern of the township government. For this reason, it seemed practical for the township to co-operate with GW. Notwithstanding the focus of "local" resource politics, actors and their agendas beyond the local scale certainly influence local resource politics. To some extent, the power relations have also been influenced by events and actors beyond the local level. For example, the township government constantly interfered with GW's project mainly due to pressure from the provincial government. The Bureau was granted the right to resource management because of the establishment of Lashi Nature Reserve, which was endorsed by an international NGO (TNC) and deployed by the Bureau as a

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[56] However, in the case of Caohai Nature Reserve, the relationship between the reserve management authority and locals has improved due to eNGOs' interventions.

means to attract funding (mainly from international donors and NGOs). Thus, the multi-scalar analysis presented in Chapter 5 proves to be essential.

The case of Lashi's fishery project raises a common issue in CBNRM projects: that is, whether CBNRM projects tend to ignore the politics of local resource development and mask the significant role of external resources and actors (Mosse, 1997). Sometimes, resources and actors external to the community have proven equally - even more - influential in shaping CBNRM projects. Although GW has always been aware of politics, its fishery project failed to adequately address politics, which are among the most crucial external factors. GW's fishery project clearly demonstrates the degree to which resource politics can interfere in CBNRM projects. And yet, the project placed emphasis on building and maintaining the community-based institutions, including the Fishery Association and its rules, in order to regulate fishing practices, restrict fishers' access, and address the responsibility of the fishing community. Compared to its efforts towards consolidating the community, the project focused less on confronting the township government and the Bureau regarding their inappropriate and monopolistic management practice. In my view, it is a dilemma faced by GW. Although it seems necessary and possible for GW to challenge the politics, in reality, it would be very difficult for GW to confront the authority and the cost may be too high to pay.

GW's project aimed to institutionalise fishery resource management by setting up the social organisations and rules for management. GW attempted to institutionalise resource management by disciplining fishers and transforming their resource use practices[57]. However, this effort was not entirely successful. In the next section, I will demonstrate that another factor affected this process was because locals have not internalised the rhetoric of "sustainability" promoted by GW due to their perceptions against the rhetoric within its social-environmental context.

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[57] C.f. Agrawal (2005) and Li (2007) for "environmental subjects", a concept suggested by the scholars using governmentality in analysing resource management.

6.3 Lacking consensus on resource management

Collective action is based on shared ideas and objectives upon which participants agree. In Lashi Lake, besides the tension between stakeholders which resulted in ineffective participation, lack of consensus on resource management was another factor fuelling the reluctance of the community to participate. There are two reasons for the lack of consensus. First, the popular rhetoric of sustainable development was advocated by GW as an ideal scenario of fishery resources usage, but it was not a goal negotiated with the locals. Second, GW simplified diverse and sometimes conflicting fishing practice, but only to dichomise legal/illegal fishing gear, as the solution to fishery resource depletion. This exemplifies a problem of participatory projects in reality: whose idea/concept/knowledge is privileged?

6.3.1 Locals' rejection of "sustainable" fishery

In CBNRM projects, the notion of sustainable resource management , which originates in modern science, is usually taken as the basis for the projects (Blaikie, 2006). However, in Lashi, the ideology of "sustainable" fishery development, a goal proposed by GW to be achieved with participation from the local community, has neither been embraced nor internalised by the fishing community at large. As the rhetoric of resource management does not match the reality in the eyes of the locals, the CBNRM model often encounters difficulty (Austin & Eder, 2007).

Sustainable development, which started to emerge within international environmental discourse in the 1980s, has been embraced and adopted widely by governments, developmental agencies and eNGOs as a mainstream discourse. Along the way, there have been certain critiques of the concept of sustainable development, such as questions surrounding the practicability of sustainable growth (Dove & Kammen, 1997). Research has also questioned whether this discourse privileges economic growth over environmental sustainability (Escobar, 1996). Despite these critiques, sustainable development has become a dominant environmental discourse in China. It has become widely adopted in policy mandates or NGO discourse since China first adopted the term "sustainable development" in its 21st Agenda in 1994 (Yie, 2011). This rhetoric remains

an important agenda in the current five-year national development plan (National Development and Reform Council, n.d.) .

ENGOs in China are also strongly influenced by this discourse, and GW is no exception. Sustainable development is listed as one of the goals in the overall Lashi programme. Phrases such as "sustainable watershed management" and "sustainable development" are repeatedly seen in the project documents (Green Watershed, n.d.-b). Through project activities, I observed that GW personnel interpreted the concept as "achieving economic development and environmental protection simultaneously", contingent on encouraging local engagement in the concept. In GW's campaign, sustainable fishery is explicitly defined, when describing one of the aims of the Fishery Association: "Self-managing fishery resources by following national fishery regulation, so fishers can conduct fishing sustainably"[58] (Green Watershed, n.d.-a, translated by author).

The logic was that fishers were responsible for protecting the fishery resources which they and future generations would depend on. For GW, the logic was straightforward: if the fishery resources were protected, the fishers would profit from the healthy fish stocks. However, I suggest that sustainable fishery was not a goal negotiated with locals, who may have very different ideas about "sustainability" than eNGOs. Marschke and Berkes (2005) suggest that in the case of CBNRM projects, it is important to understand the perceptions of sustainability of local community members, who often take livelihoods benefits into consideration. However, in Lashi, sustainable development, as originally promoted by the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau, failed to improve the livelihoods of the local fishing community. Consequently, the local community has a very different view of sustainable development from GW.

The concept of sustainable development has been used widely by the Bureau to justify its non-transparent, non-participatory policies and practices that restricted locals' access to natural resources. Initially, the Bureau persuaded the Lashi villagers that the wetland protection policy (especially the bird-hunting and winter fishing bans) would bring

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[58] The original text in Chinese is "依據國家漁業法，自我管理漁業資源，使漁民能可持續地進行漁業生產". See http://d.kmwzjs.com:10125/news-362-11712.html.

tourism opportunities as a pathway of sustainable development which would eventually benefit the local communities. But, sustainable development failed to provide tourism as an alternative livelihood strategy promised by the Bureau. No training programmes or facilities were put in place by the government enabling villagers to participate in bird-watching or eco-tourism operations. The current tour operations in Lashi are in the form of horse-trekking tours operated by commune-based co-operatives. They are not in the form of eco-tourism. The tours are usually designed for domestic tourists who are interested in sight-seeing rather than bird-watching or environmental education. Tourists rarely show interest in waterfowl or the ecosystem. In fact, horse-trekking tourism has even been blamed for damaging the environment, mainly because of the trash and excess amounts of horse faeces deposited around the lake. The only area specifically designated for bird-watching is a platform set up within the office of the Bureau; however, this platform is more for demonstration of the Bureau's work, than for tourism operated by locals. In summary, Lashi villagers have not profited from the bird conservation or ecotourism programme suggested by the Bureau, and Dayu village has not participated in the tourism market due to its remoteness. Thus, sustainable development has failed to improve the fishing community's livelihoods.

Moreover, as discussed earlier, the Bureau's practices, including incompetent fishing boat management, ineffective policing of the illegal fishing gear ban and unfair enforcement of the bird-hunting ban have all failed to address the resource problems. The, villagers have suffered from inappropriate management practices that have resulted in considerable conflict. From the villagers' points of view, the notion of sustainable development does not guarantee good and fair environmental governance.

Finally, the policies of the nature reserve management that have further exacerbated insecurity vis-a-vis long-term access to resources, may result in villagers' preference for short-term benefits. In Chapter 8, I will use the example of Xihu village to illustrate that insecure access to natural resources has been influencing people's decisions regarding short-term profit and long-term benefit.

Due to the reasons stipulated above, fishers have no faith in so-called sustainable development, and consequently sustainable fishery is unattractive to them. From my observation, Lashi fishers understand fish ecology well; they know that fishery stocks will be in better condition if they do not fish intensively. However, their choices may not follow the sustainability principle imposed by external organizations, whether by the Bureau or by GW. Sustainable fishery, like any other goal in a participatory project, should be discussed and negotiated by the local community, rather than taken as a scientific doctrine. As sustainable fishery is not a social norm agreed to by fishers in Lashi, the managing institutions based on this concept cannot function successfully.

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why the restrictive measures proposed by GW such as the illegal fishing gear ban or the issuing of fishing permits[59] based on the concept of sustainability have never been welcomed by the local fishers. Although the working methods of GW and the Bureau were dissimilar, as GW's intention was to practice participatory management while the Bureau wanted to monopolise the power of resource management by excluding the local community, the assumptions that underpinned environmental governance were in fact similar. Compared to the Bureau's territorial restriction which was imposed by delineating the boundary of the wetland reserve, GW's restrictions regarding fishing practices were non-territorial. The Nature Reserve regulations and the GW project both prevented fishers from accessing resources, albeit in different ways. It seems clear that the CBNRM model advocated by many eNGOs (including GW) exercises the power of self-exclusion proposed by Hall, et al. (2011). In the case of fishery management in Lashi, the exclusion created by GW's participatory project may have granted more power to the Bureau than to the fishing community as the Bureau has been the managing authority. It is indeed paradoxical that a participatory project may in effect contribute to the concentration of power in a single management authority. Therefore, it may be more sensible for fishers not to participate in GW's project and not to follow the institutions it sets up. In summary, sustainable fishery,

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[59] Issuing fishing permits has been proposed by GW to control the mal-practice of fishing. Although the issuance of fishing permits is written in the official wetland management regulation, it is not implemented on the ground. The mechanism of this permit remains unclear.

a popular environmental discourse, has been re-defined by local resource politics was never really internalised by villagers, giving opportunities for a corrupt bureaucracy to use this environmental discourse to subvert the goal of empowerment and to gain even greater control over the communities.

ENGOs' efforts to create consensus among community participants are often accomplished through the process of production and reproduction of knowledge. For example, in order to internalise sustainable development into local practice, GW had to interpret this concept originated from international discourse in a way that connects with locals' concerns through its project activities. In the following section, I will critically examine the process of knowledge production/ reproduction in GW's fishery project.

6.3.2 Incorporating local Knowledge as participation?

Local knowledge, sometimes referred to as indigenous knowledge or traditional knowledge, is suggested to be important in participatory development projects (Berkes, 1999; Chambers, 1997). It is thought to be beneficial to resource use management because it is practical, trial-and-error based, and adaptive to the environment (Antweiler, 1998; Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000)[60.] Many studies have explored the practicality of incorporating local knowledge into various resource sectors (Brosius, 2004; Russell-Smith, et al., 1997; Seeland & Schmithüsen, 2003). Regarding small-scale fishery, local knowledge is considered vital to consensus making (Berkes, 2003) as well as to supplementing scientific knowledge (Berkes, 2003; Johannes, Freeman, & Hamilton, 2000).

GW's project also drew upon local fishing knowledge. By consulting with local fishers, collecting stories and documenting traditional fishing practices, GW attempted to incorporate local knowledge into its project design and implementation. GW staff sought to tap local knowledge regarding fishery resources usage not only through formal project

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[60] I use the term local knowledge instead of "traditional", because the latter implies the notions of static and constant. I do not use "indigenous" because it is ambiguous to define the "indigenous" in this context. I consider local knowledge produced through the interactions of actors within a specific locale but such knowledge is subject to change over time due to the interactions with outside influences.

activities, but also during informal interaction. For example, when GW staff members saw fishers catch a big fish, they asked an elder if she had ever seen such large size fish being caught before. GW's practice is not exceptional in China. Nowadays, incorporating local knowledge in resource management has become a popular discourse among academics and (especially international) eNGOs. The surge of local knowledge in resource management started from research institutes and eNGOs in Yunnan in the late 1990s/early 2000s, as a response to the international trend (Hathaway, 2007; Sturgeon, 2007).

However, knowledge is not neutral. Rather, it is negotiated by power and redefined by discourses and hegemonies (Desai, 2006). Local knowledge sought in eNGO projects, is reproduced through NGO-community interactions and represented in eNGO practice. Examining the process of incorporating local knowledge into eNGO projects is thus crucial for understanding the power relations in participatory resource management.

Although a participatory approach, as a vehicle to draw on local knowledge, emphasises the diverse perspectives of the practice of natural resource use, certain knowledge is often prioritised over others by actors who "make strategic choices about which 'local knowledge' is heard" (Blaikie, 2006, p. 1944) . By doing so, these actors inevitably exercise the power to extract local knowledge which they deem either important or legitimate. Such prioritisation of knowledge by particular actors indicates the complex nature of the participatory project in practice, and reveals the subtle power relations at play between locals and outsiders. Sometimes local knowledge can even become a tool to justify outsiders' agendas (Mosse, 2001).

Local knowledge was reproduced through GW's fishery project and part of the reproduction process was the omission of diverse and conflicting claims regarding fishing practice. I suggest that the omission of certain claims by GW was mainly due to the over-emphasis on customary or traditional practice.

6.3.2.1 Diverse and conflicting claims of fishing practice

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Within the fishing community, there was discussion regarding whether certain fishing practices were acceptable, traditional, or harmful to fishery resources. Compared to these diverse discussions, within discussion of GW's project most of the debate was simplified into a legal/ illegal dichotomy. Sometimes, discussion focused upon whether or not a certain practice was traditional. In short, GW's project was concerned more with whether certain practices were legal or traditional, while the fishers' concern focused on whether certain practices were practical and acceptable. Discussion within GW's project dismissed the complexity of current fishing practices. As fishery ecology is complex and dynamic, research suggests that fishery management should be adaptive, and that regulation of fishing practice should be flexible (Wang, Cui, & Cao, 2007). I will now discuss the divergence in understandings of the various fishing practices between GW and local fishers, a divergence that once again demonstrated the lack of consensus vis-à-vis fishery resource management between GW and the fishing community.

All of the fishers I interviewed agreed that electrofishing was illegal and extremely harmful, and they considered fine mesh fishing to be somewhat harmful. Apart from these two particular fishing practices, fishers expressed different views regarding two other types of practice.

The first was fishing by rocking the boat, a method that involves fishing in a group of at least two boats. Fishers rock the boats in order to interrupt and chase schools of fish into one area. A few fishers, who were not Dayu villagers, practice this method. While this method speeds up the time of harvesting the fish, it does not guarantee big catches. Some Dayu villagers insisted that "rocking" is not allowed traditionally and should be banned, but those who practiced it argued that there had never been any rule against this method which they insisted was unharmful to the fishery resource. There seemed no agreement in terms of conducting this practice. In my personal view, if the size of the net mesh is big enough for small juveniles to escape, this method is not detrimental nor does it have long-term impacts on fishery resources.

The second debatable practice was the use of cage nets. While cage netting is often deemed harmful, some fishers consider it acceptable. GW attributes the devastation of the

fishery resources to cage netting, which traps every species that swims into the sets of nets. Cage nets, along with fine mesh, have been identified as unsustainable and illegal fishing gear by GW. It has become one the targets of GW's illegal gear ban campaign. Indeed, cage nets are commonly listed as illegal by government authority in other parts of China. However, in the regulation for Lashi Nature Reserve, cage nets are not explicitly listed as illegal gear, as there is no clear definition of so-called "illegal gear" in the regulation. What the regulation states is that fishers have to follow the time, practice and fishing gear permitted (by the authority). Despite there being no clear regulation declaring the cage nets to be illegal, the Nature Administrative Bureau still seizes and destroys the cage nets from time to time, in order to demonstrate its pursuit of its wetland protection activity. But, regardless of the campaign and the authority's confiscation activity, at least twenty fishing households in Dayu, which accounted for one-third of the fishing population, still used cage nets in 2011. Even more cage nets were used in 2012.

An old fisherman, who was also a former board member of the Fishery Association, blamed cage net users for the declining fishing resources. However, I did not hear other fishers complain about the use of cage nets. In fact, some villagers considered cage netting acceptable if used under certain conditions. A retired fisherman told me that he considered the cage net would be non-detrimental if used in winter. According to him, during the winter the cage nets are placed much deeper under the water's surface, since the normal-sized fish stay in the deeper area due to higher temperatures. The small juveniles, however, tend to stay on the surface level. Therefore, he considered the use of cage nets in the winter is not harmful to the fishery resource due to the reduced by-catch of juveniles. In summer, cage nets may cause by-catch problems because they are often placed close to the surface due to the elevated water level caused by rain. During my period of fieldwork, I never heard any discussion regarding seasonal variation of certain fishing practices between GW and the fishing community. Nor did I see any relevant information in any earlier documents.

In fact, in some parts of China, the by-catch problem of cage nets has been deliberated in the interests of mitigating the negative impact by employing better practices. To this end, various mechanisms have been proposed to manage and legalise the use of cage nets

(Zhuge, 1997). For example, fishers are encouraged to release any juveniles or unwanted species immediately they retrieve the cage nets from the water. Therefore, the impact of cage nets depends largely upon when and how they are used. Regardless of whether it is difficult to police the use of cage nets in reality, discussion should be included in a participatory resource management approach. But, such information and relevant awareness education has never been discussed in Lashi. Because cage netting has been declared illegal, there has been no room for open discussion about related fishing practices by stakeholders. I suggest that discussion regarding cage netting should be more flexible; that is, it should include various accounts from locals. And the use of cage nets (or other types of controversial fishing gear) should be negotiated between locals, eNGOs, and the management authority in any participatory project.

I also suggest that one reason for GW's eschewing of discussion claiming the practicability of cage netting was, that similar to many eNGOs working on CBNRM projects, GW tended to emphasise traditional or customary management systems. I reiterate here that there were no customary rules in terms of fishing in Lashi. The fishing gear utilized nowadays was mostly introduced during the past few decades. When fishing practices were discussed at project meetings, GW often inquired about the "traditional" or "old" system; for example, how people fished before the lake was dammed. Staff rarely, if ever, expressed interest in discussing recently introduced or what they deemed "illegal" gear or practice. The discussion and the documentation invariably reflected the ideology espoused by GW staff. In NGO practice, it is not uncommon to observe this tendency to neglect certain kinds of knowledge/practice, especially after participatory practice has been routinised by NGO workers. By doing so, NGOs are in positions to control the authentication of local knowledge. In GW's case, this was done by not discussing or recognizing certain fishing practices. This was especially evident in the case that the old fisherman revealed to me in private (not in a "participatory" meeting) that the impact of cage nets is not significant in the winter. What is crucial is not whether the statement made was ecologically valid; what matters is that there have been no discussions about the ecological impact of cage netting in various seasons, involving community participation. It was probably due to GW's strong interests in retrieving and reviving

"traditional" institutions, a practice often emphasised by the CBNRM model. It is also possible that the purpose was to fulfil a possible managerial model for its project operation, as an illegal/legal dichotomy makes fishing practice/gear more convenient for management purpose.

My intention here is not to judge whether the use of cage nets is sustainable or legal. It is neither the intention of this thesis to devise a management plan, nor of my expertise to make judgment. My discussion here aims to highlight possible problems in CBNRM projects. In reality, external environmental concepts may be imposed and complex claims surrounding local resource uses may be ignored. Such situations draw attention to the process of knowledge production/representation resulting from unequal power veiled by employing a participatory approach.

In sum, the ideology of the project was sustainable development, but it was not negotiated with the locals. Sustainable development, or sustainable fishery, was perceived very differently by GW and the local community; thus, the concept failed to inspire the latter. The locals even resisted the rhetoric of sustainable resource usage by sabotaging nature. Also in evidence were diverse viewpoints regarding what was illegal, harmful, or acceptable. For the eNGOs or resource management authority, setting up rules for effective management was crucial, and pursuing an illegal/legal dichotomy probably necessary. However, local fishers had different concerns; they seemed to prefer to define fishing practice in more flexible terms, such as "acceptable". In short, any consensus on resource management has to be negotiated through social interaction. In the next section I will discuss social relations as an arena for negotiating resource management agreements.

6.4 Changing relations

In the final part of this chapter, I will examine the reflexive relationship between social relations (including NGO-community relationships and kinship ties) and participatory intervention. More specifically, the friction and lack of mutual trust that obtained between the Dayu fishers and GW not only impeded, but also discouraged local participation. This friction was partly a consequence of the local politics and the lack of consensus described in Sections 6.2 and 6.3. The troubled NGO-community relationship, together with the

kinship ties within the community, underpinned the fishers's non-participation. However, in a way, the reluctance of the fishing community to participate also caused friction and mutual distrust between GW and Dayu villagers.

The analysis in this section is largely based upon the recognition that institutionalising resource management is highly influenced by social relations (Cleaver, 2002) . The GW fishery project, as a participatory project, was expected to formalise effective institutions negotiated through interaction, within the local community and between the community and those involved in institutions making. It is, therefore, evident that social relations are crucial to institutionalisation. As Ostrom (1990) suggests, under certain circumstances social relations may prove effective in strengthening management institutions. At other times, social relations may actually influence people not to participate. In this section, I will use the GW's process of establishing a village-based fishery cooperative (co-op) as an example to illustrate my argument.

6.4.1 NGO-community relationship

In 2010, GW attempted to transform the lake-based Fishery Association into a village-based fishery co-operative focused on cooperative fishing and trading. A new organisation, Fishery Co-operative of Wa'zen, was established (hereafter abbreviated as Fishery Co-op)[61]. Despite the mission of this new organisation being less restrictive and concentrating on the vitalisation of economic activity, the Fishery Co-op still could not function properly.

By setting up this new organization, GW expected to improve the livelihoods of the Dayu villagers by collective fishing/marketing; at the same time, GW expected the co-op to act as a body managing the fishery resource.[62] To this end, GW arranged several meetings with local representatives to discuss the fishery issue. Some of the representatives did not join the Fishery Co-op. While GW suggested that the co-op should be responsible for

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[61] As previously described, the Naxi name of Dayu village is "Wazen".

[62] Nevertheless, fishers representatives told me that their only goal was to sell all of their catch at a good price. Indeed, in the co-op regulations, there was no statement or information relevant to resource conservation; only rules about collective marketing, financial arrangements and rules of meetings were listed. Therefore, the co-op was not an appropriate institution for resource management.

fishery management, arguing that the latter represented the rights of fishers and was capable of managing common resources, the fishers showed limited interest in cooperating with GW. The representatives refused to take responsibility, arguing that the co-op had no power from the authority, and stressing that the lake did not exclusively belong to Dayu village. Despite the last statement, Dayu villagers in fact accounted for at least 80% of the fishing population around the lake. Finally, GW and the representatives agreed merely on awareness education activities, a conclusion that neither reached GW's expectation regarding resource management, nor addressed the concerns of the Fishery Co-op vis-à-vis establishing a working wholesale mechanism.

Around the same time that these meetings were held (but not during these meetings), details of illegal fishing practices, including electrofishing, were revealed to GW's headquarter staff for the first time. Upon hearing the news, GW staff immediately accused certain fishers (who were not co-op members) of electrofishing large fish, despite lack of proof of their illegal conduct. This allegation implied the distrust of GW towards the fishing community. Later, one of the suspected fishers enthusiastically told me about how they caught a record sized fish, weighing seventeen kilograms, with normal fishing nets. He detailed how they accidentally encountered the shoal and how difficult it was for four persons to bring in the large fish. He also told me how they managed to catch large fish on other days using fishing nets. From the details of the story and the way he expressed, it was reasonable to assume that the experience was genuine. In other words, GW distrusted the fishers; thus, they misjudged their behaviour without further exploring the facts.

The lack of mutual trust between GW and the fishing community has long been a major impediment to cooperation. Both parties have complained about each other, calling each other "unsupportive". As previously demonstrated, fishers in Dayu were never fully supportive of the fishing gear ban initiated by GW. Many people regarded the campaign as harmful to their investments and livelihood opportunities, despite a few fishers later admitting that GW may have contributed to the recovery of fishery resources to a certain degree.

Moreover, Dayu villagers often complained to me that GW had not made any material contribution (such as infrastructure), especially when compared to the agro-forestry project in Xihu which provided an alternative livelihood strategy. The Dayu villagers generally felt discriminated against. The jealousy was noted by an Oxfam consultant (Ounsted, 2004b), although it did not specifically refer to the discontent of the Dayu villagers. The Dayu villagers' expectations of material benefits from GW were rooted in their multiple perceptions regarding the nature of an NGO. The multiple perceptions are influenced by many factors, such as media[63]. Many of the Lashi villagers did not see GW as a non-profit organization. Notions regarding NGOs are obscure in China, especially in the rural areas. Even after many years of GW operation in Lashi, many Dayu villagers saw GW as a "middleman", who contracted projects from (international) donors and gained a commission. As a result, some villagers accused GW of being corrupt and of not providing infrastructure (such as roads or irrigation facilities).

Due to their misunderstanding of the nature of NGOs, and their consequent distrust of GW, Dayu villagers gradually excluded GW local staff from any sense of belonging. For example, when purchasing fish from the Dayu villagers, the project staff were not offered discounts; they were charged more than market price[64]. The Xihu villagers, on the other hand always offered GW staff and guests discount, and on occasion, they provided goods free of charge. The difference in the interactions between GW and the two villages were marked. Another sign confirming Dayu's distant relationship was evident in the very few invitations received by GW staff to attend the Dayu villagers' annual pig feasts. In Naxi culture, pig feasts are occasions upon which to re-affirm social relationships. The guest list may be changed each year according to the development of new/old relations. In 2011, project staff were invited by only two Dayu families, and one project staff member opted not to attend despite receiving an invitation. During my fieldwork, there was very little daily interaction between staff members and the Dayu villagers. This situation was very

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[63] Another important factor shaping the villagers' perception of an NGO is how actors (such as community leaders) mediate between the NGO and community. I will discuss this point in Chapter 8.
[64] One project staff member was asked to pay more than forty RMB for a kilogram of fish, whereas the market price during that period was only thirty RMB. During the same time, a non-fishing household in Dayu would be expected to pay less than twenty RMB/per kilo for the same type of fish, purchased from their fishing neighbours or relatives.

different compared to the time before the fishing gear campaign when the project office was used as a community centre and many locals made frequent visits (See: Ounsted, 2004b). The difference confirms the declining NGO-community relationship.

6.4.2 Kinship ties

In addition to the worsening NGO-community relationship, kinship ties within the fishing community also shaped people's decisions not to participate in the fishery project. As Dayu's population belongs to only three clans, the people are closely related to each other. Kinship is prominent in the social and economic lives of Dayu villagers. Therefore, it is reasonable that the representatives of Dayu fishers refuse to co-operate with GW for managing the so-called illegal fishing practice. Fishery co-op members find it difficult to intervene in the illegal fishing practices, given they are conducted either by their relatives or themselves.[65]

Similar to other Naxi villages, the influence of kinship may be observed in social activities such as weddings, funerals and annual pig feasts. More importantly, kinship ties are especially crucial in production activities such as fishing.

Kinship determines who conducts group fishing; fishing groups usually consist of brothers, cousins and/or uncles/nephews. As suggested earlier, group fishing is required for catching large sized fish. In addition, some brothers form fishing groups for the purpose of sharing costs and labour. In Dayu village, I did not encounter any fishing group formed by people without kinship ties.

Moreover, kinship relations determine who has better access to the markets, Persons with siblings/cousins/and affinal families owning a *yuzhuang* (魚莊), a particular type of fish specialty restaurant in Lijiang, are in better positions for marketing. There are four major ways of marketing Lashi fish: selling as individual vendors in the markets; delivery of personal orders; delivery to horse-trekking venues, and delivery of restaurant orders[66]. The last is considered by locals to be the best marketing channel, because restaurant

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[65]   I was told that some of the representatives also used cage nets. I also observed a large pile of cage nets in the yard of a board member of the fishery co-op.
[66]   Here I only refer to fish for human consumption. Tiny silver fish for animal feed are not included.

orders ensure considerable profit and stable demand compared to other marketing channels. In Lijiang, *yuzhuang* specializing in fresh Lashi fish, are popular among tourists and locals. But, not everyone has equal opportunity to sell his harvest to *yuzhuang*. Persons with relatives owning such restaurants are able to supply the fish regularly. Take villager Li from Dayu village as an example. He owns a *yuzhuang* in Lijiang, and his first suppliers are his fishers brothers, who practice fishing as a profession. Li also takes fish from his cousins from Xihu village, who only fish seasonally. He will only take fish from others when the supply from his brothers and cousins cannot meet the demand of the day. Clearly, kinship ties play significant roles in the production activity, both in terms of fishing and accessing the market. Under these circumstances, the co-op members would face enormous pressure within their society if they intend to intervene and manage the illegal fishing practices.

While in certain situations, social relations may work to strengthen the institutions for resource management, the institutions for fishery management in Lashi have never been properly established due to the disagreements between the different actors as discussed in this chapter. For this reason, both the NGO-community relationships and the close kinship ties within the fishing community are not helpful; they only complicate the institutionalizing of resource management.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have showed how participatory resource management, a "legacy" of international conservation and development discourse, can prove problematic when practiced in reality. Taking GW's participatory fishery management project as an example, three issues were discussed: (1) participation can be severely compromised by local politics; (2) consensus among stakeholders can be difficult to negotiate, and (3) social relations can discourage local communities from participating. These three issues are in fact related to one core message: different interests, priorities and objectives among various stakeholders result in tensions that consequently influence the environmental practices of local communities.

I must stress that the argument in this chapter is not against the participatory approach

adopted by eNGOs in the package of CBNRM, or against CBNRM in general. Rather, the findings from this chapter challenge the assumptions that participation certainly leads to collective action on effective resource management. The case study presented here highlights the complexity of the causality between participation and collective actions, a debate that has been previously discussed in other studies. For example, Green (2000) suggests that participatory interventions sometime do not bring collective action but instead help individuals to achieve their development goals. In reality, it is often more reasonable or beneficial for people to choose not to participate (Cleaver, 1999). This chapter also supports Blaikie's (2006) argument that examination of CBNRM projects should move away from facilitating conditions within the communities for CBNRM and that it is crucial to pay more attention to the interaction between CBNRM projects and the local community.

When establishing an effective resource management institution, the ground for collective action is based upon: a) cooperative relations, and b) agreement on resource management. In its attempt to achieve collective action, a central component of GW's fishery project was to mobilise the local community to engage with social norms through the process of consensus building, a process commonly seen in CBNRM projects. In the case of fishery resource management in Lashi, stakeholder relationships were severely undermined by local resource politics due to the divergent agendas of the different institutional actors, a situation that rendered agreement on resource management among stakeholders difficult.

Consensus building is a process of knowledge co-production by involved actors, but knowledge of certain actors may be prioritised over others. Reproduction of knowledge, led by GW which employed participatory tools including village meetings and the documenting of oral histories, in fact revealed power inequity veiled in a participatory resource management project. This implied a gap between the ideology and the reality of participation. Unequal power relations generated through participation thus weaken the legitimacy of "collective action" and lead to questions of empowerment, another promise made by participatory approach. I will discuss this notion further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 7

Empowering the Powerless? Conservation and Development in Yangyuchan Village

While Chapter 6 demonstrates the limits in formal participation, this chapter aims to address the informal form of empowerment by looking into the critical role of agency played in participatory conservation and development projects. By employing the case of GW's project in a Yi village, I will analyse how the local community was capable of adopting the language of NGO narratives and manoeuvring local relationships in order to achieve their own agenda. I will argue that, in reality, rural villagers may not be as marginalised as perceived by outsiders. This chapter will critically examine the notion of empowerment which is often based on the assumption of reversing the relationships between "the powerful and powerless".

Sections 7.1 and 7.2 provide the backgrounds of Yangyuchan village and the development and conservation project GW implemented. The GW project mobilised community members to participate in various project activities. In particular, capacity building activities, including establishing a watershed management committee, have been emphasised by GW as a means to empower the community for self-management of natural resources.

During my fieldwork in 2011, a plan was informally declared by officials to relocate Yangyuchan villagers, due to the interest of a Naxi businessman in developing the territory of the village for tourism. Consequently, GW, based on the CBNRM model which sees the local community as the most appropriate and legitimate manager of the forest, assisted the villagers in resisting the relocation plan. The Yi community has always been identified by GW as a powerless group, marginalised by the Naxi. As a

result, empowering the marginalised community to fight against the resource grab was reasonable for GW. (The proposed relocation plan will be discussed in Section 7.3.) This event was particularly important in my research, because it offered me opportunities to examine the GW environment and development model and further led to discussion of the process of empowerment.

Through many years of project operation, GW has constructed an environmental narrative demonstrating the human-nature relationships of Yangyuchan village. The narrative emphasises the authenticity, locality and integrity of the Yi community as the traditional forest guardians. While the narrative is problematic and carries implications which may hinder the environment and development of the village, it has been selectively adopted by the Yangyuchan villagers. I will detail the construction, the adoption and the implication of the narrative in Section 7.4.

In fact, the local community is not merely powerless and subject to external intervention. In Section 7.5, I will discuss how the villagers actively used the adopted language, and legitimised their position for bargaining with the Naxi businessman over the forest. While GW expected villagers to stay locally for development and forest protection, villagers' deliberations varied according to cultural and social factors. In practice, the social relations are complex and sometimes beyond GW's understanding. I will also show that, for generations, the Yangyuchan villagers have always been able to exercise their political ability in negotiating for their land and for their livelihoods. As a result, the notion of empowering the powerless needs to be further rethought.

Finally, Section 7.6 will discuss the notion of empowerment, a process enabling people to have wider choices and action when dealing with various issues. Empowerment has been championed by many NGOs in participatory projects. Nevertheless, complex social relations and the capability of local agency, sometimes overlooked by external agencies, challenge assumptions that there is arbitrary dichotomy between powerful and powerless, and empowerment is supposed to reverse the two positions. In addition, I suggest that empowerment is not achieved separately: eNGOs often combine specific agendas with empowerment. I refer to such combinations as "empowerment packages". In certain cases,

the delivery of an empowerment package may contradict the original intention of empowerment. In short, simplified notions of empowerment may potentially obscure the real power relations and hinder the operation of conservation and development programmes.

7.1 The Yi village: Yangyuchan

Yangyuchan, one of the eight Yi villages within Lashi Township, is where GW has implemented its forestry protection and community development project. "Yangyuchan" is the Mandarin name, meaning "potato factory". In Yi, this place is called "Budolou", meaning beautiful valley. This village, administratively commune No. 5 under the Nanyao village committee, is the most remote community in Lashi. It was also the last village connected by paved road. Nowadays, it remains difficult for vehicles to reach this village. In raining and snowing days, 4-WD vehicles are required. Although there is only one paved road to Nanyao in Lashi town, the villagers have long-time interactions with other Han, Naxi and Yi villages through walking paths. Yangyuchan sits on a mountain pass between Lashi basin and the Jinsha River valley, and is the highest among all Yi villages in Lashi with its elevation of 3100 metres above sea level. See Map 4 for the location of Yangyuchan village. Nowadays, this village, along with other Yi villages, possesses limited resources due to the topology and several regulations such as farming and logging bans since 1999.
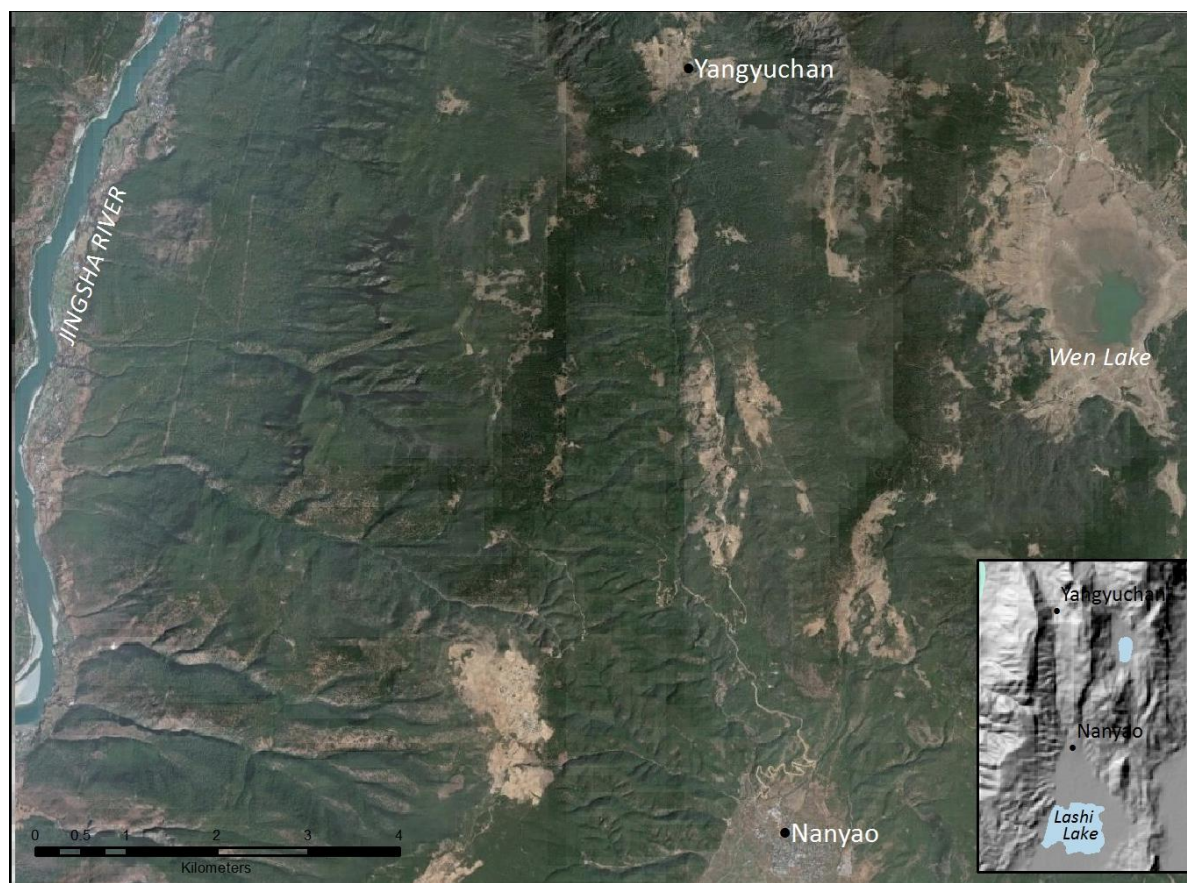
Map 4 Location of Yangyuchan village

In researching Lashi ecology, Yu (2004) categorises five different elevation zones with different ecosystems and associated land use by human settlements. GW's rationale for selecting the Yi villages as the project site was that GW considered the forest, which is central for the soil and water resources of Lashi, is mainly located in the higher zones where Yi communities inhabit[67]. Although there are eight Yi villagers in Lashi, GW mainly conducted its project in Yangyuchan, because the livelihoods in this village have been particularly difficult compared to other Yi villages. GW staff also revealed to me that Yangyuchan village has been more cooperative in project activities compared to other villages. As a result, most of the project activities were conducted only in Yangyuchan village.

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[67] As mentioned in Chapter 5, GW and Oxfam USA initially intended to implement projects only in the Yi communities, but this proposal was refused by the Lashi township government.

When the Yi ancestors first settled in Yangyuchan, this area was rich in natural resources. The Liu clan, the only one in Yangyuchan, were the first Yi to move to Lijiang area. About six generations (approximately ninety years) ago, this clan migrated from Liangshan area in neighbouring Sichuan province, where they escaped from their slavery under the noble Yi. Before the communist era, the land of current Yangyuchan village belonged to the He clan in Nanyao, the downstream Naxi community. The Naxi landlord permitted the Liu clan to stay, as Liu agreed to serve as guards for preventing others' invasion.

According to oral history, the dense forest and lush pasture provided good ground for living at the time of early settlement. The main productive activities were hunting and animal herding. Bears, deer, musk deers, monkeys, other small animals and many types of pheasants were common game. Farming and non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvesting also provided livelihood needs. In the past, Tatary buckwheat, oat and potato were the main crops.

Currently, there are about thirty households belonging to six family groups in Yangyuchan. All households belong to the Liu clan patrilineally. Various forms of parallel marriages are also common[68]. For example, two cousins within the Liu clan may marry sisters from other clans. These families linked patrilineally may also have affinal connections with each others.

Over the past several decades, the Yangyuchan villagers have experienced significant degradation of the natural environment, particularly of forestry resources. Their experience in fact corresponds to the large-scale logging policy in the Yunnan province (as a state enterprise) from the 1950s to the early 1980s, and the subsequent commercial logging practices from the 1980s until the logging ban was imposed in 1999. During the logging era, both Naxi and Yi joined forces for logging.

The ecosystem has changed so quickly and people in every generation, regardless of male

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[68] There are two reasons for that. First, the Yi people in Lijiang area still keep the tradition that no marriage is allowed with other ethnic groups. Secondly, the Yi are a minority in Lijiang area especially around Lashi Lake and therefore they are very much tied together by marriage.

or female, can clearly relate their experience to the changing nature, in terms of deforestation, declining NTFP availability and fewer animals for hunting. Elders often told me stories about the dense forest around the village. They described that it used to be very dark inside the forest because of the thick canopy. The diameter of the trees was large (4-5 chi, approximately 1.6 metres) and it took the linked arms of three to four people to circle and hug the trunk. They considered the commercial logging during the 1980s and 1990s was the major reason for deforestation. During that period, the high quality timber of this area was an important source of local government revenue, and many lowland Naxi were hired for logging (Yu, 2004). Compared to the effect of commercial logging, the agricultural practices of the Yi villagers seemed to contribute less to deforestation. Although the Yi villagers expanded their agricultural lands due to population growth, the scale was not extensive. This can be observed from the currently abandoned fields under the Sloping Land Conversion Programme announced in 1999 (SLCP, also called "Restoring Farmland to Forest", *tuigeng huanli,* 退耕還林). These fields are very close to the village and are confined within a certain area. Despite the accusations regarding the "slash and burn" practices of upland "backward" Yi as a popular mainstream discourse, the Yi should not be regarded as the main cause of deforestation in Lashi in the recent century. In fact, swidden agriculture was not commonly practiced in this area, at least not until the 1950s.[69]

The obvious declining diversity of wildlife, mostly due to deforestation, was also stressed by the elders, who observed that many animals either froze or starved, due to lack of forest for shelter and moss for food. Regular hunting activity stopped approximately ten years ago. I was told that the main reason for the ceased hunting was because there were fewer wildlife than before, but not the legal restriction prohibiting hunting, as the regulation was seldom enforced in this area.

Deforestation also caused agricultural problems. Several village elders mentioned that the heavy logging resulted in soil erosion, and wind hazards, snow hazards and floods became more frequent. People indicated that potato fields were submerged due to summer

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[69] For detailed research about swidden agriculture in Yunnan, see Yin (2008).

floods in 1987-1988. Yangyuchan village, along with other upland communities, in fact experienced natural disasters associated with deforestation much earlier than the downstream areas of the Yangtze River, but there was no government policy in place addressing the issue until the downstream provinces were significantly affected by the historic Yangtze flood in 1998. Only after the rich/urban provinces in the downstream area were damaged by the 1988 flood, did the national government declare the NFPP and SLCP, banning logging and sloping land farming in the upstream area. So not only had the upstream communities suffered from deforestation for many years, but they were later subjected to restrictions in land use (both in farming and grazing) after the implementation of both policies in 1999.

In Yangyuchan, NTFPs, including medicinal plants, honey, mushrooms and pine nuts, are valuable in both the community economy and the market economy. NTFPs are important sources of health provision, as well as income generation for the impoverished villagers. However, villagers expressed that it has become more difficult to collect NTFPs. For example, it is almost impossible to find any pine nuts close to the village now, because all pines were felled during the commercial logging period. Pines left in this area are too small to produce edible nuts. The villagers have to collect pine nuts in the area where the forest has been better preserved.

NTFPs provide extra sources of nutrition in addition to the staple foods (mostly self-produced potato and purchased rice)[70]. Meat, fruits and fresh vegetables are extremely rare in the daily diet of the Yangyuchan villagers. Meat (mostly self-raised chicken, mutton and pork) is only consumed during festivals and ceremonies and when guests visit. No fresh fruit and extremely limited vegetables are produced in the village. Impoverished villagers are mostly unable to afford purchasing food from markets. On an average day, their diet consists of potatoes, chilli powder and rice only. Therefore, the additional nutrition from NTFPs is essential.

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[70] Other staple foods include purchased wheat and self-produced Tatary bucketwheat, which are consumed occasionally.

The decline in medicinal plant resources (both in diversity and amount) has created another health concern. In Yangyuchan, villagers rely heavily on medicinal plants for treating illnesses, due to the remoteness of the village which poses problems for transporting patients, as well as the relatively high cost of receiving formal treatment in hospitals/pharmacies. Unless it is a prolonged illness that medicinal plants will not cure, the villagers always treat illness with the available medicinal plants first.

Moreover, collecting wild medicinal plants is one of the major economic activities during summer (normally from June to September), but in recent years the profit from collecting medicinal plants has decreased, mainly due to the diminishing quantity available for collection. For example, the unit prices of the main medicinal plants that Yangyuchan villagers collected were similar in 2010 and 2011[71]. However, the highest daily production value was 30-40 RMB in 2011, compared to 50-60 RMB in 2010. I was told that the variety of wild medicinal plants also decreased. Generally, villagers considered the declining medicinal resource has been due to unsustainable harvesting methods; people tended to dig out the entire roots without leaving plants to regenerate. Villagers told me that this practice was mostly done by Yangyuchan villagers themselves, since they have been the major NTFP collectors in the nearby forest. Although there is no restriction on others collecting NTFPs, outsiders rarely go to the village forest for collection due to the difficult terrain.

It is clear that Yangyuchan villagers have been experiencing significant natural resource degradation, both in terms of long-term and short-term changes. The long term trends, such as deforestation, mainly result from state policy and market forces, while the short term changes, such as declining NTFP resources, may be due to local-scale unsustainable practices and other possible factors (such as decreasing rainfall in recent years). In conclusion, the villagers have strong connections to the natural environment they depend

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71 The main medicinal plants available for commercial sale in this area include Cortex Moutan (*Paeonia suffruticosa* Andr.), Dipsacus Root (*Dipsacus apercides* C.Y.Cheng et T.M.Ai) , Armand Clematis (*Clematis armandii* Franch.). Certain species which villagers collect for self-use but not for sale include Opium Poppy, Isatis Root (*Isatis indigotica* Fort.). Commercial sale of Opium Poppy is illegal in China.

upon, and are able to express their sense of association with the environment by narrating their life stories.

In addition to natural resource degradation, lack of cash income also poses difficulties for livelihoods. The logging ban in 1999 also resulted in loss of cash income of Yi villagers. After 1999, the main cash income of Yangyuchan has been the compensation from the SLCP policy for people to abandon sloping land farming. The amount which one person can get is appropriate to the land one owns. A household in Yangyuchan could get approximately 3,000 RMB per year. In 2007, the government decided to extend the compensation into the second phase.[72]

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[72] Households who reforest for ecological benefit (ecological forest) can receive a further eight year compensation; whereas household reforest for commercial benefit (economic forest) receive five year compensation.

Figure 7 : Landscape of Yangyuchan. The village overlooks Jingsha River valley in the back.

Figure 8   One of the common medicinal plants (Dipsacus Root) collected by Yangyuchan villagers for commercial sale. August 2011.

7.2 The conservation and development project

Witnessing the resource degradation and livelihood difficulties, GW, based on the CBNRM model, initiated its livelihood development and conservation project in the Yi village in 2002.[73] Through mobilising the community to participate in various project activities, GW expected to strengthen the villagers' capabilities for performing the task of resource management themselves. The overall strategy of GW was to persuade villagers to protect the crucial ecosystem of this area, by helping them to develop better livelihoods. For example, GW has been promoting eco-tourism as an alternative livelihood activity. In general, GW has built very good relationships with the Yangyuchan villagers.

GW's rationale for implementing projects in Yangyuchan was to involve upstream communities in watershed management (Green Watershed, 2011, n.d.-d). Due to the limited livelihood choices, GW considered that poverty alleviation and livelihood development would be crucial for effective environmental protection in the Yi villages (Green Watershed, n.d.-d). Natural resources were also considered as capital for improving and developing alternative livelihoods (Green Watershed, 2011). Similar to other projects in the Lashi programme, "sustainable development", as a win-win solution for conservation and development, was the key principle of the GW project in Yangyuchan.

In project implementation, there are four major components: infrastructure (including roads, tiled houses, water tanks), livelihood security (such as goat breed improvement, medicinal plants cultivation, eco-tourism development), awareness education (including environmental protection and disaster management), and capacity building (e.g., women's night school).

An underlying goal of the project is to achieve local empowerment. Therefore, of all of the above, capacity building was regarded as particularly important and project implementation always prioritised skill building and training. The project document states

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[73] The first project GW was involved in was construction of the paved road linking Yangyuchan to Nanyao village. Nevertheless, the initial contact between GW and Yangyuchan occurred, prior to Dr. Yu's establishing of GW. In 1998, when Yu first came to Yangyuchan for research, he had concerns about the poverty issue and consequently collaborated with Oxfam for providing food aid.

"Through capacity building (including economic, political and social abilities), villagers can self-develop sustainable livelihoods (agriculture, animal husbandry and eco-tourism) to protect their resources" (Green Watershed, 2011, p. 1,translated).

Capacity building has been taken as a pathway to empower locals for self-developing livelihoods and self-managing their natural resources. Establishing management institutions through a participatory approach is often adopted by eNGOs to achieve empowerment. The Yangyuchan project is no exception. A new institution, the Watershed Management Committee, was set up in 2005 as a platform for discussion and for facilitating project activities. There were five committee members representing five family groups and one advisor. Each watershed committee member was assigned specific responsibility relating to eco-tourism operations, besides that, there were no specific roles for other matters. According to the members, their duties included discussing village matters, mostly GW projects, because GW has been almost the sole project provider besides apart from the township government. The committee also discussed and drafted village rules for resource use.

The current village rules can be taken as modifications of traditional customary uses of the forest. In the past, Yi villagers specified certain areas as "village spiritual forest" or "ancestral spirit forest" in which different practices were permitted (Yu, 2004). Current village rules specify the types of log allowed for collection and the locations for collection are specified. The rules, forbidding logging any living trees, allow villagers to collect dead logs. Village rules also prohibit access to collective firewood from certain areas prone to mudslide. Moreover, the rules identify certain species for protection. For example, rhododendrons are listed to be protected for eco-tourism assets. Nowadays many people dig the rhododendron roots for sale (twenty RMB/per piece) because they are a popular material for sculpture. Hunting for monkeys, bears and other animals is also prohibited by the village rules.

The committee holds village-wide meetings only when there are very important matters to be discussed. When I asked how people resolve disagreements, I received two answers. Some told me that issues were open to debate, while others said that they listened to two persons, who are called "Teacher Liu" and "Old Village Head". From my observation,

however, the situation was less clear-cut, given the opinions of the two leaders were highly influential.

Teacher Liu, who used to teach in Yangyuchan's elementary school before the school was abolished, served as the village head in the early 2000s. His family group is comparatively better off in terms of social and economic status compared to the other villagers. For example, Teacher Liu and his second brother finished elementary school, while others in his generation were mostly uneducated. His nephew, Yen, the first and only college graduate in Yangyuchan, later became a GW staff member.

Old Village Head had also studied in elementary school and worked in many places within Yunnan province. Therefore, he understood many languages including Mandarin and Tibetan. He served as the village head until early 2000s. In the 1980s, he once led villagers to successfully protect their land against Naxi encroachment. After he retired, he continued his involvement in many activities, including negotiating for road and electricity projects for the village. For these reasons, he is a well-respected opinion leader, both by the villagers and GW.

The capacity building activities and the set up of the watershed committee are part of empowerment, through which GW expected to achieve the goal of effective natural resource self-management. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 3, empowerment should be more critically addressed in the CBNRM model, particularly by examining the role of agency and relational power emerging from the actors. In the following section, I will address the concept of empowerment, by presenting the case of a proposed relocation plan in Yangyuchan village. This relocation plan was informally announced by the township government in 2011 and stirred a lot of discussions within the community. Although the plan was not part of GW's project, GW nevertheless was deeply involved due to its long term involvement in village affairs, in activities such as devising strategies with the villagers.

7.3 The controversial relocation plan

In 2011, the Yangyuchan villagers were potentially being relocated due to the interest of a Naxi businessman in developing the area for tourism. Up to the end of 2013, the relocation has not been enforced, but the relocation plan had stirred up a lot of debate within the community, as well as discussion between GW and the villagers. Upon hearing the news, GW assisted the villagers in resisting the private encroachment, because GW had been striving to educate the villagers for forest protection and community-based resource management. For the period of the Lashi programme, GW constructed particular environmental narratives framing the human-nature relationship between the Yi and their environment, emphasising the authenticity, locality and integrity of the Yi community in guarding the forest. The private encroachment simply did not fit into the CBNRM model. I will briefly discuss the relocation plan in this section, and later discuss the narrative constructed by GW in section 7.4.

The proposed relocation was mostly due to the interest of a rich Naxi businessman from Nanyao village, called "*He laoban*", meaning "Boss He". This person enjoys very good relationships with government officials at different levels, from township to provincial and even central government. Rumours suggest that he is related to local mafia. He is therefore very powerful in Lashi.

He laoban intended to develop the upland area above Nanyao village into a tourist destination. Over the past few years, the businessman had developed part of the area by paving the road, planting trees, and modifying the landscape (for example, creating a man-made waterfall). In the process, he resettled two Yi villages, the No.3 and No.4 communes that used to be located between Nanyao and Yangyuchan, by leasing the land for seventy years. In exchange, *He laoban* promised the resettled villagers houses and 10,000 RMB per household/per year for five years. However, the quality of the houses was too poor to pass the standard check. Moreover, the resettled households were allocated only a tiny area of land which was insufficient for farming. In fact, the densely

populated Lashi had no vacant fields for new settlers. Therefore, many new settlers were forced to seek paid employment to earn their livelihoods[74].

Although the relocated villagers were discontented, they could do little if anything about it, because *He laoban* was supported by the local government. Once, there was a negotiation meeting between the businessman and the relocated villagers. After he walked into the meeting with some township officials, he told villagers to express their opinions. However, when some of the villagers spoke out, *He laoban* scolded them for not appreciating his kindness in providing houses and compensation. Consequently, no other villager expressed any opinion in that meeting.

Prior to 2011, *He laoban* expressed interest in contracting the forest of Yangyuchan for seventy years, although he did not explicitly talk about relocating the village at that time. He discussed about how to allocate the natural resources between the villagers and himself. When I asked villagers' opinions in 2010, people mostly told me that they worried whether the businessman would monopolise the resources and leave nothing for them. In response to the potential threat, the villagers built a cottage as an eco-tourism centre with the support of GW. GW staff referred this cottage as the "bargaining chip" if *He laoban* would attempt to occupy the land by force in the future.

In July 2011, the township officials told the Yangyuchan villagers that their village was designated for relocation in the coming five-year master plan, because the village was located within a geological hazard zone. However, to that date, no official survey had been published, no villager was consulted and no relocation plan was officially announced. The township officials used the relocation plan as the excuse for rejecting the village's application for road improvement. The government asserted that no funds would be granted to develop Yangyuchan within five years due to the possible relocation. While this plan was leaked by the officials, the villagers suspected the plan to be a trick and that *He laoban* was forcing them to move.

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[74] According to a survey conducted by GW in late 2012, 80% of males in relocated communes No.3 and No.4 work for horse-trekking businesses in the nearby villages. They are offered 40 RMB in addition to 3 meals per day. Working for horse-trekking business became the main income source for most of the families.

Upon hearing the news, Dr. Yu expressed his displeasure about *He laoban's* intention to occupy the area. Dr. Yu was determined that Yangyuchan villagers should stay to develop their livelihoods rather than attempt to negotiate a better relocation package, but several GW staff members had different ideas and suggested assessing the "ecological value" of Yangyuchan's forestry resources, in order to negotiate a better compensation package for relocation. However, this option was never raised during the meeting between GW and the Yangyuchan villagers.

During his two visits to Yangyuchan in the latter half of 2011, Dr. Yu spent long hours discussing the advantages and disadvantages of relocation with the watershed committee members. He first asked people to identify the potential benefits and disadvantages of relocating to lower area.

The result of the villager discussion appears in Table 3. The order of each item in the column is the same as the order discussed in the meeting. The categories shown in parentheses are added by the author.

Table 3 : Benefits and disadvantages of relocation, discussed at a village meeting

Benefits	Disadvantages
Convenient transportation (transportation)	Loss of decades-long effort in forest protection (environment)
Convenient for school children (education)	Difficulty in getting used to new livelihoods (livelihood)
Better prospects for growing vegetables (livelihood)	Possibility of children learning bad habits due to close proximity to town/city (education)

Benefits	Disadvantages
Availability of paid labour jobs (livelihood)	Insufficient land for farming (livelihood)
Better access to information due to close proximity to the town (information)	Poor quality of housing , if provided by *He laoban* (housing)
	Loss of cash compensation from the NFPP programme (livelihood)
	Ethnic relationships (culture)
	Loss of possibly promised housing, land, money, if *He laoban* passed away (livelihood)
	Loss of livestock farming (livelihood)
	Loss of tourism resources (livelihood)

The villagers expressed further concerns in subsequent conversations. These concerns were mainly derived from the experiences of the Yi villagers of Communes No.3 and No.4. For example, their irrigation water was restricted. Although there were no written rules about water allocation, the resettled Yi were not able to fetch water until the Naxi finished their irrigation. As a result, Yi had to abandon the crops sensitive to lack of water (such as wheat), and could only grow the types of crops that could tolerate a few days delay in irrigation (such as maize). There were some cases where relocated Yi fields were sabotaged; Yi blamed the neighbouring Naxi community (mainly from Nanyao village) for being responsible. Yi villagers attributed it to the fact that the Naxi were jealous because the Yi were given free housing. Naxi were also discontented about reduced land

resources. After Lashi Lake was dammed, there was less suitable farming land, which then had to be shared with Yi.

During the meetings, Dr. Yu emphasised the disadvantages (such as loss of land and livestock) by claiming they were nearly impossible to resolve. At the same time, he suggested that local eco-tourism development would bring the same benefits to the villagers, as those they would receive if they relocated to the lower area. Moreover, Dr. Yu told villagers that Yangyuchan was the heritage from their ancestors, so they were responsible for protecting the environment. This rhetoric was repeated in almost every meeting between GW and Yangyuchan villagers I attended, and was consistent with the CBNRM model which GW adopted from international eNGO agenda. This rhetoric, in fact, is one part of the environmental narratives constructed by GW.

It is important to note that even though the content of Table 3 was recorded according to villagers' input, the process of producing the table was initiated and conducted by Dr. Yu. I suggest that the process in effect was an expression of an "empowerment package". By asking the villagers to express their opinions, the discussion served as a platform for empowerment, enabling villagers to share and discuss their opinions. At the same time, Dr. Yu, as the facilitator of the discussion, furthered his concept by emphasising the disadvantages of relocation and defending the option of local development. Yangyuchan villagers highly respected Dr. Yu and rarely raised contradictory points during discussions. This situation is nevertheless different in the meetings in Naxi village, where villagers often exchange a lot of opinions in private instead of those listed in the Table 3 .

7.4 GW's environmental narratives

GW's action in resisting the potential relocation plan reflected its understanding and framing of the human-nature relationship: Yangyuchan villagers, who are the forest guardians inheriting the land from their ancestors, should protect the forest for the benefit of the entire watershed. In short, GW has employed "watershed" as the main focus of its environmental campaign in Yangyuchan, and constructed the indigenous narrative which emphasised the "authenticity, locality and integrity" of Yangyuchan villagers. While such narratives are often simplified (Forsyth & Walker, 2008), the language is nevertheless

adopted by Yangyuchan villagers to strengthen their positions. This echoes Li (1996) point that, although the images of community may be misleading, the representation of the images nevertheless is used by NGOs or local communities as a political tool to achieve their agendas. By repeating GW's narrative claiming Yanyuchang's cultural and territorial positions, the villages are able to negotiate with external interventions. In this case, the narratives legitimised the resource rights of the community members over the Naxi businessman.

However, GW's narrative carries certain environmental implications. First, I will show that taking the watershed as the focus of its environmental campaign reveals the gaps between the understanding of environment between GW and the villagers. Secondly, narratives often simplify and mask complex environmental problems (Forsyth & Walker, 2008). Therefore, GW's narrative may render environmental problems more difficult to address   As narrative often simplifies and generalises villagers' actions and attitudes, it results in overlooking the will and the multiple positionality of agency. Examples of illegal logging by Yangyuchan villagers will be employed to explain this argument.

7.4.1 Environmental campaign: Watershed protection

The major project activity of GW's environmental campaign in Yanyuchan has been awareness education. The overall rationale of the environmental project in the Yi community, as mentioned in Section 7.2, was to protect the upland forest for the benefit of the entire watershed community (Green Watershed, n.d.-d). "Protecting upstream forest for downstream water" has always been the core message of GW's work. Therefore, engaging upstream communities is essential. The watershed model also fitted into the Oxfam Mekong Initiative, which strived to engage the upstream communities of the Mekong River as partners in its overall programme (Ounsted, 2003, 2004b). As a result, the concept of watershed is central in the project. Even the resource management organisation was named the "Watershed Management Committee".

Another important component of the project was the use of "development" as an incentive for environmental protection. In particular, eco-tourism has been one of the livelihood strategies GW has been promoting. For example, in various meetings with the

Yangyuchan villagers, Dr. Yu repeatedly emphasised how eco-tourism would provide prosperity for the village, in order to encourage villagers to stay against the relocation plan. Occasionally, Dr. Yu also introduced some concepts from international conservation agenda, such as how payment for ecosystem service (PES) may work to potentially benefit local villages, in an effort to encourage villagers to support forest protection.

My interviews[75] show that GW education activities, together with the government's NFPP programme effectively stimulated environmental awareness of the villagers, who certainly have adopted the language of GW. For example, when villagers were asked if environment protection was important, some told me that good forests were essential for *water*, while others considered forest important for developing *eco-tourism*. It is worth asking why villagers only responded that forest conservation was important for water resources and for eco-tourism, but no one mentioned that the forests were crucial in terms of their immediate livelihood uses (such as timber or NTFP products). It was thus clear that villagers have linked the concept of "environmental protection" with water resources and eco-tourism after the long term campaign by GW. Moreover, The Mandarin terms *liuyu(流域)* (meaning watershed) and *shidi（濕地）*(meaning wetland) which were introduced by GW, have also become commonly used in the villagers' conversation. People use the mandarin words because the vocabularies were adopted from GW and not from the native Yi language.

When villagers responded to me that protecting forest was important for water resources, they were referring to not only their immediate water needs, but also to the concerns of the entire Lashi watershed. An elder in his seventies, who had never studied in school and could not understand Mandarin, told me: "Now we protect the upstream forest so the *wetland* is good and attracts tourists. But we don't get money, we don't get tourists here." Another example is the presentation by the Old Village Head in a workshop

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[75] For this part of the research, I interviewed the village opinion leaders, representatives of watershed committee and their wives, non-representatives and their wives and village elders regarding ideas on the environment and environmental protection.

commemorating the 10th anniversary of GW's Lashi programme[76]. In his speech, the elder said,

> If we want to protect Lashi Lake, we have to protect the mountain of Lashi first…Only if the mountain survives so will the water…so Yi in the upstream of Lashi Lake protect the mountains…After GW's programme, we (Yi) have successfully protected the forest.

Both comments revealed villagers' idea of protecting forest for downstream water. The use of the exact word "wetland" in Mandarin, instead of "lake" in Yi, again demonstrates that villagers have adopted GW's language of environmental protection.

This is not to deny that water resources are a concern of Yangyuchan villagers, however, they are not a significant concern. The village experienced drought in 2009 along with many other south-western China areas, but did not suffer a disaster. Despite the unusual climate, no significant damage was made to the village. The village has not experienced significant mudslides since the occurrences in 1987-88 that I mentioned previously. In the recent decade, only one small-scale mudslide occurred.

As a result, the language of integrated watershed management emphasising the well-being of the entire watershed and employing development activity as the incentive for conservation seems to be partly internalised by the villagers. However, I suggest that there is a mismatch between the understandings of "environment" and "environmental protection" of villagers and GW. The mismatch can be observed from the differences in what local people experience and what they express. Although the villagers have experienced environmental degradation, they did not strongly associate degradation (such as the dramatic decrease in NTFPs) with environmental protection. Instead, when people are asked about environmental protection, their immediate responses were always about protecting forest for downstream water and/or for developing eco-tourism; they did not respond saying protection is to conserve the resources they depend on every day.

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[76] Presentation on 11th October, 2011.

The implication of such a mismatch is that local villagers may see the concept as external and probably distant from their everyday lived reality, whereas GW aims to internalise the concept into the community. Consequently, for local villagers, protecting environment is for someone else's benefit (downstream communities) and/or for future development purposes (eco-tourism), despite the fact that the changes in forestry resource result in immediate effects on their lives and livelihoods. Although GW's environmental protection project is well-intended, it may lead the villagers away from recognising the day-to-day importance of forestry resources which is their primary concern. Meanwhile, the environmental protection programme, which stresses the importance of protecting upstream forests for downstream watersheds, further reaffirms the correctness of the national policy discourse of NFPP, which some consider unjust to upstream poor communities who are constrained in their livelihood activities in the interests of better-off communities downstream. Studies show that the NFPP has resulted in negative impacts on local livelihoods (Weyerhaeuser, Wilkes, & Kahrl, 2005) and traditional culture (Shen, et al., 2010), while the effects on overall ecological benefits remain questionable[77] (Weyerhaeuser, et al., 2005; Willson, 2006).

7.4.2 Narrative of "authenticity, locality and integrity"

Another important element in the environmental narrative GW constructed is the characteristics of "authenticity, locality and integrity" of the Yi village. Internally, GW's campaign educates villagers that this land belongs to the Liu family traditionally, and the villagers have responsibility and rights to protect this area. This discourse could be observed in the meetings between GW and the villagers. In both Dr. Yu's personal work (2004) and GW's project document (2008), the Yi community has been portrayed as the legitimate users who have been protecting the environment and been marginalised both

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[77] Although the overall forest cover in China has been increasing since the NFPP logging ban, the broader impacts are uncertain. For example, many cash crop plantations were supported in Yunnan by the NFPP schemes without being considered for their ecological impacts. My observations in many parts of Yunnan show the uneven implementation of reforestation programme. In some areas the species provided for regeneration are not locally fit and in other areas the new species may even result in new ecological problems. Willson (2006) points out that despite the growing forest coverage in Yunnan due to the forestry policy, forest status and quality cannot be assured, and (Weyerhaeuser, et al., 2005) argue that the benefit of the NFPP on mitigating soil erosion is unclear.

by state policy and the Naxi community. The narrative can also be seen in an Oxfam report, stating that Oxfam decided to support Dr. Yu's idea that "upstream guardians of water resources should be compensated" (Ounsted, 2004a). Although the reference to "upstream guardians" does not explicitly point out any particular group, it refers to the Yi community in the context of Lashi watershed. In short, GW, adopting the indigenous narrative theme, legitimised the Yi village's territorial claim (being owner of the land) and cultural claim (being the guardians of nature). GW insisted that villagers should resist the potential relocation, as protecting the forest is a legitimate right as well as a responsibility. Nevertheless, as narratives are often simplified (Fairhead & Leach, 1995; Forsyth & Walker, 2008), this particular narrative proves problematic for several reasons which I will explain in the following paragraphs.

Interestingly, this narrative is contrary to the mainstream narrative, which often positions Yi as the enemies of nature due to slash and burn practices, while Naxi are often depicted as living in harmony with nature. For example, TNC has been one of the major forces in presenting Naxi as the guardians of nature [see Hathaway (2007)]. In reality, despite Naxi's customary rules of natural resource uses, the rules are no longer practiced and are rarely known by ordinary Naxi nowadays except for the elites who are familiar with the traditional culture. In a document of CBIK (The Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge) discussing the ethnic groups in Lijiang who have harmonious relationships with nature, the Yi are excluded from the discussion, as the author only includes Naxi and Tibetans as the ethnic groups respecting nature (Li, 2006). However, even Naxi used to practice slash and burn agriculture (Yin, 2008), and both Naxi and Yi joined forces in logging. As a result, the mainstream environmental narrative is confusing. It is common that environmental narratives link ethnicity and resource use patterns. In the case of land use by ethnic groups in Northern Thailand, Forsyth and Walker (2008) argue that the stereotyping of ethnic groups by outsiders (including eNGOs) is a simplified explanation of nature-human interactions   I will now analyse how the narrative of GW simplified the interactions.

GW constantly states that the Yi villagers, who occupy the higher elevations of the watershed, are supposed to remain where they are at present. This is based on rhetoric

stressing the territorial claim of Yangyuchan villagers. However, as previously mentioned, the Liu clan is not the traditional owner of the land as their ancestor migrated from other areas only six generations ago. Moreover, the ancestors of the Liu decided to settle in Yangyuchan due to the possible prosperity the natural environment offered at that time. However, as previously mentioned, the natural environment has declined significantly. Therefore, this location may no longer be attractive for Yi to stay and develop.

Furthermore, GW often represents Yangyuchan village as an integrated community with a strong consensus, while emphasising the heterogeneity of the Naxi community. This can be seen in GW's documents and presentation materials. For example, in a presentation, Yu categorises Yangyuchan as a "traditional" community sharing values of culture and nature[78]. I suggest that this image has partly been constructed by villagers themselves. Comparatively speaking, Yi may be more united than the Naxi, but certainly social differences within Yangyuchan society exist. Especially, different family groups tend to have diverse opinions, even though they rarely express the disagreement to outsiders (including GW personnel). For example, during meetings to discuss the relocation plan with GW, no villager argued against GW's proposal to resist the relocation. However, I was told in private that most of the villagers were willing to consider relocation if provided with satisfactory compensation. Only one particular family group, who enjoyed comparatively better economic and social status, rejected the relocation. This family group, young or old, female and male, all preferred to stay. A young lady from this family chatted with me while harvesting rapeseed:

> We don't want to move. Here we have freedom to grow whatever we like. We have land and water …Those who …want to move because they are lazy. It takes a lot of effort to farm rapeseed. That's why only we (the family group) grow so many rapeseed and others don't.[79]

Her words implied that her family worked hard while others only thought of getting easy money. Nevertheless, from my observation, other family groups possess less capital and

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[78] PowerPoint presentation (X. Yu, 2011).
[79] Other family groups also grow rapeseed but only for a small amount for self-consumption oil. Teacher Liu's family group grow rapeseed for commercial sale.

were less capable of utilising the resources. For example, this family group is in a better position to negotiate price in livestock trading, because several family members are fluent in Mandarin. Many other villagers could not deal with businessmen, due to their limited language ability. As a result, investing in livestock herding is more sensible for this family group, but may not be for others. This particular family group is more capable of utilising and diversifying their livelihood activities than others.

I suggest that the image of an integrated community with strong consensus is purposely constructed by the Yi villagers. As a minority in Lashi area, being united provides better chance when interacting with outsiders. For example, maintaining the image of a united community has been successful in gaining trust and support from GW. Even after the native Yangyuchan villager who was also a GW staff member, revealed to another project staff member that the village was not as cohesive as outsiders might think, he remained reluctant to reveal much detail to fellow colleagues, especially those from the headquarters.

Similar to the case of "watershed protection" in the narrative, villagers tend to embrace the notions of cultural and territorial claims imparted by GW and adopt the language, even though the narrative does not entirely fit the reality. When presenting in meetings, workshops and to visiting guests, opinion leaders such as the Old Village Head always repeated the narrative that "this land belongs to the Liu's ancestors; we villagers have the responsibility of protecting the forest". The narrative thus becomes more legitimate and more powerful when it is told by a local elder rather than by GW. By repeating the narrative, a territorial claim is strengthened.

Moreover, through the GW project, villagers actively embraced a different type of Yi culture, in order to strengthen their cultural authenticity. In the course of a study trip arranged by GW to another Yi village, the Yangyuchan villagers bought some Yi utensils for serving wine and learned how to perform the Yi welcoming ceremony when guests visit. They now use these products to host tourists. In fact, the Yi village they visited, which was successful in tourism operations, was located in another county of Yunnan. This village belongs to a different lineage of Yi. As there are six major lineages within Yi

ethnic group and with more than twenty sub-lineages in total, the culture and dialects differ between various lineages.

Adopting GW's narrative thus transforms the identity of the community to become forest guardians, and further strengthens their position as the legitimate resource users in negotiating with external interventions. Local communities may selectively adopt the language of eNGOs to obtain benefits, for different reasons than eNGOs expect (Sundberg, 2003).

7.4.3 Implications of GW's narrative

There are several possible reasons for GW's construction of the particular environmental narrative of the interactions between the Yi and their environment. The narrative may be a romanticised assumption about the ethnicity-nature relationship, a strategic framing in order to impose environmental responsibility on the villagers, a strategy to mobilise external support (such as funding) for the marginalised Yi community, or a combination of all the above. Very often, a narrative is constructed within a complicated context, which makes it difficult to identify a single reason. Regardless of the underlying reason, this narrative is convenient for supporting the CBNRM model GW has been promoting, to persuade local people to continue their local lifestyle so the forest will be protected by the community. Nevertheless, the convenient narrative has implications. I suggest GW's narrative may risk ignoring development possibilities which are not accommodated by the CBNRM model, and also risks overlooking the ongoing illegal practices (mainly logging) by Yangyuchan villagers.

7.4.3.1 Rejection of other development possibilities

First, based on the CBNRM model, GW strongly encourages villagers to stay local for environmental protection and development. From the viewpoint of environmental protection, the CBNRM model favours the local community for resource management, compared to the government and private ownership. However, imposing the responsibility on Yangyuchan villagers rejects other development possibilities, even though the natural environment may no longer offer the prosperity it used to when the Liu ancestor first

migrated to this area. The impositions thus create what Fisher and Hirsch refer to as a "rhetorical poverty trap" tying local communities with their commitment of protecting the forest (Fisher & Hirsch, 2008, p. 81).

This can be mostly observed in GW's promotion of developing livelihoods locally and resisting the relocation. In fact, villagers may prefer to move because they desire to participate in a more urbanised lifestyle regardless of any narrative relevant to their ethnicity. The Yangyuchan village is not a unique case, as this desire among Chinese ethnic minority society has been observed by Sturgeon (2007).

Meanwhile, "eco-tourism" has been used by GW, and other CBNRM advocates, as an important incentive for developing a better future. The rhetoric of eco-tourism has been very popular because of its promise of providing alternative income while protecting nature. However, eco-tourism has been taken as an elixir by many environmental/developmental NGOs without exploring the reality. In the case of Yangyuchan, the monetary benefit has been meagre despite the fact that GW has been assisting development of the tourism operation.[80]

7.4.3.2 Ongoing illegal logging

The second implication of simplifying complex human-nature interaction in GW narrative is the ignorance of ongoing problematic resource use. In fact, besides unsustainable NTFP collection mentioned earlier and occasional illegal hunting[81], Yangyuchan villagers are still involved in illegal logging activities. The illegal practices do not merely involve

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[80] The tourism operation of the village is extremely unstable. There may twenty to thirty visitors in a two month period but no further visitor for 4-5 months. As summer is the peak season of tourism in Lijiang area, poor road condition due to raining season prevents Yangyuchan being a favoured tourist spot. Besides, people interested in Yi ethnic culture would not be choosing Yangyuchan as the priority, as Yi culture in other prefectures are more thriving and more famous. The net profit from tourism was about 10,000 RMB for the entire village, approximately 300 RMB per household for a period of *three years (from 2009-2011).*

[81] Hunting for commercial use is still practiced, though it is not common because wildlife is not as frequently encountered as before. Black bears and monkeys are among the game species. I am uncertain of the areas where villagers practice hunting. Since hunting is illegal, this topic was sensitive between villagers and me. I am aware of hunting practice due to observation and from some daily conversations which villagers accidentally leaked to me. Therefore, the information regarding current hunting practices is limited.

ordinary villagers but also educated ones.   There have been three types of illegal logging practice.

First, villagers sometimes violate village rules by felling living trees in the area prohibited for collecting wood. This practice is normally not for commercial purpose but only for collecting logs for self consumption. It does not result in significant damage because villagers normally do not fell big trees within the village's territory. This practice against village rule is mainly due to the different understanding among villagers. Although GW staff, the Old Village Head and Teacher Liu could detail the village rule, I found that the perceptions of other villagers in respect to village rules were inconsistent. For example, all female villagers I interviewed stated that there was no restriction regarding the logging area, while some men were aware of the designated area. In reality, people tend to choose the logging area which was easier for access and where more timber was available.

Second, villagers have been conducting illegal logging in areas outside of Yangyuchan, for self-use as well as for commercial sale. Although villagers can apply for permission from local government to harvest timber for house construction in the village-owned forest, people occasionally log for house building from nearby areas. Villagers mentioned that the local government was aware of but tolerated their small-scale illegal logging because of the obvious necessary demand for household use.

Yangyuchan villagers often join their relatives in Wen Lake (*Wenhai*)[82](see Map 4), an alpine-wetland community located outside of the Lashi basin, for commercial logging in various places around the Lijiang area. The commercial timber has been profitable. A log, 0.3 metres in diameter and four metres long, could be sold for 1,000-1,200 RMB in 2011/2012. Although there is a risk of logs being seized by the forestry police, many people in this illegal industry have good connections with the law-enforcers[83]. People in

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[82] Wen Lake is an alpine lake located on the north-eastern side of Lashi basin. The direct distance between Yangyuchan and Wenhai is proximately five kilometres, a difficult hike through mountains. Han, Naxi and Yi ethnic groups live in Wen Lake area.

[83] Usually, people in the illegal logging industry have some connection with the forestry police so a truck would not be caught at the check-point. If the logging truck is seized, one should be fined (about 30,000 RMB) and the truck detained. However, many people avoid the penalty by using *guan xi.*

the area of Wen Lake also log for charcoal-making (Grumbine, 2010), which is no longer practiced in Lashi.

In fact, Yangyuchan villagers are clearly aware of the boundary and have a sense of ownership over the forest. There were several disputes over the boundaries between Yangyuchan and some Naxi villages in the 1980s and 1990s. The disputes were initiated because of logging activities by Naxi, and were resolved after the local government intervened. It is therefore clear that the Yi villagers have been conscious about protecting forest on their land, but not on others' land of which they have no ownership.

Third, a particular person, Mr. Y, was involved in illegal logging by contracting the transportation of illegal timber across several prefectures. Operating this business requires communication and coordination skills, as well as good *guanxi* since transporting the timber across several prefectures would mean passing through many check points at local forestry stations. In fact, his family has connection with a local forestry officer. His reason for running this business was for economic profit. He said: "even if I don't earn this money (from illegal logging), others would do it anyway!"

From the above discussion, it is clear that, although villagers have adopted the language of GW emphasising watershed protection and their responsibility as traditional owners to protect the forest, they do not fully internalise the narrative. Despite their awareness of the need to protect forest, the Yangyuchan villagers, even educated elites, are involved in illegal logging activities. This situation reveals the multiple realities of actors (Long, 1992a), instead of the single norm and role expected by GW. For example, despite Mr. Y's association with GW project and local forestry office, his involvement in illegal logging highlights the issue of individual agency shaped by his multiple identities. The agency of individual local villagers certainly plays an important role in determining the outcome of the empowerment process.

In summary, narratives, emphasising certain environmental knowledge and social order, while masking the complex interactions between different actors and the environment, are convenient for the actors who generate them (Forsyth & Walker, 2008). In the case of the Yi community in Lashi, on one hand, the mainstream narrative used by the nation state

(which is accepted by the general public) ignores the long history of state logging practice and attributes the downstream flooding to the upland ethnic minority groups (especially those who have been considered as more "backward" peoples such as Yi.

7.5 Agency of local community: Deliberating the relocation plan

GW's narrative constructing Yi as a marginalised community and forest guardians is not only problematic but more importantly, it leaves room for other roles to be positioned in fulfilling and legitimising such a narrative. In order to construct environment narratives, villains and victims of environmental crises are identified; different discourses refer to different actors as villains and victims (Adger, et al., 2001). For example, certain discourses accuse state power, while others blame private business for resource depletion. In some discourses, local communities are also blamed for environmental degradation. The process of identifying the "enemy" is fundamentally political, since politics is about grouping people into allies and enemies (Schmitt, 1976). In the indigenous model, indigenous people are portrayed as benign, having traditional ecological knowledge and conservation practices, while other actors are portrayed as potential enemies of nature. In the case of Yanghuchan, as forest protection is the objective of the state policy, the goals of GW and the state are consistent. GW has invested considerable effort in mobilising the community members to protect their resources from the businessman's encroachment. In the process GW regards the Naxi businessman as the "enemy" and considers itself as the ally of the village.

However, the agency of villagers has been overlooked in GW's campaigning against *He laoban* and his relocation plan. First, as previously demonstrated, Yangyuchan villagers are not simply "forest guardians" so it is misleading to categorise different actors as victims or villains. Second, in reality, villagers are capable of considering complex cultural and social factors in respect to the relocation plan, and have demonstrated their ability in negotiating with outsiders historically. Thus, it is an oversimplification to see a simple dichotomy between the powerful Naxi man as an "enemy of nature" and the powerless villagers as "forest guardians".

In 2011, at the time when the relocation plan was uncertain, villagers anxiously discussed the possible choices in daily conversations with each other and their relatives in No.3 and No. 4 communes. The majority of villagers I interviewed preferred to relocate, despite the awareness of potential problems as their relatives have experienced. Based on my analysis, villagers' preferences were not made based on the simple comparison shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** produced in the GW meeting, but underlying factors which could hardly be reflected from the Table, including culture, the ability to negotiate, and social relations. These factors were revealed to me in casual conversations and interviews outside of formal meetings, and therefore were probably unconsidered by GW.

7.5.1 Culture

Culture plays an important role in the villagers' deliberations about relocation. Here, I use culture related to livestock to demonstrate this point. For both the Naxi and Yi, the traditional cultures associated with their livestock are crucial. When the Yangyuchan villagers were considering whether to relocate or not, pasture for animal herding became a serious concern. For Yi, goats and sheep are strongly associated with their traditional culture, because the animals are essential for performing the Bimo, the traditional Yi rituals. It was obvious that, if relocation took place, there would be no place for the villagers to herd bigger animals such as goats or sheep, while keeping chicken and pigs remained possible. What people worried about most was not that there would be no place to raise animals for commercial purpose, but for cultural reasons. I have been told by villagers, "Where are we going to graze our sheep and goats? *How are we going to perform rituals without our sheep and goats*?" It thus became evident that deliberation for relocation was not only based on economic calculations, but also on relevant culture. While villagers had expectations of alternative livelihoods once they relocated (such as paid labour in cities) instead of a farming/animal herding lifestyle, they were concerned with their loss of culture, for which they had not seen alternatives so far. Villagers always make choices that suit their own agenda. In this case, they may choose to stay not simply because they need to (or want to) take care of the forest, but for cultural reasons.

Bimo, as a Yi tradition remains important in current Yi culture. Originally, the term "Bimo" was used to refer to the man who performed the Yi religious/spiritual ritual, but nowadays people use Bimo broadly in association with the Yi religion, which includes nature worship, totemic belief and ancestor worship. Before the communist period, Bimo, the Yi elites, trained to be spiritual leaders and mediators, were the only persons who understood the Yi transcripts, and studied about history, astronomy and other knowledge (Ayi, 2001). Nowadays, the Bimo rituals are no longer performed strictly by Yi elites, but more frequently practiced by knowledgeable elders in the village/clan. In Yangyuchan, Yi villagers use the phrase "perform the superstition" (*zuo mixin,* 做迷信) when referring to the ritual, due to the communist propaganda that portrayed traditional belief as superstition.

The Bimo system is fairly complex and diverse, but it is not the intention of this thesis to discuss this in detail. The Yi people perform Bimo rituals on many occasions and the ritual always includes several elements, such as notifying the ancestor/god about the ritual, praying for good fortune, and expelling evil spirits. The rituals can be taken in various forms for different purposes. For example, in certain conditions, the Bimo ritual serves to calm a spirit or ghost. The ritual can be short or long, ranging from one hour to several days, according to the form adopted. Bimo ritual is always performed during the Torch Festival, the most important day of the year in Yi culture (very much like Chinese New Year in the Han society)[84]. I attended Bimo rituals on many occasions, such as blessing for a teenage girl attending high school.

An animal is sacrificed as part of the Bimo ritual. The type of animal mainly depends on the purpose of the ritual, but occasionally it depends on personal preference. In Yangyuchan, the most commonly sacrificed animals are goats and sheep. They are mostly used for the major rituals such as the one performed during the Torch Festival. Major rituals are often attended by many people including those outside of the core household (such as the entire family group), and meat has to be shared among the guests. At the Torch Festival ritual, the liver of the goat or sheep is used to predict the fortune of the

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[84] The Torch Festival of Yi is on the 24th of the 6th month in Chinese lunar calendar.

family for the coming year. For smaller rituals, which are only attended by the core household members, chicken may be used but these occasions are less frequent.

7.5.2 Social relations

Along with cultural reasons, social relations were a major factor influencing the villagers' decisions regarding relocation. Here, I want to explicate the relations between *He laoban*, and GW. It might look as if people who were friendly with *He laoban* and/or who were afraid of the man tended to consider relocation. Conversely, members of Teacher Liu's family group, who were close to GW, preferred to stay. Nevertheless, this is a very rough description of how social relationships played out in the relocation issue. As I have shown earlier, the old village head, although he was GW's ally, did not necessarily prefer to stay.

The power relations among GW, the Yi village and the Naxi businessman have been complex and changing. The community does not necessary always see the businessman as the "bad guy". In fact, *He laoban* and the Yangyuchan villagers have maintained a patron-client relationship. At the time when Yangyuchan villagers shaped their image of being marginalised, they in fact negotiated with *He laoban* for achieving their agendas. The notions of the powerful and the powerless are therefore challengeable given that seemly powerless Yi sometimes benefit from the powerless position through negotiation. If the idea of "powerful" and "powerless" is problematic, it then raises the question of the need for empowerment.

Although many villagers dislike *He laoban*, they often have to depend on him in many ways, as he has been able to provide resource as his patronage. For example, *He laoban* has been assisting school children in Yangyuchan to access education. A student from Yangyuchan who did not meet the standard for entering high school, was taken by her family to ask a favour from *He laoban* for special permission for her to attend the school where *He laoban* served on the school board. *He laoban* also donated a dormitory and supported the provision of meals for the elementary school in Nanyao village, the school that the children from Yangyuchan attended. The quality of the dormitory and the meals is comparatively better than other schools in Lashi area.

Through the years, villagers have been complaining to GW about *He laoban*'s corruption and other misconduct. At the same time, villagers have been negotiating with *He laoban* and benefited from negotiation, particularly based on the natural capital (the land) they own. The construction of the road connecting Yangyuchan to Nanyao village is one obvious example.

During my first visit to Yangyuchan in mid-2009, only 4WD vehicles could reach close to Yangyuchan village (approximately one kilometre away from the village) due to the rocky and muddy road condition. During the wet season, the village was almost inaccessible by vehicle and this posed a great impediment for the transportation of agricultural products. The road was first built in 2000 with the support of GW and the township government. Since then, it had not been maintained due to lack of funding. When I visited the village in 2010, the road condition was much improved. From Nanyao, vehicles could reach close to the village in one hour. In 2011, the road condition was further improved by *He laoban*, mainly due to requests from the villagers. The township had very little interest, if any, in maintaining and expanding this road. During the six months of my fieldwork in 2011, I noticed the road had been paved and expanded continuously. Knowing *He laoban* was interested in the forest resource on the top of the hill, the villagers constantly negotiated for constructing a better road for years, which would be beneficial for the village in many ways. This demonstrates that villagers are not simply victims but active agents in negotiation.

In the end of 2011, Teacher Liu, in representing Yangyuchan village, was still searching for funding to complete the road pavement for the remaining one kilometre to the village. Interestingly, when I asked how to get government funding for projects such as road construction, he commented: "*Anyway, all projects are from He laoban, not from the government*". What he meant was that even though the funding may come from government, the real person to allocate money would be He laoban, who often contracted projects from the government for implementation. Teacher Liu and other villagers were all aware that the "benefits" they have received, such as road improvement and boarding

facilities for school children, resulted from *He laoban's* patronage. They understand that he is not just doing charity work but expects something in return[85].

Rather than contesting *He laoban's* power, the villagers may opt to maintain the existing power relations for their own benefit. This was especially relevant when considering their possible relocation. The fate of the Yangyuchan villagers was inevitably tied to the persistence of *He laoban's* power, since the "legitimacy" of the Yi villagers to relocate to lower area where Naxi live would be depend on *He laoban*. The villagers were concerned that if *He laoban* was no longer powerful, their "legitimacy" for staying in the lower area could be threatened by Naxi, who are reluctant to share the limited natural resources (mainly land and water for agriculture) with outsiders. This concern can be also seen from the Table 3.

This situation was then diverted from what GW has been strategically working for, which is to change the current power dynamic which renders the "powerless Yi", marginalized by the "powerful Naxi". Nevertheless, from the above analysis, I suggest that the Yi community is not simply powerless as GW claims, since the community has been negotiating with the private interest based on the resources they have, rather than resisting the "powerful". This supports the argument of Bebbington (2000), who suggests local communities are not just passive subjects of development; rather, they are capable of utilising the intervention enacted by dominant actor(s) to achieve their purposes. The process of negotiation and the ability to change are thus very different from view which positions the powerless in resistance to the powerful who construct the entire development discourse.

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[85] Unlike the relationship between villages and He laoban, I do not categorise the relationship between GW and the villagers as a patron-client relationship, despite the fact that both parties are positioned into an uneven power dynamics. GW is equipped with more social capital such as knowledge, network for external communication and so on, while providing protection and other resources (such as funding). However, the intention of GW's provision was not to gain service/rewards for the organisation itself. Although GW indeed expects cooperation from villagers to achieve better project outcomes, the goal is to improve livelihoods and environment.

Figure 9. Meeting between the villagers and GW staff (2012).

Figure 10.Road expansion in progress (October, 2011). The machinery and the labourer were hired by *He laoban*.

7.5.3 Ability to negotiate

Villagers were also capable of demonstrating their political ability in negotiating over the relocation case. Certain people acquired better bargaining positions. Take the Old Village Head for example. To my surprise he preferred to move under certain conditions, despite being a long-time ally with GW and very good friend with Dr. Yu[86]. In the beginning, I supposed that he would be on the same side with GW, insisting to stay against the relocation plan. Dr. Yu expected him to influence others to stay since he was an opinion leader. However, the old man told me that he would be willing to move if *He laoban* could assure him a certain amount of land in a specific area, which was used for *He laoban's* personal leisure and was considered a place free of mudslide. If *He laoban* gave this area of land to the Old Village Head, he would be satisfied, because of promised water supply. When he explained his negotiation strategy with me, I noticed the detailed and the sophisticated calculation in his plan. He pointed out the types of crops, the area of land and the expected return that would sustain his family. Although I did not have an opportunity to observe the interaction between *He laoban* and him, I assumed the elder was confident that his plan would be accepted by *He laoban*, because his words would be heavily valued by fellow villagers if he announced he was willing to relocate. If so, it would be easier for *He laoban* to achieve his plan.

In fact, for generations, Yangyuchan villagers have been negotiating and making allies with the downhill Naxi community. The first generation of Yangyuchan settlers, the Liu family, negotiated with the Naxi landlord for permission to stay in the area, by offering to take the responsibility to guard the mountain, which was on the caravan path used by many robbers and invaders. When another lineage of Yi intruded into the Yangyuchan settlement and subjected them to robbery and kidnapping, the Liu family then joined forces with the Naxi, who provided horses, manpower and other essential resources, to fight against the intruders. By doing so, Yi villagers were making an ally based on political benefits rather than on ethnicity.

Yi villagers were also capable of actively resisting against the Naxi community. Between the late 1980s and the 1990s, Naxi loggers invaded Yangyuchan forest as teams several times [87]. Oral communication did not deter the encroachment and the township government was reluctant to intervene. The Old Village Head thus organised a team of approximately twenty young men to occupy the Naxi land, and threatened that Yi would clear the forest right above Naxi villages into farmland if Naxi did not cease logging in Yi's territory. Fearful that the land conversion would lead to soil erosion and damage the farms and houses, the Naxi were forced to negotiate with the Yi. The conflict was later settled by the township government, restricting both sides from encroaching on the land of each other, and the boundary between Naxi and Yi forest was clearly delineated. The occupation was not a formal way of negotiation. Nevertheless, the action was an effective political move to achieve consensus.

From this section, it is therefore problematic to see Yi villagers as powerless, as they have shown their careful deliberation in the case of the relocation plan, and have demonstrated their ability to negotiate. The power of the villagers also came from manoeuvring their relationships in respect to GW and the Naxi businessman. The assumption of "empowering" the marginalized community therefore needs to be further examined.

7.6 Empowerment revisited

The power relationship revealed in the case of relocation highlights the necessity of examining the notion of empowerment, which is based on the assumption of reversing the positions of powerful and powerless. Nevertheless, many NGOs, as proponents of the participatory approach, "have generally been naive about the complexity of power and power relations" (Cook & Kothari, 2001, p. 14). My analysis of the relocation case sheds light on nuances by digging into the social relationship within the village and unpacks the complexity of power relations. As observed from the case of Yangyuchan village, power relations are constantly changing, and the marginalised ethnic minorities may not be as

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[87] Although both the Yi and Naxi communities recognize this history, the exact year told by Yi and Naxi of this "occupation" incident was different. Yi elder told me it was around 1988 and the oral history of Naxi states it was 1995.

powerless as GW frames in its narrative. Therefore, how should one perceive "empowerment" in eNGO agendas? I argue that there are several contradictions between the idea of empowerment, and the empowerment packages delivered by eNGOs in reality.

The concept of empowerment carries implications of a clear dichotomy between "powerful and powerless", the value of certain knowledge attached with the powerful and the powerless is therefore pre-determined (Rahnema, 1992). More specifically, powerless groups, such as the poor and weak, are expected not only to express their problems but also to "plan and act" through the empowerment process (Chambers, 1997, p. 156). I argue that first prioritising any knowledge over others contradicts the original intention of empowerment, and also that the seemingly powerless groups do not necessarily need to be empowered in order to plan and act.

This situation is most visible when NGOs demonstrate their obligation to "educate" villagers to acquire certain knowledge and skills, while in reality villagers were equipped with different kinds of capability to achieve their agendas. This relates to the argument of Rahnema (1992) who argues that many NGOs, which are promoters and allies of donors and states, serve the development regime by promoting participation, but at the same time fail to make radical changes to power structure.

In the relocation case, one assumption GW had (for empowering the villagers) was that villagers were not sufficiently qualified to make the right decision. GW staff generally felt the responsibility to assist and educate villagers, and to foresee the consequences for the villagers. In reality, I have shown that villagers, despite their tendency to accept relocation, were not so naïve as to believe that relocation would definitely bring a bright future. They were aware of potential concerns and had sophisticated considerations regarding whether to relocate. Their considerations included cultural concerns which were never discussed or mentioned by any GW staff member.

The sense of "superiority" is commonly seen in the local Chinese bureaucracy. For example, the director of the Lashi Wetland Reserve Administrative Bureau attempted to convince GW staff to give up working with the local community by saying, "*laobaixing* (老百姓, the ordinary people) are not qualified enough; … they know nothing!" The same

mentality can also be seen in a survey regarding community forestry in Yunnan, in which most forestry officials considered local people incapable of making decisions regarding forest management (Colchester, n.d.). GW, while adopting a participatory approach, fell into the similar stereotype, seeing itself act better in decision-making. The will to empower thus comes from the view that the NGO has better knowledge and skills than the local community. Certainly, GW, like many other NGOs, is equipped with abundant resources which the local community lacks, such as their networking with external actors. However, this does not imply that Yangyuchan villagers lack necessary knowledge or skills for decision-making. Their knowledge and skills are practical in their social context and are different from what GW expected.

Among all types of capabilities, Dr. Yu emphasised political ability as the most important one that local community should be equipped with. He repeated this argument in project meetings several times. On the relocation issue, GW expected Yangyuchan villagers had the ability to negotiate for resistance (although I have demonstrated that resistance was not the preferred option for most villagers). Dr. Yu also expressed his expectations about how to build political ability. For example, he considered villagers should receive a proper training programme for skills development, such as fund raising and proposal writing, rather than using *guanxi* to bargain for the projects/funds with governments.

Nevertheless, as shown in the previous section, Yangyuchan villagers had their ways of negotiating politically before GW's interventions. In 2011, Yangyuchan villagers demonstrated their political will by manipulating the village election, even though Dr Yu held a very different opinion regarding of this matter. The villagers elected a new administrative village head, who was a close friend to *He laoban's* younger brother. Both this person and the previous village head, did not participate in GW activity due to their friendship with *He laoban*. It seemed villagers were voting in favour of *He laoban*, and Dr. Yu was concerned whether the new village head would use his administrative power to influence the relocation decision. However, according to local villagers, the reason for selecting this particular person was the opposite of favouring *He laoban*. The village's Watershed Management Committee, set up by the GW project, agreed that electing this person as the village head would be actually convenient for the committee to be in charge

of making decisions about village matters, especially in regards to the GW project. It was because people considered the new village head a weak-minded person who had no opinions. The committee expected this new head to approve the committee's decisions as a rubber stamp. However, Dr. Yu was uncertain whether this person would use his power authorised by the government to put villagers into a disadvantaged situation against *He laoban*. The real reason why villagers elected this person as administrative village head remained obscure. On the one hand, it could be the case that the committee simply expected him to approve whatever the committee planned, as a rubber stamp. On the other hand, as I discussed before, there has been a strong patron-client relationship between *He laoban* and the election might indeed be a favour to the Naxi man in showing the support. Either way, this case shows that the villagers are capable of exercising their political power.

The political judgement villagers have demonstrated might have been different from what Dr. Yu expected. Nevertheless, the knowledge and skill shown in the nuanced political exercise confirms that Yangyuchan villagers are not a powerless group but demonstrate active agency in utilising changing social relations to achieve their agenda.

I must stress that I do not argue that empowerment is unnecessary. A village like Yangyuchan is unarguably positioned unequally. It has been subjected to different stages of government policy resulting in the decrease of forestry resources in earlier times and in the restrictions on agricultural and grazing activities. Currently, the land belonging to Yi communities is coveted by government, which has been trying to take away the villagers' land rights.[88] Empowering the villagers by offering more resources and access to

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[88] In late 2011, Yunnan government announced a policy which encourages people to transfer from rural household registration (*nongcun hukou,* 農村戶口) to urban one (*chengzhen hukou,* 城鎮戶口), despite the fact that the provincial government had already announced cancelling the dual household registration system in 2007. According to the policy, once one opts for the non-rural household system, he/she voluntarily agrees to give away his/her contracted farmland and allocated forest rights. Since Yunnan province had already cancelled the dual household system, this new policy is understood as legitimizing land grabbing. In Yangyuchan village, almost all households transferred into "*chengzhen hukou*" in mid-2012. However people regretted this after Dr. Yu explained that they should not have done so, in late 2012. Other Yi villages in Lashi have various responses, and not every Yi community agreed to the transfer. Generally, villagers follow what the village leaders say. In some Yi villages there were almost no transfers to the non-rural household category. It is therefore intriguing why Yangyuchan villagers agreed to transfer, despite being "empowered" by the GW project for many years. According to the speculation of a former

information, law and regulation is needed to equip the villagers with a better position for political negotiation.

However, I argue that empowerment should not be based on the assumption that people are essentially either "powerful" or "powerless" since such a dichotomy obscures the complex social relations, and privileges certain kinds of knowledge and power over others. Moreover, power does not exist "out there" and is not simply imposed by the social structure. Power is produced and exercised through the interactions between actors. Empowerment, as vesting power for enablement, therefore can be seen as a product of power negotiation, not simply as the will of certain actors.

It is therefore important that the way of empowering local community is subjected to careful consideration. It is crucial to understand whose perspective is implanted in the package of empowerment, as we see from analysis above that the NGO perspective sometimes overrides the local one.

Moreover, "empowerment packages", combining empowerment elements with agendas of donors and implementing agencies, result in another contradiction in empowerment. In the case of the Yi's relocation, GW was strongly against relocation. Through the years, many of the project activities involving the establishment of eco-tourism business, including training activities for eco-tourism operation and marketing, have been carried out due to GW's expectation that villagers would develop their livelihoods locally. In other words, GW's ideal scenario of the Yi community was to develop a new livelihood (eco-tourism) while improving others (agriculture and animal herding) based on local resources. This option tied local villagers with their rights over their land and forest, and may have been able to provide certain guarantees to villagers' well-being compared to work as paid-labour. Nevertheless, as previously suggested, the local resources, including timber, NTFPs and wildlife, have been degraded significantly. As a result, expecting the Yi community to develop locally in fact restricts their choices. Since empowerment is to

GW staff member, opinion leaders in Yangyuchan may have accepted some benefits and therefore mobilised fellow villagers to transfer their household system as the township government request. However the real reason is uncertain.

enable people to have wider choices, GW's practice seems to be contradictory to the intention of empowerment.

7.7 Conclusion

In short, power exists in many forms. In this chapter, I have shown that GW, based on the CBNRM model, constructed a stereotyped narrative depicting the Yi community as guardians of the forest who are united and are responsible for protecting ancestral land. This narrative may seem to be only relevant to environmental issues, but nevertheless, it has wider political and social implications and implies certain actions and behaviour which the villagers are supposed to exhibit. GW's narrative, is a way to empower local community by strengthening their legitimacy on local resources, but may also act to disempowering villagers in terms of restricting their development opportunities. While the agenda of an NGO like GW is involved with development and empowerment, I suggest a sophisticated understanding of the complex power relations among actors, including the NGO itself, is very much needed.

Although the Yi community seemed to be marginalised by the powerful Naxi businessman who intended to relocate the community, the community in fact utilised this opportunity to negotiate for their agendas, such as infrastructure construction, and perhaps, their ultimate desire to engage in a more modernised lifestyle. The will and ability to exercise agency by the local villagers thus should not be overlooked. Villagers are not merely powerless subjects, since power is performed in many ways.

Finally, this chapter also shows that empowerment enables individual agency that carries multiple realities to have multiple choices, and to make decisions and actions adapted to various social situations. In the case of Yangyuchan, empowerment activities did not eliminate illegal logging, but more surprisingly, the persons who have been more "empowered" by GW were also involved in illegal logging, and the empowerment activities might have even provided these people better opportunities for conducting such practices.

In conclusion, while external agencies attempt to apply internationally promoted ideologies, these ideologies are often transformed in practice. Agency proves to be essential in modifying such transformation.

Chapter 8

Empowerment for the Good of Environment?

The Agro-forestry Project in Xihu

Following the discussion of empowerment in Chapter 7, this chapter, based on a case study of GW's agro-forestry project activity in Xihu, a Naxi village, will demonstrate that even when empowerment occurs in participatory projects, empowerment does not necessarily guarantee the expected project outcome, such as good environmental governance as defined by external agencies. Similar to what has been discussed in Chapter 7, this is largely due to the capability of individual agency in modifying eNGO agendas; moreover, the decisions of villagers to opt away from what eNGOs think of "good environmental governance" are also conditioned by contemporary socio-economic problems in rural China.

In Section 8.1, Xihu village, the site where GW implemented a micro-watershed management project, will be introduced. Agro-forestry activities, the main component of the project which significantly transformed the village's physical landscape and the socio-economic life will be discussed in Section 8.2.

While the project achieved its goal to a certain degree, challenges remain. The project's outcomes were compromised because empowered villagers, capable of having wider choices, are able to act against the project goals. In Section 8.3 and 8.4, I will analyse what project goals expected by GW were compromised and what the factors were contributing to the outcome. Both sections will demonstrate that individual agency is critical in shaping the compromise outcomes, and that the socio-economic context plays an important role in conditioning the agency's decision-making.

8.1 Xihu village

Xihu, a village adjacent to Dayu, is the site in which GW implemented its micro-watershed project. The locals call this place "*Pubalou*", meaning "bee" in the Naxi language. Before the 1950s, this village was a good place for bee-keeping. Many elders told me that when they were young, the stream was clean and flowers bloomed prolifically, which was why the environment attracted bees. During the 1950s, the area was heavily logged in order to supply charcoal to the government-owned tile factory on the other side of Lashi Lake. Subsequently, Xihu was no longer suitable for bee-keeping. Today, with the exception of some Yi villages high up in the mountains, there is no bee keeping practiced in the Lashi area.

Xihu village, which is located on the north-west corner of the Lashi Lake, stretches along a small sloping valley. Houses have been built on the slope. A creek runs through the village: some houses and fields belonging to Dayu village are located downstream of this creek. (See Map 5 for the location of Xihu village). Currently, approximately seventy households of Xihu belong to the three clans: the Liang, Li and He. The ancestors of the Liang family, the biggest clan, moved from Dayu village seven generations ago. Members of the Liang clan in both Xihu and Dayu villages still recognise their blood relationship and are able to identify the seniority in the family. However, the Liang clans in different villages rarely invite each other to important occasions such as weddings or funerals, unless the two families have formed marriage relations in recent generations.
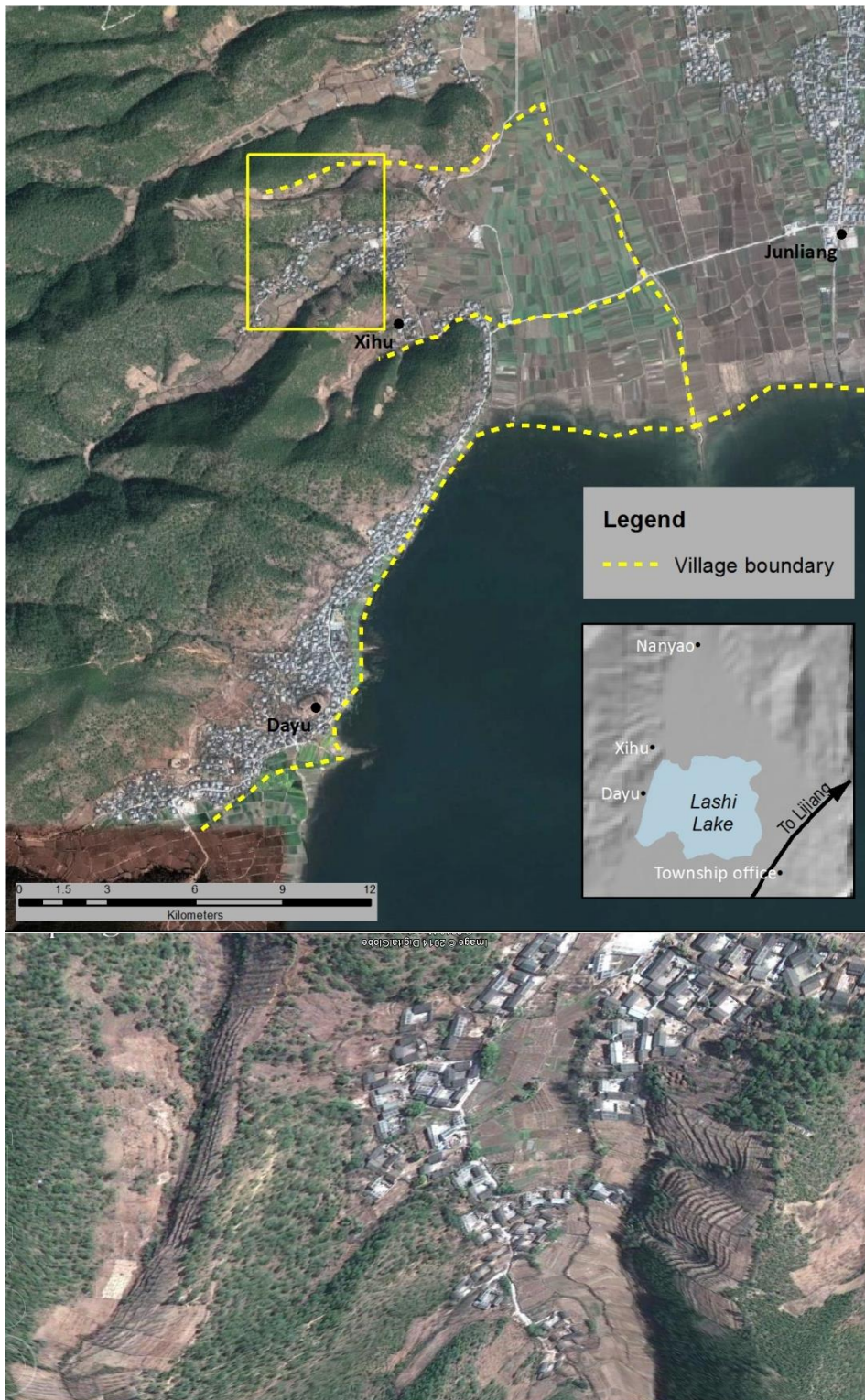
Map 5. Location of Xihu village. The area highlighted with yellow box is enlarged in the satellite photo below, showing the sloping land agriculture. At the time of the satellite photo being taken (2003), fruit farming was still in early stage. Source: Google Earth.

Xihu village used to be relatively poor compared to other villages around Lashi Lake. In the past, its economic condition did not compare with that of Dayu. The Xihu villagers often blamed the remoteness of the village for its poverty. People also felt discriminated against by other Lashi villagers because they are poor. On one occasion when some women in Xihu organised a trip to Lijiang by carriage to celebrate Women's Day, villagers from the east side of the Lake made fun of them, calling out "You, people from mountain!" In addition, in the past there were also gaps in the education levels and job types available to the Xihu and Dayu villagers. Generally speaking, the Dayu villagers had better opportunities for education. In Dayu village, it is common to encounter persons in their sixties or seventies who used to work in government departments or for state business.[89]

The villagers mentioned that although life in Xihu might not be as affluent as in other villages, they still enjoyed the farming and fishing supported by the natural hydro-cycle of Lashi Lake. An elderly man said that people appreciated the drought year because it was when the lake reduced to a huge area of muddy farmland. For example, during one drought year his family harvested more than 40,000 kilograms of wheat, which sustained the family for several years.

After deforestation occurred in the 1950s, there were no big trees left in Xihu's forest. The land that used to be covered by tall pines and huge chestnut trees was reduced to scattered small trees and bushes. On occasions, when soil washed down the slope into Lashi Lake, the Dayu villagers complained, saying that the runoff damaged the crops in the downstream fields.

The soil degradation situation worsened after the farmland in the basin was submerged due to the Lashi dam project. Post 1996, the Xihu villagers started to convert the hill area for corn and potato cultivation. But their activity became illegal after the ban on sloping land farming (SLCP) was imposed in 1999. The township government intervened and

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[89] In China, people often mix up the governmental agency and state business as same category: *danwei* (單位). People who work in *danwei* enjoy a better status, not only because they are paid good salaries (compared to labourers and farmers), but also because the job represents a good relationship with the government.

forbade the people from converting the land into fields. In their bid to gain permission for farming, the villagers negotiated with the township government; subsequently, the town mayor agreed that every household could cultivate one *mu*. Mr. A, a community leader, told me that he threatened the township mayor, saying: "If you don't let us convert the land, we won't let you build the dam!" Between 1996 and 2000, approximately 120 *mu* of slope land were said to be converted, but the amount of runoff containing chemical fertilizer that washed into the Lake increased. When the rains were heavy, many houses in Xihu village were flooded, and damage to the fields of Dayu village occurred more frequently. However, following the conversion of their land, the Xihu villagers did not benefit due to the low market price of corn and potatoes. According to the villagers, and to GW documents, both Xihu and the downstream Dayu villages suffered markedly from the effects of environmental degradation.

Aware of the environmental problem, GW initiated a micro-watershed management project, including various activities such as agro-forestry. The agro-forestry project promoted fruit tree farming using the converted slope land, and it has significantly transformed the economic and social lives of the Xihu villagers. (See the boxed area enlarged in Map 5 for the area of converted land which is used for fruit farming currently). Nowadays, income from agricultural activities, which largely improved following the introduction of the agro-forestry activity, has become the major revenue source for many Xihu villagers. I will detail the project and its implications in the following section.

Due to the agro-forestry activity, many Xihu villagers have developed alternative livelihoods to fishing and labour work away from home. This does not mean that the villagers no longer fish. Until 2005-2006, they continued to fish and hunt birds illegally just as the Dayu villagers did. However, their reliance on fishing and working outside has been much lower than that of the Dayu villagers.

In 2006, using the accumulated capital earned from their agricultural income, the Xihu villagers initiated a horse-trekking co-operative in 2006. Such co-ops were commonly found in other villages along the north and east sides of Lashi Lake. Those established along the north shoreline of the Lake had proven very successful in terms of attracting

business; thus, they became models for many other villages which sought to gain a share of the tourism business. Approximately half of the Xihu households joined the horse-trekking co-op, and work in the tourism business has gradually shifted the focus of the livelihoods of many households. Most of those who joined the horse-trekking co-op still retain their livelihood portfolios, which include agriculture, NTFP harvesting and tourism.

8.2 GW project

GW commenced its micro-watershed management project in Xihu village at the very beginning of the Lashi programme. This is the project deemed the most successful in the entire Lashi programme. Initially, Dr. Yu considered Xihu an ideal place in which to experiment with the concept of "participatory watershed management". His decision was swayed by the characteristics of the local micro-landscape that resembled many major watersheds in China which had experienced ecological disaster (such as the Yangtze River flood in 1998). Moreover, the relationship between Dr. Yu and the local leader, Mr A, was crucial to Dr. Yu choosing Xihu as the project site. Dr. Yu, who visited the village many times during his PhD research, cooperated with Mr. A on TNC's "Photovoices"[90] project before Dr. Yu set up GW.

The objective of the micro-watershed management project was to achieve a win-win solution for conservation and development. By using a participatory approach, this project aimed to both protect the watershed ecosystem and provide livelihood opportunities. At the outset of the project, GW organised workshops providing villagers training in participatory methods. In the workshops, GW asked villagers to identify problems which mattered to their families, their village, and to the entire Lashi watershed. The results were diverse. Among the issues, loss of farmland due to the Lashi dam, and mudslides damaging houses and farmland, featured prominently. These problems later

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[90] "Photovoices" was a community participation project initiated by TNC. TNC provided cameras and film to local people so that they could document the environment, and bring indigenous knowledge and traditional culture into conservation planning in northwest Yunnan. See TNC website for more detail. http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/asiaandthepacific/china/howwework/china-photovoice-exhibit.xml

became the main focus of the Xihu project. Over the past decade, numerous activities have been undertaken including watercourse management, agro-forestry activities, promotion of organic farming, and many cultural activities. In general, most of the Xihu villagers praise GW project for its contribution. For example, many villagers told me that the project provided them with a sense of security since flooding due to severe rain never reoccurred after the implementation of watercourse management, which included the construction of four small check dams to prevent mudslides, and the plantation of willows along the watercourse.

Because the project was near its termination when I conducted my fieldwork, I did not have many opportunities to participate in its implementation. My understanding of the participatory process mainly stemmed from my interviews with Mr. A, Dr. Yu, project staff, and villagers who have served as committee members. I also attended some formal and informal meetings. The bulk of the information in this chapter was gathered during my daily conversations with the Xihu villagers.

While the project was mainly conducted by GW, it was facilitated by the operation of several village-level organisations set up by the GW project. The organisations evolved over time in line with the particular requirements of the project. While the composition of the institutions has changed, Mr. A has always remained the leader. Although he received a small amount of stipend of serving the project, Mr. A was never a GW employee. According to my understanding, the election of board members to the committees was a Chinese version of an election (See Chapter 6). Although Mr. A assured me that members were elected by the villagers, several committee members told me that they were, in fact, recruited by Mr .A. Others told me that they were elected by "people's applause".[91] Among the nine members of the watershed management committee, there were four ladies and five men, including two brothers of Mr. A. The Micro-Watershed Management Committee later became the Technology Committee, which mainly handled matters relevant to agriculture. Due to the thriving agricultural activity promoted by the GW

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[91] In China, people often understand an election as "applause for someone who has been selected already".

project, in 2009, GW set up the agriculture cooperative Four board members and two supervising committee members were elected to take charge. One of the supervisors of the co-op was a sister in-law of Mr. A.

8.2.1 Agro-forestry activities: transforming local lives landscape

Among all the components of the project, agro-forestry significantly transformed the economic and social lives. As well, it transformed the physical landscape of Xihu. The rationale of agro-forestry was to protect the eroding soil while providing alternative livelihoods. Particular focus was on replacing corn/potato cropping on the sloping land with some types of trees that could hold the soil. In 2000, after Dr. Yu surveyed the land with local community members, GW decided to support the villagers to plant fruit. Fruit trees were nothing new to the Lashi villagers. They had grown many species locally over a long period of time, including Chinese plums, apples, pears, and Chinese crabapples, mostly for self-consumption. Around Lashi Lake, some other villages had already started establishing fruit tree plantations, albeit not on an extensive scale. However, the Xihu villagers had never considered growing fruit for sale prior to the GW intervention. Some feared that if all of the land was converted into fruit farming, they would not have corn and potato for self-consumption and for exchanging for rice. Others worried that they might not be able to sell the fruit due to the inconvenience of transportation to Lijiang. Despite all of the concerns, the project was eventually initiated by four pioneering households.

GW provided each participating household with seedlings and a stipend for planting trees. While the project suggested pear trees, participants were allowed to choose any type of fruit they preferred. Since then, increasing numbers of Xihu villagers have invested their time, effort and capital in participating in the fruit farming as an agro-forestry activity, after the initial success of the pioneering households. Different varieties of peaches, pears, apples, and other fruit started to generate significant incomes for this village. Some people, who had earlier left home to work in other towns, returned to resume agriculture. Throughout the project, GW has continuously supported the villagers with resources such as training workshops on agricultural technology, and the villagers are availing

themselves of more opportunities connected with fruit farming. People have gradually incorporated many introduced varieties, and are experimenting with different combinations of plantations. Regarding pears alone, over twenty varieties are grown in this village. According to GW's estimation, the average household income from agro-forestry farming in Xihu is approximately 10,000 RMB per year nowadays. Prior to GW project, one household could earn merely 2,000 RMB per year from potato sales, as the price of potatoes grown on the sloping land was merely 0.15 RMB per kilogram. My interviews revealed that households generated income ranging from 5,000 RMB to over 20,000 RMB annually from commercialised fruit farming. For many Xihu villagers, fruit sales generated a big proportion of their household incomes, but there were other income sources as well. General speaking, fruit farming has significantly raised the Xihu villagers' incomes, with peaches and yellow-skinned pears having the most profitable yields. In one year, the production of yellow-skinned pears was estimated at over 100,000 kilograms for the entire village. However, some households opted not to practice commercial fruit farming, mainly due to shortages of labour resulting from a growing percentage of the younger generation working and living in Lijiang city. Some households that were not dependent on incomes from fruit still maintained small areas of plantation, because Xihu fruit (especially peaches) is considered a valuable gift due to its high quality. An elder whose children were government officials in Lijiang said: "I grow fruit so my son can give it to his many friends as gifts. The fruit here is good and famous." As giving of gifts is considered important for maintaining relationships (*guanxi*) in China, Xihu fruit, in this way, not only has significant value in the market economy, but also in the community economy for maintaining social relationships beyond the village boundary. In 2009, snow peaches from Xihu were supplied for the state banquet in Beijing to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the PRC (People's Republic of China). Fruit trees have gradually become important, both materially and symbolically, in the lives of the Xihu villagers.

In addition to fruit, the Xihu villagers have gradually taken up commercialised Chinese yam plantation since the late 2000s, due to the increasing price of yams in Lijiang's markets. Chinese yams are popular among local residents, who have a long history of consumption, and among tourists. In the past, Xihu villagers only harvested the local

variety in the wild. According to the villagers, the local variety has the highest value in Lijiang market because of its texture. However, the local variety only matures for harvest every two years. For this reason, villagers favour cultivating the variety introduced from Shandong province in 2009, because this variety matures every year and provides a high yield. A plot of less than one *mu* of area can produce 500-1,000 kilograms of yams.[92] Although some were planted in the allocated fields, most yam farming was practiced on the sloping land. Villagers considered the sloping land had a better drainage system than the allocated field that held too much moisture to produce high-quality yams. Therefore, the villagers tended to plant yams in the sloping land, especially if they planned to commercialise the product. Many households only planted one or two rows of yams, and the yam plantations were usually mixed with fruit trees in order to maximise the use of limited land. In 2011-2012, many people were planning to expand their yam plantation on their sloping land. Nowadays, fruit trees and Chinese yams are the most essential components in presenting the physical landscape of the village.

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[92] The price for the Shandong variety in the winter of 2011-2012 was ten RMB per kilogram, whereas the local variety sold for twenty RMB.

Figure 11: Landscape of Xihu village. The direction of this photo is south-east (facing the lake); as with the satellite photo provided previously with Map 5 . This area of sloping land was mostly planted with crab-apple trees.

Figure 12: Closer look of the sloping land agro-forest agriculture.

8.2.2 Agro-forestry activities: Transforming social relations

In addition to the changes in the economic status and the physical landscape, the agro-forestry activities also shape social relations, especially in terms of the NGO-community relationship. The success of the agro-forestry activities in Xihu created a friendly NGO-community relationship that set the foundations for GW to develop the Lashi programme locally, despite constant interference from the government. The fruit trees and cultivated yams help to construct social landscape by connecting the GW and the Xihu village.

Generally speaking, the Xihu villagers embraced GW with gratitude, and recognised GW's contribution to village development. The young the old, females and males often said that GW (and Dr. Yu) had contributed to Xihu by raising their living standards. Some villagers also praised GW for introducing watercourse management, by extension reducing the flood hazards and mudslides. However, GW's contribution to Xihu has given rise to a certain discontent among other Lashi villagers, especially in Dayu, partly because the GW office is located in Dayu so its villagers expect more from GW. Moreover, because Xihu is gradually becoming better off, there is a sense of competition between the two villages. Many Dayu villagers revealed their dissatisfaction during daily conversations, saying: "We (living in) Dayu village (who used to be better off) are worse than Xihu now".

The friendly relationships between GW and the Xihu villagers are not without external pressure. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, local governments, from village committee to township government, constantly interfere in GW's project. This situation was the same with the Xihu project. Villagers were told by local officials that working with Dr. Yu would be bad for their children's careers. Some rumour-mongers accused Dr. Yu of being a member of the Falungong[93], an American spy, or a believer of any American cult. Due to these rumours and pressure from the local governments, many villagers became suspicious regarding GW's work, and some became unwilling to participate in the project.

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[93] Falungong, a religious group accused of being anti-government by the Chinese authority.

Given that "community participation" is a key approach of GW's project, the distrust of the local community due to the government interference has created frequent challenges for GW and its local staff.

One elder who served on the watershed committee told me that she had been threatened by local officials, but she was not intimidated. Interestingly, she related her participation in GW projects to the radical political movement, the Cultural Revolution, in the past. When we were chatting about GW and her participation, she mentioned that her brother was jailed during the Cultural Revolution due to his suspected connection with the Kuomintang. She said: "I'm not afraid… If they want to kill me because I have been participating in Yu's project, they just kill me." Her words showed that even though the Chinese eNGOs identified their projects as environmental, the local people often considered NGO operations as very political and often related their projects to political movements of the past. Although the old lady told me that she was not afraid, her words implied concern that participants may be punished by the government.

The majority of the Xihu villagers were grateful to GW, mainly because fruit farming has improved their living conditions substantially. It was not within GW's calculation that fruit farming in Xihu would be such a success. As the Xihu villagers had never practiced commercial fruit farming prior to 2000, it was an experiment for both Xihu and GW. In fact, it was the natural environment of Xihu which has nurtured the fruit plantations and laid the foundations for GW's survival in Lashi, despite the hardships it has faced.

The natural environment of Xihu has provided several advantages for producing high-quality fruit. According to the local farmers, these advantages stem from the micro-climate and its soil type: both differ from other fruit-producing villages in Lashi. For example, Nanyao, another valley-like village stretched over sloping land, has been practicing fruit farming for the same period of time as Xihu. The latter receives more sunlight compared to Nanyao because Nanyao is more likely to be shaded by the Yulong Snow Mountain Range as it sits in the valley. Moreover, Xihu also sits at a slightly lower altitude than Nanyao, and thus the temperature is slightly higher in Xihu. The farmers observed that there were less frosty days in Xihu than in Nanyao. Not only its

micro-climate, but also its geophysical features make Xihu suitable for fruit farming. Many villagers told me that the red soil of Xihu contains more nutrients than the black soil extending from and beyond the neighbouring village.

The only potential disadvantage that the Xihu environment has for agriculture is limited water availability. There is no reliable surface water source available in Xihu despite its location in a valley. There has been no running creek water in Xihu for decades possibly due to deforestation. Between the1950s and the 1980s, water was transported from a north-shore village approximately three kilometres away via a man-made tunnel. After the reform and open period, water became a monopolised resource of that village, which duly decided to disconnect the water supply to nearby villages. Nowadays, the irrigation and drinking water supplies in Xihu mainly depend on underground water. From summer until early winter, Xihu may get some water from the water source in Nanyao for irrigation. However, in the later stages of the dry season (April and May), Nanyao villagers often use up all of the water, leaving none for the downstream villages. Fortunately, fruit trees do not require much irrigation; therefore, the limited water resources do not pose significant threats to developing commercial fruit farming.

Had GW chosen a different focus for its watershed management project other than agro-forestry back in 2000, or decided to support crops other than fruit, the fate of GW in Lashi would likely have been different. As successful fruit farming implementation is considered by the Xihu villagers to be its most influential and beneficial project, it has gained community support for GW to contest the government over the years. In this way, the fruit trees have actively transformed the natural landscape of the village, the economic conditions of the villagers, and the social relations between the actors involved.

8.3 Compromised project outcome (I): Collective fruit marketing

Despite the success of the GW project in Xihu, challenges remain. First, GW organized a village-based agricultural co-op for conducting collective marketing, but the villagers have been reluctant to participate in collective marketing. Meanwhile, the environmental outcome is also compromised, as the villagers continued to convert sloping land for farming, and have possibly increased usage of agro-chemicals. In Section 8.3, I will use

the case of the agricultural co-op to discuss how the agency of the key individuals, such as the community leader of Xihu in this case, can significantly modify eNGO projects. The compromised environmental outcome will be discussed in Section 8.4.

No doubt that GW project has significantly changed the lives of the Xihu villagers, who have become empowered through various activities. In terms of agro-forestry activities, they have actively adopted introduced varieties of fruit and yams. They have been exposed to agricultural technologies and gained their understanding through training workshops arranged by GW and by exchanging their information with relatives or friends outside of Lashi. Some Xihu farmers, who are famous for their agricultural skills, are hired by people from other parts of Lijiang for pruning. In addition to agriculture activities, villagers also cooperate with each other on village affairs outside of the GW project. For example, villagers often co-operate for maintenance or construction of infrastructure with very little funding provided by the township government, such as for road maintenance (see Figure 13). However, despite the achievement in empowering the villagers, the project goals were not fully achieved.

8.3.1 Agriculture co-op

Subsequent to the success of the agro-forestry activities, GW assisted the villagers to set up an agricultural co-op in 2009. Agricultural co-ops have become a trend in China's NGO sector, attempting to address rural resources and social issues. In GW's view, as agro-forestry activities have improved their livelihoods, the villagers could start to cooperate on economic activities. The rationale of operating the agriculture co-op was to ensure that member households could benefit from collective action, especially in terms of fruit sales. Approximately half of the households in Xihu joined the co-op. Every member household had to contribute a 300 RMB membership fee.

In Xihu, the co-op's operation has been very limited. No collective fruit marketing was undertaken by the co-op, although collective marketing was considered by GW as the priority function of the agricultural co-op. Some member households have withdrawn from the co-op. While there had been no fruit marketing arranged through the agriculture co-op, it instead has been a channel for villagers to bulk-purchase agricultural chemical

collectively. The reason for not practicing collective fruit marketing was not because the villagers were incapable of the operation; rather, I suggest that it was mainly due to the role played by Mr. A.

8.3.2 Community leader modifying NGO projects

In Chapter 7, I have demonstrated that agency is crucial to modifying eNGO agendas on the ground. In this section, particular attention will be paid to the community leader, Mr. A, in stressing how agency is crucial to shaping identities, translating interests, and transforming the agendas of eNGOs.

Currently, the Xihu villagers do not formally operate collective fruit marketing through the co-op. However, a kind of collective fruit marketing has been operating in Xihu for several years and has been coordinated by Mr. A. Every autumn, many Xihu households sell their yellow-skinned pears to the same businessmen from the neighbouring Yongsheng prefecture through the personal arrangements of Mr. A. Yongsheng businessmen started to come to Xihu to purchase pears in 2004-2005, before the agriculture co-op was established. According to the traders, the quality of the Xihu pears was better than those of other Lashi villages; therefore, the price was slightly higher. In 2011, the price of Xihu pears was 2.2 RMB per kilogram whereas pears from other Lashi villages could only sell for 1.6 RMB per kilogram. The traders would contact Mr. A prior to their arrival and confirm the quantity they could buy each season. Mr. A had to contact the villagers, estimate the quantity available for sale, and then ask the villagers to start packaging the pears. The businessmen then came to Xihu to load the trucks; one truck could carry 5,500 kilograms. They then sold the pears to other prefectures. This marketing channel proved effective, as villagers were guaranteed a good price. Villagers also preferred to sell large quantities of pears at one time, because it saved them the time and effort of selling in Lijiang market as individuals.

According to Mr. A, the total amount for sale was usually approximately 100,000 kilograms, an estimation somehow lower than that which others had revealed to me. According to an experienced farmer, the production of the entire village was approximately 200,000 kilograms. Although it was difficult to establish the exact amount,

I consider the amount reported by Mr. A too low, given that I had witnessed the trading process in 2011 and 2012 when I did my estimation at first hand.

It might seem that this kind of collective fruit marketing overlapped with the function of the agriculture co-op. Nevertheless, this operation, which was conducted through personal arrangement, was not the same as the co-op envisioned by GW. First, price negotiation was not transparent, but was done through personal contact. I was told different prices by different villagers. Second, although Mr. A claimed that he provided his services for free, people told me that Mr. A charged approximately fifty to one hundred RMB as commission for each truck he arranged. Third, Mr. A was solely in charge of which households he would allow to deal with the Yongsheng businessmen. He acted more like a middleman than a leader of the co-op. I was told that Mr. A had a preference for arranging business with those who maintained a good relationship with him. For example, Mr. Li, who was also as a board member of the agricultural co-op, told me that the previous year, he was dissatisfied with the price Mr. A offered and therefore refused to sell his fruit to the Yongsheng businessmen. In response, Mr. A stopped recommending his fruit to the businessmen. Thus, it is understandable why Mr. A tended to show a smaller figure for pear production of the village, as he excluded some households' products from sale.

Mr. A's manipulation shows that individual agency plays an important role in shaping eNGOs' project outcomes. Although Mr. A was the head of the co-op and was supposed to promote the sale of agricultural products collectively, some villagers expressed that the co-op would never work because Mr. A could not gain personal profit if the fruit marketing was arranged through the co-op. Rather than simply following the norms expected as a local leader of NGO projects, Mr. A actively transformed the way GW's project was carried out, and translated the project activity to his own advantage. He was neither an NGO staff member, nor a simple project recipient like the other villagers. Therefore, it is hard to define him a fixed role as an intermediary operating in the interface between "community" and "NGO". Viewing the actor's operation via translation through the chain of actors was probably more appropriate (Latour, 2005; Mosse & Lewis, 2006).

8.3.3. Community leader interpreting eNGO identities

Mr. A was crucial not only to shaping the NGO project but also to interpreting NGO identities. This can be observed through his arrangement of agro-chemical bulk purchasing. As the person in charge of the chemical trade, Mr. A was alleged by fellow board members that he attempted to gain personal profit by arranging the bulk-purchase of chemicals. Some board members were said to be asked by Mr. A to make up the accounting in order to conceal any sign of personal profit. Liang Er , the former treasurer of the co-op, also alleged that Mr. A was dishonest about the real price of fertilizer and yam seeds, for faking the price gap. Liang Er later withdrew from the co-op after making the accusation of embezzlement public.[94]

Mr. A's suspected embezzlement influenced how the villagers in general perceived NGOs. For the Xihu villagers, Mr. A's actions indicated how GW functioned. For the villagers, NGO carried different meanings. While some villagers viewed GW as a charity organization, others considered it a business group contracting project from donor agencies and ultimately gaining profit from the said projects. As I suggested in Chapter 6, many Lashi villagers have mistaken Dr. Yu to be a middleman dealing with foreigner donors.

Although transparency and accountability are emphasised and demonstrated by NGOs, many Chinese remain doubtful about trusting not only NGOs, but also people who serve NGO projects. Due to the involvement of some Chinese NGOs in suspected corruption (such as Red Cross of China), these negative images influence Chinese perceptions of NGOs.[95] In general, rural Chinese may not necessarily see NGOs as operating on a higher moral ground. In the case of GW in Lashi, while there were various views of GW, I consider that the villagers' perspectives of NGOs were related to their observations of

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[94]Liang Er (a pseudonym), is a junior relative of Mr. A. He used to be in charge of distributing chemicals. He often complained to me that in order to distribute the chemicals, he had to stay at home for people to pick-up their orders. He also spent a lot on making/receiving mobile calls. He complained that he should be compensated for his time but he served for free. He later decided to sell the pesticides/fertilizers personally.
[95] Red Cross China was involved in several scandals since 2008, including questions over the unclear use of its donations. See Ye (2009) and Hatton (2013).

how individuals within and around the organization acted. After noting Mr. A's self-interested behaviour, it seems reasonable to understand why the villagers would not consider eNGOs as non-profit organizations. In effect, Mr. A's actions transformed how a NGO operated, rather than how an NGO should operate. As well, he translated the meaning of NGO by his behaviours of gaining personal profit. In a way, the role of an actor was not merely responding to the arrangement of the project. More importantly, by modifying project outcome, and reshaping the way GW was perceived, Mr. A's actions were effectively "generating and translating interests, creating context… and sustaining interpretations" (Mosse & Lewis, 2006, p. 13).

Figure 13: Villagers co-operated on the road maintenance for improving horse-trekking route (2011). Most of the households providing labour were horse-trekking co-op members.

Figure 14. Pear trading between Xihu villagers and businessmen from Yongsheng (2012).

8.4 Compromised project outcome (II): Environmental practice

In addition to nominally collective fruit marking, another challenge of GW's project is the compromised environmental outcome. The villagers continued to use agro-chemicals and to convert more sloping land. In this section, my analysis will show that the empowered villagers may act against environmental principles by favouring short-term profit over long-term ecological and economic benefits, because their actions were conditioned by social-economic conditions. Nevertheless, it is perhaps practical to recognise necessary compromises in the practice of conservation/development programmes.

As successful agriculture is almost impossible without chemical input in this situation, GW became aware of the increasing use of chemicals and the potential impact of runoff into the lake. In response, GW promoted organic farming in Xihu. When outsiders visit the Lashi project, Xihu fruit is always introduced with the slogan: "No pesticides, only manure". A picture showing a villager and a beautiful peach is often used in printed material demonstrating the success of agro-forestry and organic farming in Xihu.

However, after observing the agriculture practice in Xihu, I concluded that the farming practice in the village was hardly organic. According to Mr. A, it was impossible to completely avoid chemicals, so villagers tended to select the types with a low poison level. But it was not entirely true. The Xihu villagers, like farmers in other Lashi villages, tended to use chemical fertilizer for crops with market value, not for self-consumption. They used nitrogen and potassium fertilizers for corn because high productivity was required to meet the domestic pig feed demand and for exchanging rice or potatoes. Regarding fruit, people used more than one type of pesticide, including a product labelled "medium-level poisonous and harmful to aquatic species".[96] I also heard that people occasionally used a ripening agent on peaches, so that the peaches would be mature to be sold on market during the Chinese Mid-Autumn festival when the price was good.

As mentioned earlier, the main activity of the agricultural co-op was conducting bulk-purchase agro-chemicals. Some villagers told me that they were willing to

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[96] The chemical is called "Bestox" (*bai shi da);* it is often used to prevent pests from harming peach trees.

participate in the agricultural co-op, because it was cheaper to buy agro-chemicals through it. They could purchase at a price 15-20% lower than the price offered by nearby suppliers. Interestingly, non-member households could also purchase chemicals from the co-op for the same price as the members. This was because board members considered that the non-members could ask their member relatives to buy the chemicals for them, even if the co-op refused to sell to non-members.

As use of chemicals is against the intention of GW which has been promoting organic farming, this situation fuelled a lot of discussion with GW. Some GW staff (including Dr. Yu) disagreed with the co-op being in charge of bulk-purchasing and considered that the activity encouraged the farmers to abandon organic farming. But project staff considered it a temporary incentive for villagers to join the agricultural co-op.

In Xihu, another environmental practice is probably more evident to illustrate the compromised environmental outcome. While the villagers' capabilities are enhanced, and many are able to take up commercialised fruit farming successfully, some households have been (or intend to) continuously converting additional areas of sloping land into fruit farming since 2000, despite the fact that land conversion is prohibited by state law and is certainly not encouraged by GW. These households included those whose main livelihoods were fruit farming and horse-trekking.

For example, Liang Er, who was among the first farmers to convert sloping land in 1996, told me that he had cleared sloping land for farming twice since 2000 due to his successful fruit farming. In 2005, his illegal action was reported to the Natural Forest Protection Office by other Xihu villagers; as a result, the peach trees on his newly converted land were felled. He subsequently planted again and the fruit trees are mature now. Instead of the official number stating every household converted merely one to two mu land for farming, his household in total claimed an area of four *mu* for sloping land farming. I found him not a unique case. Many other households were involved in continuous sloping land conversion. In 2005, land conversion by two households resulted in an inter-village conflict between Xihu and Junliang. Some areas of slope land cultivated by some Xihu villagers in fact belonged to a clan in the adjacent Junliang

village. Prior to 2005, when Xihu's fruit plantation overlapped parts of the land, there was an agreement stating that the land belonged to Junliang and the trees to Xihu. However, in 2005, land conversion by two Xihu families encroached upon a part of land used as a cemetery by a clan of Juliang village, who were irritated and consequently felled Xihu villagers' fruit trees. I was told that approximately 2,000 fruit trees were felled, including those on the land Junliang villagers initially agreed upon. Nowadays, no fruit trees are planted on these areas. Nevertheless, this incident did not stop the Xihu villagers from converting more land. One of the households that triggered this conflict simply shifted its pear plantation to an area slightly closer to Xihu village. Interestingly, many people who illegally converted land have served as board members for either the previous micro-watershed committee or the current agriculture co-op, and they have been associated with GW more frequently than other villagers, both formally and informally. Several villagers told me of their future plan to convert more sloping land into fruit orchards. It seemed that they did not consider such action illegal and that it was ok to reveal it to me openly. Or, even if they knew it was illegal, it was acceptable as long as the practice remained tolerated either by the authority or by others (including the Xihu villagers and other villagers). In such cases, both state law and NGO campaigns proved ineffective. In fact, although the forest in Lashi is ostensibly regulated by the NFPP, its protection is not the concern of the local forest bureau, because the forest is neither natural forest nor intact forest due to the area's previous logging history, and the volume of timber is too small to have any commercial value. For the local forestry office, there is no incentive to regulate. While state law seemed very ineffective when it came to managing forestry resources, social relations played a more significant role in determining whether and where the villagers converted the sloping land.

The situation in Xihu was similar to the suggestion of Tomich and Noordwijk (1995) in Indonesia that agro-foresty programmes sometimes lead to the expansion of farmland, encroaching on forests rather than saving trees albeit in a different context97. Although

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[97] In Tomich and Noordwijk's study, several reasons contributed to the expansion of farm into forests, including growing migrant participation in tree-crop plantation, the sole livelihood activity in many cases. Therefore, people have no choice but to expand their farms.

there is no natural or intact forest worthy of preserving for the timber value in Xihu, soil protection is a major concern resulting from farmland conversion.

8.4.1 The negotiated landscape: Convergence of interests

Research suggests that empowering mechanisms, such as capacity building and institutional strengthening, are often beneficial for resource management (Nunan, 2006). The case of Xihu shows that empowering the community may, however, result in an adverse situation, as empowered villagers increasingly adopted agro-chemicals to support their successful fruit farming, and continuously converted more sloping land for orchards. This case gives rise to questions regarding the connections between empowerment and good environmental governance. Ultimately, there is a paradox of the logic of empowerment: if one empowers people, they are also empowered to act in a way one does not desire. Empowerment by eNGOs does not necessary lead to the desired environmental outcome.

Different actors read space differently and consequently produce different understandings and different forms of practice on the landscape (Murdoch, 2006). Instead of attempting to establish whose reading of space, between GW and Xihu village, is prioritised as dominant, I consider their interaction as negotiations, because both GW and Xihu village are aware of the intention and actions of each other. Their interactions result in "negotiated landscape", a concept suggested by Fisher et.al., (2008)[98]. To be more specific, the landscape of Xihu, significantly shaped by agro-forestry activity, encompasses negotiation between GW aiming to conserve forest and soil and the villagers intending for maximising their profit from fruit farming.

Does the negotiated landscape in Xihu suggest a trade-off between conservation and development? I think that the answer would of necessity depend on whose conservation goal was concerned, because landscape carries not only a single but multiple meanings

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[98] Fisher et.al. referred the term "negotiated landscape" to the landscape made by agreed negotiations between stakeholders. In this case, even though GW and Xihu villagers did not necessary agree upon each others' actions in advance, both sides accepted the results due to the convergence of interest. Therefore I consider their interactions as negotiation.

for various actors. In particular, there are often issues of conflicting agendas between different actors. In CBNRM projects, very often "development is the means and conservation is the end" for the sponsors of CBNRM, while "community is the end and conservation is the means" for the rural farmers (Murphree, 2009, p. 2559).

If one considers the conservation goal of GW, it may not have been fully achieved. Initially, GW's intention to implement a micro-watershed governance project in Xihu was to pioneer a demonstration for other (especially major) watershed systems in China. Therefore, an holistic conservation goal concerning a healthy functioning ecosystem was expected by GW. The plan was to protect the forest ecosystem providing many environmental benefits, not merely soil protection. From this viewpoint, the expansion of farmland into forest by fruit farming seems to have weakened the outcome of GW's environmental project.

However, the interests of Xihu villagers have been different. The Xihu villagers decided to take up fruit farming in the interests of potential monetary profit. This is why most of the villagers did not join the project immediately after GW's initiation, but waited until the pioneer households gained their revenue. For villagers, their motivation to plant fruit trees was mainly to develop alternative livelihoods, which were very limited at the time. When I asked the villagers how they perceived the agro-forestry project, they always praised the project for its income generation. The benefits of soil conservation were mentioned, but only after I questioned them about whether the mud-slides had abated. They also viewed the willow plantation along the old river course (part of the water-course management activity) as beneficial for attracting tourists and potentially providing more income from the tourism. Therefore, the villagers often saw environmental benefit as additional to economic benefit. Overall, the Xihu villagers tend to prioritise the economic goal over the conservation goal.

From the villagers' perspective, their goals of conservation and development may be balanced. The villagers' immediate environmental concern involves mud-slides causing damage to property and threatening their safety. As long as Xihu's ecosystem remains sufficiently stable and allows the villagers to sustain their current lifestyles free from

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severe mud-slides, villagers may consider converting sloping land into fruit farms favourably. It is not that the villagers do not care about their environment. Unquestionably, they do, for it has an immediate effect on them. However, their pragmatic perspective of environmental protection is not fully commensurate with GW's perspective. In fact, it is not certain if the Xihu villagers' sloping land orchards are less ecologically sound compared to the secondary forest around Xihu, since the forest has been largely modified due to its previous logging history. In fact, many studies suggest that agricultural activities do not always conflict with conservation goals [See: Marie, et al. (2009); Scherr and McNeely (2008)].

Despite the divergence in intention between GW and the local villagers, compromised outcomes were achieved due to the convergence of interests. In this case, GW achieved its goal of soil protection to a certain degree, while the villagers have benefited from livelihoods improvement. In fact, Dr. Yu was aware of the compromises which he considered a short-term condition. In reality, GW's strategy in Xihu's agro-forestry activity achieved positive and practical results and helped to build the relationship between GW and Xihu villagers.

In short, the compromised environmental outcomes constantly shape the local landscape carrying the multiple desires of the various actors. Despite a "win-win" solution being an attractive slogan of many development/conservation projects, some authors argue that a "win-more-lose-less" outcome is probably an appropriate goal for conservation projects (Fisher, et al., 2008, p. 126). The trade-offs in the conservation/development goals have to be recognised and properly addressed in order to ensure success (Campbell, Sayer, & Walker, 2010). Therefore I suggest, as far as eNGOs' participatory projects are concerned, expecting a win-win outcome is not only impractical in many cases, but perhaps even harmful for NGO-community relationships, for often inevitably one party's expectations fall short.

8.4.2 Socio-economic structure shaping villagers' agency

My intention here is not to label local communities as villains destroying the environment. Instead, it demonstrates that the agency of the villagers plays a significant role when

analysing the villagers' actions. Xihu villagers' actions are a way of maximising short-term benefits in response to socio-economic injustice resulting from uncertain regimes of environmental governance, privatisation of natural resources and insecure land tenure.

8.4.2.1 Uncertain regimes of environmental governance

The Xihu villagers have been burdened with socio-economic injustice result from various government ecological projects, such as the Lashi Dam and the Lashi Wetland Reserve.[99] The socio-economic injustice forced the villagers to practice sloping land farming in the first place, and has contributed to its continuous expansion. Government environmental policy and projects are not simply environmental, but have significant distributive effects (Yeh, 2009). In Lashi, these government policies and projects have resulted in considerable threat to the survival of the poor, and have consequently influenced whether and how local villagers participate in and carry out GW projects.

Initially, the Xihu villagers claimed sloping land because extensive tracts of land were submerged when the Lashi dam was built and more land was submerged after the second expansion. These decisions on dam projects were made without public consultation; thus, villagers could only passively accept the outcome. Within situations like this, people tend to maximise their chances when resources become available, in response to the impact of involuntary changes. Sloping land is one of the few resources that the villagers have access to; therefore, it is not unusual if they decide to maximize the use of sloping land. Moreover, their opening up of sloping land was also a way of performing resistance to hegemonic control over natural resources (land), in the form of silent protest. Sloping land has, therefore, become a space of power contestation. Up until today, the Lashi villagers still carry out various illegal environmental practices as a way of resisting and protesting against the unfairness resulting from natural resource policy (See Chapter 6).

Currently, Xihu village, like many other villages around Lashi Lake, is subject to various kinds of policies and projects, which are linked with the more intensive farming practices.

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[99] In China, dam projects are often framed as "ecological projects" by Chinese government.

One example is a government plan to protect the water quality of Lashi Lake, which intends to impose restrictions on horse-trekking activities in Lashi. According to several Lashi and Lijiang officials, in the interest of "providing safe drinking water to Lijiang city" in the near future, it is possible that Lashi will experience another regime of environmental governance by regulation of the Lijiang government. There have been suggestions about incorporating the commune-owned horse-trekking co-ops into the government-owned tourism management bureau[100]. If this occurs, the incomes of the horse-trekking co-op members will be diminished. If the policy is put into practice, the villagers may have to abandon their horse-trekking businesses, which to date have been a major income source for many households in Lashi, including the Xihu villagers. These rapidly-changing "environmental" policies, which are devoid of transparency, leave the Xihu villagers with limited choices: they have no option but to extract value from the resources (land) available.

8.4.2.2 Privatisation

Privatisation of natural resources also results in socio-economic disparity. In Lijiang, it is particularly evident how privatisation combined with government power has been accelerating such disparity. Rural people have witnessed how business profits from the privatisation of land/water/ landscapes, combined with governmental power. The Lashi villagers have been widely exposed to such changes due to the tourism development in Lijiang, which has made the city (and the surrounding area) a "hot spot" for real estate development. For example, among the first commercial banners, a giant banner with a high-end, resort-type mansion project printed on it is seen by airways passengers arriving in Lijiang. Similar advertisements introducing real-estate projects also appear in in-flight magazines and local lifestyle magazines (for rich immigrants, of course, not for the locals).

A resort development project in Lijiang is one of the examples demonstrating to rural villagers how private business profits from resource grabs backed by the government. A

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[100] Interviews with persons in charge of the "Office of Tri-lake Protection" (*sanhuban* 三湖辦) of Lijiang City, and conversation with many Lashi villagers in 2011.

few years ago, the wetland around Wenbi Lake, a small lake located five kilometres from Lijiang city, became the development site for a golf course, a resort and many mansions. Because the development was deemed a rare opportunity for Lijiang to attract business, the government was determined to keep the investment. As one official said:" We want to keep *lao ban* [businessman] and the green mountain [the environment] as well"(Wang, 2008). I was told that due to this project, many farmers protested over their loss of land, and physical conflict occurred between the protesters and the police. Two people died; their families were compensated and their voices were muted. The development finally proceeded. After the golf course was built, the lake was no longer suitable for fishing, the traditional livelihood of people living around the lake, due to the heavy usage of pesticides, were affected. Fish net traders from Dali stopped going to Wenbi Lake for business several years ago. The developer enjoyed the privilege accruing from the privatization of the wetland, assisted by government power. At the same time, the villagers were marginalised, lost their land and livelihoods, and were silenced[101].

Notions of privatisation can also be seen in the media. The prefectural TV news justified the privileges enjoyed by private business, when announcing new water resources regulations. After explaining several new regulations targeting water resources protection, the local news concluded: "In summary, who invests benefits"![102] The message implied that water is not a common resource: it can be private property, and the owner of the private property is protected and profits from the privatising of resources.

The Lashi villagers were also affected by possible involuntary settlement by immigrants from the Tiger-Leaping Gorges dam on Jingsha River, where at least two hydro power plants were financed by private companies and are backed up by the government. The Lashi villagers have witnessed how private investors have benefited from the privatisation of hydro-power, even the resistance encountered when relocating the local inhabitants. The possible resettlement due to Tiger-Leaping Gorge dams is not only relevant to the relocated community; it also poses a significant resource problem for the

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[101] This protest was not commonly known by outsiders since the news was blocked.
[102] Yulong TV News, 5th October, 2011.

Lashi villagers. If increasing numbers of residents are relocated to Lashi, the land resources available for farming will be further limited, and more intensive farming utilising sloping land is highly possible.

8.4.4.3 Land tenure insecurity

Resettlement also highlights another important socio-economic problem in contemporary China: land tenure insecurity. This issue contributes to the shaping of decisions for prioritising short-term revenue over long-term benefits. The insecurity surrounding land ownership has its historical context, as well as spatial context related to the current land-use planning of the region and the country.

Historically, in China, there have been several waves of land tenure reform since 1949. Although ultimate ownership belongs to the state, land use rights differed under different regimes, from state to collective-owned before the early 1980s. Following the decollectivilisation in the 1980s, land use rights were allocated to village committees and contracted to individual households. Each regime lasted no longer than two decades. Despite land tenure being allocated to households after the 1980s, many factors continued to impede long and secure land tenure to for Chinese farmers (Li, 2003). Along with the state's natural resource policy, such as the NFPP restricting land use, one of the reasons for the insecure sense of land ownership is the compulsory land grabbing in the name of public use by the government (Li, 2003).The tenure insecurity has consequently influenced rural villagers' environmental practices. For example, a study focused on Yunnan province suggests that many farmers were reluctant to undertake long-term care of the forest land due to their lack of sense of tenure security (Colchester, n.d.).

Locally, Xihu villagers have experienced and witnessed the same situations over the past two decades. They have experienced the loss of farmland due to the Lashi Dam. The neighbouring Dayu villagers were in a even worse situation. Because the area of land allocated to the entire Dayu is small, the allocated plots have to be swapped among the households every three years for fairness. It is one reason that Dayu villagers could not develop fruit-farming as Xihu, as the fruit frees grown on the field would not be owned by the growers once the land is rotated. Xihu villagers also witnessed how people in the

nearby Wenbi Lake area and the Jingsha River area lost their land without proper consultation and compensation. These experiences have combined to aggravate the farmers' sense of insecurity. The threat of potential involuntary resettlement from Tiger-Leaping Gorges area to the Lashi area and the possible third-time expansion of the Lashi Dam submerging more farmland, both underpin the uncertainty that drives the Lashi villagers to maximise profit from sloping land farming. For the Xihu villagers, the short-term profit gained from fruit farming is more important than the long-term benefit of the land. This may be observed in a case, in which Liang Er, the farmer who produced the award-winning peach for the state banquet in 2009, was offered a deal contracting his sloping land for farming. Although Liang's fruit sale could realise an income of approximately 50,000 RMB or more per year, he did not internalise the profit into the rent. He considered 700 RMB/mu for annual rent without fruit trees, or 1,500RMB/mu with fruit trees on the land very good deals. As his household owned four mu of sloping land for fruit farming, he could only earn 6,000 RMB per year from the rent, an amount much less than the profit gained through fruit farming. His valuation of the land in fact implies that farmers no longer value their land much.

The case of the project in Xihu, again demonstrates that eNGO projects are often unavoidably compromised when implemented locally due to the different agendas espoused by eNGOs and local communities. Local agency is shaped by socio-economic disparity as a result of uneven development, a ubiquitous phenomenon in contemporary China which I have discussed in Chapters 1 and Chapter 2. In China, the broader socio-economic structure has led rural farmers to prioritise short-term economic profits, and therefore, long-term conservation benefits anticipated by eNGOs may be compromised. In short, agency can significantly modify eNGO projects, resulting in an unpredicted outcome encompassing compromised agendas and often divergent goals sought by development/conservation agencies, a phenomenon addressed by Green (2000).

8.6 Conclusion

I argue that in a CBNRM project, while empowerment may occur through participatory projects, it does not guarantee the expected goal, whether it is a developmental or

environmental goal. In Xihu, local actors have been empowered and mobilised through various mechanisms employed in a participatory project, such as the setting up of management institutions for resource usage. Nevertheless, the project goal was compromised in terms of operation of the participatory institution (the agricultural co-op), as well as the villagers' environmental practice (ongoing slope-land conversion and increased use of agro-chemicals).

Such compromise is not uncommon in CBNRM projects, and perhaps, it should be better recognised and accepted. While a participatory approach may facilitate capacity building and lead to empowerment, it may not address natural resource management adequately. In Xihu, the community leader and the villagers were empowered to take up and further develop various livelihood opportunities, but the result of empowerment was less concerned with the environment.

This situation is not unique to Xihu. A case of a participatory watershed management project in India, for example, demonstrates that while institutionalisation through participatory approach may facilitate capacity building and empower the community to fight against political struggle, it does not necessarily result in adequate resource management (Ahluwalia, 1997).

This chapter, following the argument in Chapter 7, illustrates how individual agency can significantly shape NGO project outcomes, and how broader factors can shape villagers' agency. In this chapter I have discussed how community leaders can act to shape identities, translate interests, transform agendas, and consequently, modify projects. I have also analysed the way empowered villagers may act against environmental principles, as their actions are conditioned by factors including social-economic injustice and tenure insecurity, which have forced many rural villagers to prefer short-term profits.

In summary, this chapter stresses the importance of agency in an eNGO project. In Xihu, both the human agency and non-human entities prove to be important in connecting social relations and shaping local landscapes. The successful fruit farming has ensured the survival and development of the GW project in Xihu, despite the local government's constant interference. In a way, the fruit trees maintain the relationship between GW and

the villagers. In short, nature-human relationships and social relations are being mutually shaped and making the local landscape.

Chapter 9

Dynamics of ENGOs on Landscape Change

As explained in Chapter 3, this research employs political ecology to analyse the interactions between actors (eNGOs, governments, donors and local communities), and the consequent influence on the landscape of these interactions. Through the argument in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, this thesis has demonstrated (a) that interactions among the actors across scales influence the ways which environment and development philosophies translate from international agendas into local practice through eNGO projects; and, (b) that rural landscapes, in which social relations and human-nature relationships take place, are consequently shaped by these interactions, especially those between the projects and the local communities. On one level, although eNGOs largely adopt the agendas of their international partners, the shared philosophies are modified between eNGOs and their international partners due to the power relations that obtain among eNGOs, their international partners, and different levels of Chinese government. On another level, interactions among local communities, eNGOs and local governments also transform eNGO projects. The reality on the ground and the critical role of agency have proved to be important in shaping transformation at the local level. In short, environmental and development philosophies do not lineally translate top down from international agendas to impacts on the ground, and the influence on the rural landscape is context dependent, particularly in terms of the configuration of relationships among actors.

While this thesis primarily takes GW and its projects as its case study, I do not intend to over-generalise the influence of eNGOs on China's rural landscapes merely based on GW's experience. Certainly, GW cannot represent all eNGOs in China, but as GW's practice is situated in a broadly similar socio-political context to other eNGO projects in

rural China, the case study shows certain patterns which are critical for analysis of other eNGOs practices and relationships in a Chinese context. The case study is also helpful in raising relevant issues when investigating other eNGOs in China.

9.1 Landscape change as context dependent

In Chapter 1, I define landscape as the physical area wherein social relations and human-nature relations take place. As a result, landscape is shaped by the changing relations in human society as well as between humans and nature. Using different projects incorporated in GW's Lashi programme as case studies, this thesis addresses how eNGOs influence rural landscapes in terms of the way they address problems of physical environment through social processes (such as participation and empowerment).

Although the overall scale of the Lashi programme is confined to an area of 160 square kilometres geographically and within one township administratively, GW's projects have resulted in various influences. Table 4 summarises the differences between each GW project which I earlier discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Table 4: Summary of the differences in the case studies.

Factor	Fishery management in Dayu (Chapter 6)	Community development and forestry protection in Yangyuchan (Chapter 7)	Micro-watershed management (agro-forestry) in Xihu (Chapter 8)
Nature of access	Open access	Community management	Individual households
Influential actors	Government agencies	Private businessman	Intra-community interactions
Key individuals	No prominent individual	Opinion leaders within community	Mr. A
Environmental perceptions	Divergence in sustainable fishery between GW and the community	Partial adoption of GW narrative by the community	Convergence of interest : GW and the villagers
NGO-community relationships	Villagers' dissatisfaction with GW	Very good	Generally good

One clear difference between the cases was the nature of the communities' access to resources, such as open access in the lake fishery project in Dayu, community-managed resources as in forest protection in Yangyuchan, or individual/household controlled agriculture management in Xihu. As certain resources may be managed by multiple and/or overlapping institutions, this classification is approximate. The different contexts also affect how GW projects shape rural landscapes, given that the different natures of access require different resource management institutions and strategies.

The second difference is the involvement of influential institutional actors besides GW and the local community. In Lashi programme, in cases where powerful actors lack interest in participating in GW projects, it becomes difficult for GW and local communities to engage with and apply leverage. This was evident in the case of the

township government and the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau in fishery management. In the case of the Yi village, while the private businessman who provided patronage was powerful, at the same time, he had to depend on the Yi community for support. In the case of Xihu, there was less influence from outsiders: intra-community interactions have been the main activities because the land practically is owned by individual households.

Moreover, the case study indicates that when there are divergences between GW and local communities in terms of environmental perceptions and no negotiations are entered into, the influence of the organisation may be weakened. In many cases, GW and local communities have different ways of seeing nature and different understandings of environmental practices. For example, in Dayu, the villagers had different views from GW regarding what constituted acceptable fishing practices. The concept of sustainable fishery was promoted by GW rather than negotiated. In Yangyuchan, the locals adopted the language of watershed protection. To some degree, GW projects provide alternative ways of seeing nature, such as an holistic view of the watershed system. Although the Yangyuchan villagers partially adopted GW narratives, this did not mean that local actions necessary complied with them. In Xihu, although the motivations of GW and the villagers vis-à-vis cooperation on the agro-forestry activity may have differed, GW's strategies in Xihu had a profound influence on the landscape mainly due to the convergence of interests. Xihu's experience also demonstrated that a compromised landscape is possibly more practical as the outcome of eNGO projects.

Finally, NGO-community relationships mutually influence human-nature relationships. If eNGO projects provide benefits for the environment and/or development, NGO-community relationships will be strengthened and further provide feedback to the project goal for conservation and development. In Xihu, the prosperous fruit farming resulting in significant change in the physical landscape, strengthened the NGO-community relationship and facilitated further projects in Xihu.

To summarise, the complex interactions between the institutional actors (government, eNGOs and local communities) clash due to these differences in their framings of the

changing environment, and it is due to such complex interactions that rural landscape changes occur. However, I have to stress that the influence of eNGO practices on the landscape is often unintended and unpredicted. ENGOs practices are constantly modified due to the effects of overall socio-economic structures and the agency of those individuals who associate with eNGO projects. There is no doubt that eNGO agendas will be transformed and eNGO practices will be modified; however, how they would be done remains uncertain case by case. In Section 9.2, I will present how these agendas are transformed and how practices are modified, based on the findings of the case studies featured in this thesis.

9.2 Impact of power relations: Translating and transforming agendas

This thesis employs the case study of GW and its Lashi project to demonstrate that philosophies of environment and development do not lineally translate top down from international agendas to influences on the ground. Modifications occur at two levels: first, international agendas are adjusted due to the Chinese political system, and second, the agendas are transformed when the eNGO projects interact with local communities.

9.2.1 Inter-relationships among international partners, governments and eNGOs

Referring to the research questions in Chapter 1, the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 address the first and second research sets of questions, which are the influence of eNGOs' international linkages and eNGO relations with Chinese governments. Although the literature suggests that Chinese eNGOs' practices have been largely conditioned by their international linkages (Chen, 2010; Kuhn, 2006), or by authoritarian government policy (Hildebrandt, 2011; Schwartz, 2004), I suggest that the relationships between eNGOs, the government, and the international linkages are much more complex. Indeed, Chapters 5 and 6 show that eNGO practices and eNGO inter-relationships are profoundly influenced by both international partners and the government, however the case studies throughout this thesis also demonstrate that modification does take place. The cases of TNC and GW discussed in Chapter 5 demonstrate that although eNGOs in China adopt international

environment and development agendas, these agendas are often modified according to the Chinese political reality. And, the adjustment in the interests of Chinese government is hard to predict. In China, political power relations are heterarchical, meaning that overlapping and competing power relations exist between different levels of government (vertically), and between different government agencies at the same level (horizontally). All of these government institutions have different interests. As a result, NGO-government relationships are heterogeneous. The different attitudes of various levels of government towards GW regarding its different campaigns/projects have clearly demonstrated this point. I suggest that the influence of the Chinese government on eNGOs agendas and practices is too complex to easily generalise.

The case studies in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 suggest that clearly eNGO projects are greatly modified when practiced on the local level. While Chinese eNGOs share certain rhetoric with their international linkages, including CBNRM, participatory resource management and sustainable development, these philosophies work out differently in practice. While the modification is certainly linked to the broader socio-political context in China, individual agency also plays an important role in transforming agendas.

Moreover, the modifications also provide feedback to the agenda and practice of the international partners. In short, international NGOs have been influenced by their experience partnering with Chinese eNGOs through the years. These experiences not only give reasons for iNGOs to adjust their operations, but to re-consider some of their fundamental beliefs and practices. As a former director from one major international NGO suggests, growing recognition of the complex layers and different interests at different (and even the same) levels of government among the iNGOs, and iNGOs working in China has been an important element in developing this essential awareness (personal communication).

9.2.2 China's uneven development

This research found that the development trend in China, framed as uneven development (Webber, 2012), has been a critical factor in the transforming of eNGO agendas, such as sustainable development and CBNRM. Within the context of uneven development in

which socio-economic injustice and insecure land tenure prevail, rural Chinese are more likely to discount their future and to maximise short-term profit based on available resources. It is within this context that it has been difficult for eNGOs to mobilise rural villagers to internalise eNGO agendas in local environmental practices.

In China's official discourse, development nowadays is termed "sustainable development". While many environmental and development polices/projects come under the name of sustainable development, they have largely failed to guarantee the well-being of rural livelihoods and landscapes. At the national scale, government programmes such as NFPP and SLCP, which combine concerns for development and environmental protection, provide great examples for examining the effect of sustainable development rhetoric in reality. Both programmes have resulted in negative impacts on rural villagers in western China including depriving ethnic minorities of agricultural and forest lands (Sturgeon, 2007). Meanwhile, the overall environmental effects are questionable (See Chapter 7). Other examples include the Three Gorges Dam, which resulted in the loss of farmlands and livelihoods of peasants in central China, and the national grazing ban, which forced herders in Inner Mongolia to abandon their pastures, culture and lifestyle (Webber, 2012). These interventions, all of which have been justified as sustainable development, are framed as "ecological construction" by the Chinese government, as benefiting both the environment and society.

It is not only the Chinese government that links interventions with sustainable development, so do eNGOs in China. Operations initiated and supported by eNGOs, that also appear under the name of sustainable development, impact on the local well-being. Pudacuo National Park (Chapter 5) is one example. As an eNGO initiative, this national park allowed the government to strengthen its control over natural resources, benefited business, and neglected the negative impacts on the local communities.

Irrespective of whether they are government or eNGO projects, the above examples indicate that the distributive effects of development and conservation come at a cost to certain social groups. As a result, sustainable development, a popular rhetorical theme shared by the government and the eNGO sector, may not be welcomed by rural

communities who do not see the benefits. As sustainable development is supposed to sustain over a prolonged period, in places where access to natural resources and secure land tenure have proven problematic, the fundamental principle of sustainable development cannot be supported. Lashi Lake can be taken as a microcosm of such places in contemporary China. From the Lashi Dam, which resulted in significant shrinkage of rural farmland, to the Lashi wetland nature reserve, which restricted local access to natural resource use, Lashi Lake has been the place of various interventions highlighting the nature of uneven development and the conflicting priorities of different actors across scales. In Lashi, rural livelihoods have been impacted and rights to access natural resources have suffered deprivation due to these interventions.

In rural China, as there is no guarantee of the resources that people depend upon, it is not surprising that people are not concerned with long term benefits of development and the environment. Muldavin (2000) suggests that China's rural villagers' vulnerability has increased due to reduced entitlements and the discounting of their futures, and that such vulnerability will result in resource degradation. This argument corresponds to my findings in Chapters 6 and 8. In Xihu village, insecure land tenure, as a reduced entitlement, has led the villagers to discount their futures and focus on short-term profit by conducting slope land conversion. In Dayu village, restrictions on accessing natural resources, which used to be available to fishermen, have forced fishermen to harvest as much as they can instead of following the principle of sustainable fishery promoted by GW. Sometimes, people resist the rhetoric of sustainable development by acting otherwise in cases where they consider they have been disadvantaged by this concept. The bird-poisoning described in Chapter 6 was explicitly undertaken to irritate the Nature Reserve Administrative Bureau in response to its policing of conservation measures, representing silent resistance against problematic development. It seems ironic that even though both the Lashi Dam and the nature reserve were stated to benefit the environment, the natural landscape is not necessarily better off, because these projects have resulted in social impacts which have changed local environmental practice and production means.

In conclusion, uneven development in contemporary China is the background within which eNGOs operate. Although the agendas of the eNGOs are based on mainstream

environmental philosophies/discourses, these agendas are most likely to be transformed because they are often in conflict with (or do not fit) the reality.

9.2.3 Agency modifying eNGO agendas and practices

ENGO practices are not only contextualised by the broader structure; agency certainly plays an important role in translating and transforming eNGO agendas. The importance of agency in shaping rural villagers' environmental practice is highlighted in Chapters 7 and 8. In these chapters, I demonstrated the role played by key individuals in translating eNGO identities and in modifying eNGO agendas, and suggest that the agency of the key individuals has to be analysed based on their multiple positionings within a certain context.

In Chapter 3, I have reviewed the literature focusing on the role of agency in development studies. Research shows that ordinary villagers are able to resist, accommodate or negotiate with seemingly powerful actors, and the various approaches adopted by different research elaborating this argument. Post-structuralist studies (Escobar, 1995, 1998; Li, 1999) see agency performed by actors in the form of resistance against dominant power , while critiques (Bebbington, 2000; Mosse, 2003) argue that local actors are able to accommodate or manipulate interventions for development opportunities. In sum, local communities are not merely subject to external interventions, including international discourse, NGO agendas or governmental policy/projects.

The case studies in this research support the argument that local people are not passive subjects of eNGO agendas, in line with critiques of the post-structuralist view. In reality, discourses may be transformed and agendas may be adopted or rejected. I argue that local actors are able to utilise development interventions, manoeuvre their relationships with seemly powerful outsiders, and consequently transform the external agendas to fit in the local interests. The case of Dayu village demonstrates the rejection of sustainable development rhetoric by the fishing community. In Yangyuchan, the environmental narrative constructed by GW has been selectively adopted by local Yi. The Xihu villagers follow part of the GW project for certain common interests (e.g., preventing mudslides), but continue to covert land to better fit local interests. These case studies not only reveal

nuances of the complex power relations among institutional actors, they also demonstrate the practicability of analysing agency to reveal such nuances. The case studies also demonstrate the importance of empirical study, which locates analysis of eNGOs projects in local contexts.

As agency is inherently individual, it seems sensible to address the roles of key individuals prominent in modifying eNGO agendas, such as community leaders or eNGO field workers (see Chapter 8). Focusing on key individuals provides a useful way to examine how concepts of agency challenge the structural standpoint of development as governing. Assuming that discourse and agendas will be carried out as they are designed fails to address the interactions between individual actors. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, individuals do not simply play the fixed roles assigned to them. The identities of these individuals are actively constructed by their actions (Desai, 2006). More specifically, key individuals act to "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meanings of the elements they are supposed to carry" (Latour, 2005, p. 39). In a way, these key individuals are making a disjuncture between eNGO agendas and their practices and between NGOs and local communities, a concept I discussed in Chapter 2.

ENGO staff are certainly important in modifying project operation and constructing the NGO image. They often devise their strategies according to their multiple positionings. For example, while NGO workers carry NGOs' missions, they may also work against the organisational principles for various reasons. GW's Lashi programme provides abundant examples to illustrate such phenomena. For example, in order to gain support of the Xihu villagers, GW project staff supported Xihu's agricultural co-op's bulk purchasing of agro-chemicals, even though the operation was against the principles of the GW project (see Chapter 8). On another occasion, in order to encourage community participation, local staff provided monetary compensation to Xihu villagers attending a village meeting for the GW project. When facilitating project implementation, GW staff had to compromise the principle of voluntary participation, against GW's policy. Disjuncture between the organisational agenda and practice created by GW staff is thus evident.

In addition, eNGO staff have had to maintain the social difference that distinguished them from ordinary villagers. Only if they are equipped with a certain status, would their work be valued by the villagers. In Chapter 6, I have exemplified the disjuncture made by certain GW staff members who have attempted to maintain their personal status by performing no daily interactions outside of project affairs.

As a result, recognizing how different and multiple identities of individuals can play out in their participation (or not) in projects is crucial (Cleaver, 2001). It is therefore important to recognise the heterogeneity "within" an institution and to reveal the micro-politics within it (Fisher, 1997; Heaton-Shrestha, 2006). As this research demonstrates, employing an actor-oriented approach to trace individuals' social lives becomes very important in understanding how discourse and agendas originated beyond the local level and may result in local influence through personal interactions and exercise of agency.

This research also found it difficult to position key individuals into a fixed category. Instead, one should understand flexible individual positioning, which enables actors to construct multiple roles within different contexts, as the roles "are continuously renegotiated depending on the context and intersubjectivity" (Rossi, 2006, p. 46). This is especially evident in the case of Mr. A in Chapter 8. While on one hand, he has been taken by GW as having a leading role within the community, at the same time he has been recognised as part of GW by his fellow villagers. His identities are not only shaped by others but also constructed by himself. When Mr. A interacts with outsiders such as media or GW, he speaks as a representative of the community. However, when he speaks to his fellow villagers, he acts as if he is representing GW. Mr. A often told the villagers about his importance in the overall GW operation. For this reason, many villagers considered Mr. A as a part of GW. Grouping him into either category becomes problematic.

The same situation applies to GW project staff, who construct their multiple identities probably in more conflicting ways. Local staff sometimes describe themselves as "together with local people", and criticise GW's prioritising of donor agendas over local

concerns. Therefore, are the interactions between local staff and headquarters staff (including Dr. Yu) interactions within an organisation or between a community and an NGO? I suggest that there is no simple answer to this question. Thus, an interface between actors as suggested by actor-oriented approach is problematic (Mosse & Lewis, 2006). This research shows that interface between NGO and local community is ambiguous, and that adopting a clear-cut approach to categorising actors is inappropriate.

In summary, this thesis recognises that agency plays a significant role in modifying eNGO practices on the ground. At the same time, analyses of agency should be based on the interactions between actors within their contexts, at a specific time, in a specific place, and about a specific matter.

9.3 Participatory natural resource management in rural China: Making indigenous/community narratives

In Chapter 3, I have discussed the importance of examining the participatory CBNRM model implemented by eNGOs in China. Critical examination of such a model in China can be undertaken as a lens through which one can gain an understanding of the influence of eNGO practices on the rural landscape by changing human-nature relationships. This addresses the fourth research question set indicated in Chapter 1: "how do eNGO practices influence rural landscapes shaped by social relations and human-nature relationships."

In order to explore the influences of eNGO practices, this thesis has adopted an approach that will facilitate understanding of how eNGO narratives of human-nature relationships have (or have not) worked locally. Often, the legitimacy of the CBNRM model is sustained by certain narratives framing the relationship between local communities and their environment; within the framing, notions of indigeneity, traditional knowledge, customary law, and common resources are all related to constructing narratives suitable for the CBNRM model. In this section, I will syntheses an understanding of the making of environmental narratives in rural China.

Environmental narratives produce certain environmental knowledge and social orders (Forsyth & Walker, 2008). According to Hathaway (2007), environment and development discourses can be categorised into three narrative themes, or motifs, framing human-nature relationships in China's environmentalism: peasant, indigenous and community (Hathaway, 2007).[103] In particular, indigenous and community narratives have emerged in recent years and have been widely adopted by eNGOs in China.

This research has found first, that narratives of human-nature relationship are not only constructed by eNGOs, they are also performed by people who are subjects of the narrative. Local communities may also adopt a narrative but not necessarily comply with it. Therefore, it is possible that eNGO narratives influence locals' perceptions of nature and environmental practice, albeit to a limited degree. Second, I suggest that both the indigenous and community narrative themes, which sustain the CBNRM model, may not readily be accepted by rural villagers in China. CBNRM is thus likely to encounter difficulties in a rural Chinese context. Finally, I argue that depending on particular narrative themes for legitimising eNGO projects runs the risk of disguising the human-nature relationship in reality. As well, it may not benefit project implementation by eNGOs.

9.3.1 Construction and adoption of environmental narratives

Environmental narratives are convenient for the actors who generate them (Forsyth & Walker, 2008). However, environmental narratives may mask the complex interactions between different actors and the environment. In China, the effects of environmental narratives can be observed at various scales. At the national scale, the mainstream narrative used by the nation state ignores the history of state logging practices and attributes the downstream flooding of Yangtze River to upstream ethnic minorities, who are generally considered as backward peoples. At the local scale, eNGOs, adopting indigenous narrative themes, frame ethnic minorities as the traditional guardians of nature,

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[103] Hathaway refers to them as "social models". However, I consider the words "narrative themes" or "motifs" more suitable in this context. For consistency, this thesis uses "narrative themes".

and overlook the ever-changing environmental practice and the complex social relations of ethnic minorities.

The various environmental narratives constructed around Lashi Lake provide excellent examples of how nature-society interactions can be deliberately constructed by eNGOs, and how these narratives are actively adopted or modified by the subjects in the narratives. TNC and GW, which both worked at Lashi Lake at the same time, present the Naxi and Yi in different ways regarding how the two ethnic groups interact with their environment.

The Naxi have been depicted as "living in harmony with nature", both by Naxi scholars and by eNGOs [see (Li, 2006; Li, 2004; Mu, 2011)]. In line with the mainstream narrative, TNC, who started their China programme from the Lijiang region, portrays the Naxi as the group with ecologically-sound traditions.[104] On the other hand, GW frames the Yi as the guardians of the forest. Neither of these simplified narratives reflects the reality (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, as one can see from the case studies in Chapters 6 and 8, nowadays the ways in which Naxi utilise their natural resources differ little from those of farmers/fishermen in other parts of rural China. They harvest fish intensively with fishing gear introduced from other provinces, and convert slope land for agriculture. I suggest that this is because the Naxi are facing similar challenges to those experienced by other Chinese rural villagers, including land expropriation/consolidation, competition in the agricultural market, and rising goods prices. For this reason, their responses are similar, such as diversifying their livelihoods, lowering production costs and intensifying their agricultural practices. Although the Naxi used to observe the customary rules of resource usage, my research revealed that they either could not recall their customary rules, or regarded such traditions as "superstitious". The image of the Naxi "living in harmony with nature" disguises the reality, but somehow it remains popular among academics and eNGOs.[105] On the other hand, in contrast to the mainstream discourse by labelling the Yi

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[104] For more information about TNC's work preserving the "sacred landscape" in Yunnan, see Hathaway (2007).
[105] The problem of over-fishing in Lashi was only casually mentioned in the overall TNC programme as the organization soon broadened the scope of its work to include other areas in north-west Yunnan (but gradually moved out of Yunnan in recent years). Little attention was paid to the particular role of the Yi's influence over the environment, perhaps because the population of Yi in the entire Lijiang area was negligible.

environmental destroyers, GW framed them as forest guardians. By revealing the history of Naxi encroachment on the Yi's forest (see Chapter 7), GW attempted to shift the blame for destroying the forest away from the Yi, consequently strengthening the position of the marginalised Yi within the Lashi area. At the same time, GW's focus on fishery and sloping land farming issues in the Naxi villages implied an image of the Naxi as resource exploiters, even though GW did not specifically use the word "Naxi" when referring to the villagers around the lake.

ENGOs often produce various narratives based of their ideologies and strategic purposes. In addition to eNGO construction, local people are crucial to accomplishing the narrative. This is evident in the case of Yangyuchan village. The villagers actively adopted part of the environmental narrative, maintaining their images of legitimised resource users. Therefore, the making of the GW narratives is contingent to the performance of the villagers. Sometimes it may seem that the eNGOs, as other outsiders, are powerful narrators but this power is also granted by the villagers themselves. Without the cooperation of the villagers, the constructed narrative can hardly be legitimised and sustained.

Moreover, I suggest that because the narratives of eNGOs require collaboration from people in the story to accomplish the construction, the expansion or decrease in adopting any particular narrative themes relies not only on the narrators but also on the will and action of the people in the narratives. My argument is somewhat different from that of Hathaway (2007), who suggests that shifting environmentalism mainly depends on the Chinese elites as narrators (such as eNGOs, academics and activists), who embrace particular narrative themes. For example, Hathaway suggests that indigenous narrative themes concerning Tibetan resource issues will be less employed due to the decreasing use of the term "indigenous" by Tibetan elites.

9.3.2 Indigeneity and community narrative themes in China

While both indigenous and community narrative themes have been championed by eNGOs in China to sustain CBNRM projects, it remains a challenge for eNGOs to advocate these narrative themes as they may not be readily embraced by the rural Chinese.

Through the case studies, one can see that irrespective of whether they are indigenous or community narrative themes, they are never fully internalised by the relevant communities. The projects discussed in Chapters 6 and 8 suggest that the community narrative theme has not been able to mobilise Naxi villagers into participating in resource management. Chapter 7 shows that even though the Yi villagers may partially adopt the narrative of indigeneity, it does not mean that local actions necessarily comply with eNGO construction. Promoting and implementing the CBNRM model based on either narrative theme, on attributing rights and responsibilities to local communities for resource management, has been a difficult task. Certainly, conditions vary according to various contexts: different landscapes, diverse cultures and uneven policy implementation all take effect. In essence, this thesis has shown the very different mechanisms that Naxi and the Yi living in the same area employ when reacting to NGO construction of their relationship with the environment.

Based on the three case studies, I suggest that there are two possible reasons why rural Chinese have been reluctant to embrace community and indigenous narrative themes advocating managing resource collectively, either as a community or as an indigenous group. First, there has been the confusion over the terms "community" and "collective", due to the incompatibility of the use of the term "community" from its western origin and in Chinese context. Because "collective" has negative connotations stemming from the history of communist China, use of the term has discouraged rural villagers from adopting the concept of managing natural resources collectively. In addition, the privatisation trend nowadays has rendered the term "collective" old-fashioned, unprofitable, and unattractive to rural villagers.

Second, it is sometimes the case with the "community", or the "indigenous group" (or the ethnic minority group in the Chinese context) that eNGOs' envisioning of resource management lacks essential cultural and territorial claims for constructing and representing a community/ indigenous group.

9.3.2.1 Managing resources as a community and as a collective unit

I have discussed the critiques challenging the concept of community in theory and in practice in Chapter 3. Many practitioners, including GW staff, are aware of such critiques. The case study in this thesis, however, reveals additional issues pertinent to the meaning of "community" in the Chinese context.

The term "community" has multiple and abstract connotations. The abstraction of the definition makes it necessary to apply the concept in a specific context if there is to be any discussion of significance. The term usually refers to locally resident groups of members who share solidarity and common interests (Hawley, 1950).

In the Chinese language, however, there is no term compatible with the English term "community" used in the development discourse of western origin until recently. Although the term community is used by the majority of eNGOs (especially by the big and/or international agencies), the term is not commonly familiar to the general public, especially in the rural context. Therefore, the concept of community is, to say the least, ambiguous in China. A compatible translation of the term in the context of resource management is "*shequ*" (社區). Direct translation of the two words is "social district/block", a translation that captures the spatial characteristic.[106] In the Chinese language, there is no one single term conveying the diverse meaning of community. In regions outside of China where Mandarin Chinese is used (such as Taiwan), *shequ* is often used to refer to residential compounds. Nowadays, the term is widely used in the context of CBNRM.

While eNGO staff and local leaders use the term "community" when associating with outsiders; when eNGOs associate with rural villagers, neither NGO staff nor villagers use this word. For example, GW staff always use "*laobaixing*"[107] meaning ordinary civilian when referring to a "community member". As community is not a term used generally in China, "working as a community" for managing resources collectively is often

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[106] *Shequ* (社區) is a spatial community. The Chinese term for a non-spatial community (e.g., gay community) is "*shequn*" (社群) meaning social group.

[107] *Lao bai xing (*老百姓*)* directly translate as "old hundred surname".

abbreviated by eNGOs (including GW) when communicating with rural villagers to "working collectively" (*jiti* 集體). But, it is difficult for villagers to recognise the subtle difference between "collective" and "collectively" regarding natural resource management. This is mainly because the collective (*jiti)* is the term commonly used in China.

However, the concept of collective in Communism is inherently incompatible with the concept of community in the CBNRM model. For rural Chinese, "working collectively" does not have the same meaning as "working as a community", so villagers are often confused over "managing resource collectively" and "managing as a collective unit". However, this perspective is often overlooked by NGOs and consequently mis-communicated between eNGOs and the villagers.

In communist China, "collective" is a political term used in particular phrases, carries a distinct meaning, such as collective period, collective economy and collective unit (or the people's commune, *renmingongshe* 人民公社). For this reason, rural villagers associate the idea of "working collectively" with "working as a collective unit". In communist China, the collective unit, or people's commune, was a bureaucratic body set up by the state for the purposes of economic production and political control during the planned economy era (approximately between 1958 and1984). Within one collective, there were another one or two tiers – the production brigade (now often the administrative village) and the production team. Although a collective could be geographically based in a town/village, just as a community is based in a natural village, it did not mean that a collective, as politically defined, was the same as a community as socially formed. A group of people inhabiting the same location may not necessarily comprise a community for resource management: they may not even have recognised themselves as a community. Moreover, the formation of a collective was not derived from bottom-up peasant movements, but defined by top-down state power (Qing, 1998). Therefore, distinct characteristics distinguish a collective unit from a community. While a community has its social bonds, a collective may not. For example, the different kinds of social capital a community owns, such as trust between members, may not necessarily exist in a collective.

For the rural Chinese, the term "collective" has negative connotations implying "going back to the collective period". For example, in Lashi, I noticed a reluctance on the part of the villagers to participate in CBNRM projects (which broadly included economic organisations such as the co-op). Not one villagers I interact with said that they participated in GW projects because they considered CBNRM worked better. Instead, I observed a great silence when GW staff told villagers that natural resources should be collectively managed by the community. Neither at meetings with the Xihu agricultural co-op nor with the Dayu fishery co-op did the villagers respond positively to such a statement. Lashi villagers seem to be reluctant to adopt the idea that natural resources should be collectively managed ("community management" in NGO terminology), because the use of the term "collective" reminded them of the past, of an era in which they endured poverty and hunger. In contrast, nowadays the practice of privatising natural resources has not only become common, it is often supported by the authorities. Although the ordinary villagers often become objects of marginalisation within this situation and feel unfairly treated, they accept this phenomenon as "normal". Those among them who discuss such unjust matters often conclude: "This is how the society is nowadays". The Lashi villagers, despite having dissatisfaction, show very limited will to change their situation from being marginalized by resource privatisation. For them, collective management is old fashioned; private ownership is modern, and was what people benefit from. Although the meanings of "managing common resources" or "managing resources together" were essentially different from the communists' interpretation of collective resource use, the ambiguous meaning of "collective" and the recent trend towards privatisation rendered community-based projects unattractive.

9.3.2.2 Lack of territorial and cultural claims

As a community/ or an indigenous group is constructed, lack of territorial and cultural claims can weaken both the making and sustaining of community/indigenous groups. In the case of the Naxi villages, the process of community-building, or indigeneity-building, was absent, because the villagers were either reluctant or unable to make cultural or territorial claims. This lack of territorial claims mainly resulted from land tenure insecurity, while the lack of cultural claims was due to the dismantling of the traditional

culture. My case studies are contradictory to reported cases whereby peasants or indigenous people based their claims on their traditional culture or ownership of land. [See: Chi (2001); Li (1996) and Tsing (1999)] I consider exemplifying the absence of the Naxi's community/indigeneity making as crucial. While Naxi have been deemed by the general public to be an ethnic minority group who live in harmony with nature, in reality there have been very few claims by the Naxi to manage their natural resources as either a community or as an indigenous group.

In terms of cultural claims, the Naxi villagers have been reluctant to associate with Dongba, the traditional system of religion that encompasses the wisdom of nature, Naxi culture, and the Naxi script. Dongba, which was denigrated during the Cultural Revolution, is still considered a "backwards" belief by many Naxi today. Therefore, cultural claims prove very weak when it comes to the social construction of the community in Lashi.

In Dongba, there is a deep conceptualization of the nature-human relationship. Nature is referred to as "*Shu*", signifying an agnatic sibling of a human being. Many Naxi legends allude to the relationship between Shu and human beings in Dongba. However, the ideology of the human-nature relationship in Dongba is no longer valued or practiced by the locals. Months of interviews and conversations in the Lashi area revealed that almost no one could recall any customary law of natural resource as part of Dongba culture.[108] This was mainly due to the Cultural Revolution, which labelled Dongba "superstitious". During the Cultural Revolution, Dongba literature was destroyed, priests were executed, and schools were demolished. Although, in line with subsequent government policy, the culture has been studied[109] and is widely used for cultural consumption by Lijiang's tourism industry, Dongba rarely has connection with local people's lives nowadays. There has been no programme put in place for rural villagers to reclaim their culture. Despite the fact that the Cultural Revolution took place long ago, its effects persist. A

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108 A few rules were documented in oral history by GW. See D. Li (2002) This oral history was documented in the early 2000s. Many elders interviewed for this document have since passed away.
109 The "Institute of Dongba Culture of Lijiang" was established in 1991 for researching Dongba. Previously, the institute was a research office under the Yunnan Academy of Social Science, set up in 1981.

Dayu villager, whose grandfather was a late Dongba priest, said that he no longer cared about Dongba because it is "superstitious". When I asked the Lashi villagers' opinions regarding the specific customary rules documented[110], I was again told that these rules were superstitious. Overall, the Naxi in Lashi do not like being considered "traditional"; thus there is no motivation for them to reclaim their culture. The Naxi, although imagined as observing their traditions and ecological wisdom, are similar to many rural Chinese who desire the modern lifestyles of urban dwellers. This desire in the Naxi is not unique. Ethnic minorities living in China's frontier, for example the Akha, show more interests in "being rich than being green" (Sturgeon, 2007, p. 150).

The Naxi are not enthusiastic about voicing their territorial claims, mainly due to the problem of land tenure insecurity (see Chapter 8). In China, people have witnessed the weakness of claims based on land; they have seen involuntary resettlement forced by hydropower projects, and land-grabbing by private businesses supported by government power. Therefore, territorial claims have had a very limited effect on making and sustaining community/ indigenous groups. In Lashi, even though villagers might be subject to land expropriation by the local government due to resettlement following the construction of the Tiger-Leaping Gorge dams, the villagers were prepared to accept the outcome, rather than insist on their land rights. When discussing possible land expropriation, one villager said: "Now I have so many fruit trees, they (the government) will have to compensate me a lot (if my farmland is taken away)." One can see that despite many years of empowerment programmes, the Lashi villagers are ready to accept injustice passively rather than insisting on their land rights. Their situation also supports the argument of Cleaver (2007) that even when empowerment activities have been in place, there are still social and political constraints influencing the willingness of agency to act on social transformation.

Among all three case studies, the situation of the Yi village was somewhat different. Yangyuchan villagers partly adopted the indigenous narrative emphasising their cultural

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110 For example, in Dongba culture, there are rules appertaining to logging in certain times of the year and rules banning the pollution of water. The Naxi used to believe that if these rules were not observed, the violator would risk being punished by Nature.

and territorial claims over natural resources. I suggest that this was mainly because of the Yi's constrained opportunities in development alternatives compared to the Naxi. When faced with limited choices, people are more likely to take any available resources, including eNGO narratives which can be used to strengthen their positions. In addition, since GW maintains a relatively good relationship with the Yangyuchan villagers, the latter are inclined to adopt GW's agenda to a greater degree. This kind of NGO-community alliance can benefit local communities: they are a form of social capital building for local communities (Austin & Eder, 2007) . Nevertheless, the indigenous narrative may not suit the interests of all groups deemed "indigenous" by outsiders.

My standpoint is not to denounce the efforts of eNGOs to preserve indigenous identities or promote community-based conservation. Narrative, as a strategic simplification, may prove problematic as it can risk limiting the legitimacy of natural resources claims (Walker, 2001b). However, it can also be utilised to achieve political and/or conservation outcomes, by changing laws or policies pertinent to claiming rights over resources (T. M. Li, 2002; Walker, 2001b). My argument is that eNGOs have to be flexible and to avoid imposing a particular narrative on any community. As I have shown, irrespective of whether it is a indigenous or community narrative theme, it faces challenges vis-à-vis adoption by rural Chinese. In reality, different narrative themes may work out differently depending on the local context, a context that can vary even within a small geographical area such as the Lashi watershed. As a fixed model will rarely fit into any community in which the environment and socio-cultural context are constantly changing, there is a risk for eNGOs promoting any single narrative with homogenous characteristics and expecting people to internalise it into their practice.

9.3.3 Participation and empowerment

The participatory approach has been a strong instrument adopted by conservation and development agencies, including eNGOs working on CBNRM projects. A critical reason for eNGOs championing of participation in CBNRM is that in theory, participation is expected to empower local communities to improve their natural resource governance. This approach, while widely applied, is not without its critics (see Chapter 3). Based on

analyses from the case studies, this thesis addresses both the theoretical and practical problems of employing a participatory approach. Participatory resource management faces certain challenges in rural China, partly due to the theory being flawed and partly due to the unique context of Chinese rural society. The experience of GW's Lashi programme shows that its participatory programme and capacity-building activities have not resulted in radical social change. In other words, it has not allowed rural villagers to challenge the existing power structure of decision making.

9.3.3.1 Participation in theory

As discussed in Chapter 3, many works have questioned the causal link between participation and empowerment, suggesting that the relationship between participation and empowerment has to be careful examined (Cleaver, 1999; Green, 2000; Kothari, 2001). This research, which contributes to this argument, challenges the assumption of participation and addresses the debate regarding the relationship between participation and empowerment. I argue first that the participatory approach does not necessarily lead to empowerment. Participation may disguise the power difference within the community, and sometimes it can even generate new forms of power inequality between the community and the outside world. Second, even when local communities are empowered, the empowered actors do not necessarily follow NGOs' projection but simply have wider choices for their actions. Empowerment, as such, does not guarantee a good environmental outcome, the goal of many eNGO projects. As participation aims to mobilise individual's agency, it results in various actions (or inaction).

Several studies (Kothari, 2001; Mosse, 1997, 2001) argue that the participatory process may not pose a radical challenge to the existing power, positions and knowledge system. This can be clearly observed in the process of knowledge production/ reproduction. For example, in a participatory project, local knowledge may be constructed by pre-existing social relationships and constrained by what the implementation agencies are able to deliver on a project base; this situation may threaten the reversal of power between the community and the outside world (Mosse, 2001). In addition, it may result in local communities adopting outside agendas rather than agencies working with the

communities adopting local knowledge. The case of the fishery resource project (see Chapter 6) revealed a similar issue. In Lashi, the diverse and sometimes conflicting views regarding different fishing practices were neglected and simplified into illegal/legal, for the purposes of management of fishing gear. In GW's fishery project, the legality of the fishing gear was truth to be taken, and the usage of legal gear was a social norm expected based on this truth. This process of seeking a consensus by building on social norms of fishery management was done through what Kothari (2001) refers as "purifying knowledge", that is, by excluding what did not fit into the participatory models. The building of a consensus and of social norms was used to achieve the reassertion of power (Kothari, 2001). In this case, power was reasserted between project practitioners and the fishing community.

On occasion, participatory projects may re-affirm or even contribute to power inequality within a community, rendering local power asymmetry less obvious and thus difficult to tackle. In GW's micro-watershed management project (Chapter 8), Mr. A was particularly privileged from the establishment of various management institutions, as part of the capacity building process. The established status of Mr. A as the director of the various institutions set up by the participatory project, including the former micro-watershed committee and to the current agriculture co-op, legitimised his actions. For example, although he gained some personal benefit from organising the bulk-purchase of chemicals, since this activity belonged to "collective action", one function of the agricultural co-op, it was difficult for the villagers to challenge Mr. A.

Clearly, a participatory approach can bring new power relations, but not necessarily in the way that powerless locals resist powerful outsiders. Shifts in power structures can result in local inequality. This is not unique to the Lashi programme but common in the field of resource management. The case of participatory irrigation management in India suggests that the newly-established management institutions may re-affirm the power inequality between different caste groups (Mosse, 1997). Study of fishery management projects in Africa (Béné, et al., 2009) suggests that the co-management mechanism simply alters the distribution of power and responsibility amongst different stakeholders by enabling certain local actors to advance their own agendas while the rights of other users are

disadvantaged. In short, participation can produce power difference, an outcome that empowerment is supposed to challenge.

However, it is not necessary to be pessimistic. While participatory interventions may fail to challenge - may sometimes even produce - power inequality, this does not mean that local communities necessarily become subordinate subjects. This is related to the concept of agency discussed in Section 9.2.3. Individual agency is capable of resisting or negotiating power inequality produced by a participatory approach. Kothari (2001) points out that individuals are capable of resisting inclusion, projections of their lives, and retaining their own information, knowledge and values. It is for this reason that the Lashi fishermen refuse to cooperate with GW and continued their usage of illegal gear. It is also why the majority of the Yangyuchan villagers preferred to relocate if provided with satisfying compensation, rejecting the projection of their lifestyles by GW. The actions of the Lashi villagers showed ways to exercise locals' power and control over their resource by not participating.

Although formal participation can prove problematic in achieving empowerment, this does not mean that local communities are powerless. As I suggested in Chapter 7, the assumption of empowerment, that is, the reversing of the position between "powerful" and "powerless", is problematic. The image of a powerless social group may be misleading because many marginalised peoples are capable of political negotiation by utilising various resources. In order to achieve their agendas, local people often leverage their power through informally networking their personal relationships (*guanxi*).The manoeuvring of *guanxi* is not a participatory process since it involve only limited key persons in the network, such as the patrons. However, effective manoeuvring of *guanxi* can also successfully leverage villagers' power, the goal that empowerment projects aim to achieve.

A potential problem of the simplified notion of "powerful versus powerless" is the possibility of obscuring the real power asymmetry and hindering the operation of conservation and development programmes. Focus on the participatory approach, a framework in which "the micro is set against the macro, the margins against the centre,

the local against the elites, and the powerless against the powerful" has "reproduced the simplistic notion that the sites of social power and control are to be found solely at the macro and central levels" (Kothari, 2001, p. 140).

This thesis also demonstrates the paradox of using empowerment as a means to an end. Even when people are empowered, they may decide on actions that are not what eNGOs expect. Empowerment does not necessarily trigger the consequent collective action on matters that eNGOs expect communities to participate in. As empowerment is expected to mobilise the individual's agency, it may result in various actions (or inaction). Actions and inactions are inevitably conditioned by the wider social structure. Because of the possibility of various actions and inaction, empowerment provides no guarantee of the environmental outcome expected by eNGOs. This was particularly evident in the case of the Xihu project discussed in Chapter 8.

9.3.3.2 Local participation vs. local politics

Participation can be problematic, not only in theory but also in practice when situated in the rural Chinese context. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, China's rural resources problems are highly structural and political. In particular, as shown in Chapter 6, rural resource issues are significantly conditioned by local politics, which further complicates the issue of employing a participatory approach to resource management. I argue that while eNGO campaigns in rural China may be successful in engaging community members in participation to a degree, they face a greater challenge when attempting to in bring other stakeholders to the table for negotiation, especially the lower levels of administration in the Chinese political system; such as the township or county government.

A major issue at stake is who participates. Rural resource problems, like excessive fishing and sloping-land conversion in the Lashi watershed, are often the consequences of government projects and policies. While CBNRM employing the participatory approach is suggested to empower local people to manage their resources, it may not work if participation focuses on the community and not on the decision-makers in power. In China's rural resource issues, the decision makers are mainly the local governments

(township, prefecture and sometimes provincial governments). However, these governments are often reluctant to become involved in participatory resource management. Lack of motivation and incentives for government officials to become involved in CBNRM have been identified as major barriers impeding the scaling up of participatory approach in resource management (Yuan & Sun, 2006). In fact, the mentality of reluctance in participatory resource management is not only limited to China's official agenda. Not only are bureaucrats in favour of government-led development, but a similar mentality can be seen in Chinese academics. In China, where nationalism remains a strong theme, argument favouring state interventions over participatory development is not uncommon. For example, Zhang (2006), drawing upon cases from Yunnan, argues that participation is a "myth", and that development can only work in conditions where the state provides development packages.

In theory, the participatory approach is expected to enrol all stakeholders into a network for negotiation. However, many eNGOs, like GW, have been more successful in terms of engaging local communities in managing community-based affairs, rather than engaging the decision-makers, especially the local governments. This is probably because eNGOs often centre upon mobilising local communities into decision-making, by showing logic and providing incentives. This is linked to the idea that community members must be empowered to actively participate in the resource management decision-making process. At the same time, much less attention is given to how to engage non-community actors in participation. And yet, the success of Chinese NGOs is highly dependent on the support of local government (Hsu & Hasmath, 2014).[111]

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, interest and priorities of various levels of government in China can be very different. The lower levels of administration may agree to cooperate with eNGOs for various reasons, but mainly for financial benefit, as shown in this study (see Chapter 5), and in the work of others including Cooper (2006). As eNGOs are non-profit organisations and not necessarily involved in direct investment in local

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[111] The study of Hsu and Hasmath (2014) is mainly based on the urban context; however, it suggests a similar pattern, that local governments in China are often reluctant to cooperate with NGOs.

projects, monetary incentives for engaging local governments cannot be sustained as a long-term strategy. Moreover, as China is changing its position from an aid-recipient to an aid-donor country, fewer monetary contributions from foreign donors are expected in rural China. Therefore, Chinese eNGOs are being urged to investigate novel methods of engaging local governments in negotiation and participation.

One way is to utilise the space that has emerged from the heterachical power relations in China's political structure. I will suggest that within the complex political terrain in China, devising a mix-match strategy that will facilitate leverage through different levels of government (vertically) and through different government departments/agencies on the same level (horizontally), could be a way for eNGOs to effectively engage governmental stakeholders with participatory resource management.

GW has provided some examples for this strategy. The organisation has been maintaining its relationship with several county-level departments, such as the Forestry Bureau, the Hydraulic Bureau and the Foreign Aid Office of Lijiang. Besides its formal cooperation with these units, GW also associates with certain key persons in fields relevant to the organisation's work. According to GW staff, bureaucrats from these technical departments, compared to administrative departments (for example, the township government), tend to associate with GW, because associating with eNGOs helps these technical units to advance their professional work. The argument is reasonable, because, while leaders in township/county offices are evaluated based on performance of economic growth, technical officers are evaluated according to their professional performance. Unlike administrative units whose major incentive for working with eNGOs is the financial assistance, technical departments can benefit from other aspects. Many county-level forestry officers in Yunnan told me that their staff acquired abundant skills and information (such as GIS skills, information about international trends of conservation/forestry/climate change issues) due to their association with eNGO projects.[112] Therefore, I suggest that it is possible to engage lower administrative systems into the participatory process by creating a "sense of involvement" among technical

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[112] Interviews with forestry officers , Lijiang and Tengchong

departments. While these administrative offices are not always controlled by technical departments, they may be obligated or feel the pressure to become involved, if all other stakeholders are enrolled in the network of participation.

Moreover, local politics sometimes become even more complicated due to NGOs' participatory approach, such as establishing new institutions of resource management. In China, where local politics prevail in many aspects of the rural dwellers' lives, the case is even more evident. The Water-User Association (Chapter 5) and the Fishery Association (Chapter 6) provide clear-cut examples. In both cases, the autonomy of both associations was compromised because the projects had to accept the arrangement of personnel by the local government in order to facilitate the projects and to establish its authority among the villagers. Although these two associations were designed to be participatory institutions, the roles of the two institutions were ambivalent. While on one hand, they were civil institutions established to enhance the citizens' voices; on the other, they were channels for governments to extend their power and control.

In reality, it is impossible to keep NGOs' participatory projects independent from politics. GW's experience is not unique. For example, even a very participatory tsunami reconstruction project in Sri Lanka was constrained by power relations both locally and beyond the local scale (Kapadia, 2008).

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter re-iterates an important argument of this thesis, that the directionality of influence on rural landscape is not directly from external interventions but from interactions between actors. In this chapter, I first summarised the different context and project outcome of each village case study, in order to demonstrate that eNGOs influence on rural landscapes is very much context-dependent. Following that, I have addressed how the influences of eNGOs are formed, based on the framework of political ecology and the findings from my case studies. Political ecology, which concerns power relations in the broader social-political context, proved to be very useful in explaining and synthesising the findings. The influences of eNGOs on rural China are situated in the current trend of uneven development. At the same time, they are greatly determined by

the interactions between various actors. In particular, local actors are prominent in shaping influences.

Regarding the mechanism of eNGO practices on the ground, eNGOs influence rural landscapes through making environmental and development narratives. The making of narratives is a dual-directional activity. While they are constructed by eNGOs, they are completed by the actions of local communities, such as by rejection, adoption or modification. In rural China, the making of narratives based on community and indigenous narrative themes is facing challenges. As a result, the CBNRM model, which is often sustained by either community or indigeneity narrative themes, may be difficult for eNGOs to practice on the ground.

Rural landscapes in China are shaped by the dynamic power relations that obtain among various institutional actors, including eNGOs and their international partners, and various levels of government and local communities, whose agendas are carried by eNGO projects as vehicles. It is, therefore, critical to understand their influence on rural landscapes through analysing eNGO projects, particularly in the light of the gradually increasing presence of eNGOs in China.

I do not see rural landscapes as simply determined by eNGO projects, nor are they decided by government interventions. Rather, local actors actively create the landscape through their interactions with eNGO projects and/or government interventions. In short, the shaping of rural landscapes is better understood as the combined effect of local communities' initiatives and environment/development interventions. Drawing on Bebbington (2000), these interactions have opened up spaces for creating "new types of hybrid livelihood, institutions, and landscapes" (p.514).

Chapter 10

Conclusion

10.1 The journey of this research

This research set out to explore the influences of eNGOs on rural landscape change in China, at a time when rural China has dramatically changed in many dimensions, and a time when eNGOs are increasingly important in Chinese society. By adopting political ecology as the conceptual framework, the thesis has critically examined how interactions among eNGOs and other actors across scales, including donors, international NGOs, different levels of government, and local communities, materially and discursively influence the physical and social landscape in rural China.

The analyses were based on the case study of GW, a domestic eNGO, and its participatory CBNRM programme in Lashi Lake watershed in Yunnan province. The case study consisted of discourse analysis focusing on environmental and development discourses, an organisational ethnography of GW, and village ethnographies of Dayu, Yangyuchan and Xihu villages within the project area. Discourse analysis and organisational ethnography were used to understand the interactions between eNGOs, their international partners and different levels of Chinese governments, and to address the implications of the power relations among them. Organisational ethnography and village ethnographies addressed the research questions concerning the interactions between eNGO projects and the local communities, which eventually led to an understanding of how eNGOs shape rural landscape change by influencing social relations and human-nature relationships. In particular, as CBNRM has gradually become popularly adopted by eNGOs to address resource politics in rural China, this thesis has

analysed the CBNRM model in China in order to produce an understanding of eNGOs' influence on the ground.

10.2 Summary of key findings

The foremost finding of this research is that influences of eNGO practices on China's rural landscape are the outcomes of the interactions between various actors across scales. The interactions arise due to power relations, different world views and different priorities of the various actors.

Power relations among international actors, Chinese government and eNGOs in China determine the way agendas are modified, while local interactions between eNGOs and communities affect the way eNGO practice are transformed. Within certain contexts, the interests of certain actors may be prioritised. It is due to the different prioritised interests that tensions arise in regard to natural resource management. However, even though certain actors' interests are prioritised, they are not necessarily dominating because the seemly powerless actors, whose interests are less prioritised, may still find ways to negotiate.

Very often, eNGOs in China share similar environmental and development agendas with international society. It seems reasonable to assume that the international agencies, equipped with financial resources, are powerful in determining Chinese eNGO agendas. However, their financial support does not assure them the dominate positions; what can and cannot work out in China always has to be negotiated with the Chinese government.

In China, power relations between different levels of government are always competing; therefore in reality, no particular level of administration overrides another in every aspect. Practices of eNGOs may be accepted or tolerated by one level of administration, but may be suppressed or even forbidden by another. Therefore, eNGO practices often have to adapt to different political situation.

Modification of external interventions, whether they be eNGO projects, government policy or business plans, occurs when they interact with local communities. Although these external interventions seem to be powerful, local actors are capable of negotiating

for their own interests by adopting strategies, such as manoeuvring their networks to form alliances, utilising their positions in patronage relations, performing according to selectively accepting or rejecting a certain narrative, and seeking convergence of interests with the external interventions.

Therefore, I suggest that rural landscapes in China are significantly shaped by the interactions between the actors who possess different interests and priorities.

The second key finding is that eNGOs' influences on Chinese rural landscape are unpredictable, due to the heterogeneity of the power relations, the non-linear transformation of agendas, and the different contexts of specific places.

Power relations are complex. Any particular institutional actor is heterogeneous, so are the power relations that obtain among the various actors. Therefore, it is always dangerous to generalise too broadly about a specific institution, regardless of whether it is an eNGO, a government or a community, or to generalise too broadly about the power relations. Power relations are constantly changing due to the shifting interests and priorities of certain actors. Moreover, politics embedded in the complex power relations consequently modifies the environmental and development philosophies held by eNGOs; therefore, the philosophies do not linearly translate top down from international agendas to eNGOs' practices on the ground. The different local contexts, particularly the context of different configuration of actor's relationships, further affect the ways eNGO agendas would be practiced locally.

Therefore, it is impractical to accurately generalise from the pattern of eNGOs' influence in rural China based on one case study, and it is also why a research like this can greatly benefit from conducting ethnographic work.

Third but not least, the empirical findings from the village case studies suggest that limitations exist in participatory CBNRM.

Participation is often complicated by politics and social relations, and therefore, there is gap between the theory and the reality of a participatory approach. Although participation is suggested to achieve empowerment, which is supposed to change power structure, it

may fail to do so. There are often contradictions between the idea of empowerment and the empowerment packages delivered by eNGO projects, therefore, empowerment programmes may fall short of radically challenging power structure. Even when empowerment is achieved by participation and other capacity-building processes, it does not guarantee an environmental outcome as usually expected in a CBNRM project. This thesis demonstrates the paradox of empowerment, that empowerment enables individual agent that carries multiple realities to have multiple choices in his/her decisions, which may not follow environmental principles.

In summary, the findings of this thesis generate insights and understanding which can inform future research on eNGOs, rural resource issues and CBNRM projects in China.

10.3 Theoretical, methodological and practical implications

First, this thesis has advanced the understanding of eNGOs in China, based on a critical perspective, a political ecology framework, and an ethnographic methodology.

ENGOs, as other types of NGOs in China, share a common image as benign and contributing to an open society. This image has been dominating the discussions about eNGOs in China and leaves little space for critical examination of their influences on the ground. Moreover, due to the unique political context in China, eNGOs carry a lot of expectations, both domestically and internationally, for voicing citizens' concerns, advancing citizens' agendas and eventually paving the road to democracy. Within this context, addressing eNGOs' work in China from a critical perspective has become a difficult task for scholars for two reasons: first, the critical perspectives may be utilised by some to make Chinese eNGOs' works counterproductive; and second, critical perspectives may reveal certain sensitive topics, which are mostly avoided by academics (especially those from China).

Rather than following the usual rhetoric about eNGOs in China, this research has unpacked the complexity of power relations surrounding eNGOs in China, and gained a nuanced understanding into the eNGOs' influences on the ground. The thesis also reveals that the trajectories of eNGOs in China do not necessarily follow a path similar to that in

many western countries. This thesis suggests that it is as important to understand the roles of eNGOs from a macro-view as well as from a micro-view, which is made possible by employing ethnographic work and an actor-oriented approach.

This thesis has also demonstrated the usefulness of political ecology in studying eNGOs in China. As discussed in Chapter 3, although political ecology proves to be an useful approach, it has been under-utilised in research on China. I suggest that future research on China's environmental issues will benefit from adopting the framework of political ecology, because its attention to the distributive effects of environmental issues at various scales helps to situate relevant research in the context of uneven development.

Second, this thesis contributes to the research of participatory CBNRM, both in theory and in practice. In particular, it enhances the understanding on applying the CBNRM model in China with attention to the scale.

The empirical findings have provided some insights into why CBNRM can and cannot work in a rural Chinese context. Addressing natural resource issues at a community-level certainly has its challenges and critiques. However, it is an appropriate level to establish institutions for effective and resource management (Fisher, et al., 2008; Western & Wright, 1994). Therefore, understanding why CBNRM works in certain cases and not in others will be valuable for conservation and development of China. Although some studies have been conducted previously on CBNRM projects in China, they mostly focus on local experiences and rarely link the projects with the issues on a wider scale. This research, while focusing on a local programme, has situated the CBNRM project in a framework which addresses power relations across scales.

Finally, I suggest that eNGOs in China are facing a dilemma, and therefore, it is difficult to provide a practical implication for eNGOs working under political difficulties to address rural resource issues with a bottom-up approach.

Through my PhD research, I have always reminded myself of the need to produce a research outcome which can practically contribute to the Chinese eNGO sector. The research has provided some insights into eNGO works in rural China. In terms of working

with the local communities, I suggest that it will be more practical and beneficial for eNGOs to acknowledge the possibility of a compromised outcome when cooperating with local communities. In practice, eNGO projects may achieve better result when their strategies are negotiated with locals.

However, I admit the difficulties in providing recommendations for eNGOs working under the difficult political situation in China. I suggest that the Chinese political reality forces eNGOs into a dilemma that renders a "bottom up" approach for solving rural resource issues difficult.

Because the environmental and social challenges in China nowadays largely result from uneven development, it is impractical for eNGOs to address rural resource problems by mobilising bottom-up solutions (such as a participatory approach emphasising the responsibilities of rural villagers) without confronting authority. However, in reality, confrontation entails a great risk to persons and/or to the organisations. This is a dilemma. This is why many well-known eNGOs opt to be "invisible" in certain campaigns or public demonstrations despite their involvement[113].

My observation suggest that the dilemma is perhaps more serious for eNGOs working on rural resource issues than urban issues. In urban environmental issues such as air and water pollution, Chinese eNGOs have been comparatively more successful in urging better environmental governance, such as in the case of the eutrophication of Taihu Lake and air pollution in Beijing (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, China's rural resource issues, which are covered by layers of politics of various levels of administration and are central to people's livelihoods, are mainly consequences of social, political and economic problems.

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[113] Personal communication with staff of several eNGOs, 2011

10.4 The limitation of a case study approach and implication for research

One limitation of this research is the scope of the case study. Because I employed ethnographic methodology, which requires a considerable period of fieldwork, conducting in-depth research on more than one eNGO was impractical. As a result, this research could only use GW and its programme as a case study, while information based on other eNGOs provides the understanding of the context under which GW operates. In addition, as suggested in Chapter 9, the influence of eNGO practice on rural landscape is highly context-dependent. Therefore, there is a limitation on the extent that the case study can be generalised. Future research can benefit and be enriched, if the research can expand its scope to include more variety of eNGOs and their programmes.

ENGOs are certainly playing important roles in the contemporary China. This thesis has shown that the implications of eNGO practices are highly complex. By translating environmental and development agendas, eNGOs are transforming the society, shaping the landscape change, and inter-connecting social relationships. With the rapid pace of development and the high heterogeneity of China, so much more remain to be studied about eNGOs in China.

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Appendix 1: List of informants interviewed

Research Methods	Category	Informants/ NGOs of informants
Contextualising NGO practices	Beijing-based NGOs	• Conservation International (CI) • Greenpeace • TNC (Beijing office) • WWF • Friends of Nature
	Yunnan-based NGOs	• TNC (Yunnan office and Lijiang office) • Yunnan Green Development Foundation (YGDF) • Green Watershed (GW)
Organisational Ethnography	GW	• Director • Project staff • Headquarters staff • Consultants
	Donors of GW	• Former director of Oxfam Mekong Initiative (donor 2000-2005) • Former senior staff member of Oxfam HongKong (donor 2005-2012)

Research Methods	Category	Informants/ NGOs of informants
		• Narmada Foundation (donor since 2009)
	Government authority	• Deputy-director of the Forest Bureau of Yulong County (in charge of Lashi Wetland Reserve and wildlife management affair) • Staff of Lashi Wetland Reserve Administrative Bureau • Director of Foreign Aid office in Lijiang • Local forestry officers in Lijiang City and Tenchong prefecture • Water Resource Bureau officers in Lijiang • Director of Jizi Dam, Yulong County
Village ethnography	Local community	*Fisheries project-* • Director and (former) board members of fishery association • Director and board members of fishery co-op

Research Methods	Category	Informants/ NGOs of informants
		• Local fishermen (aged from 35-70+)
		• Wives of fishermen (aged from 35-70+)
		• Non-fishing households
		• Net traders from Dali
		Xihu micro-watershed project
		• Director and former members of watershed committee
		• Board member, members and non-members of agriculture co-op
		• Villagers
		• Middlemen purchasing fruits
		Yi community project
		• Director and members of watershed committee
		• Elder village leader
		• Ordinary villagers
		Water user project
		• Secretary-general of water user association