Local state adaptation and grassroots participation: Tianjin and Nanjing’s preservation of cultural relics in comparative aspects

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ABSTRACT

Background: Governance of cultural relics preservation and cultural industry in China have become focal points of academic interests in recent years.

Purpose: This article adopts the case of Tianjin and Nanjing to study how the local states balance market incentives and values of preservation, and adapt to new institutional frameworks and social environment in China.

Main Arguments: The authors argue that cultural preservation is a process of adaption and learning for both local state and society. This article tries to figure out the new mechanism and actors involved in the process of continuity and change in local China. The local states have learned to cope more subtly with social demands and are now more responsive to the outbreak of new events and social demands through various channels. The cultural elite also search for ways to strike a win–win solution to bridge the interests of various stakeholders. But the law enforcement and policy implementations are still full of confusion and calculation.

Conclusion: The authors argue that in order to consolidate the local capacity building, formation of a grass-roots identity will lay the long-term foundation for autonomous mechanism of collaborative governance in cultural relics preservation in China.

KEYWORDS

Cultural relics preservation; local state; policy learning; local governance; cultural elite

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to understand the new mechanism of local governance in urban China. Local states in China have been described as growth machines to embark on top-down projects of demolition and reconstruction of city regions. Many cultural relics were sacrificed under the banner of development and globalization. Local states tag many heritage preservation projects with such fancy labels as innovation and globalization. The real purpose, however, is to promote real estate development and urban rejuvenation. In order to facilitate the process of refurbishing cultural sites, many residential blocks have been demolished since the early 2000s, resulting in a mushrooming of traditional-style luxury housing areas. In other cases, the local state has encountered resistance from the local community in the process of demolition and relocation. These events have been exposed by the mass
media and prompted intervention from the central level. These cultural preservation cases were condemned as cultural destruction instead.

Local cultural relics preservation thus become the focal point to study the interplay of local state and grass-root society. At the same time, new regulations governing local cultural preservation have been revised and implemented at the central as well as local level. This article intends to study how the local states balance market incentives and new institutional frameworks of cultural relics preservation. This article also argues that in order to achieve practices of “good governance,” both local states and grass roots society are adjusting to the new institutional and market environment. It is a process of adaption and learning of both sides. This article thus tries to figure out the new mechanism and new actors involved in the process of continuity and change in local China.

Traditional wisdom explains the conflicting aspects of the urban growth machine in the process of urban rejuvenation. For instance, scholars argue that local governments in China always wear two hats – one official and one business – when embarking on profit-seeking and risk-taking endeavors by investing in real estate, bars, and restaurants. Under the circumstances, cultural preservation and urban growth are often contradictory. Urban preservation refers to the maintenance and repair of existing historic structure. Urban growth, by comparison, is usually achieved through the demolition of old structures and the intensification of land use.¹ The local state is often depicted as a revenue-oriented predator and the residents in the demolished areas are the helpless victims of state violation. In order to raise revenues from the transaction of land use rights and to address the political aspiration of the state elites, lands are amassed, resulting in displacement of inhabitants who are in turn dispossessed of their right to their properties and to the city.² These economic resources strengthen local authorities’ ability to intervene in urban conservation and to strengthen their control over society without caring much about ordinary people’s social welfare and attachment to place.³ Shin’s study of Guangzhou’s cultural heritage preservation also emphasized the relatively narrow space for local residents’ efforts to challenge or change the course of government schemes.⁴ While local residents used various means and channels to voice their concerns about the state-led redevelopment in their neighborhoods, their voices did little to change the course of government action and were overridden by the government initiatives.

Given all this negative publicity, Chinese local states endeavored to adapt to social demands and sought new ways to balance market profits and preservation needs. The two cases, Tianjin and Nanjing, experienced a similar trajectory of governing cultural heritage preservation over the past two decades. Both cities are listed as “national historical famous cities” (國家歷史文化名城) by the Chinese central government. The new cultural preservation projects starting from the early 2000s were harshly criticized and came to a temporary halt around 2010. In the second stage of development afterwards, both cities weighted the importance of market factor in historic preservation and adopted different strategies to balance competing policy goals.

¹ Zhang, “Steering Towards Growth”, 188.
² Shin, “Economic Transition and Speculative Urbanization”, 484.
³ Su, “Urban Entrepreneurialism”, 2887.
⁴ Shin, “Elite Vision before People”, 270.
The emergence of public–private partnership (PPP) has gradually become a new model of cultural heritage preservation in China. Scholars have paid attentions to the new mechanism of collaborative management of preservation projects. For instance, in their studies on three Chinese mega-cities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing), Chen, Judd, and Hawken proclaim the importance of the private developers on the industrial – heritage reuse programs. Private sector has become a main stakeholder in the heritage reuse projects, Huitong Times Square and Brewery International Art Garden in Beijing as well as the Bridge 8 Shanghai were driven by private developers or constructed through a PPP process.

In the case of the Bridge 8 Shanghai, the private developer invested in the refurbishment of an auto parts plant and then charged high commercial rents to design companies. Meanwhile, tax was paid to the local state for the re-designation of the industrial land. Further to this, Little examines the range of funding and financing options that are in use throughout the world to see what mix of public and private approaches might be most suitable for Chinese cities to adopt as part of a funding and financing strategy that will support enduring and sustainable renewal and redevelopment of older urban blocks. Under the long-term land use lease system and Chinese government-oriented market, PPP will probably be the feasible methods in historic preservation.

New mechanism of cultural preservation governance is realized by ways of continuous learning and adjustment of local as well as central states in China. It is widely acknowledged that learning and adaptation have been central to China’s massive transition process. Heilmann has characterized China’s policy experimentation as a “distinct mode of governance” thereby stressing the important role the unexpected capacity of the Chinese party-state to find innovative solutions to long-standing or newly emerging challenges in economic development rests on the ability of policy adaptation and learning. In addition, the Chinese state has the ability to manage the relationship with social actors effectively, to co-opt potential opposition forces, and to find a balance between various policy stakeholders.

5Conceptually, there is no widely accepted definition of the public–private partnership (PPP). In fact, not only is there no agreement within the literature on a precise definition for a PPP – there is quite a debate regarding what is a “true” PPP and what is not. Typically, the PPP implementation in China is conceptualized as “a public partner contract with a private partner to operate, maintain, and manage a facility or system proving a service. Under this contract option, the public partner retains ownership of the public facility or system, but the private party may invest its own capital in the facility or system.” That is, the preservation work is “guided by the government, operated by the market mechanism, and participated by the enterprises.” The public sector (government) is responsible for all the initial cost (renovation of the historic buildings). On the other hand, private partners only need to focus on the operation and maintenance of the historic buildings (the US Government Accountability Office, “Public-Private Partnerships”; and Zhang and Han, “Preservation and Regeneration Strategies”, 71).

6Chen, Judd and Hawken, “Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Heritage”, 336–344.

7Ibid., 343.

8Little, “A Sustainable Funding”, 20–28.

9For example, Mah and Hills write that “policy learning is a policy-making process in which policy-makers and policy stakeholders deliberately adjust the goals, rules and techniques of a given policy in response to experiences and new challenges. Policy learning as a concept is distinguished from other related terms such as policy innovation in some subtle ways. While policy innovation generally refers to the development of new policies which reflect significant departures from previous responses to public problems, policy learning emphasizes trial and error and experimental approaches to policy-making. Learning from the past, increased knowledge of the problems (including the problem attributes and the factors affecting them), adjustments and feedback loops are the key elements of policy learning.” (Mah and Hills, “Policy Learning and Central – Local Relations”, 218).

10Heilmann, “Policy Experimentation in China’s Economic Rise”, 3–5.

11Heberer, “The Chinese Developmental State 3.0”,615.
The Chinese case suggests that the interplay for “adaptive ability” and “policy learning” may be a crucial aspect of its successful economic transition and overall progress in social protection over recent decades. In the context of China, policy learning is a particularly relevant concept because of the reliance on the “groping for stone to cross the river” approach in this country. This Chinese approach emphasizes an experimental and trial and error learning approach for its economic reforms as well as reforms in other major public policy areas. Furthermore, the relatively intensive policy changes for cultural preservation in China in recent decades suggest that policy adjustment, learning-by-doing, and other key theoretical insights of policy learning are highly relevant to our analysis.

Local states in Tianjin and Nanjing have been described as typical cases of urban growth machine. These two cities are also famous for their historical heritages and tradition of ancient China. Academic works to analyze the pain-staking process of these two cities to balance policy goals of market maximization and cultural preservation are rare. To fill the academic gap, the following pages intend to interpret the process of policy adaptation and learning that occurred in Tianjin and Nanjing during the second stage of the preservation projects after 2009. In order to link the macro-concepts with micro-level issues of local empowerment and political entangling, the authors conducted interviews and field observations to understand the process of adjustments and transformation of local state actions as well as state–society relationship in the grassroots level. This paper also analyzes the emergence of a new mechanism of bridging social and local state interests. With the first-hand interview data, the authors delve the unique way of policy learning in Tianjin and Nanjing in pursuing multiple policy goals at the local level. The authors argue that such an adaptation process demonstrates the increasing complexity of local states in a more subtle way. However, this new policy shift does not mean the abandonment of market factors and the emergence of a more democratic local state. In the cases of Tianjin and Nanjing, homegrown grassroots consciousness and identity are still absent. In fact, local cultural identities are actually created by outsiders rather than indigenous community elites.

Our research is based mainly on data collected from field trips to both cities. The authors conducted intensive interviews in Nanjing in June 2015 and in the Tianjin in October 2016. The total interviewees in both cities exceeded 40 people. Interviews include local bureaucrats, officials, volunteers, and academics. In case that supplement messages would be needed, follow-up interviews through email or instant messaging were also deployed. In-depth interview is optimal for collecting data on individual’s personal attitudes, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. Interview also allows us to gather information to generate detailed, holistic description, capture varying perspectives, discuss process, unearth competing interpretations of events, identify the micro foundations of macro-patterns, and to testify existing theories. Specifically, while political actor’s formal decision-making processes are more visible and available than before in today’s atmosphere, interview

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12 See, for example, Fischer, “Comparing Transitions”; Gu and Lundvall, “Policy Learning”; Korsnes, “Fragmentation, Centralization and Policy Learning”; and Shi, “Social Policy Learning”.
13 Mah and Hills, “Policy Learning and Central–Local Relations”, 219.
14 Zhen, Ownership of Trust Property in China: A Comparative and Social Capital Perspective, 109.
15 Heimer and Thøgersen, Doing Fieldwork in China, 27–28.
makes us to grab the informal interactions and under table behaviors that can be highly important for the political outcomes.\textsuperscript{16}

The present article is organized as follows. In Section 2, centering on the case studies of Italian style town in Tianjin and the redevelopment of the Chengnan area in Nanjing, we examine the first (market-oriented) stage of the heritage preservation project in urban China. Section 3 offers an in-depth analysis of the second stage of the heritage preservation project (from 2009 onwards), focusing on the following case studies: (1) the reconstruction of the Wudadao area in Tianjin and (2) the preservation of the Gaogangli Silk Workshop in Nanjing. In Section 4, we turn to the role of the cultural elite and local volunteers in preserving Tianjin and Nanjing’s cultural heritage. The purpose of the conclusion is twofold: (1) to examine the process of “policy learning/ policy adaptation” at the local state level in mainland China and (2) to evaluate the process of “cultural identity” formation that occurs in Chinese cities along the cultural heritage preservation project.

2. Market maximizing attempts in the first stage

2.1. Imagining an Italian style town in Tianjin

The Italian style town, located in Hebei (河 北) district, was established in 1902 as the Italian concession of Tianjin. With the signing of the Boxer Protocol between the Qing Empire and the Eight-Nation Alliance on September 7, 1901, Italy received an indemnity of 5.91% of damages done by the Boxers and a small zone on the northern bank of the Hai River in Tianjin where it was granted extraterritoriality. This is where Italy developed the Italian concession, which would become the only example of Italian colonialism in Asia.\textsuperscript{17} After 1949, all foreign-owned property in Mainland China was seized and nationalized. Although the Cultural Revolution destroyed alarmingly large portions of the historical heritage in Tianjin’s concessions, the destruction seemed almost superficial. Whole grids of historic center cityscapes remained, and the general character of most neighborhoods was left intact.\textsuperscript{18}

The renovation of the Italian concession is an example of the top-down initiatives launched by the Hebei District administration starting in 1998. Considering the fact that the Kingdom of Italy officially controlled the concession between 1901 and 1945, the district mayor of Hebei accompanied by the deputy mayor of Tianjin, Mr. Ma Wenju, flew to Italy frequently to try to persuade the Italian government and businessmen to invest in Tianjin. The mayor was frustrated due to financial difficulties of the district government.\textsuperscript{19}

Since 2003, as a part of the Haihe Waterfront Development Plan, the former concessions have undergone another wave of municipality-led urban regeneration. During this period, Dai Xianglong, who served as mayor from 2002 to 2007, tapped his banking connections to bring in hundreds of billions of yuan in loans to rejuvenate Tianjin.\textsuperscript{20} The Municipal Government and the Tianjin Haihe Construction

\textsuperscript{16}Kapiszewski, MacLean and Read, \textit{Field Research in Political Science}, 190.
\textsuperscript{17}Marinelli, “The Italian Concession in Tianjin”.
\textsuperscript{18}Interview October, 2016.
\textsuperscript{19}Zhong, “Guoqu Yizujie”.
\textsuperscript{20}Yang, “Tianjin Shines in China’s North”.
Development Co., Ltd. (HEDO) made a renovation project of the original concession area and renamed it “Italian style town.” They also put up signs that read “experience the Italian atmosphere without leaving China” (不出國門，就能感受原汁原味的義大利風情).

The real estate developer HEDO created an entirely new commercial complex. This complex consists of bars, cafes, and restaurants in which the foreign flavors reminiscent of Italy, Bavaria, Germany, and a little bit of France are all rolled into one.21 Tianjin Haihe Construction Development Co., Ltd. is the core actor in the Italian style town project. The company is a subsidiary company of the Tianjin Infrastructure Construction & Investment Group, which provides urban infrastructure investments, environmental protection projects, and real estate management. It is also a useful vehicle for allying with private real estate developers. In other words, the urban administration of Tianjin has transformed itself around the Infrastructure Construction & Investment Group into a revenue-making machine to accumulate capital from the lucrative real estate market. The rationale behind the creation of this new exotic landscape is to project a positive image, one which uses the Italian style town as a showcase for Tianjin’s ambitions to become a global city.22

While the renovation of the former concession has attracted prominent tourist attention, the destruction of historical heritage and the particular and individual nature of the area itself have received significantly less publicity. The Italian style town project has been criticized on several counts since the result of the renovation has been the realization of a “Disneyland-esque” enclave with an Italian flavor.23 Hundreds of thousands of former residences have been demolished to make way for the current luxury facilities. Through cycles of destruction and reconstruction, old buildings have merged with new ones, in the process creating a paradoxical effect in which reality and virtual images, past and present, are so intertwined that the result is almost surreal.24 Hence, it is impossible to know or understand the old Tianjin via a tour of the Italian style town.25

Even though the exterior of some buildings remains authentic, the interior has been radically altered. Most examples of heritage, though, have been demolished or destroyed according to the principle of “destroy the old and erect the new” (破舊立新). Additionally, the roads themselves – originally a fusion of Italian and Chinese materials unique to Tianjin – were totally replaced by purely Italian ones.26 The original residents were evicted and the whole area is abandoned at night, resembling a ghost town.27 In the end, the main objective of such “urban regeneration” was the creation of upmarket commercial precincts with a “historic” flavor that are primarily comprised of hotels, bars, restaurants, cafes, pastry shops, and designer show rooms.28

Residents have denounced government violence during the eviction of the area’s original residents. Even women and elderly residents were verbally threatened or physically attacked. Since no consensus was reached with local residents regarding the

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21 McCreedy, “Tianjin’s Italian-Style Town”.
22 Marinelli, “The Italian Production of Space”, 35.
23 Marinelli, “The New I-Style Town”.
24 Marinelli, “Making Concession in Tianjin”, 419.
25 See Footnote 18.
26 Li, “Quanli Zai Kongjianzhongde Liudong”, 80.
27 Mu, “Lishi Wenhua Mingcheng”.
28 See Footnote 23.
financial payments from the Tianjin government as compensation for the costs to relocate, the dispute over property rights between the original owners and the government remains unresolved.29 For instance, the Diocese of Shanxi claims that they acquired historic buildings on three lots in the 1980s and protests that a church they claimed was demolished by the Tianjin authorities without notice.30

2.2. The incomplete project of revitalizing the Old Chengnan in Nanjing

The case of Nanjing in terms of the preservation of cultural relic provides a comparative mirror of current issues of local governance. The Chengnan (城南, South of the City) case demonstrates a more complicated governance model of entanglements involving various levels of the urban bureaucracy and business representation. Governing the preservation and development of Chengnan cultural relics reflects the dilemmas and contradictions afflicting local governance in Nanjing. In the early 2000s, the Nanjing Metropolitan Government and the Qinhua (秦淮) District Administration launched a regeneration plan for historical Chengnan to rebuild it into a cultural district with human characteristics. The salient characteristic of the Chengnan case is that the city and district government have become active players, and not just regulators, in the operation of a project of urban entrepreneurship.

The redevelopment of Chengnan in its early stage was a negative example of a rent-seeking state-business alliance that met with resistance from civil society. Labeling Chengnan as a new historical culture cluster or model district for cultural and creative industries would quickly boost the value of its real estate projects. However, the harsh process of demolition that occurred in Menxi (門西) in the western part of Chengnan stimulated unexpected resistance from the public. An alliance of residents, scholars, the mass media, and cultural figures was soon formed to raise consciousness about the cultural significance of the Chengnan area. Retired cadres and members of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference also joined the alliance. A petition was raised and submitted to the highest level of the bureaucracy. Major public cultural sectors in Nanjing were involved as well. The harsh actions of the local state and the firm resistance from below combined to create a social movement in 2009. The movement also attracted the attention of the national media instead of being solely a local interest story. The most active media in the case were the more liberal media outlets in southern China, such as Nandu Zhoukan (南都周刊) and Nanfang Zhoumo (南方周末). Xinjingbao (新京报) in Beijing also had comprehensive coverage of the Chengnan case. Local Nanjing newspapers, by contrast, adopted a more conservative approach in their reporting.31

The negative aspects of local governance of the Chengnan case are rooted in the vicious alliance between the local state and real estate developers. Since the selling of land is a major channel of local financial revenue, the city is eager to strike deals with developers to construct luxury buildings labeled with traditional Chinese cultural heritage. In order to acquire land for construction, large-scale demolition projects

29See Footnote 18.
30UCANews, “Catholics Protest Demolishing of Church Property”.
31For a more detailed analysis of the Chengnan case from 2008–2012, please refer to Leng, “Local Governance and Cultural Industry in China”, 155–176.
were carried out. Such demolition projects also involved the destruction of local or even national-listed protected buildings and blocks. In other words, the urban growth machine was becoming unstoppable given the incentives of local finance that were prevalent in the Chinese situation.

3. Learning from the experiences: process of local state adaptation

3.1. Reconstruction of a genuine Wudadao area in the second stage of preservation in Tianjin

The Wudadao (五大道, literally “The Five Avenues”) case demonstrates a more complicated governance model of entanglements involving various levels of the urban bureaucracy. The most salient characteristic of the Wudadao case compared to that of the Italian style town is the involvement of volunteers and a sympathetic attitude from the public sector, especially the central government but also the district administration. The governing of historic preservation in Wudadao reflects dilemmas and contradictions as well as policy learning and adjustment encountered by local governments all over urban China. The local community also expresses its ability to challenge the developmental zealouoseness of the local state.

Generally, the Wudadao area refers to the rectangular region in the Heping (和平) district located in the former British concession. This area encompasses 22 roads with a total length of 17 km and a total area of 1.28 sq. km. Wudadao got its name from its five main streets: Machang Street, Munan Street, Dali Street, Changde Street, and Chongqing Street, from east to west. It is comprised of more than 1400 western-style buildings of various European styles designed and built during the 1920s and 1930s that have been completely preserved.32 Its distinct character is derived from its streets, which combine long and narrow blocks with arrays of low-rise detached “western-style” architecture with denser alley-row houses.33 According to incomplete statistics, there are more than 200 former residences of celebrities in the current “Wudadao Outlandish Tourist Area,” which has become an important historical and cultural heritage area in Tianjin. Two presidents of the Republic of China and seven premiers or acting prime ministers once resided here in the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence, the area is like a microcosm of modern Chinese history.

As for the historic architecture in Wudadao, these buildings are in a similar situation: unclear properties, shabby condition, and lack of maintenance. Although some old houses are owned by the private sector, the majority are still public properties. Due to China’s state ownership of land, the Bureau of Land Resources and Housing Management of Tianjin owns the property rights to over 70–80% of the historical buildings. According to an investigation of the 736 individual street addresses in the Wudadao area in 2011, 30.7% of the buildings have been reutilized for non-residential purposes (i.e., commercial use or governmental office), whereas 22.0% of them were mixed commercial and residential buildings, both regular for housing and some secondary purpose.34

32Mu, “Wudadao”.
33Chow, Changing Chinese Cities, 128–129.
34Lin, Ikezoe and Takeshita, “Chugoku Tenshin Sokaiji”, 17–19.
Since 1984, this prominent collection of “western-style” buildings (xiaoyanglou 小洋楼) has been preserved as a pilot project. Under the new restrictions, land use and new development programs are subject to special restrictions and supervision to preserve the historical heritage of the district. On the one hand, the master plan for Tianjin approved by the State Council in July 2006, in which the central government emphasized the preservation of historic heritages, including Wudadao, should be protected comprehensively. On the other hand, however, the approval in 2006 by the central government for Tianjin to become the Northern Economic Center implied that development supersedes any other problem. Heping District is the center of educational, commercial, residential, and cultural life in Tianjin. The district is composed of the central business district, entertainment venues, and all kinds of shopping malls, making it the most cosmopolitan district of Tianjin. Since Wudadao is situated in a prime location of the district center equipped with many amenities, it is encountering enormous development pressure.

In 2008, the Tianjin Municipal Government announced a tourism project for Wudadao called “Gathering Tourists in the Wudadao” (Jukemaodi 聚客锚地, hereinafter referred to as JKMD). This project aims to construct a tourist area that contained hotels, bars, entertainment facilities, and shopping centers. The entertainment amenities in Wudadao were planned to be clustered together within a small specialized area, making it convenient for shopping. The implementation of the plan, however, would threaten several historic buildings with demolition. Although the regeneration project of Wudadao comes under the banner of “protection,” and a few buildings will be kept, the integrity of the whole area is at stake. A report in the China Daily stated “If only a few celebrity houses remain in Wudadao, it would be as if its face is preserved after its arms and legs are chopped off.”

The striking feature of the Jukemaodi case is that the Tianjin Historical Architecture Restoration and Development Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as THARD) has become a player, not just a regulator, in the operation of urban entrepreneurship and urban development. In order to protect and utilize historic resources, the government usually set up state-owned enterprises to be responsible for the protection and utilization of heritage. Since the property rights of heritage have been monopolized by the government, the governmental regulating agency and the development enterprises of heritage have become one and the same.

The Tianjin Historic Architecture Conservation Committee is an organ especially created as a platform for leadership and decision-making in the protection of historical architecture. The Mayor of Tianjin serves as its chief, the responsible vice-mayor as its deputy chief and major leaders of various related bureaus and district governments as its members. The Committee is subordinated to the Tianjin Municipal Land & Resources and Housing Management Bureau, which is responsible for directing the Committee’s work. THARD was established as a wholly state-owned company responsible for the planning, vacating and removing, renovation, acquisition, leasing, and transfer of the historical examples of architecture that have been integrated into this protection and restoration plan. Hence, all evacuations and relocations shall be implemented by the THARD. In the case of Wudadao, the Tianjin Historic Architecture

35 China Daily, “Protection or Destruction?”.
36 Zhao and Li “Tianjin Wudadao Chaqian”.

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Conservation Committee could not make a timely and strict judgment to stop the demolition while claiming that THARD’s behavior was not illegal since their actions focused on the “non-historically inflected buildings.” It is quite ironic then that the historic block homes entrusted to the Tianjin Historic Architecture Conservation Committee in charge of heritage protection have been swallowed up by the THARD.\(^{37}\)

### 3.2. Searching for a new path of cultural preservation in Nanjing after 2009

Learning from the traumatic lesson of the first stage of cultural preservation, the Xuanwu (玄武) district government of Nanjing focused on institutional construction and capacity buildings efforts to balance competing goals of local development in the second stage of redeveloping Chengnan. However, the implementation process is still full of contradiction and inconsistence. After 2012 and the passage of “The Master Plan of Historical and Cultural City Protection of Nanjing” (南京歷史文化名城保護規劃), the city and district government adopted a more prudent attitude toward the renovation plan in Chengnan. Since these “cultural relics” were regarded as major obstacles to construction, the common practice in the early stages of Chengnan redevelopment projects was to demolish historical buildings right before the formal announcement of the list of protected relics was issued. Other cases of potentially listed buildings were destroyed during the survey process. Since 2015, such crude examples of destruction have decreased. According to our interviews, construction projects involving national-level preservation of relics are normally reported to the National Culture Bureau in advance. In other words, cultural relic preservation is not just a local concern. Supervisory power goes all the way up to the central government for lack of protection of national-level cultural relics.\(^{38}\)

As the vicious connections between land use and local finance continued, the local state has adapted its steps and angles of intervention over the past few years to cope with rising demands from society. The “policy learning experience” of the urban government can be analyzed from different aspects. In terms of institutional construction, the milestone regulations on Historical Cultural Cities Protections of Nanjing and related orders designated 2300 “non-removable cultural relics.” The protected targets include cultural heritage buildings and sites at the national, provincial, and city level. In the 2010 and 2014 policy guidelines, the Cultural and Communication Bureau of Nanjing postulates the principles of overall protection of cultural relics and public participation therein. The city government also has requested conducting archeological studies before, and not after, the permission to develop land is granted.\(^{39}\)

Institutional and capacity building efforts are key steps toward the normalization of cultural heritage protection. However, some protected relics and residential buildings were still demolished “by accident” under the new protection scheme. The case of No. 39 Gaogangli in the Menxi district warrants further discussion.

The Gaogangli was the major workshop area of Nanjing Yun Silk (雲錦) during the Qing dynasty. After the Chinese Communist Revolution and the founding of the PRC

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\(^{37}\)Ibid.

\(^{38}\)Interview, May 6, 2016.

\(^{39}\)Xian dai Kuaibao, “Xin Nanjing Lao Nanjing”. 
in 1949, the family that originally owned the workshop was permitted to keep 65 sq. m of the 800-sq. m building complex of No. 39. In 2012, the building complex was designated by the Nanjing government as a “protected unit” under the master plan of cultural preservation of the Qinhuai district. According to the existing laws of the central government and Nanjing city, new construction projects are not permitted within the scope of the historical protection areas. Plans to reconstruct slum areas must exclude historical protected areas and the government must reach agreement with the owner if minor alternations and renovations are to be carried out. In other words, No. 39 of Gaogangli has full legal protections under the related state regulations.

In 2015, the family living in No. 39 was notified to move out; the house complex was slated for demolition for the reasons of district rezoning and reconstruction of the adjacent quarters. During the author’s field research, it was quite ironic to see the contrast of two notices on a wall: one read “protected unit of Nanjing city” and the other “countdown of moving out.” Initially, the Wang family, the original residents of the complex, decided to resort to the mass media and file a lawsuit against the government.40

The Wang family, however, later adopted a more conciliatory attitude and sought a win–win solution for the historical relic’s preservation. In December 2016, a petition was submitted to the party secretary of the Qinhuai district about transforming the residence into a Nanjing Yun Silk museum. The Wang family indicated that since other households had moved out of the complex, the family would donate parts of the house as a Yun Silk workshop museum and keep the remaining units as their residential area. Family members could serve as tour guides of the workshop museum and a museum shop could also be set up within the house. In 1 month, the Wang family received the reply from the Party Secretary Office of Nanjing. In addition to reiterating the existing regulations, the party secretary indicated the fact that No. 39 is a “protected unit” under the Chengnan master plan and future functions of the building will be considered according to the overall plan of the Menxi area.41

Obviously, the preservation of cultural relics is regarded as an important component of regime legitimacy at the central level. At the local level, preserving cultural relics is seen as a way of promoting a new kind of urban development and bestowing global city status. Under general guidelines or written instructions issued by the central government, each province and city has its discretionary power to implement its own historic preservation policies. The perceived weakness at the center often led to the over-commercialization of historic sites at the local level. Furthermore, urban development has actually led to the destruction, rather than the restoration, of many cultural relics. The demolition of genuine buildings and their replacement with “fake antiques” symbolize a distortion of the central government’s original intent and a breach of local heritage preservation regulations.42 The doctrine of “comprehensive protection” further exemplifies the tug-of-war between central and local government.

The Nanjing government also utilizes opportunities for eye-catching events to show its resolution of improving cultural relic preservation. After the turbulent years from 2009 to 2010, the CCP and the local government in Nanjing began to use symbolic

40Field research, June 9, 2015, Nanjing.
41Nanjing City Qinhuai District Administration, “Guanyu Jianyi”.
42Leng, “China’s Cultural Policy”, 172–174.
cases to demonstrate the determination of cutting the linkages between culture preservation and market forces. In April 2016, The Nanjing Museum organized an event with the real estate developer Taihe Group to promote a new housing project in the Chengnan district. The splendid gala was held in the historical Chaotiangong (朝天宮), the home of the Nanjing Museum. Movie star Jackie Chan was invited as a special guest to the event. However, due to the fact that the Dacheng Palace of Chaotiangong is listed as national cultural protection unit, such commercial activity was met with harsh criticism on the Internet and among the general public. The CCP party committee of the Nanjing Culture and Communication Bureau finally ordered the director of the Nanjing Museum to step down due to this blunder on cultural preservation.\(^{43}\)

The Nanjing Museum event is an opportunity for the Nanjing CCP apparatus to show their determination in warning the notorious Taihe Development Group. About 1 year before the event, a 220-year-old, city-level protected unit in Menxi was destroyed “by accident” by the Taihe Group construction team. The building complex, No. 49 of Yanliaofang, was another major workshop of Nanjing Yun Silk. No. 49 is adjacent to a lucrative upscale residential project of the Taihe Group. The demolition of this old house could pave the way to acquiring an integrated piece of land for Taihe’s villa plan, which would increase the value of the whole project.\(^{44}\) At the same time, the Taihe group was promoting a similar Chinese-style villa residential area project. This project, named “Nanjing Yuanzi” (南京院子), was similar to a series of projects in Beijing, the “Beijing Yuanzi” (北京院子), for which the promotional event was held in Taimiao (太廟) of the Forbidden City.

4. Inclusive strategies of local states: co-op policies and the inputs from the local society

4.1. The rise of cultural elite and volunteer cultural protectors in Tianjin

The brutal regeneration plan is the major controversy point of the Wudadao case. The original guideline was to fix up and renovate the collapsed buildings. Accordingly, the urban texture of the district will be preserved completely. However, THARD started to pull down those buildings which were determined to be “non-historically inflected.” Within the Wudadao area, 397 buildings are designated as “historically inflected buildings,” but 1036 buildings built before 1949 have not been entered into the conservation list yet. These 1036 buildings are not protected by similar regulations.\(^{45}\) The project thus changed from “renovation” into totally restructuring the whole area. The harsh process of demolition in Wudadao stimulated an overwhelming resistance from the local community. Volunteers for the Protection of Tianjin’s Architectural Heritage (天津市建築遺產保護志願者團隊) played a crucial role in preserving Wudadao.

Established in 2006, the team is made up of retired workers, public servants, staff members of enterprises and institutions, media employees, students, self-employed individuals, and other professionals. They are a group of ordinary citizens who have

\(^{43}\) Full text of the Nanjing CCP order can be found at https://kknews.cc/culture/z28xp.html.

\(^{44}\) Xinhua, “Bowuguan Cheng Xiuchang”.

\(^{45}\) Zhang and Han, “Preservation and Regeneration Strategies”, 70.
a deep-seated moral duty to protect the history and culture of their city. In previous years, they had organized over 10 events in an effort to challenge the planned demolition and relocation. The key slogan of the team of volunteers is “Protect cultural heritages and conserve the memories of the city.” “We are doing this here because we love our city,” emphasized Mu Sen (穆森), the founder and director of the volunteer group and a Tianjin native.

In 2003, after numerous historic blocks had been razed to the ground, he decided to do something to protect his hometown. An art critic by trade, he began spending a significant amount of his time on urban preservation. Mu sees it as his responsibility to do something about the rapid disappearance of blocks in the blistering pace of Tianjin’s modernization, so he founded and oversees the volunteer team.

Under the leadership of Mu Sen, the volunteers have conducted on-the-spot surveys of all of the city’s historic districts and taken almost one million photographs in the process. They have visited over 100 descendants of famous individuals and over 1000 original residents, amassing hundreds of hours of recorded materials. In the process, they have unearthed “identities” for more than 300 historic buildings and they have made numerous appearances in Tianjin and in the national media. When, in 2009, several historic buildings in the Wudadao were threatened with demolition, the volunteers, led by Mu Sen, lobbied widely through its lawyers and the media, invited experts to look into the situation, and made an urgent appeal to halt the proposed demolition. This appeal was jointly signed by 10 experts. The event attracted nationwide mass media attention instead of solely local coverage. The most active media in the case were the Nanfang Zhoumo (南方周末) and People’s Daily (人民日報). China Culture Daily (中国文化報), Legal Daily (法制日報), and Outlook Weekly (瞭望) in Beijing also had comprehensive coverage of the Wudadao case.

In June 2009, Xie Chensheng (謝辰生), one of the experts who signed Wudadao appeal, sent a petition letter to Premier Wen Jiabao reporting directly on the urgent situation of heritage preservation efforts in Tianjin. The appeal finally got the attention of the central government and Premier Wen issued written instructions (批示) for Wudadao. The State Council accordingly held an investigation into the Wudadao case. The demolition stopped and the municipal government then invited experts to evaluate and discuss new directions for development. In the revised project, they decided to protect the historic blocks comprehensively instead of tearing them down. In 2010, Wudadao was acclaimed as a “National Historical and Cultural District” by the Ministry of Culture and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The volunteer experience in cultural heritage preservation also has been extolled as the “Tianjin Model,” in that it combines “government direction, expert advice and public participation.”

One positive result of the Wudadao case is that the traumatic experience of Jukemaodi has served as a catalyst for adjusting of the local state. Launched after the milestone 2009 instructions, the development of Wudadao went more smoothly due to adoption of policies to accommodate local needs and cultural characteristics. Instead of demolishing old houses and building fake antiques, the government aims to improve
the original infrastructure and ameliorating housing conditions of residents in old houses by repairing them. In 2010, Tianjin Urban Planning and Design Institute and a research and design studio at University of California, Berkeley, formed a partnership to take on the challenge of revitalizing Wudadao, ensuring its preservation by making the district economically productive and alive with activities. Rather than isolating the historic blocks, the team began with the assumption that the design of the Wudadao area needed to increase accessibility to the district as well as increase the density of the population to facilitate a day and night rhythm of urban activity comprised of residents, workers, and visitors.50

The importance of market forces in historic preservation should also be taken into consideration. In China, the lack of financial support from the central government for conservation projects inhibits motivation for cultural heritage protection by local governments. Clearly, the government faced a dilemma as introducing business interests may result in large-scale demolition or destruction. However, the comprehensive conservation of historical heritage, by transforming the whole district into what they called a “dead antique” or “ice-lolly,” would certainly lead to a sharp decline in public finances. Thus, the Tianjin municipal government tries to establish a system characterized by “government taking the leading role and the market operating,” thereby generating the funds for protection in a virtuous recycle.51

The business operation Qingwangfu (慶王府) is a typical case.52 The Qingwangfu historical mansion was constructed in 1922 as the private residence for the last head eunuch (小德張) of the Forbidden City. It got its name “Qingwangfu” or “Prince Qing’s Residence” after the property changed ownership and became the house of the 4th Prince Qing (第四代慶親王) of the Manchurian Dynasty. In May 2011, THARD launched the restoration of Qingwangfu under the principles of “protection first, reasonable utilization, restoration to the original, safety and applicability.” SURV, an associated architecture firm of MAA Group, serves as a partner to participate in the renovation of Qingwangfu by the restoration team. The property is now under the management of CCA International, a London-based hospitality group that specializes in operating luxury boutique hotels and private membership clubs.

As discussed above, volunteers also play a key role in the preservation of Wudadao. On the one hand, the Volunteers for the Protection of Tianjin’s Architectural Heritage have garnered support from experts who were behind the move to preserve the Five Street Area as well as sympathy from lower-echelon local bureaucrats who frequently leaked land planning applications to their web pages.53 The volunteer team was also invited by public officials to participate in the decision-making process for cultural policies. On the other hand, however, they have a cautious working relationship with the government since local officials are often closely linked to real estate developers, even if they themselves are not developers. The Tianjin volunteers reiterate that they are campaigners instead of petitioners; and they are individual volunteers rather than being a group or an organization.54

50Chow, Changing Chinese Cities, 129.
51Zhen, “Research on Capital Operation System”, 70.
52Interview October, 2016. See also, Xin Jinrong Guancha, “Qingwangfu Shangye”.
53Chen, “Preserving Tianjin”.
54See Footnote 37.
In principle, they are more likely to seek collaboration with bureaucracies than confrontation. In the case of Wudadao, the volunteer team was committed to establishing a cooperative relationship with the Heping district government in order to further check the power of the land management department of the municipal government. Such actions require continuous coordination, persuasion, and communication. They also acknowledge that the success of their campaign to preserve Wudadao was due in part to the recognition of the central government. It is important that consensus be the product of efforts made in good faith and arranged privately to meet the interests of all stakeholders. Therefore, Tianjin’s volunteers are able to work in the party-state system while not being fully absorbed into it.

Finally, historic buildings and structures seem to change hands several times, including the frequent transfer of ownership among a number of tenants. The inhabitants being analyzed here are simultaneously more fluid and mutable, engendered by many city dwellers’ tacit understanding that seeking maximum benefits from demolition projects represents an opportunity of a lifetime for becoming rich and securing a comfortable life. Tianjin was seriously damaged by the Tangshan Earthquake in 1976, prompting lots of people to set up shanties within the neighborhoods of Wudadao. Most of them are not in favor of suspending the JKMD project. Living conditions in some old houses are difficult, with three or four families sharing a dilapidated two-floor wooden building. Most evictees would like to move if the government could give them reasonable compensation for their evictions. As such, the ultimate “representation” of the “local identity” may remain unknown or may be revealed as something quite different than what we imagine.

4.2. Myths and realities of local participation in preserving the old Chengnan

Although protests and resistance to the Chengnan case erupted around 2009, the Chengnan event did not expand into a large-scale demonstration movement in Nanjing. Furthermore, neither grassroots party organizations nor resident committees ever shouldered any responsibility of interest articulation and integration. Instead, local consciousness and identity were aroused by the cultural elite and sympathetic government bureaucrats living outside the Chengnan district. Cultural elite are normally active scholars and retired officials endeavoring to spread the knowledge and know-how on matters pertinent to cultural preservation at the local as well as central level. Yao and Han stress the importance of the “cultural elite” in bridging state and social interests. The unique status of cultural elites gives them the opportunity to navigate the authoritarian regime and advance the post-materialistic agenda for heritage preservation. They mediate state–society interaction by communicating central policies and regulations to the grassroots level, and submitting public will to the top leadership. Cultural elites have frequently mobilized their guanxi or connections in heritage preservation. They have avoided direct confrontation with the state and have refrained from blatant opposition even when engaging in grassroots mobilization. They have also been reluctant to resort to NGOs as mobilizing platforms. To preserve their

55 Interview, March 2017.
Ibid.
57 Ho, “Bargaining Demolition in China”, 425.
58 Interview, October 2016.
status as mediators, cultural elites have chosen to be cooperative rather than make
trouble.\textsuperscript{59} They have played the part of spreading the knowledge of Nanjing’s history and
linking local demands with policy adjustments. They are not leaders of a grassroots
resistance, but rather bridges between the state and society. Given the fact that Nanjing
has a very high concentration of universities and research institutions, these intermediate
players are well positioned to contribute to the incremental process of mutual adjustments
between the state and society.

Nevertheless, the growth machine of Nanjing continues to maintain its capacities in “big
demolition, big construction” (大拆大建), even after the discharge of Ji Jianye and Yang
Weize. For instance, the slum districts of Fanjiatang (范家塘) and Wenjinqiao (文津橋)
near the city center were designated as the “No. 1 Suggestion Proposal” of the city National
People’s Congress. In 2016, the city administration took only 6.5 months to complete the
redevelopment and relocation process of the slum areas in a relatively smooth manner.\textsuperscript{60} As
for the protected area of Chengnan, the local state has adjusted its steps and adopted a more
conciliatory policy of readjustment.

However, the dilemma of redeveloping Chengnan cultural relics is that the protected
area has a lot in common with slum areas elsewhere. We learn from our field research
in the Menxi district that the living conditions and property rights in the protected
areas are very complex.\textsuperscript{61} The 2012 master plan of Menxi aimed at keeping 40% of
the original residents. Some families, especially families with senior citizens, prefer to stay
in the neighborhood. However, the current situation in Menxi is a mixture of original
residents and tenants. Normally, a larger house is divided into more than 10 households
without a private bath or kitchen. According to a Tsinghua University survey, 70% of
the buildings in the Chengnan area are “seriously damaged” and 90% of the households
do not have a private kitchen and bath.\textsuperscript{62} The reason why the tenants tolerate this
situation and stay in Chengnan is out of economic, not cultural, concerns. Of course,
not everyone is satisfied with the current situation. Some households look forward to
the restructuring of the spaces and improvements to their living situation. However,
according to the local regulations, illegal additions on the protected cultural units are
against the law and subject to penalties. In other words, consensus on the most
appropriate ways of preservation and renovation has not been reached by the residents.

Fluctuating between demolition and preservation, the development of the Menxi area
of Chengnan has been stagnated for almost a decade. After the turbulent years of protest
over Chengnan’s preservation, a team from Tsinghua University was invited by the
Nanjing government to shoulder the responsibility of restoration. Different from the
local teams which have more complicated connections and networks with real estate
developers, the Tsinghua team has advocated for an incremental model of restoration.
Instead of the large-scale demolition and construction, the new Tsinghua model is to
restore “piece by piece, courtyard by courtyard” in a gradual manner. During our field
research carried out in 2015, the more controversial Menxi area is full of semi-collapsed
buildings or “protected units” in poor condition. Residents are tired of the repetitive
circle of demolition, protesting, stagnation, and restarting.

\textsuperscript{59}Yao and Han, “Challenging, but not Trouble-making”, 306.
\textsuperscript{60}Luo and Sheng, “Fanjiatang Chaqian”.
\textsuperscript{61}Field research and community interviews in Nanjing, June 7–12, 2015.
\textsuperscript{62}Ibid.
As the controversial redevelopment of the Menxi area proceeded at a very slow tempo, more redevelopment projects were implemented in the Mendong (門東) area. Comparing our field research findings in 2012 and 2015, residents and households were removed and relocated. Learning from the traumatic experiences of Menxi, the district government used strategies that combined persuasion, material compensation, and coercion. The outcome was that the relocation actions of Mendong encountered relatively weak resistance from the residents and attracted less attention from the mass media.

The Mendong cultural project, in our view, is the upgraded version of cultural relics rebuilding instead of preservation. Under the guidance of the Tsinghua team, the reconstruction process was well researched and designed beforehand. Critics argue that these new buildings are not representative of Nanjing’s style in nature. However, the hybrid style of Jiangnan, including Anhui and Jiangsu, is also a reflection of the historical trajectory of the city of Nanjing. Entrances of some houses still keep the big chai (拆, “to demolish”) character to show the historical trajectory of evolution. Parts of the outside walls are protected by glass to demonstrate the contrast between the original materials and those newly added. These new houses, however, are not for accommodating original residents. Most of these houses are now gift shops, coffee/tea houses, and restaurants instead of residential buildings. In the other words, the residential area has been transformed into a commercial district.

The introduction of the market and commercial functions in the Mendong historical area has elicited mixed opinions. The preservation activists argue that such an upgraded version of preservation is just another form of creating “fake antiques.” Most of the buildings have been rebuilt, not renovated. The “protected” wall is a smokescreen to confuse the general public. On the other hand, supporters of the new Mendong project indicate that converting the whole area into an “architecture museum of old buildings” will hamper, rather than promote, the development of the district. With appropriate collaboration with market forces, the whole area could regain its dynamism and reputation. Moreover, real estate projects (such as Changleju 長樂居) within the Mendong area will help boost up the economic development of the neighborhood and attract advanced talent to this region.

In addition to the adjustment and enhancement of carrying out capacities from the top, the Nanjing government also encourages public participation in the process of preservation and development. The renovation of the Xiaoxihu (小西湖) quarter next to the Mendong district, which began in 2015, can be viewed as an experimental model to include more public participation. The Party Secretary of Qinhuai district Cao Baolu indicated in November 2015 that the new scheme of renovation is characterized by the principles of “volunteering” and “incrementalism.” All the stakeholders, including the current residents, experts, developers, and the government, will have the right to raise their voices. Major universities in Nanjing, including Nanjing University, Dongnan University, and Nanjing Tech University, were invited to take part in the planning of renovation projects of Xiaoxihu quarter. In March 2017, the Nanjing city government released a formal document to ban the large-scale demolition of cultural preservation areas, including the Xiaoxihu quarter of the Mendong area.

63 Changleju is a heavily gated community that casts a skeptical eye toward researchers and cultural preservation experts.
64 An, “Nanjing Qinhuai Quweishuji Cao Lubao”.
65 Chou, “Nanjingshi Fabu Laocheng Yange Xiangao Guiding.”
We learn from our interviews in the Mendong and Menxi areas that the cultural identity in the region is still an ambiguous concept. About half of the Chengnan residents are tenants who do not own the houses in which they live. These tenants, normally working class people with low incomes, choose the Chengnan area as their temporary home out of economic necessity. The indigenous residents, mainly senior citizens, do not especially care about the cultural values of their houses. Some interviewees pinpoint that “cultural preservation” is a fancy term developed by scholars and so-called experts. Preservation of culture heritage is “rich man’s business.” For them, these “outsiders” do not understand the poor living conditions in the area. What they really care about is the improvement, or rebuilding, of their houses. It seems to us that they care more about the convenience of the location, not the houses per se. Their focus is more on the improvement of their living standards, and not the cultural value and heritage of their homes.

5. Conclusion

The cases of Tianjin and Nanjing demonstrate the process of adaption and policy learning of local states. Around the year 2010 was a turning point for both Tianjin and Nanjing to adapt to the rising demands from society. Local states tried to learn new mechanisms of governance under the new institutional framework of cultural heritage preservation from the central as well as local level. In the case of Tianjin, the local state adjusted its steps of intervention from an entrepreneurial style into a more conciliatory manner. The Italian street town case could be regarded as a testing ground for embracing a new scheme of cultural business and market maximization. Considering the local criticism and pressures from the higher levels of government, the local state searched for softer ways to incorporate local voices in the next stage of development. The local state worked with local activists to make Wudadao a quarter with historical amenities while preserving its cultural heritage. In the case of Nanjing, arbitrary actions of the local state stimulated resistance led by the local cultural elite. Compared to the case of Tianjin, the Menxi case was marked by the brutal enforcement by local states of demolition and relocation. After the traumatic experience in Menxi, the Mendong projects incorporated social actors and honorary voices from the cultural elite. At the same time, central and local level institutional mechanism for cultural preservation were realized after 2009. Institutions and social forces collectively put pressure on the local state to adjust toward a more collaborative manner of governance.

Does this mean that, in terms of cultural heritage preservation, Tianjin and Nanjing will eventually embrace a more democratic way of public participation and collaborative governance? We would argue instead that the local states have learned to cope more subtly with environmental changes and social demands. The local states are now more responsive to the outbreak of new events and social demands through various channels.

Since 2016, the draft of the “Cultural Preservation Law of the People’s Republic of China” has attracted heated debates in National People’s Congress. The Nanjing city government issued “Implementation Opinions of the People’s Government of Nanjing City on Further Strengthening the Work Related to Cultural Relics” in 2017 to include cultural preservation in the master plan of urban planning. In Tianjin, the “Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages” has been implemented since 2014 to assign around 1000 buildings as “protected relics” in the city.
The cultural elite also search for ways to strike a win–win solution to bridge the interests of various stakeholders. But the law enforcement and policy implementations are still full of confusion and calculation. Some cultural heritage sites have consistently been destroyed “by accident.” Such strategies sometimes cause fluctuation and stagnation in policy. If some cases of cultural site renovation are really controversial, the local state prefers to let them lie idle and expose them as miserable situations without renovation.

Entertainment and commercial projects are obvious targets for the alliance between the local state and developers. However, the local states ally with market forces in a more delicate way. As shown in the cases of Tianjin and Nanjing, the “ideal type” of cultural project is to demolish the whole block for new real estate development. Tianjin and Nanjing still leave spaces for real estate developers, but in a relatively low profile. For other preserved blocks with revitalization plans, we notice that the renovated or reconstructed buildings reflected the historical trajectory of the district. Normally, expert teams are introduced and professional opinions are honored.

In the process of local state adaptation, we observe that the Tianjin and Nanjing city governments have learned to co-opt social forces and cultural elites. The local states form new alliances with developers and universities to undertake new projects of preservation. In contrast to the pre-2010 era, university professors and students have now become their allies, not foes. Volunteers, including local elites and college students, are mobilized to take part in the process to search for new ways of heritage site preservation. The local states take initiatives to include these forces from the locality to make sure that they will not form and take part in collective action against the government. Moreover, the state introduces intellectuals and cultural elites into the institutional channels of communication and policy feedback. These cultural elites also have the self-identification as moderate reformers, instead of troublemakers.

It must be noted that cultural identities in our cases of Tianjin and Nanjing are “created” by outsiders. Such identities are not growing at the grassroots level. Local residents are tired of endless struggles and demands of demolition, protest, and worsening of living conditions. They do have affections for their locales, but not the buildings in which they live. Cultural values are “found” by members of the cultural elite who normally do not live in the area. In the other words, cultural and local identities are “given” by nonresidents. Neither Wudadao nor Chengnan has its own “local boss” to serve as the bridge between the grassroots and local states. Elsewhere in Nanjing, such as the Xiaolingwei Street Administration of Xuanwu district, the local administration has begun to promote a community-based association to link grassroots and district identities. Looking toward the future, the formation of an institutionalized local identity will be the key to strike a balance among competing interests of cultural heritage preservation in China.

This article contributes to the literature of local governance in China from the following aspects. First of all, this article provides concrete empirical case studies on the transformation of Chinese local state by focusing on the policy adaptation and learning. After the “critical junctures” around 2010, Tianjin and Nanjing demonstrated their resilience by accommodating to the institutional and social pressure. Such transformation may prove that the local states have become “smarter,” but not necessarily means the brunt shift to western-style democratic rule. Second, this work challenges the dichotomy of state and society in analyzing Chinese politics. Social actors, such as cultural activists, NGOs, and
cultural elite, are playing multiple roles to bridge social and state interests. Such unique forms of mutual accommodating may shed lights on a Chinese way of local governance. Last but not least, this study demonstrates the lack of local identity in China. The authors argue that in order to consolidate the local capacity building, formation of a grass-root identity will lay the long-term foundation for autonomous mechanism of collaborative governance in cultural relics preservation in China.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this article was presented in the 2017 Asian Network for Studying Local China (ANSLoC) meeting, held in National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, June 28, 2017. The authors appreciate the feedback from participants of the ANSLoC meeting, as well as comments from anonymous reviewers of the Journal of Contemporary East Asian Studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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