Rewiring UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and Rural Peripheries: Imagined Community and Concrete Inequality From France's Corsica to China's Heyang

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UNESCO's World Heritage Centre's communication monopoly over nationally filtered heritage operates not in an apolitical past but in present politics. Working through the "World Heritage Order" and its changing definition of "outstanding universal value," this article develops a bridge between seemingly disconnected rural sites in France and the People's Republic of China to move beyond the confines of "imagined communities" and their potential for displacing "concrete inequalities." The article extends a critical approach of communication to heritage and contextualizes present rural heritage communication within larger political economic and cultural processes of urban–rural and capital–capillary dynamics that enables, in the cases examined, their current heritage identity.

Keywords: cultural heritage, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, People's Republic of China, rural studies, Corsica

While engagements with old and new media—news, television, film, social media—are the norm, approaching the production of cultural heritage as a site of communication remains relatively uncharted. One of the possible reasons—and, simultaneously, results—of this is that cultural heritage is commonly understood as operating in the apolitical past tense, approached as historical fact, rather than within the present tense of politics, where it can be critically reproached for its ability to package political projects. Despite this understanding, the ongoing contestation over the use of cultural heritage, in everything from the deployment of historic maps as "weapons of mass cartography" in territorial claims to recent riots over Confederate statues in the United States, point toward the political and economic ramifications of the communication of cultural heritage. With this in mind, the expanding global rural heritage industry and its articulation through UNESCO's World Heritage Centre (WHC), the largest institutional player in the field, can be fruitfully explored from a communication perspective.

This article enriches the "global to village" framework of this Special Section by avoiding a vertical line from a universal or global experience to a local or village-based experience by breaking from established identities and building a transcultural line from my home in rural Corsica, a French island, to

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the rural site of Heyang in the People's Republic of China (PRC). This article critiques the capacity of distinct nationally filtered "imagined communities"—in the way that Anderson (2006) describes—in concealing past and present "concrete inequalities" in the communication of cultural heritage. Pursuing this end, this article extends a critical communication approach to the realm of heritage and engages the WHC's global heritage regime's changing definition of "outstanding universal value" (OUV). As I show, the definition of OUV has shifted to condense the normative valuation of cultural pedigree with economic interests by defining world heritage in terms of its access to global tourism. In exploring the WHC's relationship to Corsica and the ways in which the WHC's dominant discourse on heritage can be related to Heyang, this article argues that the identification of a universal cultural heritage displaces conflicts over inequality to the detriment of particular peasants. That is, as much as heritage development may bring with it opportunities its communication also brings with it unique challenges. The connections between Corsica and Heyang showcase not only the need for critical engagements with the communication of cultural heritage and the possibility for transcultural readings of heritage, but also questions the WHC's celebration of heritage sites without also contextualizing their current preservation status as a product of structured historic poverty.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws from a tradition of critical communication research that offers a key framework in relating various levels of the "communication processes, both to each other and to the central dimensions of social structure and social processes" (Golding & Murdock, 1978, p. 354). As proposed by Golding and Murdock (1978, pp. 353–354), this is a three-pronged approach. First, it locates unequal and stratified distribution of communicative resources within larger patterns of economic inequality—in particular, locating the mass media along the axis of class understood as the central axis of stratification. Second, it addresses the issue of legitimation through communication by which these structures of inequality are naturalized as "common sense"—that is, how communication plays a role in the process of economic inequality being socially legitimated through cultural reproduction via media industries. Third, it foregrounds these social struggles of challenge and incorporation in the dialectical processes of social stratification, class polarization, and cultural displacement.

In extending this framework to the media system in the PRC, Zhao (2008, pp. 6–7) highlights the more complex and challenging problems of media and cultural industries in legitimating inequality in a formerly self-proclaimed socialist country operating within a contested capitalist world system. Here deep contradictions between the "party line" of international communism and the "bottom line" of global and local commercial interests in a post-Mao China, which once espoused socialist ideals of social equality, are themselves in the process of incorporation by new socializing pressures (see also Zhao, 1998). This is embodied in how the country's seemingly national-centric reform-era reorganization of its communication system are engaged as being part and parcel of a "neoliberal-oriented global restructuring of communication and culture, leading to the formation of a truly globalized communication system and the spread of the culture-ideology of consumerism" (Zhao, 2008, p. 150). While the work carries the torch of a critical approach to communication, it does not, similar to Golding and Murdock (1978), extensively engage the rural-urban dimension or extend this critique to heritage.

In this article, I extend this critical framework to the communication of rural heritage to demonstrate how the communication processes involved in imagining communities, embodied in a depoliticized communication of heritage, can legitimate national inequality. This article responds to the call for creativity embodied in Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) concept of "chain of equivalence," whereby equivalently disadvantaged struggles can be weaved together. After all, operating within the "commonsense" approach to national frameworks of cultural heritage is to legitimate, returning to Golding and Murdock (1978), the larger social and economic inequality their communication may naturalize.

This article argues that in some cases the communication of cultural heritage is not only predicated on past and present structures of inequality but also contributes to the legitimation of inequality. In the cases of rural cultural heritage, their preservation, establishment, management, and promotion involve contested webs of international economic core/periphery capital relations, centrifugal flows of information and intranational normative cultural-linguistic monopolies determined by urban cultural capitals—that is, capital in the geospatial sense, the economic-financial sense, and the cultural sense, which can be understood in shorthand as the language of capital(s). Specifically, the ability to articulate in a professional high-register "standard" language is a product of complex urban political dynamics that subordinates "substandard" rural expressions under a polarizing cultural process. Within the larger realm of communication and culture, rural cultural heritage is also a site of struggle over the imagined community.

Anderson (2006) developed the concept of imagined community to describe the sociomaterial processes that led to the possibility of the relatively new concept of the nation understood in terms of a limited community. The nation is imagined as limited, because "even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (p. 7). The nation is imagined as a community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail" (p. 7) it is conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. As Anderson argues, the relative philosophical poverty and outright incoherence of nationalism, whose imagined antiquity relies as much on selective remembering as on active forgetting, does little to hinder its "political" power evident in how many people willfully die for such a limited imagination (pp. 6–7).

For Anderson (2006), these communities were made imaginable by the explosive interaction between "a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communication (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity" (pp. 42–43). During this time, corroborating histories and museums emerged that communicated discrete "imagined communities" as descendants from ancient heritage (p. 6). During these processes, previous vernacular languages geographically close to centers of power, such as those used in state administration, were transformed to "standard" print languages of power (p. 45).

Here, communication resources are key to (re)producing imagined communities operating within larger patterns of economic and social inequality. Drawing parallels to Golding and Murdock (1978), the macrolevel politics of access to communication are reembodied at the microlevel politics that collapses social stratification under a projected universal common—in this case, an identified imagined community. Situating this within an urban–rural dynamic, those not in control of communication nodal points,

particularly those distant from media centers in the countryside, can be understood as being subsumed under centralizing conceptual identities.

One possible alternative to the capacity for imagined community to displace the centrality of social struggle would, following Laclau and Mouffe (2001), operate through "chains of equivalence" between equivalently disadvantaged cases across communities. Against "commonsense" categorizations of difference, Laclau and Mouffe (2001) note that while struggles may take on different forms, each of which may at first seem to be distant in terms of content, they nonetheless may have a positional formal equivalency in terms of being disadvantaged by existing centers of power. In building a chain of equivalence between these differences, each link can remain distinct in its uniqueness but nonetheless brought together to formulate a new conceptual whole. Applied specifically to rural heritage, the possibility for progressive politics operates in changing inherited ontologies provided by the language of capital(s) by moving outside of that which is given—to move beyond the imagined limit. This is achieved by creating a chain between equivalent—not identical—rural struggles. That is, the critique from particular experiences of inequality in rural capillaries vis-à-vis centralizing urban-biased development can be weaved together to formulate a systemic critique of the communication of heritage identity.

From Anderson's nation-centered rendition of imagined communities, the rise of the "transnational capitalist class" (Robinson, 2004) and existence of "transnational agrarian movements" (see Borras, Edelman, & Kay, 2008) point toward the articulation of what can be called a "transnational peasant class." This requires, at the very least, a rejection of confined cultural identities to lay the formation of transculturally "equivalent" connections. For Robinson (2004), the transnational capitalist class is transnational because it is tied to "globalized circuits of production, marketing, and finances unbound from particular national territories and identities" (p. 47). While Robinson focuses on the contextual beneficiaries of such a world system, an alternative can be imagined from below that is tied to corresponding disadvantaged positions within the language of capital(s). In other words, rural Corsica can be used, not as a cultural particularity within the imagined community framework of the "French" national lens—or even through a civilizational lens—but as a link in a chain with other rural spaces outside of established conceptual cultural continuities.

To pursue such a path requires a creative critique of "commonsense" cultural boundaries that act as forms of containment to "construct what is beyond the limits" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 144). An example of this can be seen in Michèle Lalonde's 1967 Canadian poem "Speak White." The piece, named after an Anglophone racist slur against "white looking" speakers of non-English languages within Canada, critiques heritage narratives and commandeers established nodal points of identity communication. The poem, written in a primarily Francophone-speaking Quebec but where media and industry were in the hands of Anglophones (see Mezei, 1998), claimed equivalence not only among those who were contextually poor, due to the uneven expansion and redistribution of capital, but poorly articulated themselves in a given cultural capital's "standard language" due to their peripheral, "un-cultured," status. In the poem, the relatively "poor" Quebecers are shown to be "cultured" by Anglophones through their access to English heritage and consumer products—the Magna Carta and the significance of "crumpets"— while simultaneously recognizing that English is the language laborers primarily use to communicate with their employers.

Here, the use of English signals both the "high" of cultural capital and simultaneously the "low" paying corporeality of economic capital flows: One is hired, fired, and cultured in English. Working against this, the poem resists how socioeconomic peripheries are not only affected by the movement of economic capital, but also interpolated under prioritized cultural systems of meaning in which they cannot properly respond. The poem ends with a creative chain of equivalence connecting Quebec to Watts and Algeria—crashing through scripted cultural identities and uncovering an alternative community in claiming "we are not alone" (Lalonde, 1974). Here, while each individual struggle may be different, their positional relationship within larger social structures provides a kernel of equivalence. Here embodied is an alternative comradeship to the identification of community promoted by dominant forms of heritage. In the poem, the goal is not to simply make a new economic and cultural capital but instead weave struggles against the language of capital(s). This rejects the capital-centric production of heritage identity and its formal capacity to ignore political alternatives and displace capillary experiences through a communication of objectivity writing singularity over multitudes of difference. Drawing from this, we can move beyond engagements of nationally filtered "French" or "Chinese" culture and instead locate how the constitution of culture operates within struggles over the establishment and communication of rural heritage.

The World Heritage Order and the Management of Outstanding Universal Values

Growing out of the sense of change and loss by two world wars and global modernization, UNESCO's World Heritage Convention glamorizes a nation's heritage as its "most important and priceless possessions" (UNESCO, 1977a, p. 1). It appeared during a period of both deep global cultural and neoliberal political-economic change (Harvey, 2003) and the rise of global tourism (Harrison, 2013). With the World Heritage Centre's list recently swelling to more than 1,000 sites, the WHC has established itself as the major player in what DiGiovine (2009), drawing from Appadurai (1996), identifies as the *heritage-scape*—a globalizing process that works with states to create individual heritage sites through selection criteria. With the increasing commoditization of this criteria, as this article later describes, it may be that while the entrances to WHC sites are located in different states, one always exits through the gift shop—which, as DiGiovine notes, extends to the valorization of nearby businesses, from bed and breakfasts to brothels.

The WHC's changing identification of OUV, the key component to receiving heritage status, showcases the need to engage heritage critically. From its basis in the 1972 heritage convention, the WHC has shifted from Spartan preservation goals to being deeply implicated in the nature of the communication, management, and integration of national heritage sites to global tourism networks. Within this context, "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention" (OG) is the major institutional mechanism of syncing with these changes, responding to the 1980s "heritage industry" boom (Hewison, 1987) and its globalization over the period of the 1990s to 2000s (Harrison, 2013).

The OG has changed dramatically since its first 1977 iteration, shifting from world heritage preservation to world tourism promotion, evident with the increasing demands for authenticity (UNESCO, 1994), "management conservation" (UNESCO, 1997), and the participation of business stakeholders (UNESCO, 2005) as well as the explicit awareness of tourist pressures on site conservation (UNESCO,

2008). Arguably, the representative kernel of this progression is located in the changing definition of OUV between the 1987 and 1988 OG, where marketability is directly tied to the definition of OUV, becoming the Trojan horse that injects various tourism and management demands articulated elsewhere in WHC policy to its core identity.

In the first OG, the "universal" requirement for OUV is interpreted simply as a property that is highly representative of the culture in question (see UNESCO, 1977b). This definition expanded later that year (UNESCO, 1977c) to recognize OUV in sites with one of the following traits:

1. Represent a *unique artistic* or *aesthetic* achievement, a *masterpiece* of the creative genius; or

2. Have exerted considerable *influence*, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, *on subsequent developments* in architecture, monumental sculpture, garden and landscape design, related arts, or human settlements; or

3. Be unique, extremely rare, or of great antiquity; or

4. Be among the most characteristic examples of a *type* of structure, the type representing an important cultural, social, artistic, scientific, technological or industrial development; or

5. Be a characteristic example of a significant traditional style of architecture, method of construction, or human settlement, that is fragile by nature or has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible sociocultural or economic change; or

6. Be most importantly *associated* with ideas or beliefs, with events or with persons, of outstanding historical important or significance. (UNESCO, 1977c, p.3)

Against this cultural definition, 1988 is a key year for the emerging global heritage industry evident in new requirements. From 1977's ancillary need for applications to simply describe the state and means of preservation—legal, administrative, financial, and so on—the 1988 OG requires a site to meet one of the original requirements for OUV and

> have adequate legal and/or contractual and/or traditional protection and management mechanisms to ensure the conservation of the nominated cultural properties or cultural landscapes. The existence of protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level and/or a well-established contractual or traditional protection as well as of adequate *management and/or planning control mechanisms is therefore essential* and, as is clearly indicated in the following paragraph, must be stated clearly on the nomination form. Assurances of the effective implementation of these laws and/or contractual and/or traditional protection as well as of these management mechanisms are also expected. Furthermore, to preserve the integrity of cultural sites, particularly

those open to *large numbers of visitors*, the State Party concerned should be able to provide evidence of suitable administrative arrangements to cover the *management of the property, its conservation and its accessibility to the public*. (UNESCO, 1988, section 24.b.ii, emphasis mine)

This new definition of OUV requires a site to be outstanding both culturally and economically, requiring a management mandate for accessibility not only for world heritage status but to tourism capital. The requirement is not expressed as an additive, a protective apparatus ensuring the integrity of the value, but is inscribed into its very identity as the core definition of the value itself. With this new definition, only sites manageable and marketable instrumentally are recognized for possible OUV. Here, we can see where the interests of cultural capital transmute to economic capital. The normative collapse between what is considered heritage and how it is managed creates the DNA of today's WHC, which, given its control over the key nodal point of articulation, at once internalizes private economic interests while interpolating the imagined community at the global level through its articulation of world heritage.

Given the prestige of the WHC's heritage regime and the absence of any global institutional alternative, the WHC can be understood as being the key player in the "World Heritage Order." Although the term has been used in disparate contexts (see Hayward, 1996; Meskell & Brumann, 2015), the World Heritage Order can be understood from a communication perspective as signaling the WHC's control over the global identity of world heritage. As I have shown, this carries with it cultural and economic imperatives. Acting as an international platform that relies on member states to submit sites for review, the WHC's integral role in communicating old cultural heritage is firmly part and parcel of present politics. At the very least, the communication of world heritage, be it identified in rural France or rural PRC, brings with it more than simple concrete conservation for imagined communities.

Communicating Corsica: Pristine Forests or Forlorn Poverty?

France's Corsica, a small Mediterranean island and part of my own "heritage," provides an arresting example of how its current heritage properties, as identified by the WHC specifically and tourists more broadly, is predicated on historic structured economic poverty. Unlike references to heavily mediatized economic and cultural capitals, capitularies on the "dependency road" (Smythe, 1981) such as Corsica, require contextualization before they can become "citable." In short, like other primarily rural spaces, Corsica's complex history and the current nature heritage tourism boom never make it to mainstream readings of globalization.

Before the 1884 Berlin Conference, where European centers of power divided global peripheries, Europe's city-centers partitioned what would later become regional peripheries. This is evident in the brief existence of the Corsican state expressed in its 1755 constitution that was written postliberation and considered a first with women's suffrage. It was repealed when the island was sold by Genoa to France, which subsequently invaded the island. This prompted the Enlightenment thinker Voltaire to question whether one people has the right to sell another (see Antonetti 1990, p. 370).

The ensuing French rule was violently repressive, and Corsica fell prey to larger colonial structures (Antonetti, 1990). Economically, by the 19th century, half of the bread consumed was imported, and by World War II, Corsica imported most of its products. Racist policy implementation is evident during World War I, when 10% of the population was conscripted, in stark contrast to the French average of 3.5%. Unlike other French departments, from 1881 to 1962, the island "lost" half of its population. Culturally, the Corsican language was historically forbidden in schools, with signs in 1914 banning its speech (Vergé-Franceschi, 2005, p. 495). The suturing of the gap between the language's historic spatial reality within France and its social recognition as part of France's heritage did not happen until a 2008 Constitutional amendment that officially identified, 219 years after France's invasion, the Corsican language as an official part of France's national heritage. However, given the island's distance from access to prestigious nodal points within the language of capital(s), these processes have not been able to have been expressed through an authorized heritage as powerful as that expressed through France vis-à-vis other states.

This historical process has enabled the island's current identification as having preserved "natural" forests and heritage villages that today fuels tourism to the island, leading the official website for tourism in France to describe it simply as "a preserved island" (see Au.france.fr, n.d.). Read critically, the historic distance from the direct benefits of industrialization and the vast deterritorialization of residents has enabled its current consumable value. However, this encroaching commercialization and its inherent social stratification is being contested. This contestation can be seen in the very creation of the Parcù di Corsica ("Regional Natural Park of Corsica") which at once acts as a bulwark against current capitalistic pressures over constructing private resorts and walling off beaches as well as a practical solution to the complexity of property claims as a result of depopulation. Covering 40% of the island, sections of the park, such as the Gul of Porto (comprising the Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve), were soon listed to the WHC in 1983. However, this conservation victory was not without its historic and ongoing price.

The influx of legions of tourists and vacation homes has brought about ongoing resistance to forms of marketization that marginalizes alternative developmental paths evident in a protracted struggle taking place on many fronts on the island. One of these fronts has been the active bombing campaign against tourist infrastructures (Perrier, 1971). Between 1975 and 1982 alone, there were 2,967 bombings in Corsica—all without casualty—primarily targeting tourism infrastructure (Vergé-Franceschi, 2005, p. 505). While Corsica's pastoral beauty is communicated as "world heritage" by the WHC, its "history of pain" of its primarily peasant population, a key dialectical moment in its historical stratified rural relationship to urban centers, is displaced not only by WHC's official site description but also, more broadly, by readings of nation-centric world system analyses. That is, on the one hand, its historically peripheral status within the language of capital(s) has "preserved" the island in a way for its current value for tourism, and, on the other hand, in this pivot toward communicating this new value, the history of structured rural immiseration is displaced.

Against such imagined community and its ability to collapse social struggles, the nonidentified within the current WHC identifications of Corsica's "pristine forests," that which is not communicated in its heritage, is the tragedy of regional structured poverty. Here and elsewhere, contextually disadvantaged

spaces such as Corsica operate on the rural periphery of the so-called West showcase an experience not of the Other "out there," but of the anterior within—the uncanny exploitative economic and cultural systems showcasing a fundamental nonidentity of current conceptualizations of Western identity. Understood through the language of capital(s), the prioritization of a particular imagined community over particular difference—where economic and cultural modes in the *countrysides* are displaced as a *country's side*—do not voice rural peripheries and points toward a signified West not concomitant with the complexity evident in the West itself. This problematizes simplistic models of world-system analysis by not only *provincializing* the West concept as an ontological whole vis-à-vis other perceived wholes (see Chakrabarty, 2000) but *pastoralizing* the concept of onto-itself by grounding it within urban–rural dynamics. It is from this context the rural can be approached as displaced under urban-centric economic and cultural orderings under the stratification of the language of capital(s) that, returning to Golding and Murdock (1978), (re)constitute ideological legitimation through communication nodes by which social structures of inequality are reinforced.

The Counter-Cultural Revolution in the Great Leap Backward

Before exploring a creative chain of equivalence from rural Corsica to rural China, this article will provide background to the "cultural" side of the PRC's reintegration to the global economy via its ongoing reidentification of the political foundations of the its authorized heritage and its ensuing effects on the rural. The politics of apolitical engagements with cultural pedigree are particularly salient in the PRC, where state-sponsored memory plays a conspicuous role in navigating the dual demands of communist legacies and current economic pressures (Zhao, 1998). This disjunction is embodied in analysis of the PRC's relationships to global institutions that generally ignore the PRC-WHC dynamic (see Johnston, 2008; Kent, 2007) and work claiming to critically engage the country's heritage politics can disregard revolutionary legacies (see Blumenfield & Silverman, 2013).

From the May 4 movement to the Cultural Revolution, the territory we now call China has had a history of critiquing heritage as a site of politics. Lu Xun, a key figure in the 1919 May 4 movement, argued that defenses of cultural heritage were complicit with sustaining exploitative power relations (Chow, 1960). By applying a genealogical approach to discourse, whereby the "pedigree" of the communication of heritage is questioned on its own historical terms, he argued that only the ontological form of an eternal "Chinese civilization" remains unchanging in the passage of time while its actual "content" shifts to the rhythms of ruling regimes. As Lu Xun puts it, in the history of "China," when "barbarians" became "rulers"—a new elite taking over the nodal point of authorized heritage communication—scholars discovered that these "'barbarians' [were] also the descendants of the Yellow Emperor" (see Chow, 1960, pp. 310–311). That is, while the category of China remained the same, in terms of actual content, each ruling force, many of which were at one time deemed to be "foreign," were in turn incorporated within the heritage narrative of the imagined community in question to further legitimate the status quo.

This critical approach to cultural heritage was renewed in the PRC's emergence when it mobilized media to inverse "traditional hierarchies" by recognizing the importance of peasants in society (Zhao, 2008). At the same time, the country officially pursued inclusive industrialization without urbanization

(Zhu, 1999). This spirit was reemployed during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76 when cultural heritage was reproached as a roadblock to progress. That is, the continuation of traditions of injustice, such as cultural chauvinism, patriarchy, and other forms of bondage, were criticized as standing in the way of modern social progress.

Against this, the 1978 economic "open door" policy brought with it a counter-Cultural Revolution that prioritized urban development while cultural discourse began challenging class-based appellations. Gradually, heritage-tourism as a cultural and economic industry was promoted given its high returns on relatively low investment (Li, Y. & Hu, 2008). By the late 1990s, far from mobilizing media to promote the importance of peasants, new campaigns propagated an identity of "cultural traditions" (Dynon, 2008) that ran parallel to apolitical urban-based normative concepts of quality (Yang, 2007). Here a new imagined community was communicated at the moment when economic reform fostered social upheaval. That is, on the one hand, new relations to global and regional centers of capital transformed the countryside, while, on the other hand, this transformation was culturally legitimated by interpolating rural dissent through the communication of a normative urban-centered discourse.

In this context the PRC joined the WHC "late" in 1985. However, by 2015, despite high costs of readying sites for application, the country quickly became a global heritage leader. Despite this boom, without a single PRC communist site listed with the WHC, the PRC-WHC dynamic displaces communist legacies—a feat achieved by provincializing the "international communism" at the heart of the PRC's constitution by communicating an identified "world cultural heritage" under WHC auspices. That is, while there exists a burgeoning nationally recognized "red heritage" tourism industry (Li, Y. & Hu, 2008), none of these sites have yet to be chosen to apply to the WHC. While there is obvious pride in the idea of cultural heritage, there is also prejudice in terms of what makes it to the world stage, embodying a schism between the PRC's revolutionary history and its recognition through the WHC. Integral to this process is the ongoing uneven market expansion that has rendered villages by transforming peasants in to "semifree commodities" able to work primarily in urban economic centers. For Qiu (2010, p. 531), this enormous migrant-peasant labor force is the source for the highly mediatized urban-based success narratives that are predicated on rural demise. The extent of the resulting rural transformation has created an ironic situation where, following Žižek (2011, p. 714), the oppressive power of the Cultural Revolution's Red Guards who destroy ancient monuments pales in comparison to the "success" of capitalism in dismembering both traditional social relations and material history. As Žižek claims, China's shift between modernizing without urbanization to an urban-oriented modernization is embodied in the transition from the Great Leap Forward, with its development slogan "an iron foundry in every village," to today's new capitalist Great Leap Forward, embodied in Žižek's (2011, p. 718) tongue-in-cheek description as "a skyscraper on every street."

While the PRC's emerging manufacturing centers chased the "hard" development dragon to the detriment of their heritage resources, replacing the old with the new, some rural spaces, facing both depopulation as peasants moved to cities as well as deprivation from large-scale development, retained what would later become their current "cultural" real estate. Similar to Corsica, historic depopulation coupled with distance from economic redistribution created the context for today's rise of cultural heritage value. In these cases, historic rural poverty, in short, is a predicate for heritage quality. In the PRC

context, today many of these "untouched" villages are being brought in to tourist-heritage networks as different levels of government promote their venues by investing in "authentic" WHC-style repairs as urban intellectuals seek legitimacy and profits in their interpretation of Chinese cultural nostalgia (see Wu, 2015, p. 31; Qian, this Special Section).

It is within this complex ongoing process, which can be described as a "Great Leap Backward" toward heritage, that a critical communication approach is particularly poignant. This is apparent in the first instances of primarily rural sites in the PRC being submitted to the WHC. After the PRC signed on to the WHC, Shanxi Province's Pingyao was awarded OUV and received UNESCO approval in 1997 "due to its well-preserved city layout, city wall, and architectural excellence" (Wang, 2011, p. 18). While during the late Qing Dynasty, Pingyao prospered and housed many financial institutions, it became one of the country's poorest areas in the 1950s to 1990s. During this time, what we would now call "heritage buildings"—many built for banking elites—were redistributed among the poor. While Pingyao's precommunist survival rested on the banking network and fortified walls, it is its poverty that prevented it following a pattern of development that would have led to the demise of its "heritage qualities."

The "universal value" of heritage, which makes up the "most precious asset of a nation" according to WHC logic, was not universally acclaimed by residents when identified in Pingyao. Claims of authenticity were employed to evict peasants living in subdivisions established during the Cultural Revolution. While Pingyao received world heritage status from above, a segment of locals were displaced from below. With "expert advice," the local government sought to "relocate 20,000 Pingyao residents so that the crowded old city may retain its authenticity," admitting in the same breath that, while residents fully support the relocation plan, "their finances do not permit buying the more spacious houses in the new city" (W. Li, 2003, para. 12). The form of OUV in the heritage communicated was one that quite literally displaced the social struggle faced on the ground. Who, after all, would work against world heritage?

These complexities are embodied in the difficulties revolving around the fact that those who resist the incursions of heritage can be read as not only working to resist "world heritage" and OUV but also a normatively "harmonious" vision of imagined community for nationally identified sites. In so doing, they wage their participation in a normative "imagined identity" by resisting an industry working against their wages. In the Pingyao case, instead of communicating the issue in terms of social justice, the preservation status of heritage takes precedence: The elitist heritage communicated rectifies the "mistake" of land redistribution (see Nicolai, 2013). Here revolutionary history is displaced to reconstruct a vision that is, in both form and content, inimical to both communist legacies and, in some cases, the interests of residents. Moreover, within the counter-Cultural Revolution context, the history of Pingyao's merchants, who were framed as exploiters during the height of communist historiography, are being reintegrated within the PRC's heritage as being precursors to contemporary "opening up" economic reform (see Kong, 2010).

In cases following this "Pingyao Model" (Nicolai, 2013), the identified essence of the PRC's cultural heritage is managed to displace communist legacies as merely accidental cultural deviance— following a "rectifying" institutional trend where once purged figures, from "capitalist roaders" like Liu Shaoqi to "historical figures" like Confucius, are officially rehabilitated postreform. However, this counter-

Cultural Revolution is incomplete given that communist legacies form the Chinese Communist Party's legitimizing political foundations (Zhao, 2008), illustrating a struggle between the "vampiric" logic of depoliticized communication of heritage, that sucks the "red" out of social struggles, and the unfulfilled communist promises of social justice, which enable what can be called a dream of the red horizon that haunts contestation over the nature of heritage communication within the PRC. This apolitical heritage development contradicts the relatively recent rise of "red heritage" within PRC. Today communist heritage is increasingly exploited, both economically and politically, as embodied in Yan'an and other revolutionary sties (see Li, Y. & Hu, 2008). The tensions between apolitical communication of heritage and its political revolutionary alternative provide a site of struggle over the identity of heritage within the country.

The Heart of Heyang: Rural Reservations, Restrictions, and Renovations

As part of an international research team (see Zhao, this Special Section), I participated in interviews with locals in the village of Heyang, located in Zhejiang Province, to study the village's nascent heritage industry. I found that, similar to Corsica, historic relational poverty allowed for the village's current ripeness for WHC-style heritage tourism. While the peculiarities may be different between Corsica and Heyang, the ongoing struggles under the language of capital(s) are similar. While not a world heritage site, the WHC regime's normative framework can be seen as working through a domestic hierarchical Chinese regime, from the nation's capital, Beijing, down to Zheijang's provincial capital, Hangzhou, all the way to Jinyun County's Heyang, expressed through the nexus of the Jinyun County Heyang Ancient-Dwellings Protection and Development Management Committee.

The interviews revealed that, while there is a consensus that heritage must be protected, there was no consensus on *what* cultural heritage is, let alone *how* to protect it. This was complicated by a struggle between an active resistance to an encroaching identification of heritage inimical to some interests and an active promotion of heritage by those seeking the development of the local heritage industry for their own benefit. As Heyang gained its status as a nationally protected rural heritage site, the local government has been increasing its demands, following the generally universalized WHC OG guideline for safeguarding authenticity by requiring extensive and expensive renovations. Here there was active resistance toward what villagers perceived to be the communication of a heritage that would be disadvantageous to their lives. Some interviewed complained that these policy demands for "authentic repairs" of the identified heritage translated in their difficulty to afford them.[1] While a plan is in place for the local government to pay the lion's share of the repairs, Hong and Liu, both in their late 60s, lamented that they could not use cheaper and more efficient modern alternatives to home improvement that would better their daily lives. With regard to public roads, some seniors, among them Hong, complained that the stone roads, as authentic as they may be, are very dangerous to walk on. In one of the direst cases, Ms. Ma, in her early 70s, explained that if rains, she has to use an umbrella at home because of the broken— but nonetheless authentic—roof. She also lamented that the state of the house has been a point of contention within the family, with her two sons refusing to visit her until she sells it. One man in his 40s, Mr. Cao, when asked about his views on heritage replied in the local language that he wished "cultural heritage in the village would simply die."

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used to maintain participants' anonymity.

Arguably the views expressed here are not simple philistinism—a misinterpreted example of Marx's "idiocy of rural life"—but rather a genuine isolation against a culture being identified against lived interests. It is not that the people interviewed who were critical of cultural heritage lacked "aesthetic sensibility" but, from a communication perspective, were isolated from many aspects of the means and ends of the pursuit of heritage and have enough sense to be able recognize whether what is identified is inimical to their interests. For a minority in Heyang, the road to dispossession—from both cultural imagined community and concrete practical housing—is paved with heritage development. For others, however, whose position enables them to benefit from the development of the community's cultural heritage, the process is championed in terms of a commercially viable cultural renaissance.

In such cases, heritage requirements such as "authentic repairs" can act in what has been defined in another context as a form of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003, pp. 162) or, more specifically, an ironic "accumulation through outstanding universal value" where the language of the commons is employed at the very moment when not only dispossessing local inhabitants but also displacing past histories of structured poverty. In this way, the arrival of "universal heritage" works similarly to the arrival of the *free flow* of globalizing ICT in the village, where new technology expected to connect residents to the network society *dams* local information outlets by ejecting them from relevant information on the "local political sphere" and injecting them to the "global public sphere" (see also Hauck, this Special Section). While some contextually benefit from the cultural heritage industry at play, the most disadvantaged portion of the peasants are treated as passive onlookers under either cosmopolitan media systems or a universal heritage—a position from which they are unable to properly respond.

Returning to the complex history of the PRC, local resistance in Heyang would have taken a different turn if an alternative heritage were identified. What was identified as heritage in the village revolved primarily around historic buildings in the village rather than a peasant-oriented revolutionary reading of its own history. While slogans, such as "opposing contemporary revisionism" written in red along a wall, still exist and were counted as heritage among some villagers, they did nothing to prevent the ongoing practice of revisionism in the village in the rearticulating of the village's heritage identity through the nexus of the heritage management committee. In this case, the struggles of the most disadvantaged are compounded by the nature of what is communicated as their heritage. After all, do these heritage plans consider the red graffiti, written during the Cultural Revolution along the walls of Heyang, as essential to the new preservation project, or will they be, like Pingyao subdivisions, removed in the name of OUV and cultural authenticity?

In brief, the Jinyun County Heyang Ancient-Dwellings Protection and Development Management Committee and its relative control over the communication of heritage, leaving a communist reading of the past presents an unarticulated remainder. Here, the control over the communication of heritage not only affects the outcome with regard to the political symbolism of what is remembered, and with it, in turn, the (re)production of common sense, but the method of remembrance affects locals materially. Here, a key nodal point in the communication of authorized heritage has shifted hands from a communist articulation to a cultural articulation of heritage identity. If this were not the case, these residents could use this communist identification as an aegis against capitalizing claims of "common" cultural heritage. To complicate things further, as Zhang (this Special Section) mentions, the cultural vision of historic Heyang

life as having been good for locals revolves around its own imperial connections and rural exploitation of nearby contextually poorer areas. In other words, the memories of the "good life" recall its status as a landlord village in a contextually beneficiary position, both economically and culturally, under the language of capital(s).

Similar to Corsica, in Heyang, the language of capital(s) plays an important role—linguistically, economically, and culturally—in the identification, capitalization, and communication of heritage. Economically, workers from other rural areas have been brought to Heyang, creating a stratified rural-to-rural migrant workforce who are hired by the local government for construction work in the village because locals were seen as not having the necessarily expertise to restore their own homes to Heyang heritage standards. Culturally, the general consensus in the village—that heritage must be protected—made it difficult for some to formulate criticisms against the way in which the identified heritage negatively affected them. Linguistically, the reproduction of unequal power relations is reinforced through the use of a normative standard language that is epitomized in the high registers employed to communicate the value of heritage while their very access to this value is threatened materially. This is evident in the fact that many peasants did not bother to read the large banner along a key road in the village stating that "cultural artifacts are nonrenewable cultural resources" (文物是不可再生的文化资源). During interviews, Mr. Dong, a farmer in his 50s, commented that the key terms of the banner employed prestigious language rarely used in daily life that only compounded the general alienation felt in the village between the residents and the local government. This distance is doubled in the context of the state sponsoring the "common speech" (普通话) as the imagined community's standard language while Ms. He, Ms. Wu, and Mr. Xing, all in their late 60s to early 70s, revealed in interviews that when they were children they were instructed by their teachers to refrain from speaking their own local language at home on pain of punishment. As in Lalonde's poem, one can see how if one cannot fully articulate oneself in the professional "standard language," whose very standardization is embedded within larger socioeconomic processes, one cannot fully participate within a predetermined public sphere.

In sum, the productive difference between the conceptual identity of cultural heritage and its concrete material consequences works against some of the peasants. Like a vampire, the communication of cultural heritage identification in this case sucks the communist rhetorical archives that could have been used as a political response to social struggle. In its place, the universalizing language of the cultural commons was employed to evict not only current particular peasants but also structured historic inequality, leaving in its wake the kernel of a socially stratifying OUV.

Concluding a (Paper) Tiger's Leap

What brings these seemingly disparate rural sites in communion is how their current heritage communication is predicated on both the normalization of historic inequalities and the displacement of present social struggles. The conditions that enabled Heyang's current heritage qualities are predicated on its historic pre-Mao powerful status vis-à-vis other nearby rural areas (see Zhang, this Special Section), a contextually advantageous position that disintegrated during the post-Mao period, when Heyang's lack of development enabled its current preservation qualities. The nature of these heritage developments has brought with it new social struggles. The conditions that enabled Corsica's current heritage and nature

tourism boom rest, to a large extent, on its contextual historic poverty and historical depopulation. The spread of vacation homes on its "untouched" property and the extent of its nationally protected forest are predicated, in short, on historical poverty. This has brought with it an extensive social struggle embodied in ongoing local resistance. In this way, the WHC-style celebration of cultural heritage in the rural sites examined can be approached as conceding to past and present economic and cultural displacement. From this perspective, the WHC's dynamic privileges one part of this process in its uncontested cultural celebration. However, are not Corsica's pristine heritage parks also the result of structural poverty? Is not the cultural legacy of Heyang also a contested case within the language of capital(s)?

Walter Benjamin (2000) famously described a critical engagement with history in terms of a "tiger's leap" into the past able to reroute future-oriented development by relaunching historiography as a form of poetic memory. In another context, Mao described the high posturing of imperialism as a mere "paper tiger" (紙老虎). For this essay, against the paper tiger of the limits of imagined communities, I have formed a chain of equivalence between the historical and current rural struggles in Corsica and Heyang. The creative link, achieved through a tiger's leap between the peculiarities of Corsica and Heyang, showcases an alternative heritage predicated not on established cultural categories but on the experience of contested rural struggles. Despite their respective celebratory cultural narratives, underlying struggles over historic and contemporary displacement ground an alternative to the depoliticized visions of universal heritage promoted within the World Heritage Order. In relation to its monopoly over the standardization of universal cultural heritage under the language of capital(s), perhaps the only response, as a "weapon of the weak" (see Scott, 1985), is to connect the "dialects" of countrysides.

Looking for alternatives, with the PRC's long-standing promotion of "red heritage" tourism and given rhetoric that its communist heritage is under threat by "foreign values," exemplified by then president Hu's (2012) essay whereby Western cultural and ideological fields represent the battleground for China to promote socialism, it is possible that the country may ironically be forced to list International Communism on the Intangible Cultural World Heritage list, a list where UNESCO (2003) recognizes the "processes of globalization" as threatening the "disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular owing to a lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage." Perhaps only then would there be the required protection and funding to radically rewire and reimagine the communication of not only the country's heritage identity but also the global imaginary of community.

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