

Summary

The purpose of this research was to investigate how the historic villages in the ethnic area in China have been affected by the rural built heritage preservation policies and rural development mainstreams in the recent decades, taking the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) as the lens for investigation. The research question can be dissolved into sub-questions:

- How have the historic villages in ethnic areas been preserved and/or transformed?
- Which are the stakeholders in this play? What are the tensions/coalitions among them?
- What are the results and outcomes?
- Which are the possible future development issues?

After the overall literature review on the papers and the existing case studies (Chapter 1), the review on the evolution of rural built heritage preservation policies (Chapter 2), the rural development programs searching for sustainable development in the rural ethnic area launched in the recent decades (Chapter 3), the research adopts a multi-case study analysis as the methodology, taking six villages from Tongren, Guizhou province as a case study area (Chapter 4). The case study analysis aimed to investigate the plans, and projects in labeled and not labeled villages and the stakeholders involved in the whole process.

The research found that rural built heritage preservation and development in the ethnic area has been strongly addressed by the labeling, planning, project-making, follow-up management characterized by different patterns of stakeholders. Moreover, the rural built heritage preservation and development is an instrument of power that has been incorporated into the municipal, county, and lower-level planning settings, portraying an overall top-down government-led feature. An intentional ladder development for the government's overall strategy of resource allocation and spatial reorganization has been identified. Different patterns of stakeholders are identified. This research suggests that different roles played by stakeholders tend to be inseparable and often overlapped thus forming ambiguous and difficultly controllable dynamics in shaping the rural built environment. In conclusion, insights have been provided based on the debates of AHD

and positioning rural built heritage preservation within the public governance. A shared platform among stakeholders by advocating crossing the boundaries between public institutions, government, and community and private spheres is provided. The issue of the lack of social capital and policy arrangement in rural areas should be further explored.