

1 **Recovering Tradition in Globalising Rural China:**

2 **Handicraft Birdcages in Da'ou village**

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4

5 **Abstract**

6 This paper explores a historic rural craft tradition as the focus of economic development
7 through the valorisation of the local cultural heritage, or culture economy. The case study traces
8 the revival of bamboo birdcage making in Da'ou village in Shandong Province, where the craft
9 knowledge of making birdcages once prized by the Chinese imperial court has been passed on
10 through generations and protected from outsiders. Since economic reforms in the 1980s, the
11 birdcage craft has again become the major activity in Da'ou village, responding to new urban
12 market demands, and bringing prosperity. Yet, through a conceptualisation of cultural heritage
13 as a 'prosaic third space', the paper reveals the dynamics and tensions involved in the
14 incorporation of the birdcage tradition in local economic development strategies and the
15 promotion of e-commerce and tourism, and the processes of abstraction initiated. As such, it
16 raises questions about the relationship between craft, knowledge and place that resonate beyond
17 China. The research is based on semi-structured interviews conducted in 2016 with respondents
18 including local leaders, craftspeople, suppliers, and sellers.

19

20 **Introduction**

21 In spite of growing interest in rural creative economies, relatively little attention continues to
22 be directed towards artisanal craft production in rural communities, reflecting perhaps as
23 Gough and Rigg (2012) suggest the interstitial or 'in-between' qualities of craft-making.

24 Artisanal crafts exist in an ambivalent space between art and industry, capable of producing
25 both unique artefacts of immense creativity and aesthetic quality and standardised mundane
26 objects for utilitarian use; they are based on individual skill and small-scale workshop
27 production, but show tendencies towards spatial agglomeration; they are strongly associated
28 with particular places of production, but are enmeshed in translocal networks of supply and
29 exchange; and they are valorised as expressions of embedded tradition, yet are enrolled in
30 strategies for future rural development.

31 Tensions between these attributes have been articulated differently in diverse geographical and
32 historical contexts. In Europe, and other parts of the global north, rural craft industries were
33 diminished by industrialisation and urbanisation in the 19th and 20th centuries. The recent
34 proliferation of artisan craft workshops and businesses has emphasised their more artistic
35 outputs as part of rural culture economies, sometimes tapping into embedded local traditions
36 of specialist craft making, but in many cases involving the hybridisation of products, styles and
37 techniques and the production of generic ‘rustic’ artefacts (Fox Miller 2017; Kneafsey et al.
38 2001; Mayes 2010; Mitchell and Shannon 2018). Elsewhere, in Africa, Asia, Latin America
39 and parts of Eastern Europe, artisan craft production has persisted as a mainstream part of rural
40 economies, including in specialist ‘craft villages’, only more recently encountering pressures
41 to restructure, modernise and engage new markets (Chu 2016; Eyferth 2003, 2009; Gough and
42 Rigg 2012; Kimura 2011; Mahanty and Dang 2015; Pudianti et al 2016; Rogerson 1986). As
43 in Europe, such dynamics may form part of neo-endogenous rural development strategies based
44 on the commodification of local cultural resources as ‘authentic’ ethnic artefacts for export to
45 niche markets (Aguayo 2008; Forstner 2013) or to attract tourism (Hieu and Rasovska 2017),
46 but they can also involve processes of industrialisation and deterritorialisation as production is
47 reoriented towards mass manufacture of low-cost commodities for export (Chu, 2016; Gough
48 and Rigg 2012; Kimura 2011).

49 Craft production is commonly identified with particular embodied knowledge, skills and
50 techniques that may be closely guarded by practitioners and communities, giving rise to
51 specific expressions of localism as well as distinctive social and gender relations. Changes to
52 modes of craft production may thus present challenges to established social structures and
53 cultural identities in rural communities. Accordingly, artisan craft industries can provide an
54 interesting lens through which to examine how rural communities respond to and manage
55 change, including political-economic restructuring and the arrival of new technologies.

56 This paper explores such dynamics through an empirical case study of artisanal birdcage
57 production in Da'ou village in Shandong province, China. Set against the background of the
58 social and economic transformation of rural China - with the dismantling of collectivist
59 production models and promotion of entrepreneurship, opening of new markets, introduction
60 of new technologies and implementation of 'rural reconstruction' policies - Da'ou village has
61 seen the revival of its historic craft industry making bamboo birdcages in response to demand
62 from expanding urban middle classes. The revival has brought prosperity to the village, but
63 also introduced tensions between moves towards more mechanised, distributed forms of
64 production to meet increased demand from retailers and a recent emphasis on direct sales to
65 individual customers, often through e-commerce, of high quality craft, with the latter being
66 actively encouraged by the local government. As the two approaches prioritise different forms
67 of knowledge and different social relations the implications for the community are social and
68 cultural as well as economic.

69 To inform the analysis, the paper draws together three conceptual influences. First, our framing
70 of place adopts the relational perspective, following Massey (2005) in emphasising the
71 'throwntogetherness' of place as an intersection of broader social and economic relations,
72 comprised by diverse human and non-human, material and discursive components (see also
73 Heley and Jones 2012; Woods 2007). Places such as Da'ou village are therefore constituted in

74 relation to other places. Second, we draw on literature on culture and knowledge in rural
75 development, including the notion of ‘culture economy’ as the basis for endogenous
76 development (Ray 1998, 1999; Kneafsey et al. 2001) and later work highlighting the role of
77 knowledge transfer and learning in rural development and the plurality of knowledges
78 mobilised (Adamski and Gorlach 2007; Esparcia 2014; Kimura 2011; Wellbrock et al. 2012).
79 Third, to assist understanding of the political-economic context of rural China, we utilise
80 Oakes’s (2009) characterisation of Chinese policies for exploiting rural cultural economies as
81 negotiating a ‘prosaic third space’ in which local and translocal influences are hybridised and
82 culture is folded into social regulation and governance.

83 Collectively these conceptual framings lead us to posit three research questions: How has the
84 culture economy of Da’ou village as the ‘birdcage village’ been constructed relationally and
85 mobilised as a focus of rural development? What knowledges and practices related to birdcage-
86 making are embedded in the social and spatial structures of Da’ou village and how are these
87 challenged by new translocal relations? To what extent does the birdcage culture of Da’ou
88 village form a prosaic third space between state and market, what does this reveal about
89 dynamics of power and agency in the village?

90 In these ways, the paper aims not only to advance understanding of restructuring in rural China,
91 and particularly the place of craft industries in the contemporary countryside, but also to
92 contribute to wider literatures on creative economies and rural development, by providing an
93 empirical counterpoint to the cases of craft revival commonly described in European rural
94 studies and by raising questions around identity, knowledge, agency and relationality that may
95 be equally pertinent in analyses of culture economy in European rural development.

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98 **Artisan Crafts, Culture Economies and Rural Communities**

99 Artisan craft production was historically a core industry in rural economies, as skilled
100 craftworkers made artefacts for agriculture, trade and rural life, and certain localities utilised
101 local natural resources and embedded knowledge to specialise as centres producing high
102 quality craft goods for sale to urban elites. Industrialisation in 19th and early 20th century Europe
103 and North America supplanted small-scale rural craft production with urban-focused Fordist
104 mass production, supporting the emergence of a global consumer culture in which urban and
105 rural residents opted to buy cheaper, mass-produced and aesthetically ‘modern’ consumer
106 products over locally-crafted artefacts (Luckman 2015; Williams 1958). Similarly, the later
107 industrialisation of artisan craft production in the global south has been promoted by state-
108 sponsored modernisation programmes and reinforced by the dissemination of western
109 consumer culture, with the attendant incorporation of rural economies into global economic
110 networks (Eyferth 2003; Gough and Rigg 2012).

111 The suppression of rural crafts has never been complete, however, and as Fox Miller (2017)
112 notes, successive waves of craft revival since the industrial revolution have drawn on anti-
113 modernist and anti-globalist sentiments, some of which have found distinctively rural spaces
114 of expression, from the ‘back-to-the-land’ movement (Fisher 1997), to more commercially-
115 oriented ventures appealing to post-Fordist searches for authenticity (Fox Miller 2017). As
116 such, Fox Miller (2017) observes, craft products can appeal both to progressive sensibilities
117 around quality, ethical consumption and local production, and to conservative impulses for “a
118 nostalgic valorization of historic practices of making” (p. 3; see also Krugh 2004; Luckman
119 2015; Williams 2011).

120 These qualities make craft-making an attractive component of neo-endogenous rural
121 development strategies based on the revitalisation of local ‘culture economies’, attempting “to
122 ‘(re)valorize place’ and ‘localize economic control’ through the commodification of resources

123 such as traditional foods, regional languages, *crafts*, folklore, landscape systems and so on”
124 (Kneafsey et al. 2001, p 296, after Ray 1998, 1999; emphasis added).

125 Accordingly, the development of craft making has been promoted as part of programmes to
126 foster ‘creative industries’ in rural localities, with initiatives such as craft centres, craft fairs
127 and marketing campaigns to tourists (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Lysgard 2016; Prince 2017a,
128 2017b). The crafts produced may build on historic local traditions and reputations, but are often
129 modified to incorporate translocal influences and fit consumer expectations of rural culture and
130 rural crafts, and in many cases the individuals involved in artisan craft-working are in-migrants
131 or return migrants (Herslund 2011; Kneafsey et al. 2001).

132 The discontinuities that consequently can be found in rural craft traditions in the global north
133 contrast with stronger continuities in the global south, including the persistence of ‘craft
134 villages’ where the economy is dominated by specialist craft production (Gough and Rigg
135 2012; Hieu and Rasovka 2017; Mahanty and Dang 2015). As in the global north, rural craft
136 making in the global south has come under pressure from modernisation and globalisation,
137 notably the industrialisation of production to increase supply to domestic and export markets,
138 and the spread of ‘modern’ western consumer culture (Karolia and Sardiwal 2014). However,
139 rural craft-making in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, has in some cases benefitted
140 from new markets for authentic ‘indigenous’ or ‘ethnic’ craft artefacts, both in domestic cities
141 and internationally (Jain 2017; Nettleton 2010). In these instances, artisan crafts have been
142 foregrounded in community-centred development strategies that parallel culture economy
143 approaches observed in Europe, involving the valorisation of cultural resources and attempts
144 to localise economic control. For example, Aguayo (2008) discusses the case of the rural
145 Otavalo district in Ecuador, as an example of a ‘global village’ that is engaging with
146 globalisation on its own terms through the export of traditional Andean woven handicrafts. As
147 Aguayo describes, the revival of traditional indigenous weaving in Otavalo was prompted by

148 opportunities from tourism, but expanded globally through a diasporic networks of migrants
149 from the area, who broker deals and sell the handicrafts through street markets in European
150 and North American cities.

151 Similar examples from elsewhere in Africa, Asia and Latin America are documented in the
152 literature (e.g. Forstner 2013; Hieu and Rasovska 2017; Pudianti et al 2016), with communities
153 functioning as nodes in a transnational market for ‘ethnic’ art, crafts and fashions, whilst
154 “maintaining and re-creating a supposed ‘traditional identity’ strongly linked to local places”
155 (Aguayo 2008: 546). Yet, even as traditional local identity is foregrounded, the localities
156 concerned are transformed by the connection into translocal networks and the reorganisation
157 of production systems, including tendencies towards mechanisation and industrialisation to
158 meet demand and remain competitive (Gough and Rigg 2012; Kimura 2011).

159 The transformative impact on rural communities is not only economic, but social – in some
160 cases reconfiguring gender relations and empowering women (Forstner 2013; Sugathan et al
161 2016; Weir 2008) – and spatial. In understanding the spatial reconfiguration of rural cultural
162 economies, Kneafsey et al. (2001) use vertical networks to discuss the relationships with
163 external buyers and external market outlets, processors and institutions, horizontal networks to
164 include local market outlets, trust-based relationships between local producers and consumers,
165 internal knowledge flows and the use of place-based promotional schemes. While there might
166 be elements of both relations, some rural localities show a clearer orientation towards one of
167 the two trends.

168 In Kneafsey et al’s (2001) case study of Wales, artisanal craft-makers demonstrated strong
169 horizontal networks “through the use of local retail outlets and local inputs” (p 307), but weaker
170 vertical networks as well as a degree of ambiguity towards identification with place as a brand,
171 noting that “many producers feel that the authenticity and artistic quality of their craftsmanship
172 should stand up for itself and not have to be propped up by calls to regional imagery” (ibid.)

173 Whilst not presented in these terms, Gough and Rigg's (2012) case studies in Thailand and
174 Vietnam, in contrast, might be argued to exhibit strong vertical networks and weakening
175 horizontal ties. The craft-production system in their case study has in effect become
176 disembedded from the village, either as a territorial unit or as a community of social relations,
177 with social, economic and cultural implications. Although often undergoing substantial spatial
178 reconfiguration, the craft sector, compared to others, tends to remain attached to place, needing
179 to evoke an essence of locality in order to maintain market prices in line with the pretence that
180 handicraft products are "imbued with local skills and values and made from local materials,
181 which marks them out as different, converting cultural authenticity into commercial value"
182 (Gough and Rigg 2012: 184).

183 In both the global north and the global south, the effective revitalisation of artisan craft
184 industries depends on the integration of both vertical and horizontal relations, which can take
185 place in variegated ways according to the context. Kneafsey et al's (2001) positioning of
186 knowledge flows as a feature of strong horizontal networks corresponds with the emphasis
187 placed on the exchange and diffusion of information and ideas in broader literature on creative
188 economies, seen as a factor supporting spatial agglomeration (Bathelt et al. 2004; Florida 2005;
189 Knudsen et al. 2012). This includes not only the transmission of technical skills, but also the
190 sharing of market and business information, and critically the diffusion of innovative
191 technologies and practices. The implied requirement both for a critical mass of practitioners
192 and for interfaces with other actors such as researchers and marketers supports the
193 identification by Florida (2005) and others of creative industries with cities, yet recent literature
194 presents numerous examples of knowledge flows enhancing artisan craft industries in rural
195 contexts, through formal and informal channels. Kimura (2011), for instance, describes
196 knowledge diffusion about technological innovation spreading through kinship networks in
197 paper-manufacturing craft villages in Vietnam; whilst Forstner (2013) recounts the role of

198 workshops disseminating technical skills, business knowledge and education in women's rights
199 in empowering women craft-makers in rural Peru. Indeed, Wellbrock et al. (2012) assert that
200 rural areas can be considered as 'learning regions' as much as city-regions, but with different
201 configurations of knowledge actors and a greater emphasis on engaging and reproducing
202 embedded local traditional knowledge, for example for artisan craft-making, as central to
203 culture-based endogenous development. Thus, in localities where the inter-generational
204 transmission of craft skills by practitioners to apprentices has been broken, rural development
205 programmes may include centres, workshops and courses that revive lapsed local knowledge
206 and train new practitioners in traditional crafts (Karlson 2016).

207 *The Decline and Revival of Rural Crafts in China*

208 The trajectory of rural craft production in China has resonances with that in Latin America and
209 other parts of Asia, but is shaped by the particular political-economic context of China and
210 especially state management of the economy. Historically, the Chinese countryside was
211 characterised by localities specialising in the production of specific artisan crafts. These
212 communities were defined not only by their products, but also by the skills and knowledge
213 required to make them, which as Eyferth (2009) observes in his study of paper-making in rural
214 Sichuan, were "embodied in the brains and bodies of practitioners, situated in natural and
215 manmade environments, and distributed across groups of practitioners" (p 44). Specialist local
216 skills were guarded by social and spatial infrastructures disciplined by generational and gender
217 hierarchies, in which, for example, "women were consciously excluded, not from the
218 knowledge of certain production processes ... but from regarding their knowledge as personal
219 property that they could transmit at will" (Eyferth 2009, p 230).

220 These structures, however, were dismantled in the early years of the Communist regime, as
221 rural China experienced forced deindustrialisation, with traditional rural craft industries
222 restructured and marginalised under the pretext of modernisation, and labour diverted to

223 agriculture (Eyferth 2003, 2009). By Mao Zedong's death in 1976, Eyferth (2003) notes, "rural
224 handicrafts – a sector that in 1952 employed 3.9 million fully specialized workers and a
225 unknown number of sideline producers – had all but disappeared" (p 54).

226 Economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping from 1978 enabled a revival of rural craft industries,
227 and the introduction of the 'One Town, One Product' policy in 1989 further encouraged the
228 specialisation of localities around traditional craft industries (Pan 2012), but the impact has
229 been uneven. In some cases, artisan crafts have been revived to meet new market demands for
230 commodified rural art and handicrafts with cultural capital from the expanding Chinese urban
231 middle classes (Guo 2012; Liang 2004; Zacharias and Lei 2016). Elsewhere, traditional crafts
232 have been transmuted into mass-produced commodities for export, with craft-based producers
233 enrolled as subcontractors in global value chains (Chu 2016). In yet other instances, the
234 economic potential of rural craft industries has been inhibited by the continuing regulation of
235 the household as a unit of production (Eyferth 2009), or challenges with production capacity,
236 limited markets, low skills, restricted innovation and creativity, and the elderly profile of
237 craftworkers and difficulties in training new craftworkers in an environment of rural
238 depopulation (Feng and Jiang 2014; Gao et al 2017; Wang 2016).

239 At the same time, artisan crafts have been foregrounded by an emphasis in Chinese policy on
240 cultural heritage as a vehicle for economic development and modernisation in rural China
241 (Oakes 2009, 2012). Regional brands have mobilised cultural symbol to promote commercial
242 development, heritage clusters have been established that reinforce the association of craft and
243 place (Xu 2015), and local governments have turned "their specialty export products into
244 'culture' in order to laden its exchange value with symbolic capital as well as inculcate a market
245 consciousness among locals and provide new opportunities for commercial entrepreneurship"
246 (Oakes 2009, p 1082). Artisan craftworkers have been reimagined as entrepreneurs, producing
247 artefacts for urban consumers created by state social policies (Oakes 2009), as well as for

248 export, with transactions increasingly made through e-commerce platforms such as AliBaba
249 (for exports) and Taobao (for the domestic market) (Lin et al. 2016). As such, the
250 commodification of cultural heritage in China can also be viewed as a disciplinary project, not
251 only shaping individual economic subjects, but also the representations of culture that are
252 reproduced (Oakes 2012).

253 Indeed, Oakes (2009) argues that the valorisation of cultural heritage in China is connected to
254 perceptions among some elites of culture as “a unique space of distinct Chinese social
255 institutions and practices that might provide an alternative to the problems of both market
256 capitalism and state authoritarianism” (p 1076). Applied to rural development, this approach
257 constructs rural villages as singular, pure places isolated from global connections, such that it
258 “has been unable to locate culture, state, and market simultaneously within the same spaces of
259 everyday life, but has instead conceived of culture as inhabiting an abstract space that bears
260 little resemblance to the places where rural people actually live” (ibid.). It is in this respect that
261 Oakes (2009) labels Chinese culture-based development as a ‘prosaic third space’, following a
262 Chinese interpretation of the concept of third space that is informed by the more critical
263 writings of Homi Bhabha (1994) and Edward Soja (1996) but more prosaically conceives of
264 third space as a shared space mediating state and market provision of public goods and enabling
265 equal access. The prosaic third space of culture-based development therefore involves the
266 mediation of cultural resources – including artisan crafts – by state and market, but is marked
267 by its own contradictions and abstractions: the veneration of tradition in a project of
268 modernisation; the privatisation of communal cultural resources to protect local culture and
269 afford more local control; and the reinforcing of local distinctiveness to abstract a commodity
270 for translocal consumption. It is in this context that we encounter Da’ou village.

271

272 **Methods and Case Study**

273 This paper draws on intensive fieldwork undertaken in Da'ou village over four days in October
274 2016. Da'ou village (*Da'oucun*, 大欧村) is located in Jimo county, north of Qingdao in
275 Shandong province on the east coast of China. Its registered population includes 1500 residents
276 in 460 households. The surrounding region is a fertile agricultural district, with wheat, corn
277 and vegetables grown in fields around the village. Under Chinese law, each registered resident
278 has a land-holding, but many rent out the land to farmers from Da'ou village or neighbouring
279 villages, with the majority of the village workforce employed in birdcage making and
280 associated activities (see figure 1). There is also a small footwear factory, a museum and a
281 village government office, as well as two general stores and a post office in the village.

282 The research team was symmetric (Hantrais, 2009): it consisted of two European and two
283 Chinese researchers, with all interviews involving at least one European and one Chinese
284 researcher working together. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese or the local
285 dialect by a Chinese researcher, following an interview schedule jointly composed by the full
286 research team. Summary translations of the interview responses were periodically made for the
287 European researchers during the interview, allowing for supplementary questions to be posed.
288 All interviews were recorded with the informed consent of the interviewee and professionally
289 transcribed in Chinese and translated into English.

290 The fieldwork was organised with the assistance of the local government and party committee,
291 who also arranged the first couple of interviews, but did not play an active part in the selection
292 or conduct of further interviews. The local government also provided a car and driver to
293 transport the research team between the village and their hotel, but the driver did not
294 accompany the team to interviews within the village. One of the first interviewees, a prominent
295 craftworker in the village, subsequently acted as a facilitator for the research team, liaising with
296 the Chinese researchers to find interviewees and making introductions. All requests for
297 interviews were accepted. In total, 11 interviews were conducted with 19 people, including

298 nine birdcage makers and family members, five government officials, two employees at the
299 municipal e-commerce centre, and three other residents of the village (table 1). Thirteen of the
300 interviewees were men and six women. All interviews were conducted in Da'ou village, mostly
301 in homes or workshops, except for one interview at an e-commerce centre in the chief town of
302 the municipality.

303 As Da'ou village is fairly compact in area, the research team were able to walk around the
304 whole village, taking notes and photographs that provided supplementary data. Further
305 information was collected from visits to the village museum, the municipal e-commerce centre,
306 and to the Jimo Ancient City tourism site, where one of the Da'ou village craftworkers has
307 opened a shop; as well as from informal conversation with officials from the local government
308 and other local residents over meals. Additional contextual information on rural crafts and
309 birdcage culture in China was later collected from English and Chinese-language online
310 sources.

311

312 **Chinese Bird Culture and the Da'ou village Birdcage Tradition**

313 Bird culture in China has a long history, with birds revered by the Chinese population for the
314 spiritual and symbolic meanings attached to them in Chinese religion and mythology. The
315 keeping of birds as pets was popularised in the Song Dynasty (CE 960-1279), especially in the
316 imperial court and among aristocratic families. Historically, birdcages were made in various
317 localities around China, with differing styles reflecting local fashions, climatic conditions and
318 types of bird kept. Birdcages have been made in Da'ou village since the mid Ming Dynasty,
319 around CE 1500, originally supplying local markets in Shandong, but achieving prominence
320 when they became popular with members of the imperial court in Beijing during the early Qing
321 Dynasty (CE 1644-1911), and especially the reign of Emperor Qianlong (CE 1711-1799), when

322 they were favoured as a status symbol by members of the Manchu elite (Interviewees 5 and 6;
323 Wang and Wang 2009).

324 In common with other traditional craft industries (Eyferth 2003), the birdcage industry in Da'ou
325 village was extensively curtailed following the declaration of the People's Republic in 1949,
326 with labour redirected towards agriculture to maintain food supplies. Craft production was
327 relegated to a sideline of the agricultural cooperative, undertaken by older men working
328 together in a collective workshop. The focus of production also shifted to more utilitarian items
329 such as clothes pegs, coat hangers, clothes stands and badminton racquets, with only relatively
330 few birdcages made and sold through the Qingdao Department Store (Interviewees 6, 10 and
331 17). The store, which can be literally translated as the Market of National Goods, functioned
332 as the main retailing store for Shandong province in the Maoist era, where artisans were obliged
333 to sell their products.

334 Economic reforms after 1978 provided the opportunity for the birdcage industry to be revived.
335 The new household responsibility system allowed craftworkers to set up their own workshops
336 again, and the dismantling of the village cooperative and the monopoly of the Qingdao
337 Department Store permitted them to sell directly to customers in markets in Qingdao: "you
338 could work on your own and the talented people could market their products outside; they
339 didn't have to sell to the department store" (Interviewee 9 – birdcage maker). In particular,
340 craftworkers established contacts with traders or agents who bought birdcages from Da'ou
341 village to sell in Beijing and other cities of northern China.

342 Through these connections, Da'ou village has profited from a renaissance of bird culture in
343 China and a growing demand for birdcages from urban residents. As Yang (2015) notes, the
344 growth in demand reflects several concurrent trends, including the increased disposable
345 income, leisure time and pursuit of cultural capital of the expanding urban middle class, and
346 the popularity of bird keeping as a hobby among the substantial retired population but also a

347 growing fashion for keeping birds by young people, and the reduction in prices of birdcages
348 making them affordable to a wider section of the population. Despite some competition from
349 plastic and metal birdcages, Da'ou village craftworkers produce around 500,000 birdcages per
350 year (Xi and Wang 2015) and have secured an estimated 70-80 per cent of the market for
351 birdcages in northern China, including cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Wuhan.
352 Birdcage sales bring around 30 million RMB (3.75 million Euro) in revenue to Da'ou village
353 each year, with 75 per cent of households in Da'ou village engaged in making birdcages, and
354 a further 15 per cent in supporting activities (Interviewee 6).

355 One craftworker reported an annual household income of between 80,000 and 100,000 RMB
356 (10,000 to 12,000 Euro) which was considerable higher than an average household income of
357 31,545 RMB (4,000 Euro) for urban households and 12,848 RMB (1,600 Euro) for rural
358 households in Shandong province for the same year 2015 (Shandong Bureau of Statistics, 2017a
359 and 2017b). Residents have invested this relative wealth in household improvements, including
360 new furniture and appliances, refurbishing or extending houses, or building new houses.
361 Property values have consequently inflated, with a four-bedroom house in Da'ou village valued
362 at 140,000 – 150,000 RMB (18,000 – 19,000 Euro) compared with 40,000 – 50,000 RMB
363 (5,000 – 6,250 Euro) in a neighbouring village. Increased revenue to the local government has
364 been channelled into improvements to the landscape and public infrastructure of the
365 community. Roads have been paved, attractive street furniture installed, and a former rubbish
366 dump in the centre of the village converted into a lake. Housing for elderly residents has been
367 refurbished and modernised, and there are plans to replace some of the older housing in the
368 village with modern, western-style villas (see figure 2).

369

370 **Local Embeddedness and the Transmission of Knowledge**

371 The construction of Da'ou village as a noted centre of birdcage making is however less
372 straightforward than the above descriptive account suggests. The locality of Da'ou village lacks
373 the raw materials for birdcage manufacture – bamboo grown in northern China is not
374 structurally suitable and the *moso* bamboo used instead imported from the southern provinces
375 of Fujian, Jiangsu and Anhui, for centuries transported by handcart in a journey taking several
376 weeks (Interviewees 4, 6 and 15). Similarly, Da'ou village is over 650 kilometres from its most
377 important market in Beijing. The founding narrative recounts that the practice of birdcage
378 making was brought back to Da'ou village by a villager who had travelled to southern China
379 in the early Ming Dynasty and adopted by around twenty households, who passed the craft on
380 through subsequent generations (Interviewee 4). As such, the identity of Da'ou village as the
381 'birdcage village' is relationally constructed by the intersection of translocal flows of materials,
382 artefacts and cultural practices, spatially fixed in Da'ou village as the locus of inter-
383 generational transmission of specialist tacit knowledge that, to paraphrase Eyferth (2009), is
384 embodied in the brains and bodies of the birdcage makers.

385 Tacit knowledge is implicit, subjective and contextual; it is a form of practical 'know how'
386 embodied in the skills and work practices of individuals and organisations, in this case of
387 craftworkers. For Da'ou birdcage makers, this knowledge covers the seventy to eighty steps
388 involved in crafting a birdcage, as well as the variations required to create up to sixty different
389 kinds of birdcage for different species, ages and sizes of bird, times of day and forms of display
390 (Interviewee 6). These skills have been passed on within families, but commonly through
391 observation and immersion than formal apprenticeships:

392 We all learnt from our previous generations. I learnt from my grandfather, who learnt from his
393 grandfather. Before all the previous generations know how to do it. (Interviewee 17 – Birdcage
394 maker)

395 [Birdcage making] ran in our family and was passed down from my ancestor. I was immersed
396 in this environment, listening and watching. (Interviewee 6 – Birdcage maker)

397 I listened and watched this and was fully immersed in this since a kid. I could because i
398 watched it since a kid. (Interviewee 16 – Birdcage maker)

399 The birdcage makers are accordingly described in the lay discourse of the village as *inheritors*
400 or *successors*, emphasising both the continuity of the craft tradition and the special status of
401 afforded to them. As in Eyferth's (2009) study of Sichuan paper-makers, this status is
402 reinforced by generational and gender hierarchies that serve both to reproduce and protect the
403 specialist knowledge of the community. In particular, whilst women contribute to birdcage
404 making in household units (albeit commonly assigned ancillary tasks), young women in the
405 village have conventionally been excluded from learning the skills of the trade until they had
406 married a birdcage maker, an apparent precaution against the knowledge being dispersed
407 through marriage outside the community.

408 The close policing of the social boundaries of the community was reinforced by the relative
409 anonymity of Da'ou village in the birdcage supply chain. The birdcages sold to the imperial
410 court in Beijing became known after their place of use, not their place of manufacture, as
411 Peking Birdcages. Even in recent years, the origin of birdcages made in Da'ou village has not
412 always been evident to buyers:

413 I went to Guangxi Province and my friend wanted to show his bird cage during dinner and told
414 me he bought this in Beijing several days ago. I told him to show me. Then I told him it was not
415 from Beijing, but from Qingdao. He said no and told me he bought in Beijing. I told him the bird
416 cage was made in Da'ou Village, Qingdao City. (Interviewee 6 – Birdcage maker)

417 Birdcages sold through the Qingdao Department Store during the collectivist period were
418 marketed as functional products whose progeny was unimportant. The traders who later tracked
419 down the birdcage manufacture to Da'ou village and established retail networks in Beijing and

420 other cities further perpetuated the anonymity, initially keeping the identity of Da'ou village as
421 the place of production confidential to protect their trade and obstruct competition
422 (Interviewees 6 and 11).

423 As such, the reputation of Da'ou birdcages was based on the quality of the craft – the product
424 of the embodied tacit knowledge and skill of the birdcage maker – not on identification with
425 place. Whilst the discretion consolidated both the status of individual craftworkers and
426 strengthen of relationships with the agents who sold the birdcages, it is contrary to the discourse
427 of cultural heritage as the basis for rural development and became increasingly difficult to
428 maintain with the expansion of new markets and introduction of new technological innovations.

429

430 **Adaptations and Innovations**

431 The renewed popularity of bird culture in China and the liberalisation of domestic markets has
432 helped sales of Da'ou birdcages expand to new cities and provinces. As the traditional style of
433 birdcages varies between regions, the market expansion has been mirrored by an increase in
434 the range of birdcages made in Da'ou village from a historic portfolio of 20 to 30 different
435 types to over 60 varieties. Significantly, the agility to expand the range has been enabled by
436 the grounding of Da'ou village's reputation in the skill and artistry of the individual
437 craftworker, not in a specific design of birdcage.

438 At the same time, there has been a bifurcation of production between lower-value standardised
439 birdcages made as bulk orders for regular retailers, and higher-value customised birdcages
440 made for individual customers. Most craftworkers will produce both, with one estimating that
441 pre-ordered standardised birdcages constituted around 80 per cent of their annual sales
442 (Interviewee 6). In order to meet the demand for lower-quality birdcages a number of
443 adaptations have been introduced into the production system: households have specialised in

444 specific components of the birdcage or accessories, rather than a single craftworker making a
445 complete birdcage from beginning to end; cooperatives have been formed in which large orders
446 are distributed between several craftworkers; the final assembly of the finished birdcage has
447 been delegated to regular buyers, to reduce transport costs and avoid in-transit damage; and
448 some stages of the production process have been mechanised, such as polishing the bamboo
449 (Interviewees 4, 5, 6, 12 and 16). Such adjustments indicate a move towards more industrial
450 modes of production, as observed by Gough and Rigg (2012) in craft villages in Thailand and
451 Vietnam, yet so far have been accommodated within the parameters of the household system
452 and traditional knowledge community – including machinery that has been developed in the
453 village itself as expressions of *tu fang* (or *tu fa*) or indigenous method (Interviewees 2 and 6).
454 The adaptations to production have accelerated the manufacturing process, enabling a
455 craftworker to produce four or five birdcages per day, which would retail for around 30-50
456 RMB each (3.75 – 6.25 Euro). By contrast, a full hand-crafted bird cages takes two to three
457 days to complete and sells at an average price of 500-600 RMB each (62 – 75 Euro) (though
458 the best quality examples can sell for more than 5000 RMB (620 Euro)) (Interviewee 6). Da’ou
459 craftworkers therefore are required to negotiate between maintaining the cultural value of their
460 birdcages with limited high quality, high price examples, and ensuring consistency of income
461 with cheaper, lower-quality examples, reflecting Banks’s (2010) observation that increased
462 demand for craft products is leading to a reduction of quality, with a decline in ‘good’ craft
463 jobs and the rise of large numbers of standardised products. As one birdcage maker observed:

464 “They feel completely different. For the good one, you have a sense of achievement when
465 you just look at it. You may earn more with machine [for the ordinary ones]. But we can’t
466 lose or forget our traditional craftsmanship. You have to make the birdcage purely by hand
467 if the customer requires it.” (Interviewee 6).

468 The higher prices commanded by individually crafted birdcages reflect not only the time and
469 artistry involved in their production, but also an exchange value that is inflated by symbolic
470 associations with idealised notions of Chinese rural tradition and cultural heritage. Such
471 birdcages may be bought for purely decorative purposes, or put to new uses abstracted from
472 the original function of keeping birds, for instance as lamps or serving vessels for food at
473 restaurants (Interviewee 8).

474 The growth in individual sales of Da'ou birdcages has been facilitated by a further innovation
475 with the introduction of e-commerce, permitting direct sales to customers through the online
476 platforms Taobao and WeChat Merchant. Around 40 online stores have been developed by
477 households in Da'ou village, generating 10 million RMB (1.25 million Euro) in e-commerce
478 sales, or around one third of total sales revenue from the village (Interviewee 5). One household
479 interviewed was selling five per cent of their products through Taobao, whilst another had
480 increased their e-commerce sales by 30 per cent in the previous year (Interviewees 10 and 16).
481 Passing the threshold of 10 million RMB in revenue has earned Da'ou village designation as a
482 'Taobao Village' by the Ali Research Institute. Online sales thus make a significant
483 contribution to the village economy, yet they are viewed sceptically by some older male
484 craftworkers – in part because individual orders received through e-commerce are considered
485 less efficient than the bulk orders of agents, and in part because e-commerce is perceived as a
486 threat to the businesses of regular agents and retailers with whom craftworkers have developed
487 close relationships and who still constitute the majority of sales (Interviewees 6 and 10).

488 The wariness of many craftworkers towards e-commerce also reflects the new knowledge and
489 skills requirements that the technology has introduced to the village, and which few
490 craftworkers have or show interest in acquiring. As one commented, “artisans don't want [to
491 be on] Taobao. What the artisans love is craftsmanship. Making birdcages is better than
492 spending time on the computer” (Interviewee 6 – Birdcage maker). Accordingly, e-commerce

493 activities in the village are predominantly managed by women, who were traditionally
494 marginalised in the birdcage production process, with younger women in particular using
495 computing and business skills acquired in education or employment outside the village (for
496 example, Interviewees 8, 10 and 16). As in Lin et al's (2016) case study in Guangdong
497 province, the adoption of e-commerce in Da'ou village has reinforced the household as an
498 economic unit, but with an altered division of labour. Moreover, as a disruptive technology, e-
499 commerce has had wider social impacts, challenging the established generational and gender
500 hierarchies of the birdcage craft, enhancing the status and independence of women and their
501 contribution to household finances, weakening the importance of the craftmakers' vertical
502 networks with buyers, and valorising new forms of knowledge alongside the inherited craft
503 skill of the birdcage makers.

504 Similar ambivalence is attached to the prospect of e-commerce opening new opportunities for
505 exports. Almost all sales of Da'ou birdcages are made within China, but some international
506 sales have periodically been made to countries including Canada, Indonesia, Japan,
507 Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam and the United
508 States – generally as bulk orders through agents either in China or the importing country
509 (Interviewees 4, 6, 7 and 8). Local government officials, craftworkers and e-commerce traders
510 all expressed aspirations for exports, and one household we visited had a large map of the world
511 pinned above the computer they used for e-commerce, but many described the difficulties
512 encountered with language and knowledge of exports processes and markets:

513 “You are not an expert in this field. If you can speak English or other language. No such
514 talent, nobody has ever studied in college. The agent, with higher education and experience
515 in this field, exports to other places.” (Interviewee 10 – Birdcage maker)

516 “As a man from countryside, we have to think whether we have the ambition but also the
517 ability or the English skills. But we don't know anything about this ... We lack such

518 talents. The bird cage business will grow with such talents. With the talent, whoever knows
519 international trade or foreign language, the market will expand. Farmers, we don't know
520 about that field. (Interviewee 6 – Birdcage maker)

521 Notably, in contrast to the computer and design skills required for e-commerce that have been
522 acquired by women and young people in Da'ou village, the forms of knowledge required for
523 international trade are positioned here as being beyond the capacities of uneducated villagers,
524 echoing Eyferth's (2009) observation of the tendency of rural people in China to characterise
525 themselves as unskilled peasants, despite possessing valuable if under-recognised skills.

526

527 **The Prosaic Third Space of Da'ou Village Birdcage Culture**

528 As narrated by residents themselves, the story of the Da'ou village birdcage craft is a tale of
529 peasant persistence and ingenuity, an example of the 'popular peasant innovation' documented
530 by Ye and Fu (2015), in which rural inhabitants are 'dynamic actors' and "the real promoters
531 of institutional transformation in the special institutional context of rural China" (p 97).
532 However, closer examination shows that the agency of Da'ou village residents has been
533 repeatedly checked and regulated by external actors: from the suppression of birdcage making
534 in the collectivist era, to the reliance on agents for market access, to the technological and
535 organisational requirements of e-commerce, to the more recent initiatives of local government
536 to incorporate the tradition in the promotion of cultural heritage for rural development. For
537 villagers, the birdcage craft tradition is a 'commons', a "a common stock of knowledge"
538 (Eyferth 2009, p 230) that belongs to the community. Yet, in keeping with Eyferth's (2009)
539 study of Sichuan paper-makers and Oakes's (2009) example of tunpu culture in Guizhou,
540 efforts to sustain the birdcage craft tradition have involved the commodification and
541 privatisation of the underpinning knowledge. At the same time, it has evaded full market
542 capture, with resistance to industrialisation and the retention of working practices that defy

543 market logics. Neither, though, is it fully within the control of the state, as autonomous
544 craftworkers operate independently.

545 In these ways, the Da'ou village birdcage craft resonates with Oakes's (2009) conceptualisation
546 of cultural heritage in China as a prosaic third space. Compared with other rural communities
547 in China that have experienced either industrialisation, urbanisation and incorporation into
548 global economic networks (Chan et al. 2009; Liang et al. 2002; Long et al. 2009), or economic
549 stagnation and depopulation (Gao 2017; Long et al. 2009, 2012), Da'ou village appears to
550 represent a third space in which economic vitality has been achieved whilst maintaining
551 distinctive social structures and practices that are regarded as characteristic of the Chinese
552 countryside. Core to this balance is the synergy of the household production system with the
553 individualistic and workshop-focused working practices of craft-making and the volume of
554 market demands for the end product. Yet, from some perspectives the household system is
555 viewed as an obstacle to the further economic development of Da'ou village. In contrast with
556 parts of China in which models of community capitalism revolve around community-owned
557 enterprises (Chan et al. 2009; Hou 2011), the household production system in Da'ou village
558 lacks coordination, integration and coherent brand, has limited capital for expansion, and is
559 less open to political direction. These sentiments informed a critique of the Da'ou village
560 birdcage industry articulated by the local township governor:

561 "The problem Da'ou birdcage faces now is the negligence of the brand due to the
562 household model ... The purely handcrafted artwork boasts a huge market value
563 due to its vast market. You can collect and buy it and put it in your home for 2-3
564 years, then it becomes a symbol of history. Now the problem with current
565 household model is that the brand is not strong. Just like what I told my villagers.
566 Before there was a high brand awareness of the Da'ou birdcage among the people.
567 Now the brand is not built up thanks to current household production model ... If

568 we work in concert and build the brand, the people or villagers will benefit a lot
569 due to a bigger profit margin. For example, now one birdcage can be sold by 600
570 yuan [RMB] or 1000 yuan. After the brand is popular, maybe it can be sold for
571 5000, or 6000 [RMB].” (Interviewee 5 – Township Governor).

572 Although the local governor considers the household system to be the main obstacle to the
573 creation of Da’ou brand, the confidentiality about the birdcages’ place of production,
574 maintained until 1978, also hindered place-branding. Yet, even if during this period the product
575 was rarely associated with Da’ou village, the growing demand of birdcages and the consequent
576 economic expansion still contributed to the development of the village, as previously
577 demonstrated. Nevertheless, for further strengthening such rural development the emphasis of
578 the local government has been on initiatives to support brand development, promotion and
579 marketing, not dissimilar to cultural economy initiatives in European rural development
580 programmes. However, whilst the primary aim of these initiatives is economic, they also, as
581 Oakes (2012) suggests, serve as tools of governmentality that order and discipline subjects to
582 conform to certain representations (including of idealised notions of rural life) and behaviours
583 (appropriate to participation in a modern economy).

584 First, the Da’ou village brand has been strengthened through external validation, with
585 recognition as a UNESCO-listed component of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Shandong
586 Province in 2013 and designation as a ‘Rural Memory Village’ in 2016. These awards have
587 enhanced the visibility of Da’ou village, with features in a Chinese travel magazine and a
588 television programme. This promotional material takes advantage of the cultural heritage of
589 the birdcages to give prominence to Da’ou village and reinforce the place-brand. Second, the
590 brand has been consolidated by physical projects in the village, aimed in part at attracting
591 tourists to visit and buy birdcages directly (Jimo Government 2016). Three exhibition spaces
592 have been created – a central showroom for displaying village products; an educational space,

593 known as the ‘Successor Hall’, to teach the birdcage craft to new generations; and a public
594 museum, the ‘Hall of Rural Memory’, that includes displays on the history and techniques of
595 birdcage-making and examples of tools, machinery and styles of birdcage (figures 3 and 4).
596 Additions to the village landscape similarly reinforce the brand identity as the birdcage village,
597 including sculptures of birdcages at the village entrance, models of birdcages attached to
598 streetlamps, murals on the village offices depicting stylised historical scenes of birdcage-
599 making, and information boards describing the craft heritage. All are connected by the recurrent
600 motif of the new village logo, a green outline of a birdcage around the interlocking (Latin)
601 letters D and O.

602 Third, marketing channels for Da’ou birdcages have been developed by investment in e-
603 commerce infrastructure, including an e-commerce centre in the main town that handles online
604 sales and dispatches orders on behalf of local producers, and runs training courses covering
605 topics such as opening an online store, website design, advertising, photographing products
606 and managing logistics (Interviewees 13 and 14). The e-commerce initiative, which covers the
607 wider Yifeng township, has a ‘1-10-100-1000-10000-100000’ target:

608 “One means to build a rural e-commerce service center. Ten means to establish 10 e-
609 commerce model villages and cooperatives. Cooperatives set up by the farmers ... to drive
610 the e-commerce development of 100 villages since Yifeng town consists of 100 villages.
611 One thousand means to cultivate 1000 entrepreneurs. The e-commerce entrepreneurs will
612 promote the development of 10,000 farmers to become rich. One hundred thousand means
613 to achieve more than 100,000,000 e-commerce sales revenue.” (Interviewee 13 – E-
614 commerce centre manager).

615 As such, the strategy aims explicitly at creating entrepreneurial subjects, stimulating private
616 enterprise and inculcating modern business cultures. Its hub-and-spoke structure, meanwhile,
617 implicitly promotes more coordinated and cooperative approaches to marketing, including

618 through an e-commerce hub established in Da'ou village as one of the ten model villages to act
619 as a central sales point for birdcages produced by different workshops, unified by the Da'ou
620 village brand (Interviewees 12 and 13). Thus, the online strategy is not limited to strengthening
621 entrepreneurial skills, but also fortifying the reputation of Da'ou as a Taobao village by
622 promoting its branding as an innovative, modern and technologically advanced place.

623 Together these initiatives service to push the cultural space of Da'ou birdcage-making towards
624 a more ambitious market orientation through state-sponsored projects. This process abstracts
625 the Da'ou village brand and its mobilisation from its roots in the physical tradition of birdcage-
626 making in the village in three ways. Firstly, the cultural heritage of birdcage-making embodied
627 in the brand and represented in the museum, street art and promotional materials is abstracted
628 from the actual history through its depiction of an idyllic rural past that glosses over the harsh
629 struggle for survival, its suggestion of a continuous tradition that ignores the discontinuity of
630 the collectivist era, and the marginalisation of the agricultural history of the village, with
631 villagers historically being farmers first who made birdcages out of season.

632 Secondly, the birdcage craft community is abstracted from the physical space of the village.
633 Although the craft production of the birdcages continues to be contained in the village and
634 participation largely restricted to village kinship networks; key aspects of sales and marketing
635 are performed outside the village, whether by young people living away from home managing
636 e-commerce websites at a distance, or through the showroom for Da'ou birdcages opened in
637 the Jimo Ancient City tourist complex, 15 kilometres away.

638 Thirdly, the specialist knowledge of craft birdcage-making has been abstracted from the 'brains
639 and bodies' of the craftmakers, through codification and representation in museum displays
640 and especially in the 'Successor Hall' and in birdcage-making sessions for children in the
641 training pavilion in Jimo – significantly, outside the village. This last step departs from the
642 historic transmission of knowledge in familial lines, but reflects the upscaling of the cultural

643 significance of the Da'ou birdcage that has become part of the brand, with the imperative that
644 “the Chinese traditional craftsmanship has to be passed on to the next generation” (Interviewee
645 6 – Birdcage maker).

646

647 **Conclusions**

648 The revitalisation of the birdcage craft tradition of Da'ou village and its transformation into a
649 thriving economic vitality that has taken the village from poverty to prosperity stands out as a
650 notable example of the successful contribution of art and craft to rural development, and
651 particularly of China's policy of valorising cultural heritage for economic development. It is
652 however an atypical case, even in its local context. Historically there were three villages in the
653 township that produced characteristic handicrafts: birdcages in Da'ou village, and dustpans
654 (*boji*) and weighing scales (*sheng*) in neighbouring villages. Only the birdcage tradition has
655 been successfully revived, facilitated by market demand from urban middle classes and
656 reflecting the capacity of the Da'ou birdcage to be recognised for more than its use value. More
657 broadly, the picture of rural craft industry in China is uneven, with pockets of successful
658 revitalisation, such as Da'ou village, contrasted with wider patterns of long-term decline
659 characterised by low earnings, ageing craftworkers and problems of business succession (Wang
660 and Zhang 2013).

661 Da'ou village nonetheless provides insights into the dynamics of how traditional crafts are
662 mobilised for economic development, not only in China and other global south contexts, but
663 also by highlighting similarities and differences with trajectories in Europe and North America.
664 One common thread is the central significance of the craftworkers' specialist knowledge and
665 skill to the creative practice of handicraft making. It is this skill or knowledge that is valorised
666 or commodified as craft industries are highlighted in culture-based rural development

667 strategies. Yet, the ways in which knowledge is preserved, transmitted and mobilised differ
668 between Da'ou village and other geographical contexts detailed in the wider international
669 literature on rural craft industries. The perseverance of Da'ou village as a distinctive centre for
670 birdcage-making may arguably be attributed to the close policing of the inter-generational
671 transmission of knowledge within the village and the impermeability of imagined community
672 boundaries to knowledge transfer. This contrasts both with the situation more commonly
673 observed in Europe, where many 'rural crafts' have become generic and non-place specific and
674 the revitalisation of rural craft industries has often been led by in-migrants (Fox Miller 2017;
675 Herslund 2011; Kneafsey et al. 2001); and with the 'deterritorialisation' of craft-making
676 through processes of industrialisation documented by Gough and Rigg (2012) in craft villages
677 in south east Asia.

678 Closer examination, though, points to similar pressures being exerted on the birdcage industry
679 of Da'ou village, particularly as it has been formally incorporated into local government
680 policies for cultural heritage and economic development, and subjected to disciplining and
681 direction by the state. It is here that Oakes's (2008) concept of cultural heritage in China as a
682 'prosaic third state' – existing between tradition and modernity, and between the state and the
683 market – is helpful in highlighting power relations and processes of abstraction. As discussed
684 above, state-led efforts to consolidate the Da'ou village 'brand' are creating a discursive
685 representation of the village and its birdcage tradition that is abstracted from the complex,
686 relational history of the locality, whilst the moulding of craftworkers and their households as
687 entrepreneurial subjects and the related promotion of e-commerce and tourism abstracts aspects
688 of the birdcage business from the territorial space of the village, and abstracts the craft
689 knowledge of birdcage-making from the 'brains and bodies' of the craftspeople (c.f Eyferth
690 2009).

691 These observations, together with accounts in the existing literature of the deterritorialisation
692 of craft-working in both the global north and the global south, raise questions about the
693 relationship between craft, knowledge and place in rural economies. The notion of ‘culture
694 economies’, as initially articulated by Ray (1998, 1999), envisages endogenous rural
695 development based on the cultural resources embedded in place, including craft traditions. Yet,
696 the case of Da’ou village reinforces a pattern observable in the broader literature that the
697 commodification of traditional craft-working for new markets involves processes of abstraction
698 that detach craft industries from place, replacing as Oakes (2008) indicates, a root-based culture
699 founded on isolation with a route-based culture born out of global connection.

700

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711

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