

Recovering tradition in globalizing rural China: handicraft birdcages in Da'ou village

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Da'ou village
Shandong province

The birdcage village
Revitalising a traditional craft to negotiate a changing present

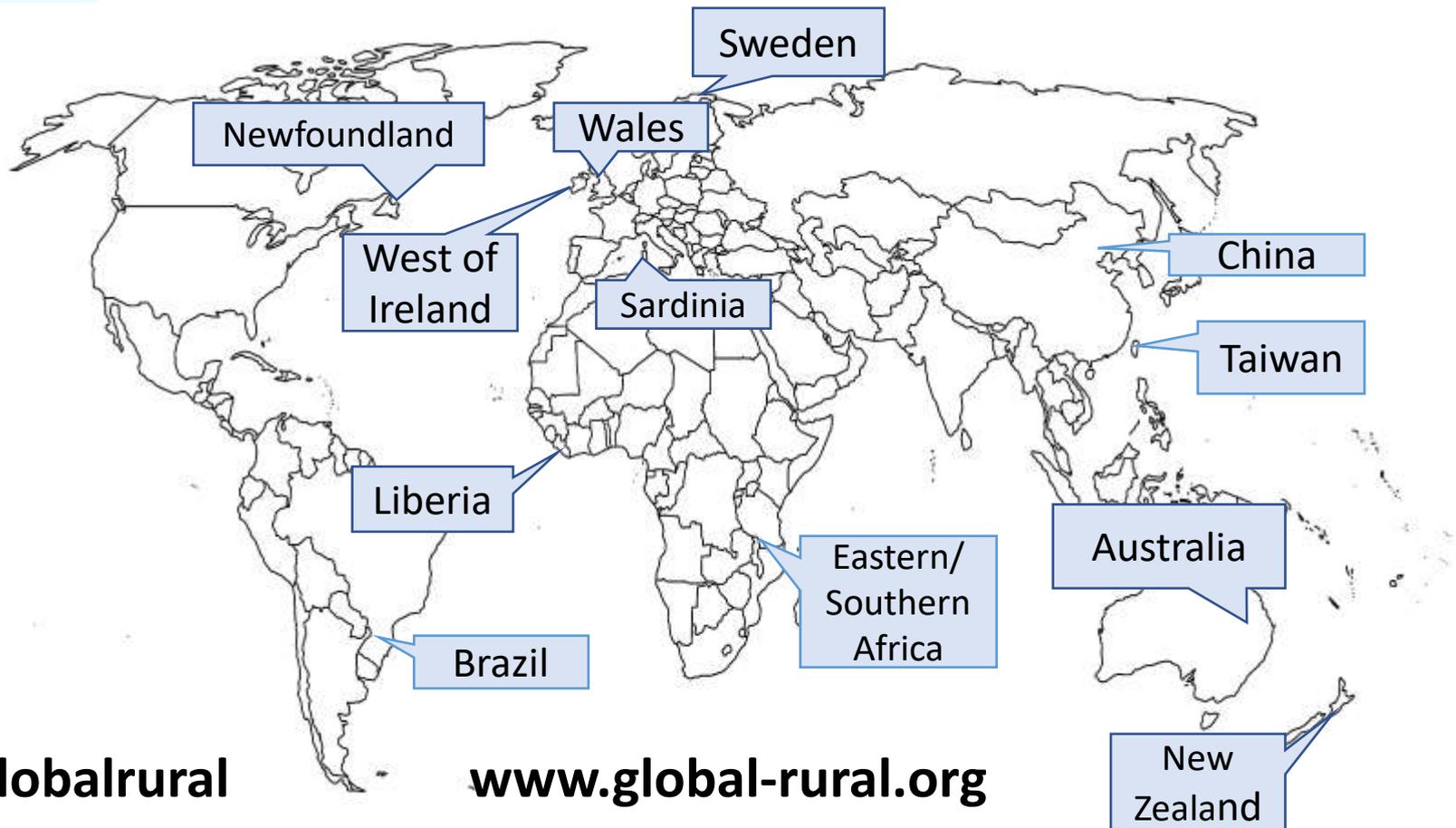




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Da'ou Village

- One of several case studies in China
- Collaboration with IGSNRR, Chinese Academy of Sciences
- Interviews in Chinese by Xiaoyu Zheng and Yuanyuan Yang
- **13?** interviews over 3 days in October 2016
- Transcribed and translated by first language Chinese speaker
- Study one with cooperation of local government



The Da'ou Birdcage

- Craft introduced to Da'ou village by migrants from southern China in ?? Century
- Village developed distinctive style of bamboo birdcage
- Traditionally sold in markets in Qingdao and other local cities
- Fashionable with imperial elite during Qing dynasty
- Reputation throughout China



The Da'ou Birdcage

- Handmade by individual *craftsmen*
- Skill jealously guarded by village
- Innovated own tools



The Da'ou Birdcage

- During Maoist era, village production shifted to clothes pegs and coat hangers



The Da'ou Birdcage

- Traditional birdcage craft revitalised
- Demand from growing urban middle classes
- Craftsmen formed cooperatives
- Birdcages sold through agents



The Da'ou Birdcage

- *Any information about number of sales / income?*



Da'ou Village

- Brought village prosperity at time other Chinese villages struggling with depopulation
- Village beautification and modernisation schemes



Da'ou Village

- New housing and renovated housing



Da'ou Village

- Helping to keep young people in the village?



New connections

- Growth of e-commerce
- Da'ou named as a 'Tabao village', with sales of over RMB10m (€1.25m) on Tabao online platform & at least 10% of households engaged



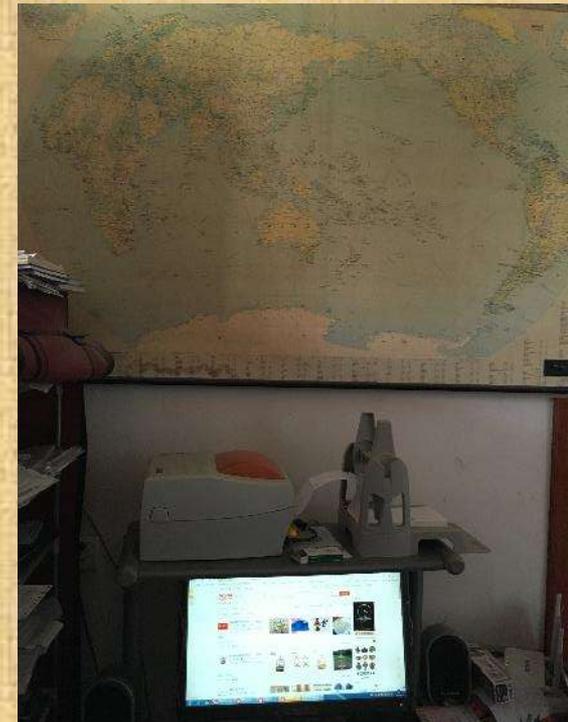
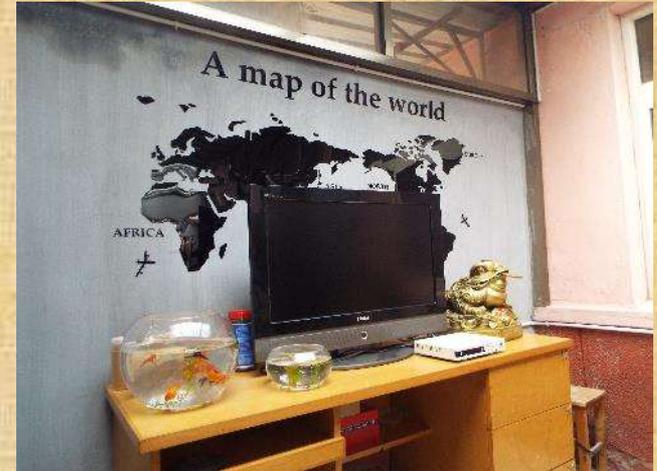
New connections

- E-commerce particularly led by women and younger people in village
- Older craftsmen sceptical



New connections

- Dreams of reaching international market
- Problems of language and customs bureaucracy



New connections

- Emphasis also on tourism
- New museum and showroom
- Hopes from new Qingdao international airport



New connections

- One craftsman opening shop in new Jimo Ancient City tourism development



New connections

- Featured in travel magazines and TV programmes



Summary

- Like many villages in China, Da'ou village facing significant change
- Challenges of out-migration and decline of agriculture
- Da'ou turning to traditional crafts to secure future
- Assisted by global technologies and connections – e-commerce and tourism
- Blending the traditional and new opportunities
- Shifts in village social structure
- Tensions between old and new



A photograph of a rural street scene. In the foreground, there are buildings with colorful facades and some clutter, including a large pile of debris and a blue tarp. In the middle ground, a person wearing a cap is sitting on a small cart or machine, possibly working with agricultural equipment. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape under a bright sky. The overall scene is somewhat overcast and dusty.

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