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Protecting the biodiversity in the fast urbanization age – an ecotourism zone in Hainan, China

Yanhong Tang ^a, Yuezhong Chen ^b *

^a *Ecoland Planning and Design Inc., Beijing, China*

^b *Ecoland Planning and Design Inc., Beijing, China*

Abstract

In China's rush to urbanize, development practices are often forceful on local people. Displacing development of the Chinese countryside to make way for expensive housing and large hotels is a regularity. This paper looks at the Yanoda Ecotourism Zone Planning project in Hainan, China as an example of the method of the Ecotourism and Sustainable Development approach.

The design team thoroughly collected and analyzed the natural and culture elements of the area, and hosted public meetings of all parties including local governmental, developer, local farmers, potential buyers and came up an innovated master plan for the 164 km² (40,525 acres) project areas that all parties receive some benefit; at the same time, the natural resource and cultural character of the area was preserved in a maximize way. The Ecoland design team also came up with a demonstration design for Phase I area as well as a design guideline for the rest of the project area. Three years after the project, the local residents' income, the government tax income from tourism, and developer's investment return have all proved the success of the development. The goal of preserving the sensitive environmental area was accomplished as well. By incorporating scientific research, urban infrastructure, and job training, the plan shows that the goals of ecological, cultural, and economic sustainability can be combined to create a successful development for all parties involved. The result is a popular tourist destination that has the support of both the people and the government. Yanoda Ecotourism Zone shows how a model developed with the community can lead to successful future growth. The master plan for Yanoda is not merely a guideline for development but a model for a system of continued sustainability and growth.

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* Yanhong Tang. Tel.: +86 13910437575; fax: +86 10 82815567.

E-mail address: jtang@vip.sina.com

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1. Introduction:

Land acquisition by government and developers through eminent domain in China is a much more common practice than in the United States due to the strong governmental power in China. Local residents may be relocated abruptly and without consent to make way for expensive housing and large hotels; the land they depended on to earn their living may be replaced by seemingly endless luxury vacation villas, shopping complexes, and theme parks. Residents face the threat of losing their primary source of income and then becoming a burden on their community. Conventionally , the landscape architects' role in urbanization development is fairly limited in China and the government, the developer, and the local people all have their own, very different objectives. With this project, our team took on the task of coordinating and guiding these different parties, and creatively leading the development process

This paper, uses the Yanoda Ecotourism Zone Planning project of Hainan, China to demonstrate the ECOLAND landscape architecture team's success in implementing an Ecotourism and Sustainable Development method. The project represents an innovative way to develop land in China that forgoes the conventional model of gentrification in favour of a progressive blend of ideas, directly involving and benefiting the local people in an ecologically and culturally sustainable way.

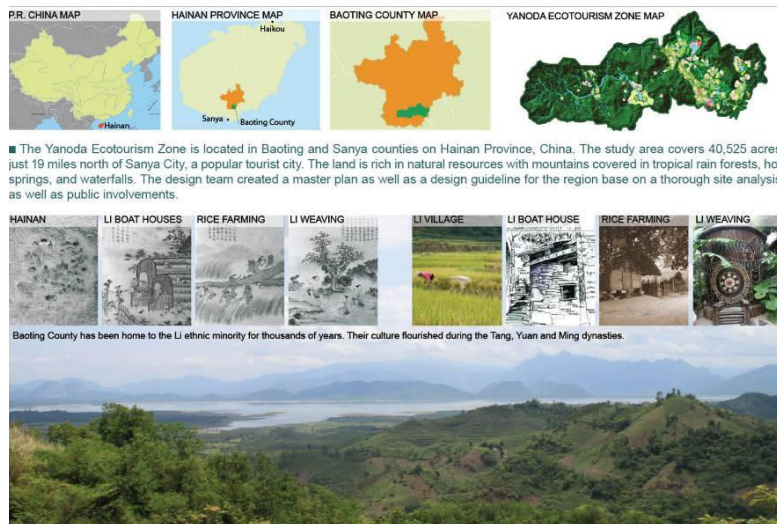


Fig. 1. Project location and historic character of the area

2. Project Background

The Yanoda Ecotourism Zone is located in Baoting and Sanya counties on Hainan Province, in the South China Sea (Fig.1). The study area covers 164 km² (40,525 acres) near the Wuzhi Mountains. This project was a collaborative project between the developer and two county jurisdictions. Initially, when the ECOLAND design designers proposed to the developers and local government that residents and their establishments should be preserved as a cultural attraction. Its residents, the Li people, are one of China's 55 ethnic minorities. team was called in, the preliminary plan showed no connection to the local land which is rich in natural resources and culture. The developer's original plan was to coercively relocate residents of the area and replace their farmland with expansive golf courses and 'Spanish-Mediterranean' style resorts.

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