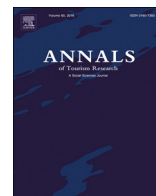




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Existentially understanding tourism in locale: A *dwelling* perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study draws heavily on Heidegger's post turn thinking of *dwelling* to provide a philosophically informed approach to comprehend host perceptions of tourism. The philosophical premise of *dwelling*, including (to) *poetically dwell* and *the fourfold*, existentially conceptualizes the host community and destination site as a *oneness* where host perceptions are formed and tourism-created consequences occur. A hermeneutic-phenomenological investigation of a village-based tourism initiative in China demonstrates that *guanxi* as the manner of *dwelling* fundamentally frames how a local destination community perceives tourism; in turn, the ongoing tourism development has profoundly influenced the hosts' existential condition (i.e., *the fourfold*), leading them to *unpoetically dwell*.

Introduction

Perceptions of tourism and its accruing complexities in destination communities have been extensively researched since the 1970s. Most studies have concentrated on whether host communities perceive tourism as “blessing or blight” (Young, 1973, p.1). Although host perceptions of tourism have become “one of the most systematic and well-studied areas of tourism”, plentiful reviews¹ have pointed out two main challenges that persistently undermine “a solid foundation for further advancement in the research field” (Nunkoo, Smith, & Ramkissoon, 2013, p.6). Firstly, the theoretical frameworks (e.g., social exchange theory, irridex model, seminal resort life-cycle) in much of the research conceptually simplify the formation of local perceptions of tourism and tourism development in locale. These studies are commonly classified as “tourism-centric” but fail to consider “the wider socio-cultural and historical framework” (Sharpley, 2014, p.46) within which tourism presences and hosts' perceptions are formed. The second challenge is the dominance of the positivist paradigm, which quantifies the local-formed ‘perception’ based on an existing outlook or hypotheses that were developed elsewhere, potentially creating “a contextual vacuum” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p.31). Such “weakness” of theoretical foundation (Sharpley, 2014, p. 42) and absence of “methodological reflexivity” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p.8) result in research that tends to describe *what* host perceptions are but does not necessarily explain *why* local residents choose particular perspective(s) to understand tourism and its multi-phenomenal impacts.

In view of these two challenges raised, *dwelling*, one of Heidegger's central philosophical thoughts, and his *hermeneutic phenomenology* are extremely pertinent in the development of this article. *Dwelling* is about the existential essence of human beings in their world—the recognition of time-deepened rootedness and the integration of human beings and their world—which offers a

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robust philosophical foundation on which the spatial and temporal formations of local perceptions and tourism-in-locale are “put together in a coherent unity” (Chia, 2002, p.31). By so doing, we can essentially understand why people choose a particular way to live in a particular place—in this context, the importance of perceptions and reactions to tourism may be ‘lightened’ (Sharpley, 2014), as all of them are subject to context-lifestyle decision. Moreover, Heidegger's insights into humanity's existential situation that resides in *understanding* and *language* inform his *hermeneutic phenomenology* (Dreyfus, 1991). Its commitment to understanding “the perspectival directedness of our involvement in the lived world” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.38) makes *hermeneutic phenomenology* a context-sensitive methodology. This methodological guide is particularly appropriate to our research aim of how the experiential phenomena of tourism and their profound influences are perceived by a particular destination community, with an existential perspective of contextual idiosyncrasy.

To existentially understand hosts' localized perceptions of tourism and the profound tourism influence upon various dimensions of the locale, this research situates discussion within *Huangling*, a Chinese single-surname village where residents share the same surname, worship the same ancestors and continue intimate interactions over time. Under the investment of a local company, WRCD, *Huangling* village has experienced tourism development into *Huangling Tourist Resort* since 2008, and villagers have relocated to *Huangling New Village* in 2012. What has already happened and is happening in *Huangling* can be commonly found in rural China today: relocating residents (Cui & Ryan, 2011), seasonality (Chio, 2014) and emerging self-run tourism businesses (Ying & Zhou, 2007). It is this commonness of rural tourism development observed in *Huangling* that allows us to discern what is unique and local in perceiving tourism within rural China. Underpinned by Heidegger's philosophy and methodology, this article reveals that *guanxi*, as a particular manner of *dwelling*, “contributes to the overall experience in the locale” (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001, p.76), including how the *Huangling* destination community perceives tourism. Simultaneously, the “contextual processes” (Tucker, 2010, p.928) of tourism development have ongoing influences over *guanxi*, leading the locals to *unpoetically dwell*. This article makes a first attempt at systematically applying Heidegger's *dwelling* to tourism research, especially incorporating his post-turn thinking. It offers a robust philosophical framework; spatial, temporal and human dimensions of a destination community are ontologically integrated, which contributes to a comprehension of tourism phenomena in a local sense. Moreover, we fashion a philosophical interrogation of *guanxi-dwelling* to existentially understand rural Chinese people who experientially perceive and are directly impacted by tourism. Such a horizontal “epistemological conversation” (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015, p. 13) between West (*dwelling*) and East (*guanxi*) advances the research on tourism in (rural) China.

Dwelling: existentially understanding tourism in locale

The concept of *dwelling* presented in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1996) captures the distinctive manner in which human beings exist in the world, with a central concern of “the meaning of being” (Gadamer, 1976, p. xlv). In this early treatise, human existential meaning exists at a nexus point in time where past, present and future are interconnected in place(s). This is what Heidegger (1996, p.384) calls, a “threefold perspective”: every person, as a person, finds themselves always already in a meaningful present world, and the ‘meaning’ is conditioned by the legacy of a cultural past; this ‘meaning’ also provides the outline from within which it is meaningful to commit oneself in the future. Obviously, this time-deepened ‘meaning’ of human existence here is culturally conditioned, so that the concept of *nature* “can be made intelligible only in terms of” certain established meanings (Dreyfus, 1991, p.109). As Heidegger (1996, p.66) illustrates, “the wind is wind in the sails.” The natural world, i.e., wind, can only make sense in relation to human experiential involvement, i.e., sailing; if the wind has not yet been experienced by us, in Heidegger's view, it does not meaningfully exist. Such cultural-conditioned and time-thickened meaningful existence remain in his later philosophy of *dwelling*, but the “denatured” manner of being as human was reinterpreted by Heidegger (Wrathall & Malpas, 2000, p.198).

Changes (known as ‘the turn’) occurred in Heidegger's philosophy after *Being and Time*. In these ‘dwelling’ (from the distinctive manner of existing) became definitive of human essence (Wheeler, 1997). Heidegger (2001) reinterprets *dwelling* through an exercise in etymology—the philosophy of *dwelling* is bound with German language (e.g., particular literal/etymological connotations), requiring a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural awareness, and so we reiterate it here: the German word for the verb ‘to build,’ *bauen*, comes from the Old English and High German *buan*, meaning ‘to dwell.’ Though this original meaning has been lost, it is preserved in such compounds as the English ‘neighbor,’ meaning one who dwells in nearness; *dwelling* is thus potentially bound up with ideas of ‘home,’ ‘familiarity’ and ‘rootedness’ (Ingold, 2002). Notably, it can be too romantic to conjure up “a cosy and comfortable” experience of ‘*dwelling*,’ or “a haven of rest where all tensions are resolve[d]” for *dwelt* place(s) (Ingold, 2005, p.503); home is not necessarily a comfortable or pleasant place to be but being-at-home “is always contextualized and lived” (Davis, 2010, p.21–26). Then, how can we become *dwellers* “to be at peace” and how can the world we live in come to be homely or a *dwelt* place? To answer these questions, we need to understand the cognates of *dwelling*: (to) *poetically dwell* and *the fourfold*.

“Dwelling occurs only when poetry comes,” as claimed by Heidegger (2001, p. 224), who does not place ‘poetry’ in the usual domain of literature, rhetoric or aesthetics but develops it as an ontological notion. *Poetry* is the “historical language of being” (Geertsema, 2018, p.6), which preserves the culturally conditioned understanding (e.g., religion, politics, philosophy, etc.), in terms of appropriate human existence. That is, *poetry* is an outlet of *understanding* that provides the foremost measure for the existence of a person. This existential understanding fundamentally answers who ‘I’ am and fits all life experiences into ‘my existence’ in the world. Any experiential perception of what is around us is pre-formed by our existential understanding and this perception is one which occurs against the background of *language*. The essence of language, as Heidegger insisted, is not human communication but a mode for the hermeneutics of existential understanding and human situatedness. This is why his famous poetic determination of language reads that we are “learning to dwell in the speaking of language” (Heidegger, 2001, p.207). Our capacity to engage appropriately in our world is a *poetic* sensitivity—when the human being appropriately lives in the light of the *understanding* of their historical essence

preserved in *poetry*, they inhabit the ‘poetic dwelling’ or, as Heidegger (2001, p.212) says, “man dwells poetically.” So, the ‘quality’ of human life is determined by how people are able to *dwell*, wherein *dwelling* connotes inevitably more than “a utilitarian act”, e.g., merely occupying a space (Geertsema, 2018, p.189). To *dwell poetically* means to “belong primarily within the fourfold” (Heidegger, 1977, p.49); *dwelling* in terms of appropriately existing is ultimately intertwined with the reinterpreted world, i.e., *the fourfold*.

The fourfold names the “gathering” of *earth, sky, mortals* and *divinities* (Heidegger, 2001, p. 151), which is late Heidegger's more robust account of the world, in terms of its ontological structure (Wheeler, 1997). In particular, *earth* is a unified nourishing or fertilizing power; it names the register of the natural world and of thriving life (e.g., soils and animals) that all nourish human existence. *Sky* is the fundamental, orderly rhythms (e.g., seasons), offering the experiential context of ‘familiarity’ where humans exist. *Mortals* refers to “being-with-one-another” (Heidegger, 2001, p.148); that is, Heidegger identifies a being-in-community as the essential condition of being human. Mortals are thoroughly united into a community by common commitment to their shared *divinities*. *Divinities* refers to a fundamental understanding of the appropriate or inappropriate way to exist, granted by history and so showing up as authoritative and divine in the given community (Davis, 2010), which variously Heidegger calls “the fugitive gods” (Heidegger, 2001, p.138), “divine destinings” (Heidegger, 1977, p.34) or “laws” (Heidegger, 1999, p.312).² He (Heidegger, 2001, p.147) describes *divinities* as “messengers of the godhead,” in the sense of being a charismatic ethical messengers, rather than possessors of supernatural powers (Wrathall & Malpas, 2000). In other words, what is messaged through the *divinities* plays the role of the ‘gods’ of that place, the ethos of its people, what shows up as holy—that is, authoritative (e.g., *Confucianism* for Chinese, *Zen Buddhism* for Japanese). Each of the elements of *the fourfold* articulates a limit of a place/world, which opens or interfaces for “a being who exists in a human manner” (Heidegger, 2001, p.154). Nature and reality are not as an *absolutum* existing only outside human beings but interwoven into the being of human beings. ‘Human beings’ as one dimension within *the fourfold* are essentially integral to a *world-as-fourfold*.

There is a connection between Heidegger's two central statements about *dwelling*: ‘poetically man dwells’ (Heidegger, 2001, p.212) and “dwelling is inhabiting the fourfold” (Heidegger, 1977, p.48). The latter is the explication, the fully established meaning, of the former. First, to *dwell poetically* is to appropriately exist with *earth, sky, divinities* and *mortals*, through which the four dimensions integrate with one another into an underlying unity. To ‘poetically *dwell*’ emphasizes the appropriate existence in a world wherein people and their context mutually include and define each other (Davis, 2010). There is an important sense in which the existential structure of a community arises as a consequence of human beings’ particular situatedness in an environment and culture. Second, the *world-as-fourfold*, accomplished through mutual appropriation between human beings and their context, is a *poetic dwelling*. ‘*Dwelling*’ here is the place(s) for a “habitual” mode of habitation by human beings (Heidegger, 2001, p.145); in Heidegger's (1977, p.45) language, “belong within the fourfold, we dwell as those at home.” We live habitually only when we are within a home that one might call *poetic*; so, in *dwelling* we inhabit the *poetic* (Wrathall & Malpas, 2000). Heidegger (2001, p.225; 1977, p.14) also claims, “dwelling can be unpoetic,” if we are not “properly to experience and take over this dwelling.” That is, we forcefully respond to *the fourfold* so that it is no longer “in its essential being” (Heidegger, 2001, p.148): when we exploit the soil, reverse natural rhythms, push wholly aside the guidance of our ethical heritage, erode the human sense of a particular community, then *poetry* is not present in our habitation, i.e., we lose our *poetic dwelling*.

Heidegger's ontological thinking of *dwelling* evokes an understanding of a host community and their habitation (which in the tourism context is referred to as ‘destination’) as an integral destination community. By using the term ‘destination community,’ we signify the existential “oneness” (Heidegger, 2001, p.147) of the host-in-destination. Likewise, an existential understanding of tourism phenomena should incorporate this situated wholeness. Crucially, hosts do not merely ‘spatially occupy’ (Squire, 1994), ‘reside in’ (Ying & Zhou, 2007), or ‘attach to’ a destination (Cui & Ryan, 2011)—these practical activities (frequently used to study host perceptions) convey a simple addition of ‘people’ to ‘environment.’ Rather, local hosts are inescapably immersed in all spheres of the destination site, through which a wholeness is brought into being. The holistic destination community is not a piece of land nor a group of people, nor space nor time, nor past nor present nor future. It is rather a wholeness of all of these together. Therefore, a tourism destination is what its host community perceives, but it is also the foundation and context for that perceiving; any host perception of tourism phenomena and the subsequent consequences of tourism are fundamentally framed by the essential existence of host-community-in-destination. Moreover, every destination community is of its own existential contextuality—the existential understanding preserved in *poetry, the fourfold* and the way to *dwell*, which are always “localized and place-bounded by time” (Wrathall & Malpas, 2000, p.102). Host perceptions of tourism can be understood as “a certain vantage point” of a destination community (Darbellay & Stock, 2012, p.455), one that pertains to the local *dwelling* manner and is grounded in their existential understanding; ‘host perceptions’ and ‘tourism phenomena’ require to be understood as contextually lived as they are, without the reduction or distortion of the underlying contextuality.

Importantly, for the host community, the destination site is neither a “touristic space” nor a ‘place to play’ (Squire, 1994, p.16), as both are centered on “the agenda and perspective of the tourist and the industry” (Ringer, 1998, p.3). Rather, it is the *poetic dwelling* that is the “irreplaceable rootedness” for a host community (Heidegger, 1996, p.346): it does not merely physically house the host community as their homeland but is the *home* sustaining a particular mode of existence. However, tourism, as both the result and promoter of ‘modernity’ (Tzanelli, 2018), brings “*the real plight of dwelling*” (Heidegger, 2001, p.159). In particular, tourism development is often accompanied with “placelessness” (Richards, 2007, p.98), “delocalization” (Nowak, Petit, & Sahli, 2010, p.233) or

² Heidegger's statement of *the divinities* (2001, p.148)—the mortals “do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols”—moves us away from thinking divinities-dimension of the world as resembling those of any religious weight or (the ‘God’ of Christian) theology. For being ‘fugitive,’ different places house different ‘gods’ and within one place, there can be orthodox and marginal ‘divine laws’ (Young, 2000).

the “Disneyfication” (Torres, 2002, p.110) of landscape (*earth*), and the reversed or interrupted seasonal and diurnal rhythms in locale (*sky*), e.g., seasonality. Tourism is also one of the most common forms of consuming the sacred and *divinities*, e.g., religious worship and tradition (Urry, 1995). In many cases, local people (e.g., ethnic groups) have experienced “commercialization” (Chio, 2014, p. 166) for the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Thus, the symptoms of tourism development ‘dis-ease’ are the loss of *poetic dwelling*: local hosts lose their homeland and their existential rhythmic familiarity, and lose what allows them to be a community, their own humanity and poetic primal language. The ‘violation’ of both non-human and human essences resulting from tourism development, in Heidegger’s (2001, p.159) language, is “homelessness” for the destination community. The destination community has therefore become meaningless and uprooted, which threatens the sustainable development of both local community and tourism industry in the locale.

Guanxi: dwelling in rural China

This study attempts to communicate to the reader a sense of context-revealing idiosyncrasies of rural China, the context wherein a localized perspective of understanding tourism is formed. For this, we turn to *guanxi*—the unique logic guiding Chinese social lives (Fei, Hamilton, & Zheng, 1992) and suggests that *guanxi* can be understood as the manner of *dwelling* in rural China.³ Different levels of consideration lie behind such an East–West epistemological dialogue. Philosophy is essentially *profound* and *general* in character—which enables concrete phenomena and practical questions (e.g., the context of China) to be *figuratively* accommodated within (particular) philosophical frameworks (e.g., *the fourfold*) and essentially understood (Tribe, 2009). It is the philosophical profundity and generality that ‘empower’ Heidegger’s *dwelling*, as well as other Western philosophers’ thoughts, to be poetically ‘translated’ into a non-western context. Moreover, Heidegger’s philosophical understanding involved in *dwelling* is of a focus on human existence, prompting us to investigate how to be a host in rural China and how tourism impacts these hosts’ *being*. With the philosophical backdrop of *dwelling*, we go beyond two prevailing accounts of *guanxi* in established tourism scholarship: the Confucian heritage in tourism administrative management and the pragmatic tool described in tourism development process (see, Chen, 2017), although both are different facets of the *guanxi* phenomenon. Rather, we claim that the “indigenous Chinese category” (Yan, 1996, p. 14), *guanxi*, deserves to be understood in the broad sense of *China-as-fourfold* and in the profound existential sense of ‘being Chinese people’; by living through/in *guanxi*, Chinese people *poetically dwell*.

China is fundamentally agricultural, which historically bears the *guanxi-dwelling*. According to the *Cambridge History of Ancient China* (Allen & Richards, 1999), the *Yangtze River* and *Yellow River* floodplains (i.e., the dimension of *earth*) cultivated the family-farming economy as the fundamental livelihood in ancient China; a consequential fact is that “Chinese society has ground out of its ties to the land” (Fei et al., 1992, p. vii). A natural outgrowth of such an “earthbound China” (Fei et al., 1992, p.1) is the enduring system of residence, which forms the “acquaintance society,” with an emphasis of the long-term forms of *guanxi* (Luo, 2007, p.66). Moreover, lives in such an agrarian world are interlocked in the (dimension of) *sky*, which also contributes to the *guanxi-dwelling*. For example, the close relationships between the formation and development of Chinese civilization and climate change are established (Fang, 2010). With most of its farming region in the East Asia monsoon region, an “intense cooperation” in China’s socioeconomic lives has been significantly encouraged by the fluctuations in temperature and precipitation (Talhelm et al., 2014, p.603). Cultivating paddy rice—the staple crop in China—in this climate region requires elaborate irrigation systems that can hardly be accomplished by individual households, unless the kin group, whole clan and even several villages cooperate. The “climate oscillation” also caused extreme floods and droughts, and consequent famine, throughout historical China, wherein “only intensely cooperative social groups [could] endure, prosper, and spread” (Henrich, 2014, p.594). To confront the threat of climate deterioration to life, Chinese people “have to cooperate intensely and become more interdependent” and “nepotistic” (Talhelm et al., 2014, p.607)—both are the fundamental characters of *guanxi*. Thus, *earth* and *sky* contribute to “a cradle of *guanxi*” (Bell, 2000, p.132); *guanxi-dwelling* is how Chinese people appropriately live in and with non-human dimensions of their world.

Guanxi is the Chinese manner of being “among mortals” (Heidegger, 2001, p.149). In a “*guanxi-centered society*” (Luo, 2007, p.6), individuals “can be defined only co-relationally at any given time” (Kipnis, 1997, p.24), e.g., being someone’s parent, sibling, or friend. Accordingly, *zuòrén* (literally, being a person) means fulfilling the responsibilities inscribed in different forms of *guanxi*. Failure to do so results in the negation of social acceptance of being a person. *Being-in-guanxi* is what it means for Chinese people to remain, in the full sense, *human* beings, and that is why they are called “*guanxi beings*” (Lu, 2014, p.29). Those “simple and essential decisions” (Heidegger, 2001, p.48) based on harmonious *guanxi* with the surrounding world have been taken as *divinities* by Chinese people to commit and thus become the entrance to Chinese society. For example, *fēngshu* (often translated as ‘geomancy’)—a set of theories aimed at achieving harmonious *guanxi* between humans and earth (Zheng & Yan, 2011)—has principally guided Chinese people to probe the appropriate habitation. *Daoism* suggests that maintaining *harmony* means that “the courses of the seasons are pursued without any collision among them” (Laozi, Ames, & Hall, 2003, p.56), i.e., a climate-adaptive lifestyle (*sky*). Confucianism declares, for an individual, the ultimate pursuit is to become “the sage who is able to harmonize” (Huang, 2019, p.28). These fragmental excerpts from Chinese classics suggest that the Chinese ideal of achieving *harmonious guanxi* is not restricted within the human community but covers all spheres of the cosmos, i.e., *China-as-fourfold*. This “legacy of a ‘past’” (Heidegger, 1996, p.358) (e.g., Confucianism, Taoism), which preserves the *understanding* of harmonizing the world through an appropriate execution of *guanxi*, is

³ As shall be seen, *guanxi* is formed within the context of China as an ancient agriculture society (Fei et al., 1992). It retains influences upon present Chinese urbanite and rural people but in different ways and the varieties of *guanxi* in urban China are different from its in rural (Lu, 2014). Given these various differences, our research focuses on a particular form of *guanxi* rooted in Chinese rural life, *xiāngqīn*.

the divinities for Chinese people.

Importantly, *guanxi-dwelling*, like other manners of *dwelling*, results from the holism of *the fourfold*. Simultaneously, *guanxi-dwelling* as the “habitual” mode of habitation (Heidegger, 2001, p.145) by Chinese people is distinctly characterized as being ‘mortals-centered’: the Chinese existential structure of *the fourfold* emphasizes the *mortals-dimension* more than other dimensions; although all people in their respective lifeworld are essentially being-with-one-another, Chinese people seem to rely more heavily on the *mortals-dimension* to engage in their lived world, which distinguishes ‘them-self’ from non-Chinese. Notably, Chinese people can experience disharmony when they inappropriately experience *guanxi*, leading one to *dwelling unpoetically*. For example, *guanxi* is observed as being manipulated as a “power game” (Luo, 2007, p.94), causing results that are seen pejoratively, e.g., nepotism, corruption. In the sense of *dwelling*, these *guanxi-related* phenomena do not retain the situated “existential meaning” (Heidegger, 1996, p.108) and instead create an “oblivion” of the *poetic dwelling*, i.e., *harmonious guanxi* (Heidegger, 2001, p.225).

Methodology

Hermeneutic phenomenology, with its emphasis on interpreting the “account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p.3), was adopted here to investigate host perceptions of tourism and the subsequent consequences in a Chinese rural tourism destination community. Our study includes a fifteen-month field investigation (September to December 2015, March to November 2016 and July to August 2018), throughout which the lead author lived side-by-side with *Huangling* villagers. A long-term immersion in the local lifeworld allowed her to capture the local *speaking* (e.g., dialect) of tourism—a preliminary step for the following interpretations not to be decontextualized from where they occurred. It demonstrates that those Chinese villagers perceive *guanxi* as what they live-through, and their emerging tourism experiences always were meaningfully understood from a *guanxi* perspective. It thus prompts us to “let what shows itself be seen from itself” (Heidegger, 1983, p.32); that is, we rely on the ‘context-bound’ concept, *guanxi*, to ‘contextualize’ local hosts’ perceptions of tourism.

Studies based on *hermeneutic phenomenology* adopt an idiographic focus (instead of generalizability); they represent a perspective rather than a population (Malone, McCabe, & Smith, 2014). Thus, a small, purposively-selected and carefully-situated sample of eleven participants was selected (See Table 1). The extent to which indigenous villagers are involved in tourism varies; participants were identified as indigenous villagers who directly participate in tourism development (e.g., operating a tourism-related businesses, working in the WRCD), as they could potentially offer “rich and detailed experiential account[s]” (Smith et al., 2009, p.51).

Epistemologically, ‘truth’ in *hermeneutic phenomenology* is an interpretative construct, in which both researcher and participant bring to their experiential understandings (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). A semi-structured interview approach, which allows a deep probing of rich information (e.g., stories, examples) of how participants understand their experiences, was adopted. The interview schedule complemented phenomenological protocols, and the subsequent process evolved by formulating questions and comments around participants’ descriptions, with the aim that the local perceptions and tourism experiences could emerge at the lived level (Malone et al., 2014). Each interview lasted approximately 110 min and took place in the participant’s preferred location. Ethics issues were considered: before each interview, informed consent was obtained, and every participant was aware of being audiotaped and assured of their confidentiality.

Additionally, a reflexive diary and participant observation were also employed throughout the fieldwork. Writing a diary provides the lead researcher with an opportunity to conduct self-account and examination (Smith et al., 2009), constantly alerting her to be in a reflexive position throughout the fieldwork dynamics (see Example 1). Later, the reflexive diary and observation materials (e.g., notes, photos) helped co-authors to understand the interview materials and trace the whole fieldwork process, contributing to the subsequent contextualization of interpretation.

Example 1. Participant 1 was much more reticent and reserved and, in turn, made me much more active (though reluctantly) in conversation. She got me disclosing more to her, e.g., how people operate hostels in the UK, and expressed that “thanks to tourism, I can contact various people like you who were beyond my *guanxi* circle.” I am a part of her host-experience—this prompts me to think about “I” as both the researcher and the researched. Participant 1 and I seemed to enrich and be an integral part of each other’s tourism experiences. [Extract from Reflexive Diary 2018/08/10]

Table 1
Profiles of participants.

	Gender	Occupation	Time
Participant 1	Female	Owner of a hostel	2016–now
Participant 2	Male	Staff in <i>Huangling Touristic Resort</i> , WRCD	2015–now
Participant 3	Male	Manager of <i>Difang Guanxi Department</i> , WRCD	2012–now
Participant 4	Male	Owner of a restaurant	2014–now
Participant 5	Male	President of WRCD	2008–now
Participant 6	Female	Human Resources Manager, WRCD	2015–now
Participant 7	Female	Owner of a hostel	2013–now
Participant 8	Male	CEO of WRCD	2010–now
Participant 9	Female	Owner of a snack booth	2012–now
Participant 10	Female	Owner of a restaurant	2015–2016
Participant 11	Male	Staff in <i>Huangling Touristic Resort</i> , WRCD	2014–now

Heideggerian *hermeneutic phenomenology* focuses on understanding human essence itself in terms of language that addresses us from inside it (Gadamer, 1976; Heidegger, 2001). In this research, a verbatim transcription (from spoken to written language) involves also translating Chinese into English, which was conducted by the lead author during the fieldwork. Importantly, transcription and translation, as well as writing, are themselves forms of interpretative activity. As shall be seen in the following interpretations, there are some ‘non-conventional’ English expressions—we maintain the local perceptions tied “within its speaking” (Heidegger, 2001, p.188); a ‘conversation’ style of writings is adopted, in order to present those interpretations as ‘lived’ as they occurred (Malone et al., 2014).

To ensure interpretative activity was of ‘a comprehensive vision’ (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010), an interpreting group, including four researchers who are familiar with *hermeneutic phenomenology*, was established. Based on an active engagement with the data, each member drew from his/her understanding, referring back to research materials (interview transcripts, reflexive diary, photos, etc.), as interpretation must occur in context. Moreover, interpretation proceeded through a hermeneutic circle; that is, we related each single part to the text as a whole context, e.g., sentence–paragraph, individual transcript–eleven transcripts, until all members agreed upon the interpretation. To prevent this interpretation from losing its indigenous character and becoming a free-floating thesis (Malone et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2009), the lead author re-contacted the eleven participants to confirm our interpretations matched their intended expressions of their perceptions of tourism.

Findings & discussion

The following interpretation demonstrates how *guanxi* as a *dwelling* manner existentially perpetuates a rural Chinese destination community’s perceptions of tourism; tourism development has profound influences over the existential conditions of *guanxi*, leading the locals to lose their *poetic dwelling*.

Guanxi-dwelling framed tourism perception

Throughout the fieldwork, the term ‘*guanxi*’ which “provides the very social matrix” (Yan, 1996, p.22), came up in the conversation whenever tourism phenomena were discussed. For example, Participant 2 perceived his recruitment by WRCD as a sign of “expanding [his] social *guanxi*.” A department in WRCD, which facilitates tourism development, is named as *Difang Guanxi Department* (literally, *guanxi* in local place), as, in local perception, “doing tourism is dealing with *guanxi*” in locale (Participant 3). A hermeneutic investigation shows that *guanxi* is what the *Huangling* destination community lives in and through and that their perceptions of tourism are existentially framed by this *guanxi-dwelling*.

Example 2. Interviewer: *What is gǎo lǚyóu [literally, doing tourism] like?*

Participant 4: *Like running my tailor shop. I was a tailor and have no idea about tourism or running restaurant but I always have good guanxi with everyone: gifting newborn quilt for neighbors, helping-out tailoring works in funerals. Now, my restaurant being popular should thank to my xiāngqīn [literally, village kin] who always recommend mine rather than the outsiders'. A good guanxi here can never be wrong. [Extract from Interview 2016/07/26]*

This conversation demonstrates that *guanxi* is understood as ‘appropriate-in-locale’ that essentially frames perceptions of tourism in the *Huangling* destination community. Before 2008, *Huangling* villagers had never been hosts (nor had the majority of them been tourists); tourism is something emerging in their lifeworld. As observed, even the term ‘*host*’ does not exist in their daily speaking. Instead, *gǎo lǚyóu* (doing tourism) is the local expression for ‘being a host’. Accordingly, in Participant 4’s view, ‘unknown’ tourism can only be meaningfully understood and experienced through relying on *guanxi*—such a perception is grounded on his *understanding* of living appropriately by execution of *guanxi*. Moreover, the *Huangling* destination community is understood as a world in which having “a good *guanxi* can never be wrong.” This individual perspective does not exist in a vacuum but requires a *guanxi-centered* context for its formation. That is, *guanxi* is neither a perceptual strategy nor a specific skill (of operating a tailor/restaurant) individually held by, for example, Participant 4. Rather, *guanxi* is “the existential constitution” (Heidegger, 1996, p.136) collectively understood by the whole destination community. It fundamentally frames how they perceive tourism, besides other phenomena in life.

Notably, Participant 4 attributed the popularity of his restaurant to a particular form of *guanxi*, *xiāngqīn*; *xiāngqīn* refers to people living in the same area who perceive themselves as intimate as consanguineous kin. *Xiāngqīn guanxi* is the localized *poetical dwelling* for the *Huangling* destination community. Participant observation revealed that indigenous *Huangling* villagers addressed each other as *xiāngqīn*, regardless of whether there was kinship. *Xiāngqīn guanxi* first connotes location specificity (*xiāng* in *xiāngqīn* means ‘village’). The unfavorable settlement conditions of *Huangling*—mountainous terrain, limited fertile land, vagaries of weather, scarce water resources and so on—have bred a local way of living by relying on *xiāngqīn guanxi*. The *earth* and *sky* of *Huangling* have compelled village members to be as intimate as kin, i.e., *xiāngqīn*, (instead of merely co-living). Through this, they overcome difficulties and increase collective wellbeing. The vernacular architecture derives from this way of living—the residences are intensely adjacent, e.g., sharing the same wall. While these folk dwellings are geared towards the mountain streams and fit the limited residential land, the “strong group consciousness” and intentions “to care for each other” rooted in the design are obvious (Zheng & Yan, 2011, p.3556). Fig. 1 contains no single household, as in such a mountainous landscape (*earth*) and climate region (*sky*), solitary living is perceived as a disaster. The compact settlement space combination that illustrates the “harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature” (Zheng & Yan, 2011, p.3558) simultaneously facilitates the cultivation of *xiāngqīn guanxi*.

In the context of tourism, the ‘localism’ of *xiāngqīn guanxi* plays its role in different ways. The vernacular architecture, famed as

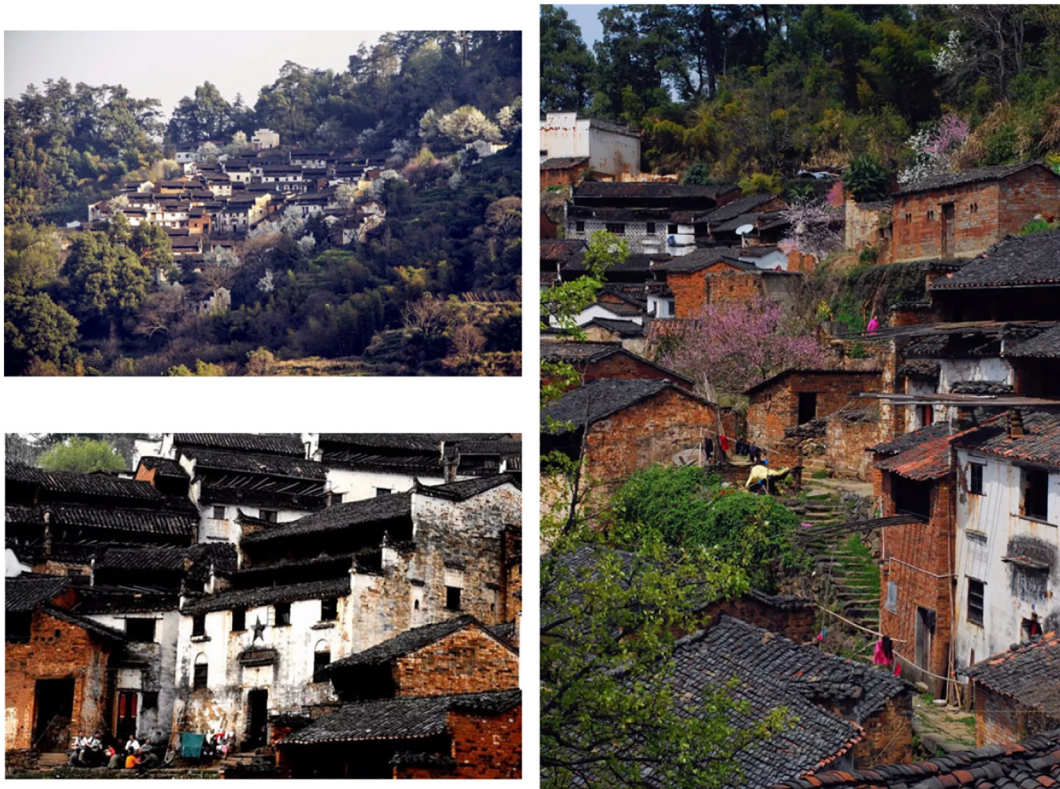


Fig. 1. Vernacular architecture in Huang village.

Huizhou Style, together with other factors (e.g., scenic landscape), “create[s] favorable conditions for local tourism” (Chio, 2014, p.159). According to Participant 5, the traditional architecture is perceived as “the most important reason for WRCD to invest *Huangling* into a sightseeing resort.” The repaired vernacular dwellings are pursued by urban sightseers, who contribute the majority of income to the *Huangling Tourist Resort*, as a valuable experience of tranquility and nostalgia. *Xiāngqīn guanxi* becomes especially apparent when faced with “the outsiders”—immigration in *Huangling* is a very recent phenomenon resulting from tourism development, e.g., operating tourism-related enterprises. However, those enterprises (e.g., restaurants, souvenir shops) run by indigenous villagers are always given priority by their *xiāngqīn* in recommendations to tourists. When choosing job candidates, “the earthbound *xiāngqīn*” are perceived as “more stable than outsiders” and always favored by WRCD (Participant 6). By naming immigrants as “outsiders,” *Huangling* villagers essentially distinguish immigrants from their *xiāngqīn*. This also reminds us that ‘localism’ alone is insufficient to form the *xiāngqīn guanxi*.

Example 3. Interviewer: *Your hostel is of prosperous business.*

Participant 7: [Smile] *my son takes care this guanxi. He knows how to wǎnglái [literally, going and coming] with the travel agencies and tourists. Our hostel is the largest one here and in busy seasons, it is very struggling for us three but my son could ask his aunts for help. We are xiāngqīn who zǒudòng [literally, walking and moving] for whole life, you know, good guanxi can always be counted on.* [Extract from Interview 2016/03/18]

Participant 7’s tourism experience reveals that *xiāngqīn guanxi* also involves a time-cultivated intimacy (*qīn* from *xiāngqīn* means ‘intimate’). The different experiential aspects of operating a hostel were understood by Participant 7 through *guanxi*: “my son takes care this *guanxi*”—for the external managerial issues and *xiāngqīn guanxi* for the internal ones. Essentially, *guanxi* is the “existential appropriateness” (Heidegger, 1996, p.169) understood by villagers with respect to meaningful living in *Huangling*. From this viewpoint, what villagers experience does not matter. The point is how these experiences fit into their lifeworld. *Guanxi* is the *Huangling* destination community’s “relatedness-to-the-world” (Smith et al., 2009, p.17), which defines the range of possible perceptions and actions. Any tourism phenomenon that comes to the locale is always already laden with the situated appropriate existence, i.e., *guanxi*. In this sense, *guanxi* is the “particularly worldly mode of being” *Huanglinger* (Heidegger, 1996, p.151).

According to Participant 7, the *xiāngqīn* who help in her hostel when it is understaffed are those she has interacted with for her “whole life.” Geographic (e.g., mountainous isolation) and other structural constraints (e.g., household registration) contribute to a residential stability—the majority of villagers live as close relatives throughout their lives. The lifetime interaction ‘forms’ villagers who are not merely reliable and trustworthy but also intimate: that is, *xiāngqīn*; *xiāngqīn guanxi* is essentially characterized as “long-term, stable relationship[s]” embedded with time-deepened intimacy and affections (Lu, 2014, p.28). Such ‘being-intimate-with-

other,' through being assimilated by villagers and across generations, becomes gradually internalized by village members, and finally develop into norms that prescribe the essence of being a *Huanglinger*. Thus, *xiāngqīn guanxi* is the ineluctable *mortality* for the whole *Huangling* destination community.

Notably, villagers explicitly distinguish *xiāngqīn guanxi* from short-term and unemotional personal relations by naming the cultivating processes of the former and the latter as *zǒudòng* and *wǎnglái*, respectively. The local expression, *zǒudòng*, is a metaphor for mutual visiting, referring to long-term and intimate interactions, which articulates those practical activities/experiences of cultivating *xiāngqīn guanxi*. In pre-tourism *Huangling*, *zǒudòng* included reciprocal assisting with farming production, exchanging favors and gifts and spending leisure time together. Tourism provides a new context for *zǒudòng*, i.e., mutually supporting one another in the tourism development process. Admittedly, in daily life, villagers also maintain purpose-motivated and short-duration social interactions, especially with “the mobile strangers” brought by tourism development (Molz & Gibson, 2016, p.23), which are locally called, *wǎnglái*. Participant 7's son, in taking “care *guanxi*” with “travel agencies and tourists” has an obvious purpose for the prosperous businesses, which hardly entails a time-accumulated “interpersonal closeness” (Yan, 1996, p.32). Example 3 shows us that *being-with-xiāngqīn* is the full sense of humanity (i.e., *mortals*) in the *Huangling* destination community, and the time-cultivated intimate *xiāngqīn guanxi* continues to play a role in the context of tourism. Simultaneously, tourism development triggers other forms of *guanxi*, ones that are short-term and pragmatically-oriented.

Example 4. *As an outsider, my approaching to participants can be challenging. Several months living taught me how to work contextually: being introduced by their xiāngqīn. Interestingly, my 'brokers' always introduced someone to me by saying "He calls me shushu (father's young brother)" or "I call her gugu (father' sister)." [Extract from Reflexive Diary 2015/12/16]*

This reflexive diary shows how *xiāngqīn guanxi* through everyday language becomes the *divinities* for *Huangling* destination community, which authoritatively guides they how to live. The character ‘qīn’ in *xiāngqīn* also means ‘kinship,’ which connotes that people who live in the same village can be counted as kin. This local understanding is practiced by *Huangling* villagers daily through extending kinship terms to everyone as routine address. The usage of kinship terms (instead of a name) to address someone is significant: the verb “to call” is used instead of the verb “to be.” In introducing, or interpreting someone as “she whom I call *gugu*” rather than “she who is my *gugu*,” the existential understanding of *xiāngqīn* is demonstrated—*xiāngqīn* is the *understanding* of who they are and being named through certain type(s) of *xiāngqīn guanxi* is an existential statement of being a *Huanglinger*. *Huangling* villagers preserve their existential understanding “within speaking”; the manner of addressing *xiāngqīn*, including the term ‘*xiāngqīn*’ and the related kinship terms, “grants an abode for the being of mortals” in *Huangling* (Heidegger, 2001, p.190). As observed, language learning itself in *Huangling* starts from kinship terms. For example, small children are constantly being taught “call her auntie”—life learning begins with learning *xiāngqīn guanxi* through “the speaking of language” (Heidegger, 2001, p.207). *Living-in-xiāngqīn-guanxi* is preserved in everyday language, from generation to generation, by being exemplary, charismatic and authoritative; *xiāngqīn* addressing is always already being localism-oriented and requiring intimate interaction, reciprocal support and the like. Therefore, by speaking *xiāngqīn* addresses in everyday life, villagers are living “before the divinities” (Heidegger, 2001, p.148) and commonly commit to the *understanding* of ‘the good life’ grounded on *xiāngqīn guanxi*, through which is formed the *Huangling* destination community.

Huangling as a spatial region (i.e., *earth, sky*), with respect to human settlement, has practically encouraged villagers to develop and rely on a particular form of *guanxi* based on geographic identity, i.e., *xiāngqīn*, to lead their lives. *Huangling*, as a surname settlement, is characterized by intimate and long-term within-village interaction among villagers; *being-with-xiāngqīn (mortals)* is the essence of being a *Huanglinger* and constitutes the *Huangling* destination community. Throughout history, appropriately being a *xiāngqīn* has been preserved in everyday language (e.g., *xiāngqīn* addressing) as the *divinities* guide villagers to live in their lifeworld. Therefore, *xiāngqīn guanxi* as a habitual mode of living is the *poetic dwelling* for villagers, which is formed through mutual appropriation of the *earth, sky, divinities* and *mortals* of *Huangling*; by living in and through *xiāngqīn guanxi*, the *Huangling* destination community *poetically dwells*.

Losing poetic guanxi-dwelling through tourism

Huangling is by no means a static utopia but always “in the process of becoming” (Geertsema, 2018, p.23)—villagers adjust their perceptions and reactions in response to tourism-created changes. For example, the nine-to-five working pattern in the *Resort* is welcomed, as it is perceived as “living as modern and relax as you urbanities” (Participant 11). More villagers prefer to use Mandarin “in order to better *gāo lǐyóu*” (Participant 10), while their own “house of being” (Heidegger, 1983, p.166), i.e., the dialect, is being lost. As hermeneutically demonstrated, experiential tourism-involvement creates tensions for the *Huangling* destination community, who are both *xiāngqīn* and hosts. This profoundly changes their existential conditions of *xiāngqīn guanxi*: in Heidegger's language, they are losing *poetic dwelling*.

Example 5. Interviewer: *How do you perceive your appointment of the CEO working in county seat headquarter?*

Participant 8: *Well, for those Resort staff, I am, firstly, their nephew, cousin, or brother, and then, I can be their manager. If my subordinate mistakes job and says, “elder brother, forgive me,” it can be thorny. The current arrangement suits our actual situation. [Extract from Interview 2016/03/18]*

Example 6. Interviewer: *You did not appoint Participant 8 as the Resort General Manager, what is your consideration?*

Participant 5: *His local identity can impede his management. Xiāngqīn in Resort have seen him grow up from childhood. What if someone he calls “grandfather” goes wrong? This will make him difficult to zuòrén [literally, being a person]? [Extract from Interview 2016/06/06]*

These two related conversations unveil how tourism development erodes the *poetic dwelling* of *xiāngqīn guanxi* for the *Huangling* destination community. The phenomenon of using relational kinship names as the routine form of address is suggested “as a practice of *guanxi* reproduction” in rural China (Kipnis, 1997, p.37). For addressers, the uttered relational names contain the expected privileges of the *xiāngqīn guanxi*, and for those being addressed, acceptance of a name is acknowledging the embedded obligations. Thus, every time a kinship address is uttered, particular forms of *xiāngqīn guanxi* are (re)created or reinforced. Obviously, in the *Huangling* destination community, the “appropriate disposition to act” (including reciprocal trust and support) (Kipnis, 1997, p.39) embedded in *xiāngqīn guanxi* is the most important criterion to be a proper social person, i.e., *zuòrén* (being a person)—a daily expression in China, while those who act inappropriately are condemned as ‘dehumanized.’ The dilemmas (perceived by Participant 8 as “thorny” and by Participant 5 “difficult to *zuòrén*”) resulting from the potential conflicts between being a proper *Huanglinger* and a professional tourism manager are fully realized.

The context-situated appointment that aims to avoid an either-or choice—*xiāngqīn* obligations or professional responsibilities—means, in effect, that restricting *xiāngqīn* addressing practices inhibits the (re)production of *xiāngqīn guanxi*. The *Huangling Tourist Resort* is a tourism enterprise grounded on organizational management principles such as HR, planning and quality management. In this tourism-created ‘world,’ the localism, consanguinity and private intimacy of *xiāngqīn guanxi* are supposed to give way to organizational, hierarchical and professional principles. In everyday working, *xiāngqīn* addressing is eliminated and replaced by a new addressing system (e.g., manager, director) that pronounces the corresponding interaction manner among members. This is essentially *de-guanxi* and redefines the ‘divine law’ of the *Huangling* destination community.

The *de-guanxi* transitions brought by tourism also impact the *sky* (dimension of *Huangling*). In pre-tourism *Huangling*, villagers led their lives based directly on climate and seasons: rising with dawn and quitting with dusk, sowing in spring and harvesting in autumn. However, tourism development has overturned this natural rhythm of life: the endless visitation and the ever-advancing tourism services (e.g., night tours, 24/7 operating hotels) in the *Resort* “turn night into day and day into harried unrest” (Heidegger, 2001, p.148). The peak (March to September) and slack (October to February) of visits to the *Resort* governs villagers to “live with strong seasonality” (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001, p.117) instead of receiving “the seasons their blessing and inclemency” (Heidegger, 2001, p.148). That is, the climate-adaptive life of the *guanxi-dweller* has been replaced by the tourist-centered living pattern of the host; rhythms of life in the *Huangling* destination community are fully subject to tourism development or, more specifically, to urban tourists. The continuous development of tourism in the *Resort* demands that the “localized forms of practice become transformed and hybridized in a globalized world” (Tucker, 2010, p. 928), and these *de-guanxi* transitions scour out the foundations of *xiāngqīn guanxi*, undermining the *poetic dwelling* of the *Huangling* destination community.

Example 7. Participant 9: *Since the Resort opened [i.e., 2012], I began to run this snack booth. I also did the constructing job [of the Resort] for a while ... they didn't need me ... I always avoided the hard work.*

Interviewer: *How has your life been after developing tourism?*

Participant 9: *No improvement at all! The income [from snack booth] is definitely not enough and we still need farming. You outsiders merely see the prosperity in the first row. For us [living] in the rear, there is no *guanxi* in tourism.* [Extract from Interview 2018/08/18]

This conversation shows tourism development undercuts the intimacy among *xiāngqīn*, further deteriorating their *poetic dwelling*. First, tourism development undermines the *earth* that nourishes *xiāngqīn guanxi*. The vernacular architecture, as well as hillside living conditions, facilitates closeness among neighbors, which itself is the expression of *xiāngqīn*. However, these traditional dwellings are primitive (e.g., no indoor plumbing, poor insulation, tiled-roof, compact interior design), and hillside life is tough (e.g., water shortage, lack of access to transportation, educational and health facilities). Locally, these vernacular residences are viewed as “poor and backward” (Participant 11). The *Huangling* destination community has thus become severely depopulated from 1068 inhabitants in the 1980s to a ‘sub-hollowing’ village of 506 in 2008. The *Huangling New Village* comprises four rows of three-story buildings with reinforced concrete structure, indoor plumbing and spacious living space (See Fig. 2), which are perceived by locals as “modern and



Fig. 2. Panorama of Huangling New Village.



Fig. 3. Visible differences among the rows of the Huangling New Village.

comfortable,” (Participant 10) and “living a good life” (Participant 11). However, the relocation has caused unexpected estrangement among *xiāngqīn*—all participants expressed that they visited their neighbors much less often after moving down. Participant 11 said, “In hillside house, I could hear and even see what neighbors are doing and to visit. Now, every home is compound, wall partition and I am afraid the visiting is an interruption.” These independent, individual enclosed and well interior-decorated buildings enable the locals to “live as you urbanites” (Participant 10)—living in modern and private conditions, but also being as estranged as urbanites.

Second, Participant 9’s denial of tourism contributions to her life shows the outbursts of grievance from the marginalized villagers in the tourism development process, which suggests a changed *mortality*. Participant 9 lost the predictable income source from working in the *Resort* because of her incompatible working behavior, e.g., “always avoided the hard work.” For these Chinese peasants, working in the *Resort* is essentially being ‘institutionalized’ and “modernized” by tourism (Chio, 2014, p.98). But not everyone is ready for this tourism institutionalization. Those who do not fit with the ‘new’ tourism professional world are marginalized. Adding to Participant 9’s woes, tourism relocation exacerbates her marginalization. Self-run enterprises (e.g., hostels, souvenir stores) have emerged since the *Resort* opened to the public. However, prosperity in business is not evenly distributed but concentrated on the first two rows, with their advantageous location. For example, participant 10’s restaurant, located in the fourth row, merely sustained for one year because “rare tourists and no business.” In contrast to the prosperous and bustling front two rows, the back two present a desolate and gloomy scene (see Fig. 3). This visible uneven development is perceptually mirrored by Participant 9’s divide between “us” who live “in the rear” and those “in the first row.” This perceived divide shows that the original ‘being-with-*xiāngqīn*’ (*mortals*) is replaced by an unharmonious self-versus-others. For Participant 9, income from the tourism snack booth is insufficient to support the whole family, and so her household still relies on subsistence farming—a laborious livelihood that local people want to escape. When tourism frees her *xiāngqīn* from heavy farming and empowers them in terms of economic prosperity, Participant 9’s marginalization feels especially bitter, as her own successes come up short compared to those of her neighbors. Subtly, “tourism has no *guanxi* with us” is not a statement of resistance to tourism development itself but rather (should be contextually understood as) a statement of resentment against her being marginalized, coupled with envy, disappointment and subtle anger.

Tourism development has contributed to the development of the *Huangling* destination community. However, the ability of tourism “to permeate communities” (Harrill, 2004, p.252) changes these Chinese hosts’ living state: *earth* (e.g., modern buildings replacing traditional dwellings), *sky* (e.g., tourist-centered life rhythms supplanting a climate-adaptive lifestyle), *mortals* (e.g., self-versus-other replacing intra-village intimacy) and *divinities* (e.g., business management principles expelling *xiāngqīn* addressing). Thus, villagers are losing the *poetic dwelling* that is embedded in *xiāngqīn guanxi* through the tourism development process. It potentially challenges the sustainability of *Huangling* as a destination for the tourism industry and a harmonious habitation for the local residents.

Conclusion and reflections

This hermeneutic-phenomenological investigation demonstrates how a rural Chinese destination community perceives tourism phenomena, grounded in their *localized* manner of *dwelling*—*xiāngqīn guanxi*. Simultaneously, the perceptions held by these Chinese hosts show that the accruing changes brought by tourism have deteriorated the existential conditions (i.e., *the fourfold*) where this Chinese destination community *poetically dwells*, threatening the sustainability of the locale as both a tourism destination and the *poetic dwelling*.

This study thus makes several theoretical contributions through reflecting upon a cosmopolitan combination of tourism, Heideggerian philosophy and Chinese indigenous knowledge. It makes the first attempt to systematically draw upon Heidegger's philosophy of *dwelling*, especially including his later philosophical 'turn,' to provide a robust foundation for us to understand tourism phenomena through human existence (i.e., *poetically dwelling*), contextual presence (i.e., *the fourfold*) and meaningful interpretation (i.e., *hermeneutics*). As demonstrated empirically, what fundamentally defines how tourism is perceived is the essence of being a host in locale, and what is ultimately impacted by tourism is these hosts' existential being. By conducting such "a philosophical act," we contribute to current tourism research that is believed by Tribe (2009, p.3–5) to be 'stubbornly under-philosophized,' thereby offering deeper understandings of tourism as a complex, world-making phenomenon and practice (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). Our work also advances the "way of knowing" (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2008, p.24) host perceptions of tourism. The innovative use of phenomenology, as informed by Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics, responds to the call for a comprehensive tourism theory and context-sensitive methodologies in this research field (Deery et al., 2012; Nunkoo et al., 2013; Sharpley, 2014).

Moreover, this study conducts an epistemological dialogue between Western *dwelling* and Eastern *guanxi* in the academic analysis of tourism. By philosophizing the "way of being" rural Chinese hosts (Ateljevic et al., 2008, p.24), i.e., *guanxi-dwelling*, this study, on the one hand, contextualizes *dwelling* in rural China through *guanxi*, developing an existential understanding of rural Chinese people who, by acting as hosts, are experientially involved in tourism. This is insightful for future research on tourism phenomena in rural China. On the other hand, it philosophizes *guanxi* as the manner of *dwelling* in rural China, which incorporates "the plurality of worldviews that recognizes diverse tourism perspectives and practices" into the process of understanding tourism development (Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010, p. 901). This inspires further exploration of philosophizing different existing-manners through *dwelling*, for better understanding tourism phenomena in a local sense. It is worth noting that the philosophy of *dwelling* itself is a contextualized knowledge production; the German context where *dwelling* was formed is distinct from the one that breeds *guanxi*. What we construct in this study is a *horizontal* dialogue between Eastern and Western cosmologies: *guanxi and dwelling*—both are intellectually gripping. In this sense, the expression, e.g., *guanxi-dwelling*, is not a 'conceptual definition'—the statement of '*guanxi = dwelling*,' or '*China is the fourfold*' cannot be deduced—but rather an epistemological conversation and a philosophical interrogation (e.g., *China-as-the-fourfold*).

Hermeneutic phenomenology essentially entails *being reflective* (Smith et al., 2009), which substantiates a critical self-reflection throughout this research. First, we are fully aware of the stain on Heidegger because of his engagement with Nazi Germany, a stain that means using Heidegger can be fraught with challenges and contradictions. Our use of Heidegger here is *critical and selective*. Being critical, the ontological thinking involved in *dwelling* that emphasizes a place-bounded distinctiveness of existence is not without problem: the inclusive nearness of one place/community/ethnic group/nation can be ambivalent for others or even exclude *the others*. We value Heidegger's contribution to the understanding of human existence without adopting his political, religious or moral views; we selectively use the parts that can be made use of and reject the anti-alien sense. Second, *guanxi* as a Chinese manner of *dwelling* (within the *threefold* framework) is dynamic rather than being frozen in time. The residential stability in past rural China contributes to *xiāngqīn guanxi*, one form of *guanxi* that is local and intimate in character. The increased tourist-host interaction brought by "tourist mobilities" and the 'mobility' within *Huangling* (e.g., the depopulating phenomenon) resulting from China's rapid transition are creating "the plight" of (sustaining) *xiāngqīn guanxi* in the *Huangling* destination community (Tzanelli, 2018, p.17–39). Further investigating (*xiāngqīn*) *guanxi* in an open *Huangling* with high mobility from sustained longitudinal comparisons can be a research agenda.

Heidegger (1999, p. 187) wrote, a few days before his death, "It requires reflection, whether and how there can still be homeland in the age of the technological equi-formed world-civilization." This urges a deeper and better understanding of 'values, right conduct, the meaning of the good life,' their link to 'the virtue of tourism' to better prepare us in considering what would be 'good' tourism (development for the locale) and a consideration of the ways tourism can contribute to a 'good' (local-)world (Tribe, 2009, p.16–21)—especially against the backdrop of tourism as the world's biggest industry, where everything appears to be a 'touristic resource.'

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