Annals of Tourism Research 75 (2019) 152–164

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/annals

Mediating urban transition through rural tourism

Yiping Li[a], Heqing Zhang[a,*], Dian Zhang[b], Richard Abrahams[c]

[a] Sino-French College of Tourism, Guangzhou University, China, No. 230 Wai Huan Xi Road, Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Centre, Guangzhou 510006, PR China

[b] College of Geography and Earth Science, Guangzhou University, China, No. 230 Wai Huan Xi Road, Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Centre, Guangzhou 510006, PR China

[c] Department of Geography, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

ARTICLE INFO

Associate editor: Scott McCabe

Keywords:
China
Discourse
Distance
Jiabang
Power
Rural tourism

ABSTRACT

This study examines China's urban–rural transition in the process of development and change. Regarding tourism as a discourse of difference, it focuses on a rural ethnic community, *Jiabang*, in Southwest China. It aims to highlight the role of tourism in providing a stimulus for the creation of a local group identity that subverts wider discourses of rural areas. With the goal of understanding how toured places are imagined, presented and consumed, this study utilises mixed data sources collected from tourism promotional materials and ethnographic fieldwork. The findings suggest that the forces behind the touristic place creation and consumption are both integral to and the result of the changing attitudes and perceptions of people and places in contemporary China.

Introduction

We would like to start this paper with two short instances: one centred in Shanghai, one of China's most modern metropolises (Fig. 1), and one set in the remote rural mountains of Guizhou Province in Southwest China (Fig. 2). Upon initial consideration, these two places could not be more different from each other, but our paper, *Mediating Urban Transition through Rural Tourism,* aims to untangle the ways by which these two instances are actually very much part of the same story. By interrogating the social and cultural arenas in which tourism operates, we examine how China's rural, ethnic minority places and peoples are created and consumed through tourism. Fig. 1 presents China's own Expo pavilion in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, which epitomises the creation of touristic reveries of place, and represents a snapshot of China's state-driven tourism industry that mobilised nearly 70 million citizens to attend (Cloud, 2015). This Expo pavilion presented idealised images of various places, coming together to form a singular picture of China's nationhood.

Tourism was introduced initially to consumers as an economic development mechanism (Bao & Ma, 2010). However, its role in China has never been merely about economics. Central planning ensures that tourism projects are saturated with ideological messages on the modern Chinese nation, captured through narratives that touch upon such aspects as history, cultural heritage, development and spatial movement (Airey & Chong, 2010; Yan & Bramwell, 2008; Zuo, Gursoy, & Wall, 2017). For most domestic tourists, tourist imaginaries occur amidst their daily lives in rapidly changing urban centres like Shanghai. Their imaginaries reflect idealised narratives of the places targeted by tourism, such as the one highlighted in Fig. 2, where in 2011, an ethnic rural community occupied our study site: the *Jiabang* Scenic Area (hereafter referred to as *Jiabang*). Located in China's undeveloped southwest Guizhou

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: liyiping@gzhu.edu.cn (Y. Li), lyzhq@gzhu.edu.cn (H. Zhang), dzhang@gzhu.edu.cn (D. Zhang), richabra@hku.hk (R. Abrahams).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.01.001
Received 17 June 2018; Received in revised form 1 January 2019; Accepted 2 January 2019
0160-7383/ © 2019 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Fig. 1. China Pavilion for the Shanghai World Expo 2010. The main structure of the China Pavilion, 'The Crown of the East', had a distinctive roof, made of traditional *dougong* or brackets, with a history dating back more than 2000 years. Below the main structure, there was a 45,000-square-meter joint pavilion featuring the displays from local provinces, cities and regions (Picture and words by Sebastian Jordana, 3 September 2009). *Source:* Retrieved November 26, 2018, from: https://www.archdaily.com/34037/china-pavillion-for-shanghai-world-expo-2010.

Fig. 2. Location of *Jiabang*. *Source:* Authors' own sketch map.

Province, *Jiabang* manifests the ways by which distant communities are drawn into national networks through tourism. Its attractions include terrace farm sceneries and ethnic minority communities. When our investigation began, *Jiabang's* tourism development was in its infancy. Access to the area required a three-to four-hour hike, and both awareness of the place and visitor numbers were very

low. *Jiabang* represented an example as much as that could be found in a newly discovered rural destination in China: freshly opened to visitors and resembling a true embodiment of the traditional agoraphobic places that tourists imagine—a "connoisseurship of difference considered against their normal lives" (Urry, 2006, p. vii). Tourists are willing to travel across spatial expanses in an almost quasi-religious pursuit of different experiences (Graburn, 1989). Thus, tourism is understood as being founded upon the appeal of distance (Wang, 2000).

Borrowing Foucault (1980) view of knowledge and power, we regard tourism as a discourse of difference, which acts as a key mediator in producing idealised knowledge on places, in order to examine how *Jiabang* manifests a fulcrum upon which tourism acts as a social nexus of distance. Our basic arguments are as follows: 1) in a physical sense, geographic expanses are crossed, bringing together the social and material realities in contact zones of lived experience, and 2) in a social sense, it is through this contact that tourism manifests a process of learning about different peoples and places. Our paper first outlines tourism's role in representing places and peoples, thus setting the foundation for the analysis of China's contemporary rural–urban divide. Our discussion focuses on how individuals come to understand the process of place and socio-cultural construction, by situating the placed agents, the hosts and guests, in the contextual field of ethnic minority and landscape,

A place is always in a process of becoming (Cresswell, 2008; Harvey & Braun, 1996; Massey, 2004). Tourism is one of the forces for constructing places both physically and socioculturally, such as landscape transformation (Chang, 2012; Chang & Huang, 2008), cultural change (Macleod, 2004) and the popularisation of cultural heritages (Lee & du Cros, 2013). Thus, our ultimate purpose is to demonstrate that tourism is not just about consuming a site for oneself as an external agent, but also about engaging in patterns of consumption that add to the cultural capital of the self. We realise tourism research within China veers towards applied quantitative analysis, which is very much place-based in that the impacts of tourism and their implications are contained within the defined spatial zones of tourism (Bao, Chen, & Ma, 2014). The currency of such perspectives is not in doubt, along with its usefulness for generating both understanding and policy implications associated with tourism development. The significance of our study, therefore, contributes to the highly needed multi-fronted research (Holinshead & Hou, 2012) to indicate the ways by which tourism development spills beyond the ticket gates of tourist sites. We hope to draw scholars' attention to the social effects of tourism policies accounting for grounded consequences that transpire in people's everyday lives, communities and areas, divergent demands and unequal opportunities.

Tourism as discourse

We utilise a theoretical framework based on Foucault (1980) conception of power as being exerted through the construction and propagation of normalising discourses, which in our case, are propagated through the narratives of tourism. We interrogate the ways by which nation-state discourses of ethnicity, place and development are transmitted through tourism. Discourses are systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak systematically (Foucault, 1980). Discourses constrain individual agency by shaping social relations and identities, and the overall contours of the taken-for-granted world, which both naturalise and universalise worldviews (Thorpe, 2012). Discourses emerge from systems of knowledge that shape explicit understandings of the world through cultures, along with customs, organisations and individuals that create webs of influence and define power relationships.

All knowledge is derived from human intervention and is restricted simultaneously by underlying beliefs and assumptions from humankind. Foucault argues that power is enacted by the dissemination of certain kinds of knowledge that formulate ways of seeing the world: "the exercise of power itself creates a condition for the emergence of new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information" (1980, p. 51). The creation of discourses enacts and cements power, because power is implicit in all kinds of relationships (Foucault, 1990). Hence, tourism may be considered one such instrument imbued with certain ideologies, images and messages, such that cultural, ethnic, regional and other differences about peoples and places are signified through tourism (Fazito, Scott, & Russell, 2016; Holinshead & Hou, 2012; Zhang, L'Espoir Decosta, & McKercher, 2015). Tourism representations are skewed snapshots of reality that reflect passively the prevailing cultural values and distributions of power in society by drawing upon current stereotypes and images (Hollinshead, Ateljevic, & Ali, 2009; Overton & Murray, 2016; Pan, Santos, & Kim, 2017). Such representations also play a prominent role in shaping values, behaviours and identities by contributing to the process of socialisation (de la Maza, 2016; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Yan & Santos, 2009).

Certain versions of the world are represented by tourism at the expense of others. Some voices are heard more than others, certain histories are presented more widely than their counterparts and a few narratives are used to recreate histories of peoples and places. The selection of discourse types is largely collaborative with the institutionalised worldviews and ideologies created within the centres of power (Goulding & Domic, 2009; Zhang et al., 2015). Consequently, tourism processes have broad cultural meanings that extend far beyond the actual consumption of tourist places. Tourism provides a means by which governments can project ideological messages, shape national identities and legitimise their positions (Ashworth, 1994; Fazito et al., 2016; Yang, Wall, & Smith, 2008). The corresponding effects are attuned in tourism target areas, wherein disparities in power exist between tourists and toured communities (Bruner, 2005; Cornet, 2015). When dominant groups steer developmental policy to target the less powerful groups, tourism representations articulate the relations between the centre and the periphery (Yang, 2011). Such cases often occur in areas of ethnic differences, wherein tourism provides the socio-cultural domination of certain groups by others (Dann, 1996), and acts as medium enabling governments to disseminate discourses in which minority groups are constructed (de la Maza, 2016).

China's rural-urban divide

Traditionally, China's place-based rural and urban distinctions were less significant relative to the post-industrial Western nations where cities emerged as the centres of power and advancement (Liu, Nijkamp, & Lin, 2017; Park, 2008). The influence of Western powers caused the first rupture to China's traditional and rural socio-cultural status quo. A catalogue of military defeats to foreign powers culminated in the humiliating loss to Japan in 1895. As a strategy to counter China's fallen status, intellectuals and elites began to search elsewhere for radical alternatives from models of industrialisation. Traditional ways of thinking were questioned in favour of ideas of foreign derivation, scientific thought and human equality. The rural areas came to signify a spatial representation of the nation's stagnation, consequently creating a shift in attitudes towards the places and peoples of traditional Chinese society: the countryside and its residents (Wang, Luo, Zhang, & Rozelle, 2017).

After 1978, China's reform was tinged by an unprecedented thirst for modernisation, and the country again sought to catch up with Western capitalised nations by adopting their "scientific technology" (Zhun, 2013, p. 7). Urbanites began to associate the rural areas with backwardness (Liu, 1996). China's socio-political constructions of place-based individual and group identities stem from the inception of the rural–urban stratification and the subsequent perception that rural and urban folks embody mutually incompatible values and lifestyles. This belief clearly delineates the rural–urban gap throughout a century of upheaval and allows modern urban Chinese to perceive the countryside as a repository of traditional values. Moreover, this strategy enables them to embrace their urban modernity with the knowledge that the countryside acts as a guardian of their traditional *Chineseness* (Sayers, 2006; Xue, Kerstetter, & Hunt, 2017), which Hou (2012) considers an imaginal realm performed and articulated through tourism. Consequently, compared with more advanced Western nations, the modernisation campaign in China has evolved these contradictions: market rules versus political irrationality, the development of a modern economy versus the construction of a modernised civil society and traditional Chinese norms and values versus the appreciation of a modern sense of democracy (Li, 2006).

In China, minority ethnicity has become synonymous with rurality. A 2010 census suggests that, combined, the 55 ethnicity minority groups make up a mere 8.4 percent of the population (Wikipedia, 2018). China's government web portal (CHINA.ORG.CN, 2018) indicates that ethnic minorities are scattered over vast areas and can be found in approximately 64.3 percent of China, mainly distributed in the border areas. At the turn of the 21st century, the proportion of ethnic minorities holding rural residence was almost 80 percent, owing largely to historical settlement patterns that had seen minorities settle into remote rural areas, and in the contemporary era, by institutional mechanisms that prohibited population movement (Commission, 2017). Ethnic minorities are, in many ways, modern China's antithesis, associated with the backward side of the rural-urban divide. *Jiabang,* an ethnic Miao minority community, has been (re)created through tourism's use of China's rural–urban divide. Under the influence of tourism, this rural community has become a place in distance, representing traditional cultures and set in the faraway peripheral environment.

Traversing of distance through tourism

Tourism is founded on the appeal of distance (Wang, 2000) that entices tourists to travel across spatial expanses to seek out different experiences (Graburn, 1989). Such appeal and the social, economic, spatial and imagined facets, which are central to creating real and imagined differences, are keys to our understanding of the ways by which tourists desire to visit *Jiabang*. In tourism, a distinction between the familiar and the faraway is crucial, because the juxtaposition between the ordinary home and the exotic other places is the key to defining objects of the tourists' 'gaze' (Urry & Larsen, 2011). This is tied to the ambivalence of modernity, wherein disenchantment with modern life positions tourism as a spiritual source, that is, an important right of the modern individual to escape, to recharge and to (re)discover (MacCannell, 1973; Smith, 1989).

Distance is implicit to the instances relayed at the beginning of our paper. The exhibits in China's Expo pavilion drew images of various places and people from beyond their physical bounds; an image, a landscape, a life, a custom—all transformed into a part of a greater whole, part of a national picture presented for global recognition. These differences are implicit in the creation of tourist places: imaginatively, the local becomes an object which, in reality, is dissolved, interacting in wider national and global spheres and being understood beyond its original context, devoid of its local meaning. The second elicitation of distance is that China's rural status and the perception of it are (re)created by the rural–urban divide. Mediated by tourism, the appeal is not just for tourists. Tourism affixes communities and places with pasts, existing economies and cultures, making it a force of change that interacts and becomes parts of new realities (Crick, 1991). During fieldworks, we saw how the appeal of distance became part of the subjectivities of locals, who were the focus of the tourists' gaze. Through government development initiatives, *Jiabang* is becoming increasingly connected. Under the national development policies, China is shrinking. Moreover, developmental money spills westwards, so do roads and railways. Consequently, travel times are slashed, creating both the physical and temporal means for tourists to venture into new territory.

Methodology: reconciling the structure–agent binary

The theoretical framework that posits tourism as a discourse provides an ideological prism, through which we can examine the realms of current socio-cultural and spatial politics in China. The extent to which these discourses are accepted and subverted by both host and guest communities, and the ways by which they shape material and lived realities, are contemplated in reference to Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984). This enables contemplation of how tourism is enacted from the state level, received at society level and how social action feeds back into the material properties of place. Under the formulation of the gaze, the power of discourse in tourism is enacted at the social level, creating a dialectic between structure (state planned tourism) and agency (its receipt at

Table 1
Quadripartite approach in Strong Structuration Theory.

1: External social structures – conditions of/for action.
– Mediated through *position-practices*, a social position associated with identity and practice together with a network of social relations (institutions, power relations, technologies etc.).

2: Internal social structures – agents' capabilities and what they know about the world. This can be divided into:
a) *General dispositions:* including, socio-cultural schemas, discourses, world-iews, moral and practical principles, attitudes, embodied skills, personal values and commitments. Many of these dispositions are not amenable to change within the individual.
b) *Conjuncturally specific knowledge:* relative to the immediate strategic terrain and the expectations of behaviour and action in relation to it (based on an understanding of external structures).

3: Active agency and action – agents draw on their internal structures in routine or strategic ways.

4: Outcomes – as they feed back onto the position-practice network, internal and external structures are either reproduced or changed.

Source: Adapted from Stones (2005).

societal level). The rationale is to interrogate more rigid dualisms between structure and agency by examining the state mechanisms of place and subjectivity creation, on the one hand, and individual understandings of the self, society and place on the other hand. In doing so, we probe the extent to which tourism is a medium that allows individual tourists and hosts to create and recast their own subjectivities.

Agents often face intractable structures in the form of rules, social classifications, gender and race issues in their daily lives (O'Reilly, 2012; Stones, 2005, 2012). The perception of structure–agency duality is heightened by the fact that human action is short term, whereas social structures appear more embedded across time and space. To underpin our overall research strategy, we borrowed largely from Stones (2005) Strong Structuration Theory—a framework linked with empirical evidence that utilises a recursive relationship between the structure–agency duality, in which each component can be researched empirically (Table 1). In different social situations, agents are placed in dynamic relationships of position practices (practices occurring in relative positions), placing a focus on agents who are "situated in webs of networked relations", which must be considered in terms of particular structures and agents in particular contexts for empirical research (Greenhalgh & Stones, 2010, p. 1288).

Stones (2012) argues that empirical research should attempt first to sketch out the structural context of the field, in order to ascertain the most salient explanatory forces. Based on this, "a framework of the intermingling influence of relative domains should be outlined along with a consideration of which actors-in-focus can be conceptualised to create a wider field of study" (Stones, 2012, pp. 5–7). Methodologically, this creates a process whereby the researcher works backwards from the phenomenon in question, by attempting to find the causes of its production. Our study situates placed agents, the hosts and guests, in the contextual field of ethnic minority, landscape and tourism. The intermingling fields in which agents are situated are analysed by scrutinising textual tourism promotional materials and tourism-related policies, as well as the spaces of tourism themselves that are considered as a material texts through which power relations and enactments can be discerned. Foucault's concept of the omnipresence of power sets our understanding of the flows and exertions of both social and institutional power as they are enacted, absorbed, confronted and transformed in the daily life practices in *Jiabang*.

The central questions for investigation involve the creation of rural tourism in *Jiabang*: how is the place created and why? In the context of tourism, where differences between agents' communities are not only institutionalised, but are emphasised on a daily interactional level, the salience of ethnically defined group characteristics is particularly pronounced. Idealised touristic images of ethnic minorities in China are layered with wider rural and ethnic discourses that mould guests' perceptions of the host communities (Choi, 2009). Through this token, three interrelated considerations are outlined for investigation: 1) Place: an account of the social production of space; 2) Society: an understanding of the ways by which agents interact to produce and reproduce social relations and places; and 3) Power: the outline of the means through which power is made inert in and enacted through social relations, forms of knowledge and places. This triad of considerations enables our contemplation of a fuller picture of how tourism is enacted from the state level and received at the society level, and then how social action feeds back into the material properties of place. Accordingly, three data collection and analysis techniques were formulated. First, tourism policy and promotional materials were considered with a discourse analysis. Second, the bulk of empirical investigations were conducted through ethnographic fieldwork that utilised interpretive techniques centred on interviews. Third, non-representational techniques, such as the observations of interactive participants, were used as supplementary methods.

To capitalise on the variety of sources available, we approached information mining with a variety of techniques to enable the collection of information from textual, human and material sources (Burgess, 1984). We decided to juggle, during the fieldworks, both the interpretive and non-representational approaches. Interpretive approach sees the ethnographer mine the field, interpreting "social activities [that] can be read for meanings" (Morishita, 2001, p. 10). Non-representational approaches come from an understanding that culture may be more about what people do in their daily lives (Latham, 2003). These two approaches are sometimes seen to be in opposition, but they combine to allow for the complimentary checking of information gathered from various sources. Essentially, this allowed styles that are "differentially empathetic to the lived experience that are 'real' to distinct institutions or to particular interest groups" (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 68). Our purpose of using the non-representational and observational approaches was to supplement the dialectic accounts. Together, these were used to build a fuller picture of the various communities that create a social, placed experience at the research sites.

Ethnographic observational techniques formed the backbone of the work in the field, providing the basis from which the bulk of

Table 2
Number and type of recorded interviews partaken during the fieldwork.

Tourists	*Ethnographic*	18
	Semi-structured	9
	Group interview	11
Officials	*Ethnographic*	2
	Semi-structured	3
	Group interview	0
Host community members	*Ethnographic*	12
	Semi-structured	3
	Group interview	4
Tourism business owners	*Ethnographic*	7
	Semi-Structured	6
	Group interview	0

our findings were based and creating the opportunities to meet informants and integrate into the subject communities. Field-based research involved intermittent periods of ethnographic investigation spanning a three-year period (2012–2015), which involved both time spent with tourists and locals in a variety of settings, but with a focus on the tourist centre of the *Jiabang* Terraces Scenic Area. The timing of fieldwork was chosen to align to specific peak tourist times. The spring rainy season is popular with photography enthusiasts as it coincides with the rice planting season when the paddy fields are flooded, and the summer due to it being the traditional peak tourist season. As field trips to each site ranged from one to several weeks in duration, our field research format fell between deep immersion ethnographic work and shorter, rapid participatory assessment methods (Chambers, 1991; Geertz, 1973). Gaining access to respondents was largely dependent on rapport. Being a Chinese-speaking white Western researcher gave our field investigator an interest factor that made him approachable and made people interested in him. It was not uncommon for people to take interest in his own background and barrage him with questions about his own biography. This facilitated the process of building reciprocal trust and understanding, enabling him to secure visits to the local school, tourism businesses and local government tourism units to interview relevant representatives.

Unstructured and informal interviews were employed to allow the respondents to develop answers beyond a structured format (Burgess, 1984). Interviews were conducted with local tourism entrepreneurs, locals working in and outside the tourism industry, government tourism officials and tourists (Table 2). The issues explored included the impacts of tourism, local and tourist perspectives, the history and development of tourism in *Jiabang* and wider issues of local, ethnic minority and Chinese culture. Most of the interviews conducted emerged from situations that arose in the field; thus, most interviews were ad-hoc, unplanned encounters. The investigator actively sought situations whereby groups (particularly tourists) could be interviewed, because the group dynamics would enable the respondents to stimulate their own ideas and thoughts more freely, ultimately setting the research agenda. Field research inside China meant that our field investigator, a Chinese-speaking white European, must be sensitive to various contingent factors that influenced the way he conducted fieldwork and interviews, whilst others influenced access to, and the quality of information gained, and raised some important ethical and methodological quandaries. We agree that our field investigator must go beyond Eurocentric conceptions of ethics (Randstrom & Deur, 1999), as concepts like 'confidentiality' and 'benefit' are understood very differently between individuals and across cultures (Kindon, 2002; Pain, 2004). In China, there is often a suspicion that Western scholars are simply 'dirt-digging' or doing fanciful research that cannot answer the important questions official, often more positivist, research aims to do. To avoid any unknown consequences, we applied the strategies of both recording interviews and having denser, more detailed information, or using short handwritten or voice notes to record aspects that the investigator felt could be important, especially in informal or unplanned interactions, which were a constant aspect of fieldwork.

It should be noted that recorded interviews constituted only a fraction of the interactions our field investigator had with hosts and guests. Many more conversations went unrecorded or became footnotes in the fieldwork diary that would add to his own biographies, providing clues for the reciprocal reflection of promotional materials and choice of interview topics and in targeting and reaching respondents. The type of causal-process interactions with interviewees and relevant observations helped instigate the actual process of tourism development and place transformation in *Jiabang,* thus producing an "insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process, or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in casual inference" (Seawright & Collier, 2004, p. 277). Arguably, it was these interactions that formed the backbone of our research, as the information was used to snowball ideas, test theories and find respondents for more formalised recorded interviews. The investigator would look for repeated themes in informal conversations, try to notice the things that people brought up when they were speaking amongst themselves or over dinner and take note of the questions guests asked of their hosts and vice-versa. These opportunities allowed the investigator to develop questions that were aligned with the dominant discourses, narratives, concerns and impressions of the respondent groups.

Findings

Our findings uncover multiple meanings of places often centred on the economies of place consumption. Tourism affixes both past and existing economies and cultures to *Jiabang,* as a force of change that interacts and becomes parts of new realities.

Fig. 3. *Jiabang* on the China National Geography website. *Source:* Retrieved November 26, 2018, from China National Geography web site: http://www.dili360.com/article/p53e07d15ec1f682.htm.

Tourism promotion and the rural landscape

Representations and the defined lure of *Jiabang* are centred on its terraced field landscapes. Fig. 3 shows the rhythms of nature that are crucial to the representational strategies in the tourism promotion. This photograph depicts a typical scene captured during a spring sunrise. As the emerging light breaks over the mountains, it glistens across the pools of water on the paddy fields, creating clouds of fog that spill down from the mountains and settle on the valleys. The preponderance of imagery during spring time suggests this season is the best time to visit. Notably, images during this season account for nearly 90 percent of the examined photographs taken mainly by tourists.

Promotional materials position the landscapes as part of nature, pointing to the idea of *tian ren he yi* that some consider to be "the fundamental philosophy behind the relationship between humans and nature in China" (Cui, Liao, & Xu, 2017, p. 249). This means that humans and nature are united as one, which sets the tradition in China that natural places are appreciated, aesthetically pleasing and morally enhanced by the cultural refinement emerging from human interaction (Peterson, 1995). In China, there exists a cultural lineage that extends back to Confucius, from whom the Chinese literati began the long tradition of seeking spiritual values and wisdom in nature, by integrating the human and the natural with no clear distinction of the self and the natural environment (Yan & McKercher, 2013). Natural elements are traditionally the centre of the moral and aesthetic ideas, thereby creating idealised landscapes where humankind and nature are in harmony. For instance, Notar (2006) finds that, beyond being a sign of Chinese culture, the tree at Butterfly Spring has hardly more ideological charge than the famous Guest-Welcoming Pine at Huangshan. Consequently, the dynamics that shape tourism in China stimulated government-engineered development, which turned the nature of a tourist destination upside down (Nyíri, 2007).

Reconciling naturalised people

In the promotional materials analysed, landscapes are not presented in an intimate way. The viewer is not in the fields but is on a high position and is thus considered a detached observer. Photographs in Figs. 4 and 5 convey a message of timelessness and the idyllic rural life. The images show people moving through and living amongst nature. This scenario is outlined through a composition that illustrates the local people working and living within the landscape in their daily lives. Potential tourists viewing these images can immediately understand that this place invites them to gaze upon a dominion laid out before them in a series of vistas, and that their role is to watch in a detached, passive function whilst others toil.

Notably, promotional materials symbolise nature as permeating every aspect of the places portrayed. Whilst those landscapes presented symbolise the ideal union of humans and nature, they also denote more of the aesthetic perspectives than that of scientific approaches. Consequently, the scientific interpretation of landscapes seems ineffective in Chinese natural attractions (Xu, Cui, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2013). *Jiabang* is referenced frequently in textual accompaniments as *yuanshengtai*, which is an ambiguous Chinese term emphasising an indigenously developed knowledge of the ecology that is natural, pristine and green, and incorporates systems of values and spirituality (Wang, 2008). The crux of the emergence of *yuanshengtai* emanates from contemporary anxieties over the perceived ebbing of traditional influences on modern life, rapid social change and environmental degradation. When the

Fig. 4. Farming in harmony with nature. *Source:* Retrieved November 26, 2018, from China Discover 2018 web site: https://www.chinadiscovery.com/articles/top-6-most-beautiful-rice-terraces-in-china.html.

Fig. 5. Nature scenery: *Jiabang* terraced fields. Source: Retrieved November 26, 2018, from Nanyang Modern Photography web site: http://www.nyddsy.com/.

impulses of *yuanshengtai* are centred on such places as remote, ethnic minority rural areas, they become formulated as an anti-modern reaction expressed in the desire to preserve cultures that are threatened by modernity. The ethos of *yuanshengtai* "tries to convey a sense of perceived authenticity in traditional and local cultural traits unaffected by modern cultures" (Chen, 2008, p. 159). The lure of places of *yuanshengtai* is an opportunity to savour and delight in the place of visitation, whilst also affording an opportunity to lament and reflect on detrimental changes brought about by development and modernisation.

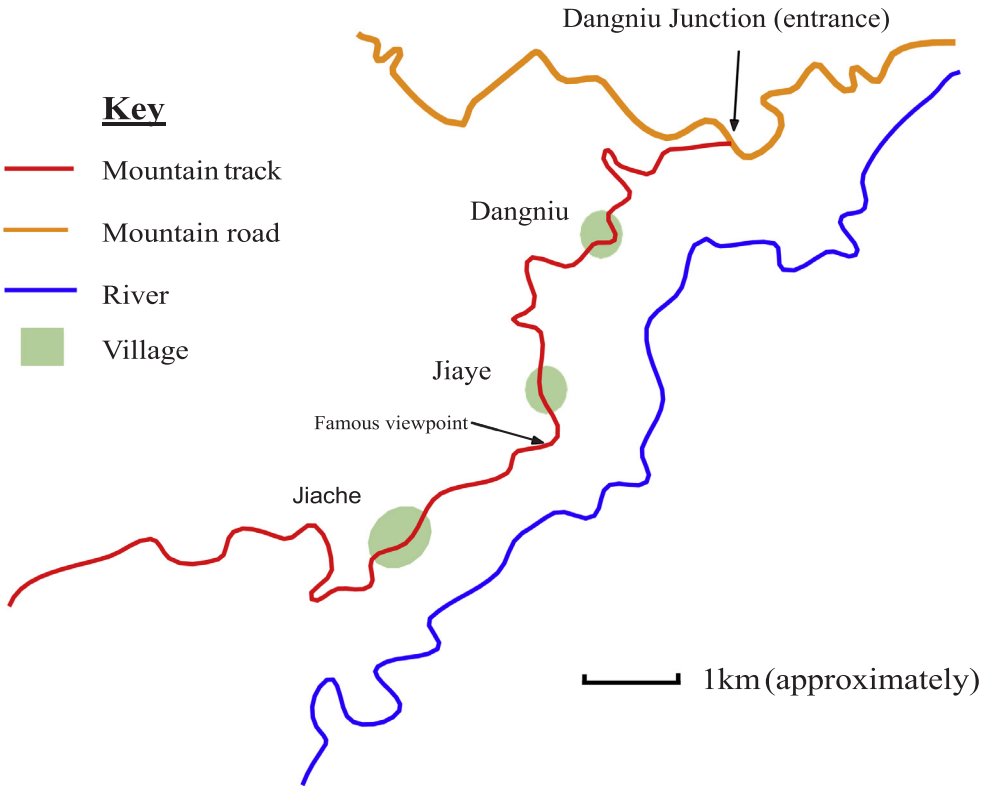

Fig. 6. Sketch map of the *Jiabang* Terraces Scenic Area. *Source:* Authors' own sketch map.

The subaltern place of Jiabang

Jiabang was found to be the antithesis to the realities of China's developed Eastern coastal regions. It has been regarded as a closed community situated in an agoraphobic environment, where the locals perceptually have a holistic identity spawned from their fixed locus in the natural enclosure of the remote Guizhou mountains. A saying about Guizhou often repeated some hundred years ago states there are "no three days without rain, no three flat feet of land, and no person has three coins". In the popular Chinese imagination, Guizhou is a hard place: hard to live in, hard to farm, hard to cross and a cruel land of poverty and ethnic minority communities locked in prison-like mountains. Seclusion and inaccessibility have meant that whilst coastal provinces have seen tremendous economic growth, Guizhou has been left behind as one of China's poorest provinces. For tourists visiting *Jiabang*, the legacy of Guizhou's image in popular culture, coupled with its developmental backwardness, made them perceive it as a place of the past, placed imaginatively on the periphery of modern China. The *Jiabang* Scenic Area's touristic promotion as a place of periphery is founded on its inaccessible physical geography, and its social make-up with minority ethnicities accounting for over 80 percent of the population.

Geographical remoteness, compounded by the mountainous terrain, meant that the area remained undisturbed by both tourists and the interests from outside developers. The first tourists began arriving in the area in 2010. Before that, the villages of *Dangniu, Jiaye* and *Jiache* that fall within the *Jiabang* terraces area were unremarkable amongst the many hundreds of minority farming communities nestled unnoticed in this remote part of China. Fig. 6 shows *Jiabang*, the local administrative seat from whence the name of the scenic area comes, and is a small ethnic minority town some 30 min by car from *Jiache* along a single-track mountain road. The process of opening up *Jiabang* to tourists has required the employment of both local infrastructural developments and wider communicative technologies. In 2008, the local government began work to expand the mountain track. The new road would link the area by car from *Jiabang* to the east and the *Dangniu* junction to the west. Despite the sluggish infrastructural development, by the time our investigation began, *Jiabang* was already enjoying a steady growth of visitors, having first been brought to the attention of photographers when an image of the terraces was projected as part of the backdrop during the closing banquet of the World Expo 2010. Consequently, *Jiabang's* appeal of distance has been noticed by photographers, tourists and tourism developers.

Remembering the past through consuming the present

Jiabang is envisaged by urban tourists as a bounded place of tradition that is juxtaposed against the uncertain nature of the cities that are evolving constantly under the forces of modernisation:

> This time (the trip) is especially to come here because after two or three years, here will be opened up and it will not be like this…The people will not be like they are now, they do not realise what it has that is good so the local people are much more honest and simple, the local people are warm-hearted, if they are nice to you it is because they want to be nice to you, in other places, it is not like this. (Respondent 1)

The above feedback about a respondent's *Jiabang* visit establishes an important binary of distance. To escape to somewhere also means to leave somewhere. Home provides a pivotal background to the ways that tourists imagine and consume destinations. The tourists' gaze is created through the difference from the mundane aspects of everyday life (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Tourism is the chase of a dream (Ryan, 1997) on a scared journey (Graburn, 1989). It can sometimes help divert a modern individual's attention, from the normal everyday life to the faraway exotic others, in order to escape it all (Cohen, 1979). Tourists often equate the different with the exotic. *Jiabang* is imagined as a cultural anchor in a shifting national landscape, unfiltered by the forces of modernisation that characterise the urban centres. The critical point is that *yuanshengtai* is a discourse that oozes with meaning, contrary to the perceived ills of the urban society that the tourists come from. It is through their normal, urban lives that the tourists comprehend the meanings of *yuanshengtai.* The idealised imagery of *Jiabang*, imbued with the discourse of *yuanshengtai,* juxtaposes the place against home and fixes it as an exotic place to escape from the former. The social processes that transform *Jiabang* are indicative of the ways by which the countryside has become a place of cultural meaning to urban tourists.

In *Jiabang*, tourists' current observations acted as direct cues for reminiscing about personal histories and recollections of former societal modes. A prominent theme was the ways by which local people behaved. Tourists focused on an idealised formulation of community that prompted observations on authenticity, hospitality and the honesty of the local people. One tourist remarked that he enjoyed visiting places like *Jiabang* because the hospitality of the people was better than in his home city of Shanghai:

> People will invite you to drink with them because they want to drink with you, there is no other reason. The people are more honest and are kind to you. People in the rural areas are friendlier and less calculating. (Respondent 2)

The older tourists interviewed extolled the virtues of hospitality and kind-heartedness that they said were more common in their youth, qualities that they felt they could still experience in the countryside.

Whilst lionising the projected merits of rural life, the countryside also offered a direct link to what many recalled as the negative aspects of their youth. It was not uncommon for respondents to relay stories about the material privation they used to suffer. When members of a retiree group were asked if they minded the comparative discomfort of staying in the rural villages, many of them were quick to reveal they had experienced much worse. One group member stated that his family of nine lived in a 40 square-metre room, and it was not unusual for people of his age to have slept on floors with little personal space. Another claimed the accommodation standard in the scenic area was low, but it was far more comfortable than most of the locals could enjoy. (Respondents 3 & 4)

The material environment of the countryside reminded some tourists of past personal spaces or of their youth in general. The ethnic minority villages and their supposed pre-developmental purity provide links to a nostalgic yearning for past urban places:

> Children in the villages are lucky where they grow up. It is a much better environment. To be honest I would say it's excellent. Like you told me about the children going down to the stream to go fishing, when I was younger in Shanghai I could swim in the river with my friends, but now it's too polluted…(all) those places [from my youth] have gone. (Respondent 5)

The context of the above observation reflects the materiality, or rather perceived immateriality, of the respondent's past and the perception of a correlation with current lives in *Jiabang*. The countryside life of local children who can play healthily in a place considered safe, and without the trappings of materialism, induces idealised images of unconstrained innocence. It also evokes a certain sense of freedom perceived to have been lost in an urban setting where, through the material changes of development, the perceived freedoms and places of innocence have been lost.

Through reminiscing, the respondents were also offering a tacit criticism of the present. The rapid expansion of China's tourism industry has witnessed numerous problems relating to environmental, economic and sociocultural sustainability (Chen, Huang, & Bao, 2016). Many of the field observations were centred on material facets, comparing the obvious materiality of life in the cities from whence they came against the relative starkness of the villages in *Jiabang*:

> You can see all these people are poor, so they are all the same. They will help each other to build a house or to plant the fields. You can see they are much simpler and more warm-hearted. Before, when we were young, China was like that, every place was like that, at that time people did not care about their material things. Before, people did not have material possessions so they cared about each other. Before, in society, people were more important. Before, a friend was just a friend, now to make friends it is all about creating personal advantages. (Respondent 6)

The above respondent's feedback laments the detrimental changes brought about by the developmental progress in modern cities which, conveys a nostalgic "sentiment of loss and displacement" (Boym, 2001, p. xiii). Such sentiment reflects a state of mind that imbues globalised cultures, spawned from the emergence of popular remembrance that has accelerated alongside the ferocity of modernisation. When such sentiment sweeps through groups, nations or generations in a homogenising fashion, it is symptomatic of a widespread response to an irretrievable past, and the loss that bears grief as its partner. This widespread response, hopefully, will help resolve those barriers (Li, 2006) that contradict the Western sense of modernisation to the Chinese context.

Conclusion

Our study situates placed agents—hosts and guests—at an ethnic tourism destination in rural China. The intermingling positions by which the agents are situated in the contemporary Chinese society are analysed. By scrutinising how the socially constructed distances between rural and urban places are lived out through tourism, we reaffirm our basic arguments: places are ongoing social constructions rather than pre-given, fixed or neutral spaces. China's places of rural, ethnic tourism are ongoing productions of social relations that are evolving constantly under the forces of development. Urban guests were compelled to visit *Jiabang* through impulses framed by the binaries contained in discourses of the rural and the ethnic. The same binaries also framed the practices of tourism in the scenic area, wherein cultural values associated with rural and urban areas were encoded in the behaviours and perceptions of tourists, which in turn, become a vehicle for identity politics between the agents, namely, the hosts and guests. Arguably, cultural processes at home inform the urban guests about the rural, allowing for the perception of idealised places consumed in a manner that further cements expectations despite objective realities (Zhu, 2012). Although *Jiabang* is imagined as a peripheral place, the very fact that tourists have targeted it in the first place is due to its emerging incorporation into wider national modernisation networks that allow urban tourists to venture further into the remote mountains to find the romanticised version of the rural. The irony is that *Jiabang's* discovery by tourists is not accidental but planned; it is the result of political agency that drew the place into wider networks associated with the mechanics of modernity. The end game of these processes is that *Jiabang* will become subject to more governmental development intervention that will change the past and current characteristics of the place.

That the opening of *Jiabang* has come at a time of shrinking distances in the wider region of China's 9.6 million-square-kilometre territory that have essentially drawn the periphery closer to the centre, is no coincidence. As development continues, this is a process that will undoubtedly continue not only in material terms, but also in relation to how ethnic minority villages and the people become presented, imagined and consumed. The propensity of the local community to absorb the discourses that accompany increased tourism development will become a seminal nexus of how the local community comes to identify itself in Chinese society. Moreover, it outlines how *Jiabang* is understood in juxtaposed positions of transition; from the outside perspective, the tourists visit precisely because of imagined inertia to change, whilst locals hope that tourism will instigate developmental changes in their communities and draw them into wider communicative and developmental networks. Rather than being bounded places of the tourist's imagination, rural places, like any other places, are open, in transition and shared. Places of tourism, perhaps more than any other places, are socially fabricated with increasing interests of outside planners, investors and ordinary tourists. In *Jiabang's* emerging tourism area, before tourists arrive, they will consume narratives posted online by other tourists, see images promulgated by the Chinese state media outlets, all of which are representations created by local agency. Through *Jiabang's* process of opening, outside interests are welcomed to assume ownership of the place both physically and socio-culturally, objectify and consume it through their own imaginaries. Such imaginaries are founded upon existent social narratives of the *other* (the ethnic host community). Arguably, the visited social groups are understood as being part of *us*, they are Chinese people and landscapes, which further enable tourists to know and assume the legitimacy of their rights to consume the place.

To understand how the structural properties of societies and institutions are ultimately produced and reproduced through everyday actions, our study unsettles the deterministic approaches dominating the academic sphere of tourism research related to China (Holinshead & Hou, 2012) by incorporating the actions of people in their day-to-day lives. Moreover, to make sense of how power works through both agency and structural properties, we have incorporated a Foucauldian conception of power through which tourism is located as an inclusive discourse of distance/difference. What we find troubling about many studies of tourism places in China is the disconnection between the state and individuals as agents of place and society construction. Analyses of tourism in China tend to concentrate unilaterally on the mechanics and content of state policy and management, leaving scant understanding of how agents have the capability to act otherwise. These conceptions posit places of tourism as spatial examples of the power of the state to define, mould and create people and places, offering a mirror to the ideological content of the government's social and spatial policies. We do not question the validity of those analytical studies. Rather, we have attempted to offer insights into future studies on the opportunities presented through tourism for people to act otherwise; to create their own representations and behave in ways which are formulated upon individual understandings about the world in which they live.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful of the University of Hong Kong for the resource, wisdom and inspiration which have made this research possible.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.01.001.

References

Airey, D., & Chong, K. (2010). National policy-makers for tourism in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*(2), 295–314.

Alibaba Cloud. (2015). 2010 Visitor number of Shanghai World Expo will reach 70 million. https://www.aliyun.com/zixun/content/2_6_775636.html (accessed January 23, 2015).

Ashworth, G. J. (1994). From history to heritage; from heritage to identity: In search of concepts and models. In G. J. Ashworth, & P. J. Larkham (Eds.). *Building a new*

heritage: Tourism, culture and identity in a new Europe (pp. 13–30). London: Routledge.
Bao, J., Chen, G., & Ma, L. (2014). Tourism research in China: Insights from insiders. *Annals of Tourism Research, 45*, 167–181.
Bao, J., & Ma, L. (2010). Tourism development in China, 1978–2008: Whence, what and whither? *Progress in Human Geography, 35*(1), 3–20.
Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia.* New York: Basic Books.
Bruner, E. M. (2005). *Culture on tour: Ethnographies of travel.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Burgess, R. G. (1984). *In the field: An introduction to field research.* London: Routledge.
Chambers, R. (1991). Rapid (or relaxed) and participatory rural appraisal – Notes on practical approaches and methods. *Qualitative Research Methods Newsletter, 2*, 11–16.
Chang, T. (2012). Making and unmaking places in tourism geographies. *The Routledge handbook of tourism geographies* (pp. 133–138). London and New York: Routledge.
Chang, T. C., & Huang, S. (2008). Geographies of everywhere and nowhere: Place-(un)making in a world city. *International Development Planning Review, 30*(3), 227–247.
Chen, J. (2008). *Nation, ethnicity and cultural strategies: Three waves of ethnic representation in post-1949 China.* Unpublished doctoral dissertationNew Brunswick, New Jersey, United States: Rutgers University.
Chen, G., Huang, S., & Bao, J. (2016). The multiple logics of tourism development in China. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 24*(12), 1655–1673.
China State Ethnic Affairs Commission (2017). China ethnic statistical yearbook 2017. From ChinaBookshop web site: http://www.chinabookshop.net/china-ethnic-statistical-yearbook-2017-p-26568.html (accessed November 26, 2018).
CHINA.ORG.CN. (2018). Fifty-six ethnic groups. http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/Brief/192294.html (accessed November 26, 2018).
Choi, J. (2009). The internal expansion of China: Tourism and the production of distance. In T. Winter, P. Teo, & T. C. Chang (Eds.). *Asia on tour: Exploring the rise of Asian tourism* (pp. 207–222). Abingdon: Routledge.
Cohen, E. (1979). A phenomenology of tourist experiences. *The Journal of the British Sociological Association, 13*(2), 179–201.
Cornet, C. (2015). Tourism development and resistance in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 52*, 29–43.
Cresswell, T. (2008). Place: Encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography, 93*(3), 132–139.
Crick, M. (1991). Tourists, locals and anthropologists: Quizzical reflections on "Otherness" in tourist encounters and in tourism research. *Australian Cultural History, 10*, 6–18.
Cui, Q., Liao, X., & Xu, H. (2017). Tourist experience of nature in contemporary China: A cultural divergence approach. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, 15*(3), 248–265.
Dann, G. (1996). *The language of tourism: A sociolinguistic perspective.* Oxford: CAB International.
de la Maza, F. (2016). State conceptions of indigenous tourism in Chile. *Annals of Tourism Research, 56*, 80–95.
Fazito, M., Scott, M., & Russell, P. (2016). The dynamics of tourism discourses and policy in Brazil. *Annals of Tourism Research, 57*, 1–17.
Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977.* New York: Pantheon Books.
Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality Volume 1: An introduction.* New York: Vintage.
Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays.* New York: Basic Books.
Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society.* Cambridge: Polity Press.
Goulding, C., & Domic, D. (2009). Heritage, identity and ideological manipulation: The case of Croatia. *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(1), 85–102.
Graburn, N. (1989). Tourism: The sacred journey. In V. Smith (Ed.). *Hosts and guests: The anthropology of tourism* (pp. 21–35). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Greenhalgh, T., & Stones, R. (2010). Theorising big IT programmes in healthcare: Strong structuration theory meets actor-network theory. *Social Science and Medicine, 70*, 1285–1294.
Harvey, D., & Braun, B. (1996). *Justice, nature and the geography of difference.* Oxford: Blackwell.
Holinshead, K., & Hou, C. X. (2012). The seductions of 'soft power': The call for multifronted research into the articulative reach of tourism in China. *Journal of China Tourism Research, 8*, 227–247.
Hollinshead, K. (2004). A primer in the ontological craft: The creative capture of people and places through qualitative research. In L. G. A. J. Phillimore (Ed.). *Qualitative research in tourism: Ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies* (pp. 63–82). London: Routledge.
Hollinshead, K., Ateljevic, I., & Ali, N. (2009). Worldmaking agency - worldmaking authority: The sovereign constitutive role of tourism. *Tourism Geographies, 11*(4), 427–433.
Hou, C. X. (2012). Review – China and deep-rooted vision: Cultural grammar in contest in tourism today. *Tourism Analysis, 17*, 387–397.
Kindon, S. (2002). From mitigation to negotiation: Ethics and the geographical imagination in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *New Zealand Geographer, 58*, 14–22.
Latham, A. (2003). Research, performance, and doing human geography: Some reflections on the diary-photograph, diary-interview method. *Environment and Planning A, 35*(11), 1993–2017.
Lee, F., & du Cros, H. (2013). A comparative analysis of three heritage management approaches in southern China: Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Macau. In K. D. Silva, & N. K. Chapagain (Eds.). *Asian heritage management: Contexts, concerns, and prospects* (pp. 106–121). London: Routledge.
Li, Y. (2006). Contradictions of modernization in China and the implications for community tourism development. In T. V. Liu (Ed.). *Tourism management: New Research* (pp. 1–23). USA: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
Liu, T. T. (1996). Local identity in modern Chinese fiction and fiction of the native soil. In D. Faure, & T. T. Liu (Eds.). *Unity and diversity: Local cultures and identities in China* (pp. 139–160). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
Liu, J., Nijkamp, P., & Lin, D. (2017). Urban-rural imbalance and Tourism-led growth in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 64*, 24–36.
MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings. *American Journal of Sociology, 79*(3), 589–603.
Macleod, D. V. (2004). *Tourism, globalisation, and cultural change: An island community perspective.* Toronto: Channel View Publications.
Massey, D. (2004). The responsibilities of place. *Local Economy, 19*(2), 97–101.
Morgan, N., & Pritchard, A. (1998). *Tourism promotion and power: Creating images, creating Identity.* Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
Morishita, S. S. (2001). *Teodori: Cosmological building and social consolidation.* Rome: Editrice Pontifica Universita Gregoriana.
Notar, B. E. (2006). *Displacing desire: Travel and popular culture in China.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Nyíri, P. (2007). "Displacing desire: Travel and popular culture in China" by Beth E. Notar. *The China Journal, 58*, 166–168.
O'Reilly, K. (2012). *Structuration, practice theory, ethnography and migration. International Migration Institute Working Papers Series*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press.
Overton, J., & Murray, W. E. (2016). Fictive place. *Progress in Human Geography, 40*(6), 794–809.
Pain, R. (2004). Social geography: Participatory research. *Progress in Human Geography, 25*(5) 652 633.
Pan, S., Santos, C., & Kim, S. (2017). Promoting tourism, projecting power: The role of television commercials. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 34*(2), 192–208.
Park, C. H. (2008). *Delights in farm guesthouses: Nongjiale tourism, rural development and the regime of leisure- pleasure in post-Mao China.* Unpublished doctoral dissertationAnn Arbor, MI: University of California.
Peterson, Y. Y. (1995). Chinese landscape as a tourist attraction: Image and reality. In A. A. Lew, & L. Yu (Eds.). *Tourism in China: Geographic, political, and economic perspectives* (pp. 141–154). Boulder: Westview Press.
Randstrom, R., & Deur, D. (1999). Reciprocal appropriation: Towards an ethics of cross-cultural research. In J. D. Proctor, & D. M. Smith (Eds.). *Geography and ethics: Journeys in a moral terrain* (pp. 237–250). London: Routledge.
Ryan, C. (1997). The chase of a dream, the end of a play. In C. Ryan (Ed.). *The tourist experience: A new introduction* (pp. 1–24). London: Cassell.
Sayers, J. (2006). Remember the mother river: The impact of environmental injustice on national identity in contemporary China. In S. H. Washington, P. C. Rosier, & H. Goodall (Eds.). *Echoes from the poisoned well: Global memories of environmental injustice* (pp. 331–344). Oxford: Lexington Books.
Seawright, J., & Collier, D. (2004). Glossary. In H. E. Brady, & D. Collier (Eds.). *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards* (pp. 273–313). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Smith, V. (1989). *Hosts and guests: The anthropology of tourism.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Stones, R. (2005). *Structuration theory.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Stones, R. (2012). *Causality, contextual frames and international migration: Combining strong structuration theory, critical realism and textual analysis. International migration institute working papers series*. Oxford: University of Oxford.
Thorpe, J. (2012). *Temagami's tangled wild: Race, gender, and the making of Canadian nature.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
Urry, J. (2006). Preface: Places and performances. In T. O. Claudio Minca (Ed.). *Travels in paradox: Remapping tourism* (pp. vii–x). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0.* Los Angles: Sage.
Wang, N. (2000). *Tourism and modernity: A sociological analysis.* Oxford: Pergamon.
Wang, Y. (2008). *Naturalising ethnicity, culturalising landscape: The politics of world heritage in China.* Unpublished doctoral dissertationAnn Arbor, MI: Duke University.
Wang, X., Luo, R., Zhang, L., & Rozelle, S. (2017). The education gap of China's migrant children and rural counterparts. *The Journal of Development Studies, 53*(11), 1865–1881.
Wikipedia. (2018). Sixth national population census of the People's Republic of China. From Wikipedia – the Free Encyclopaedia web site: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_National_Population_Census_of_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China (accessed November 26, 2018).
Xu, H., Cui, Q., Ballantyne, R., & Packer, J. (2013). Effective environmental interpretation at Chinese natural attractions: The need for an aesthetic approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 21*(1), 117–133.
Xue, L., Kerstetter, D., & Hunt, C. (2017). Tourism development and changing rural identity in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 66*, 170–182.
Yan, H., & Bramwell, B. (2008). Cultural tourism, ceremony and the state in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 35*(4), 969–989.
Yan, L. B., & McKercher, B. (2013). Travel culture in Eastern Jin China (317–420 AD): The emergence of a travel culture of landscape appreciation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 43*, 23–46.
Yan, G., & Santos, C. A. (2009). "CHINA, FOREVER": Tourism discourse and self-orientalism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(2), 295–315.
Yang, L. (2011). Ethnic tourism and cultural representation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*(2), 561–585.
Yang, L., Wall, G., & Smith, S. L. J. (2008). Ethnic tourism development: Chinese government perspectives. *Annals of Tourism Research, 35*(3), 751–771.
Zhang, C. X., L'Espoir Decosta, P., & McKercher, B. (2015). Politics and tourism promotion: Hong Kong's myth making. *Annals of Tourism Research, 54*, 156–171.
Zhu, Z. (2012). Performing heritage: Rethinking authenticity in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(3), 1495–1513.
Zhun, X. (2013). The political economy of decollectivisation in China. *Monthly Review, 65*(1), 1–17.
Zuo, B., Gursoy, D., & Wall, G. (2017). Residents' support for red tourism in China: The moderating effect of central government. *Annals of Tourism Research, 64*, 51–63.

Professor Li, Yiping is a geographer and tourism researcher, and currently a distinguished professor of Sino-French College of Tourism, Guangzhou University, China.

Professor Zhang, Heqing is an anthropologist and tourism researcher, and currently the Dean of Sino-French College of Tourism, Guangzhou University, China.

Professor Zhang, Dian is a geographer, and currently a chair professor of College of Geography and Earth Sciences of Guangzhou University, China. He is also an honorary professor of the University of Hong Kong.

Dr Abrahams, Richard obtained his PhD Degree from Department of Geography, the University of Hong Kong. He is currently a manager of Olympus Hedge Fund Investments in Hong Kong.