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The state-led tourism development in Beijing's ecologically fragile periphery: Peasants' response and challenges

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ABSTRACT

A top-down rural sustainable strategy *via* rural tourism has been recently advocated as a feasible and appropriate option to engage Chinese peasants of scenic mountainous areas to revitalize the local economy. The northern and western hilly Beijing being protected from urban expansion has turned out to be an ideal choice for its proximity to a potentially large middle-class clientele. We explore theoretically and empirically the contradictory unity between local peasants' entrepreneurial undertakings (decentralized competition) and top-down tourism development plan (monopolistic centralization) in a mixed-governing "common-pool resource" (CPR) situation in local rural tourism in China. This paper contributes towards a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms of local land use regulations on rural tourism development and the conflict-resolution in benefit sharing negotiations between local communities with public authorities and mega tourism project developers in the land expropriation and heritage conservation process. Supported by field surveys, two cases of tourism business are analyzed using the argument on CPRs and multilateral monopoly relating to access and rights of use of collectively owned rural land, and how this monopolistic power has been established in rural tourism development. Our study highlights the importance of the village autonomy in deploying their contestation and bargaining power in safeguarding their land rights and sustaining a vast ecological system and rural tourism commons, while accepting tourism as their newly established livelihood.

1. Background and introduction

After four decades of economic reform which has brought substantial economic success, China has diversified from its dependence on export-led industrial growth to cover increasingly a domestic consumption-based economy which is much service-oriented (Tsang, 2014). The same period has also witnessed a sharp rise of middle classes who pursue more leisure-making varieties, one of which is rural tourism. Recently, the growth-driven Chinese state, like many parts of the world, has used rural tourism as a development strategy to replace or supplement small farming to furnish rural households with more incomes. This applies to particularly ecologically fragile and hilly areas, under the program known as Tourism Assisting the Poor (*lv you fu pin*, see Zeng & Ryan, 2012; Chio, 2014). Promoting rural tourism has not only a great significance to ease rural exodus to over-burdened large Chinese cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in services and facilities, but has also the potential to attract rural migrants to return to their villages as active entrepreneurs, using their social capital acquired from cities.

Indeed, rural tourism plays today a "post-productivist" role which serves to both conserve the natural ecology and provide service-led economic activities. This concept embraces also a series of the rural settlement transformation issues driven by urbanization, as to how well land use planning should be executed, and the right types of on-farm and off-farm activities that should be opted (Almstedt, 2013; Long & Woods, 2011). Previous studies had examined the transitional rural community from the rural village to the urban neighborhood due to urban sprawl at rural-urban fringe, and the informal rural settlement such as urban fringe village (*chengbiancun*) and urban village (*chengzhongcun*) for lack of planning regulation adjacent to or merged into urban boundary (Lang, Chen, & Li, 2016; Liu, He, Wu, & Webster, 2010; Zhu, Zhang, Li, & Zhu, 2014). But few referred to the micro dynamic land development of the scattered rural settlements at the ecologically fragile periphery of the Chinese metropolises, which is driven by an urban-centered cultural tourism derived from the post-productivism. Naturally, rural tourism development as a key component of these post-productivist factors has diversified even more land use in the countryside, and it has created land use competition and other challenges in rural China. Among the challenges, the negotiation process among different stakeholders is largely

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found to be proceeding in an inalienable context and a conflictual rural governance custom (Ho, 2001; Shen & Shen, 2018).

There has been a very close relationship between the rural tourism land uses and the institutional evolution of rural land rights in both the Global North and Global South. The existing literature and case studies from Canada, USA and Europe have demonstrated that in a post-productivist era, rural land use in tourism (including efficacy, value, allocation, and sustainability) is influenced by an increasing complexity of the rural property rights regime, stakeholders involved, and power geometry in rural governance (Vail & Hultkrantz, 2000). More specifically, the double-edged nature of the regulations in rural tourism development has been hinted at in previous studies. A strong authority planning and development control is essential, but the regulation can also result in the disempowerment and socio-economic exclusion of community residents. Marsden (1999), in his political-economic analysis of the British rural space, suggested that the new relations with the state at different scales and the differential governance of rural space were worthy of greater scrutiny. But the underlying mechanisms by which the paradoxical consequences (e.g. ambiguity, uncertainty and disempowerment) emerge in the governance and regulation of rural tourism land uses in the context of China were little mentioned.

The contested rural spaces and different degrees of regulation are observable in China's rural tourism land uses, too. China's township/village- and household-based rural tourism has been encouraged by liberalization policies since the 1990s. But bottom-up initiatives encounter multiple land use regulations, such as farmland protection, regulations on rural land transaction, Grain-for-Green Program, New Countryside Program, Targeted Poverty Alleviation Program, land acquisition and consolidation (see Zhou, Guo, Liu, Wu, & Li, 2018). A very complicated land management and rural governance power matrix has generated the paradoxical consequences, including the consolidation of rural tourism development rights to the hands of mega-corporations and local authorities (Li, Ryan, & Cave, 2016; Ying & Zhou, 2007). These empirical studies, however, failed to answer a very core issue in the tourism-driven rural settlement transformation in the context of a collective land regime in rural China today: how the peripheral villages supply themselves with the robust and efficient institutions to manage such a complex "common-pool resource" (CPR) situation in local rural tourism? Chinese rural tourism development incorporates the majority of the full set of design principles illustrated by long-enduring CPR institutions, as discussed in Elinor Ostrom's (1990) framework in governing the commons. But unlike her self-governing CPR institutions, rural settlements in China have continuously faced the conflict-laden, mixed-organized and -governed CPRs, because their rural territory is jointly owned and used as some form of common property by local villages, by co-ops, by corporations, and by state. Instead of one governmental authority or self-governing, a polycentric set of limited-access CPR appropriators has built up and maintained a CPR institution in tourism development of rural China.

In a limited-access CPR owing to an inalienable context in rural land uses, the incentives and the strategic behaviors for each participant will depend on and get constrained under the rules and structure of the particular CPR system. We hence need to identify the specific forms of competition and monopoly embedded in the institutional contexts, and show the particular ways in which these forces would generate the various forms of land use patterns and territorial relations among the different players (Harvey, 2014). The peasants involved still exercise a considerable control over institutional arrangements and property rights on this communal tenure. More importantly, as argued by Ostrom (1990: 54), rural settlements who hold the strong self-organizing and -governing authority would not get stuck in a single-tier world, and this village autonomy would allow the peasantry to switch back and forth across multiple layers of nested governmental jurisdictions and between operational-, collective-, and constitutional-choice rules for greater opportunities and well-being. It implies that this CPR setting in rural China has a high potential to meet Ostrom's (1990, 2007) principles for a long-enduring CPR institution and "institutional robustness", which are deemed essential to sustain a vast ecological system and rural tourism commons. We thus attempt to examine the strategic behaviors of rural settlements and their processes of altering the rules in a polycentric CPR institution, when confronted with suboptimalities in appropriation and provision. Their land-rights game and negotiated settlement is a key element in the rural transformation. How, to what degree, and with what consequences does the CPR system enable or inhibit the peasantry's collective negotiation in the land use competition in the rural tourism development? To examine these questions, this paper will draw on Harvey's (2014) political-economic analysis on the "monopolistic competition" relationship in the commodification of nature and rurality.

This paper aims to investigate the gap largely missing in existing studies about the role of rural settlements in governing this conflict-laden, mixed-organized and -governed CPR, and their strategic behaviors of altering the suboptimal rules through a series of land-rights game, which we term a "multilateral monopoly situation". The case studies would reveal the considerable diversity of collective-choice level rules for governing this CPR in China, and the feasibility of robust and mixed-governing CPR systems to manage rural communal property in tourism development. This requires a political-economic analysis in the state-capital-peasantry relations in terms of their claims to rural land conversion as communal rights holders and share of the benefits thus created in the rural tourism business (Chio, 2014; Cornet, 2015; Li et al., 2016; Ying & Zhou, 2007). The role and responses of peasants will need to be contextually redefined as to how they react with mega-corporations and local authorities as co-stakeholders in the transformation process. Borrowing Ostrom's (1990) theories on self-organized collective action as a robust institution for common-pool problems, we argue that, far from being passive and subordinated to state authorities and markets, autonomy of rural settlements has now become a crucial social force in China in bargaining and extracting the surplus value of the collectively owned rural land, although in remote locations under an urban-centered developmentalist regime. Following this logic, the aim of this paper is to examine the rationale of the multilateral monopoly in the rural tourism land development in a mixed-governing CPR setting (among central government, municipal/-district government, township government, rural settlements, and investors), and how the peasantry has negotiated collectively for a clearer and more stable collective property rights in remote villages located in the hilly areas in the north and west of Beijing Municipality which have potential to attract a large clientele. The surveys were conducted to investigate the response of rural settlements towards the top-down initiatives. Before tackling these questions in turn, a brief review is first deliberated.

2. Review on rural tourism land politics: monopoly *vs.* competition

The role of governance and regulation is a hot debate in the rural tourism development in the Global North and South (Daugstad, 2008). It has been proved that the state remains heavily present in the rural tourism development, through its infrastructural investments, top-down rural program, village demolition and relocation, and some other rural governance apparatus. Arguably, the power is both a promoter and an inhibitor to sustainability in some contexts, and how the rural tourism ventures can empower the local communities to maintain a balance of power is an issue worthy of more investigations (Frisvoll, 2012). But this entanglement of power and politics in the rural tourism is quite place-specific and context-dependent.

The geopolitical analysis is introduced to interpret the land disputes in rural tourism development in the transitional economies including the Central and Eastern European Countries and China (Hall, 2017; Xue, Kerstetter, & Buzinde, 2015). For instance, in Poland, Bulgaria, Czech, Slovakia and Estonia, the unclear title on land is one of the most source of legal obstacles for tourism investment, associated with a risk of

lawsuit with pre-communist owners which the developers are not willing to take (Hall, 2017; Niewiadomski, 2016). China's rural-urban dual land track has made the rural tourism development even more complex than the above issue of land reprivatisation in the Central and Eastern Europe. By China's legal framework, rural lands including farmland, homestead land (*zhaijidi*) and natural resources such as forest, grassland, mountain and water are all collectively held in the countryside (Ho, 2001). Ownership of the collectively owned rural land is unclear, and this makes the transfer of the developmental right to a developer for scenic spots and hotels a difficult one in terms of compensation. Despite ambiguity of peasants' land rights, what is most important is how the gain is shared and under what conditions (Hsing, 2010).

While there was a large body of the comparative empirical studies on the nexus between the government-led planning and sustainable rural tourism development in the diverse contexts (Daugstad, 2008; Frisvoll, 2012), little has referred to the mechanism and impact of a contradictory unity of competition and monopoly in the land uses between multiple stakeholders (state-capital-peasants) in rural tourism development. In the Western theory, governments were assumed to be impartial and without commercial interests; but more and more case studies from the local developmentalism and the growth-enhancing policies have begun to see the upper level authority as an important destination stakeholder, who is legislatively mandated to undertake land use plans and regulate the engagement and collaboration of multiple stakeholders. This is particularly true where who can acquire the tourism assets at a low cost has been a focus of much of tourism development. One of the concerns is, transforming rural landscape to tourism uses could give rise to socio-spatial unevenness and land disputes. This means tourism development induced displacement and resettlement (TDIDR) issues, and there is no lack of such evidence taking place in many transitional economies in the Central and Eastern Europe and China (Hall, 2017; Xue et al., 2015).

Indeed, the state's control on the rural land developmental rights was hinted at in the Government-Tourism Enterprises Model in Qiyunshan and Huangshan, as an interventionist approach on the productive activities and daily life of rural communities (Li et al., 2016; Qian, Sasaki, Jourdain, Kim, & Shivakoti, 2017). Even in the so-called Community-Based Tourism Model (CBT), Li et al. (2016), Ryan and Gu (2009), Ying and Zhou (2007) found that the rural communities in China only participated in the economic activity, with a low participation in planning and decision-making process due to the institutional settings and some other socio-cultural components. In a centralized land administration system, the residents' weak participation in decision-making can be exacerbated where, due to the unequal access to rural lands and core tourism assets between the upper level authority and the locals, not all the residents are able to participate fully in the local planning and decision-making process. Cornet (2015) and Chio (2014) analyzed how the villagers had reacted to and resisted the land seizures and the unequal distribution of benefit. But there is still a weak conceptual grasp of the place-specific interaction of state-capital-peasantry power in particular land politics, and how this land politics shape the outcomes of the differential governance of rural space in the rural tourism development. Rural land held in communal tenure in the transitional China meets Ostrom's (1990) criteria for effective and robust CPR settings, such as clearly defined boundaries, good-fitting rules, participation in collective choice, monitoring, sanctioning, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and minimal recognition of rights to organize. Accordingly, rural land conversion to commercial use in China is an asymmetric issue, and it is difficult for rural settlements to modify collective-choice rules to better fit them to the dynamic setting over time due to a high cost of changing the rules. We thus need to examine the strategic behaviors used by rural settlements to alter the rules used to organize operational choices in a polycentric CPR situation.

We will loosen the specific limits on Ostrom's (1990) self-governing CPR situations. First, we focus on how rural settlements must switch back and forth for a dynamic equilibrium of its collective-choice structure in a mixed-governing CPR environment. Rural settlements are organized on the basis of multiple nested levels of rules (operational-, collective-, and constitutional-choice levels) and governmental jurisdictions (town, municipal, and central levels). Instead of one level external authority or self-governing, the CPR case study from rural China can offer a polycentric and nested system beyond rigorous disciplines on CPR. Second, we regard this polycentric CPR situation is more like an informal and evolutionary collective-choice process (including *de facto* as well as *de jure* rules) in the local arena. How would the rural settlements supply their own insinuations within this sophisticated management system? It is apparent that the rules affecting the peasantry's operational choice are made within a set of collective-choice rules of a CPR situation that are themselves made within a set of constitutional-choice rules. Rural settlements who have self-organizing capabilities at a micro-setting can go back and forth across levels for higher-order rules, introducing a new research gap in the local institutional development. This points to the importance of rural autonomy to be a potentially strong collective action force to monitor appropriation and provision activities (including their own and externals) and devise their own rules to solve CPR problems. Next, we will examine the rationale of "multilateral monopoly" in the rural tourism land uses in China that is a mixed-governing CPR environment, followed by a case study from rural Beijing.

3. Multilateral monopoly in the rural tourism land uses in Beijing, China

The liberalization of rural production since the late 1970s has created opportunities for the economic vitality in the countryside in China. In practical terms, it is generally believed that the peasants' entrepreneurship spirit can be promoted by material rewards. In China under reforms, some tourism planners had noticed that by the early 2000s, *nongjiale* (farm homestay) turned out to be a popular market among urbanites who wished to enjoy an "overnight vacation" in the rural recreational areas around the metropolises. These sites offer the multi-faceted natural-cum-recreational assets such as farming, nature walk, sports and entertainment associated with the promotion of the health, arts education and heritage-related activities. Before long, many peasants in Beijing's hilly areas started to respond to the rising need for leisure and recreation (Park, 2014). By the early 2010s, a variety of resorts ranging from the humble collectives run by local operators to the well-equipped medium-to-large accommodations by some larger investors began to emerge in rural Beijing, especially in its mountainous districts like Mentougou, Miyun, Huairou, Yanqing, and Pinggu. Seemingly, these small landholders in the periphery of metropolises have produced a similar consumptive product which is called *nongjiale*, thus indicating a presuming state of market competition. However, this is not a liberating of decentralized individualized market freedoms; but, on the contrary, it is a contested process for the "monopoly power" in producing a recreational space in the case of the land and property ownership.

3.1. Monopoly power on lands emerging in the era of the rural commodification

The contestation between the policy imperatives from upper level authority and the village resistance against policy compliance was repeatedly elaborated in recent studies on the rural governance in contemporary China (Chio, 2014; Cornet, 2015; Shen & Shen, 2018). Since the 2010s, a new role of the state has emerged in the rural governance as the economic base has moved from extractive activities to services (Smith, 2010). This is known as the "state entrepreneurialism" which is a reformist neoliberal reconstruction process taking place in the vast unplanned rural hinterlands in China (Wu, 2018). It is indeed a new paradigm of governing the countryside through state-led programs

(Shen & Shen, 2018) where local party officials practice the relationship game or "neo-*guanxi*lism" to compete for limited but lucrative projects (Wang, Ye, & Franco, 2014). But the competition for projects is subjected to a hierarchical managerial control within China's bureaucracy. At the top, there is the highly centralized and monopolistic state power dictated by "visible hands" guided by more or less policies of power decentralization to the grass-roots. At the bottom, however, there are "invisible hands" which are stretched out by individual farm-homestay market competitors and developers. This state-society relation remains a core issue, especially when rural lands have remained collectively owned by peasants and their ownership is still inalienable after four decades of market-oriented reform.

During the period 1949-78 Mao's centrally planned paradigm, land values in China were nonmarketable, and the self-reliant agricultural policy offered peasants the rights to be full collective owners of rural lands without being challenged. During Deng Xiaoping's post-1978 reformist period till now, conflicts arising from peasants' articulation for "rural land development rights" have constituted the land-based urban politics and the main crisis of the Chinese peasantry in the midst of a fast-growing urban economy in China today (Hsing, 2010; Liu, Wong, & Liu, 2012). This crisis has been intensified due to: a) rural land expropriation at the Chinese urban front that has ignited changes in land uses and property rights (Ho & Lin, 2003); b) very low compensation that is based on pre-conversion estimates upon land acquisition, with the bulk of post-development landed surplus value going to government agencies and developers (Lin & Ho, 2005); and c) "informality" of peasants' passionate real estate endeavors to share the cake of "real--estate fever" taking place in "urban villages" or "small property housing" at the suburban zones of major cities (Liu et al., 2012). For decades, Chinese peasants have had a strong conviction that they "own" the rural lands they till. Yet, rural China has a very different context from the Western capitalist world, where private property forms a core notion of ownership and a clear definition about who has access to land/-infrastructure/heritage, who is responsible to preserve resources, and who can share more from property- or land-related profit gains. Ostrom (1990) helps us to confront the superiority of privatization, and points to CPRs for allocational purposes.

Historically, rural landownership has evolved since the Chinese Communist takeover in 1949 when private landownership was gradually abolished; and then during the period 1952-57 rural lands were organized into farm cooperatives under collective ownership and management; and it was further consolidated when People's Communes were established in 1958. In the early 1980s land reforms saw the redistribution of rural land to households, but landownership was transformed, *de facto*, into user right or lease (Standing Committee, 1998, 2004). More specifically, the State Council was specified as the representative of the state to manage the landownership (Ho, 2001, p. 404), and it also allowed peasants to set up the enterprises on rural collective lands for commercial uses in conformity with the state codes (Standing Committee, 1998, 2004). With regard to the access to and rights of use of CPRs such as rural lands, water and natural resources as listed above, Schlager and Ostrom defined the property-rights schema involving: a) authorized user (e.g. peasants in the rural China) holding the operational level rights of access and withdrawal[1] but lacking the collective-choice authority to devise their own management rules or to exclude others from gaining access to resources; b) claimant individuals (e.g. local village committee officials) who possess the same rights as authorized users plus some collective-choice rights of management; c) proprietors (e.g. village and township governments) authorizing who may access resources and how resources may be utilized but not to be alienated; and finally d) true landowners and developers (e.g. local municipal governments) who hold the right of alienation in addition to collective-choice rights of management and exclusion (Hsing, 2010; Ostrom, 2009; Schlager & Ostrom, 1992; Sikor, He, & Lestrelin, 2017).

It is apparent that the peasants of a particular rural settlement (as a self-organized collective entity) can produce operational rules at a community level, but they have limited access to the collective-choice property rights (normally at township level) that can change local operational rules. Constitutional-choice actions by higher ranked governments (such as municipal and central governments) can entail devising collective-choice rules. The rural land politics has evolved in the bundles of property rights in regard to access to and rights of use of CPRs in rural China. More strikingly, the case of de-agriculturalization and de-industrialization of rural Beijing replacing them with rural tourism has intensified this trend of land disputes. In recent several years, the phasing out of agrarian, mining and manufacturing activities in the peripheral "preservation zones" in the northern and western hilly areas of Beijing by replacing them with rural tourism can be marked by a productive trajectory. In this rural commodification and tertiarization process, the monopolistic control of local natural-cum-recreational assets by some external corporations (including private investors, state-owned tourism enterprises and township tourism enterprises) has been their core competitive edge in support of the state's pro-growth and developmental paradigm. In this rural commodification process, nature and rurality have been reproduced to suit the neoliberal economic operation executed in the countryside as its metropolitan counterpart. One cannot, however, expect that an "optimal" land use for higher profits would be a good institutional design in ecologically fragile areas. In fact, a CPR institution is a sustained one (although not measured as optimal), and rural autonomy is an important social force to sustain its vast ecological and resource system.

Smith (2007) has called such a consumptive production of recreational and natural heritage realized by capital investment as the "formal subsumption of nature". We need to specify that the existing natural and heritage resources would not be able to be intensified or spread to all spots. They are specific and unique by themselves. Once they are put under the possession and control by the external corporations, they can be hardly shared evenly by the small and atomised businesses of grass-roots peasant entrepreneurs who are in no good position to own them (see Boyd, Prudham, & Schurman, 2001). Peasant entrepreneurs have to use the business skills, operational production circuits or network to make up a difference for a better performance. Such a contradictory unity between the monopoly and competition is elaborated by Harvey (2014) as a field of monopolistic competition, which is also one of the contradictions in the cases of uneven development. Going beyond the economist Joseph Stiglitz's account of rent seeking, Harvey argued that monopoly power and competition are indistinguishable in some contexts, and the two are fused and "the contradiction is latent rather than antagonistic" (Harvey, 2014, p. 134). This monopoly power, as a collective power of monopoly rents, is "foundational rather than aberrational to the functioning of capital" (Harvey, 2014, p. 134). Similarly, rural tourism is not constructed as a molecular-like competitive collisions of individual peasant entrepreneurs and external investors in a chaotic system of economic activities. Rather, rural tourism businesses rest on an assemblage of individual and collective monopolistic property rights on the natural and heritage resources and rural lands. This is actually the deliberate ambiguity of institutional ensemble, in and through which the forces and interests of different agencies, ranging from local operational rules, collective-choice property rights, to constitutional-choice actions, are contested, negotiated and mediated.

As argued by Harvey (2014: 135), "the balance between monopoly and competition oscillates erratically back and forth", and is cyclical

[1] In Schlager and Ostrom's (1992) redefinition of different bundles of property rights in regard to common-pool resources, the operational-level property rights are "access" (right to enter a defined physical property) and "withdrawal" (right to obtain the "products" of a resource); and collective-choice property rights include "management" (right to regulate internal use patterns and transform the resource by making improvements), "exclusion" (right to determine who will have an access right, and how that right may be transferred), and "alienation" (right to sell or lease these collective choice rights).

over time and subject to the political process and state intervention. The market-oriented reforms opened up diversified forms of rural commodification including rural tourism at a spontaneous stage in the 1980s and 1990s. Beijing government began to implement the standardization and planning during the 2000s to coordinate the unstable tourism markets in the countryside and fix the crisis made in the 1990s such as the inharmonious functioning of public facilities with serious pollution issues. Map A1 in Fig. 1 shows a blueprint to develop the "valley economy" (*gouyv jingji*) led by the local governments in Beijing, characterized by mountain valleys with features shaped by their unique geology, landform, drainage patterns and a charming cultural landscape. Dozens of valleys in the north and west of Beijing have been identified for having potential to be developed into the leading tourism village spots.

On the one hand, the government's strengthening of its monopoly position (as a typical constitutional choice action exercising rights of management, exclusion and alienation for municipal resources) has proved a common view that its efforts in infrastructure support are critical to lead local tourism development by drawing in private investors. Up until the end of 2016, Beijing government invested 0.7 billion yuan on the road and facility improvement and nature rehabilitation in the "valley economy" areas. Another 14.5 billion yuan came from private investors (BJ. chinadaily, 2017), and more planning and upgrading measures including the "recreational corridor" for self-driving tourists are expected (see Map A2 in Fig. 1). On the other hand, the top-down spatial plans and a concentration of administrative power, also create the potentialities of monopolizing the tourism attractions and property at an advantageous location (as strong incentives for proprietors such as the township governments who hold the collective-choice rights to undertake the investments in resources), which are more accessible to the expressways, national highways, planned circle tours and other types of infrastructural investments (e.g. "valley economy").

Apparently, the governments' efforts have redefined the peasant entrepreneurs' spatial qualities (especially locational advantage and environmental and resource quality) that are a certain monopoly power in competition with others. The monopolistic competition in the rural tourism development is always on its change, subject to the globalization and economic restructuring processes, institutional reforms, and local agents at multiple levels. Thanks to the government-led infrastructural investments, highly localized rural tourism resources have become regionalized. But at the same time, the rural residents who have stayed back due to low educational level and skills are losing their monopoly privileges, as they are forced into competition at a greater scale. In such a "monopolistic competition" for high-quality tourism resources and superior locational advantages, rural tourism actually invokes a "right to the rural", where the rural residents who have stayed back can claim their operational rules and inclusiveness within a natural setting and attachment to their private and collective properties in the "government-led" rural tourism development. We will look closer into how the monopoly rent is created and distributed in this multilateral monopoly situation in a mixed-governing CPR environment in the rural China, especially in the peripheral zones of the metropolises like Beijing.

3.2. Complexities and uncertainties in a multilateral monopoly situation

Dictated by its pro-growth and developmental paradigm and prescribed by market rules, different players encounter in this contested rural space — investors, peasants and local elites, and officials at different branches of the state apparatus. They are all looking for ways to construct and preserve a monopoly position and entrepreneurial opportunities to cash in on the natural scenery and authentic heritage. As elaborated by Harvey (2014: 139), there are three paths at least to secure a monopoly privilege in the monopolistic competition: a) the massive centralization of capital in mega-corporations; b) the establishment of property rights through laws and alliances; and c) name branding that enables the property owners to command a monopoly price. In cultivating the monopoly power, the capital centralizes at strategical locations; the governments (who are the true landowners and constitutional rule makers in Schlager and Ostrom's property-rights schema) make long-term planning and investments in the resource system to reduce uncertainties and promote rationality in the business environment; and the townships and villages (as proprietors) are liberalized economically due to the power decentralization and devolution processes. The peasants as authorized users are reacting with such a complicated constitutional-rules and proprietor-rights system, where

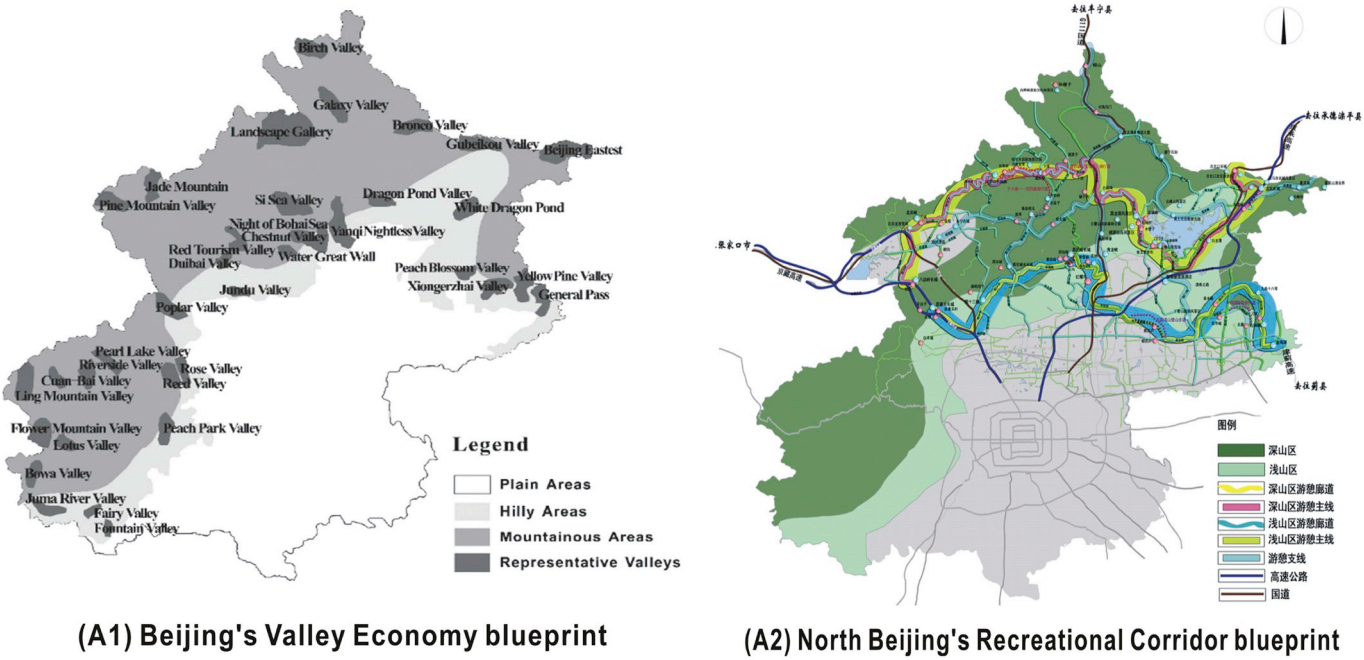


Fig. 1. Spatial integration planning of the peripheral rural tourism resources in Beijing.
Source: Map A1 from Beijing Municipal Commission of Rural Affairs; Map A2 from Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform.

their strategic behaviors and "peasant rationality" would vary greatly with "the manner and complexity of their internal and external articulations" (Scott, 1998, p. 197). The considerable diversity of collective-choice level rules that were effective and robust for governing the CPRs was well documented in Ostrom's (1990) analysis, too. In Harvey's (2014: 131–145) dialectical logics, the centralizing and decentralizing tendencies of capital are dependent to each other, and their tensions are so pervasive that the capital has its way to "balance and rebalance the tendencies towards a monopolistic centralization and decentralized competition through the crises that arise out of its imbalances". So how, then, have the local governments managed the contradictions between the monopoly and competition in a highly uneven geographical development context in the rural peripheral zones of the metropolises like Beijing? Our answer will be sought from the multi-agents and multi-goals in the multilateral monopoly in a mixed-governing CPR of rural tourism land development.

Fig. 2 unravels the intergovernmental politics on rural issues, which constructs a rural governing pattern through the territorial administrative hierarchies from the central state to cities, districts, towns, villages and peasants. This managerial hierarchy has become a source of power to coordinate the tourism development rights in an inalienable rural real estate sector in China today. First, China's unreformed rural land and property law system has resulted in a very different investment environment in countryside from a liberalized urban market. Under the background of construction land quota being strictly controlled by the central government, Land Bureau is the major regulatory body that allocates and auctions the construction land for commercial uses to prevent the urban sprawling and the excessive farmland expropriation. But in an urban-biased developmental paradigm, few construction land quotas go to rural areas (Long, Li, Liu, Woods, & Zou, 2012). In this context, the state-led rural programs, especially the pilot/demonstration projects and mega-projects, thus offer an appealing shortcut to the land development quotas for town- and village-level entities. Apparently, due to the hierarchical structure and a paternalism legacy on rural issues, the grassroots officials' lobby capacity or clientelist ties and the intense interactions among the governments at different levels are crucial to win the program campaign in a centralized land quota system. The rare construction land quota is one of the most prominent concerns in the rural tourism development, as reflected by the representatives from township-level Tourism Offices of Yanqing, Huairou and Miyun Districts.

Second, not merely the officials at different ranks of the state apparatus are bargaining for the rural tourism developmental rights within a centralized land management system, but even the peasantry is struggling to construct a clearer rural land development and transfer relationship that would contribute to the sustainable development of tourism businesses in an inalienable rural real estate sector. If the land is expropriated by mega-corporations, the negotiating for compensation and resettlement is a major task, as the peasants ask for a more reasonable price and higher gains from the land circulation for tourism investments. If the land lease receives no official recognition given that it will not go through the proper public expropriation procedure, the informal contracts signed by peasants and investors would not be precise enough to stipulate the necessary detailed terms. What's more, if the peasants convert land uses to expand the tourism business, their self-help housing would be under the regulation by local authorities addressing informality (*weijian* 违建) problems, and also subject to the levels of right and power to enforce. All of the above scenarios are full of uncertainties and ambiguities, expect for a reference to the price formation process from a perfect land and property market. The above set of collective-choice rules are not necessarily normal to regulate the appropriation from and provision of a CPR. The rural settlements who have self-organizing capabilities are also supplying their own institutions within a CPR situation.

Besides the entanglement of power and politics in the tourism land development process (see Fig. 2), the shift of developmental paradigm that fits into the modern image of national capital city has also displayed the dialectical but contractionary relationship between the monopoly and competition in the multiple goals of the rural tourism campaign. After a long period of rural-urban dichotomy in Mao's centrally planned system, rural incomes did make a great leap for several years from 1978, thanks to the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) initiated by the central government as the first step of rural reform. However, TVEs' weaknesses became highly visible for lack of infrastructure, economies of scale, specialized skills, and management expertise of rural folks (Wang et al., 2014). Consequently, TVEs were given much lower priority. Since then, the rural-urban dichotomy has been widened in favour of urban jobs for better educated youths. Local rural residents of low educational level and skills have been more or less forced to stay behind. As reported in the 6th National Census, about 60 per cent of Beijing's rural labour force was found to be 45 years of age or older in 2010. Youth flight has deepened the rural crisis. The political ethos shifted from the "development as the priority" in Deng's material incentive and market-led reforms in the 1990s, to the "scientific approach to development" through the regulatory consolidation during Hu's regime in the 2000s, and then towards the "new urbanization" based on a national ecological regulatory framework under the current Xi and Li regime in the 2010s. A new type of integrated spatial plan, namely "Main Functional Zone Planning" (*zhuti gongnengqu guihua*), requires a regional and integrative approach to the rural and urban development and environmental and social issues, rather than treating them as separate issues. The vast rural territory in the northern and western hilly areas of Beijing is planned into the "ecological containment and preservation area", with more emphasis on the ecological regulatory governance.

In this context, the commodification and tertiarization of the rural sector can be seen as a strong integration factor with the urban economy. It is a process that promotes rising shares in services employment and growth in gross output relative to other sectors. The case of de-

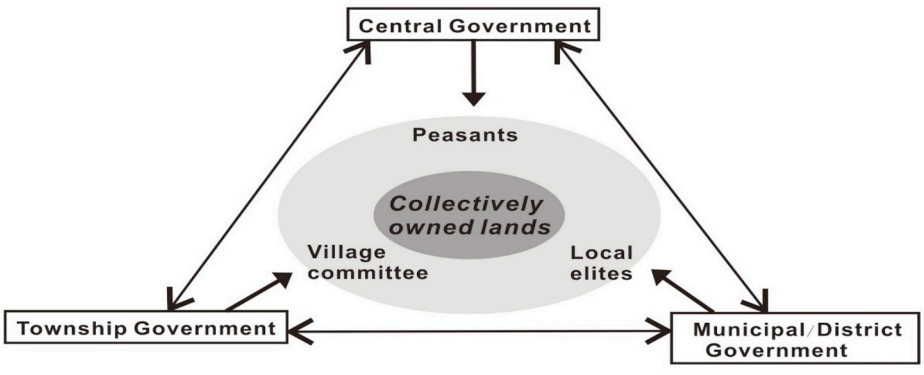


Fig. 2. Multi-agents and multi-goals in the rural tourism land development.

agriculturalization and de-industrialization of rural Beijing replacing them with tourism has testified this trend of rural restructuring in recent years. The rural tourism and the ecological rehabilitation and governance thus represent an effort to fill the regulatory control gap in the countryside. These rural spatial plans and the regulatory control over rural land development reflect the state's agenda to extend the municipal planning power into the largely "unplanned" rural hinterlands (Wu, 2018). Three major forces being extended from urbanity to rurality to "fix" the crisis of ecological degradation, uncoordinated competition, and rural-urban asymmetry are observable in this re-centralization of power and development right on the rural hinterlands. These forces comprise of: a) the commodification- and tertiarization-oriented restructuring by removing their farming and manufacturing activities; b) introduction of a new means of service-led tourism capitalizing on the local aesthetic values; and c) the public governance equipped with intensive planning measures and financial input (see Fig. 3). In this case the monopolistic centralization has been political (establishing a coalition with local peasants), as well as economic (keeping sustainable and at the same time the use of capital to arouse entrepreneurialism). They all aim at building up a solid "growth coalition" well integrated with the world economic system, under power centralization process and a more rational state management with monopolistic control of its natural assets and ecological resources (see Fig. 3). But since the enclosure of Miyun Reservoir, Nature Reserve Conservation Zone in Juma River and other water body for ecological preservation purposes in 2016 and 2018, rural tourism market in Beijing gets constrained by stifling power of upper authorities. It is apparent that this developmental paradigm differs significantly from the promotion of competitiveness under entrepreneurialism in the past years.

In the state-led rural tourism programs, the multi-agents and multi-goals involving the state apparatus, peasants and investors have led to bilateral, trilateral or even multilateral monopoly situations with conflicts in a CPR institution of rural communal tenure among the relevant interest groups. Apparently, the progress towards sustainable tourism is conditional on the entanglement of the power and politics in the rural tourism land development process (Figs. 2 and 3), but the interactions of power and politics are quite place-specific and case-dependent. Therefore, in this paper we aim to formulate political-economic interaction models leading to a concise and clear elaboration on this multilateral monopoly situation and their monopolistic competition on the natural scenery and rural lands. Usually, in order to simplify the problem, only some outstanding pairs of the relevant interest groups are highlighted and analyzed in a bilateral or trilateral context.

As demonstrated in Fig. 2, peasants who have self-organizing capabilities as authorized users are put in the very center of property-rights prism. The township governments as proprietors, municipal governments as true landowners, and central governments as higher ranked constitutional rule makers have formed the particular constitutional-rules and proprietor-rights systems, where the peasants can switch back and forth to articulate their property-rights (see Schlager & Ostrom, 1992). In the next section, we will investigate successively two pairs of such interacting CPR appropriators in two levels of the collective-choice arenas: a) constitutional choice problems with land expropriation (for scenic spots construction purposes) that is relation between rural settlement and landowner/developer; and b) proprietor rights problems (for heritage maintenance purposes) concerned with the rural-wide equilibrium between rural settlement and township-level government. Both of these pairs are negotiated and mediated by the Central State as prime constitutional rule makers. How, to what degree, and with what consequences does this collective-choice rule (peasantry-landowner *vs.* peasantry-proprietor relation) enable or inhibit the peasantry's collective negotiation in the land use competition in a CPR institution of rural commons?

Firstly, in the case of peasantry-landowner relations in a CPR environment, landowners (actually growth coalition) hold the right of alienation to sell or lease their collective-choice rights including management, exclusion and alienation. The first case on the constitutional choice problems with expropriation in Simatai Village refers to a massive centralization of capital in the mega-corporation to create a municipal-level mega-tourism project in the north edge of Miyun District in Beijing. We will look into how this monopoly privilege in the monopolistic competition has cumulatively affected the peasantry's collective actions in using CPRs in the dislocated and resettled Simatai Village.

Secondly, when it comes to proprietor rights problems between peasantry and township government, the township government can authorize who may access resources and how resources may be utilized in a rural-wide CPR situation. But the township governments as proprietors are unable to alienate either of these collective-choice rights. Peasantry-proprietor relation therefore constitutes a very different situation from the above peasantry-landowner relation. This shows a great diversity of collective-choice level rules across multiple nested layers of a CPR institution. Here, the case study in regard to proprietor rights problems is about the name branding of Cuandixia Village in Mentougou District of Beijing, and how the peasants' collective monopoly advantage has empowered local communities to maintain a balance of power against the township tourism enterprises and other external ventures.

4. Methodology

4.1. Simatai and Cuandixia as a case study

As the national capital of a large nation, Beijing is a globalizing prototype with an urban and a rural sector, and its strategic goal is to integrate these two sectors into a development hub (see Fig. 4). In the urban sector, a series of urban renewal and land use intensification measures have already transformed it into an innovative techno and financial hub. Its national administrative and higher education positioning has also a command-center influence over the whole nation. With an area of 16,412 km^2, the Beijing Municipality has 62 per cent of it classified as mountain areas, covered by largely hills and water catchments providing reservoirs to support the city's 20 million inhabitants. Map A1 in Fig. 4 shows the physical environment of Beijing. While urbanizable low-lying areas are situated in the south and the east, virtually the northern and the western zones are mostly mountainous and hilly areas found in the five districts of Mentougou, Miyun, Huairou, Yanqing and Pinggu and are classified under preservation uses (namely "ecological containment and preservation area" in Map A2 in Fig. 4). Specifically, Miyun and Mentougou are equally representative of the de-agriculturalization and de-industrialization trends of rural Beijing. Over the past 20 years, hundreds of polluting industrial plants had been shut down in Miyun District, and over 100,000 mu[2] of farmlands previously reclaimed from the Miyun lake were returned to waterbodies (News.sohu, 2016). From 2004 till 2016, under the relocation initiative of the Beijing Municipality, 100,000 inhabitants living in the high-risk areas or working on coal mines in Mentougou District were resettled to low-lying areas (Beijingdaily, 2016). Small farming settlements are found interspersed and scattered along the valleys, and it is here rural tourism has been identified to be developed (see Fig. 5).

We picked two sites for our survey along the Beijing's "Great Wall Culture Belt" in the north and "Ancient Village Culture Belt" in the west. The two belts were chosen because the phasing out of agrarian, mining and manufacturing activities by replacing them with rural tourism and other cultural and recreational activities in these aesthetical sites, have been planned to be the demonstration project in the new Beijing Master Plan (2016–2030). Over the past decade, following the rapid decline in manufacturing, rural tourism has been developed there, and significant growth in household income levels has been observable especially in the leading tourism village spots like Simatai and Cuandixia Villages, which

[2] One mu is equivalent to about 665 m^2.

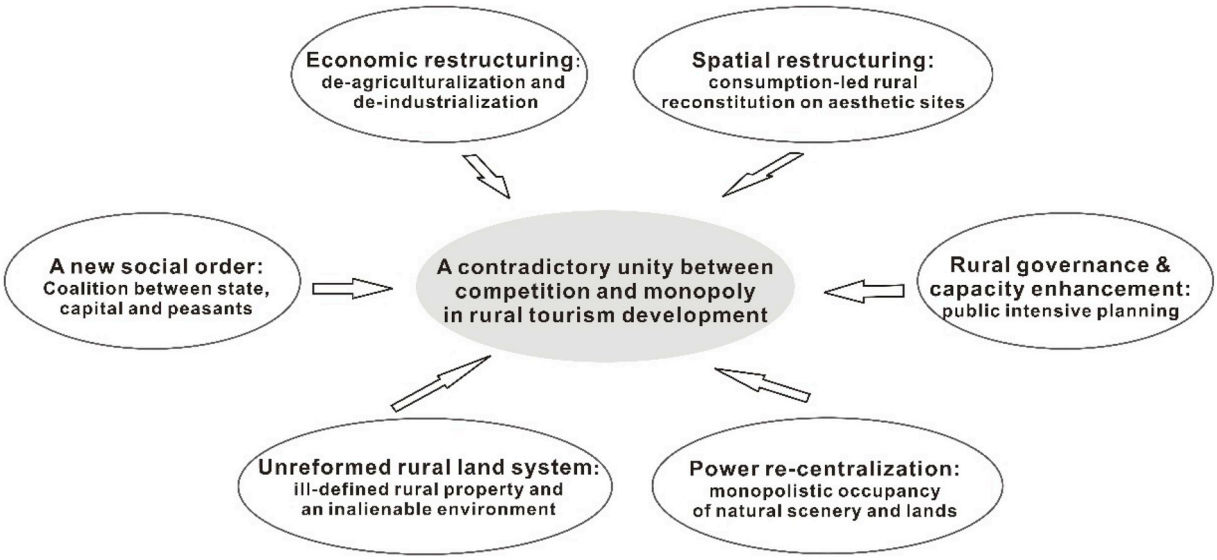


Fig. 3. Complexities and uncertainties in the rural tourism land development.

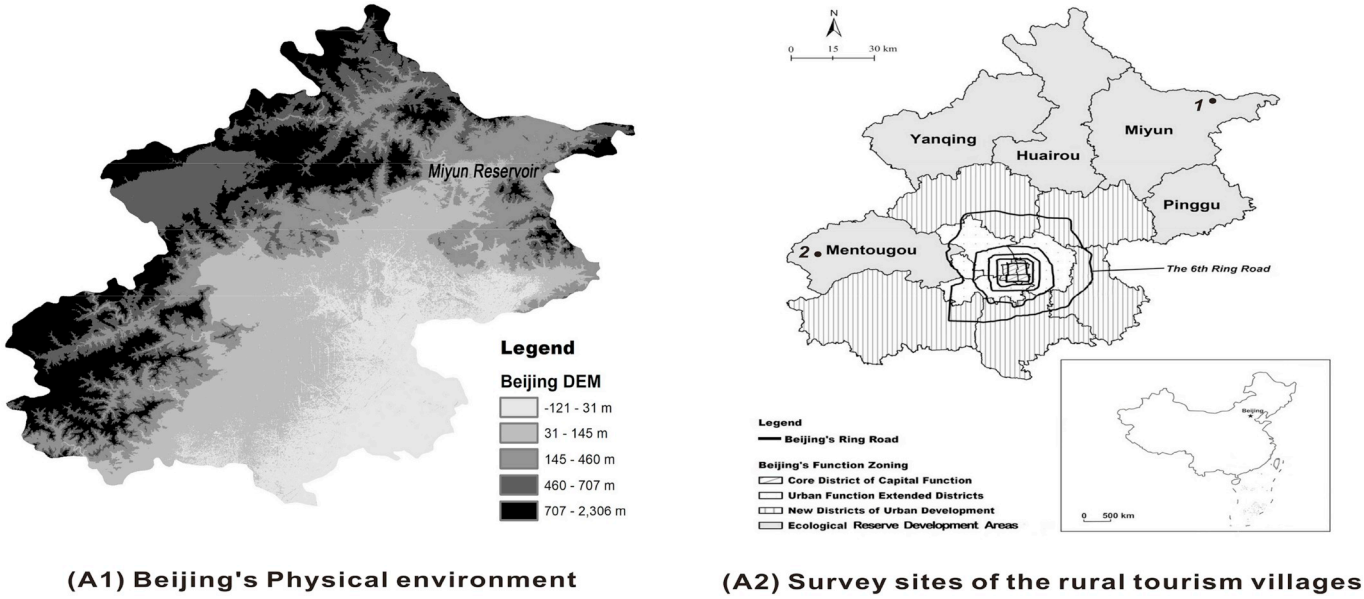


Fig. 4. Physical environment and the survey sites of rural tourism development in Beijing: 1 — Simatai Redeveloped New Village; 2 — Cuandixia Heritage Village.
Source
Map A1 from DEM data; Map A2 from fieldtrip.

are located in the planned Tanghe-Simatai and Cuan-Bai "valley economy" areas (see Map A2 in Fig. 4, and Table 1). As compared in Table 1, Simatai and Cuandixia are apparently wealthier than their neighbouring peers, for holding the core natural-cum-recreational assets and having potential and popularity. This proves the existence of monopolistic competition in rural tourism development, with the bulk of benefits going to the prime locations enjoying easy access and highly attractive scenic spots and historic resorts. Remote sites with few charms share relatively little. It is thus of great significance to investigate the monopolistic competition and the specific land politics and power negotiation process in the multilateral monopoly situations of CPRs in these villages.

The rural tourism villages of metropolitan Beijing are located in its ecologically fragile periphery. By principle, Chinese cities comprise administratively of urbanized zones surrounded by a big junk of rural areas. This administrative classification began in the 1950s when the

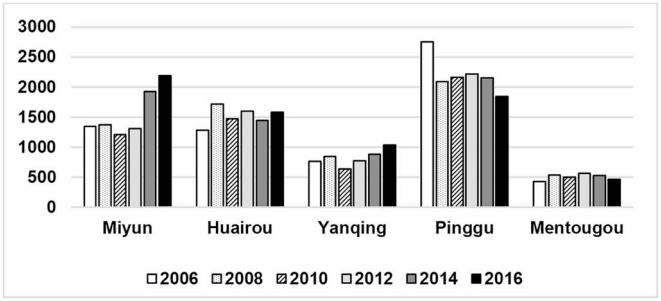


Fig. 5. Growth of rural households engaged in *nongjiale* in Beijing (2006–2016).
Source: Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2017.

Table 1
Rural incomes in the surveyed Tanghe-Simatai and Cuan-Bai "valley economy".

	Disposable residential income per capita (yuan)								
	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Tanghe-Simatai Valley Economy									
• Simatai Village	7258	8310	10476	11362	12500	15622	18126	20864	23657
• Gubeikou Village	7415	8356	10214	12908	14343	15951	17635	20408	22790
• Hexi Village	6883	8431	10509	11562	12781	14192	16357	19457	21255
• Tanghe Village	7246	8305	9321	10395	11547	13344	14866	18146	19887
Rural areas in Gubeikou Town	7175	8320	10000	11255	12537	14286	16192	19116	21005
Rural areas in Miyun District	9156	12641	13869	14830	16267	16202	17855	19183	20997
Cuan-Bai Valley Economy									
• Cuandixia Village	8581	12875	14012	15125	17000	23125	24260	29178	31369
• Huanglingxi Village	5802	6946	7541	8108	8919	9632	10405	11238	12162
• Shuangshitou Village	4405	6539	7180	7821	8590	9231	9870	10649	12844
• Baiyu Village	4531	7131	7703	8363	9469	10219	11031	11938	13875
Rural areas in Zhaitang Town	5086	7124	7694	8324	9186	9186	10743	11145	13844
Rural areas in Mentougou District	6948	9645	9982	10764	11610	12605	13680	14582	18203
Rural mountainous areas in Beijing	–	10518	11460	12908	14433	16379	18431	18649	–
The whole rural Beijing	7860	11986	13262	14736	16476	18337	20226	20569	22310
The whole urban Beijing	17653	26738	29073	32903	36469	40321	43910	52859	57275

Source: Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2006, 2010–2017.

Marxist doctrine of integrating the urban and rural sectors was adopted with an aim to reduce rural-urban gaps in favour of a more equitable society. Beijing and its rural tourism communities fit into the rural-urban divide and state-peasantry relations in socio-economic production and coordination. Second, in line with Beijing government's recent image branding efforts, actions have been taken to "formalize" its unplanned rural hinterlands by clearing up "inappropriate" village houses. In regard to the rural tourism development, a key problem in its CPR environment is how to allocate a scarce communal tourism resource so as to reduce uncertainty and conflict over the assignment of rights.

Thirdly, the tourism village spots like Simatai and Cuandixia Villages (see Fig. 4 and Table 1) have been transformed in different ways, depending on the rules and structure of a particular mixed-governing CPR: a) the municipal government-sponsored mega-projects who have the rights of alienation to sell or lease lands; and b) township governments as proprietors who have no alienation rights. The focus of our study is to examine the role and strategic behaviors of the rural settlements in the diverse CPRs where they claim to be collective land owners.

In 2013, 2015 to 2017, our team conducted a series of extensive fieldworks in the key mountainous townships and representative tourism villages in Beijing, with an objective to identify their different operation mechanisms and strategies in relation to their available resources, locational conditions and monopolistic advantages in rural tourism. Simatai and Cuandixia Villages were recommended to us as prototypes by the local officials given their higher than normal tourism-generated revenues, and were cited as Beijing's exemplary entrepreneurial participants from below for having made the distinctive performance in rural restructuring. Typically, they were representative of two pairs of interacting groups in the complex multilateral monopoly situations in CPRs: a) constitutional choice problems with land expropriation and the peasants' counterplot to mega-corporation's monopolistic advantage in Simatai redevelopment; and b) peasants-township negotiation in the "valley economy" developmental rights, and how such territories are constructed by both sides, mutable and dynamic, in a quite ambiguous appropriation and provision relation.

4.2. Research methods and data collection

The fieldtrip in Simatai and Cuandixia Villages consisted of three parts. Firstly, the pilot study was conducted as early as 2013, 2015 and 2016, with a comprehensive investigation on the township- and district-level tourism offices. Secondly, a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed randomly to *nongjiale* (farm homestay) entrepreneurs of targeted villages in August 2017, of which 76 questionnaires were found to be valid for analysis. What's more, another 47 interviews were collected from the focus groups including 20 city guests in Simatai and Cuandixia, consisting of: a) Cuandixia Village Committee secretary and its college-graduate village official, Simatai Village Committee head, head of Tourism Offices of Gubeikou Town, and head of Committee of Tourism Development in Miyun District; b) manager of Cuan-Bai Scenic Area Management Centre, official of Gubei Watertown Scenic Area, investors and managers in nearby several holiday cottages and hotels, and real estate investors and brokers (e.g. Longhu Villa broker and villa lease manager), where available; c) local elites including villager representatives and *nongjiale* representatives in Cuandixia and Simatai Villages; d) local peasants, migrant entrepreneurs and workers, helpers and other business people engaged in *nongjiale* business; e) officials and *nongjiale* entrepreneurs in other villages of the same "valley economy", involving the Village Committee officials in the surrounding Baiyu, Huanglingxi and Shuangshitou Villages (Cuan-Bai Valley) and Tanghe Village (Tanghe-Simatai Valley); and f) 20 white-collar city guests, young students, retirees, and other guests. Each interview lasted from half to 1 h. The survey covered, *inter alia*, management and investment in rural tourism business, peasants' engagement in *nongjiale* (involving household productive factors such as labour force, land, housing, investment, skills and e-commerce), and peasants' attitudes toward the tourism planning at different administrative hierarchies from the central government to Beijing Municipality and districts, and down to township- and village-levels.

The socio-economic profiles of Simatai and Cuandixia Villages surveyed are shown in Table 2. In this empirical study, Simatai and Cuandixia Villages are representative of two pairs of bilateral property relations shown in Fig. 2, — peasantry-landowner relations and peasantry-proprietor relations, both of which are mediated by the Central State as prime constitutional rule makers in the different CPRs. Simatai Village, representing a peasantry-landowner partnership, was situated at a more liberalized environment with big external investors handling expropriation and resettlement issues. Cuandixia Village, representing peasantry-proprietor partnership, was more like a self-administrator, possessing not only user rights but also control rights, and having a strong initiative to conserve local heritage resources, and to facilitate sustainable community development. As tabulated in Table 2, Simatai operators were younger than those in Cuandixia, as the former had 22.6 per cent of migrant entrepreneurs coming from outside. However, Simatai operators earned apparently less than Cuandixia peasants, despite their higher education standards and marketable skills,

Table 2
Nongjiale entrepreneurs surveyed in Simatai and Cuandixia Villages.

	Simatai Village	Cuandixia Village
Gender		
Male/Female	39.6/60.4	73.9/26.1
Age group (years)		
≤20	0.0	0.0
21-30	17.0	0.0
31-40	28.3	4.3
41-50	18.9	34.8
51-60	22.6	30.4
Above 60	13.2	30.4
Total	100.0	100.0
Education level		
Elementary school or below	25.0	30.4
Junior high school	34.6	39.1
Senior high school	13.5	13.0
Technological or junior college	17.3	8.7
University and above	9.6	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Housing plot area (*zhaijidi*, sq. m.)		
≤100	0.0	43.5
100-200	81.1	47.8
Above 200	18.9	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Housing sources		
Inherited	0.0	100.0
Redevelopment and resettlement	77.4	0.0
Rented	22.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Annual household income (yuan)		
Below 30,000	1.9	4.3
30,000–50,000	11.3	4.3
50,000–100,000	41.5	8.7
100,000–200,000	39.6	52.2
Above 200,000	5.7	30.4
Total	100.0	100.0
Contribution of tourism in income		
Below 20%	5.7	4.3
20%–50%	3.8	8.7
50%–70%	34.0	21.7
Above 70%	56.6	65.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Number of entrepreneurs surveyed	53	23
Total no. of *nongjiale* entrepreneurs	251	52

Source: Fieldwork in Beijing, Aug 2017, N = 76.

younger age and higher investment input. Their different monopolistic advantages in the different CPRs can explain the causes. Below are the two case studies in Simatai and Cuandixia Villages, by which we examine how peasants' monopoly power in a multilateral monopolistic competition has empowered themselves in very different ways in CPR environments to alter and rebalance their relationship with municipal mega-project and township tourism enterprises. The two cases also look through the prism of geographical scale, and therefore etch a certain order of the state power and rural governance over different spatial scales in CPRs (see Smith, 1990).

5. The monopolistic competition of tourism land uses in hilly Beijing: a megaproject-dominated mode *vs*. a local village-centered mode

5.1. Simatai: a longlasting land negotiation in a municiapl-level megaproject

In the economics text, a state of equilibrium should be achieved in a competitive market. But in the Simatai project, land development is proceeding in an inalienable environment. In the situation of so-called "tourism development induced displacement and resettlement" (TDIDR), the Simatai village land was first appropriated by Gubei Watertown company to be rebuilt into a mega-tourism complex (see Fig. 6). This mega-project occupied 10 square kilometers of arable and house plots, and covered 43-ha century-old courtyards of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th production teams of Simatai Village. With a centralization of four-billion-yuan investment (US$600 million) and a systematic branding of Great Wall cum reservoir and the courtyard heritage as unique in the north China so as to allow a monopoly price to be put upon them, this mega-project has been a big success in the capital city. Gubei Watertown has continued its stellar performance since its opening in 2014. In 2015, it attracted 1.5 million tourists and in 2016, 2.5 million, achieving a big revenue of 0.46 billion yuan and 0.74 billion yuan respectively.

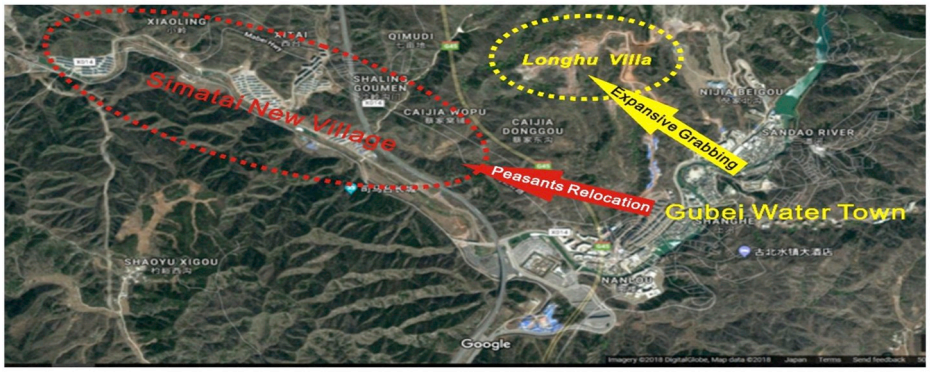
The land and housing developments are the core disputes in shaping and defining their respective monopoly power. Their monopoly pricing is created with state interventions in the absence of a competitive market. The negotiating is thus a major task, but hardly free of the distortions in a mega-project dominated mode. Interestingly, the monopoly power in land transactions between big corporations and peasantry is influenced by the complex intergovernmental politics on the rural issues. The peasants have lost their control rights and authority to CPRs in the face of growth coalition between municipal governments and tourism developers. But this megaproject-dominated mode is mediated by the Central State, who is a prime constitutional rule maker trying to empower peasants and solving three specific problems faced by agriculture, the rural sector and peasantry (MARA, 2019). The management regime of common property is to protect peasants' rights in case of land expropriation. Nevertheless, indigenous property rights have been taken largely away in the negotiation of resettlement claims. The complexities and uncertainties in the rural governance in a CPR situation have been regarded as a socio-political source of power for each side to lobby for their respective monopolistic advantage in this bilateral context.

First of all, in retrospect, the land disputes can be dated back to 2010 when farmland was offered with one million yuan per hectare. Negotiating was a major task between peasants and corporation, as land enclosure involved relocating and resettling of local communities. The main disputes lied in the land pricing and compensation contract, because corporation used the crop price as a reference for farmland compensation, but peasants saw such offer too low to cover their potential gains after land use conversion and circulation. Just at this point, villagers learned that the central governments were intending to augment farmland compensation standards that would be good to the peasantry. They therefore submitted a petition in 2012 using arguments taken from the draft version of the "Amendment of Land Administration Law to the Standing Committee". Consequently, a different compensation mode was adopted and, instead of surrendering their land, peasants have been offered a long-term land lease fee by Gubei Watertown at 30,000 yuan per ha per year. This landed dispute that is a typical constitutional choice problem with land expropriation (for scenic spots construction purposes) between rural settlement and landowner/developer in a CPR situation was solved by resort to a more consolidated monopolistic power from the higher ranked governments at the constitutional level. Peasants' face-to-face confrontation with the mega-project, and their collective and coordinate strategies to contest, circumvent and manipulate local rules, are a particular "peasant rationality" and "robustness" following the break-down of the indigenous common property rights structure. It is proved that the land process also gets to the core of a contradictory unity between competition and monopoly in the rural tourism activities, where each side of these competitors (including disadvantaged peasantry) were going out of their way to procure as much monopoly power as they can (see Harvey, 2014, p. 134).

Second, the main innovation of the Simatai project lies in allowing the resettled villagers to own and operate their double-storey inn, as a supplement to the luxury hotels inside the scenic areas (Fig. 6). A two-bed room in the inn was charged a humble 180 yuan per night, against a much higher Gubei Watertown's luxury hotel asking for over 1000 yuan per night. But this seemingly unitary planning has arisen the

(A1) Plan of Simatai Folk Inn

(A2) *Nongjiale* run by Simatai villagers



(A3) Territorial and market relations between the Simatai Village and Gubei Watertown

Fig. 6. Simatai Village and its monopolistic competition with megaproject.

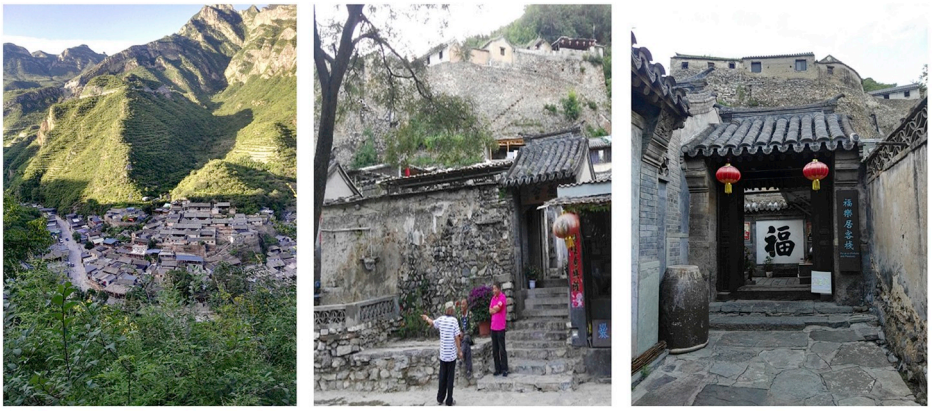
unexpected developmental conflict in the Bed & Breakfast. Map A3 in Fig. 6 demonstrates an increasingly visible, yet poorly studied, ambiguity and conflict as to how the Bed & Breakfast market is shared and under what conditions between peasanty and corporation. The initial investments for scenic spots and resort development were followed by a more comprehensive range of the products in the tourism industry including the tourism real estate development, which is called the "tourism-oriented land development" (TOLD) or "tourism gentrification" in the literature (Liang & Bao, 2015). Peasants' B&B market niche, however, was being annexed by a more professional villa lease business (700-yuan daily lease which is affordable to middle-class city guests, see A3 in Fig. 6), when the two big corporations—Gubei Watertown and Longhu Villa established the tourism-real-estate alliance for quicker profits. The local communities are not winners in the aestheticisation and commodification processes of rural space, as their market share was squeezed. So how are we to understand this change of the peasants' status? The rising power of monopolies were associated with an extensive centralization of the capital in advantageous locations, which is actually a global process beyond the local control. The spatial organization of the village territory is itself a way of orchestrating the contradictory relation between monopoly and competition, and turning them to its own advantage in the competition at a greater scale (Harvey, 2014, pp. 138, 144). The peasants who have lost control rights and possess only user rights are helpless in this communal Bed & Breakfast business.

The Simatai project attests the specific geographical pattern of monopolistic competition in a particular mixed-governing CPR situation between rural settlement and megaproject. The village-megaproject nexus tells us that the unity of them two is actually a contradictory unity of competition and monopoly. Their dynamic equilibrium has created a specific common property regime offering a solution to their access to the CPR. Our case study has supported Bromley's (1991) argument that the common property regimes may be preferred option, and this depends upon the resource type, the users and the legal and political environment. Both sides centered on how to better to ensure monopoly power, through massive centralization of capital, through land management laws and alliances, and through name branding that have been elaborated by Harvey (2014: 139). Our study further proves that the balancing between competition and monopoly is oscillating erratically, and this balancing process is also geographical, resulting in fierce territorial politics as to how to maintain the monopoly power over the rural space (see Fig. 6).

5.2. *Cuandixia: a village-township developmental negotiation at local scale*

If above case of Simatai is known for its mega-project representing constitutional choice problems with land expropriation in the CPR situation, Cuandixia goes through a village-township alliance (representing proprietor rights problems) in rural tourism development at the local scale, in which the re-imaging of the hilly rurality has been made to receive the holiday makers of largely urban origin. Cuandixia underpins a vast tourist trade in which the authenticity and uniqueness of the village architectural heritage are highly valued. Cuandixia Village, seated in Mentougou District of west Beijing, is a 500-year-old settlement, noted for its well-preserved courtyard architecture. As an important node on the Ancient West Beijing Horse Road that once linked China's capital to Hebei, Shanxi and Mongolia, this village accumulated wealth by establishing the business network in Beijing and Tianjin. The sheer size of each courtyard was a symbol of wealth of large families during the early and middle periods of Qing dynasty (1644–1911) when 76 house units were built.

When Deng's reforms began in the early 1980s, youth fled the village following urban reforms which saw the growth of jobs in the cities, leaving behind only few dwellers and dilapidated courtyards. Its nearby Baiyu, Huanglingxi and Shuangshitou Villages had restructured their



(A1) Cuandixia Village: well-preserved courtyard architecture

(A2) Territorial politics in the township-planned Cuan-Bai Valley Economy

Fig. 7. Cuandixia and its landed issue with the township economy.

economic base from cropping and herding to coal mining in the deep mountains, and these village replaced the old stone houses with modern buildings. But Cuandixia managed to keep the integrity and heritage of their clan habitat, and unique qualities of well-preserved courtyard architecture gave them monetary value and historical significance. As early as the late 1990s, the Beijing Municipality invested for infrastructural improvements (such as asphalt road construction and well water facilities) to support the rural tourism of Cuandixia. The authenticity and uniqueness of Cuandixia courtyards, a better access to urban guests, and a successful name branding by village officials have created the unique monopoly power in tourism compared to other hilly villages of the metropolitan Beijing. In 2003, Cuandixia was awarded China's Historic and Cultural Village by the Ministry of Construction and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, and this was followed in 2006 by another national honor—The Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected issued by the State Council. For the above reasons, preservation is the priority, and its uniqueness and authenticity are commodified and sold to tourists in a conservative way (see A1 in Fig. 7). This situation also yields the monopoly advantage on the side of local communities possessing not only use rights but also control rights in regard to CPRs, in their negotiating for tourism development with the external investors including the township tourism enterprises.

The township governments and their tourism enterprises have played an active role in balancing the uneven development between wealthier and poorer villages in the territory. Cuan-Bai Valley Economy has been planned for a common prosperity (see Map A2 in Fig. 7), as almost all the hilly villages in Zhaitang Town transformed themselves from farming, grazing and coal mining to the tourism sector over the past two decades but only several of them have succeeded. Land conflicts have arisen in the township-led valley economy as to who are allowed to share the monopoly price to be put upon Cuandixia's heritage. This point lies in the ambiguity of rural land right as to what is the private property and what is the collective-owned asset in China's rural collective economy. In the Western economics literature, it is the private property that confers a monopoly over the use of a commodity (including the tourism products) upon its owner. By China's legal framework, rural lands (including farmland, homestead land, and non-farm resources such as the forest, grassland, mountain and water resources surrounding farmland and villages) which are collectively held have remained peasants' property rights (Ho, 2001). But this collective

property right is shared at different administrative hierarchies—natural villages,[3] administrative villages, townships, each of whom can command the monopoly power to a certain extent. Based on Bromley's (1991) view on the continuum of property regimes, the common-pool property has set its own decision-making and resource management rules, indicating clearly transaction costs, modes of allocations and outcomes. This ill-defined ownership makes the transfer of rural land developmental right to a developer for scenic spots and hotels a difficult one in terms of compensation. There is more, who should benefit from the rural assets, and how the gain is shared and under what conditions? What has now happened is that the monopoly power over the use of tourism resources rests on the assemblage of these different collective monopolistic property rights. But this collective monopoly is a contradictory unity, mutable and dynamic over time rather than determined in a competitive market. It is interesting that the rural community may build up its own privilege and rights and re-establish workable common property regimes for social protection, heritage preservation and other relevant distributional considerations.

Land conflicts are almost unavoidable between peasants and township (as proprietors). At a startup stage, Cuandixia collected a 10-yuan entrance ticket at its village gate. In 2009, the township-level entrepreneurs planned to enclose and retrofit these courtyard architectural heritages with gates, fences, road design and environmental aestheticization, to attract more urban guests and prevent non-paying tourists from gazing at these township heritages. This plan is the so-called Cuan-Bai Valley Economy, wherein the scenic area expanded from Cuandixia's 5.3 square kilometers to the four villages, totaling 46.6 square kilometers (Map A2 in Fig. 7). As coordinated by the Cuan-Bai Scenic Area Management Centre which is a branch in township government, tourists are now rerouted to the surrounding Baiyu, Huanglingxi and Shuangshitou Villages, too, — a seemingly "spillover effect" for a common prosperity. Our findings are different from Smith's (2010) account of the hollowing out of the township governments in rural governance in recent years in China. Township governments are still of a great importance in the rural tourism, including re-centralizing and decentralizing the power in the case of land and property ownership. Township governments are also struggling to squeeze the monopoly prices and seek the tax/nontax sources in the township territory. For this reason, Cuandixia residents were discontent with Management Centre's ticket revenues of five million yuan annually, and they were also skeptical to the enclosure plan on the whole Cuandixia village territory including their private old stone houses. The Cuandixia Village Committee secretary told us their perceptions during the survey in the summer of 2017:

> The township government initially wanted to make an agreement with the four villages for an integrative redevelopment of the whole scenic area. The agreement said that all the tourism resources and the village territories would be under the dictates of township plan and management. Why should we share equally with others who don't possess the heritage? We did not sign the agreement.

Villages like Cuandixia have got branded as tourist destinations by virtue of their unique characteristics and special cultural qualities. If Cuandixia does not possess the particularly unique features to band, then they would not hold the monopoly power inherent in private heritage and say no to the commercial plans. From this case study, the contradictory unity between Cuandixia Village (decentralized competition) and township plan (monopolistic centralization) is of considerable importance to (re)balance the interests between them. It is clear that we cannot use economic efficiency or Pareto improvement efficiency criteria for comparing the resource management regimes, especially in a CPR situation designed to sustain its vast ecological resource and cultural heritage system. Also, decisions may be made to offer the heritage and disadvantaged parties more protection. The name branding and the enforceable social contract between State Council, Beijing Municipality and heritage sites have empowered the peasantry in Cuandixia access to user and control rights in the disposition of CPRs.

5.3. Discussion: peasant rationality & strategic behaviors in governing CPRs

The rural land held in communal tenure in China meets a vast majority of the full set of design principles illustrated by long-enduring CPR institutions, as discussed in Ostrom's (1990) framework in governing the commons. In our effort to develop a more unified and multi-level framework within which the self-organizing and -governing rural settlements are able to go back and forth across levels as a key strategy for solving problems, we have selected two levels of the collective-choice arenas for empirical studies. From the existing studies, the respective roles of the central state, municipal government and local township government have been found to be the prime constitutional rule maker, true landowner, and proprietor when rural lands are transferred from the peasants having merely user rights for conversion to commercial use (see Lin & Ho, 2005). Our empirical studies on the constitutional choice and proprietor rights problems in Simatai and Cuandixia cases have shown that the peasants demonstrated their multiple coordination tactics in different CPR institutions when confronted with suboptimalities in appropriation and provision. Simatai can switch forth to a more consolidated monopolistic power from the constitutional level. Cuandixia, having stronger self-organizing capabilities in heritage preservation, can say no to the CPR institutions proposed by township government. Based on our analysis of the mixed-governing CPR situations using the institutional analysis and the findings from the empirical studies, there are at least three possible solutions as discussed below.

Firstly, privatizing or nationalizing the common resources may not be a good alternative. Our study has demonstrated the feasibility of a robust and mixed-governing institution to manage complex CPR situations in rural China, on the condition that the peasantry who have self-organizing and -governing autonomy can supply themselves with new rules to solve CPR problems in a long-run equilibrium. As elaborated by Netting (1976: 145), the communal tenure enjoins on "the entire community the conservation measures necessary to protect these resources from destruction". The collective actions of rural settlements and the rules they use are able to keep their monitoring and other transactions costs relatively low, and reduce the potential for conflict (see Ostrom, 1990). This explains the importance of local rural autonomy as a social force to sustain its vast ecological and resource system in China today, especially when external investors continuously face substantial incentives to behave opportunistically.

Second, our findings can be used to advance the theoretical understanding of Ostrom's (1990) collective action framework, to complement the one-level analysis of self-organized CPRs. What we concern is much more about peasantry's strategies in a mixed-governing and multi-level CPR situation—whether peasantry is stuck in a single-tier world, or how can they go back and forth across levels beyond the bureaucratic and geographical bounds that are given in a CPR. Our empirical studies have looked into the peasantry's strategies in addressing the constitutional choice and proprietor rights problems. More case studies in other particular polycentric CPR situations are required to better attest the "institutional robustness" of rural tourism development in China today.

What's more, the central government as a prime constitutional rule maker can play a mediatory role in addressing constitutional choice and proprietor rights problems in two cases. At the macro policy level, the Central State must look at the three issues of the rural sector (agriculture, rural areas and peasantry). One of these includes the empowerment of the peasants in their contestation and bargaining power in

[3] A natural village is one that exists spontaneously whereas an administrative village has an administrative role to work under the "township" supervision. An administrative village may encompass several natural villages.

safeguarding their land rights, even though merely user rights. Given that cultural or non-cultural heritages are important assets, they must be safeguarded during the development process. Indeed, the environmental, heritage and community values are all CPRs that should be evaluated for not only economic efficiency but also on the basis of their ecological and cultural values. Respect of property rights, equitable sharing of benefits and appropriate environmental-cum-cultural measures are part and parcel imperatives in bringing about a sustainable development in China's fast changing, vast and dynamic rural areas.

6. Conclusion

The growth of state-driven rural tourism was significant nationwide in China during the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011–2015), recording a double-digit increase annually in rural tourist numbers and revenues. As reported in 2015, a spectacularly high performance was achieved in rural China, involving 2.2 billion tourists, 440 billion yuan in revenues, and 5.5 million more jobs created for the rural households (people.com, 2016). But little is known about the relationship between the rural land institution and the rural tourism evolutions in an inalienable real estate sector in China. By borrowing Ostrom's (1990) collective action framework and Harvey's (2014) monopolistic competition thesis, our research contributes a mixed-governing CPR situation analysis and a political-economic perspective on the multilateral monopoly in the rural tourism land development, and how the different players (state apparatus at different ranks, investors and peasants) are seeking their respective monopolistic advantages in this process. This research question is worthy of greater scrutiny, as the rural space in China has been increasingly reshaped to meet the imperatives of capital expansion, and it is clear that the governments and rural community have a big job to catch up with this fast-growing global business. Conflicts of interest have arisen in rural China as it is not merely a land transaction issue. Peasants who collectively own rural lands are a key stakeholder and land reforms thus far have not radically changed their status given its high sensitivity. For a long time, we have put the peasantry at a subordinate and passive position in China's rural land development. Our conceptual and empirical studies have found and explained the "peasant rationality", their strategies, and "institutional robustness" in a mixed-governing and multi-level CPR situation for solving appropriation and provision problems in state-led rural tourism schemes in China today.

How would tourism projects be introduced to the rural space in a CPR environment for investment, and how to achieve a win-win solution with the peasantry has remained a great challenge. In Smith's (1990) analysis in his book *Uneven Development*, he saw that any modernization process would have created a new disequilibrium which would require a new solution to manage the growing inequality or uneven development issue. Our comparative studies on the two villages Simatai and Cuandixia in Beijing have revealed the considerable diversity of collective-choice level rules for governing this CPR in China, and the feasibility of a robust and sustained mixed-governing CPR system to manage the rural communal property in tourism development. On the basis of village autonomy, peasantry who hold the strong self-organizing and -governing authority would devise their power, rationality, and counterplots collectively to contest the state rules at diverse administrative ranks. Cuandixia Village, as a national-level heritage, is positioned at a privileged status in commanding a monopoly control of their key tourism resources and therefore reap higher dividends. But Simatai is faced with the alienation of its indigenous property rights by landowners, and destruction of local village authority systems in the relocating and resettling process. Owing to their effective collective action, peasants would not get stuck in a single-tier world, but would switch back and forth across multiple layers of nested governmental jurisdictions and between operational-, collective-, and constitutional-choice rules for greater opportunities and well-being.

Second, the village autonomy by possessing not only user rights but also control rights is seen to be important to facilitate the sustainable ecological and community development, and guarantee the environmental, heritage and community values of the CPR situations that cannot be evaluated by conventional efficiency economics. Peasantry may keep an equilibrium with proprietors (e.g. township government) who can authorize who may access rural resources and how resources may be utilized, but unable to alienate any collective-choice rights. The relevant public policy questions also involve giving more property rights, protections, and autonomy to the peasantry in the rural tourism land development, heritage preservation and village construction processes. In order to beef up the peasantry's collective capacities to build up and sustain their own institutions, active efforts at the constitutional level to regulate appropriation and provision activities and an effect to enhance the village autonomy and collective actions for micro-institutional change should be guaranteed at the same time. More empirical studies are needed for providing a foundation for analysis of the incremental institutional change in a micro-scale CPR, and peasantry's trial-and-error learning about collective actions in a robust CPR situation.

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