Guanxi & Dwelling: Contextualising the Study of Tourism Research

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1. Introduction

This working paper explores the relevance of using dwelling (Western) and guanxi (Eastern) as usefully and intertwined embodiment metaphors to offer an improved comprehension of tourism research in China (Bao, Chen and Ma, 2014). A review of past studies on guanxi, dwelling and tourism shows that such a research gap exists that those studies tried only to link either guanxi and tourism (e.g. Pan et al. 2002; Lew and Wang 2004; Li et al. 2007) or dwelling and tourism (e.g. Jun and Li 2004; Bloch-Tzemach 2012).

Previous scholarly accounts of guanxi divided as normative and practical perspectives: the former regards guanxi as an element in Chinese social order, this strand can be traced McIntyre et al. (2006) to Max Weber (1968), Liang Shuming (1963), Fei Xiaotong (1947) and Kwang-kuo Hwang (1987) et al; the latter views guanxi as a practical means for advancing personal/group interests, focusing on the impacts of guanxi upon various fields. Subsequently, researches combining guanxi and tourism follow these perspectives above, for example, Li et al (2007) explore how guanxi has become a problem for actualizing tourism in China, which, in effect, emphasizes guanxi as an aspect of Chinese culture and its normative regulating power in China reality. Pan et al (2002) analyses the significance of guanxi in improving tourism marketing opportunities for Australia in China, and this concentrates guanxi from an effective perspective. These researches address guanxi as an extraordinary practice in Chinese life. This paper claim, for Chinese people, the
most relevant embodied practices through which Chinese become Chinese are
everyday ordinary and often non-representational practices, that is, guanxi.

In terms of the topic of ‘dwelling & tourism’, previous studies either referring ‘dwelling’
to a kind of cultural heritage, such as, ancient dwelling house (e.g. Zhang & Li 2004;
Chen 2009), or as a temporary staying relatives to the action of ‘travelling’, such
“dwelling-in-travel” and “travel-in-dwelling” (Clifford 1997: Chapter 1) are referred to
the possibilities of travelling and coming home through home (Larsen, Urry and
Axhausen 2007), have been studied widely (McIntyre 2006; Chaim and Cohen 2012;
Vernerey 2012). These researches have not touched the philosophical connotations
of dwelling reattributed by Ingold. The issue of tourism as a complex phenomenon
offers dynamic models of human-spatial interaction has been neglected. Our claim,
thus, is that tourism is a practical way through which human beings are involved in the
world, that is, create knowledge and interact with their environment.

It is this creativity and significance that we whish to emphasize: first, it intends to
develop the potential of non-representational theory for tourist studies in an
ontological sense and, secondly, it initiates academic exploration regarding the
linkage between guanxi and dwelling in tourism development and, thirdly, the
exploration has the potential to generate useful insights for comprehending tourism as
a more holistic force that (re) shapes dwellers’ perception, cognition and engagement
with other people (guanxi) and non-human components of all kinds within collective
fields of power (Ingold, 2005).
2. Guanxi

Given the reality that guanxi permeates social and economic life in contemporary China and Chinese culture in general, which suggests that applying tourism development or any task in China cannot avoid its influence. It is challenging to find an exact counterpart in English to cover its complexity and defies definitions, such as interpersonal relationship, connection, networking, and web et al. While the interpretations of guanxi in Modern Chinese dictionary (1994: 407-408) indicates its flexibility and adaptability in Chinese daily life, which can be understood as a state that formed on the interactions and interplays, for example, Quan Li Guanxi (power relations); or based on some common properties and characteristics between individuals/groups, or both, for example, Lao Xiang Guanxi (people with the same locality). Certainly, in real world, guanxi between individuals usually is an integrated state of both of states above.

Guanxi rooted deeply in Confucianism which is mainly concerned with establishing a harmonious secular order in the man-centered world through ethical system, i.e. Lun Chang. The substitute, in effect, of the modern term of guanxi in Confucian classic is Lun that means differentiated order among individuals (Yu, 1984). According to Confucianist philosophy, an individual is first and foremost a relational being in Lun Chang system. The concept of man in China, thus, is based on the individual’s transactions with his fellow human beings (Hsu, 1971), constituting proper guanxi is the central problem in Chinese society. As the noted Chinese scholar Liang Shuming
(1948) suggested that Chinese society is relation-based (GuanXi Ben Wei) which means that each individual is the centre of his/her guanxi without explicit boundaries, and inevitable involved in others’ guanxi.

There are many kinds of guanxi of which the well-known five cardinal relations are the most fundamental as the basis of social order and stability: parent-child, ruler-subject, husband-wife, brothers and friends. Apart from natural relations, such as, father-son guanxi, non-natural guanxi are voluntarily constructed with the individual self as the initiator. Guanxi may be constructed by applying two criteria: one is based on the individual’s common attribute, such as, kinship, co-worker, classmate; the other on situational position in a given interaction and interplay, such as, teacher-student. It should be remembered that as the base of guanxi construction, both of these criteria are relative and elastic. For example, locality can refer to a natural village, a county, a city, or a province; even as the basic social unit, the term of family can theoretically be extended to an unlimited number of people, all of which gives the individual enough social and psychological space to construct guanxi. Simultaneously, guanxi offers platforms for Chinese people’s to unfold their lives, i.e., growth and development, and since overlapping guanxi constitute the whole Chinese society, which are chose by Chinese people naturally as the point-cut to involve society and lives.

It is not surprising therefore Chinese person develop into a guanxi-oriented individual who demonstrates an exquisite and superb art (La Bare, 1945) in guanxi construction in their everyday life. To apprehend and master the arts in managing guanxi are essence of being an authentically Chinese person.
3. Dwelling

The concept of dwelling has a formidable intellectual pedigree, beginning with the line of ‘poetically man dwells’ quoted by Heidegger (1951), and haunted his later thinking, later it has been reworked and developed by Ingold (1993; 1995; 2000; 2005) as interweaving of people and place. Ingold refers ‘dwelling perspective’ (2000) to “all creatures, human and non-human, are fellow passengers in the one world within which they all live, and through their actions continuously create the conditions for each other’s existence” (2005:503). Dwelling should be taken up as an innovative ontology to understand the relationships between people and their environment. It is this recognition of a being is already situated in an environment of human and non-human others, and committed to the relationships thus entailed. This ontological approach consequent challenges to the Cartesian split of culture from nature, human from non-human, and moves beyond the opposition between the naturalistic and culturalistic views.

Heidegger (1951) identified ‘I dwell, you dwell’ to ‘I am, you are’. Similarly, Marx and Engels (1977) declare that individuals are what they express, therefore coincide with their production, i.e., their life, which inspired Ingold to rearticulate dwelling. In effect, dwelling is the manner by which human beings are on the earth (Cloke & Jones, 2000), which elaborated by Ingold (1993) as from a spatial and a temporal dimension: landscape and time. Human life is a process of formation of the landscape in which people have dwelt. Ingold argues that landscape is always contextualised, lived,
practices which create spaces, times, places, and it is known to who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them (ibid.). Besides, landscape is the familiar domain of human beings’ dwelling through past, present and future. Thus, the landscape becomes a part of dwellers, just as dwellers are a part of it, form this, human beings and their environment are an integral entity.

Life-process also involves the passage of time that inheres in the pattern of dwelling activities (similar to Marx and Engels’s ‘mode of production’) are articulated by a term of taskcape. In other words, tasks are the constitutive activities of dwelling. The temporalizing of taskcape is endless, since life is carried on through the successive activities that punctuate its flow. And every task takes its meaning from its position, i.e., landscape. Therefore temporalizing of the landscape is going on performing through past, present, and future which lies in its rhythmic interrelations or patterns of resonance (Ingold, 2000). Taskcape undergoes construction over time, where the habitual practices of humans form familiar patterns which can become landscapes or places. This formation implies a shift form location to involvement, from occupying to dwell, from a house to be a home.

Ingold’s dwelling perspective with space-time attributes provides a rich background to shift understanding of landscape beyond a dichotomy of conventional thought (nature/culture, objective/subjective). Rather through the mutual engagement of the human and non-human components of landscape continuously generates both cultural knowledge and bodily substance that offers dynamic models of human-spatial interaction.
4. Bridge guanxi and dwelling

The combination of guanxi and dwelling is a potentially theoretical basis, specifically, for western audience, to understand of how Chinese society works in the context of tourism, and this understanding should not divorce from the property of Chinese society, i.e, guanxi. Through reflexively examines these Eastern (guanxi) and Western (dwelling) philosophical discourse, we can find some similarities which enable us to bridge them as an intertwined ontological frame.

Identity

Taskcape articulated by Ingold, as the habitual practices of humans form familiar patterns which can take landscapes or places to be homeland(s). Each place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there - to perform tasks over time. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its dwellers engage. Therefore performing various tasks overtime gives landscape particular character and identity. Indeed the features identified as serving this segmenting function - rites, feasts and ceremonies - are themselves as integral to the taskscape as are boundary markers such as walls or fences to the landscape. Dwelling, thus, offers dwellers a view of places or landscape where familiarity and identity are set in a dynamic and fluid context.

The integration of ‘organism-in-environment’ of dwelling typically reflects in Chinese understanding of 人 (Ren) which can be roughly translated as personage. As reported in The Analects:
One cannot herd with birds and beasts. If I am not to be a man among other men, then what am I to be?

---- The Analects chapter 18: 6

Obviously, the innate disposition is that being-in-guanxi for Chinese people depends upon their engagement with their fellows, in other words, without in relation to these ‘other men’, Chinese people can not exist independently, and his/her existence would without any meanings. Therefore, had/have/will have relations to other men is specific existence for Chinese people, that is, being-in-guanxi is a particular way of Chinese dwelling in this world.

The involvement of tourism as a more holistic force would, or not potentially (re)shape the performance mode of identity and the recognition of identity is one of our interests.

**Authenticity**

Many commentators (e.g., Macnaghten & Urry, 1998) argued that modernism in many of its forms is destructive to the practice of dwelling. Guignon (1993) believes authenticity is a critical element in dwelling, but seems impossible under the condition of modernity. The view of authenticity of being as some original (nature) form, some blessed sate (Massingham, 1988). Such an argument assumes a relationship between authenticity and dwelling which poses important questions about nature and landscape under contemporary conditions. Endeavour to protect place threaten nature, and vice versa. Examples can be easily found in tourism development.
In terms of the authenticity of guanxi, this paper claim, should be the appropriate tenor (Chang) described by Confucians for corresponding guanxi: affection for parent-child, righteousness for ruler-subject; distinction for husband-wife; order for brothers; sincerity for friends (King, 1991). While these authentic system also faced obliteration since the modernism, which by Confucius’s term as ‘rites collapsed and music disappeared’.

From this logic, dwelling has been realized hardly by alienating modernity, and become impossibilities. Human beings, as intentionally motivated organisms, could, or not, break limits to make the protection of nature and the protection of landscape are compatible is another attention.

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