



Changes in land use of a village driven by over 25 years of tourism: The case of Gougezhuang village, China



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ABSTRACT

The rapid urbanization and industrialization process during the last three decades has reshaped traditional Chinese rural villages in different directions, among which tourism villages are an important type. Integrating participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods, geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing (RS), we explored the spatial–temporal pattern of land use changes in Gougezhuang village from 1986 to 2010. The results indicate that in the past 25 years, Gougezhuang village has experienced an expansion in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions, with increasing land intensity. This expansion was accompanied by the touristization process, with land function changing from meeting villagers' living needs to satisfying tourists' demands. Gougezhuang village has converted from a traditional rural village to a modern town, a change driven by the interaction among local governments, villagers and other stakeholders, under the constraints of the geographic environment and the promotion of large-scale tourism demand. This paper suggests the unsustainability of current land use patterns, which are manifested in the severe conflict between increasing tourism land use and limited village construction land, irrational land usage, irregular expansion, and damages to rural traditional culture and the eco-environment resulting in the loss of rurality. With the tourism village advancing toward a new phase, the current land use pattern of the tourism-based village should be modified, converting from being driven by local living needs to external tourism demands. To solve these problems, this paper proposes that (1) current restrictions on land supply in tourism villages should be unlocked, and land quota should be allocated according to tourism demand; (2) a proper circulation mechanism of rural collective land¹ is necessary for the sake of effective land supply; and (3) an integrated plan should be implemented to achieve the balance between rural tourism development and the protection of rurality.

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Introduction

In China, the traditional centrally planned economy has been transformed into a market-based economy, with the accompanying processes of industrialization and urbanization since Deng Xiaoping launched economic reforms in 1978. These processes have resulted in a rapid and far-reaching transition development of rural China. This fast and radical rural restructuring is often referred to as rural transformation development (RTD) (Cai, 2001; Liu, 2007; Long et al., 2011), which is characterized by changes in the rural land-

scape, residential land use (Henle et al., 2008; Mander and Jongman, 1998; Vos and Meekes, 1999) and rural production and lifestyles. During the RTD process, traditional rural villages are reshaped into different usage types (Long et al., 2009b). On the one hand, most of the traditional agriculture-dominated villages are gradually declining and becoming blighted by depopulation and the abandonment of buildings and land, which is called “village-hollowing” in China and is similar to the “Dying Village” in Europe (Long and Woods, 2011). On the other hand, with the introduction and development of various industries in rural areas, some new types of villages (industry-dominated rural development type (IDT), rural development type focusing on business, tourism and services industries (BTT), and balanced rural development type (BDT)) are constantly emerging and have become the main form of rural urbanization in China (Long et al., 2009b).

Land-use perspective is an important channel to explore the social, economic, cultural and ecological reconstruction process of rural areas. Studies on rural transformation development from a land-use perspective, specifically the arable and residential land change, have attracted wide attention and been conducted at

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¹ Two types of land ownerships, namely, state and collective land coexist in the current land administration system in China. According to the Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China, the state owns urban land, whereas village collectives own rural land. Urban land is mainly used for construction, and rural land is used for agriculture production.

different scales in recent years. At the regional scale, arable and residential land change in China have aroused academic concern in various areas, including farmland loss due to urbanization and farmland preservation (Gong et al., 2012; Long et al., 2012; Tan et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2010; Xi et al., 2012), rural settlements and residential land expansion (Peng et al., 2008; Su, 2011; Su et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2010), spatio-temporal dynamic pattern of land-use change (Liu et al., 2008, 2010b; Long et al., 2009a; Tian et al., 2007), and driving forces analysis and simulation (Liu et al., 2010a; Xie et al., 2007; Zhan et al., 2010). For the village scale, volumes have been written on the loss of agricultural land in peri-urban districts caused by urban sprawl (Lin, 2006; Liu et al., 2010c; Wang and Scott, 2008; Wei and Zhao, 2009; Yu and Ng, 2007), the formation and evolution of the “village in city,” and the decline or reconstruction of traditional villages (Hessel et al., 2009; Käyhkö et al., 2011; Long et al., 2009b). However, current studies on land use change in rural China mainly focus on agriculture-dominated villages, particularly the hollowing villages (Cheng et al., 2001; Feng and Chen, 2003; Lei, 2002; Li and Li, 2008; Liu, 2007; Long and Li, 2012; Long et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2005; Xu, 2004; Xue, 2001; Xue and Wu, 2001) and pay little attention to new-type villages, which, to some extent, impedes a better comprehension of the rural urbanization process with Chinese characteristics during the last 30 years.

The tourism village is an important form of the three types of new villages, and it is imperative to make a breakthrough in both theoretical and empirical studies on the reconstruction of tourism villages. Thus, this paper took Gougezhuang village, a demonstrative tourism village in the Yesanpo tourism area in the suburb of Beijing city, as a case study, with the aim of (i) revealing the land-use change trajectories of tourism villages during the past 25 years, (ii) identifying the driving mechanism of land use change with the local development context, and (iii) providing policy implications for tourism villages' development, especially in land planning and management, to control tourism village sprawl, preserve the traditional rural landscape, and achieve the sustainable development of rural tourism.

Tourism village and land use policy

The concept of the “tourism village” was proposed by the China National Tourism Association (CNTA) and Ministry of Agriculture of People's Republic of China (MAPRC). The tourism village, as a crucial component of rural tourism attraction, dates back to the 1980s of 20th century, first appearing in the suburb of Chengdu (home of the panda) in western China, in the form of “Nongjiale” (Happy Farmer Home) (Su, 2011). With the increasing tourism demand, a series of RT-promoted activities were created by the CNTA, including “China Rural Tourism Year 1998”, “China Eco-tourism Year 1999” and “Chinese Life Tourism Year 2004”. In 2007, the CNTA and MAPRC jointly launched the “Chinese Harmonious Urban and Rural Tours” project and “Rural Tourism Development Program (2009–2015)” aimed at building 1000 demonstrative tourist towns, 10 thousands demonstrative tourism villages, and achieving 771 million tourist visits.² The strategy of building a new countryside was proposed by the central government of China and has also facilitated farm diversification into tourism.

As a result, the number of rural communities has greatly increased in pursuit of different forms of RT, particularly “Nongjiale”, the local agglomeration of which has fostered the continuous formation of tourism villages. After 30 years of development, the rural tourism attractions nationwide had received

and entertained approximately 720 million tourists as of 2012, creating 216 billion RMB in revenue, with approximately 85,000 villages engaged throughout 31 of China's provinces and autonomous regions (Sun, 2012). There also exist various RT spatial patterns, such as city attachments, scenic regions, major traffic networks, and independent tourism destinations. RT has exerted significant effects on enhancing farmers' income and human capital, promoting local employment, improving rural economic structure, protecting rural environment, and the inheritance of traditional rural culture, while pleasing urban and rural residents and strengthening urban–rural communication (Su, 2011). Building demonstrative tourism villages has been the most important method to foster RT development and new countryside construction.

The expansion of rural tourism has incurred huge demands in recreational land use and changes in the traditional land-use pattern. Tourism is one of the more dynamic and complex sets of land use. The strong growth in tourism land use has been accompanied by changes in form and distribution and its relationships to other land uses (Nelson, 2001; Nepal, 2007; Wall, 1996; Williams and Shaw, 2009). In response to this demand, the land reform proposed by the Chinese central government in 2008 started to allow various types of rural land circulation, as long as the uses did not change the collective ownership or land use purpose or damage farmers' land contract rights. The land reform also stipulated that non-agricultural construction land did not have to be state-owned, and farmers were permitted to engage in non-public project development in various ways. The land reform of collective-owned construction land was further deepened, regulating that profit-oriented construction land, in accordance with the land use general plan, can be paid use and circulated through various methods such as sale and transfer.

However, tourism village development in China is still facing various political limits from the current land policy system, such as the well-known Red Line³ (Yi, 2009) and various restrictions on collective land use for profit-oriented purposes. The competition between welfare-oriented residential and profit-oriented commercial land and the contradiction between economic development and environment protection have led to severe conflicts among local governments, enterprises, villagers and other stakeholders (Wu et al., 2013). The existing land use and household registration system has also resulted in serious urban–rural isolation, including the restriction on resource flow and polarization trends of economic development and living standards (Li et al., 2010). For tourism land, the absence of a generally accepted definition and clear position in the current land use system and rigid land policy strictly controlling land supply have seriously hindered the further development of tourism villages. Severe problems still exist for rural tourism land use and land development in tourism villages.

Materials and methods

Study area

The research village is located in the Yesanpo tourism area (Fig. 1), a famous tourist resort in northern China, 100 km away from Beijing, with a total area of 498.5 km², including 6 independent tourism attractions. Yesanpo was designated as a five-star (5 A) tourism area by the CNTA in 2011. It has rich tourism resources, such as steep canyons and beautiful rivers. It is a quite popular tourist destination among Beijing citizens because of the well-preserved eco-environment and proximity. Yesanpo received 2.24 million tourists and generated 670 million RMB in revenue in

² The administrative hierarchical system of China is composed (in a descending order) of the central government, provinces, cities, counties, towns, Xiangs (or townships), and villages.

³ “Red Line” indicates the aim of maintaining the total cultivated land area at no less than 1.8 billion mu in the period lasting to 2020.

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