

# Indigenous Self-Determination and Sustainable Economic Development

## Chapter 10: Self-gentrification as a pro-active response to tourism development: Cases of Indigenous entrepreneurship in mainland China and Taiwan.

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### Abstract:

Indigenous tourism could be a mixed blessing with multi-faceted complexity of diverse issues ranging from socio-economic benefits to those of political rights. It could also determine the sustainability of the surrounding natural environment and Indigenous cultural heritage. While self-determination is to be respected and hegemony of any kind is to be resisted, social and economy development in the Indigenous communities require supports, knowledge and networks with the wider society.

This chapter offers two case-studies of entrepreneurial endeavours in Indigenous communities in Asia where there are attempts to develop their socio-economic status under their own terms, while conserving their own cultural heritage (self-gentrification), in response to gentrification pressure (as well as opportunities) coming from tourism development and associated modernisation. The first case examines the intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities in tourism sector and the efforts to improve capabilities and provide resources to the ethnic communities in the Honghe Hani Rice Terraces UNESCO Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site in Yunnan province, mainland China. The second case of Chi-mei community in Taiwan offers some insights on successful collaborations of Indigenous community with national museums to develop tourism economy and entrepreneurship while enhancing the appreciation and conservation of Indigenous heritage.

## Section 1: Introduction

Globally, tourism has commonly recognised as an important tool for economic development in many communities. Tourism businesses generate much needed employment especially in rural and remote regions. It could empower marginalised communities, socially, economically and politically (van den Berghe, 1992). In Indigenous communities, tourism can also play a key role in the protection and revitalisation of Indigenous cultural heritage.

Tourism activities in Indigenous communities are not a new phenomenon. It could be traced back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century in Asia, Africa and Scandinavia, where Indigenous people served as guides, porters, interpreters and servants (WINTA, 2014) to the travellers, migrants, Christian missionaries, and academics. Later, tourism businesses appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, targeting wealthy European "elites" travellers to seek not widely known exotic culture in the far-fetching Indigenous lands (Craik, 1994). As Indigenous culture has been seen as a unique selling point of many destinations, for international and domestic tourists, Indigenous tourism has attracted substantial government attention and private sector interests after the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016).

The impacts of tourism on Indigenous peoples has gained substantial attention in the academia. Ethnographic researchers have identified the issues pertaining to acculturation and commodification of Indigenous culture. (Fletcher *et al.*, 2016). Tourism development in Indigenous community can have negative impacts on the socio-cultural fabric of the local community as well as raise the questions of economic, social, and political justice. Other possible negative impacts are the destruction of their living environments, exploitation, racism (United Nation, 2009), distraction from tourists, and intrusion of foreign culture and business products.

The ownership of Indigenous heritage is often at the heart of the debate when developing Indigenous tourism in Indigenous communities, since during the development, their narratives and right to present may also be shared with outsiders, such as governmental organisations, planners and other business in the industry. The ownership becomes complicated especially when Indigenous cultures are commercialised. For example, in Canada, Graburn (1976, 1989) argues that because of the consumption of Indigenous souvenirs, Canadian Indigenous culture is considered as a 'borrowed identity' and a national symbol for Canada. Todd (1990) further argues that Indigenous peoples face the challenges of losing their specialities to be distinguished from their surrounding dominant culture when Indigenous identity, cultures or symbols are seen as national symbols.

In addition, with the arrival of tourists, and thereby the businesses and in-migration of workers serving the tourism industry, competition for space in the communities increases, leading to the increasing pressure of gentrification. Gentrification (Glass, 1964) will lead to the displacement of the long-term residents (including the marginalised Indigenous people), who are either forced or voluntarily left their community and their places. They are usually priced out of their space and dwelling, unable to support themselves with a higher living costs, and feel unable to cope with the overwhelming presence, but foreign social behaviours, of tourists. They may also succumb to the market tendency to sell or rent out their properties as the value

raises. Gentrification could be either unorganised gentrifier-led or government and big business-led) as residents are to retreat or being relocated to less expensive areas. In an extreme case, tourist gentrification is described as “museification” where local resident in urban areas has been hollowed out (Chan *et al.*, 2016).

While gentrification usually occurs in urban setting, it could be as acute in cases with rural context (e.g. Chan *et al.*, 2016; Nelson & Hines, 2018). The hollowing out in rural settlements has been an on-going phenomenon for a long history due to modernization efforts by colonialization agents particularly foreign and national governments, but also Churches and the modern education system. In addition, space competition could extend beyond living space to traditional dwelling in Indigenous communities, group of building with historical architecture features, and agricultural and other types of land use.

Even without the arrival of tourists, rural Indigenous communities have already facing tremendous pressure of modernisation, of individual moving out seeking job opportunities and education in nearby townships or cities. This hollowing out effects have been disintegrating Indigenous communities, and thereby their culture and heritage (Chan, Zhang, McDonald, & Qi, 2016). The impact is on both the communities and individual. While economic pressure is the key mover for out-migration, cultural changes follow over the time, which will lead to the loss of Indigenous heritage.

As in many other tourism developments, sustainable tourism scholars have attempted to theorised tourism development, implementation and management in Indigenous communities (Hinch & Butler, 1996; Carr *et al.*, 2016). Carr *et al.* (ibid) advocating that it is necessary to enhance "...governance, collaboration and embedding Indigenous values and world-views in tourism development...". It is nonetheless crucial to ask who is to decide and how to represent these values and world-views. Whitford and Ruhanen (2016), thereby, call for a more open and exploratory research the voice and experience of Indigenous people - their views, challenges, and responses to be documented, analysed and assessed. Researchers, and the wider global communities, should respect and support the Indigenous people rights of self-determination, be it political, economic or socio-cultural. What aspects of the Indigenous culture to be "modernised" and what aspects to be "preserved"? What lifestyle to be maintained and what to be modified?

### **Entrepreneurship as a pro-active response**

In most of the gentrification literature, Indigenous or long-term local residents have also been seen as passive victims needing protection from the unsurmountable gentrification pressure coming from the external world. Instead of being seen as the victims of tourism gentrification, Indigenous communities should be encouraged and supported to be self-determined - to have the ability to improve their own socio-economy and political standings during this tide of change engulfing their community. There are only a few studies, in exception, (e.g. Chan *et al.*, 2016; Oejo, 2011) discussing some proactive responses of residents to utilise the changing environments, as gentrification occurring, to their own advantages. And entrepreneurship could be a mean to this end. Chan *et al.* (2016) propose the concept of self-gentrification to describe the phenomenon of this type of self-determination and progresses by the Indigenous/long-term resident facing pressure of gentrification as:

*"Under the threat of other forms of gentrification, the long-term residents adopt a proactive approach to become the 'gentry' themselves. As such they are able to benefit from the positive aspects of gentrification whilst avoiding many of the negative effects, particularly displacement."*

Entrepreneurship has long been seen as a tool for self-determination. Similarly, this conception has also been applied to Indigenous people (Peredo et al., 2004) and their communities. Studies in the Americas and Australasia have demonstrated that involvement in starting up businesses is "the key to building a more vibrant economy" model and community for Indigenous people (Anderson & Giberson, 2004; Stevens, 2001 as cited in Peredo et al., 2004).

Literature in rural development has also advocated for a more sustainable development model with a stronger involvement of the communities in entrepreneurial activities. Bramwell (1994) proposed that attention should be "given to the role of local communities and local businesses..." Due to a prolonged historical disadvantage of their economic status in the society, private investors and cooperation external to their communities could dominate the market that features Indigenous cultures (Wu, 1997; Lee, 2003). Similarly, Indigenous tourism in other parts of the world, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, suffered from the extensive involvement of external private businesses in Indigenous tourism who might not have a sufficient understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture, thereby leading to mis-representation and Indigenous culture and the loss of authenticity (van den Berghe, 1992). "Authenticity" is a critical factor for the success of Indigenous tourism, as Dicks (2004) argues, instead of just observing the sceneries, Indigenous tourism that is often associated with 'experience-led' tourism, which would attract visitors. Therefore, the participation of Indigenous peoples is also a critical element in developing Indigenous tourism (Cohen, 1988).

Lane and Kastenholz (2015) further suggest that a better management would be required as such, if they do exist, is typically fragmented and poorly organised. Similar concerns have been voiced in studies of Indigenous tourism enterprises in many parts of the world. They are mostly micro-businesses and have their viability threatened (Fuller, Buultjens, & Cummings, 2005) by problems such as land tenure issues, low literacy, lack of access to capital, weak social capital and networks, insufficient business skills, no training opportunity, and no knowledge of market trends (Cachon, 2000; Jeremy et al., 2010; Weir, 2007). While scholars have warned against excessive external influence in Indigenous businesses, sustainable partnership and a good network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners could be beneficial (Cornell 2006; Fuller et al., 2005).

There might be a question of whether small business owner in indigenous tourism setting could be classified as entrepreneur, and therefore a revisit on the definition of entrepreneurship or entrepreneur is required. There is however little consensus in the definition of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur among management scholars (See Garner, 1988, 2008; Ramoglou, 2013). The relatively minimalist definition of entrepreneurship, commonly found in popular press and dictionaries is "skill in starting new businesses, especially when this

involves seeing new opportunities" as in Cambridge Dictionary and an entrepreneur is one who creates and runs a commercial enterprise. Many of the Indigenous enterprises are of similar nature with small business but could also vary substantially from individual ownership to collective forms (Frederick & Henry, 2004) as well as one with a strong social goal.

While the definition of Indigenous entrepreneurship usually takes this minimalist perspective such as "the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people..." by Hindle and Lansdowne (2005), it does not mean that Indigenous entrepreneurs do not explore opportunities and take risk and are not innovative and resourcefulness; or their actions produce transformative results in their production system and communities - key characteristics of entrepreneur (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Schumpeter, 1934; Bruton *et al.*, 2010; Drucker, 2014; Stevenson, 1983; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009).

The following sections in this chapter provide an analysis of two detailed cases of tourism entrepreneurship in Indigenous community in Taiwan and mainland China. The case in mainland China focuses on individual entrepreneurs and the one in Taiwan looks at community efforts in tourism development. These two cases in East Asia demonstrate sustainable responses of Indigenous communities toward pressure arises from tourism development. This chapter discusses the opportunities, approaches, and challenges faced by Indigenous communities under the wave of tourism development, and how they response to it.

In Section 2, we provide information about the methods and data sources. Section 3 is a brief introduction to ethnic entrepreneurship in tourism in mainland China, then follows by the case in the Hani Rice Terraces Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site in Yunnan in Section 4. Beginning with a brief background on the Indigenous entrepreneurship in Taiwan (Section 5), Section 6 examines the roles of external organisations and their interactions with an Indigenous community of Amis Tribe in Taiwan. Section 7 provides some key learning conclusions derived from these two cases.

## **Section 2: Methods and Data**

This chapter draws on primary and secondary evidence collected from a number of research projects spanning from 2013 to 2018 at the sites of these two case studies. Primary data came from various data collection methods including structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured in-depth interviews. The researchers have also written ethnographic diaries that noted down observations on the surrounding, the non-verbal interactions between individuals, and researchers' own opinions and reflections on the case. As the researchers aiming to understand the development of Indigenous enterprise in Indigenous communities and the interactions within the community and with outsiders, qualitative research methods are considered to be more appropriate, which could provide richer data for the examination of the unique context in these case studies, comparing to quantitative approach (Denzin & Ryan, 2007).

Secondary data also collated from government statistics and data from state-owned tourism park operator. In addition, the authors have also cross-examined the context with historical

documents, policy documents, news reporting and other narrative accounts. To understand a complex social phenomenon, Yin (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994) propose that combining these different sources of data would allow researchers to produce more convincing findings and reliable conclusions.

The researchers met with owners and employees of tourism-related businesses in the site, ranging from small guesthouses to museum curators and large state-owned corporations and its subsidiaries. The targeted guesthouses were mostly located in the most visited villages, which are susceptible to a greater degree of gentrification. We interviewed local residents and community leaders from different villages, and also government officials at village, town and county levels, who have a portfolio related to tourism, environment or development at the sites. The interviews were mostly conducted in Mandarin Chinese (putonghua), but on some occasions our local guide helped as an interpreter for local languages, particularly amongst older villagers who often had difficulty in speaking Mandarin. The interviews were transcript into text files and were analysed in NVivo. During the analysis, categorisation was conducted on the data by themes, for examples, the community history, commercial development, and conflicts.

### **Section 3: Overview of Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship in Mainland China**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) identified fifty-six ethnic groups based loosely upon territory, language and other cultural features (Harrell, 1995). Ethnic Han has been the predominate ethnic group constituting for a long time in the history. Nowadays, Han ethnic population is more than 91% of the total population in the country, based on the recent census data (2010). The other fifty-five minority ethnic groups, but with a total population of slightly more than 100 million, occupy a vast territory primarily in the southwestern and western regions of China. However, the term "Indigenous" is not in use but "ethnic" minorities as it is a more common, as well as an official terminology in mainland China. Even though the PRC adopted the 2007 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, ethnic minorities in China is not officially considered as Indigenous groups, particularly with any connotation of colonisation.

The mainland is a vast country with an enormous tourism resources, natural and cultural, but these resources are not evenly distributed. Ethnic minority regions are mostly in far flung areas with challenging landscape and thereby low in accessibility and under developed. They are however usually well-endowed with abundance natural and cultural tourism resources. The communities are mostly poorer compared with their counterparts in the eastern coastal provinces. Therefore, governments at various levels often attempt to promote ethnic tourism development in the rural area as a mean of rural socio-economic regeneration (Su, 2011) in views of many challenging difficulties in developing the economy through other industries (Li, 2014). Consequently, tourism has become an increasingly important industry in many provinces with a high number of ethnic minorities such as in Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Tibet, where tourism contributes to more that 5% of the GDP (Li, 2014). For instance, Yunnan province, where there is a substantially high population of various ethnic minorities, is

experiencing a rapid growth of tourism industry. In 2017, the revenue from tourism in Yunnan was more than 1 billion USD<sup>1</sup>.

Nonetheless, Chinese ethnic tourism is a distinctive occurrence under an authoritarian state that practises market-socialist economic governance. The Chinese government has established many ethnic minority autonomous regions and districts throughout the country. The local officers, even though, might be the ethnic group themselves, it does not mean that the communities are having any substantial control and say over their own resources and development (Swain, 1989; Xie, 2001). Development planning is probably top-down under this centralised control system (Harvey, 2005), but it is increasingly involving private or quasi-private corporations under the neo-liberal market reform since 1978s. This is very much in great contrast with their western Indigenous counterpart who may enjoy a greater control over any development planning and activities including tourism in their communities (Hinch & Butler, 1996).

As ethnic tourism in China continues to grow rapidly, there are concerns of economic leakages out of the ethnic region leading to unsustainable development or even "inharmonious" community relationship, expressing in the Chinese terminology. Gentrification in ethnic minority tourism destination is a concern in mainland China with threats coming from both large-scale organised state-led and unorganised gentrifier-led gentrifications (Chan et al., 2016; Su, 2012; Zhang et al., 2016). Many tourism entrepreneurs in the ethnic minority regions are of Han Chinese origin, recently migrating from other parts of the country while the involvement of the local ethnic minorities could be very limited (Walsh & Swain, 2004; Yang & Wall, 2008). The representation of the ethnic minority people at top and middle managerial levels in the tourism related enterprises is also low (Chan et al., 2016).

Despite these challenges in promoting tourism entrepreneurship within the ethnic minority communities in China, this field is relatively under researched. A literature search in CNKI, the Chinese key journal database, using three keywords (i.e. ethnic, tourism, and enterprise) yielded only eleven pieces of articles. Besides Fu (2006) and Liang and Zheng (2007), all those articles were published between 2010 and 2014. In this literature, the key issue of concern is about the impact of non-ethnic minority enterprises on the communities and culture, and thereby advocating that those enterprises should be tasked to protect the culture and heritage of the minorities (Fu, 2006; Liang & Zheng, 2007; Wei, 2012). The challenges faced by tourism enterprises in ethnic minority regions have also been identified, for examples, growth related (Wen, 2013; Long, 2010; Li, 2014) and funding barriers (Li, 2011; Wu, 2012).

#### **Section 4: A case on Hani and Yi Indigenous communities in the Yuanyang Hani Rice Terraces UNESCO World Heritage Site**

On 22 June 2013, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization awarded Honghe Hani Rice Terraces as a World Cultural Landscape Heritage Site (WHS) (UNESCO, 2013). This WHS is located in remote and mountainous terrains in Yuanyang County, Honghe

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<sup>1</sup> Yunnan Province Tourism Development Committee Yunnan Lvyou Fazhan Weiyuanhui, 2017 Provincial Tourist Arrival Statistics <http://www.ynta.gov.cn/Item/36181.aspx>, last access 19 August 2018.

State in the south of China's Yunnan province. It encompasses some 16,603 hectares of core area and 29,501 hectares of buffer zone – around latitude 102.40' E, longitude 23.05' N (UNESCO, 2013) – where there is an extensive concentration of magnificent rice terraces along the northern slopes of the Ailao Mountain.

The area is an autonomous prefecture of the Hani and Yi ethnic minority groups, with socio-cultural practices and religions readily distinguishable from the Han ethnic majority. There are 82 villages with a total population of around 50,000 within the WHS. The main ethnic group, the Hani, build their villages and terraces at the highest altitude, from 1400 to 1800 m above mean sea level, while the Yi ethnic group occupies middle-altitude mountains, mostly below 1600 m (Chan, Zhang, McDonald, and Qi, 2016).

The UNESCO inscription is in recognition of its breath-taking rice terraces under centuries-long of sustainable agriculture supported by local cultural concepts. The balance achieved in this harmonious relationship between the environment and ethnic communities is strongly linked with their unique cultural and religious practices. In the core area of the Honghe WHS, the upper slopes of the mountain, over 1800 m, are forested while the terraced rice fields are distributed in the valley down to 700 m above sea level with, at times, gradients of 15 - 20°. The Hani builds their villages between their sacred forests at the top of the mountain, which has very significant religious meanings (Bouchery, 1996) and still in practice today, and the earthy rice terraces further down the slopes. Hani villages have distinctive traditional mushroom like dwellings, commonly two-and-a-half storeys houses with a thatched roof, which has become a tourist attraction (**Figure 1**).





**Figure 1:** Pugaolao village and the magnificent view of rice terraces at the Honghe World Cultural Landscape Heritage Site.

(Source: Photograph taken by one of the authors)

The Hani religious practice of forest and water worshipping helps to maintain the harmonious relationship and sustainable practices in the mountain slopes. Logging within the sacred forest is prohibited helping the local micro-climate in moisture trapping and ground water storage, delivering sustainable water supply to the villages and rice terraces (Lu, 2011, p. 121; Mao, 1991; Wang, 1999). The forest supplies ever-running streams via a complex web of natural and man-made drainage channels. The Hani has a traditional social system for building sluice gates to apportion water resources throughout the terraces, which is managed by an elected irrigation headman, "yiroharapo" (Shimpei, 2007).

In 2008, years before the UNESCO inscription, the government has established a tourism development company to develop and manage tourism. The Yunnan Shibo-Yuanyang Hani Rice Terraces Cultural Tourism Limited (The Company) is a joint venture of Yunnan Expo Tourism Group Holdings Ltd. (66.7%) and the county level government sovereign fund (33.3%)<sup>2</sup>. The Yunnan Expo Tourism Group Holdings a prominent state-owned corporation with substantial involvement in tourism in Yunnan Province. It is a joint venture between

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<sup>2</sup> Webpage of Yunnan Shibo-Yuanyang Hani Rice Terraces Cultural Tourism Development Ltd., <http://www.yyhntt.com/aboutus.html>, last access 18 Aug 2018.

central government (51%) and provincial government (49%) sovereign fund<sup>3</sup>. The registered capital is about RMB 132 million (approx. USD 20 million).

The UNESCO inscription boosted the likelihood that tourism will become a significant force of change at the WHS. These changes would probably be witnessed in the economic, socio-cultural, and physical environments in Yuanyang. In the two years preceding the inscription, the tourist arrival had already experienced an explosive increase, and the trend continued over the following five years after the inscription. The Company, which collected entrance fee to the site, recorded an annual tourist arrival increased from 32,000 in 2009 to over 140,000 in 2012, which was about three times the local population. This trend is predicted to accelerate following UNESCO inscription, just as in other UNESCO sites worldwide (UNESCO, 2010; Herbert, 2001; Hall & Piggin, 2003; Yang et al., 2010). The Company had since collected a total RMB 6.7 million of entrance fees<sup>4</sup>. From 2013 to 2017, five years since the inscription, the total tourist arrival in the county of Yuanyang had nearly surpassed 1 million<sup>5</sup>.

Improper planning could also lead to the phenomenon of so-called "fantasy city" (Hannigan, 1995) or "museification" (Bouche, 1998), where gentrifying projects turn space into "tourist bubbles". Under the wave of increasing tourist arrival in the WHS, gentrification has been creeping in over time. The increasing number of visitors in the WHS also generates more demands on the infrastructure, for instance, fresh water (competing with irrigation requirements particularly during dry season, which coincides with the annual peak tourist season), road network, and living and entertaining space. Individual tourists may be transient, but continuous streams of tourists, as Clark (2005) noted, may lead to an impression of ever-present outsiders, who competes for space and resources. These could also lead to the increase of property prices and living costs. There have been complaints from local residents on scarcity of fresh water due annual draught session and solid waste management, particularly blaming tourists.

While land might be plentiful in rural settings, competition and thereby gentrification do occur on some specific types of land in rural areas (e.g. Nelson & Hines, 2018). The local government and the WHS site management company are well-aware of potential negative impacts on the WHS under any large-scale government-led gentrification, i.e. relocation of ethnic villages for tourism development purposes, witnessed in other tourist destinations in the province (Chan et al., 2016; Su, 2012). The steep topography of Honghe WHS restricts the availability of suitable land for new buildings and new villages. In addition, there are cultural and hydrology significances of the locality of Hani village in between the sacred forest and the rice terraces.

Nonetheless, an unplanned gentrifier-led gentrification could also lead to competition for land and traditional dwellings as well as destroying the beauty of the landscape. Other than the threats of any large-scale government led-gentrification, individual gentrifiers are new comers

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<sup>3</sup> Webpage of Yunnan Expo Tourism Group Holdings Ltd., <http://www.ynexpogroup.com/index.html>, last access 18 Aug 2018

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished data from the park management company, Yunnan Shibo-Yuanyang Hani Rice Terraces Cultural Tourism Development Limited.

<sup>5</sup> Yunnan Province Tourism Development Committee Yunnan Lyou Fazhan Weiyuanhui, Yuanyang Tourism Industry Development, <http://www.cczql.com/Item/38436.aspx>, last access 19 August 2018.

such as owners and employees of establishments catering to tourists, as well as the tourists themselves. With the increasing popularity of this WHS and the tourists' thirst for authentic experience, traditional mushroom type dwellings is therefore highly sought after (Chan et al., 2016). The number of small Bed & Breakfast type of accommodation has increased from about 50 in 2013 to 230 in 2018<sup>6</sup>. In this process of tourism gentrification, space is transformed into affluent enclaves to accommodate better-off tourists.

With the new built restriction imposed on the core zone, villagers have been approached and rent out their dwellings to individuals and businesses, mostly non-local entrepreneurs spotting on this blooming accommodation market. Long-term lease (15 to 20 years) with a flat rent rate is very common as reported by Chan et al. (2016). Even during the early days of the inscription, there are numerous guesthouses in a small traditional Hani village of Pugaolao; some are under-construction, some locked away waiting for the peak season to arrive. A small number of new comers and converted guesthouses might add a new favour to a small traditional agricultural village. But, uncontrolled conversion and an attractive stable income from renting out mushroom dwellings could drive villagers away from their nature habitat as well as traditional livelihood and skills in rice terrace farming and maintenance.

Nonetheless, it is the choice of the villagers. Their self-determination counts. Here, we provide a few examples of good efforts made by the local individuals of Yi and Hani ethnic minority to counter the negative effects while take advantage of the tourism development in the WHS. Any involvement in tourism sector no doubt will have some implications on one's culture and lifestyle. But it could also promote conservation of cultural heritage. Chan et al. (2016) has recorded the intention and love of locals and emigrated ethnic individuals to return to their communities, *"...although many young people are going away to work in the city, we will still return to tend the rice terraces... The rice terraces cannot be deserted, they are the bedrock of our society, inherited from our ancestors."*

This section will provide further examples and cases self-gentrification in the WHS.

*... Young people are returning [from emigration] ...Many people are coming to ask about how to start a guesthouse and restaurant (Comments by a local officer)*

*...there is no need to leave here. I just want to remain in this beautiful place... if I were to leave, I would miss home so much. My ideal is to follow the development of tourism here. (A young ethnic entrepreneur who runs multiple tourist establishments in the WHS)*

*... let every villager has a little more income, everyone learns to do business...As we develop tourism sector, there are more opportunities. it is not necessary to go to the City as a migrant worker, one has a future in our home community... (Comments by a Hani entrepreneur in the WHS)*

Emigration to nearby cities has been a great challenge that might bring the communities to their knees. This problem is not confined to ethnic communities but rural and small townships in China as well as globally. For instance, urbanisation growth in China has been at an unprecedented speed since the economic reform in 1978. By 2016, population dwelling in cities had increased from 17.9% to 57.35% (Bai et al., 2014). In addition, the residue but

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<sup>6</sup> Same as footnote 5 in the above.

dreadful impact of adult emigration on rural China is the left-behind population, which amounting to 58 millions of children, 47 millions of women, and 45 millions of elderly people in 2015 (Ye et al., 2009). The consequence of this growth is the massive problem of depopulation in small cities, towns and rural areas, bearing down on the local commerce and livelihood. Local industries hollow out and agricultural land left uncultivated. It could disintegrate communities and destroy their culture and heritage, particularly in small ethnic communities.

The development in tourism could help to reverse the trend (Chan et al., 2016), if concepts of sustainability is well-embedded in the planning and execution of the development. Many local people believe that their future is still in the WHS as their involvement in tourism is an opportunity to improve their socio-economic status and income. During the time of this research fieldwork, there are numerous cases of local ethnic entrepreneurs who run restaurants and guesthouses, provide transport services, as minivan drivers or owners, and offer services as tour guide. The Company, which manages the WHS, has also employed local ethnic minorities to work as low-skill workers, office-based clerks, and mid-managers, as well as those who work in the Company owned hotels and restaurants (various interviews with the Chairman and Directors of the Company).

*...she has purchased a new mini-van to run her tourism business... a very good business. Now she is the main bread earner in her household...her current status and look at the way she behaves and talks, she definitely enjoys a better independent (Reflecting on a former colleague by an office worker of The Company)*

*...I was a migrant worker in Mengzi City [a small city not far from the WHS] after I graduated from the primary school. Now I am glad to be able to return to my village to work in a new hotel...but the pay is very low about RMB 1200 per month [~USD 325]; it is insufficient. I still need to help in the farm, and do some weaving and sewing jobs in the evening... (Comments from a hotel waitress in the WHS)*

*...I have the ability to earn money; do not need to be at his disposal. Previously, men decide on everything because they control the money... now, you go out to work; you receive your own pay. It is at your own discretion if you want to let him know...for me, when I receive my salary, my bonus, I do not need to let my husband know... (Assertion by a former worker in The Company)*

Self-gentrified through the involvement in the tourism sector, local ethnic residents have improved their household finance and social status. It is more prevalent among ethnic women whose family and social status improved due to the increase in earning power. Nonetheless, there could be a clear income gap, and thereby social status, between successful small business entrepreneurs and low-skill tourism workers as articulated by the interviewees as above.

*...his decision to become a tourism entrepreneur was by no means a carefully planned out one, but rather highlighted several key points in his life where interactions with others helped him become more aware of the entrepreneurial way of life and inspired him to follow this course of action... (Chan, Zhang, McDonald, & Qi, 2016)*

*...a key diffusing agent of touristic knowledge are the visitors themselves, who bring with them into the WHS sets of expectations and requirements garnered from touristic experiences that they have had elsewhere... (Chan et al., 2016)*

Nonetheless, ethnic minorities do not usually have the appropriate resources and skills required for business venturing and involvement in the tourism sector. They also need finance, knowledge and network to kick start their ventures and continue to innovate. Chan et al. (2016) have advocated that capacity building through support networks and direct trainings are necessary to ensure the community benefited from tourism development, in both social and economic respects. For instance, government provides grants under the "Beautiful home" programme to encourage refurbishment of tired dwellings in the WHS.

*...The Company encourages us... if you go to get a diploma, The Company will help to cover tuition fees. Now, it is better. The Company collaborates with external college; The Company will sponsor the full fees... the course will begin in this September..." (Supports offered by a female worker of The Company)*

*...About 95 per cent of middle managers are locals...continuously provide training... take them to other tourist destinations to observe and learn, as well as share our experience with them... (Reinforced by a top non-ethnic manager at The Company)*

*... I am happy to help them to succeed in the tourism business. Everyone also wants to get involved in tourism business and earn a little bit more... (Offers made by a young and successful ethnic entrepreneur)*

Provisions of these resources and capabilities have been provided up by The Company and the local government over the last few years. For instance, the Company does provide the workers with opportunities to obtain diploma in tourism management and hospitality. The local government has organised 8 sessions with a total of 514 persons attended hotel management and hospitality training; 27 sessions (730 attendants) on tourism management skills; and 46 sessions (1267 attendants) of prefecture or provincial level training events<sup>7</sup>. The ethnic entrepreneurs themselves are also willing to share their knowledge and experience in conducting tourism operations with the rest of the community.

## **Section 5: Overview of Indigenous entrepreneurship in Taiwan**

Indigenous entrepreneurship has been supported by the Taiwanese government since 1999, with the main objective of narrowing the economic gap between metropolitan cities and rural countries. The importance of developing Indigenous entrepreneurship has been well recognised despite there is no official statistics on the economic size of the Indigenous cultural industry. Comparing with the policies that aimed at 'Han-ised' Indigenous peoples over the history of Taiwan, in particular during the period in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the distinctiveness of the Indigenous culture has become an asset for developing Indigenous cultural industry and a key resource for Indigenous entrepreneurs. The Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) has been set up in 1996 for strengthening Indigenous rights and overseeing Indigenous affairs.

Indigenous enterprises commonly build upon resources derived from Indigenous traditional music, dance, craftworks and visual art that features Indigenous traditional cultural elements (Chen, 2011). In addition to individual entrepreneurs, there are some Indigenous artists who would choose to work with business partners and license out their works. Liu (2007) comments that by licensing out their art works, it not only increases the business profit but

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<sup>7</sup> As reported by the Yunnan Province Tourism Development Committee Yunnan Lvyou Fazhan Weiyuanhui, Yuanyang Tourism Industry Development, <http://www.cczql.com/Item/38436.aspx>, last access 19 August 2018.

also the social and cultural value as this increases the visibility of the works. Liu (2007) also points out that, for Indigenous cultural products to survive in the creative industry, it is important to acquire the knowledge and skills of branding and marketing. As one of the biggest challenges that Indigenous entrepreneurs encounter is insufficient business experiences and professional designers who is able to transform Indigenous artworks into business products - a similar finding in other parts of the world.

Many of the CIP supported projects focus on empowering Indigenous villages through transforming traditional crafts into cultural products. For instance, the project, "Challenge 2008: National development focus project – new village development", focuses on encouraging traditional art development by organising workshops on Indigenous craftworks in order to further cultivating Indigenous talents as well as providing training on business management. It aims to revitalise rural Indigenous towns and raise the awareness of Indigenous cultures (Chen, 1995). Three main areas have been identified for the cultivation of Indigenous entrepreneurship, i.e., i) assisting in developing the overall sectors and promoting Indigenous traditional craftworks; ii) developing Indigenous tourism which a focus on areas of Indigenous towns and their natural surroundings; and iii) providing training courses for individual craftsman or artist (CIP, 2013). Since 2006, there are government projects that supported several Indigenous communities in Eastern Taiwan populated with many Indigenous communities. Particularly, with the project 'East Coast Community Tourism Development Discovery' (Discovery project) in 2012, the development of Indigenous tourism has been emphasised. However, heritage preservation is a continual process, cultural transformations could occur while interacting with outsiders, some may be welcomed but others could also cause the loss of traditions (Ryan, 1991; Dicks, 2004). Therefore, taking the consequences of disturbing community residents and interrupting traditional practices in the past into considerations, the 'Discovery project' chose nine Indigenous communities to support and develop the tourism and the related business.

Tourism is one of the most common industries to nurture Indigenous entrepreneurship in Taiwan as well as in other Indigenous society, such as in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (Whitford et al., 2017; Ryan & Aicken, 2005). It is not uncommon for Indigenous communities to develop tourism in order to achieve social aims, such as educating the younger generation, creating job opportunities and raising cultural awareness in the wider society. Therefore, Indigenous entrepreneurship is often organised in a collective approach, as it requires efforts from all elements of the community in building a community-based tourism industry (Lin, 2002).

However, as many Indigenous communities in the World, the Taiwan Indigenous communities are facing many difficulties such as local people migrated out to cities for better job opportunities and education as well as the risk of losing traditional cultures and languages. As a result, increasing the awareness of Indigenous cultures and financial income have been the main purpose for developing Indigenous tourism in Taiwan. Especially, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the emphasis of localisation in Taiwan, Indigenous villages have become popular destinations for domestic tourism. Along with the commoditization of ethnicity, Indigenous tourism started to develop significantly and brought a large number of tourists into Indigenous communities (Ji, 1998; Chiang, 2008). It is popular, especially with funding from

the Ministry of Culture and CIP, for Indigenous communities to adopt the concept of community development on managing their neighbourhood, developing local cultural heritage, improving the connections between Indigenous communities with outsiders. With the advantage of the distinct cultures and traditions as well as the nature surroundings of Indigenous communities, which mostly situate in the mountainous area, developing Indigenous tourism has been considered to have great potential for Indigenous communities (Wu et al., 2011).

## **Section 6: A case on Chi-mei Indigenous community in Taiwan**

Different from the gentrification that Glass (1964) observed in London inner city, gentrification is happening in Hualian county due to the growth in private tourism sector. According to Lee and Cheng (2007), the number of people participated in rafting had been increasing, especially in Hualian county with the unique geographical environment. Hualian has become one of the most popular destinations for rafting and thereby many rafting businesses have been set up to take opportunities of the growing market. Although there are many indigenous residents in Hualian county, most of the rafting businesses are not established by them (Huang, 2009), as the result, Indigenous communities are not really benefitting economically from the growing rafting activities. It is more common to see them being employed by these businesses. Recognised the potential opportunities of rafting business, there are indigenous communities who were motivated to have a stronger participation in the sector, however, they are unable to compete with the existing businesses run by outsiders.

This case of Chi-mei community where the rafting businesses are solely established and run by local Indigenous people is an exception rather than a norm. Chi-mei, one of the communities belong to *Amis* tribe, also called as *Kiwit* in Indigenous language that spoken by *Amis* tribe. Chi-mei is considered to be one of the oldest *Amis* communities and their village was the last among Taiwanese Indigenous villages that got connected to electricity supply. Due to the villages being relatively isolated in the high mountains of Hualian county, they are able to preserve their traditions and culture (Lai, 2015) such as age hierarchy and ritual dances, especially compares to the "plain" Indigenous people who lives in the plain areas and are well integrated with other factions of the Taiwanese society since 16<sup>th</sup> century. Assisted by the government project in setting up local Indigenous cultural centres, Chi-mei Indigenous community started community-based tourism. It has been seen as one of the most popular ways for Indigenous people to actively participate in tourism, and to create opportunities and provide incentives for its out-migrated community members to return to the village.

### **Case Analysis**

The development of Indigenous tourism in Chi-mei community starts from the government project of building cultural centres in Indigenous villages. The CIP proposed to reclaim idle buildings, which were built in 1996 in order to be the bridge between cities and small towns in rural area, to be used as local cultural centres. These local cultural centres play the role of connecting the communities with leading museums and to build Indigenous exhibitions on the local communities. With the government support, Chi-mei community is able to reduce the difficulty of seeking funding for running the cultural centre. However, because the cultural

centre is owned by the local government, the relationships between local government and other groups in the area could be very complicated.

Nonetheless, the cultural centre in Chi-mei functions as a community museum that has been highly regarded among other cultural centres because of its success of collaborating with national museums and motivating community members into further development. In 2007, the project 'big museums lead small museums' was established in order to provide training to Indigenous communities and job opportunities as well as to further assist Indigenous communities to strengthen their self-recognition from representing themselves. Collaborating with leading museums in temporary exhibitions is not only popular among Indigenous communities but also for local governments, as it could attract outside visitors.

The cultural centre in Chi-mei community is a well-known example, not only because of the exhibitions in collaboration with National Taiwan Museum allowed the community to re-examine their past, but it also become an initial step to initiate other businesses in the community. As the curator stated (based on interview by the authors in 2015), the initial intention was to help those who were having difficult experiences in cities, started by bringing them back to work in rebuilding a traditional house and refurbishing the cultural centre. Later, the project expended to cover other aspects in the community development.

The exhibitions in cultural centre plays different roles in the community, it was described as a trigger point for the community elders to tell the history that was not known. In Indigenous society, the ownership and the right of telling history and memory could only be accessed by people with status equivalent to elders (based on interview by the authors in 2015). On the other hand, the exhibition also becomes the 'window' for the community to represent themselves to outsiders. Particularly, in the development of Indigenous tourism, the community has been holding camps for group visitors. Organising activities for visitors are a popular approach in attracting tourists into Indigenous communities and interacting with them. For example, in the camp, the community introduces visitors the traditional Indigenous cooking, cuisine as well as traditional techniques of weaving and artworks.

Cultural rafting (**Figure 2**) business has been established by the community. It allows outside visitors to experience the culture and history of the community by rafting along the river that the community's lives strive on. Unlike the existing rafting businesses in the area that aim to excite tourists with fast speed, the cultural rafting business in Chi-mei aims to show the visitors the history of the community, such as how did they support themselves with the natural resources and their relationship with the nature. With the concept of environmental sustainability in mind, they illustrate the approaches and rules of using natural materials that were set by their ancestors.

The idea of 'the whole community is a living museum' is used by the community. The idea is developed from a cultural centre that contributes in building self-recognition for its community members. It also further achieves in solving challenges that the community had faced, such as unemployment and emigration of younger generations. By developing Indigenous tourism, the community members have the chance to represent themselves to



tourists. The community has become united and more appealing for members to choose to stay as it provides job opportunities in the village.



**Figure 2:** Rafting brochure from the Chi-me community.  
Source: Photographs taken by one of the authors

In the case of Chi-me community, the establish of Indigenous tourism relies on key actors (Abbott, 1995), the cultural centre curator and his team, who may occupy influential position in the community and have more social capital to initiate any plan and to motivate others to support the plan and even become part of it. However, as Kung et al. (2014) observes, the success of developing tourism in Indigenous community relies on the willingness of community members. In Chi-me community, there was no universal consent for developing the community at the beginning. Similar to any community, it is not uncommon for people in the same community to have many different opinions, political stances or different priorities.

In Chi-me, as the curator admitted, there were some members against changes and questioned the intention of developing the community. Because the perspectives of developing Indigenous tourism in the community may not be shared by everyone in the community, there are conflicts between different groups in the community. However, with the influences of being key actors who may also have better opportunities to convince others and unite the community to work collectively in the development. Later in the development, the disagreements were resolved, and the agricultural products also became part of the business. As the result, the scale of development has been increased and more members are involved as well as benefited from it.

Conflicts also can be found between outside visitors and Indigenous communities that develop Indigenous tourism. Indigenous tourism development invites visitors into Chi-mei not only helps to increase the awareness of their village and their traditions and culture but also brings the community members more job opportunities and increases the economic capital of the community. Nevertheless, there may be some consequences, such as visitors being disrespectful toward Indigenous culture, interrupting festivals or residents. In addition, as mentioned in the above paragraphs, Chi-mei community also has complicated relationships with the local government and other businesses in the area. Prior to the establishment of the cultural rafting business in Chi-mei community, the rafting industry has been developing for decades in the area and the existing rafting businesses have also built connections with local politicians. Therefore, although Chi-mei community has been working closely with CIP and having supports from national cultural organisations, their cultural rafting business is not particularly welcomed in the local area but have to face server competitions and pressure.

The development of Indigenous tourism in Chi-mei community in Taiwan is not a rare case, especially as Murphy (1985) states, developing tourism within Indigenous communities not only brings in job opportunities and financial income, it also empowers Indigenous communities to have the power of controlling their own development and further to retain the benefits that come from displaying their cultural uniqueness. In the Indigenous communities that do not have a featured activity, it is common to see Indigenous communities to make the most of their neighbourhoods, from decoration on entrance gate, community maps and village-made crafts or products.

To include the entire village as a whole destination in developing Indigenous tourism, there are some common approaches which can be found in other examples of Indigenous community tourism (Chen, 2017). As mentioned before, village map is used not only to inform visitors about directions and locations but also to illustrate and highlight the aspects they wish to display to outsiders, for example, the tribal house or the cultural centre in Chi-mei community. With guided tour from the community, the interaction with tourists are encouraged, maps can be used to tell stories, explain concepts that only can be found in the community or the significance of certain places. With narratives, there is more chance that tourists would have vivid impression of their visit. Community map is also helpful when the community is having a festival, which is the period that attracts the most tourists but most of them may not be very familiar with the community.

Indigenous tourism shows the flexibility of playing various roles at the same time. For the Chi-mei community itself, it plays a social role on preserving the tradition and cultural, educating the younger generations and to solve the issues of unemployment and losing its member. On the other hand, it also represents the community to interact with tourists, taking the expectations from tourists into considerations, being responsive to the market and balancing the tension of preserving traditions and building facilities that satisfying the needs of a modern life. Commercialising Indigenous heritage in tourism also allows Indigenous people to reclaim the right to tell their own stories, to increase the awareness of their traditions, cultures and rights in the wider society and further to resolve the issue of maldistribution, such as unbalanced or injustice resources distribution among different groups of people (Debes, 2011). Mal-distribution is often connected with misrecognition, especially for marginalised

groups, such as Indigenous communities. As Fraser (2003) points out, misrecognition may not be the definite cause for maldistribution, but solving misrecognition could be helpful in solving maldistribution. Since the vicious cycle has been formed, Indigenous communities have been suffered from the consequences of negative labelling that could be the reasons of maldistribution. As a result, it is not surprising that Indigenous tourism can play different roles in Indigenous communities, it gives the opportunity to re-examine the existing understandings of Indigenous peoples and it also provides the potential to improve their economic status.

### **Challenges facing Indigenous community entrepreneurship**

It is still in the early stage to conclude whether Chi-mei community is a case of successful community entrepreneurship model that may be replicated in other Indigenous communities. Lai (2015) comments that there are some areas which could be improved for the tourism Chi-mei community to become more sustainable and make long-term profit. For instance, the existing main activities in the tourism only include visiting cultural centre and traditional buildings, tribal experiences and cultural rafting. With further innovation to improve contents and distinctive products, the number of return customers can also be increased. Considering the difficulties in accessibility, increasing the opportunities for their visitors to revisit would be the key for the success of Indigenous tourism in Chi-mei.

Similar to other Indigenous communities, the tourism development in Chi-mei is based on their distinctive characteristic of Indigenous cultures from the mainstream society. Tokenism is one of the common risks for developing Indigenous tourism, as it features the differences between the visited cultures and visitors', who might be interested in exoticism of the culture. In order to stand out from other cultures, the aspect of cultural adaptation is dealt lightly in Indigenous tourism. However, over-emphasising the traditional aspects of Indigenous cultures would minimise the representations on how the culture has changed by interacting with outsiders and could further lead to tokenism. As Hsu (2012) states, ethnic food is one of the biggest selling points in Indigenous tourism, however, as the interactions with the wider society, ethnic food culture might also lose its place in Indigenous communities. It could render into merely a performing culture when ethnic food is included in Indigenous tourism.

The risk of tokenism will need to be considered carefully especially when selling Indigenous artworks, crafts and products is included. As Lin (2004) observed, it needs strategies to encourage visitors to consume and purchase within Indigenous villages, as the tags 'native' or 'authentic' play important roles in Indigenous tourism, showing outside visitors how the Indigenous weaving techniques or the process of making traditional crafts can be useful. However, the common challenges Indigenous communities will face is the high cost of these products, and the competition of other similar but low-cost products from China (Chen, 2014). In order to modify the expectations of their visitors, the further strategy is to demonstrate the techniques in order to increase the consumption.

The relationship with other stakeholders is also one of the key issues when developing Indigenous tourism (Changpin, 2004). As mentioned before, apart from business competition, the conflicts between Chi-mei community and its local government also involve several other aspects. For example, the bureaucratic difficulties that can be caused by the conflicting power relationship between different governmental organisations. Especially when financial

resource is involved, conflicts can also happen between different communities within a local government administration (Huang, 2000). Instead of fully support a particular community, it needs to take every community into consideration and balance the distribution of resources (Huang, 1995). Therefore, it would be particularly useful to establish positive relationship with local government or local politicians, since their support may also lead to a better position for negotiation as well as further collaborations and resources.

Furthermore, although the development of Indigenous tourism has been increasing the employment rate and economic capitals in Indigenous communities, it is important for Indigenous tourism to be self-sustainable. By empowering Indigenous peoples with a better training in the techniques and knowledges they need in the industry could have them become less depend on the government and to sustaining the development.

## **Section 7: Conclusions**

The case in Honghe UNESCO WHS demonstrates that Indigenous entrepreneurship can be a proactive mean to counter tourism gentrification. Some long-term ethnic minority residents have responded to gentrification by discerning for themselves ways to improve their own socio-economic standings in accordance with their own aspirations, which often includes their desire to conserve their own cultural heritage and the sustainability of the rice terraces.

With sufficient encouragement, supports, and network, we witness innovative and entrepreneurial activities initiated by individual local residents and returning ethnic emigrants. When the ethnic minority residents feel empowered to appropriate tourism development, social equity will be served, so does the sustainability of the community and its natural and rice-terrace ecosystem.

The case in Taiwan focuses on the collective and community-centred approach to economic development in a remote Amis Indigenous tribe in the mountain of Taiwan Island. The case demonstrates a remarkable success of community based Indigenous tourism development under an appropriate level of supports provided by external institutions, the roles played key actors, and the mobilisation of the entire community.

It should be noted that both cases demonstrate a reverse trend of emigration when opportunities for economic activities improved in the land of Indigenous communities. The majority of Indigenous tourism destinations, but not exclusively, are similar to those of rural tourism in which they are often typified as being “built upon the rural world’s special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, ‘traditional’ societies and ‘traditional’ practices” (Lane, 1994, p.14). The sustainability of Indigenous tourism is often contingent on the conservation of its cultural heritage as well as the related built and natural environments (Chan et al., 2016; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). For a successful conservation, the Indigenous people, who embodies the culture and whose life depends on the land and the nature, is the foremost pre-condition.

Nonetheless, tourism development might be flourished or even be sustainable regardless of the level of "authenticity" or the rampant commodification of performing culture. For

examples, extensive constructed authenticity of ethnic Naxi's homestay in the deep gentrified Lijiang UNESCO WHS (Wang, 2007; Xu, 2012) and the popularity of staged events and festivals in Xishuangbanna (Yang & Wall, 2007), where both are also ethnic minority destinations located in Yunnan province.

Therefore, the key questions should not be merely about tourism development but also who the key beneficiaries are? The involvement of the Indigenous people themselves has to be an integral part for the success of this process. The intentions of the Indigenous people should be respected in any planning, design and implementation of Indigenous tourism. Colbourne (2017) even goes further in advocating self-determining rights of Indigenous people in shaping the nature, types, and development of tourism and tourism enterprises.

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