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Abstract

How can ethnic tourism alleviate rural poverty? Due to the difficulty of simultaneously expanding tourism while promoting pro-poor tourism, most villages traverse one of two developmental pathways: 1) ensuring an inclusive structure before expanding, or 2) expanding before building an inclusive structure. This study compares four comparable cases in Southwestern China to understand the politics behind the decision to choose different pathways, and the impact each pathways has on local residents. While the first pathway requires a careful balance to maintain a pro-poor structure as tourism volume expands, the second pathway presents apparently insurmountable barriers to poverty reduction due to the lack of political will to change the structures of successful tourism industries in ways that include the poor.

Keywords

Pro-poor tourism, Rural development, China, Power

Introduction

The Miao village of Shang Langde, in the remote county of Leishan (“Thunder Mountain”) within China's equally remote province of Guizhou, has been open to tourism since the late 1980s. Upon opening, the villagers collectively developed low-cost tourist facilities for foreign backpackers as well as for domestic tour groups arranged by the local government - a simple clean dormitory-style guest house and public toilets were enough to encourage some tourists to stay at least a few days to enjoy the local hospitality and culture. In the early days, the village did not even boast its own restaurant. Instead, villagers invited tourists to their homes to partake in local cuisine and potent wine for what was then a relatively modest sum (Oakes, 1998). By the late 2000s, resisting a wave of enthusiasm for rapid commercialization and scaling-up of tourism, the locals rebuffed offers to build fancier star-rated hotels, or to establish restaurants and shops featuring a wider variety of goods other than local Miao handicrafts. Indeed, local leaders went in the opposite direction, demolishing the centralized guest house in

favor of augmenting its "*nongjiale*" style tourism, in which local residents adapted their own houses to host tourists.

Just a two-hour drive away, the once sleepy Miao village of Xijiang, also located in Leishan county, Guizhou province, traversed a different pathway. In 2001, while this town could be found in some tourist guides, it boasted few tourist attractions and offered only a handful of places to stay. Starting in 2007, however, the town's tourism activities expanded rapidly. Star-rated hotels, restaurants, hipster bars selling Budweiser, and shops with items sourced from all over China and beyond rapidly proliferated to entice international and domestic tourists to stay and spend. The town was soon entrenched on the itinerary of most tour guides. Efforts focused on ensuring that the village was commercially successful in a centrally controlled way, such as building a guard post to collect high entrance fees. Interviews with those directly involved in tourism found that few were actually from that village. Many actual Xijiang residents reported receiving few benefits, and feeling discontent with - and disconnected from - the burgeoning tourist industry that supposedly featured their town and their culture.

These disparate experiences in what had been similar areas allow us to ask under what circumstances does rural-based tourism in areas with large proportions of ethnic minorities reduce poverty? What are the political and policy factors that affect decisions regarding the way tourism is developed? By comparing Shang Langde, Xijiang, and two other villages with varied development strategies and resulting impacts, this manuscript identifies two distinct developmental pathways for ethnic tourism in rural villages. Further, the manuscript aims to understand the circumstances under which a pathway is taken and the trade-offs of each pathway. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to filling in remaining gaps in our understanding of tourism's impact on development and poverty reduction.

Literature review

Because of the potential of the tourism industry to revitalize the countryside by boosting economic growth and providing jobs and other benefits to local, often poor, rural residents, experts have long debated the use of tourism as a pathway to reduce poverty, both in China (e.g., Chio, 2014; Lo et al., 2018; Wen & Tisdell, 2001; Xu, 1999) and throughout the developing world (Saarinen & Rogerson, 2014; Scheyvens & Russell, 2012; Tisdell & Roy, 1998; UN World Tourism Organization, 2002). This focus on poverty remains tangential to the research on the management of tourism, much of which barely mentions the goal of poverty reduction (e.g. Murphy & Murphy, 2004; Vanhove, 2005). In contrast, among those for whom poverty is a concern, the early debate divided academics into polarized positions: those who saw pro-poor tourism as a panacea versus those who rejected it as a Trojan horse designed to spread the principles of neoliberalism. Such extreme views of the potential for tourism to reduce poverty are not useful to understanding a varied reality – for either would expect uniform results, not variation. Fortunately, even the more recent studies with relatively clear-cut conclusions, both optimistic (e.g., Jiang, DeLacy, Mkiramweni, & Harrison, 2011; Lo et al., 2018) and pessimistic (e.g., Pleumarom, 2012; Biddulph, 2015) draw caveated conclusions, leaving room for contingent results.

While more nuanced than some of the early research, the researchers examining the relationship between tourism and poverty over the past dozen years or so tend to coalesce into two camps: those that emphasize the business sense of pro-poor tourism (the "profit camp"), and those who emphasize the structural barriers to ensuring that poor residents from the area actually benefit (the "structures camp"). It is important to remember that these are camps made up of scholars who focus on tourism and poverty - most books on the management of tourism sites make little mention of these concerns. First, members of the profit camp, even as they largely reject the assumptions held by earlier researchers that tourism-sparked economic growth automatically trickles down to the poor, maintain their focus on the economic benefits that rural-based tourism tends to provide to the poor (Ashley, Roe, & Goodwin, 2001; Croes, 2014; Duffy, 2002; Kim, Song, & Pyun, 2016; Roe, Urquhart, & Bigg, 2004).

When tourism industries located in poor rural areas with tourism resources are both profitable and growing, then such industries typically generate numerous employment opportunities for local villagers (e.g., Croes & Rivera, 2015; Kim et al., 2016; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). This in turn helps to diversify local areas, spark rural development, and provide an alternative to migration (e.g., Li, Yu, Chen, Hu, & Cui, 2016; Lo et al., 2018; Panyik, Costa, & Rátz, 2011).

Even outside of job growth, investment in tourism infrastructure can connect villagers to the larger economy, a boon to local agriculture (Hall, 2007; Li et al., 2016; Oraboune, 2008). Growth can also increase tax revenues, which can be invested in welfare and development projects (Jamieson, Goodwin, & Edmunds, 2004; Schilcher, 2007; Snyman, 2012; Zeng, Carter, De Lacy, & Bauer, 2005). Researchers in this camp maintain that the tourism industry must remain sensitive to the poor; indeed, a range of manuals to industry have also been proffered to this end (e.g., Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) & UN World Tourism Organization, 2010; World Tourism Organization, International Trade Centre, & Enhanced Integrated Framework, 2017). Nevertheless, the profit camp recognizes that "tourism business remains a business" (Ashley & Haysom, 2006, p. 1), and pro-poor tourism must "work within the constraints of 'commercial viability,'" (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007, p. 37). Because pro-poor tourism cannot exist without a viable tourism industry, this group is oriented towards profits first, while the inclusion of the poor and ensuring they benefit becomes a vital but secondary issue.

By contrast, members of the structures camp focus on factors that can facilitate or block locals from reaping tourism's benefits. Pessimists among the structures camp argue that political and market power largely preclude the poor from benefiting from tourism, with some even dismissing the "pro-poor tourism" ideal as being captured by international and local political and economic elites which use the trappings of pro-poor tourism to justify inherently exploitative relationships (e.g., Bianchi, 2009; Biddulph, 2015; Scheyvens, 2009). By contrast, more optimistic members of the structures camp proffer solutions that should help overcome local structures that prevent poor people from benefiting from tourism. Such scholars emphasize empowerment of the poor (e.g., Aref, Redzuan, Emby, & Gill, 2009; Ndivo & Cantoni, 2016) and the promotion of local participation in the development of local tourism (Feng, 2008; Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006; Ying & Zhou, 2007). Other countermeasures to structural barriers include ensuring the tourist areas remain small in scale (Wheeler, 1992), sourcing inputs such as food and labor from local producers l(Schilcher, 2007) and promoting local small businesses (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Lo et al., 2018; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Because many locals receive little formal education, overcoming structural barriers often requires equipping the poor with necessary skills and knowledge (e.g., Medina-Muñoz, Medina-Muñoz, & Gutiérrez-Pérez, 2016). Researchers from the structures camp recognize that profits are important, but they remain focused on ensuring that rural-based tourism is and remains pro-poor.

Are the profit and structures camps mutually exclusive? Given the difficulties in achieving success on any dimensions combined with the difficulties of getting any powerful stakeholder to care about the welfare of the less powerful, academics that enthusiastically implore corporates to focus on the "triple bottom line" of profit, sustainability and poverty reduction (Elkington, 2013) sounds naive. While compatible in theory, simultaneously promoting profits while reducing barriers to the inclusion of the poor has rarely worked in practice. The literature is full of examples of pro-poor sites failing commercially, as well as instances in which pro-poor tourism initiatives fail to benefit - or even undermine the survival strategies of - the poor. This apparent dilemma has led many researchers to conclude that the two priorities are difficult, or even impossible, to manage simultaneously (Schilcher, 2007). As one set of researchers concluded, "In tourism, however, altruism plays second fiddle to profits in what is inherently a commercial activity," (Chok et al., 2007, p. 51).

Yet the success of pro-poor tourism requires somehow reconciling these two priorities. Doing so in turn necessitates understanding multiple factors that influence whether a particular tourist site can be both commercially successful and pro-poor. To this end, some researchers have incorporated many of the recent observations and arguments about pro-poor tourism into theoretical frameworks that can be used to organize and

promote what until now has been a chaotic hodgepodge of research. In forming one of the more useful of such frameworks, Zhao and Ritchie (2007) combine micro and macro environments, six stakeholders, three anti-poverty tourism "themes," and three "determinants" that potentially lead to poverty alleviation, into a dynamic framework. While contributing useful thoughts about the relationship between these factors, these researchers are explicitly establishing a research agenda with which to better understand the interaction between these proposed factors.

Similarly, Winters, Corral, and Mora's (2013) framework incorporates several sets of factors, including economic and other external forces, destination assets and institutions, tourism products and markets, and the "desired results" that derive the impact these factors have on poverty, employment and income. Winters et al. rightfully criticize other models for ignoring the "inclusion of poor households," (p. 184) and are careful to add "substantial benefits to the poor" as one of their indicators of desired results. Like Zhao and Ritchie (2007), even as Winters and his co-authors discuss some broad issues related to ensuring that the poor are included and benefit from tourism, they are lighter on substance, explicitly establishing this framework to structure a research agenda (p. 198).

A third framework, one that comes closest to combining the two camps of profit and structure, was presented in a tourism development manual published jointly by the United Nations World Tourism Organization and Netherlands Development Organization (2010). This framework combines two factors, "Volume of spending" and "Proportion of spending reaching the poor," that parallel the 'Profit' and 'Structure' theories respectively. The manual's authors do propose a limited number of ways to increase the volume of spending for projects that generate little revenue, as well as ideas to increase the proportion of profits channeled to the poor for those projects that exclude the poor. Yet, the manual's advice (see p. 36) is either vague and tautological (it suggests "increasing the proportion of spending that reaches the poor," through "increasing participation levels by the poor" and increasing pro-poor tourism by establishing "a community-based tourism initiative,") or likely counterproductive (such as the manual's suggestion of promoting resorts, which have long been shown (e.g., Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Tisdell, 2001) to exclude the poor. Thus, this framework provides little concrete or useful analysis on how to ensure that tourism benefits the poor.

Taken together, despite decades of work, the research on the causal link between tourism and poverty reduction remains in its infancy. In a sentiment affirmed repeatedly (e.g., Gascón, 2015; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012; Winters et al., 2013) one research team concluded,

The tourism-poverty alleviation link, however, is still not well established partly due to a paucity of appropriate evaluation approaches that are capable of simultaneously providing … a deeper understanding of an [anti-poverty tourism intervention's] mechanisms, the complexity surrounding the operational processes and evidence of its impacts. (Phi, Whitford, & Reid, 2018, p. 1930).

Filling in this theoretical gap remains an urgent priority for those who hope to attack the scourge of poverty by creating opportunities for the poor to participate in tourism.

Methodology and case selection

One way forward is a comparative study that focuses on cases with varied degrees of success and failure while holding constant a range of factors such as macro-political and economic environment, culture, and connection to tourist and other related markets. This would allow researchers to isolate purportedly key factors to better understand the impact of tourism on a range of indicators. To this end, this manuscript presents a comparative study of four villages within Guizhou that have attempted to undertake ethnic tourism as a means of reducing poverty.

In 1992, Guizhou became the first province in China to link ethnic tourism to poverty reduction, particularly among the numerous ethnic minority villages situated amidst the mountain valleys (China Tourism Yearbook, 1996, p. 186). As part of China's Open Up the West campaign in the year 2000, many ethnic minority villages in Guizhou have since been undergoing extensive makeovers to make the village more attractive to both domestic and international tourists (Chio, 2014), so as to promote urbanization and tourism development (Lai, 2002), and the tourism sector was forecast to make an "increasingly large contribution" to Guizhou's economy between 2006 and 2020 (Strategic Environmental Assessment Study, 2007). The China National Tourism Administration lauded the strategy of using ethnic tourism to increase rural incomes as "an ideally balanced socioeconomic formula that could increase rural incomes while simultaneously boosting urban leisure," (Chio, 2014), with central leaders emphasizing cultural tourism as a mechanism to close the rural-urban developmental gap (China Briefing, 2014; Feng, 2008; Su, 2011; Yang, 2012). Yet, despite its potential, the development and impact of ethnic tourism has been puzzlingly inconsistent – this even among sites that are geographically proximate and culturally similar (Chio, 2014; Ying & Zhou, 2007).

The four villages examined in this manuscript were selected based on two key criteria of geographic proximity and the potential for ethnic tourism. As indicated in Fig. 1, all but Pingzheng are located in Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Prefecture, an autonomous prefecture due to its majority of Miao and Dong ethnicities, with more than 40% Miao population and 30% Dong population. Pingzheng is one of the last remaining sites of a tiny ethnic minority known as the Gelao, a people of dwindling ranks that have received no small amount of attention from scholars and others committed to preserving their culture and language. All four areas have rich cultural features that could potentially attract tourism.

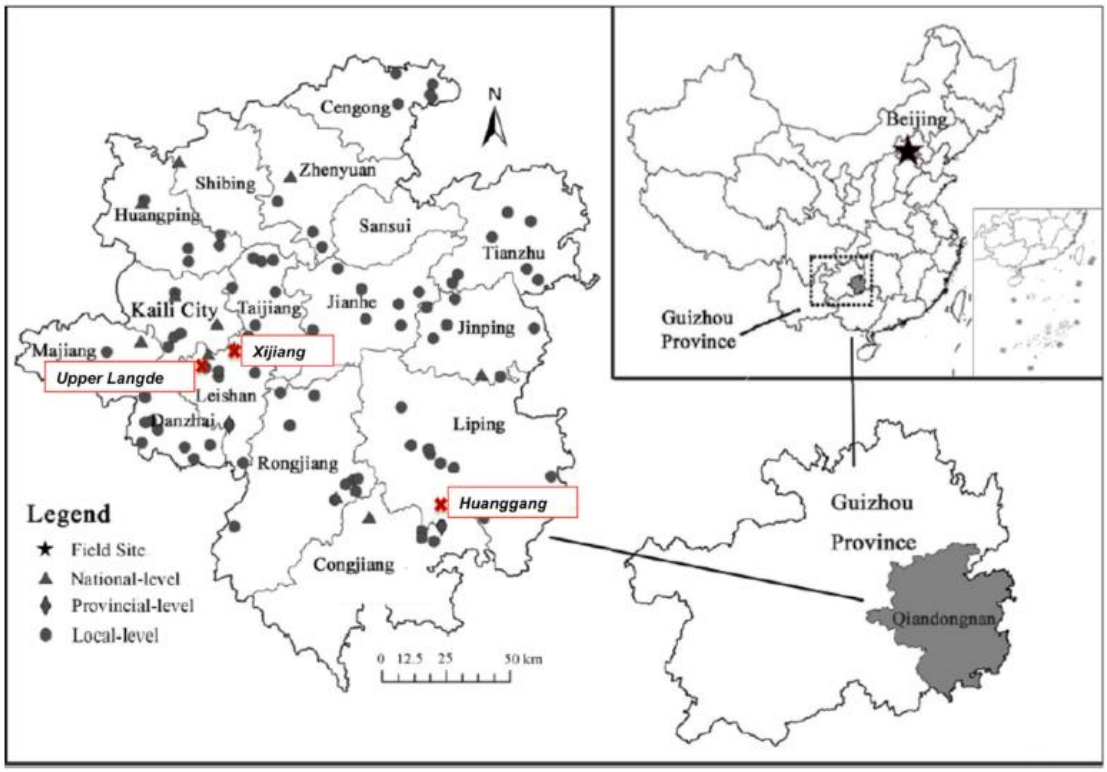

Fig. 1. Map of Qiandongnan prefecture, Guizhou province, China. (Adapted from Li et al., 2016 and [source withheld]).

While we lack village- or township-level data needed to measure poverty or rural incomes, even perfunctory observation reveals that the villages studied here are far from wealthy. Moreover, an analysis of county-level data reveals that three of the four tourism areas are located in some of the poorest regions of Guizhou province, itself a poor province. The official poverty rate of Leishan county, which contains Xijiang and Shang Langde, is 20.8% (rank of 68 of 86 counties), whereas Liping, which contains Huanggang, is 19.9 (rank of 62). Zunyi county, the home of Pingzheng (ironically, the least successful case), is quite wealthy. This county, which the central government recently converted from a county to an urban district of the nearby prefecture-level Zunyi municipality, is ranked 17 of 86 county-level units for poverty. Nevertheless, this area's poverty rate is 6.7%, and 80,000 of its households and 105 of its villages have been declared to be poor. Pingzheng township is likely home to many of these. The primary economic activity of each of the villages has traditionally been subsistence agriculture – primarily rice and rape seed. Here too, Pingzheng is an exception. Because the area is close to the famous alcohol producing county of Maotai; some farmers have been able to produce sorghum for those efforts.

Data needed to test the aforementioned hypotheses were gathered from all four villages through qualitative methods, using ethnographic observations and unstructured interviews. Three of the four areas were visited in 2004, Shang Langde and Huanggang were revisited in the early 2010s, and all of the four sites were visited in 2016. In each area, we spoke with local residents, both those who participated in tourism and those who did not. Where possible, we interviewed local officials and other leaders, asking them about their strategies and approaches to developing tourism in these regions. Prior to visiting each village, the authors conducted secondary research that revealed that each of the four villages had been engaged in developing ethnic tourism based upon the cultural capital of their heritage.

While we visited a broader range of ethnic minority villages in Guizhou with a variety of tourist sites, we focus on these four cases because they represent four overall types of villages we visited. Some of the areas we visited, such as the Gelao village of Pingzheng, failed to attract significant tourism. Some had tourism industries structured in ways to exclude poor local residents from the benefits - case in point being the Miao village of Xijiang. In a third type of area, represented by the Dong village of Huanggang, locals structured tourism such that they benefit directly – yet few tourists came, and then only during certain peak seasons. In a fourth type of area, as seen in the Miao village of Shang Langde, tourism grew, and the locals were able to capture most of these benefits.

In each village we visited, we conducted semi-structured interviews and firsthand observations aimed to explore nine specific factors in each of these places:

1. the profitability of the ethnic tourism industry;
2. the viability of the tourism industry as an alternative to urban migration;
3. the composition of the ethnic tourism industry worker population;
4. local vs external distribution of ethnic tourism industry workers across key sectors (formal);
5. local vs external distribution of ethnic tourism industry workers across key sectors (informal);
6. the decision-making power of local vs foreign pertaining to ethnic tourism industry;
7. trade-offs made to accommodate tourism development (on a village level);
8. benefits from tourism development (on a village level);
9. local opinions regarding the ethnic tourism industry

We contrast Huanggang and Xijiang with Shang Langde based on these criteria so as to analyze their differences and the role of different stakeholders in shaping each development path taken, which led to differing effectiveness in poverty reduction (see Table 1). Implications for the newer or less developed tourism development cases are addressed in the last section.

Table 1. Key differences between Huanggang, Xi Jiang, and Shang Langde across key parameters.

Parameter	Shang Langde	Xijiang
Profitability of the tourism industry	Annual tourism earnings see increase from RMB 5676 to RMB 526,500 (1986 to 2009 respectively) Tourism volume increases substantially from 947 to 238,100 (1986 to 2008) Interviewees who own *nongjiale* that we spoke to typically earn 50,000–60,000 yuan a year (80 yuan/night for a double room, mid-sized *nongjiale* typically has 11 rooms) Making and selling local handicrafts are done in conjunction with farming and housework (predominantly female industry) and daily earnings are typically 20–30 yuan, for 1–2 h of sewing and half a day of selling Restaurant meals are approximately 25 yuan per person, created with locally grown produce	Annual tourism profits see exponential increase from RMB 332,400 to RMB 4.3 billion (2006 to 2014 respectively) Tourism volume reached 8.51 million in 2014 due to establishment of highway connecting prefecture capital Kaili and Leishan county that passed by Xijiang Most expensive hotel in the village costs 320–380 yuan/night for a double room and has approximately 15 rooms Employment in hotels and restaurants within the village fetch renumeration of approximately 2000–3000 yuan per month
Viability of tourism industry as alternative to urban migration	Tourism was a viable alternative, reversing brain drain as young adults, who had attended high schools and universities in the cities returned to the village to contribute and further develop tourism	Working in the tourism industry is a potential alternative as occupations like cleaners and entertainers open up Local villagers with more capital and education could return to the village and set up small businesses catering for tourists
Composition of ethnic tourism industry workers	Locals are the predominant majority, with exceptions of other minorities that have married into the village	Mix of locals and foreign owners from other wealthier districts in China (e.g. Hunan, Guiyang, Shandong) participate in the ethnic tourism industry
Local vs external distribution of ethnic tourism industry workers across key sectors (formal)	Majority of businesses are locally-owned *nongjiale* offering both accommodations and meals. Their enterprises are typically family-run, and children that have picked up skills from outside the village at university or other jobs come back to support the local industry (e.g. university graduate manages online bookings; cook comes back to work for family *nongjiale*) Locals are encouraged to participate as a means of increasing their household income Local government offers substantial subsidies to the poor for *nongjiale* supplies (e.g. beds, bowls, tables)	Majority of businesses are externally-owned, especially hotels, cafes, and bars. These enterprises are typically owned by families and run based on employer-employee relationships. Some of these employ locals to be cleaners or entertainers Positions open are of limited scope as hotels are predominantly set up by foreigners who perceive locals to lack the necessary skills (e.g. managing online bookings or welcoming guests) for increased participation Local villagers who have some degree of capital are able to pool their funds and set up independent stores, but these will be placed in direct competition with more fancy establishments run by owners with deeper pockets Other local villagers who are able to benefit are those that live by the main road are benefit coincidentally, or have received university education and are thus equipped to capitalise on existing opportunities
Local vs external distribution of ethnic tourism industry workers across key sectors (informal)	Majority of small vendors are locals, selling handicrafts to tourists as they alight from buses or after they enjoy performances in the square Other informal jobs and services include authentic performances at the village square by the Miao people, and farming for the *nongjiale* restaurants	Informal economy built around tourism exists — and locals can participate in sporadic employment such as planting flowers to beautify landscape for 120 RMB/day Other informal jobs include running a transport service

Decision-making power of local vs foreign pertaining to tourism industry	The local government and village leader take charge of tourism development within the village, championing sustainable development, local engagement, and community-led efforts to better develop tourism (e.g. paving the village square for performances) Encouraged diffusion of tourism revenue among all villagers by prohibiting enterprising locals from building by the road, thus encouraging visitors to look around and explore the village more thoroughly	Ticket revenues from entrance form a significant portion of the local tourism industry revenue, estimated by locals to amount to 300,000–400,000 RMB per day No transparency as to how ticket funds are used and suspicion around whether funds are used in ways advantageous to locals (e.g. to build roads) Limited decision-making power on part of locals in sale and purchase of land as locals are forced to sell at pithy remuneration rates of 20,000 RMB per mu instead of stipulated 210,000 RMB for paddy fields
Local opinion towards tourism	Overall positive orientation towards the tourism industry as an alternative to farming while encouraging protection of local culture	Mixed feelings about the tourism industry. While the option to return to the village and work or open a small business is appreciated, some sense of disgruntlement towards the type of engagement available to locals (predominantly employment by foreign owners). Limited re-distribution of profits from entrance fees a key source of disgruntlement for the villagers. Locals feel excluded from reaping the economic benefits of tourism while bearing the costs of increased land prices, environmental degradation, and cultural maintenance. Dissatisfaction over issue of entrance fees has spilled over into protests in 2014 demanding for more redistribution.
Trade-offs made to accommodate tourism on a village level	Construction of new buildings have to appear traditional and made from wood, even if they are internally concrete as they village is a protected area Some degree of congestion from tourist arrivals To a certain extent, loss of Miao language due to tourism as learning putonghua becomes more practical for engagement in the tourism industry. Especially relevant in Miao culture as the language is verbally transmitted and has no written form	Relocation of village secondary school in 2014 forced parents to send their children to the country secondary school Loss of agricultural land for some villagers to make room for rapid tourism development Compulsory land sales at low and unfair prices Increasing difficulty for locals to purchase homes in the village — shrinking home sizes per person as families live together Environmental degradation from rubbish and air pollution
Benefits from tourism on a village level	Local ownership and enhancement of internal infrastructure (e.g. paving roads to their homes from the main road and village square for tourists) Reversal of brain drain as graduates return to the village to support and drive local industry Slow and steady pace allowed tourism to grow while keeping culture authentic	Households are rewarded via a bonus scheme for preserving an authentic look and feel that can add up to 4000–5000 yuan per month More formal employment available within the village Increased connectivity to the rest of China via roads and highways

Results and discussion

The four case studies presented in this paper show four different models of ethnic minority tourism development in rural villages. Despite many similarities among the four villages – same province, similar strategy of using their ethnic minority cultural capital for tourism - the way tourism has developed in each of the villages has been radically different, with different resulting poverty reduction outcomes. Fig. 2 presents the two potential pathways in which tourism can develop. While fraught with challenges, the first pathway - establishing an inclusive structure before earning sufficient profit - reaches the ideal top-right quadrant in Fig. 2, where sufficient profit is shared by local villagers, thereby achieving poverty reduction. The other pathway - earning sufficient profit and then establishing an inclusive structure - requires significant political will, and is thus less likely to reach the ideal

quadrant. The trade-offs and challenges of each pathway are analyzed through the four case studies, each representative of a quadrant in Fig. 2.

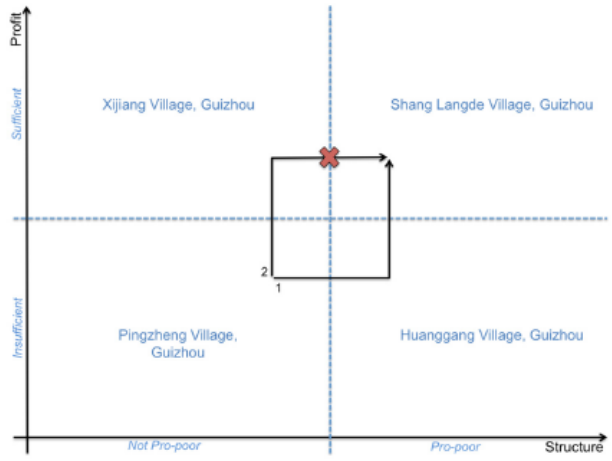

Fig. 2. Framework that combines profit and structure, with the four cases of ethnic minority tourism villages.

Type 1: Traversing the Balanced Path (Upper Langde)

Shang Langde Miao village (上郎德苗寨; Upper Langde) was designated in 1987 to be one of the prefecture's first seven ethnic tourist villages (Oakes, 1998). Located in Leishan county, the UNWTO listed Shang Langde as a "world-class rural tourism village". It is still seen as a model of ethnic tourism, (Chen, Li, & Li, 2017) and Chinese government agencies studying tourism development in ethnic minority villages frequently visit (interview SL12). Despite being one of the first few villages in Southwest China to open its doors to tourists in the 1980s (interview SL04), it remains popular among tourists. In this way, tourism has supplemented the income for its villagers. Because of its sufficient profits and successful poverty reduction, Shang Langde illustrates one pathway through which ethnic minority villages can reach the model's ideal top-right quadrant.

Although at first the area saw a relatively modest number of visitors, the elected village committee pressed on and encouraged participation. As the village gradually became better known, the increasing number of visitors and the incentive of higher incomes drew more villagers to participate, creating a virtuous cycle. This can be seen in the exponential increase in tourism earnings from RMB 5676 in 1986 to RMB 526,500 in 2009, as well as tourist arrival numbers from 947 tourists in 1986 to a peak of 238,100 tourists in 2008 (He & Yang, 2012).

Tourism generated many opportunities for the villagers, who were in the mid-1980s almost universally poor. These opportunities included opening their own *nongjiale* with government subsidies (interview SL11), performing in the Miao dances, and making and selling handicrafts to tourists (Chen et al., 2017). Local residents used tourism to supplement their incomes from farming, thus reducing the need to migrate to earn cash incomes. In fact, while many rural areas in China experienced brain drain, the situation in Shang Langde was reversed. Many young adults, who had attended high schools and universities in the cities, returned to the village to contribute to the further development of tourism, such as managing *nongjiale* room booking websites (interviews SL10, SL11, SL14).

Shang Langde's success is largely due to its pro-poor structure (rightward shift in Fig. 2) first developed in the nascent stages of tourism development, that then allowed for a further increase in the volume of tourism (upward shift). From the beginning, the elected village committee drove the development of tourism and held the decision-making power, giving local villagers the opportunity to take ownership and have a say in how best to develop

tourism in their village. The villagers established an informal and sometimes tense division of labor, with the county and provincial governments providing marketing, including organizing and managing tour groups in exchange for a large cut of the profits. But the local residents and local government managed the tourism site itself, even rejecting the participation of external developers in favor of using local labor to carry rocks from the riverside to build stone paths and the performance square (SL 14; Oakes, 1998). Even when the village became more popular with tourists, the villagers "unanimously" rejected the offer of external developers for large-scale but extractive development. They chose instead to take ownership via 'Langde Miao Village Pacts' that protected the traditional cultural objects and enforced measures to maintain the traditional look of the village with wooden houses on stilts (Chen et al., 2017). While early critics pointed out that tourism eroded the Miao culture (Oakes, 1998), few dispute that tourism benefited local residents economically.

Thus, the initial rightward shift through its pro-poor structure provided the vital foundation upon which the villagers could build, holding onto their decision-making powers to have a say in how best to then achieve a sufficient level of profit as illustrated by the upward shift in this model. As a result, Shang Langde was able to reach the ideal quadrant: sufficient commercial success that includes most rural residents.

Type 2: top-down development with little participation (Xijiang)

Also located in Leishan county in Qiandongnan Autonomous Prefecture, Xijiang Thousand Household Miao Village (西江千户苗寨) is a key location for tourists to visit to explore ethnic minority culture, with daily Miao dance and *lusheng* (芦笙, a traditional Miao instrument) performances, shops selling Miao 'traditional' handicrafts, and terraced wooden houses built in the 'traditional' Miao style. Young Chinese tourists are also drawn to the numerous cafes and hostels available, and the site's convenient location makes it an ideal short holiday away from the city. Xijiang comprises six natural villages, with more than 1000 households (Li et al., 2016), and is thus a grand-looking village nestled in the mountains with many well-built roads and beautiful wooden houses, largely in traditional Miao style. It was listed as a national-level historic cultural town in 2007, and was selected as an AAAA-level tourist destination in 2011. While Xijiang is often touted as successful, with high tourism profits (China National Tourism Administration, 2016), the style of tourism opened there has largely excluded poor local residents.

Despite opening to tourism as early as 1994, a visit to Xijiang as late as 2003 revealed that there was little tourist traffic and only one small guest house to receive visitors. This changed dramatically in 2006 when the county government earmarked the village for rapid tourism development, enabling Xijiang to obtain its tourism accolades within a short span of a few years. As a result, tourist profits increased exponentially, from a mere RMB 332,400 in 2006 to RMB 140,000,000 in 2009, largely due to the RMB 100 entrance tickets introduced in 2009 (He & Yang, 2012). Tourism increased yet again in 2014 when a highway connecting the prefecture capital Kaili with Leishan county passed by Xijiang - 8.51 million tourists visited in that year, generating an income of RMB 4.3 billion (Li et al., 2016).

However, secondary literature, firsthand observation, and numerous on-site semi-structured interviews indicate that because tourism developed so rapidly, the low-income villagers in Xijiang received little opportunity to benefit from tourism development. Many local residents felt betrayed that the revenue from the sale of entrance tickets was not distributed as promised, with only 10.5% of receipts being shared, compared to the promised 15% (Li et al., 2016; interviews XJ05, XJ09, XJ13). This sparked a 2014 protest that destroyed the ticketing barriers, allowing tourists to enter the village for free. In response, the local government started distributing more money to villagers participating in tourism and through prizes during Miao New Year celebrations (interviews XJ05, XJ09, XJ13), in exchange for ending – and hushing up – the protest (interview XJ13). The betrayal was compounded by the insufficient land compensation, as farmers' compensation for the nearly 12 ha of agricultural land acquired for tourism development was disappointingly meager (Li et al., 2016). In one typical exchange, one interviewee received less than one-tenth of the promised compensation (20,000 RMB per mu instead of the supposed RMB

210,000 per mu) when the family's agricultural land was partially acquired by the government. The government then sold the land at RMB 20 million per mu to outside businessmen to build summer villas (interview XJ02).

Not only were the local residents, who even as late as the early 2000s were largely poor, unfairly compensated, they were not included in the opportunities generated by tourism development. Locals failed to establish *nongjiale* style housing due to the large-scale tourist hotels established by outside developers. While some local residents benefitted by renting their land to these developers (interviews XJ03, XJ05, XJ07, XJ09, XJ12), they did not benefit as much or as directly as their counterparts in Shang Langde. Most of the official shops, restaurants, and bars along the main street are similarly owned and managed by outside businesspeople, who rarely hire locals. There is a perspective that locals lacked the necessary skills to help out in the tourism industry, echoed by both hotel owners ("they don't have the sense for accessing the internet and managing online bookings, or the knack for hospitality" (XJ13)) and locals ("my children are working outside because they don't have the skills needed to be part of the tourism industry here" (XJ05)). At first locals participated by establishing informal businesses, such as food tents or small shops, along the main road. Yet the village committee considered these to be unsightly, and forced their removal whenever important government officials visited (interview XJ07). As one research team underscored, tourism development in Xijiang reflects "an imbalance … in the villagers' participation rates in tourism development and the distribution of tourism revenues," (Chen et al., 2017, p. 276).

Why did Xijiang's tourism develop in a manner so unlike that of Shang Langde? When tourism in Shang Langde began, Guizhou's provincial government adopted a development strategy that focused on tourism development as a way to reduce poverty. Whereas neighboring provinces boosted their GDPs by developing large-scale tourism sites, Guizhou focused on small-scale tourism structured to allow poor people to participate [source withheld]. However, when Xijiang was developed, Guizhou's strategy changed to focus on rapid development. Under this context, while Shang Langde's local residents were represented by the village committee that drove tourism development, Xijiang's tourism developed in a top-down manner with the county government and external corporations as the main drivers. Under pressure to show results, county government officials led to the initial upward shift to maximize commercialization, but largely stymied the subsequent rightward shift towards a pro-poor structure. Xijiang is thus located in the model's top-left quadrant.

The development of tourism in villages like Xijiang underscores that, through government support, private investment, and top-down initiative, shifting a village to the 'high profit' top-left quadrant can be relatively straightforward. However, subsequently shifting to the upper-right-hand quadrant requires opening up the tourism sector to more participation from locals. These efforts reinforce themselves by augmenting the powerful position of already powerful actors: the government receives increased revenues, and wealthy outside entrepreneurs capture profit. These powerful forces, in turn, entrench the initial style of development, all but blocking a subsequent rightward shift to the ideal quadrant. Therefore, the political will needed to restructure the tourist site does not currently exist. Indeed, Xijiang receives little criticism in Guizhou, where it is perceived as a successful model of tourism development. Moreover, this impression is consistent with the high levels of tourist visits and tourist receipts, compared to the smaller scale and lower revenue model generated by Shang Langde's model. Both the village committee and the county government have directly opposed attempts of local residents of Xijiang to participate directly in the tourism industry. In conclusion, although Xijiang's initial shift to the upper-left-hand quadrant was fairly straightforward, it lacks a realistic scenario to make the shift to the ideal upper-right-hand quadrant.

Type 3: expansion of tourism blocked by lack of capability (Huanggang)

Huanggang (黄岗侗寨) is a relatively small Dong minority administrative village consisting of 350 households in two natural villages located deep in the mountains of Liping county, also in Qiandongnan Autonomous Prefecture (Li et al., 2016). Like most Dong and Miao villages, the terraced wood houses and paddy fields flanked by the mountains combine to paint a picturesque landscape. Together with its neighboring village Xiaohuang (小黄侗)

six kilometers away, Huanggang is renowned for its Dong folk music and international class singers. Huanggang is also the Dong village with the most number of drum towers (鼓楼), breathtaking architectural marvels that are traditionally used for large group gatherings, with bonfires on cold winter nights.

Huanggang has been open to tourism since the early 2000s (interviews HG2004-01, HG2004-06, 2004), yet tourism arrivals have been consistently low. Although Huanggang had previously experienced rapid development like that in Xijiang in the early 2000s, this slowed down as locals became jaded with how funds from this top-down development were not noticeably shared with the locals, who responded by refusing to sing for tourists (interviews HG2004-04, HG2004-05, 2004). Visits in 2003 revealed very little tourist traffic, and clear signs that locals were jaded by the lack of compensation. The village had but one guest house and while charming, had little in the way of tourist activities.

Subsequently, tourism was reignited, this time in a bottom-up manner. To ensure that the current development of tourism takes place in a pro-poor manner, local villager Teacher Wu played a key role. As the village's first university graduate, he had a dream to develop tourism to improve the lives of his fellow villagers. To achieve this, he built his own *nongjiale* to attract larger groups of tourists, made connections with tour guides in the cities thereby increasing awareness of his village on tour itineraries, secured the help of fellow Mandarin-speaking return migrants, and provided informal opportunities for locals to participate in tourism by selling vegetable and meat produce, as well as their rice wine (interviews HG03, HG05, HG07, HG08, RA02). Locals could participate easily by setting up their own small *nongjiale* with just one or two rooms (interviews HG03, HG08) and selling rice wine, duck eggs, or handwoven cloth (interviews HG02, HG03). Since these utilize readily available resources, locals can participate in the informal economy through widely available opportunities and at low investment risk.

However, these initiatives have not been especially successful in attracting consistent tourists. Huanggang receives large groups of tourists, but only during three annual Miao festival dates - the Taiguan festival (抬官节) on the 7th and 8th of the 1st month and the Hantian festival (喊天节) on the 15th day of the 6th month in the Lunar New Year. During these periods, tourists overwhelm the village's facilities. All the rooms in the hotels and *nongjiale* are filled and tourists sleep in tents on the main road. However, during the rest of the year, Huanggang is quiet. A modest but steady stream of visitors come, but most just spend a few hours roaming around the village, and rarely stay for even a night. Actual infrastructural and amenities development remain limited (the main dirt road had been replaced by a tar road, and some dirt paths are now stone paths), leaving the village in its original and natural state. The scale of tourism development in Huanggang thus remains small. This feast-or-famine style of tourism is insufficient to allow local residents to rely solely on tourist receipts for their livelihoods.

This recent attempt to stimulate tourism can thus be viewed as a reset button to develop tourism once again – but this time ensuring that locals have decision-making power with the support of the government. As such, Huanggang has developed a pro-poor tourism structure (rightward shift) but has not yet made sufficient profits (no upward shift). To be sure, shifting to the upper-right-hand quadrant would be challenging, requiring significantly more resources and support. Despite their efforts, the locals lack the capacity and know-how to reach further flung markets and attract additional demand. Governments have the capacity to fulfil this function – they did so for Shang Langde in the village's early stages of development. The chances of successfully doing so in Huanggang are low. Not only are the villagers mistrustful of significant government participation based on past experience, but the provincial strategy for tourism development has also shifted away from supporting small-scale tourism. In 2013, the local government provided some support for tourism development by investing in Huanggang's main road and drum towers (Li et al., 2016).

These efforts notwithstanding, more needs to be done to enable tourism to become profitable, while ensuring that tourism development remains largely driven by locals. Two key factors are especially lacking: a unique brand name for Huanggang and more Mandarin-speaking locals (Chio, 2014; interview HG03). Due to its proximity to

the more famous Zhaoxing (interview HG04) and Xiaohuang Dong villages that are propped by their superior advertising and more frequent performances (Li et al., 2016). Huanggang seems quieter and less attractive to tourists. However, significantly enhancing its reputation, investing in additional performances and other tourist draws, and teaching the locals Mandarin is beyond the capabilities of local residents, even with the enthusiastic support of Teacher Wu.

Although these barriers are substantial, they are primarily issues of capacity and inertia, not political resistance. Thus, they are arguably less daunting than the barriers hindering Xijiang's rightward shift to a pro-poor structure. Already, most villagers are more willing to support increasing tourism and to heed rules related to maintaining an authentic and hygienic look for the village (interview HG07). In short, Huanggang's current challenge is channeling government support to become profitable, while retaining the industry's bottom-up villager-led development.

Type 4: implications for newly established tourist cites (Pingzheng)

Pingzheng (平正乡) is a Gelao minority village located in the wealthier Zunyi county (now called Bozhou District) within Zunyi prefecture, famous for its Maotai wine and rich Long March history. Pingzheng's tourism development began just a few years ago, and offers limited job opportunities for the locals. Instead, many working adults have chosen to migrate in search of better jobs, leaving their elderly parents to care for their young children. County government support for Pingzheng comes in many forms, including the resettlement of residences from faraway mountain lodges to houses by the river, as well as establishing a number of tourism attractions, such as the Gelao-themed museum and resorts. Yet, most of the initiative has come from an inspiring township village secretary, a local Gelao committed to protecting and promoting Gelao culture.

The surrounding area has seen increased visitations. First, during a six-month period from late spring to early autumn, Chongqing residents escape the summer heat in their homes for the “natural air conditioning” and scenic Karst geography of Zunyi. Second, “Red Tourism” has increased, as various government organs organize semi-voluntary groups to visit sites related to the heroic Long March. Yet, despite the increased tourism in Zunyi prefecture, and despite efforts to develop tourism, few tourists or even tour guides know about the village. Despite the summer interest, tourism volume for the rest of the year is dismal (interview PZ07). The limited tourism volume can be seen in the low room prices in the resort from 40 to 50 RMB per night because “[their] conditions are not good” (interview PZ03).

In addition, the push for tourism development has led to locals being excluded from employment and decision-making opportunities in tourism. While most of the employees of the museum and the resort are local Gelao people, they often take in people from outside Pingzheng, some of whom are not Gelao, for their dance and acting performances (interview PZ03), when it may have been possible to employ local villagers. The informal economy, which usually encourages participation of the poor due to its lower barriers to entry, is also lacking, as seen in how a female villager who tried to peddle her crafts in front of Shangurenjia was chased away because she was Han, not Gelao (interview PZ01). The Gelao-themed museum also has a prohibitive price of 98 RMB per entrance ticket.

The insufficient profit and limited pro-poor opportunities in Pingzheng are due to the lack of two factors. First, the lack of cultural capital stems from a deeper problem – the Gelao traditions upon which Pingzheng's tourism is based were actually Sinicized as early as the Song dynasty (960 CE to 1279 CE), so unique Gelao traditions have all but disappeared. As a result, there is little natural cultural capital left upon which Pingzheng could build its differentiating factor for tourism. Cultural capital can be ‘created’ via marketing campaigns, but these unfortunately require significant amounts of capital. Second, the county and town governments remain the main drivers behind tourism development; local villagers are rarely involved in decision-making. The relationship between government and villagers is more like that of Xijiang rather than Shang Langde. Given the lack of local

involvement, the area is more likely to continue on its current path, which is more consistent with a focus on profits rather than a focus on distribution.

Conclusion

Rural tourism development and the rural poor

Understanding these cases helps us answer the question: how do local communities best increase the volume of tourism while maximizing local participation and ensuring the industry is pro-poor? Our cases reinforce how difficult expanding tourist industries can be - even with the resources and efforts of Pingzheng and Huanggang, both have so far failed to make the industries more profitable. Even more difficult is ensuring that the tourism industry is pro-poor. To do both at the same time requires efforts that combine the political commitment to remain pro-poor with resources and capabilities to expand. However, based on the conclusions of the theoretical literature, research conclusions built on cases from throughout the world, and the cases we describe in this manuscript, successfully growing the industries commercially while ensuring that poor local residents benefit is difficult to accomplish simultaneously.

For these reasons, even those pro-poor tourism initiatives, if they emerge from the first quadrant, are compelled to traverse one of two pathways: either ensuring participation via bottom-up initiatives before expanding in volume and scope (Pathway 1), or expanding tourism before ensuring pro-poor participation (Pathway 2). However, these two pathways, which fall short of the promise of pro-poor tourism in one dimension or another, are not equally likely to commence to the ideal top-right quadrant. As exemplified in the case of Xijiang, the latter path requires political will to increase the participation of the poor and become genuinely pro-poor. Xijiang's initial steps to developing tourism bottom-up showed some signs of success, earning the recognition of influential guidebooks such as the Lonely Planet. However, the local and provincial governments chose to forgo supporting such efforts in favor of expanding the profitability of tourism in a top-down manner. This succeeded in rapidly expanding tourism, such that the area is now included on the ‘must-see’ lists of arranged tours. These exclusive methods of development were met with considerable local resistance – sometimes passive, sometimes violent – as the local residents perceived few benefits from the development of tourism while wealthier locals and outside investors captured most of the revenues. These increasingly powerful forces that have benefited from Xijiang's rapid development also have to become increasingly committed to the model's perpetuation. Making the rightward shift to the pro-poor quadrant thus means overcoming political forces aligned to maintain the status quo and mustering a rapidly receding political will towards authentic inclusion – an increasingly unlikely prospect.

Traversing Pathway 1 – shifting first to inclusiveness, before focusing on commercialization, also faces formidable hurdles. The case of Huanggang exemplifies the challenges faced in distinguishing the site from its competitors and improving the locals' proficiency in Mandarin. While overcoming these barriers is challenging, such an effort is also more realistic. After all, the area's tourism, while disappointing, does have busy seasons. Because locals do not rely on tourism for their subsistence, but can use it to supplement farming and other incomes, this has so far been sufficient. The challenges in making the area more successful commercially are primarily technical and capacity-related, as opposed to political, which makes overcoming them seem more likely.

This encouraging argument is underscored by the example of Shang Langde, which has resisted pressures to shift away from its participatory model over the years. Like Huanggang, the village started out as a model of low-volume, pro-poor development. Like their counterparts in Huanggang (successfully) and Xijiang (unsuccessfully), the locals resisted attempts to scale up in a top-down, non-pro-poor manner. Yet, Shang Langde was able to overcome substantial challenges to reach the upper-right quadrant, and today the lion's share of the higher tourism revenues earned accrues to the locals. The price for this – cultural erosion for instance (Oakes, 1998) – has been

substantial. However, from the perspective of poverty reduction and human scale development, Shang Langde represents a positive model to emulate.

Cases in comparison

These four cases are joined by others in Guizhou and in neighboring Yunnan and Hunan provinces that the authors have personally visited or that have been extensively described by other researchers. Case after case provides additional evidence to undergird the argument that while Pathway 1 (establishing pro-poor tourism first and then increasing revenue) is a challenging pathway, attempting to traverse Pathway 2 (increasing revenue first and then shifting to pro-poor tourism) is even more so. As can be seen in Fig. 3, none of the cases that joined Shang Langde in the upper-right-hand quadrant followed Pathway 1. Like Xijiang, each of the cases in the upper-left-hand quadrant were highly developed tourist sites, but managed only minimal local participation. Moreover, the forces that benefited from tourism development were able to block subsequent attempts to shift in a pro-poor direction.

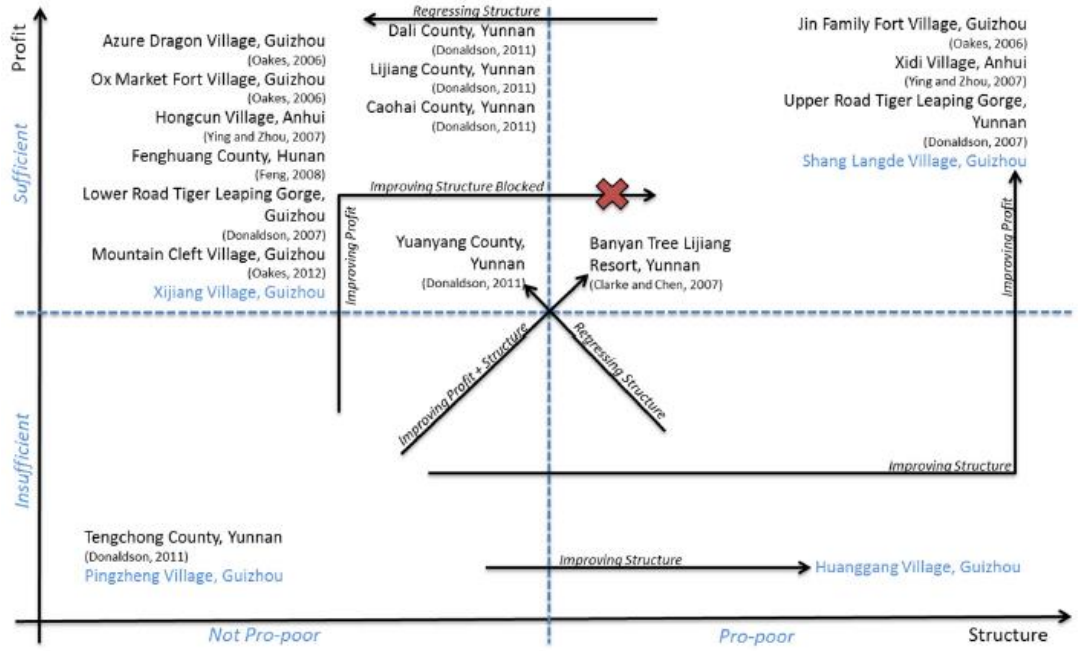

Fig. 3. Model with cases derived from literature.

Even more sobering, a number of cases – the popular areas of Dali and Lijiang as well as a nature reserve known as Caohai – reverted from high revenue/high pro-poor stance to one that was less pro-poor. Dali and Lijiang had been popular backpacker havens in the 1980s, but with the development of four- and five-star hotels and larger scales of tourism, most of the beneficiaries of these areas are no longer local developers, shop-owners, and entrepreneurs. Similarly, Caohai was a nature reserve with an innovative pro-poor model, but this was abandoned in favor of top-down development, with most of the benefits now captured by the local and provincial governments. This makes Shang Langde's resistance to abandoning pro-poor tourism that much more extraordinary, because they could have cashed in on their success, or collapsed under pressure.

The variation among these tourist sites is striking. Despite the fact that they each developed in the same province and under similar macro conditions, all four ended up in different quadrants. To be sure, these arguments require additional research in other contexts to see if there are conditions under which Pathway 1 is more viable, as well

as to further understand how some projects actually reach the upper-right-hand quadrant and manage to stay there. Indeed, whether the pathway traversed by Shang Langde and others remains open for others to traverse is an open question. As noted above, Guizhou's model for decades – from at least the late 1980s to the late 2000s – focused on a 'micro-oriented' model of development. In 2005 – long after Shang Langde reached the upper-right quadrant – the provincial government started turning away from its original pro-poor strategy, and by 2010 had completely abandoned it, in favor of one that emphasizes economic growth above all else. While Shang Langde had the support of a provincial development strategy to reach the upper-right-hand corner, the other three villages did not. The provincial government has shifted away from being a pioneer in pro-poor tourism to one that is more consistent with development that excludes local participation, along the lines of the approach seen in Xijiang. Adopting a successful policy of developing tourism in a way that increases the profitability of tourism, while also ensuring that it is pro-poor in structure, is difficult enough. Doing so in the context of a skeptical, if not hostile, provincial and central leadership might prove impossible.

Implications on theory

The cases compared here underscore that regarding different options to developing local tourism (to paraphrase Karl Marx) while men make their own pathways, they do not make them as they please. Decisions are constrained by socio-political dynamics of power. People living in areas with significant tourism resources face the temptation to expand as fast as possible, sometimes with an eye to distributing the largess of tourism's benefits later. This subsequent redistribution in fact rarely occurs. Yet amidst constraints that, as Marx would say, "weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living," still, choose we do – so it makes a difference to choose as powerfully and as wisely as we can. Returning to the original question of whether it is possible to combine tourism that makes a profit with tourism that benefits the poor, we finesse the question by concluding that one can combine them not simultaneously, but rather in sequence – and that the order of that sequence makes a difference. As seen in Xijiang, the "grow first, include later" pathway creates barriers between tourism's benefits and the poor that are all but insurmountable. By contrast, cases like that of Shang Langde indicate that the "include first, grow later" pathway, while significantly less profitable in aggregate, allows for greater participation of the poor.

Further, the case studies suggest that "community participation," as it is often used in western scholarship, is less relevant in the contexts discussed here. Advocates of community participation tend to implore developers of rural tourism to include the local community in its planning – still a top-down model, but one that at its best authentically includes the community. The attempts at consultation and participation in the four Chinese villages described here seem in turn less and more meaningful than what these terms generally imply in western scholarship. Pingzheng and Xijiang leaders have played driving roles in these areas' development, and have done little to hide the perfunctory nature of their attempts to encourage participation or consultation. In stark contrast, the tourism development in Shang Langde and Huanggang– especially in the past few years – is far more organic and bottom-up than the western literature expects is even possible. These forms of community participation are directly related to the outcomes of tourism development in these areas. The former two excluding local residents from participation and direct gain, while the latter two experiencing poverty reduction – palpable, though at a widely varying rate – due in large part to the direct participation of local residents.

When the local people maintain their decision-making power, they are able to enact policies that demonstrate awareness of their local landscape (such as providing subsidies for poor residents to meet expenses in establishing *nongjiale*) and that demonstrate a desire for more egalitarian distribution (such as forbidding building by the main road to encourage fair dispersion of profit). Although Shang Langde's profits are far lower than those of Xijiang, those profits provide income to 80% of the village's residents. Meanwhile, the residents of Shang Langde avoid having to migrate to feed their families, retain some level of autonomy over tourism decisions, and have, compared to other areas, protected their culture. To be sure, villages like Huanggang face substantial barriers to expanding the scope of their tourism industries and reaching the ideal quadrant. Yet, such barriers - as daunting as they might be – appear to be more surmountable compared to those faced by Xijiang. Ironically, despite

disempowering locals, eroding the culture, and establishing unjust systems of redistribution, Xijiang's model of development is considered the more successful. The pathway of pro-poor tourism, fraught with difficulty and temptation, remains the road less traveled.

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