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Exploring the Potential of Mass Tourism
in the Facilitation of Community
Development:

A Case Study of Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve,
Western China.

用于帮助社区发展密集型旅游业潜力的检测与评估
一个以九寨沟自然保护区为例的研究，
中国西部.

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A b s t r a c t

It is not generally thought that there is great potential for sustainable and empowering local-level development through mass tourism; however the majority of world tourism continues to be at the large scale. This is especially so in China, where mass tourism is pursued as a means of developing the western regions where ethnic minority groups mostly reside. Instead of advising only small-scale community tourism based on theories of participation and empowerment, there is a need to examine realistically the potential of mass tourism for local-level development that is both sustainable and empowering. This thesis uses the case study of Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, Sichuan, China to explore the possibilities for the development of resident Tibetan communities hosting more than a million Chinese tourists per year. According to the values of the Tibetan village Panyazhai, well-being has indeed been enhanced through mass tourism, in a manner that is moving towards sustainability and empowerment. The thesis concludes that in Jiuzhaigou regulation is the key to sustainable and empowering development, and appropriate regulation is best achieved through partnerships between local communities and the State that involve both formal and personal relationships.

人们普遍认为,通过大规模密集型旅游业为一个地区带来自主可持续发展并没有太大潜力.然而,世界大部分旅游业仍在继续以这种方式进行.特别是在中国,大规模密集型旅游业更是被作为少数民族聚集的西部地区发展的一种模式.因此,除了考虑以自主参预理论为基础的小规模地区旅游业外,有必要对大规模密集型旅游业为地区带来自主可持续发展的潜力进行实际地检测.本论文就是将每年接待逾百万游客的中国四川省九寨沟生态自然保护区作为研究实例,对当地藏民居住区发展的可能性进行了考察.根据对藏族村寨盘亚寨的评估,当地人民的生活水平通过大规模密集型旅游业确实得到提高,并且正朝着自主可持续发展的方向迈进.本论文得出的结论是:在九寨沟,合理有效的管理对确保自主可持续发展很有必要,而取得这种合理有效管理的最好途径是通过地区人民,旅游部门,和以当地行政以及保护区管理部门为代表的地方政府三者之间相互的合作.

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List of Abbreviations

CAT	Circumstantial alternative tourism
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CICETE	China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges
DAT	Deliberate alternative tourism
[e]	Electronic document (no page numbers)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (The World Conservation Union)
JNNRA	Jiuzhaigou National Nature Reserve Administration
JNSRA	Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Reserve Administration
MAB	Man and Biosphere Programme (UNESCO)
n.d.	No date
NGO	Non-government organisation
NTA	National Tourism Association (China)
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
Pers. comm.	Personal communication
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
QNPWC	Qomolangma Nature Preserve Working Commission
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SARS	Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SMT	Sustainable mass tourism
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region
UMT	Unsustainable mass tourism
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

G l o s s a r y

Guide to Pronunciation of Chinese Terms

This thesis basically uses the Pinyin system of romanisation for Chinese terms. Although Pinyin allows for recording the tones of the Chinese language, I have not used these symbols within the text, but have included the correct Chinese character in the glossary so that Chinese speakers may look up the word. This brief guide to pronouncing Chinese terms does not therefore include the tonal aspect of each syllable.

Each Chinese syllable is split into an initial and a final sound, with one of four tones assigned. The finals are normally a mixture of vowels (sometimes with 'n' or 'ng' added) pronounced as follows:

a	–	ah
e	–	eh
i	–	ee or sometimes as the 'i' in ditch.
o	–	or
u	–	oo
ü	–	yu

Many of the Chinese initials are consonants similar to their English counterparts (or similar enough for our purposes here) except for the following:

zh	–	pronounced something like the 'j' in Joe.
q	–	pronounced something like the 'ch' in China.
x	–	pronounced something like the 'sh' in sheet.
c	–	pronounced something like the 'ts' in sheets.

Hence 'Jiuzhaigou' should be pronounced 'jeeoh-jai-go', 'guanxi' should be pronounced 'gwan-she' and 'Cai' should be pronounced 'tsai'.

Note on use of place and personal names

This thesis has tried to be consistent in the romanised renderings of personal and place names that use non-roman scripts. I used the Pinyin system for romanising both Chinese and Tibetan place and personal names (including pseudonyms), except for those which are known outside of China in another form (for example: Lhasa, Chiang Kai Shek, Yangtze River). In the case of place names, I generally tried to use the official government designation in order that they may be found on a map or cross-referenced with other works. In the case of personal names, I used whatever was given me in personal communication, which was generally the Chinese rendering of a Tibetan name. In the case of pseudonyms, I replaced names with typical Sichuanese Tibetan names, rendered in Pinyin.

Glossary

Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture	阿坝藏族羌族自治州	Autonomous prefecture of Tibetan and Qiang peoples within Sichuan Province. Has thirteen counties, one of which is Jiuzhaigou County.
Amdo	安多	Branch of Tibetans, or the language they speak.
autonomous prefecture	自治州	Government administrative division. Provinces are divided into prefectures, some of which are ethnic autonomous prefectures allowed greater self-governance, highest official of prefecture must be of the ethnic minority concerned.
autonomous region	自治区	Government administrative division. Province-level areas of ethnic minorities guaranteed greater self-governance, highest official of an autonomous region must be of the ethnic minority concerned.
Bailongjiang	白龙江	River and forest bureau in Sichuan (<i>lit</i> : white dragon river).
Baima	白马	Branch of Tibetans (White Horse) that follow the Bon religion (pre-Lamaism).
Beijing	北京	Capital city of the People's Republic of China, situated in northeast China.
Bitahai	碧塔海	Lake in Zhongdian County, Yunnan Province.
Chengdu	成都	Capital city of Sichuan Province.
Chiang Kai Shek	蒋介石	Leader of the Nationalist government from 1928-1949.
county	县	Government administrative division, a county is normally named by its county capital, which is responsible for the management of the county's townships (县), which are in turn responsible for the management of other villages (村). Hence Jiuzhaigou is the name of a county, a large town and the national park.
Cultural Revolution	文化大革命	Period in Chinese history (officially 1966-1976) where students and workers revolted against the communist leadership and the subsequent put down where city youth were sent into the countryside for 're-education'.
cun zhang	村长	Elected leader of an administrative village.
Dai	傣[族]	Ethnic group found in southwest China and other parts of southeast Asia.
Dalai Lama	达赖喇嘛	Traditionally the highest spiritual and political leader of Tibet.
danwei	单位	Work unit. Under communism an administrative unit based around the workplace.
Deng Xiaoping	邓小平	<i>De facto</i> ruler of China from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Responsible for the 'open door' policies.
duiwai kaifang	对外开放	'Opening up to the outside' – referring to China's recent policies opening up the economy to foreign investment and ideas.
fazhan	发展	Develop, development.
Gansu	甘肃[省]	Province in northwest China.

goukou waimiande	沟口外面的	Belonging to outside of the gully mouth
guanxi	关系	Relationships, connections. Referring often to having the right connections in order to do something.
Guangxi	广西[壮族自 治区]	Zhuang people's Autonomous Region in southern China.
Guizhou	贵州[省]	Province in southern China.
Guwazhai	故洼寨	Village in Jiuzhaigou, near Panyazhai, mostly destroyed during the Cultural Revolution
Hainan	海南[省]	Island province off the south-east coast of China.
Han	汉[族][朝]	A people, state and later dynasty of China beginning around 200BC. Today, the main ethnic group in China is called Han.
Hanification		Becoming more like Han Chinese (<i>source</i> : author)
Heyezhai	荷叶寨	Village within Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, near Panyazhai.
Huanglong	黄龙[保护区]	World heritage protected area in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province (<i>lit.</i> yellow dragon).
Huangshan	黄山	Famous mountain tourist destination in Anhui Province, eastern China (<i>lit.</i> yellow mountain).
hukou	户口	System of household registration in China.
Jiang Qing	江青	Third wife of Mao Zedong and leader of the Gang of Four, arrested after Mao's death for her part in the Cultural Revolution.
Jiang Zemin	江泽民	Served in the leadership of CCP and the PRC from 1989 to 2005 (including as President from 1993 to 2003).
Jianpanzhai	尖盘寨	Village in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, near Panyazhai.
Jiuzhaigou	九寨沟 [县][保护区]	Valley, county and protected area in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous prefecture, Sichuan Province.
Kawagebo	[梅里雪山]	Mountain in Yunnan Province, also known as Meili snow mountain (<i>source</i> : Tibetan).
Khamba	康巴	Branch of Tibetans in Northeastern Tibet and nearby provinces, and the language they speak.
Kuomintang	[中国]国民党	The nationalist government of China from 1912 to 1949. Fled to Taiwan to establish the Republic of China (<i>pinyin</i> : Guomindang, <i>lit.</i> The Nationalist People's Party of China).
Lhasa	拉萨	Capital city of Tibet (TAR).
luohou	落后	Backward, undeveloped, fallen behind, primitive.
Maerkang	马尔康[镇]	Capital of Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture.
Mao Zedong	毛泽东	Founder of the PRC and Chairman of CCP from 1935 to 1976.
Meili Snow Mountain	梅里雪山	Mountains in Yunnan Province, also known as Kawagebo (Tibetan).

Miao	苗[族]	Minority group of China and other south east Asian countries (known sometimes as the Hmong). In China, mostly found in Guizhou Province.
Minshan	闽山	Mountain range in Northwest Sichuan, on the edge of the Tibetan plateau.
momo	馍馍	Traditional Tibetan bread, term used in Jiuzhaigou to refer to any bread.
Mosuo	摩梭[人]	Matrilineal minority group in Yunnan.
Mu	亩	Area of land equivalent to 0.066 Hectares.
Nanping	南平	The old name for what is now officially called Jiuzhaigou County.
Nationalist	[中国]国民党	The Nationalist People's Party of China. Known as Kuomintang or Guomindang, they governed China from 1912 to 1949. Fled to Taiwan to establish the Republic of China.
Naxi	纳西[族]	Minority group in southwest China.
Pakeha		New Zealander of European descent (source: Te Reo Maori)
Panyazhai	盘亚寨	Village in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve.
po siji	破四旧	Smashing the old ways
prefecture	地区	Government administrative division. Provinces are made up of administrative prefectures, and prefectures are divided into counties [县].
province	省	China is divided into 22 provinces, which are directly under the central government at the same level as municipalities, autonomous regions and special administrative regions.
Qiang	羌[族]	Minority group in Northwest Sichuan.
Qin	秦[朝]	A people, state and later dynasty of China beginning around 220BC.
Qing	清[朝]	The last Chinese dynasty, ruled by the Manchus and fell in 1912.
Qinghai	青海[省]	Province in western China.
shaoshu minzu	少数民族	Minority nationality of China
Shuzheng	树正[寨]	Village in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, where most tourists stop.
Sichuan	四川[省]	Province in western China.
Songpan	松潘[县]	Town and county in Sichuan Province.
Tiananmen Square	天安门	'The gate of heavenly peace' to the Forbidden City in central Beijing. Best known in the West for the massacre of students that occurred there in June 1989, following pro-democracy protests.
Tibetan (Zang)	藏[族]	Ethnic group found in Tibet (TAR), Western China, Nepal, India and Bhutan.
xingfu	幸福	Happy, happiness, well-being.

Xinjiang	新疆[维吾尔 自治区]	Uighur Autonomous Region in northwest China.
Yangtze	长江	River running from the far west of China to the East China Sea, originating in Tibet and Qinghai (<i>pinyin</i> : Chang Jiang. <i>lit.</i> long river).
yuan	元	Chinese dollar (¥), also written RMB. ¥1 is worth US \$0.125 (USD: RMB is fixed 1:8).
Yunnan	云南[省]	Province in southwest China.
Zechawa	则查洼[寨]	Village in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve.
Zhangzha	漳扎[镇]	Town outside of Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve.
Zharu	札如[寨]	Village in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, where the temple is located.
Zhongdian	中甸[县]	County and town in Yunnan Province.
Zhongguo	中国	China (<i>lit.</i> central kingdom)
Zhu Rongji	朱镕基	Premier of China, 1998 to 2003.
zizhi difang	自治地方	Autonomous place.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over time, research and general opinion has alternately advocated for and cautioned against tourism as an agent of development, and nowhere has the debate been more intense than when the subject is the less developed world. At the national scale, it is often claimed that tourism contributes to a rising income per capita, and can stimulate other industries in turn – the more tourists the better. Yet others have shown that most tourism revenues in fact ‘leak’ out of the nations concerned, that benefits accumulate to richer tourist-generating industrialised nations and environmental disasters accumulate to less-developed tourist-receiving sites. Although tourism benefits some individuals, it is now generally thought that in terms of community or local-level development ‘less is best’; serious restrictions on tourist numbers and behaviour must be imposed in order to protect community assets, environment, culture and society. Small-scale tourism is thought to be more sustainable, more empowering and more appropriate to development at the community level.

Yet this is a thesis about community development in the context of large-scale tourism. Aside from the claims of those who advocate, caution against or adapt tourism, this thesis explores holistically and realistically the potential of mass tourism in facilitating sustainable and empowering development at the local level. Others have studied the effects of mass tourism on communities, some from within modernisation or neo-liberal perspectives, some from within dependency perspectives, and some from within alternative development and tourism perspectives. But when an issue such as mass tourism is explored from any of these ideological viewpoints, one invariably misses out on truly understanding how the local people concerned view the whole process. This thesis therefore addresses the issue of community development and mass tourism through the understanding of the people of Panya Village, Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, Western China.

This chapter of the thesis will explore the way the research question came to be asked, in order to establish the researcher’s assumptions and positionality. It will then address the way in which the research question will be answered, outlining the general research approach, methodology and limitations, ethics and thesis outline.

1.1 Research Context

The research aim of this thesis was born out of my specific context and background as a researcher and a student. Firstly, familiarity with Chinese people and the Chinese Mandarin language enabled me to travel to China as a tourist, experiencing Chinese-style tourism and viewing both poverty and wealth within the Chinese context. Secondly, an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies and a postgraduate focus on Development Studies were particularly helpful in revealing the complexities of the human-environment relationship, leading me to a greater appreciation of the problems of developing nations. One of the best solutions I had learned about that balanced environmental protection and development was the community-based ecotourism framework, where community organisations developed ecotourism lodges and tours for environmentally and culturally sensitive tourists to visit, thus participating in the equitable and sustainable development of an indigenous community.

In 2002, while travelling as a tourist around China considering possible development thesis topics, I was fascinated by Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, Sichuan Province, where mass tourism was meeting head-on with nature-based tourism and indigenous communities.

“We’re going tramping.” My Chinese friend informed us, a group of sweating and white-faced foreigners gathered in her small Chengdu apartment, continuing on to explain that it was going to be cold in the mountains we were visiting and to make sure we brought warm enough clothes. As we were all quite geographically disoriented at this stage of our whirlwind tour of China, we didn’t quite grasp early enough that the mountains she was referring to were actually the edge of the Tibetan plateau. We also didn’t quite grasp the incongruence between the New Zealand English word “tramping” (a word that for us is associated with large backpacks, faintly marked tracks, open fires, billy tea and daily eight hour long uphill treks) and the Chinese concept of nature-based scenic mountain tourism. Excited about possibly my first glimpse of something like ecotourism, and definitely my first glimpse of minority peoples in China, I boarded the bus at 7am in Chengdu during the hottest summer experienced in fifty years. Ten hours later we disembarked in Songpan County woefully underdressed and reeling from both the altitude and the culture shock of our bus trip shared with karaoke-loving, parasol-bearing, high-heeled, middle-aged tour

companions. *By the time we understood what was happening, it was too late. We were mass tourists. Asian mass tourists. Tramping, our Chinese friend conceded, had been a frightful misnomer. "But," she added brightly, "It's much cheaper to go this way, and we can see more things!" A statement that soon proved disturbingly correct as we were informed that the bus would be leaving for our first sightseeing tour at 5am the following morning in order to traverse the full 80-kilometre scenic round-trip of the Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve in one day. Our young, beautifully made-up tour guide herded us, flag in hand, into our twin-share three-star hotel bedrooms for an early night.*

Four days and three hotels later, we had experienced the wonders of the 'Fairyland on Earth' Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve and the amazing terraced mountain of Huanglong Reserve, along with several other sites of scenic and consumer interest in the area. The image of five thousand tourists with pastel sun-umbrellas forming an odd river bobbing steadily up the side of the mountain taller than New Zealand's Mount Cook stayed with me as I tried to make sense of all I had seen. The Coke machine at 3,500m. The tourists posing in Tibetan dress for photos en masse. The sedan chairs. The Tibetan women in their traditional dress looking utterly comfortable yet woefully out of place compared to the fashion-conscious tourists. The beautiful Tibetan homes. The women in high-heels with matching handbags under one arm and oxygen pillows under the other (connected directly up the nose by a tube). The trees, the lakes, the terraces, the temples. The busloads and busloads of tourists. The masses of souvenirs lining the marketplaces. The luxury hotels. The recycling bins, the first I had seen in China. The absence of children. 'What on earth in tourism and in development is happening here?' I asked myself.

The Jiuzhaigou experience taught me one thing about tourism in China. Where there is picturesque scenery, the tourists will go. All of them. Together. Later, learning of the status-based imperative to tourism in China, it became clear to me that community-based ecotourism was just not an option for development there. All tourism in China, almost by necessity, is mass tourism. But my studies in development and the environment had given me the very clear impression that mass tourism was evil: an imperialist, racist, anti-environmentalist bourgeois activity that destroyed local cultures and environments by drawing previously happily self-sufficient communities into a homogenising cash-based

global system of oppression and inequality. Yet since there was obviously no escaping mass tourism in China, the question for me was ‘how can this supposed evil be harnessed for local-level development?’ It seemed sensible to ask those who were most likely to know: the local people in Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve.

1.2 Research Approach and Methodology

It is clear from the above incident that I had a lot to learn, both about my own conceptions of tourism and development, and the way others understand these concepts too. The problems surrounding the highly contested concept ‘development’ are somewhat over-documented, and I have attempted to avoid any superfluous additions to this debate by trying to understand and use ‘development’ as conceptualised by the case study community, without claiming that this is necessarily universal. The methodology thus employed in this research has been consistently one of understanding and explaining rather than defining, measuring and quantifying. Gaining an insider understanding of the way local people in Jiuzhaigou conceptualised development, and hence understood the changes that had taken place in their lives through tourism, could only really be done through a qualitative approach.¹

Yet even as I attempt to address my research question using a local understanding of development, the assumptions underlying the research question are not local. The questions I ask as a researcher are made up of complex assumptions that are embedded deep within both my cultural context as a young Pakeha New Zealander and the wider international development culture that informs most research and study in developing nations. During the thesis-writing journey, I have alternately attempted to separate myself from and accept my position within these cultures, attempting to go beyond my cultural limitations then recognising that mostly I cannot. My interactions with the Tibetan people of Panya through qualitative research enable me, to an extent, to step back and see development, tourism, sustainability and empowerment from a different perspective. Yet the Greco-Roman philosophical heritage of my education (of which this thesis is a product) has meant

¹ As Brockington and Sullivan (2003) discuss, this kind of topic (involving values and identity) can, at least initially, only really be researched inductively and qualitatively.

that my logic and my research is still based on the thesis-antithesis-synthesis approach of Western culture, where dichotomous comparisons abound, and every statement is 'proven' through references and arguments. Conducting research within these two different contexts (the local perspective and the academic perspective) definitely broadens my understanding of the processes of development.

Within this broader understanding, I have come to think that we definitely cannot see development as solely an economic or technological phenomenon. It is manifestly plain in this world that economics or technology cannot solve, or even explain, much of humanity's striving for improvement, an elusive concept that we try to pin down with the label 'development'. A step towards clarifying the approach I take in this thesis can be made with reference to Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen's conceptualisation of development as *freedom*. He eloquently makes the case for freedom as both the means and ends of development (Sen, 1999), seeing the expansion of freedom and the removal of 'unfreedoms' as prerequisite to and resultant of development as it should be. Yet even if I view poverty as a lack of choices and development as increasing freedom and opportunity, this view is not reflected necessarily in the powers that control development work. Hence not only have I had to attempt to understand and explain the conceptualisation of development that the people of Jiuzhaigou hold to, I have also had to come to an understanding of the kind of ideologies that inform deliberate development work through tourism in China. The first half of the thesis is dedicated to understanding development and tourism ideologies, both in general and specifically with regards to mass tourism in China. The second half of the thesis involved understanding the development ideologies of the groups involved in the actual case study, and the significance that this case study has in understanding mass tourism and development in China and beyond.

1.2.1 Research Ethics

Because this research argues for a local idea of development in conjunction with the principles of sustainability and empowerment, it follows that the research itself should not only seek to understand sustainability and empowerment, but should *be* sustainable and empowering. Robert Chambers (1992) heads up a section in an IDS discussion paper

'Reversals of dominance: from extracting to empowering'. He notes that 'however useful and justified it may be, the consummation sought [of the normal research process] is to process the data extracted into a PhD, articles or a book' (1992: 36). Empowering methodologies however, still 'enable outsiders to learn, but through the sharing of information in a manner which enhances people's analysis and knowledge and leaves them owning it' (1992: 36). There is no doubt that the consummation of this research is in a Masters thesis. However, this does not mean that the methodology has to be purely extractive and self-serving. As the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand state:

... in requiring students to do field research purely as a training exercise, [anthropologists] may be making an unfair imposition on research participants. Unless there is some potential benefit for the research participants, and not just for the students involved, such exercises should be avoided (ASAA/NZ, 1987: 3).

In terms of ethics and principles of research then, it is not enough merely to avoid disempowering, but the fieldwork component of this research should also aim to empower. As discussed later in this study, empowerment has several different aspects and levels. This research attempted to empower both local communities and the local park administration in terms of giving voice to these groups of people, misunderstood in a local, national and global sense, and subject to outside-imposed stereotypes.² This research also sought to obtain this information without causing problems for the participants, both within park administration and local communities. Hence I sought all the appropriate permissions, and went through all the government requirements and regulations of research in China. I consistently declined offers from more powerful contacts to help me in avoiding the more bothersome regulations, as this causes friction between the local government and the local Public Security Bureau (PSB), and further entrenches the flows of power.

Research that causes undue dissension and resentment amongst local people due to one's association with particular people in the field would lead to decreased social sustainability. Although I could not claim to be totally objective, I could at least attempt to be neutral in

² Yet even in my efforts do this, I agree with Scheyvens and Storey (2003: 237) that 'empowering methodologies alone will not dissolve the power relations which exists between researcher and participants.' I see it more as an ethical choice rather than a hope of changing the world as such.

local affairs, to not add to any tensions that were already present. In terms of using *guanxi* or connections³ to get things done my way, I believe research that causes one group of people to be obliged to obey another group of people in doing something that may cause personal trouble and may even be illegal is ultimately disempowering. Although I cannot claim to empower people exactly in these situations, I can at least attempt to not add to the pressures put on ordinary people by 'important' people, to attempt to be an ordinary person myself, rather than an important foreign visitor.

1.2.2 Methodology

The fact that my context as a New Zealander and a researcher is so far removed from the daily lives of the people in Jiuzhaigou working out the practicalities of mass tourism development necessitated that in the case study fieldwork I adopt something of an anthropological method in research. My basic methodology, for the most part, involved participatory observation:⁴ living and working as a hawker with the residents of Panya village. My shared experiences working initially as a hawker formed the basis of the relationships that allowed me to explore local understandings of well-being and development through discussion and observation.

The depth of understanding that can be gained from this kind of qualitative research is well documented by writers such as Babbie (1998) and Brockington and Sullivan (2003) who show how qualitative research is the only way to really understand a social situation as the participants in that situation understand it. The process of understanding a local conceptualisation of development, and understanding to what degree their current and past situations matched up with this conceptualisation, involved both interviewing, participation and observation. Obviously, as a person of a different ethnicity and language, and one who is not a current member of what is essentially a fixed community, it was not possible for me to be an unobtrusive researcher. Instead, I followed in Liebow's (1967) example, where I

³ A concept discussed in Chapter Four.

⁴ I prefer the term 'participatory observation' to what some such as Babbie (1998) and Brockington and Sullivan (2003) describe as 'participant observation', since the immersion of the researcher in daily activities is much more than just sitting back and observing research 'participants', it is experiencing the daily lives of 'participants' yourself, as far as possible for an outsider.

recognised my position as a researcher openly, but still let myself become a part of the community as far as possible. Living with several local families enabled me to experience first hand the conditions of life, and to use everyday opportunities as launching pads for discussion. Along with firsthand participation and observation, 'snowball' sampling (Babbie, 1998) was used for getting interviewees, whereby contacts I made were asked for other contacts who would know something more about a particular issue.

The use of participatory methods was initially planned for the fieldwork phase of the research (see Appendix One and Two); however, on arrival in Jiuzhaigou it became clear that most participatory exercise methods were not appropriate to the local context. People invariably preferred casual conversation to formal exercises, and people politely declined to take part. For the women, especially, the use of a paper and pen was discouraging, even taking notes in my own personal notebook. Hence, the fieldwork became an exercise of sharing work, purposeful chatting and participatory observation. Fortunately, later in my fieldwork period, several of the younger people became comfortable with research procedures, and assisted me in working through much of the information to check its accuracy and consistency. These young people assisted in the operation of the participatory exercises that were eventually carried out once the community came to know me better.

1.2.3 Limitations

This research is set within a particular place and time, where Jiuzhaigou as a tourist destination is popular, well-regulated and supported by the host communities. The research investigation is limited to living memory, where the current situation in Jiuzhaigou is compared by residents to the situation around twenty to thirty years ago. Clearly, the situation could change just as easily in the future, and could even end up worse than it was twenty years ago. The research is therefore limited in that it is a snapshot of a specific time, and should not be taken as definitively true even one or two years from now. In addition, this shows how important it is to not only analyse local well-being changes, but also to investigate sustainability and empowerment concerns as these give an indication of where the development situation in Jiuzhaigou is likely to head in the future.

Although my grasp of Mandarin is good enough for the hawking business, the use of a translator was essential for interviews, since Mandarin Chinese is a second language for both myself and the people of Jiuzhaigou. However, the narrow geographical area covered by the local dialect⁵ meant that there was only one known person who could speak both English and the local Tibetan dialect – the extremely busy vice-director of the reserve. Although many people tried to convince me that a Mandarin translator would be adequate, I personally preferred to work through a local translator for accuracy and for the comfort of the local people. Because this was not possible, I hired a translator who could speak both Mandarin and university-level English and was from a nearby area. Hence the limitations of this research are often linguistic, where translation went through two translators, or where one or the other of us was working in our second language, or a mixture of all of these methods. Linguistic limitations also apply to secondary sources, where I have mostly consulted English language sources in my literature reviews and statistical information.

Other limitations are political, where the sensitive place of Tibetans within China is aggravated by the independence claims of Tibet proper,⁶ meaning that both I and my translator were warned by the local PSB to avoid all mention of politics or religion in discussion with anyone. There was also a considerable amount of reticence on the part of the people of Jiuzhaigou, both government-employed and self-employed, in regards to my questioning, as they too are understandably wary of outsiders stirring up political trouble in areas that the State would rather they left alone.

Bureaucratic requirements for gaining research permission involved time consuming negotiations with several different levels of government as well as the reserve administration and local PSB; this meant that the research scope had to be reduced from the wider Jiuzhaigou area (involving two government institutions) to just the actual protected

⁵ The use of the word 'dialect' here is somewhat inaccurate, since the language of the Tibetans of Jiuzhaigou is likely to be a Qiangic language (<http://tibet.ethno.info>). The language of the people of Jiuzhaigou and the Tibetan language (in any dialect) are definitely mutually unintelligible (according to a Lhasa Tibetan interviewed). However, people use the word 'dialect' to indicate their Tibetaness culturally and ethnically.

⁶ This thesis provides no discussion in regards to Tibet's claims to independence, or China's claim to Tibet. It is not considered relevant to the topic at hand since the Tibetans of Jiuzhaigou have been distinct from Tibetans in Tibet for hundreds of years, and were not claimed by Tibet in negotiations.

area managed by the joint Jiuzhaigou National Nature Reserve Administration/Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Reserve Administration (JNNRA/JNSRA). Research in China requires permission from the province level, the prefecture level, and the county level, of which I thought I had obtained the first and last prior to my arrival. Research requires a Foreign Expert's Visa (F), even for students. A Foreign Expert's Visa requires an invitation from the highest Foreign Affairs Office in the province, which requires an invitation from an organisation, company or government agent that will be responsible for the researcher. Culturally, 'being responsible' for a foreigner in China obliges the host to lavishly provide for their accommodation, transport and translation. A host must also report foreigners staying in private homes to the local PSB station within 48 hours of arrival. Despite having an invitation from an organisation, I could only be given a tourist visa by the Chinese embassy in New Zealand because my research had to be vetted by the Foreign Affairs Office in China before I could proceed. In total, these requirements took six weeks to meet once I was in the country.

Both Chinese and Tibetans are hospitable people, willing to please and to provide – a cultural strength for them, but an academic weakness for me in that seeing that I got what they thought I wanted was much more important to them than 'the truth'. Hence I attempted to triangulate as much of my information as possible through various sources in order to avoid only knowing simply what I appeared to want to hear. The limitations of triangulation lie in the fact that this research deals with opinions and perspectives, which of course are different for each person. Triangulation was therefore mostly done through repeated questioning and observation, along with group discussions (as recommended by Babbie, 1998 and Kumar, 2002). It must be recognised here that people by nature are not always consistent in their answers, hence any social research is highly contestable and subjective.

Finally, a major limitation and yet key idea of the research approach is summed up by John Muir:

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe (Muir, 1988: 110).

This research is limited in its observation and analysis since I do not have the room, the time, or the ability to encompass the universe of interlinking complexities to which the key themes of mass tourism, local-level development and Western China are 'hitched' to.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The necessity of understanding context has been recognised more and more within development and tourism thinking. Understanding ideological contexts is particularly helpful in explaining why and how development has been pursued in the way it has, and why and how the various problems of development have come about. While this chapter introduces the research aims and methodology, the following three chapters seek to understand the ideological context for development through tourism, internationally and in China.

Chapter Two traces the ideologies of tourism and development through their recent history in order to position this research within its historical and theoretical context. The chapter seeks to show the importance of inductive, context-specific research in development and tourism (which are place-based practices) as opposed to deductive theory or ideologically based research that does not recognise its own inevitable subjectivity. The concepts of sustainability and empowerment are introduced as appropriate ethics of local-level people-led development.

Chapter Three critically explores the concepts of mass tourism and local development, trying to go beyond uninformed generalising stereotypes. The tourism system is explained, showing the complexity of the elements involved and the impossibility of generalising statements about mass tourism's sustainability or prospects for empowering development. The chapter shows how sustainability is related to regulation, and empowerment to benefits and control, neither of which are necessarily excluded by mass tourism in development.

Chapter Four turns to China, seeking to understand the way that tourism and development are conceptualised and practiced in the Chinese context. The chapter places Chinese ideas of development and tourism within their historical context, showing how Western-style

modernisation and development are used for Chinese purposes. The chapter introduces the role of protected area tourism in the development of the ethnic minority groups in the western regions of China.

Chapter Five moves on to the case study side of the research, introducing the protected area of Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve, destination of more than a million tourists a year and home to more than a thousand Tibetan residents. The case study serves as a context within which to explore ideas of local development through mass tourism, and this is done by delving into one community's understanding of well-being and how that well-being has changed over time as tourism has increased to the reserve. The chapter outlines the methodologies used to do this in each section of the findings.

Chapter Six then discusses the situation as described in Jiuzhaigou, looking at whether the reserve has moved towards sustainable tourism and empowering development. The factors specific to tourism in Jiuzhaigou, life in Jiuzhaigou and the management of Jiuzhaigou are discussed in order to understand how it is that Jiuzhaigou has managed to move towards sustainability and empowerment where other sites of mass tourism have failed.

Chapter Seven brings together the case study, the research aims and the ideological contexts and discusses what emerges as the three main themes of this research: the importance of regulation for sustainability and empowerment, the interrelatedness of sustainability and empowerment, and the need for partnerships to ensure appropriate regulation for local-level development. The thesis concludes with some key recommendations for further development in Jiuzhaigou and a summary of the main contributions that this thesis has made.