

Tourism as a socially sustainable tool for rural development
– Case: Mutianyu village, China

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<p>Opinnäytetyön nimi Matkailu sosiaalisesti kestäväenä työkaluna maaseudun kehittämisessä Case: Mutianyun kylä, Kiina</p>	<p>Sivu- ja liitesivumäärä 90 + 8</p>
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<p>Maaseudut ympäri maailmaa kohtaavat nykyään vakavia ongelmia kuten mahdollisuuksien ja palvelujen hupenemisesta johtuvaa väestön pienenemistä ja vanhenemista. Useat maaseutualueet ovat kääntyneet matkailun puoleen paremman tulevaisuuden toivossa, ja se onkin osoittanut potentiaalinsa kyläyhteisöjen elvyttämiseen tarjoamalla merkittäviä taloudellisia hyötyjä. Huonosti hallintoa matkailukehitys voi kuitenkin myös tuhota kyläyhteisöjä, sillä ne ovat erityisen herkkiä nopeille sosiaalisille muutoksille. Matkailu voi toimia sekä pelastajana että tuhoajana. Tämän työn teoreettinen osa perustuu laajaan kirjallisuuteen ja tutkii maaseutumatkailun ja kestävä kehityksen periaatteita sekä sosiaalisen kestävyden tärkeyttä maaseutumatkailun kehittämisessä ja hallinnoinnissa.</p> <p>Työn tavoitteena on tutkia matkailun mahdollisuuksia sosiaalisesti kestäväan maaseutujen kehittämiseen, erityisesti pienessä kiinalaisessa Mutianyun kylässä Kiinan muurin juurella. Erityisesti työ keskittyy kylään vuonna 2006 avattuun tasokkaaseen majoitus- ja ravintolayritykseen nimeltä Schoolhouse. Kylä on saanut matkailusta hyvinkin merkittäviä taloudellisia hyötyjä, mutta matkailun sosiaalisia vaikutuksia kyseiseen yhteisöön on tutkittu erittäin vähän. Tavoitteena on selvittää voiko tämän kaltainen matkailukehitys elvyttää kyläyhteisöä sosiaalisesti kestäväällä tavalla ja siten voisiko kyseistä kehitysmallia käyttää kenties muuallakin. Tutkimus on suunniteltu auttamaan Schoolhousea tulevaisuuden kehityksessä ja suunnitelmissa.</p> <p>Työn empiirinen osuus koostuu kahdestatoista kvalitatiivisesta teemahaastattelusta, jotka tehtiin Mutianyussa kyläläisten kanssa. Haastattelut tehtiin syyskuussa 2009 ja kukin kesti noin 20-30 minuuttia. Tulokset osoittavat, että kyläläiset ovat saaneet merkittäviä taloudellisia hyötyjä matkailukehityksestä ja sille pannaan myös merkittävää arvoa. Matkailun positiivisiksi vaikutuksiksi koetaan myös erityisesti parantunut infrastruktuuri ja rakennettu ympäristö, kun taas voimistunut liikenne, melu ja saasteet koetaan negatiivisiksi vaikutuksiksi. Asenteet matkailukehitystä kohtaan ovat erittäin positiiviset. Schoolhousea itseään kohtaan suhtaudutaan yllättävän välinpitämättömästi, kuitenkin lähinnä positiivisesti.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen mukaan matkailua voidaan käyttää kyläyhteisöjen, varsinkin Mutianyun, kehittämiseen sosiaalisesti kestäväällä tavalla, mutta huolellinen hallinnointi, tasapainottaminen ja yhteisön osallistuminen ovat ehdottomina edellytyksinä. Kyläyhteisön tarpeet on otettava huomioon kaikessa matkailukehityksessä ja sosiaalisia vaikutuksia on aktiivisesti arvioitava. Schoolhouse tarjoaa hyvän mallin sosiaalisesti kestäväälle matkailukehitykselle, mutta parannusehdotuksia tulevaisuudelle löytyy myös, muun muassa melu- ja liikennehaittojen pienentämiseksi.</p>	
<p>Asiasanat Maaseutumatkailu, kestävä matkailu, kyläyhteisö, sosiaalinen kestävyys, yhteisön osallistuminen, elämänlaatu</p>	

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<p>Rural areas around the world are facing serious problems today such as aging and population decline due to loss of employment opportunities and services. Many rural areas have turned to tourism in search of a better future and it has revealed its potential to sustain rural communities by providing significant income and opportunities. However, poorly managed tourism development can also destroy rural communities, which are extremely fragile to rapid social changes. Tourism can act as a saviour or destroyer. The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on literature, examining the principles of rural tourism, sustainability and the importance of social sustainability in the development and management of rural tourism.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the potential of tourism as a socially sustainable tool for rural development, specifically in the small Chinese village of Mutianyu under the Great Wall. A specific focus is on The Schoolhouse company, an up-scale lodging and restaurant company in the village, opened in 2006. The village has obtained major economical benefits from tourism, however, little research has been conducted on how tourism has actually socially affected the community. The aim is to evaluate whether this kind of development can sustain the village community in a socially sustainable manner and thus whether it could be further adopted in other rural areas in the future. The study is planned to mainly assist The Schoolhouse in future tourism development.</p> <p>The empirical part of this thesis consists of twelve qualitative theme interviews conducted in Mutianyu with community members. The interviews were conducted in September 2009 and each lasted 20 to 30 minutes. The results reveal that villagers have gained significant economical benefits and increased incomes from tourism development and they put great value to it. The villagers also perceive better infrastructure and built environment as major positive impacts of tourism, whereas increased traffic, noise and air pollution as negative impacts. The attitude towards tourism is generally highly positive, while attitudes towards The Schoolhouse are surprisingly indifferent, although clearly more positive than negative.</p> <p>According to this study tourism can be used as a socially sustainable tool for rural development, however, careful management, balancing and community involvement are required. The needs and opinions of local villagers need to be taken into account in all tourism planning and social impacts need to be proactively assessed. The Schoolhouse appears to offer a good model for socially sustainable tourism development, but there are also some recommendations for future, to reduce the social problems caused by, for example, increasing noise and traffic.</p>	
<p>Key words Rural tourism, sustainable tourism, rural community, social sustainability, community involvement, quality of life</p>	

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1 Introduction

Tourism has been a part of many rural communities around the world for a long time and in many cases it has been an important sustaining power and source of income in times of declining economy. In most parts of the world populations of rural communities are alarmingly declining as people move into urban centres to find opportunities and entertainment. When population decline, services also tend to perish which further accelerates the declining process. This is the case in China as well and clearly manifested in village communities in Beijing municipality. The countryside seems to be in peril and some ways must be discovered to maintain rural life in the world. While tourism has shown its potential as a tool for rural development, it can also destroy the very communities it is supposed to sustain, which means that careful management and balancing is always required in rural tourism.

1.1 Aim and delimitations

This thesis focuses on the case of Mutianyu village which is located about 90km north from downtown Beijing in China. It is a village right next to a popular tourist section of The Great Wall with the same name and has been benefiting from tourism since the late 1980s. It is rather clear that tourism has brought the community many economic benefits such as increased income and significantly more employment opportunities, however, another question is the degree of sustainability of the tourism. This thesis concentrates especially on the social aspects of sustainability in tourism in the Mutianyu area. The aim is to evaluate the potential of tourism as a socially sustainable tool for rural development. Moreover, this thesis focuses on The Schoolhouse company which is a lodging and restaurant business that opened right in the centre of the village in 2006. The company quite openly tries to do good for the village and sustain its life, yet the aim of this thesis is to examine the level of social sustainability in the tourism development conducted by The Schoolhouse actually. If The Schoolhouse's development model appears to be an ideal one, it could well be employed in other declining rural communities as well.

Social sustainability is a contemporary concept in general because today the solution to environmental problems is seen to be closely linked to the aspects of social sustainability (Närhi 2004, 120) and thus the discussion that used to be solely about environmental protection is slowly but steadily moving to involve social aspects as well. To evaluate the social impact of tourism, it is crucially important to investigate what the villagers think and feel about tourism. For this purpose this thesis includes an analysis of twelve qualitative theme interviews which

the author conducted with villagers of Mutianyu while doing his internship there in 2009. Each interview lasted from 20 to 30 minutes and they offered an important insight into the villagers' minds and attitudes. These interviews combined with theory and existing studies are used for recommendations on how tourism in Mutianyu could be developed into a more socially sustainable direction. This thesis aims to give directions and answers to both The Schoolhouse company and the village authorities on how to benefit from tourism without causing damage to the local community. Finally, it strives to be beneficial to the entire tourism industry as well, as rural tourism is becoming increasingly popular and the problems are becoming increasingly apparent being of current concern.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

Before going deep into the Chinese countryside, it is time for a literature review, which consists of chapters 2 and 3 and which evaluates the concepts of rural tourism, sustainability and social sustainability. It is crucially important to make clear first what is meant by rural tourism and rurality, and what are the problems in contemporary rural communities. The latter tells us why tourism is important to the countryside, which brings us to the impacts of tourism on rural communities. It is important to look at the impacts tourism has on rural communities in general, the positive and the negative ones. The following chapter is about the potential of tourism as a tool of sustaining rural areas, and on the other hand its potential to destroy rural communities – it is all about balance and right management in rural tourism. After that is a chapter describing the importance of community involvement in rural tourism, and last but not least, it is naturally appropriate to look more closely into rural tourism in China.

This thesis focuses on socially sustainable tourism, so before writing more about it, it is necessary to make clear the definitions of sustainability, sustainable tourism and social sustainability. It is also essential to generally evaluate what is actually a socially sustainable rural community and what are its features. Then we will look more closely at the social impacts of tourism and social sustainability in tourism in general. Then it is time to go to the contextual part of this thesis, Mutianyu village. First is told briefly the history and general information about The Great Wall at Mutianyu, after which there is general information about the actual Mutianyu village, and information about its history, its tourism and its social life.

The Schoolhouse company plays a major role in this thesis, and it should be made clear at this point that it is not just one tourism company in the area, it is basically the only one actually in the village and its impacts goes right to the courtyards of the villagers, unlike the development

which takes place up at the Great Wall. First we will look at the business idea and structure of The Schoolhouse company, before looking more closely at the sustainable tourism aspects of its operations. Chapter 6 will tell more about the social impacts of tourism and The Schoolhouse on Mutianyu, and there is also a comparison with another tourism section of The Great Wall, Badaling, which is an example of totally different, more aggressive tourism development. The aim is not to disparage Badaling, surely it is a successful tourism destination, but to show an example what could happen to Mutianyu as well if the concepts of sustainability are not taken seriously. After this it is time for the empirical part of the thesis.

As stated before, the empirical part of this thesis consists of twelve qualitative interviews with villagers of Mutianyu. These interviews reveal to some extent the attitudes and experiences of local inhabitants regarding tourism in the village, important when talking about social sustainability. The research methods are described before discussing the results of the interviews. The last chapter include conclusions and recommendations for the future, which are drawn from the interviews, existing theory and some previous cases. In the end there is, naturally, a bibliography listing all the literate sources employed in this thesis, offering recommendations for further reading on the subject.

2 Rural tourism

Tourism in rural areas has grown significantly in recent years and decades all around the world, partly because of market forces – seeking new kinds of destinations – and partly because of government initiatives resulting from the declining population and economy of the countryside (Lane 1994, 13). For many visitors rural areas are attractive choices of destination and their popularity has significantly increased, and this has brought its positive as well as negative impacts (Page & Connell 2006, 424). This chapter explores the concepts of rurality and rural tourism, the potential of tourism as a tool for development in rural areas and its threats to rural communities. The importance of community involvement is further highlighted, moreover the specific conditions of rural tourism in China are evaluated.

2.1 Definitions of rural tourism

A natural starting point for this thesis is to define what is actually meant by rural tourism. First of all, defining rurality is not a simple matter. There has been plenty of discussion about rurality in academic texts, but a consensus has not been reached what it specifically is (Page & Connell 2006, 425; Small 2000). Glyptis (1991 in Page & Connell 2006, 425) defines rural as anything non-urban, anything beyond the urban edge. This definition, however, has received lots of criticism because it does not provide any special features for rurality. Wilderness, for example, is not usually considered to be rural, yet, it is included in Glyptis' definition. The same problem is apparent in the definition offered by United States Census Bureau (in Rural Assistance Centre 2008) which defines rural by first defining urban and then defining rural by exclusion. Zhou & Ma (2009, 294) argue that the term rural, especially in China, refers to traditions and culture that are closely connected to land and the seasonal nature of land use. They claim that rural exists as a counterpoint to urban, which tries to protect people from seasonality. It seems that defining rural in one particular way does not seem possible or even purposeful. Most commonly used definitions focus on population density, which evidently is an important feature, however, personal and social perceptions probably provide a better understanding for rural. Small (2000) argues that rurality is best thought to be a “construct” and the meaning of it depending on what is the context in which it is described. Different contexts include demographic (definitions using population density), social (definitions taking into account the social essence of rural), economic (definitions using economic activities, such as farming), psychological (definitions seeing rural as a state-of-mind) and cultural (definitions focusing on lifestyles of rural people) (Small 2000).

The rural which is usually relevant in rural tourism is a space which includes features of all of the contexts above. A practical “definition” or more like a division is offered for example by Heikkilä, Rintala, Airio and Kainulainen (2002, 22) who cover in their study rural areas close to cities, and sparsely populated rural areas. This does not include any psychological or social aspects, but it takes into account the crucial feature that the definitions above failed to do: rural areas should be populated, be as sparsely as it might. The distinction is practical also when it comes to tourism, as the nature of tourism and its impacts are often significantly different in rural areas close to cities than in remote rural areas.

Rural tourism is simply defined as tourism activities that occur in rural areas. When discussing rural tourism, it is important to recognize – and it is more and more recognized today – that a rural tourism product consists of the environmental features of the area, the built environment and the social aspects of the community. (Page & Connell 2006, 438.) It is characterized by being located in rural areas as well as being closely linked to nature and traditional cultures or lifestyles, and heritage. It is also usually small in scale, highly diverse due to the complexity of countryside and it involves the local community, as opposed to for example urban tourism or beach destinations. (Zhong & Ma 2009, 295.) Rural tourism is also highly dominated by small-sized tourism enterprises (Mitchell & Hall 2005, 3). These features are also highlighted in Lane’s (1994 in Page & Connell 2006, 428) paper “what is rural tourism?”. Although often falsely thought to be almost synonyms, there is an important distinction between nature-based tourism and rural tourism, which is simply put that nature-based tourism does not usually use the local community or culture as any kind of resource, but in rural tourism the community is a key factor. Distinctions can be fuzzy due to a number of reasons, though. (Zhong & Ma 2009, 295.)

Page and Connell (2006, 429) perceive rural tourism as a more complex concept and divides it into three categories depending on the formality of the tourism activity (see figure 1 below). Informal rural tourism is low key, focuses on the natural environment and is non-commercialized. It relies on individual ability and knowledge of the rural environment. The characteristics of formal rural tourism include high level of organization, marketing, employment and infrastructure and it seems to be highly commercialized. It is focused mainly on purpose-built attractions without rural themes and consists mostly of organized holidays. The third category falls between these two, combining low key with small scale and creates opportunities for economic diversification while being averagely commercialized. This kind of rural tourism consists of for example lunches in village inns and overnight stays in guest houses.

(Page & Connell 2006, 429.) This theory is relevant in this thesis, as the tourism development by The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu fits in perfectly to the “in-between” category, which is arguably the most appropriate one when it comes to social sustainability in tourism. To my opinion this division seems appropriate, because it does take into account that there are different forms of tourism activity in rural areas and each of them requires different kinds of approaches – this division recognizes that it is not enough to simply state that rural tourism is tourism in rural areas, there must be more to it.

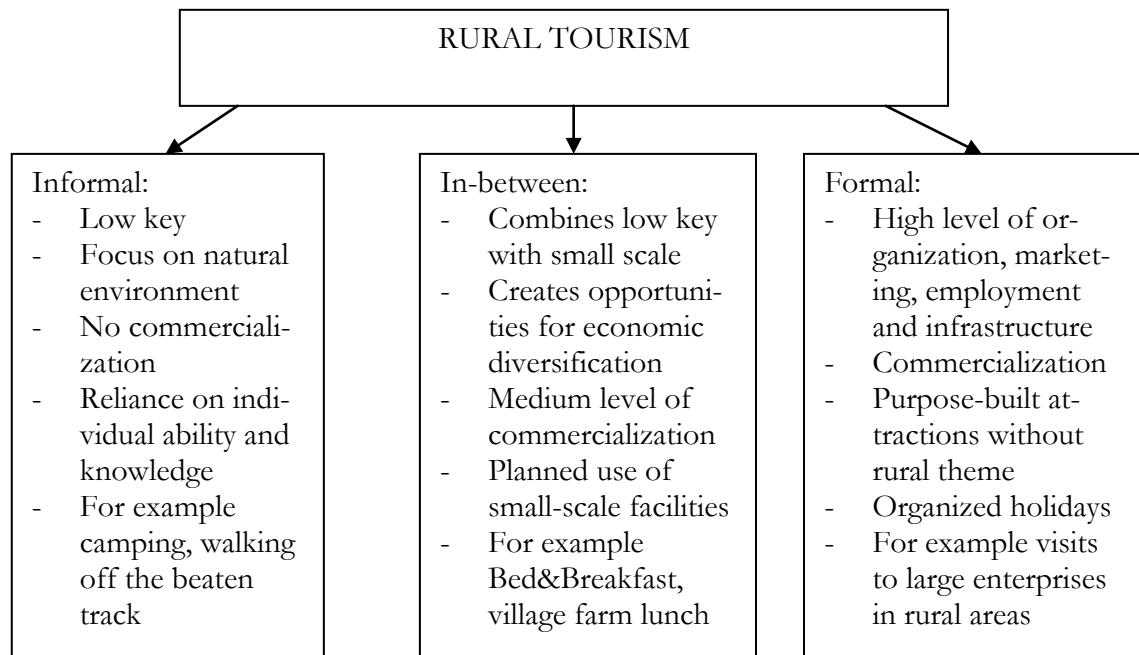


Figure 1. Rural tourism divided into three categories (Page & Connell 2006, 429)

Because this thesis focuses on community aspects of rural tourism, it is purposeful to briefly define what is meant by “community”. As in so many other terms, a consensus defining the meaning of “community” has not exactly been reached. The key concept, at least when examining a rural community, is the physical concentration, the fact that the members of a community live and work in a certain area. However, the term “community” also includes aspects such as common interests between people, common ecology or locality, or common social system or structure. (Rapport 1996, 114.) Community surely is more than merely a geographical living area, it is also about belonging, about a milieu that is most essentially “theirs” with common norms, opportunities and activities. Community in rural areas is traditionally more important than in urban areas, as can be observed from a study in Finland by Heikkilä et al. (2002, 79) where 35% of inhabitants of remote rural area said to have close relations with the community, whereas only 17% of urban answerers said to be close with their neighbours.

2.2 Problems in contemporary rural communities

Rural areas are dynamic places where changes happen all the time, but there is no doubt that more radical change has occurred in post-second-world-war period than ever before (Wilson, Fesenmaier D., Fesenmaier J., & Van Es 2001, 12) and still in 21st century the countryside is undergoing an unprecedented change. Indeed, that is the one thing academics seem to agree on. (Garrod, Wornell & Youell 2006, 117.) Changes in agricultural technology, practises and policies throughout the second half of 20th century have created rapidly growing unemployment, falling incomes and economic marginalization of small farms around the countryside worldwide. In many regions, the number of farms has dramatically declined and industrial farms have taken control of the production. This combined with the fact that developed technology has resulted in lesser need for employment in the surviving farms, has created serious lack of employment opportunities and thus large-scale out-migration to urban areas and serious aging of the population (Wilson et al. 2001, 12). Accordingly, the elderly seems to be the group most likely to stay in the area. When the population declines, the demand for services also declines which encourages more people to out-migrate to places where there are services or demand for services (Page & Connell 2006, 427). These problems have been especially critical since the 1970s due to economic restructuring and farm crisis. As a result, many rural areas have started to seek non-traditional ways to get income and tourism has turned out to be a worthy sustaining tool. (Wilson et al. 2001, 12.)

To some extent, the case is the same almost all over the world, and while many remote rural areas in China do not have the problem of declining due to the virtual impossibility of outmigration, the villages around big cities such as Beijing face this problem very sharply. In addition, rural areas close to urban centres face the problem of often being sustained by industrial or large-scale tourism development, usually destroying the former community as it was. It seems rather difficult to find a way to sustain rural areas without taking away the very essence that makes them rural. Second-house business is one way that has been found out to be a good way to sustain rural areas, but, even though they do offer benefits for communities, it has created lots of critical debate because second-house owners may exacerbate the problems of service provision when the community itself is declining (Page & Connell 2006, 427).

Entering to a more detailed level, which is particularly a problem in northern Chinese rural areas, is the severe lack of water, and because the issue was raised by a number of interviewees in this study, it is appropriate to address it here. It is estimated that more than one billion peo-

ple in the world do not have access to safe drinking water and, consequently, thousands of people every day die due to water-related diseases. If the same development continues, it is estimated that in 2050 two thirds of the world's population will live with chronic water shortages and polluted water. (Katko 2009, 197.) Lack of water resources, especially in the north where Mutianyu is situated, is actually one of the key constraints limiting sustainable development in rural China. China's annual per capita water availability is only a quarter of the world's average. More than 300 million rural inhabitants do not have access to safe drinking water and 46% of North China's population is at high level of water stress. (National Geographic 2008, 36.)

The figure (figure 2) below offered by Page and Connell (2006, 428) concisely illustrates how problems in rural communities lead us to the overall subject of this thesis – rural tourism.

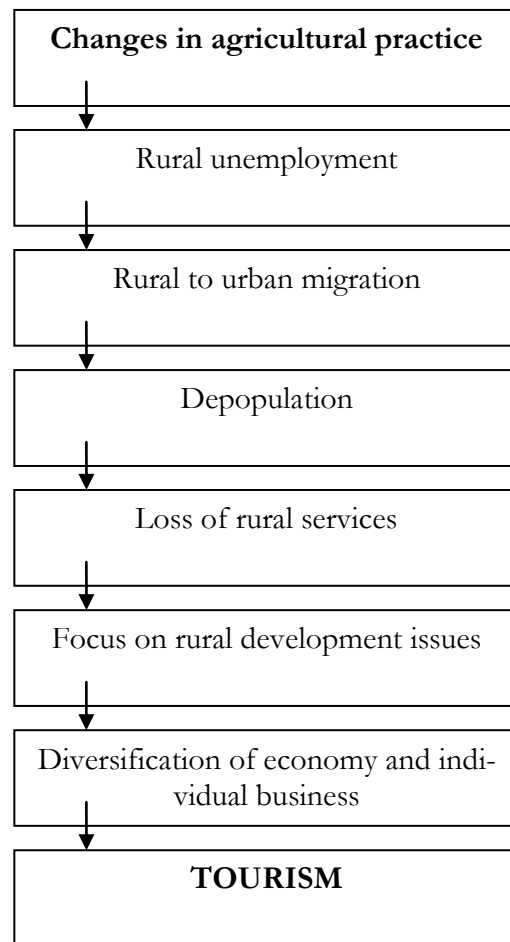


Figure 2. The context of rural tourism (Page & Connell 2006, 428)

When it comes to tourism, rural communities are characterized by a number of problems. In the global tourism market, rural areas have relatively limited pulling power, although their

popularity is increasing. Perhaps a bigger problem, not unrelated to the former problem, is that rural tourism remains highly fragmented consisting usually of a large number of small, family-run businesses. While this certainly helps keeping the benefits inside the community, this limits the industry's ability to create and maintain a clear and competitive destination image. Thus there is often an ambiguous and potentially harmful image emerged, which does not help the problem of limited pulling power. (Garrod et al. 2006, 124.) Rural tourism is also often highly seasonal and geographically concentrated, while lack of local control often brings its own problems (Swarbrooke 1999, 162-163). Still, in many rural areas which are faced with the economic decline among other problems mentioned in this chapter, tourism becomes an important economic development tool creating jobs and improving the living standards of the area (Gosse & Jolliffe 2006, 5; Swarbrooke 1999, 164).

2.3 Impacts of tourism on rural communities

One of the most significant subjects of debate in contemporary tourism is its positive and negative impacts in general (Cooper & Hall 2008, 161). Tourism has always and will always impact in some way everything and everyone it touches. In addition to tourism's undeniable role in economic development, it brings enormous social and cultural as well as environmental impacts. (Xu, Sofield & Bao 2008, 1.) According to Theobald (1998, 59), however, positive impacts such as improvements in economic conditions and social understanding should in theory exceed negative impacts. However, as studies traditionally have dealt with economic impacts, the adverse social and physical consequences often have been overshadowed. (Theobald 1998, 59.) Fortunately, ten years after Theobald's argument, Cooper and Hall (2008, 161) note that tourism's undesirable social impacts are becoming more and more recognized.

Tourism has numerous impacts on rural areas which can be environmental, economical, social or cultural, positive or negative. Community residents do not often recognize or understand the economic and social benefits derived from tourism and tend to focus on negative impacts (Gosse & Jolliffe 2006, 20), but nevertheless there are also significant positive impacts of tourism on rural communities. It is important to evaluate these general impacts of tourism when doing any research relating to how tourism affects a certain environment or community. In this chapter the impacts are evaluated rather generally, while more detailed information about social impacts can be found in chapter 3.4.

Probably the most obvious positive impact of tourism on destination communities is that it brings in significant income that creates business turnover, household income, employment

and, of course, government revenue. It assists the viability of existing businesses, be they tourism or non-tourism related, and increases the living standards of the community. (Theobald 1998, 65; Page & Connell 2006, 432; Cooper & Hall 2008, 166.) Tourism is one of the most labour oriented industries there is, which explains its important contribution to employment and income creation (Mitchell & Hall 2005, 3). In addition, some portion of income received by the tourism business of a destination is re-spent within the local community resulting in further positive impacts on the economy (Theobald 1998, 65). Tourism also attracts usually significant amounts of foreign investment (Cooper & Hall 2008, 166). These positive economic impacts are demonstrated for example in a survey by Sun and Bao (2008, 24-25) where in a village called Dai in China, a rural tourism destination, the average monthly income of the villagers was notably increased by tourism development: In 2002 it was about 240€, whereas in 2005 it was about 360€¹. The study also showed that tourism development in the village has significantly diversified the economy and provided non-farming jobs. Another good example is a study by the same authors from a tiny remote Yubeng village in China, where due to tourism the annual income of the village as a whole rose from approximately 14000€ in 2001 to almost 63000€ in 2005, making household incomes higher than average in the province².

As can be seen, linkage between tourism and local economy has considerable potential to improve the incomes and employment of a community, but increased incomes also, unfortunately, often lead to increased income gap between wealthy and poor (Cooper & Hall 2008, 166). Furthermore, there is also a great risk of leakage from the locality meaning that the money from tourism goes somewhere else than to the community (Saxena, Clark, Oliver & Ilbery 2007, 11, 18), for example to multinational corporations. In worst scenarios this can lead to so called “neo-colonialism”. In simple words this means that in tourism development the power and benefits are taken away from local level and concentrated into the hands of foreign companies (Theobald 1998, 69). Thus tourism is controlled by foreigners, not locals, often minimising the benefits for local community. This is particularly true in all-inclusive resorts, but also a threat in rural tourism. This does not mean, however, that a company cannot be foreign-owned and still benefit the local community in many ways.

¹ Dai village is situated in Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan province. Dai village is a typical tourist destination focusing on Dai nationality culture and history (Sun & Bao 2008, 24)

² The village has a population of only 163 people and is located in remote mountainous area of Yunnan province (Sun & Bao 2008, 37)

Tourism is claimed to be more effective than other industries in generating income and employment in remote, less developed regions, which makes it an ideal tool of developing the infamously poor Chinese countryside. Arguably, it is in poor rural areas that tourism can have its most significant positive impacts. Where people are traditionally poor farmers, the incomes are likely to increase considerably when they become involved in tourism. (Theobald 1998, 65-66.) However, the desire for better income is often closely linked to a desire to get a better housing and this unfortunately too often leads to tearing down old houses, also those with cultural or historical importance, and building new ones which are not necessarily appropriate for the cultural setting. Building new houses can be cheaper than restoring existing old houses not fit for modern amenities, which would be a more sustainable option. (Ryan, Huimin & Meng 2009, 248.) Fortunately, tourism can act as a contributor to architectural conservation, as a saviour of culturally valuable buildings, as tourism uses the built cultural environment as an important resource (Hall 2008, 31-32; Cooper & Hall 2008, 166). The Schoolhouse, for example, has given a major contribution to Mutianyu by restoring a great number of old abandoned village houses regardless the fact that building a new house would have been cheaper. Similar contribution is recognized in a research about German second-house owners in Sweden. The research found that German visitors were buying and maintaining old buildings falling into disrepair, thus sustaining local heritage and providing income to local communities.

One major positive impact of tourism to rural communities is often a significant improvement in infrastructure (Theobald 1998, 66; Cooper & Hall 2008, 166; Page & Connell 2006). As Theobald (1998, 66) points out, the development of tourism in formerly undeveloped rural areas requires the existence of proper infrastructure among other facilities. Usually the infrastructure is indivisible in a way that when providing them for tourism industry they are provided to local people as well, thus improving their quality of life and access to services. However, the improved transportation infrastructure can also result in negative impacts. According to a study conducted by Zhang & Zhang (2006, 4,6-7) about the spatial nature of the residential land prices in greater Beijing area, residential land price was observed to be highly influenced by the degree of infrastructure facilities. They found that well-developed transportation infrastructure, mainly highways or good roads, positively contributes to residential land price. Thus, if tourism in a rural community requires well developed infrastructure, the land price in the village is likely to rise, even if residents would not get any benefit from tourism. This, however, can be seen as a positive consequence as well even in the local community among property owners (Cooper & Hall 2008, 161-162).

In addition, creation of better infrastructure can lead to increased taxes on local residents which can result in severe social tension (Cooper et al. 2005, 237). What affects land prices even more is that growing tourism in a region makes increasing demands upon the scarce resources of that area – land in particular is highly demanded, meaning that land prices easily rise to the level when they are hardly affordable by local population (Theobald 1998, 66; Page & Connell 2006, 432). Hand in hand with the rise of land prices comes the rise of real estate prices. Hall (2008, 235) even went on to argue that in many cases the most significant impact of tourism is its impact on real-estate values. Farmers and landowners are tempted, or even pressured to sell their land or houses, obtaining no doubt significant short-term gains, but leaving them landless with only low paid work available. In general, much of the benefit from high land prices accrue to parties who purchase the land before it has been planned for development, and then sell it forward when plans are done. These problems can be solved or reduced in many cases by two possible means: if the government buys the land at an early stage for a fair market price, or if the land is rented rather than sold to developers. (Theobald 1998, 66.) Another negative economic impact is that rural tourism encourages dependence on industry prone to uncontrollable change, which potentially makes the livelihoods uncertain. It also creates part-time and seasonal employment (Page & Connell 2006, 432).

Then we can proceed to the environmental impacts of tourism. What has been arguably the biggest concern for a long time when it comes to the impacts of tourism is that badly or carelessly planned tourism greatly affects the natural environment of destinations. The negative impacts at worst may include destruction of important ecosystems such as mangroves, rainforests and farmlands to give room for tourism development. Coral reefs are damaged by tourists, air is polluted by traffic and the water by discharging waste and sewage from hotels to the sea. Tourists can also create a tremendous amount of garbage in tourism destinations, damage crops and farmland and, although usually unknowingly, introduce alien forms of plant life into delicate ecosystems on their clothing or some other similar way. Tourism also creates very often “aesthetic pollution” which means that buildings completely out of place in their environment, completely alien in their design, are built into a destination damaging the cultural and scenic environment. These are only a few examples of the negative environmental impacts tourism can cause, but one should remember that tourism is often also a highly positive force in environmental conservation. Tourism is usually dependent on the natural environment and it is in its best interest to conserve it. (Theobald 1998, 74-75; Hall 2008 31.) Indeed, tourism can actually help in each issue mentioned above, if carefully and responsibly managed.

The relevant question is whether tourism creates greater benefits for a community than other possible forms of development, and whether the benefits are more significant than the costs (Theobald 1998, 67). In Chinese rural areas, the alternative is often industrialisation, and thus from a sustainable point of view, tourism is arguably almost always a better alternative. However, it should be remembered that as one aspect of social sustainability is social and economic diversity, usually it is desirable to promote several forms of development in a village – only tourism can be too narrow approach, although it arguably should play the main role.

In most parts of the world, especially in China, rural areas that has been under tourism development could consider themselves fortunate compared to rural areas without tourism. Tourism usually means, as mentioned above, improved facilities and infrastructure, and increased employment opportunities (Butler in Williams 2003, 292). However, it has been noted that too often when developing rural tourism, especially when it is related to some form of conservation, the locals' access to resources is greatly reduced. This is, of course, sometimes inevitable, but what is of great importance is that compensation to the people whose access to resources is reduced should always be made. The compensation can be, as it was in a certain case in rural China, monthly payments, free electricity, free water or free education. (Stone 2002, 136.)

2.4 Potential of tourism as a saviour and destroyer of rural communities

Tourism development in rural areas can be divided in two alternative scenarios. In areas where the traditional rural economy and society is declining tourism is seen as a potential saviour. However, in areas which already receive considerable number of tourists the emphasis is on managing the tourism so that it does not act as a destroyer of the host community and environment. (Swarbrooke 1999, 161.) In general terms, the purpose of tourism development in rural areas is to provide opportunities for economic as well as social development (Page & Connell 2006, 432).

It is argued that tourism can not only keep people from out-migrating from rural areas, but also attract those seeking jobs and development opportunities. It often also encourages females to get away from purely domestic roles and to enhance them as citizens. (Zhang, Yan-yan & Liu 2009, 283.) Especially young adults in rural areas may perceive tourism as their best economic possibility in the future (Huh & Vogt 2008, 454). Indeed, one of the first academic writings about rural tourism decades ago highlighted the potential of tourism in sustaining and developing rural communities and areas. The most significant positive potential benefits of tourism for rural communities are that it reduces poverty by increasing the levels of income,

helps to prevent outmigration by providing jobs, diversifies the rural economy by providing various opportunities, improves infrastructure and brings new ideas from urban areas. (Zhou & Ma in 2009, 295.) In some rural areas, particularly the ones close to urban centres, there has already been noted a “repopulation”, which has been no doubt aided by tourism and recreation. One form of this repopulation is second house owners (Page & Connell 2006, 427) which is hoped to be a sustaining force for Mutianyu village as well, regardless the concerns mentioned in chapter 2.2.

A study conducted by Gosse and Jolliffe (2006, 10-13) in Kingston Peninsula, rural Canada, shows how important tourism can be for the development and well-being of a rural community. 75% of the people interviewed³ stated that tourism development is essential for the overall well-being of the Kingston Peninsula. Also, over 90% said that tourism is not too dominant in the area and thus should be more developed, and nearly 60% could not see any problems unfolding for the community with increased tourism development. However, the study also highlighted a problem related to the fragmented nature of rural tourism (mentioned in chapter 2.2), as over 50% of the answers agreed that if certain tourism ideas are developed by certain people in the community, others automatically oppose. Almost half also said that the residents and tourism industry is not in agreement how tourism should be developed, about another half being neutral. (Gosse & Jolliffe 2006, 10-13.)

Tourism obviously is not the only option as a tool for development in declining rural areas. For example, according to a study conducted by Stone (2002, 121) (more in chapter 2.6) in the villages in question logging - which used to be the main industry in the villages but has been since replaced by tourism – was economically more beneficial for the community. It created greater revenues, offered more employment and allowed the community greater access to resources. However, it also caused major environmental damages, especially for the rainforests of the area. Tourism, which is now based on environmental protection in the area, may not offer as much economical benefits, but it protects the environment and arguably offers the local residents better living conditions. It has to be remembered that tourism specifically has a great potential in sustaining local communities in a sustainable way without gradually destroying the area. It can play a major role in environmental (natural and built) protection because the tourism product depends on them. Unutilised buildings can be restored and taken into

³ 30 tourism stakeholders were interviewed in Kingston Peninsula, a rural area with 3000 inhabitants in Canada, in New Brunswick province.

tourism use, saving them from eventual destruction. Tourism businesses can also make payments into conservation funds or become a member of a certain environmental scheme. One of the best ways to benefit local community is to adopt a policy of buying only local food and products when possible. Tourism in rural areas can also indirectly sustain the rural way of life by branding the destination based on local distinctiveness. (Garrod et al. 2006, 121-122.)

Tourism has often been recognized as tool for safeguarding the integrity of the countryside and maintaining rural ways of life in addition to its economic impacts (Garrod et al. 2006, 118), which is more than can be said about mining or industrial development, for example.

Then there is the risk of tourism causing overwhelming negative impacts virtually destroying the rural community. If the development of tourism solely focuses on tourists' need for fun and entertainment, there is a risk that the sense of rurality will disappear altogether and tourism becomes socially unsustainable. When developing tourism, especially when it is observed to be profitable, foreign resources and capital is often derived to the rural area, sometimes changing the area to yet another urban complex thus destroying the rural community that tourism was probably meant to sustain in the first place. (Zhou & Ma 2009, 297.) Cooper and Hall (2008, 167) argue that tourism can simply lead to weakening or loss of community, although the other possibility is renewal of the community. It is all about the balance. There is an inherent responsibility to recognize the long-term impacts of tourism on rural areas, bearing in mind both the negative and positive impacts related to the development. (Page & Connell 2006, 439.)

The line between making a place more appealing and tourist-friendly, and destroying the very essence which makes a rural area special is a very indistinct one (Williams 2006, 16). The relationship between tourism and the natural and social environment is especially close in rural areas, which makes sensitive planning and management of the rural area itself and the tourism activity extremely important (Page & Connell 2006, 425). As Van Den Berghe (2006, 552) says, tourism together with migration is today one of the most dynamic sources of destruction and modification. One of the major problems is that tourism and its impacts still have not received the necessary attention from governments. There are often ministers of tourism, but these are often "far down the pecking order of influence". (Hickman 2007, xv.) The result of the widespread lack of governmental "focus" is that tourism still is one of the most unregulated industries in the world, mainly controlled by a very limited numbers of tourism enterprises. These are, naturally, for-profit corporations and not necessarily keen on sustainability issues, although it undeniably has become increasingly important issue to companies. (Hick-

man 2007, xv.) Butler (in Williams 2003, 292) also notes that tourism has traditionally suffered from public-sector neglect when it comes to tourism planning and plans are usually mostly just marketing plans including little development control.

Market forces do not ensure that tourism development is appropriate, either. Careful planning, management and balancing by tourism developers, enterprises and local authorities is needed to reduce environmental damage as well as conflicts of interest. This requires far-sighted actions and recognizing the fact that in addition to exploitation of environment and communities being unethical, it is unprofitable in the long-term. (Theobald 1998, 59, 66.) The problem is that rural tourism is often managed by outsiders who have rather little understanding of or interest in the community and its environment. Poor management of the natural and social environment can lead to their ultimate destruction. (Page & Connell 2006, 433.)

One of the most important tasks in tourism management is to develop a scale and pace of the tourism development that is suitable for the local community, to ensure the sustainability of the community and the tourism product (Zhang et al. 2009, 270). According to Theobald (1998, 73), there is a relationship between the density of the tourism development and the growth of local resentment towards tourism. At its best, tourism can become a community enterprise that offers benefits and possibilities to the community and to the entrepreneurs. The more the locals are involved in the tourism development, there more benefits they will eventually get. Also, community involvement arguably is important in establishing the authenticity in rural tourism – otherwise, it may become just a fake reproduction of what it should be. (Zhang et al. 2009, 270.) The importance of community involvement is discussed more closely in next chapter.

2.5 Community involvement in rural tourism

As long time ago as in 1985, Murphy (1985⁴, 138) highlighted the significance of providing participation opportunities for local community in his famous book about community approach in tourism noting that “it should not be forgotten that it is the residents home which is being put on display and the residents who must act as hosts, whether they are directly involved or not with the industry”. There is no doubt that for tourism to be sustainable the local community must be taken into account, it must be sustained. Sun and Bao (2008, 31) even

⁴ This source is old, but as it is one of the most famous books in this field of study, it would be inappropriate to write about socially sustainable tourism without a few quotations from him.

argue that tasks such as cultural heritage and natural environment protection simply cannot be completed without community participation. Local involvement is, after all, one of the most important requirements for the sustainability of rural tourism (Mitchell & Hall 2005, 5).

Community participation in short means that “during the process of decision making, development and planning, management and inspection, the community views and their needs are fully considered” (Sun & Bao 2008, 23), or it can be said even simpler that it is a process involving all so that decision-making is shared (Okazaki 2008, 511). The potential of tourism in sustaining rural communities is closely connected to the level of local participation. Community based tourism has been increasingly popular in recent years and it has been seen as an effective approach to sustainable tourism, tourism that involves the local community and brings significant benefits to it. (Xu et al. 2008, 1; Okazaki 2008, 511.) Stone (2002, 117, 137) also argues that a failure to involve local people in tourism development eventually easily leads to damage of the resource base and reduction of tourism’s potential to generate benefits. He made a conclusion in his research about rural tourism in China that for tourism to develop successfully a widespread support from the local community is crucial. He noted that if locals gain social or economic benefits from tourism they are likely to have a positive attitude towards tourism development, even though they would be restricted to access some resources. Arola and Suontausta (2005, 35) also noted that in the future the preference for tourist destinations will be more strongly connected to the support by local population. Okazaki (2008, 511) says that community participation is a good way to increase the positive benefits of tourism while decreasing its negative impacts, and that is, after all, the ultimate goal of sustainable tourism. This has been fortunately increasingly recognized and for that reason in recent years planners and entrepreneurs have started to realise that they must take the host community and its views into account in order to create sustainable tourism (Zhang et al. 2009, 269).

Local participation can exist in many forms and does not necessarily require education or experience. It can simply be public forums where local residents can voice their concerns and make suggestions, give opinions. The main point is that the local community needs to feel appreciated and listened to. Participation opportunities increase the local support for tourism, and without local support rural tourism is highly unlikely to succeed (Stone 2002, 137; Huh & Vogt 2008, 446). This is reinforced by the study conducted by Gosse & Jolliffe (2006, 19-20, mentioned in previous chapter) where almost 60% of the respondents answered that everyone in the community needs to be involved in tourism development, not just the businesses. Furthermore, it is argued that community involvement is especially beneficial because that way

community will build up the capacity to tackle future problems and can break away from the control of tour operators and other powerful groups. Also, approaches without community involvement have failed in the past to resolve the problems regarding sustainable tourism. (Xu et al. 2008, 6.)

Another study was conducted in rural China in the early years of this decade, where in a village dependent on mining and timber harvesting started to operate a tourism company renting local residents' rooms for bed & breakfast guests – after four years significant increase in the incomes of locals was reported. In the same study was observed that public participation and active listening of locals was the most important factor in making the villagers feel positive and supportive about the tourism development. (Ryan et al. 2009, 255.)

Furthermore, the residents' opportunity to influence the re-construction and to take part in local decision-making is as important part of social sustainability as any other. Actually, this participation, at least according to Matthies (2001, 135), can prevent outmigration - which is a major problem in rural areas – because it promotes identification with the area and sense of belonging. Issues like the opportunity to participate in one's living area and access to political decisions are becoming increasingly important aspects of social inclusion, especially in the case of unemployment. (Matthies 2001, 130, 135.)

Academics have classified different forms of community participation in many ways, but a clear enough yet not too simple model is offered by Wang and Wall (2005 in Xu et al. 2008, 7-8). According to them, four basic patterns can be recognized:

1. Community participates in decision making and gets benefits from tourism
2. Community participates in decision making but gets virtually no benefits from tourism
3. Community does not participate in decision making but does get benefits from tourism
4. Community does not participate in decision making nor gets any benefits from tourism

The first pattern obviously would be the ideal case, while the last one would be the worst. Arguably the most common case in rural tourism is the third case, which according to my observations seems to be the case in Mutianyu village as well.

What is also important in this context is that the marketing and packaging of tourist products, which should be distinctively local, should be done in co-operation with the local community, resulting in better experiences for both tourists and local community (Saxena et al. 2007, 11).

It must be noted, though, that the point is specifically in participation opportunities rather than in actual participation. This must be said because in many cases local people probably do not want to participate, and that does not mean that tourism could not succeed. For example in China, which is a highly centralized country, local communities do not necessarily have high motivation to participate in tourism development and decision making. Planning of economic development is traditionally seen as government's duty. (Xu et al. 2008, 8.) Furthermore, community participation can be ineffective due to locals' lack of experience, knowledge and education (Okazaki 2008, 511-512). Even if this was the case, though, it has been argued that developers still need to observe changes in local residents' attitudes towards tourism, because this will provide good insights in the community development and residents' quality of life (Huh & Vogt 2008, 446), and it will also show if the tourism development is "on the right track". Tracking residents' attitudes is crucial in rural community, because the population tends to be dominated by elderly and studies have shown that elderly are more likely to have negative feelings about tourism than other groups of people. (Huh & Vogt 2008, 448, 454.) Lastly can be said, as Okazaki (2008, 512) argues, that even though there is some criticism towards community participation, a better means to achieve sustainability simply has not been suggested.

2.6 Rural tourism in China

Due to the enormous size and long history of China, the tourism potential in the country is almost limitless. Since China introduced its general open-door policy and economic reforms in the late 1970s, tourism, especially international tourism, has expanded significantly and has become a major industry in China. (Leese 2008, 998; National Geographic 2008, 56.) In 1980s, however, China's tourism saw various problems as the growth was outpacing the ability to manage tourism. Also transportation infrastructure and education possibilities were truly inadequate, service level was low and neglect for environmental protection was a serious problem. (Stone 2002, 28-29.) The worldwide recession in early 1980s also brought its own problems (Brenda & Costa 2006, 198). When China moved into 1990s, new attitude was taken towards tourism, foreigners were given more freedom, problems were virtually solved and doors opened even more than before (Stone 2002, 29-20; Brenda & Costa 2006, 198). Following a deliberate effort both in terms of government policies and investments, China has become a major destination for international tourism, and it is estimated that by 2015⁵ China will

⁵ Or by 2020 according to Leese (2008, 998)

be the number one tourism destination in terms of tourist numbers in the world (National Geographic 2008, 56). Tourist arrivals rose during the period from 1978 to 2003 from 1.8 million to 91.7 million (Breda & Costa 2006, 197). In 2008 international visits totalled approximately 53 million and tourism revenue was about 40 billion US dollars, ranking internationally 4th and 5th, respectively (UNWTO 2009, 6). At the same time, rural based tourism has also increased rapidly (Zhang et al. 2009, 271).

The rapid growth of tourism in China surely has brought its benefits, but is also increasingly characterised by negative social, ecological as well as economical impacts. Still, fortunately, according to Zhang et al. (2009, 268) empirical studies conducted in China in recent years indicate that tourism in general has positively contributed to a social and economical development of a locality. Nonetheless, there has been serious differences and problems in community involvement, distribution of benefits and implementing community approach, (Zhang et al. 2009, 268), all of which are crucial aspects of social sustainability. Also Sun and Bao (2008, 23) note that community involvement in Chinese rural tourism has a long way to go and at the present there is a low level of local participation.

A major part of Chinese population still lives in villages in rural areas – 57% officially in 2008 (CIA 2009) although according to some estimates even 70-80% of the total population (Zhou & Ma 2009, 297). There are over a million villages in China, which naturally greatly differ from each other in size, economics, character and construction style. After the establishment of the communist People's Republic of China in 1949, the government took total control of rural areas and eventually in the 1950s villages were re-organized to be communes where people worked and lived together without any privacy. A village became a "team". After Mao Zedong's⁶ death in 1976 and subsequent economic crises, the communes were gradually abolished and the land was re-distributed to households. Agricultural reforms followed and diversification in rural areas was possible again - private enterprises rapidly started to grow. Many villages turned themselves into rural industrial centres, and this with many new reforms gave rise to urbanization process in rural areas, obviously destroying the rural essence of various villages. The socio-economic changes resulting from these policies and reforms radically transformed many villages. Also, what had been impossible for decades, a major part of rural labour force migrated to cities, at least temporarily. (Leese 2008, 1029-1032.) Indeed, in the be-

⁶ Mao Zedong was the chairman of communist party and a dictator of China from 1949 to 1976.

ginning of 1990s, somewhere between 100 and 200 million labourers left farms to seek employment opportunities in cities (National Geographic 2008, 62).

Migration in large scale, new birth control policies and new sources of income among other reasons changed the traditional village structures in most parts of China. Less and less villagers actually counts as peasants anymore and villages are run by the new economic elite including the owners and managers of new village enterprises, instead of traditional clans. Fortunately, the processes of differentiation in villages have also shown to encourage a revival of traditional village culture and structures - a revival of popular religion, rebuilding of temples and return to traditional family structures can be observed. Anyway, there is no denying that a village as an agricultural community is replaced today by more differentiated village developments. (Leese 2008, 1029-1032.) Some villages obviously has been destroyed as such by industrialization or urbanization and more and more villagers are being forced to abandon the traditional way of Chinese life while the country modernizes (National Geographic 2008, 55), but tourism can actually offer a way to make living out of traditions. For example in a study from Dai village (mentioned in chapter 2.3) it was noticed that tourism played a significant role in restoring and preserving traditional culture as a whole - the traditional performances were no doubt aimed to create more income, but this was actually noted to further promote the survival of traditional customs. (Sun & Bao 2008, 29.)

As a consequence to changes mentioned above, state ownership does not exist in rural China anymore to a great extent, at least according to Fan, Heberer and Taubmann (2006, 288). On the other hand, Ryan et al. (2009, 240) argue that in China's "centrally determined legislative frameworks determine the discourse of local application of laws and regulations associated with tourism and local community planning", suggesting that the state is still omnipresent, which is confirmed by my own experience in China as well. Nonetheless, the process of privatization has led to arising of economic irregularities and social inequalities bringing a return to for example usury, child labour as well as economic exploitation of workers in the private sector. How this links to rural tourism is that it has great potential to bring a better economic activity to a rural community and help rural areas to obtain a more sustainable way of development. (Fan et al. 2006, 288-289; Ryan et al. 2009, 252.)

Chinese countryside is still far behind the cities in many sectors including the quality of education, healthcare and economic opportunities and levels of income (Williams 2006, 32; Zhou & Ma 2009, 297). This has made various communities interested in promoting tourism as a tool

of economic development and improvement of the quality of life and tourism surely does have significant potential in this. When rural tourism occurs in China, it usually becomes a significant source of income, not least because the previous income most probably was utterly inadequate. On the other hand, the problem in Chinese rural tourism is that the benefits too often go to investors from outside the community and the local residents enjoy only limited benefits. Rural tourism in China should be more community-based, contributing more directly to the well-being of local residents. (Zhou & Ma 2009, 297.) Tourism development is to a large extent still planned and manipulated by local governments and they usually supports the (often foreign) developers because of the investment money involved. The local community can usually only passively allow the tourism development and simply get a one-off payment of their land.

Community-tourism relationship is easily regarded just as maintaining good relationship with the locals more than encouraging true co-operation. No doubt there is a lack of experience and education amongst villagers in Chinese rural communities and this is perceived as an obstacle to real co-operation in tourism. This lack of education also results in villagers not realizing the impacts of tourism which can eventually lead to serious social problems. It must be noted, as Ryan et al. (2009, 252) argue, that the rural population currently in China in general does not really possess sufficient capabilities to participate actively in tourism planning, which makes the important question of community participation a difficult one. This issue is not helped by the fact that legislative and regulative “spider web” that occurs in China makes it potentially difficult to a villager to become an entrepreneur and gain knowledge and experience that way. For example – relating to a popular rural tourism activity in rural areas around Beijing – orchard visits in rural Beijing are under the authority of Beijing Tourism Authority (BTA), but the orchards themselves under the control of Forestry and Fishing Department. In addition, land use and ownership regulations are highly complex (Ryan et al. 2009, 248, 252). Xu et al. (2008, 8) also argued that unclear property rights of tourism resources is the biggest obstacle for communities to actively get involved in tourism. All this indicates that the nature of Chinese State still creates obstacles for rural tourism entrepreneurship by local villagers and in the long run discourages real community participation. This is partly confirmed by findings of Stone (2002, 118) in his case studies in rural Hainan⁷ where he discovered that tourism related entrepreneurship was virtually non-existent.

⁷ The cases were Jianfengling and Diaoluoshan National Forest Parks in remote Hainan province in China.

In a study conducted by Zhang et al. (2009, 275-276) in 2006 about rural tourism in Beijing area⁸, 69% of the respondents said that they are participated in tourism operations in some way and 40% directly worked for tourism enterprises. Respondents recognized the benefits of tourism in improving local infrastructure, which, according to authors of the study, appears to be a common finding in contemporary Chinese tourism. The study also showed that local communities disagree that tourism is having a negative impact on the environment, on the contrary, and this seems to be a common perception in China. (Zhang et al. 2009, 275-276.) Also in Stone's (2002, 118) case studies half of the local interviewees claimed that tourism has only positive influence on their life, mostly increased income. Increased incomes are highlighted also in a study by He, Li and Wang (2004, 261) about rural tourism in China's Longquanyi County⁹: about one third of the income growth in rural households each year was observed to come from tourism during the high season. Moreover, over 5000 people in the county were engaged in tourism.

However, in Zhang et al. (2009, 275-276) research some of the respondents did complain about the increasing pollution and noise. The problem of noise affecting inhabitants in rural tourism destinations is also noted by Mexa and Collovini (2004, 259, 261-265) and they indeed picked it to be one of the nine indicators when assessing the carrying capacity of rural tourism. They also highlighted that in small towns – or indeed in tiny villages – the problem of noise, for example, is much more serious for the community than in cities. In the same study discussed above (Zhang et al. 2009), there appeared to be no overall negative intrusion in villagers' life by tourism, but it also showed that a sizable minority is beginning to feel some negative impacts of tourism. The industrial impacts were perceived merely positive, while the speed of tourism development was a concern for a number of respondents. In Stone's interviews (2002, 118), on the other hand, as many as 83% of all respondents said they would gladly welcome more tourists. In Stone's research (2002, 118), over 60% of the resident did not think they would personally benefit from increasing tourism, but almost 70% admitted that the community surely would benefit. The most important community benefit was perceived to be stronger economy due to increasing incomes. Interestingly, in Stone's research one major positive benefit of tourism noted in the interviews was better built environment and a better road, which were clearly pointed out in the interviews of this thesis as well.

⁸ Study was conducted in six villages in three rural districts in Beijing Municipality: Pinggu, Yanqing and Miyun. Data is obtained from 243 completed questionnaires and 21 in-depth interviews.

⁹ Longquanyi County is a rural county in Chengdu metropolitan area, in central China. The area is considered to be a model rural tourism area in the country. (He, Li & Wang 2004, 260.)

3 Socially sustainable tourism

Social sustainability has risen to the international discourse in recent years and at the same time there has been serious attempts to understand the importance of the linkage between environment, economy and social issues. Today, even UN and World Bank have developed official indicators relating to social sustainability. (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 11.) Traditionally, however, it has received less attention in sustainability debate than environmental aspects, perhaps because social impacts occur slowly in time and are often intangible (Swarbrooke 1999, 69). This chapter will examine the concepts of social sustainability and socially sustainable tourism, but before going to the social issues it is important first to define what is sustainability in general and what is meant by sustainable tourism.

3.1 What is sustainability and sustainable tourism?

The concept of “sustainability” first emerged at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, arguably to reconcile economic growth and environmental protection (Murray 2006, 338). McKenzie (2004, 1) and Barron and Gauntlett (2002, ii), on the other hand, argues that the concept was discussed already in the 1960s¹⁰. The most famous and still widely accepted definition of sustainable development is that given by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations 1987,1; Matthies 2001, 127). This does offer a good simplified definition, but as Page and Connell (2006, 390-391) note, the concept is more complex and one cannot rely only on one short definition. Most importantly, sustainability can be viewed from different aspects: there are ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability. Surely sustainability works differently if it focuses on ecological sustainability, where the aim is to protect the nature, or if it focuses on economic sustainability where what is being sustained is the economy, one way or the other. (Page & Connell 2006, 390-391.)

Sustainability is a trendy word nowadays and it has a wide range of meanings, as mentioned above. Common with all the meanings is that they all have to do with continuity, with sustaining something. (Murray 2006, 338.) At first, as Murray (2006, 338) argues, sustainability merely replaced the term “environmentalism”, but in time it has come to include a more holistic con-

¹⁰ Hall (2008, 20) mentions that the intellectual heritage of the concept dates back to early 19th century, but the actual term was not developed yet.

cern for environmental change and now the term takes into account the economy, politics, society and culture, not just the nature (Murray 2006, 338). It was in the 1980s when sustainability as a term started to be seen as something more than environmental protection and to be discussed also in somewhere else than in environmental movements (Barron & Gauntlett 2002, iii). It has become a term around which much science and business has organized ever since (Murray 2006, 338), and the same can be said about tourism. However, the problem and reason for large-scale criticism has traditionally been that when the term is defined so vaguely in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders in all aspects, it easily becomes a “smokescreen” behind which businesses can easily hide and actually continue to do business in unsustainable way while playing lip service to the principles of sustainability (McKenzie 2004, 2). As Lane (1994, 17) noted already 15 years ago, the very concept of sustainable tourism is often “attacked by developers seeking rapid, short-term return on their investments”.

Tourism is very closely linked with issues of sustainable development. Given the size and volume of tourism industry, tourism undeniably is a contributing factor to various problems such as climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and cultural diversity and endless economic restructuring (Hall 2008, 19). Sustainable tourism is considered to be most relevant in rural areas, where the relationship between the tourists and the environment is most obvious (Page & Connell 2006, 392). When talking about sustainable tourism, it is important to bear in mind that it is not just about protecting the nature – ecological sustainability – but it is also about sustaining local communities, their cultures, improving their living standards and also about keeping the tourism business economically sustainable. To guarantee long-term sustainability, all of these aspects must be balanced together (UNWTO 2004; Hall 2008, 27-28).

When it comes to worldwide tourism in general, the main focus is usually on ecological sustainability, as tourism industry uses considerable amount of energy, which is mostly based on fossil fuels, in several activities – transportation of people and goods to and within the destination, accommodation services, and other activities. In 2005 there were 9,8 billion tourism trips done in the world¹¹ which makes it rather clear that the burden tourism creates on the environment is tremendous. (UNWTO 2008, 134.) In more local and specific destinations, however, the other aspects of sustainability raise in importance and in rural tourism especially social sustainability is a major concern because rural communities are socially very fragile. As Swarbrooke (1999, 78) says it: “sustainable tourism cannot exist if we protect the environment

¹¹ daytrips and over-night stays, domestic and international

but ignore the social needs of tourists and hosts”. Furthermore, it is not hard to recognise that environmental risks are almost always connected to social problems, such as social inequity and social changes in the local community. In turn, social and ecological problems connect to economical problems. (Matthies 2001, 127-128.) All in all, a desired level of sustainability, be it economical, ecological or social, simply cannot be achieved without achieving at least a basic level of sustainability in all three aspects simultaneously (Elkington 1997 in McKenzie 2004, 6). These three dimensions and their relationship is the one thing in common in all the different definitions of sustainability, however rival they otherwise might be (Barron & Gauntlett 2002, iii; Närhi 2004, 119).

In sustainable tourism, the concern is usually about the destination area, not so much about sustaining the tourism itself. The environment of the destination needs to be sustained, because it is the reason why there is tourism in the first place. (Butler in Williams 2003, 285, 288.) Sustainable tourism can be seen as a triangular relationship between tourists, the host area with its environment and people, and the tourism industry. Traditionally the tourism industry has dominated the “triangle”, but the very idea of sustainable tourism is to reconcile these three aspects and make them equal to each other, and most of all, keep the equality and balance in a long-term basis. In a way, sustainable tourism is finding the balance between tourism's growth potential and the conservation needs of the natural and social environment. (Lane 1994, 13.) Swarbrooke (1999, 13) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community”. Although this definition cleverly combines the different aspects of sustainability, the problem with it is that it says that sustainable tourism is only about protecting the features tourism depends on. Arguably, for example rural communities should be protected and local people should benefit from tourism even though tourism would not depend on them. For example tourism generally at the Great Wall does not depend on the local villages, it depends on the Wall itself and the Wall would be there even though there would not be any villages. This does not mean that tourism should not consider the needs of local communities, does it?

There is actually no universally accepted definition of sustainable tourism (Page & Connell 2006, 393) but the widely accepted definition by World Tourism Organizations is that sustainable tourism should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.” (UNWTO 2004; Xu et al. 2008, 2)

In addition, sustainable tourism should make tourists satisfied and raise their awareness about environmental and social issues, encouraging them to act sustainably in the future (UNWTO 2004). In Agenda 21 for tourism¹², World Tourism Organization offers a shorter yet more limited definition, saying that “sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future” (UNWTO 1996). As this definition suggests, in sustainable tourism both the tourism and the local community should be sustained in balance. In Agenda 21 (UNWTO 1996) it is also reminded that sustainable tourism products are operated in harmony with local communities, cultures and environment so that these actually benefit from tourism, not become the victims of it (UNWTO 1996). From all of these definitions can be seen that in sustainable tourism, social sustainability is arguably more important than in most other industries – indeed, it is often put in priorities ahead of environmental protection.

3.2 What is social sustainability?

Social sustainability is much more difficult to measure or identify than economic growth or environmental damage which makes it arguably the most problematic aspect of sustainability. Also, social sustainability is always about a certain community or society and thus general indicators are of little use and too vague, indicators should be separately defined in each case. (McKenzie 2004, 9.) Kajanoja (2009, 81) simplifies the definition by arguing that social devel-

¹² Agenda 21 is a comprehensive program of action concerning sustainable development adopted by 182 governments at United Nations Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Agenda 21 for travel and tourism is a joint UNWTO, WTTC and Earth Council publication, outlining practical steps that governments and private companies can take to implement the goals of the Rio Earth Summit and make the tourism sector more sustainable (UNWTO 1996)

opment equals well-being, in other words, social sustainability is sustainability of well-being. When assessing well-being, factors such as security, health, human rights and local participation should be taken into account in addition to economic aspects. (Kajanoja 2009, 81, 86-87.) This is a simple way to start defining social sustainability.

However, there are always many other definitions and they are no doubt useful, if not absolute truths. One working definition is provided by McKenzie (2004, 12): “Social sustainability is: a life enhancing condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition”. A more comprehensive definition is given by Barron & Gauntlett (2002, vi):

Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life.

Both of these definitions actually say more or less the same, the latter just dares to take it to more detailed level. Social sustainability can be either a current condition that needs to be maintained, or a goal that needs to be achieved (McKenzie 2004, 13). The term “quality of life” can be divided to objective living conditions such as working conditions and state of health, and subjective well-being such as satisfaction and happiness (Kajanoja 2009, 92). Arola and Suontausta (2005, 38) refers to these objective and subjective conditions as measured and perceived well-being, respectively. This suggests that the terms “quality of life” and “well-being” can be used as almost synonyms, both meaning the very feature that social sustainability aims to sustain.

There are no universal truths about what is a “life-enhancing condition” or how we can form a socially sustainable good living environment. Historically, measures of the well-being of societies has been dominated by economic indicators such as income. (Närhi 2001, 61.) On the other hand, Sairinen and Kohl (2004, 11) argue that it is often described with concepts such as equity and equality. However, to take the discussion to more practical level, it can be argued, that the three most important aspects of social sustainability are employment, housing and services, which have multiple meanings and are linked to other various aspects of social sustainability (Barron & Gauntlett 2002, v, xii). Still, to leave the definition here would be too shallow. There can be identified some “basic rules”, mainly other than economic, which we

can use to define social sustainability more deeply. The aspects of social sustainability can be divided into three categories (Närhi 2001, 61-63) which can each be further divided:

- Social and ecological diversity of the environment
 - o Demographic elements, such as quantity, age-structure and socio-economic status of the population
 - o Diversity of the community structure, such as diversity of different type of housing, employment opportunities, and public activity spaces
- Coping in one's everyday life and access to activities
 - o Sense of community, measured qualitatively through experiences. Experiences of comfort, opportunities to influence.
 - o Availability of services
 - o Safety, including noise and pollution
- The quality and state of the environment in a broad sense
 - o Natural environment
 - o Built environment
 - o Psycho-social environment (Närhi 2001, 63-64)

McKenzie (2004, 12) also adds such factors as equity between generations - meaning that future generations will not be disadvantaged by the actions taken by present generations – and mechanisms for a community to collectively identify its strengths and needs. He also raises the importance of a system of cultural relations, where the positive aspects of a certain culture are valued and protected. Barron & Gauntlett (2002, vii) offer a five-parted principles of social sustainability (equity, diversity, interconnectedness, quality of life, and democracy and governance), but that as such is, according to my own experience living in a rural community, too narrow and does not take into account the environmental aspects in the main principles.

Social sustainability is a complex mixture of physical and social factors. Social inclusion or exclusion, or well-being, is linked to both the social and physical environment in where one lives. The physical environment includes features such as the quality of buildings and yards, traffic, level of housing, access to services and nature, while social environment consists mostly of economics, image, social networks, activities and atmosphere. Diversity of community structure, easy access to services, light traffic and the built environment makes the framework of the physical environment, which determines the frame of social aspects. The social aspects, which are among others age diversity, social stability, social control and the sense of

community, cannot be separated from the area they are built on. (Matthies 2001, 131-135.) When talking about social sustainability as a whole, all of these aspects should be taken into account. As Närhi (2001,54) says, environmental questions are very much also social questions. As many of the most severe environmental degradations occur in areas of extreme poverty and low social satisfaction, it could be argued that increasing social sustainability leads to improved environment (McKenzie 2004, 3). Below is a figure (figure 3) demonstrating the linkage between the three aspects of sustainability:

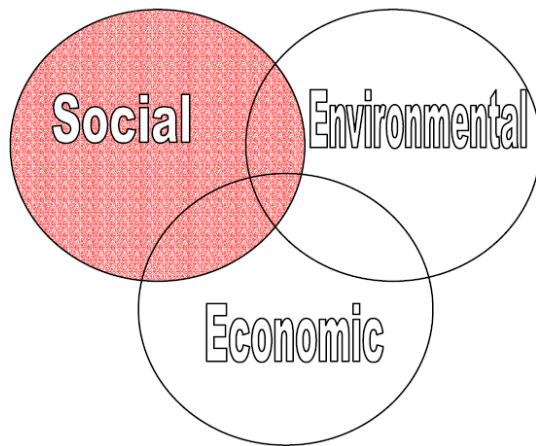


Figure 3. Three main levels of sustainability (Barron & Gauntlett 2002, iv)

As can be seen from the figure above, social sustainability is equal to environmental and economic sustainability, and this theory is widespread in the academic world. Any company that recognizes and adopts this model should immediately include social sustainability to its operations and make it equal to ecological and economical sustainability. Sadly, this often has not been the case and there are plenty to improve in the business – and tourism – sector when it comes to social sustainability. Social factors are rarely equal in practice and they tend to be overlooked. (McKenzie 2004, 5.)

In a research conducted by Barron & Gauntlett (2002, ix), there were two major overlaps highlighted. First of all, it was found that social interactions clearly affect what happens in economic and environmental areas. Thus, promoting social sustainability turned out to promote overall sustainability, and another way around. In the eyes of inhabitants of a certain community ecological and social aspects are often undistinguishable from each other and there is no purpose of trying to distinguish them, except for academic discussion. The living environment, the very thing social sustainability aims to enhance, includes the nature, air quality and built environment as well as local social issues (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 11). This is not to

say, however, that social and environmental sustainability always walk nicely hand in hand – sometimes something enhances the social environment but is harmful for the natural environment. The point is that there should be a balance found, because sooner or later, if something is too harmful to the environment it no doubt affects the social satisfaction – and if lives of people become too limited in the name of environmental protection, that will eventually affect the environment as well.

3.3 Socially sustainable rural community

In order to discuss whether or not tourism in a certain rural destination can be socially sustainable, it is necessary to look into what makes a community sustainable. A sense of community has in recent years become increasingly important in tourism related studies, for a number of reasons. Most significantly, there is a concern that communities should stay economically viable to sustain social relationships and differences of culture, which in turn, in many cases, are the aspects rural tourism depends on. (Zhang et al. 2009, 269.) It has been recognized for a long time that human aspects are the very resources of rural tourism, and for the tourism to be successful and sustainable in long-term, these resources must be sustained as well (Murphy 1985, xvi; Garrod et al. 2006, 118). Furthermore, aiming at socially sustainable communities is not just about improving the life of citizens in a certain area, it goes further than that. Indeed, it is argued that for a country or region to achieve environmental sustainability – a major concern in the world today – it requires socially sustainable rural areas (McKenzie 2004, 11).

A comprehensive figure from Pepperdine's (2000) paper is shown below (figure 4), which indicates 18 aspects of a sustainable community. Although this figure is from a study conducted in an Australian rural community, it can be widely used when talking about any rural community anywhere in the world, although each case surely has its own specific features which should be remembered. If a village does well in every aspect mentioned in figure 4, it can be argued to be truly socially sustainable. Of course, this kind of situation would be almost impossible in practice – there are always some areas where improvements can be made.

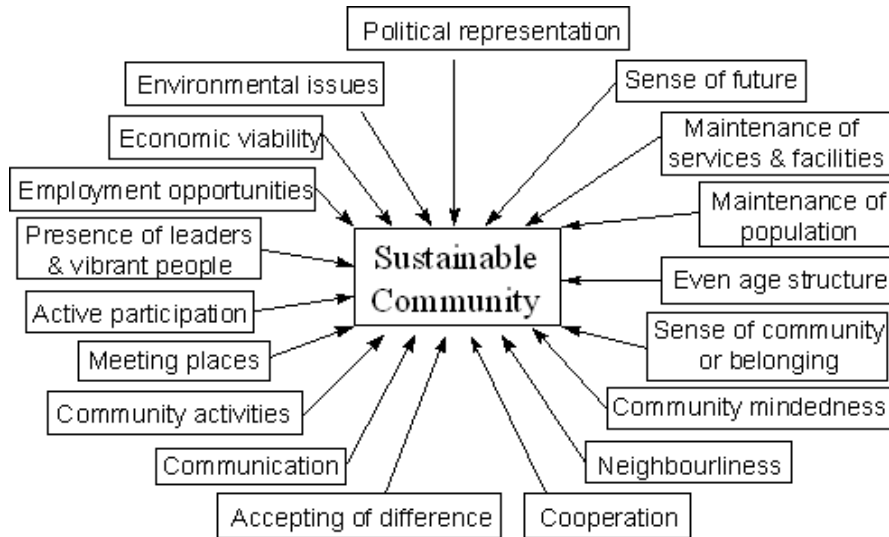


Figure 4. Main themes identified as important for the social well-being of a community (Pepperdine 2000)

It is not only the quality of the natural and social environment that contributes to social inclusion or exclusion, but to a great extent one's possibility to influence one's living environment. Although space as such has often lost its significance in contemporary societies, in a community where people are not very mobile, which indeed implies to many Chinese rural communities, the concrete daily environment is of crucial importance. (Matthies 2001, 130.) Social sustainability is much about ecological sustainability as well, especially in rural communities where ecological values are often a major part of social wellbeing. For example, a research in Australia by Barron and Gauntlett (2002, ix) revealed that over half of the statements regarding social sustainability contained significant reference to ecological concern, especially in relation to quality of life. Garrod et al. (2006, 118) argue that social well-being is highly dependent on high-quality natural environment, and well-being in the long-run depends on the careful use of natural resources in the short-term.

When talking about social sustainability in communities, it is important to take into account the whole living environment, not just single measurements such as unemployment. For example various studies have shown that the aspect of safety is a really important, if not the most important, part of a social sustainable community. (Matthies 2001, 128, 131.) The reputation of the living environment is also a key aspect of people's relationship to the place they live (Boeck in Matthies 2001, 130), meaning that communities or villages with a good reputation are more likely to be socially sustainable than the ones with a bad or neutral reputation. Interestingly, neither safety nor the reputation of the living environment are part of Pepperdine's figure above.

As noted before, social sustainability is harder to measure than other forms of sustainability. In practise, it is usually done by identifying useful indicators for the case in question and using them as a tool measuring the strengths and weaknesses of a community. The data collected is used when planning how to increase the social sustainability of a community. In an example of social sustainability indicators used in a study of rural communities of South Australia's Gilbert Valley, conducted by Smaliles and Hugo (in McKenzie 2004, 15-16), indicators used included sense of future, sense of community, even age structure, political representation, economic viability and employment opportunities. This example is from Australia, but these kinds of indicators are general enough to be possible to use in most rural communities in the world. However, the indicators in this example do not focus at all on access to services and resources, for example water supply, which are crucial parts of social sustainability. Indeed, Katko (2009, 198-199) argues that water supply in a community is clearly a first priority.

3.4 Social sustainability in tourism and social impacts of tourism

“Tourism is, without a doubt one of the major social and economic phenomena of modern times” (Arola & Suontausta 2005, 29). In chapter 2.3 the impacts of tourism are evaluated mostly from economic point of view, but as Theobald (1998, 67) noted already over ten years ago, a more balanced view of the effects of tourism “demands a deeper understanding of the human issues surrounding the impact made by tourism”. Social impacts on local communities can be both negative and positive, although the negative impacts tend to get more attention (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 24). Social sustainability in tourism has received traditionally less attention than ecological issues, which is, as Swarbrooke (1999, 69) argues, due to the fact that social problems tend to occur slowly in time and they are they are largely intangible, while environmental damages can be seen quickly and concretely. In rural tourism, there has unfortunately traditionally been a tendency to develop business with little or no strategy to address sustainability issues (Mitchell & Hall 2005, 3-4), least of all when it comes to social sustainability, which is something that ought to be changed in order to guarantee the future of rural tourism.

When assessing social impacts it is important that the impacts are always evaluated in a specific context of a specific area, impacts should be related to a single case. For example building of a resort to a small village surely has significantly different impacts than building the same resort to an urban area. Tourism can have impacts on the whole society or on a community, demographic or cultural group, family or an individual. (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 24.) Economic

growth and development always result in changes in the social characteristics of the area - when the community members become wealthier, their lifestyles and needs change as well (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 225). Social changes in a community can arguably create more costs than economic benefits in the long-term (Page & Connell 2006, 359), which is why they should be carefully evaluated. Tourism can create extremely complex situations of culture change and it affects many aspects – beyond the obvious - of the life of the local community, including tastes, styles, gender roles, politics and social relations (Van Den Berghe 2006, 552).

An increase of international tourism in a rural community easily results in increasing multinational presence, a “monetarisatation of traditions and other social activities” (Shepherd 2002, 188) and a change in local social relationships. Tourism does bring economic benefit, but it often also brings new social problems such as increased crime rates, drug addiction, prostitution, gambling and a decline in social stability as well as decline in moral values (Shepherd 2002, 185; Theobald 1998, 72). Crime rates easily increase in tourism destinations, and this has been the case in China as well in recent years (Brenda & Costa 2006, 192-193). However, as Pizam and Mansfeld (2006, 8) note, tourism can also improve safety in destination area, because security incidents have major negative impact on tourism destination and authorities want to prevent them in order to maintain tourism and its positive economic impacts. Tourism can lead to increasing competition amongst villagers and thus create tension and conflict, as happened in a small Yubeng village in China (study by Sun & Bao 2008, 39-40), where community based tourism involved villagers in tourism and made them competitors against each other. They overcame this problem by creating an “interest-sharing system”, which is a distribution system to share the income from tourism with the whole community. This is rather radical from a western point of view, but it surely has contributed to the social sustainability of Yubeng community.

Tourism is often also blamed for contributing to the spread of various diseases, but there is little evidence to support that accusation (Theobald 1998, 72). Nonetheless, it can be a serious concern in the local community. Tourism also more often than not contributes to the growth of capital values in a community (Shepherd 2002, 185) but it is difficult to say when this is an impact of tourism and when it is simply a result of capitalizing times. This is a relevant question when it comes to rural tourism in China. The country is capitalizing anyway in a high speed and money is playing greater and greater role in the whole country and thus, while it is

easy to blame tourism, it is rather difficult to say how big is the role of tourism in the growth of capital values.

One social impact tourism can have at its worst is that the arrival of tourists in too large scale results in some of the local residents to leave their homes and move to places where they can live undisturbed. This has been particularly a problem in Native American communities in North America, where, as a result, strict restrictions in tourism have been adopted. At its most extreme this problem has probably been in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where ancient tribe communities have been completely removed or denied their hunting rights when creating National Parks. Fortunately, in Mutianyu this has not been the case, as can be seen later.

There can be an enormous imbalance of economic power between the tourists and the hosts, which is likely to result in some attempt at emulation and some resentment. This might significantly affect the social pattern of the host community. In addition, if tourists are not aware of local customs they may behave in ways that create severe social friction in a community. (Cooper et al. 2005, 237.) In many cases, tourism simply exploits the culture and traditions of a community, their social life, with the sole aim to satisfy the visitors. This often happens at the expense of local pride and dignity, in worst case destroying the real authenticity. On the other hand, tourism undeniably can lead to increased local pride and community spirit as well. (Cooper & Hall 2008, 167.)

Theobald (1998, 71) and Cooper et al. (2005, 243-245) talk about “staged authenticity” which is one possible key to social sustainability in tourism. The “front region” of the destination is the places where tourists mainly are, the lobbies, restaurants, activity centres and other similar venues. The “black region” is the places where the community actually lives, the residents’ homes, alleys and other authentic social venues of the community. If the host destination is able to convince tourists that the activities and cultural happenings in the front region are authentic, the black region is being protected as tourists do not have to search authenticity there. The problem with “alternative tourism” is that it often penetrates the real black regions jeopardizing their sustainability. (Theobald 1998, 71.) This does not mean, however, that tourism when carefully managed could not also help to preserve ancient cultures and ways of life. Indeed, tourism can wake the interest of local community in traditional cultural forms (Theobald 1998, 71) and revitalize cultural traditions, events and crafts (Page & Connell 2006, 432). Indeed, many communities adopt traditional ways of living for tourism purposes, but too often these traditions end up being cheap imitations of their former selves where ritual and tradition

become only a monetary value to locals (Shepherd 2002, 184-185; Theobald 1998, 71; Page & Connell 364). Although it must be noted, as mentioned in chapter 2.6, that traditions in some cases can be further revitalized because of the very fact that money is earned from them (Sun & Bao 2008, 29).

In addition to the possible revitalization of traditional ways of life, one of the most important positive social impacts of tourism is that it assists in viability of local services, which tend to be inadequate in declining rural areas. On the other hand, tourism can also reduce local services in cases where for example food shops are replaced with gift shops. Still, more often the impact on local services is positive. Other positive impacts include creating a sense of pride and opportunities for social and cultural exchange. (Page & Connell 2006, 432.) Tourism development usually also increases local participation in local activities and events, improves the security, forces peace in conflict-prone areas and makes the political atmosphere more open (Hall 2008, 30), the latter being particularly relevant in communist rural China. It also must be remembered, which is closely linked to social well-being, that tourism undeniably creates employment and increases standards of living, as mentioned in chapter 2.2. However, there is also a risk that local labour is replaced with outside labour and local ownership is reduced when tourism development continues (Hall 2008, 29) – this is an issue that should be addressed especially by tourism business leaders.

There are many factors influencing the nature and extent of social impact of tourism on communities. Firstly, the impacts are likely to be less in a diverse rural community which is not solely dependent on tourism. Secondly, the number of tourists is an important factor: large number of tourists in a small community obviously tends to have a large impact, while large communities with less number of tourists are less impacted. This has resulted in many areas, for example parts of rural UK, adopting a mode of development that aims in getting smaller number of high spending tourists. Thirdly, the pace of the tourism development influences the scale of social impacts. Naturally, rapid growth tend to lead to large social impacts – the community needs time to adopt the changes and that should be taken into account when planning tourism development (Page & Connell 2006, 362).

As said before, community involvement is crucial in socially sustainable rural tourism. One way of involving local villagers as well as benefit the local village itself is farmers markets – indeed, this would be an excellent idea in Mutianyu as well. As Page and Connell (2006, 438) mention farmers markets among other similar events develop a local differentiation of the

rural experience and thus, in addition to adding value to tourism sector, significantly benefit local food producers. They also enhance the image of the local area, which is something perceived to be important in social sustainability, as argued by Matthies (2001, 131-135). Farmers markets have great potential in rural tourism and they produce a tourism product that links the locals with the visitors and have important potential for positive economic impacts, that goes straight to the community, not to the hands of third parties. Farmers markets can even be demand drivers for rural tourism increasing the overall tourism in the region. For example in Canada, the potential of farmers markets has been recognized and their popularity have increased considerably in recent years. Today there are estimated to be some 500 farmers market in Canada and they have been noticed to contribute to rural tourism – indeed, some areas have included them in official tourism plans. (Jolliffe 2008, 233-245.)

Cooper et. al (2005, 266-267) recommends three actions for making tourism more socially sustainable when there are issues in that area. First suggestion is to set limits on the future growth of tourism. Badaling section of the Great Wall has been pressured in recent years to limit its tourist numbers to no more than 16 million annually (China.org.cn 2007, China Hospitality News 2007) and this would be a good idea in Mutianyu as well. The second suggestion is to change the behaviour of the stakeholders in the tourism industry – entrepreneurs, local governments, developers, communities - to make products currently provided more sustainable. The third suggestion is to replace the current unsustainable tourism products with new products that are sustainable. To be successful it is likely that a combination of all three approaches will be necessary. It is easy to say, but in practise these recommendations are difficult to implement and requires long-term planning and devotion to sustainability issues.

3.5 Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

When developing new sites, including tourism projects, today an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is often used. In fact, it is required in planning processes in most Western societies. One element of EIA is Social Impact Assessment (SIA). The principle of both of these assessments is to combine different perspectives, aspects and opinions in planning and development processes. (Matthies et al. 2001, 9.) Obviously, the aim of EIA is to formalise the evaluation of possible environmental impacts what different projects and plans have. It is seen as a tool to adopt the principles of sustainability in practice. In time became an increasing need to also evaluate the impacts on people and communities, and Social Impact Assessment was thus developed in Northern America in 1970s. SIA can be seen as a tool to combine social and ecological sustainability. The basic idea is to find out for the decision makers the pos-

sible impacts of a certain development on the well-being of individuals and communities. (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 5, 11, 12, 17.)

In addition to environmental impacts development projects often have social impacts, for example changes in employment opportunities, services, community structures and values. Where SIA has been used, more attention has been paid to social issues. SIA is mainly seen as a process to identify the future impacts of planned developments on individuals, organisations and other social systems. While EIA studies mostly the natural environment, SIA focuses on people and communities and concentrates on changes, good or bad, on the local level. SIA estimates and evaluates the conditions of a community as it is at the moment and as it is after the change by the planned development. The objective is to provide decision-makers with useful material and information. (Närhi 2001, 56-58.) All in all, it is aimed to serve the local community, which is why it is a very good tool of achieving social sustainability in tourism.

Although SIA is in theory a part of EIA, in practise so far it has been used only occasionally. Fortunately, today more and more attention paid to it and there is more pressure now than ever to do it well and thoroughly. In fact, SIA is now often conducted also separately without the EIA. The increased use of SIA is naturally linked to the increased interest in global scale in the social aspects of sustainability. (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 5-6.) There are a number of benefits of conducting a Social Impact Assessment. For example, it reduces the uncertainty among the population and thus reduces the resistance towards the planned development. This in part reduces the risk of contradictions and even suspensions of the project. Taking into consideration the local community increases the possibilities of success and can eventually even lowers the expenses (Burdge & Vanclay 2004, 42-43), as highlighted earlier in chapter 2.5.

When Social Impact Assessment is carried out, the process can be divided to seven parts:

1. Evaluation of the necessity of the assessment.
2. Planning of the assessment.
3. Identification of impacts and limitations.
4. Data collection and analysis of the impacts
5. Comparison of impacts and different alternatives
6. Reporting
7. Monitoring (Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 32-33)

The indicators of Social Impact Assessment according to Sairinen and Kohl (2004, 25) can be found as an appendix in this thesis. It must be remembered, though, that there are several different indicator sets offered by for example UNWTO and academic writers and there is no single “perfect” set, as argued by Roberts and Tribe (2008, 580). Each case should have its own specific indicators, but readily available indicator sets are a good starting point. Here must be noted that it has been argued that the most efficient way to achieve sustainability in tourism and benefits to local community is through small, locally owned tourism enterprises, but there is little evidence of their social impacts, and thus social sustainability indicators are crucial with small tourism enterprises. Use of these indicators provides decision makers and entrepreneurs direction of the process how tourism enterprises could contribute to social sustainability. (Roberts & Tribe 2008, 576, 580, 586, 589.) The indicators compiled by Roberts and Tribe (2008, 529) are perhaps clearer and more ready to use for example in the case of Mutianyu than the set offered by Sairinen and Kohl (2004). Although they are not as thorough, they surely are more practical, and more linked to tourism – these indicators can be found as an appendix as well, to make comparison with different kinds of indicator sets.

4 The case of Mutianyu village

The village of Mutianyu was selected to be the case in this thesis, as I did my internship of six months in the village from March to September 2009 and I noticed the potential of the current tourism in Mutianyu to be a model for socially sustainable tourism. I was employed by The Schoolhouse company and I gained important first-hand experience while living right at the centre of this small village.



Figure 5. Map of East Asia and the location of Beijing in China. Mutianyu village is in Beijing Municipality (CIA 2009)

Before going to Mutianyu (慕田峪) village, first it is purposeful to write about what is the reason why there ever was this rural community, The Mutianyu Great Wall section in Beijing municipality. Figure 5 shows where Beijing is located – a detailed map of Beijing area showing more specifically where Mutianyu is situated is as an appendix in this thesis. In Beijing municipality, there are almost 630 km of the Wall altogether, of which less than 150 km is open to tourists with about 400 open fortifications (Evans 2006, 167). The Great Wall at Mutianyu is located some 90 km north of downtown Beijing¹³ (see appendix 1). It was built originally by Northern Qi Dynasty in the 6th century, but it was significantly strengthened and restored in the early Ming Dynasty which ruled the country from 1368 – 1644. After this reconstruction it served as a major northern protector of the capital Beijing for centuries. (TravelChina-Guide.com 2009, China Bound Ltd 2007.) The main reason for the reconstruction of the Wall in early 15th century is that in 1402 the capital of China moved back to Beijing from Nanjing, which made the question of a protective wall important again (Williams 2006, 12).

¹³ Some sources say 70km (e.g. Evans 2006, 174) or even something else, but 90km appears to be the most common claimed distance.

The Mutianyu section is a little bit further away from downtown Beijing than most of the other sections and there is no highway nor railway to get there, which makes it less crowded than many other sections (Naumann 2009), although it was the second part of the wall to be opened for tourism (Evans 2006, 176). It is still a very popular tourism destination which brings its own benefits and problems, of which there is more information in the following chapters of this thesis. The restored, and thus accessible for tourists, section of Mutianyu Great Wall is currently 2250 meters (Naumann 2009) and the section is located in a highly mountainous surroundings, the highest point having an altitude of 540 meters. The wall is built in a place which is surrounded by green woodland and mountains – indeed the percentage of land covered by forest in Mutianyu is over 70% (China Travel 2008) making it the greenest part of The Great Wall as a whole.

The village of Mutianyu is a small village located right next to the section of the Wall with the same name, about 90 km north of Beijing in Huairou County (Law 2004, 75) (see appendix 1). It is nicely located in a ravine at the base of green Yanshan Mountains. The village was founded by the original builders of the Great Wall and it has maintained its rural way of life and is still a working village. (China Bound Ltd 2007.) The village is quite an interesting mixture of new and old rural China, where a modern electrical bike could easily crash with a donkey carrying agricultural products. Mutianyu has only around 350 to 400 inhabitants, mostly consisting of elderly. As in many Chinese villages, Mutianyu is dominated by two families, The Li and the He families. Hes are Manchurian based and moved to the village two centuries ago, while Lis are considered to be the original settlers of the village. (Williams 2006, 22, 60, 62.) Mutianyu village is on the way to the tourist section of the Wall, about 200 meters downhill from the Wall entrance. It is dominated by one main road which is bordered by villagers' residents, village hall, village clinic, two village shops, public toilets, and, indeed, The Schoolhouse (see appendix 2).

4.1 History and development of Mutianyu village

Mutianyu village was founded by the people who constructed the Great Wall centuries ago, but no one seems to know exactly when it was. For a long time it was a poor village, just like others around, depending almost solely on agriculture and living under the strict rule of the communist government. The winds of change came in 1983 when the village got the official permission to develop itself as a premier Great Wall tourist destination. These were also the times when the political atmosphere in China started to liberalize, and this combined with the

emerging tourism encouraged villagers to become entrepreneurial, move into tourism sector from agriculture.

It might seem obvious now, but developing Mutianyu as a Great Wall tourism destination was not obvious at all. The first idea was to make Mutianyu an industrial centre producing belt buckles or watchbands. What is obvious is that industrial development would have destroyed the village as we know it now and would have made it an urban suburb instead of the ancient traditional rural community. The man one should thank for how things turned out is He Wenxiu who was the head of Mutianyu's Village Party Branch for 15 years starting from 1969. First of all, he managed to persuade young villagers to stay in the village at the times when the youth all over China left their homes to join Mao Zedong's Red Guard¹⁴. Moreover, it was in the early 1980's when He Wenxiu's leadership really paid off regarding the future of the village. Encouraged by Deng Xiaoping's new economic policies to improve the economic situation of the countryside, the village leaders of Mutianyu proposed to Beijing that Mutianyu would be turned into an industrial site. For each item they would produce, they would receive about one penny – this was not a good deal. Fortunately, He Wenxiu stepped in and went back to Beijing with a two-page proposal to make Mutianyu as one of China's premier Great Wall tourist destinations. Getting everyone in Beijing aboard was not an easy task, because there already was a successful Great Wall site in Badaling (see chapter 6.2) with plans for further development. Not everyone was convinced that a new destination was needed. He Wenxiu arranged a trip for the officials to Mutianyu and did not rest his case until they finally approved to develop Mutianyu using tourism as opposed to the industrial development described above. (Williams 2006, 68-74.)

Today, the village mayor of Mutianyu is Li Lianting, who is responsible for the village plan, development and tourism (Yang, C. 11.11.2009), the latter together with Liu Jinwu, Director and General Management of Beijing Mutianyu Great Wall Tourism Office. Liu Jinwu has visions that include a plan to preserve Mutianyu's ecological and historical integrity through for example zoning laws that will protect the buildings of the village as well as the natural environment. (Williams 2006, 18.) This is a great thing given that sustainable aspects in planning are not for given in China, especially in places where the potential of tourism is much higher than the community could sustainably handle. Usually the pressure to achieve economic growth is too high and the awareness about sustainability issues is highly limited, as noted by

¹⁴ The Red Guard was the army of People Republic of China during Mao's government.

Xu et al. (2008, 11). There are also plans to open a Mutianyu museum in order to educate guests more about the cultural and historical aspects of the destination (Williams 2006, 18).

4.2 Tourism in Mutianyu

Due to the proximity of the rapidly emerging middle class of Beijing and the ability to attract the high numbers of international tourists coming to Beijing, the rural areas of Beijing municipality were among the first areas in China to seek benefits from tourism. This development started in the 1980s (Zhang et al. 2009, 271) and thus the tourism development in Mutianyu with the opening of The Great Wall tourism section can be seen as a part of overall tourism boom in rural areas of Beijing. Tourism in Mutianyu has traditionally been focused almost solely on the Great Wall, but when those “wall-tourists” come to Mutianyu they see the village, if they see it at all, through a glass quickly when passing by (Williams 2006, 6). However, with the founding of The Schoolhouse company (see chapter 5) the tourism has found its way deep inside the village and tourism in Mutianyu is now also rural tourism per se as opposed to only visits to a famous world heritage site. The Schoolhouse has rental homes in Mutianyu and neighbouring Yingbeigou villages, which are all right in the middle of the villages with villagers living right next door. The Schoolhouse restaurant is also in the middle of Mutianyu village and it attracts a great number of tourists to eat in the village, not up at the Wall. Basically, the role of the village in the area’s tourism has changed in recent years to become an important centre of rural tourism instead of being just a pass-by village on the way to the Wall.

There were no statistics, information or even estimates found on the visitor numbers of Mutianyu Great Wall, or where tourists come from. It is highly possible that there is no track kept on tourist numbers at all. The official website of Mutianyu Great Wall is a voluntary service kept by China Bound Ltd (see chapter 5) and does not have any accurate official information on the subject. The only tourism statistics found for this thesis was the guest database kept by The Schoolhouse Rental Homes this year, noted in this thesis until November 21st 2009. The database includes registration information of the guests staying at The Schoolhouse Rental Homes and thus the information shows quite reliably of which nationalities the guests consist of. The database is based on 1300 guests. Most probably it tells little about the overall tourism in Mutianyu, namely day-visitors to The Great Wall, but it does tell a lot about overnight visitors in Mutianyu village, as The Schoolhouse is by far the most significant accommodation company in the village. The statistics clearly show that the overnight tourism in Mutianyu is

dominated by foreigners, as only 8% of the guests were Chinese¹⁵. Altogether there were guests from 41 countries. As much as 30% of all the guests were from The USA, followed by United Kingdom (14%). Other significant nationalities were Australians (7,5%), French (7%) and Germans (6,5%). Finland was also surprisingly well represented with 3,5% of all the guests. The overall share of Europeans was 41%, meaning that less than 30% of the guests came outside Europe and The USA. (The Schoolhouse 2009a.)

When these figures are compared with the official statistics of China's inbound tourism from 2008 (National Tourism Administration of The People's Republic of China 2009), the differences turn out to be significant. 60% of all the foreign visitors to China were from Asia in 2008, whereas only 25% came from Europe and as few as 7,5% from The USA. Perhaps the most interesting differences are that over 30% of all the foreigners coming to China were from Japan or Korea, but their share in the guest numbers of The Schoolhouse was only 1%; and that while almost 13% of China's inbound tourists were from Russia, only 0,3% of The Schoolhouse's guests were Russians. Also, the number of guests from Hong Kong and Taiwan was significantly lower in The Schoolhouse than in China in general. A conclusion can be made that The Schoolhouse, and indeed Mutianyu village as an overnight tourism destination, is clearly more popular amongst Western than Asian countries, and that it has not yet attracted significant domestic tourism. There is clearly a significant potential to attract more Asian and Russian customers.

The depression of the world's economy has had its impacts on Mutianyu's tourism, although any official information was difficult to find. According to Spear (2009a) ticket sales at the Mutianyu Great Wall fell by almost 30% from spring 2008 to spring 2009. The depression seems to give a good opportunity to attract more Asian and especially more Chinese tourists, as domestic tourism tends to increase in times of economical crisis.

¹⁵ If Hong Kong and Taiwan is included the percentage is 10.

5 The Schoolhouse Company

As noted by Gunn (2002, 82) the best solution to achieve sustainable tourism is not the actions of eager environmentalists or governments, but the voluntary actions by tourism businesses and developers. Tourism businesses are dependent on their natural and cultural surroundings, and it is in their best interest to sustain the quality of these environments. The Schoolhouse company in Mutianyu village has realized this and has started to act on sustainable principles to the greatest extent possible. This company and its story is part of this thesis in order to show that one company can make a difference, although there are always areas of improvements and issues to pay more attention to. The Schoolhouse company is a term used in this thesis combining the restaurant, lodging and glass businesses of The Schoolhouse created by China Bound Ltd, although no branch of the enterprise is officially called The Schoolhouse company.

5.1 The Schoolhouse business idea and history

The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu Great Wall (Xiao Yuan, 小园, “a little garden”, in Chinese) is a village retreat located in Mutianyu and Yingbeigou villages in Bohai District, Huairou County, Beijing, China. Mutianyu is part of the Mutianyu Great Wall Tourism Zone park, and Yingbeigou is right next to it. The Schoolhouse is a rental home and restaurant business with 11 luxurious rental homes in Mutianyu and Yingbeigou villages, seven in the former (seven first mentioned in table 1) and four in the latter. The homes vary in size and price, ranging from a small two-bedroom house costing 1800 Rmb (approx. 160€) per night to a big four bedroom courtyard house costing 5000 Rmb (approx. 450€) per night. The reception is in The Schoolhouse main building where guests arrive to check-in after which they are personally escorted to their house by a staff member. All the houses have modern facilities including hot running water, free wireless internet, full kitchen facilities, radiant floor-heating and air-conditioning. All but one of houses have at least one fireplace and some of the houses have a television. Below is a table (table 1) showing the size, price and completion time of each of the rental homes.

Table 1. Rental homes of The Schoolhouse in 2009

Name of the house (English and Chinese)	Maximum accommodation capacity / size in square meters	Price / night	Completed
Grandma's Place 奶奶家	5 / 95m ²	1800 Rmb	January 2007
The Pavilion 亭子	5 / 137m ²	2800 Rmb	August 2007
Hillside Haven 山边逸居	5 / 115m ²	2800 Rmb	December 2007
Red Door 红门	9 / 280m ²	3800 Rmb	January 2008
Persimmon Court 柿子院	9 / 437m ²	4200 Rmb	January 2008
Heart's Repose 心憩地	9 / 345m ²	5000 Rmb	May 2008
Reflections 水映	7 / 215m ²	3800 Rmb	May 2009
Stone Forest 石林	5 / 122m ²	2800 Rmb	December 2008
Eagle's Rest 鹰之巢	5 / 130m ²	2800 Rmb	January 2008
Mumanyu 慕漫峪	10 / 298m ²	3800 Rmb	August 2008
Big Rock House 大石头	5 / 242m ²	2800 Rmb	January 2008

The history of The Schoolhouse got its first spark in 1993 when Jim Spear, current partner and general manager of the company, met a souvenir vendor at Mutianyu who tried to sell him a T-shirt – he ended up buying a house instead. This is when he started a relationship with the village and the future partners of The Schoolhouse. After full-time retirement from downtown Beijing to their country house in Mutianyu, and after a little bit of pressure from the community, Jim Spear and his wife Liang Tang felt they needed to give something back to the community, and eventually after negotiations with village authorities they leased and renovated the abandoned Mutianyu Village Elementary School. The Schoolhouse company was founded in September 2006. (Spear 2009a.)

In addition to the rental home business, the company also runs three restaurants, The Schoolhouse Restaurant, Roadhouse Restaurant and Xiaolumian Restaurant. The Schoolhouse Canteen Restaurant (Xiao Yuan 小园, "a little garden" in Chinese) is the main restaurant being open every day of the week. It is a western-fare based restaurant serving western food as well as some Chinese options. The Schoolhouse Canteen is located right in the middle of the village in the same building where The Schoolhouse company office and meeting facilities are.

The building is a former abandoned Schoolhouse¹⁶ which the company founders renovated in 2006 to be the heart of the company. The Roadhouse (Da Lu Guan'r, 大鼓馆儿, "big road house", in Chinese) is the company's biggest restaurant if measured in size, but it is only open during the weekend lunchtimes and mostly serves as a restaurant for special events and tour groups. It serves authentic Chinese food and is located few minutes outside the village on the "main road", the only road leading in and out of the village. The building where The Roadhouse Restaurant is was first of the big local restaurants and had fallen into bad condition before The Schoolhouse rented and renovated it. The Roadhouse is also the place for staff dormitories, central stores and main kitchen of all three restaurants. (Spear 2009b.)

Xiaolumian (小庐面, means "a little noodle hut") is the newest restaurant of the company situated in a traditional peasant house in the middle of Yingbeigou village. Like The Roadhouse, Xiaolumian is open only on weekend lunchtimes or by special request. The restaurant serves homemade Chinese noodle-dishes in traditional settings, and has received recently plenty of attention and even fame in Beijing area restaurant scene. Xiaolumian was a run-down farmers house before it was renovated and turned into a restaurant by The Schoolhouse. The Schoolhouse Canteen restaurant is clearly the busiest and the most profitable restaurant of the company, while The Roadhouse and Xiaolumian are still waiting to be found by the large public.

The third part of The Schoolhouse company is The Schoolhouse Art Glass, a non-emitting craft enterprise with lampworking and hot glass workshop. It is located in a building next to The Schoolhouse Restaurant in a former abandoned warehouse. The terrace of The Schoolhouse Restaurant is actually on the roof of the Art Glass shop. Art Glass consists of two sections, the shop and the studio. Twice a day there are two free glass blowing demonstrations for the guests to watch. The shop sells glasses and glass decorations made by the Jiang Jiamei, the company's glassblower who studied the subject in Dalian, and by Zhang Shijiu. The Schoolhouse Glass is the first glass studio in Beijing area to be open to public. (Schoolhouse Glass 2009).

The countries where the guests of The Schoolhouse rental homes mostly come from are mentioned in the previous chapter. The official statistics end there, but according to my own experience in the company it can be argued that the most significant customer group is the west-

¹⁶ The School of Mutianyu was moved closer to the city in late 1990s due to insufficient number of children.

ern foreigner workers in Beijing looking for a getaway destination for a night or two. Upper class Chinese from Beijing are increasing their share but yet form a rather small part of all the guests. Springs and falls are the busiest seasons, summers being a bit quieter due to the raining season and the fact that many of the foreigner workers are visiting home. Weekends obviously are the busiest time of the week. The impact of the worldwide depression has been that hundreds of tours by various tour companies got cancelled in 2009, seriously affecting the business, but the foreign worker business has been doing well. The company's turnover and profit increased from 2008, but not as much as was anticipated, due to the depression. (Spear 2009a). The company has been deliberately trying to get more corporate and wedding events and these efforts have been rather successful – various weddings and business events were held at The Schoolhouse during my internship in 2009.

5.2 Company structure

The business structure of the company is rather complicated, but figure 4 in the next page clarifies it. The Schoolhouse Company is managed by China Bound Ltd. which is a “privately held company that invests in operating companies and provides consulting services focused on China’s hospital and retail pharmacy sectors” (China Bound Ltd. 2009). China Bound is an offshore company, meaning that it is not officially registered in China. China Bound Ltd. was founded and is run and owned 100% by American Jim Spear and Chinese Liang Tang, a married couple with decades of experience in running businesses in China. China Bound Ltd. operates through a subsidiary called Beijing ABC Management Consulting Company, Ltd, which is 100% owned by China Bound Ltd. The main office is in The Schoolhouse main building in Mutianyu village. Beijing ABC is registered in China, and is used for design and building projects of Jim Spear that are not related to The Schoolhouse tourism business¹⁷. China Bound Ltd owns the majority of China Restaurant Holdings, which in turn owns 100% of Mutianyu Schoolhouse Restaurant Co. Mutianyu Schoolhouse Restaurant Co. is the company that runs the tourism business in Mutianyu village and fully owns The Schoolhouse Restaurants at Mutianyu Great Wall and China Countryside Hotels. China Countryside Hotels is actually not a company, but a brand, under which is The Schoolhouse Rental Homes and two soon-to-be opened inns, The Brickyard Inn and Pines at Mutianyu Inn. The Schoolhouse Restaurants at Mutianyu Great Wall includes all of the three restaurants The Schoolhouse Company has. (Spear, J. 12.11.2009). The Schoolhouse Art Glass on its part is owned by China Glass Hold-

¹⁷ Jim Spear designs houses in Mutianyu area for individual people as second homes, in addition to the rental houses.

ings, which is an offshore company owned by China Bound Ltd. and a company owned by Julie Upton-Wang and Peiming Wang, the other partners of The Schoolhouse. After figure 7 is picture 1 where can be seen the logos of the different parts of The Schoolhouse, compiled from the company's website.

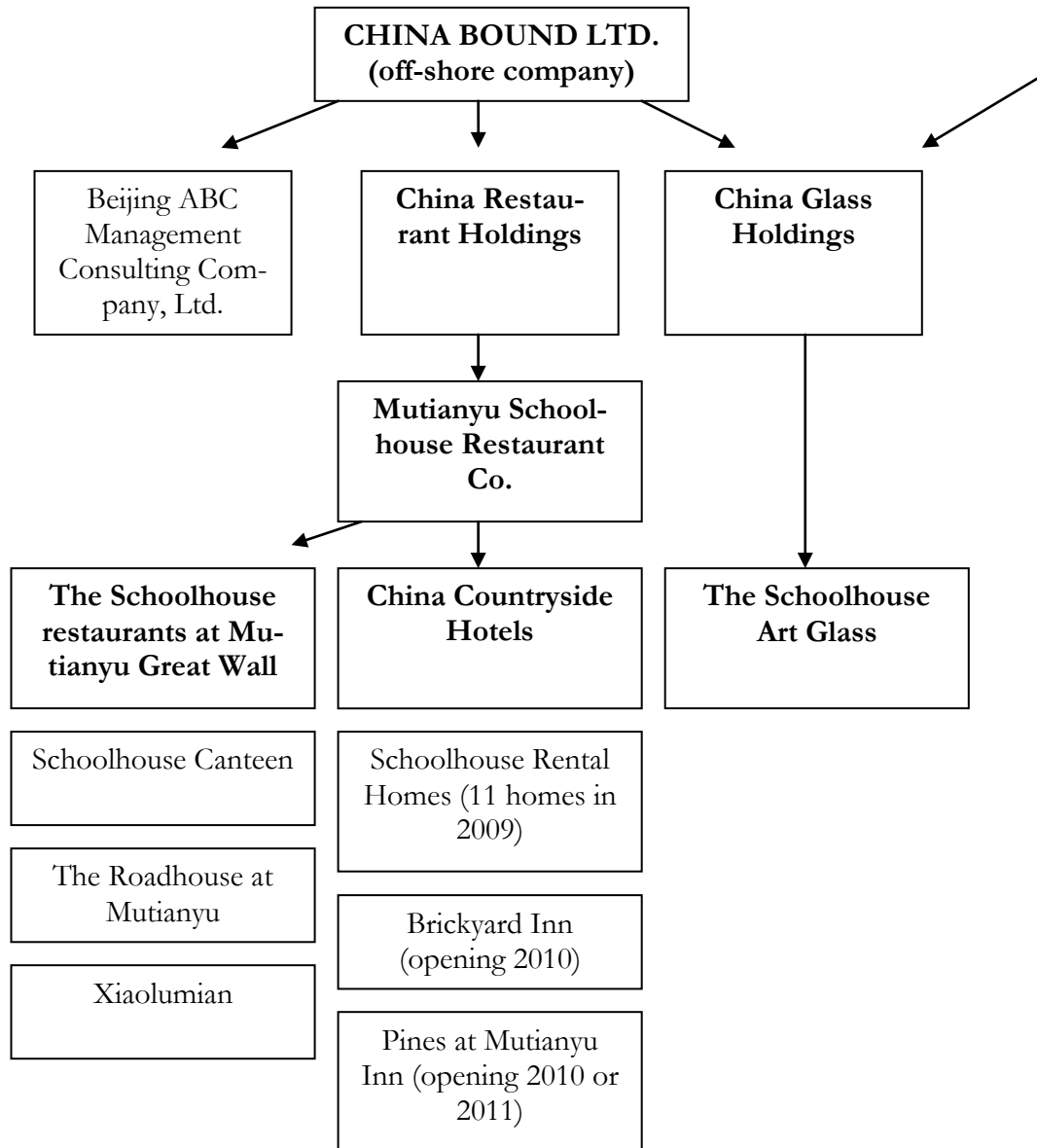


Figure 7. Company structure of The Schoolhouse Company (Spear 2009)



Picture 1. Logos of The Schoolhouse, The Roadhouse, Xiaolumian, Brickyard Inn, China Countryside Hotels and Schoolhouse Glass (The Schoolhouse 2009)

The Schoolhouse Art Glass is somewhat separated from the rest of the Schoolhouse with different staff and different management – it is not part of the Mutianyu Schoolhouse Restaurant Co. The Schoolhouse Art Glass is run by American Julie Upton-Wang and Chinese Peiming Wang, who are partners of The Schoolhouse in addition to Jim Spear and Liang Tang. China Countryside Hotels is the part of The Schoolhouse on which this thesis mostly focuses on. China Countryside Hotels is a lodging business consisting of the rental homes described in previous chapter. CCH (China Countryside Hotels) leases under-utilized properties from the local government or from private owners, re-develops them into rental homes and rents them out to tourists. CCH has developed a unique business structure that allows private investors to invest in accommodation around Mutianyu. All but one of the homes are privately owned, CCH operates as a management and maintaining company. Jim Spear, one of the partners of The Schoolhouse, designs and builds the houses for private people and CCH leases the houses from the owners for tourism purposes. A deal is made with each owner giving them a certain amount of nights in a year they can use their house for free. Thus, CCH has built the houses with foreign capital which has made the development of various luxurious houses possible. The only house owned by CCH is the smallest and oldest one, Grandma’s Place. (Avantage Ventures 2009; Spear 2009a.)

5.3 The Schoolhouse, sustainable tourism and social sustainability

The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu Great Wall is a for-profit business with a social mission to help sustain the village that has allowed the company owners to live and invest there. The Schoolhouse is devoted to act on sustainable principles and markets itself as a sustainable tourism company. Sustainability is a trendy word and companies around the world use it as a tool to attract customers, but The Schoolhouse says that there sustainability is “more than a buzz word”. The Schoolhouse has been awarded four Green Stars from Eco Hotels of the World, which is a rather comprehensive internet based independent guide where they have listed some lodging businesses of the world with environmentally respectful values (Eco Hotels of The World 2009a). The fourth eco-star was achieved on late August 2009. A sustainable food program conducted in 2009 played an important role in getting the fourth eco-star. Furthermore, The Schoolhouse won the award for best sustainable communities development in Asia for 2009 at annual HICAP Conference¹⁸ in Hong Kong in October (The Schoolhouse 2009b).

The Schoolhouse was constructed – or rather rebuilt – to have a low energy footprint. For example, there is efficient radiant heating, passive solar, thermal paned windows and insulation for energy conservation (Avantage Ventures 2009; Spear 2009a). According to the company itself, The Schoolhouse recycles all its bottles and papers, and, as a part of the sustainable food program, composts its non-meat non-diary organic waste. Chemical cleaning produces are avoided, as are all pre-packaged amenities in the houses, unless separately asked. Solid toilet waste is collected in septic tanks and is recycled and the restaurants serve cleaned tap-water instead of bottled water. (Eco Hotels of The World 2009b.) These are all environmentally sustainable practises, but to The Schoolhouse a big part of sustainability is social and it tries help the local community to a greatest extent possible. The main social missions are to provide employment and training to people in their local community, support other local businesses, promote handicrafts, and procure food locally or grow it on site. Workers are preferentially hired from local villages. The company is interested in development that preserves the sense of the vernacular community and its history. The basic idea is that small-scale development provides better opportunities for rural neighbors than large-scale projects, which tend to displace people and make them strangers in their own land (Spear 2009b.) This is reinforced by academic literature, for example Gunn (2002, 85) notes that low-scale

¹⁸ Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific. It is Asia’s longest running hotel investment conference.

development can be integrated more readily into the community's existing social and economic life. In Mutianyu there is a growing pressure for a large scale tourism development which inevitably would undermine the community and replace the unique rural setting with something generic (Spear 2009b). This is where The Schoolhouse contributes to the sustainability of the community.

The Schoolhouse uses local products in its restaurants, and according to Spear (2009a), in the future the goal is that all the food is either grown by themselves or purchased from local villagers. This contributes to social as well as environmental sustainability, because when all the food is local, the need for transportation is minimal and that reduces the pollution levels. A part of the sustainable food program conducted in 2009 is the Roadhouse garden, a kitchen garden producing herbs and vegetables which are served in the restaurants. The Schoolhouse has also implemented a regular program to train and re-train staff regarding how to operate consistent with basic environmental principles including re-use, recycling, conservation and composting. Used sheets and towels are first used for cleaning in our businesses and then passed on to a local recycler, for example. (Eco Hotels of The World 2000b.)

As can be seen, sustainability has become an undistinguishable part of The Schoolhouse, and it surely gives competitive advantage – not so many companies in China are devoted to sustainable values. Protection of the environment and thus ecological sustainability has been traditionally often seen as solely an expense to a company, but in reality acting responsibly towards the environment can bring substantial competitive advantage. Viitala and Jylhä (2006, 357) talk about “eco-competitiveness” where a company which pays attention to ecological issues better than its competitors is an eco-competitive company. The Schoolhouse surely is an eco-competitive company and does not hesitate to use it in marketing. It has been well-documented that companies with a reputation of sustainable environmental values have a strong market advantage. However, the effects of reputation of socially sustainable values on business performance is a relatively new point of interest and thus the impacts have not yet been widely documented. (McKenzie 2004, 7.)

As mentioned in the literature review of this thesis, community involvement in tourism development is crucial for the social sustainability of the community as well as for the success of the tourism company. The Schoolhouse works closely with the neighbors of development sites as well as with the local government and park authorities in order to fit in to the community and make the development more sustainable, from everyone's point of view

(Spear 2009b). Visitors and staff are encouraged and educated to pay attention to and respect the natural environment of the area which is important as natural environment is essential in social sustainability, as can be seen from theory and from the interviews conducted in this thesis.

Probably the most significant way The Schoolhouse contributes to the social sustainability of Mutianyu is the employment opportunities it provides and the demand it creates for enterprise development of local services. The Schoolhouse provides employment for approximately 30 full-time and 10 part-time staff who come from Mutianyu and from nearby villages (Avantage Venture 2009). Services such as construction, landscaping and maintenance are outsourced to local businesses and the staff is always preferentially hired from local area, although some of the workers do come from further away. The company also hires local performers and entertainers to perform at The Schoolhouse and thus creates a possibility for some villagers to actually gain from their traditions, as opposed to let them go altogether – this is noted to be a positive impact of tourism by for example Sun and Bao (2008). As the company owner (Spear 2009b) argues, The Schoolhouse has a “social mission to help provide modern livelihoods so that people have the economic ability to sustain our rural community without leaving home”.

Even though Theobald (1998, 71) warns about the risks of tourism entering the “black region” (more in chapter 3.4), The Schoolhouse has worked with the local governments to set up a program of non-commercial home visits. During these visits a group of tourists visit a home of typically elderly members of the village community, and the village families receiving the tourists get a token honorarium for each visit. These visits help visitors to learn more about the village life and make the community more involved in tourism. The Schoolhouse says that “no family is visited so frequently that the experience becomes simply passé for the residents”. (The Schoolhouse 2009c.) The home visits are a great opportunity for visitors to see the actual living rural community in the site. The home visits arguably offer benefits to some villagers and make them feel more involved and appreciated, increasing the level of social sustainability, but undeniably it is also important by the management to be careful that these visits do not grow into too commercial and large-scale product threatening the authenticity of the village. Lastly, I should be mentioned that The Schoolhouse has helped to establish and continues to support a Sister Village relationship between Mutianyu Village and Shelburne Falls in The USA, which is the first of its kind in contemporary China (The Schoolhouse 2009c). The social effects of this relationship remain to be seen, as the project is still at its beginning.

6 Impacts of tourism on Mutianyu

Mutianyu's relative success as a tourism destination, be it the at the Wall or in the village, has had significant impacts on the village. The subject came up in previous chapters to some extent, and is also discussed with the interview results, but it is purposeful to evaluate the impacts of tourism on Mutianyu in a separate chapter as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there has been two major forms of tourism development in Mutianyu, causing different kinds of impacts. First, in the late 1980s the Great Wall tourism section was opened in Mutianyu and that is when tourism virtually started there. Later, in 2006, The Schoolhouse Company opened in the village bringing the tourism right to the very heart of the village. Chapter 6.1. will evaluate the impacts of both of these tourism developments on Mutianyu village, from a social point of view, after which in chapter 6.2. there is a comparison between tourism development in Mutianyu and in Badaling, another, more aggressively developed section of the Great Wall in Beijing municipality.

6.1 Social impacts of tourism on Mutianyu

The opening of the Great Wall tourism section and thus tourism has brought significant economic impacts on Mutianyu, mainly increased incomes, opportunities and living standards in the community, which are exactly the impacts highlighted in theory about the subject (e.g. Theobald 2008, Page & Connell 2006, Cooper & Hall 2008). As mentioned, Mutianyu used to be a poor agricultural village, but now tourism acts as the main source of income and the living standards have increased significantly. One of the main forms how tourism has brought increased incomes is the souvenir stalls at the Great Wall entrance. A great number of villagers started to sell souvenirs, farm products and food there once the tourism section opened, and when tourist numbers begun to increase, the villagers' incomes rose as well. The average income the vendors get is usually many times higher compared to the former income from farming or other rural activities. As Li Fangquan (30.8.2009) says, now people are actually able to make good living, to have a good life. Some villagers have also opened restaurants and cafes near the entrance, from which the incomes are significant too. According to Spear (2009a) the vendor stalls are guaranteed to exclusively local people by law, which further increases the economic impacts of tourism on the villagers' lives and decreases the levels of leakage, which is often one major problem in rural tourism (e.g. Saxena et al. 2007).

The other major positive impact is the one on infrastructure, also an important one from the point of view of social sustainability. After the opening of The Great Wall tourism section, the

main road of the village was paved and the infrastructure in general was improved significantly. According to Li Fangquan (30.8.2009) the village was hardly accessible and roads were only small mud roads before tourism development occurred. The road in Mutianyu is currently one of the best in the area.

Other than this, the opening of the Wall arguably did not affect much the village, the development occurred at the wall which is, after all, separate from the village. As Li Fangquan (30.8.2009) mentioned, the government did not really pay much attention to the village itself, but to the Great Wall site. The opening of The Schoolhouse company, however, has brought more direct impacts as the development occurs right in the middle of the village. Probably the most obvious positive impact is the improvement of the village's built environment. The former primary school and the area surrounding it is virtually the first thing visitors see when they arrive to the village, and is at a central location in the heart of the village. After the school got abandoned in late 1990s the area had gotten to a really bad condition and, as one villager noted, was a dirty run-down area dominated mostly by animals. When The Schoolhouse was founded in 2006, the abandoned school was transformed into the company's main restaurant and office. Now the whole area is renovated saving as much old appearance as possible, thus contributing to architectural conservation, mentioned by Cooper and Hall (2008) as a possible positive impact of tourism, as opposed to "aesthetic pollution", a possible negative impact of tourism according to Theobald (1998). This affect can be generalized to a great extent to all of the building projects of The Schoolhouse, although the buildings tend to have new parts as well. Improved built environment is closely linked to social sustainability and this is one of the major ways how The Schoolhouse has improved the quality of life in the village.

When it comes to economic impacts of The Schoolhouse on Mutianyu contributing to social welfare, the most significant one is that The Schoolhouse leases all the land and run-down buildings from local land owners at market prices, creating significant income to them (Spear 2009a; Spear 2009b). In other words, this is exactly the way Theobald (1998) suggested the negative impacts of the pressure to sell land for tourism development can be prevented. The other direct social benefits to the village are the employment opportunities The Schoolhouse provides. Below is a quote from the partner of The Schoolhouse about this subject:

The Schoolhouse indirectly creates employment opportunities by helping build Mutianyu as a destination brand so that there is demand for new services and attractions from visitors who stay longer and spend more money. More immediately and more concretely our young business is responsible for the payrolls of over 200 people (Spear 2009b).

The employment opportunities offered by The Schoolhouse are not as significant yet than those offered by the tourism development at the Wall, but they are nonetheless significant. Whereas the villagers of Mutianyu no doubt benefits more from the opportunities at the Wall, the Schoolhouse offers significant employment opportunities to the surrounding villages in Bohai Township as well, especially for the young. The village mayor even helps The Schoolhouse proactively with recruitment (Spear 2009b). Spear (2009b) further notes: “Our entire kitchen team except the executive chef is comprised of local people who came without previous experience and can now run kitchens serving a variety of cuisines independently”. The Schoolhouse also indirectly creates employment by purchasing from local businesses to greatest extent possible (Spear 2009a; Spear 2009b). It must be said too that the employment opportunities increase rapidly, as The Schoolhouse company expands at a rather fast pace – two new inns, for example, are going to be opened soon, as mentioned earlier.

The tourism development in Mutianyu is not without its negative impacts, however. The traffic on the main road of the village has increased significantly and it directly affects a number of villagers. Increasing traffic has also lead to increasing air and noise pollution. The tourists traffic goes right through the centre of the village and even small increase is clearly noticeable and disturbing. Another negative impact is that tourism development uses significant amounts of water and electricity of which there is lack in the area, especially water is a problem. Furthermore, tourism has undeniably increased competition between villagers and thus affected social relationships. These issues are raised in the empirical part of the thesis.

6.2 Comparing tourism development in Mutianyu with Badaling

Badaling (八达岭) is the most popular Great Wall destination in China, located 70km north from Beijing downtown. It was the first section to open to tourism, in 1957¹⁹, and today it receives the greatest number of tourists of all Great Wall destinations. (BadalingGreatWall.com 2009.) In 2007, a record of 72000 visitors in a day was recorded (China.org.cn 2007). It was also the first section to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 (Evans 2006, 8). The Chinese Tourism Ministry has invested plenty of money in Badaling to make it look like what they probably perceive modern tourists expects – it is full of shops, restaurants, parking lots, buses, vendors, piped-in music (Shepherd 2002, 192) and there even is a Star-

¹⁹ Or 1959 according to Evans (2006, 20)

bucks, Kentucky Fried Chicken and a Great Wall Rollercoaster. It is, according to my observations and various literate sources (e.g. Evans 2006, 168; China.org.cn 2007), very overcrowded and reaching its carrying capacity. What tells much about the destination is that there is even a private airport in Badaling for helicopters and small airplanes (Commune By The Great Wall 2009). The reasons why it is overcrowded and highly popular are that it was the first Great Wall section opened for tourism, it has more than adequate tourism facilities, and it is virtually the only Beijing Great Wall section that can be visited as a half-day trip, due to the highway connecting it to downtown Beijing. Badaling is well restored and one of the most “majestic” Great Wall sections and no doubt shows impressive engineering. (Evans 2006, 179.)

However, due to its heavy tourism development, with few efforts to be socially sustainable, it is in various guide books the least recommended section to visit (e.g. Evans 2002, 180)²⁰. It is an amusement park on its own with hardly anything left of the old rural communities of the area. It is also so well connected to Beijing that the accommodation possibilities are rather limited and underdeveloped, one reason for this being also the lack of real community. (Evans 2006, 180.) There is no reason to disparage more Badaling in this thesis, it is a highly successful tourism destination in what it is trying to be. The point is that the almost aggressive tourism development in Badaling has resulted in disappearing of the rural communities of the area – there are very few of such in Badaling, it is more like a huge theme park. Why this example of tourism development is raised here is that there is always a risk of Mutianyu to develop in the same direction, destroying the ancient rural community, if not carefully managed.

There is no denying that the scale of tourism is rather large in Mutianyu as well, and, as Evans (2006, 176) mentions, there are more vendors at the wall entrance than one could possibly buy anything from, but Mutianyu has more old-world, more authentic feel to it. The biggest difference is that there actually is a living, traditional rural community in Mutianyu, a few hundred meters away from the wall entrance. The village has stayed surprisingly untouched until recently by the tourism development in the area – externally that is, the livelihoods of villagers have been greatly changed by tourism. When there is still a living traditional community present, there is still potential to develop the tourism in a way that the community does not perish but gets sustained and enhanced by tourism.

²⁰ All guide books researched in this study complained Badaling’s “over-touristic” nature, but some of them also said it is still a great part to visit due to its impressive features.

The comparison can be brought to a more detailed level by briefly comparing The Schoolhouse Company in Mutianyu with its arguably most significant competitor in Beijing area, The Commune in Badaling, managed by Kempinski Hotels. The Commune is an up-scale resort consisting of 42 villas within eight square kilometres of private land adjacent to Badaling (Commune By The Great Wall 2009). It is similar to The Schoolhouse as in attracting the same sort of customers and being a similar getaway destination from the city, but it is significantly different in a number of ways. First of all, it is a closed private land away from any community and inaccessible for local residents, whereas The Schoolhouse is right in the centre of a living community the houses being neighbours to the villagers. This means that the local residents in Badaling do not benefit from The Commune other than in form of possible employment, while The Schoolhouse leases the houses from local villagers providing them significant income. Secondly, the villas of The Commune are “private collection of contemporary architecture” (Commune By The Great Wall 2009) being completely alien to traditional Chinese style, whereas The Schoolhouse builds its houses by renovating old run-down village houses, thus conserving to an extent the architectural heritage and fitting in to the local surroundings.

The possible negative social impacts surely might be lesser in a case of Commune where the resort is completely closed from surrounding people, but that development conflicts with the very principles of socially sustainable tourism, where community participation (e.g. Murphy 1985), social and cultural exchange and revitalizing local traditions (e.g. Page & Connell 2006) are highlighted. Furthermore, Gunn (2002, 86) argues that “major tourist services are most appropriate when located at communities rather than dispersed throughout natural areas”. The Commune surely is an excellent company, the goal is not to disparage it, but when it comes to socially sustainable tourism it is not the ideal kind of development. An arguably more appropriate approach is the one taken by The Schoolhouse.

7 Research methods

Research methods of this thesis consist of qualitative interviews, personal observations, casual conversations, academic research and other studies as well as information gained from various people living and operating in Mutianyu village. When talking about social sustainability, the subjective opinions and attitudes of the villagers themselves have a crucial importance. Social studies generally use objective social indicators of living conditions without measuring people's opinions. However, as Kajanoja (2009, 90-91) argues, there are a number of justified reasons to include subjective measures, to take into account the opinions of the social group that is studied. Social sustainability is not so much an exact science than it is about what people actually feel and perceive. Bearing in mind this fact, the empirical part of this thesis is twelve qualitative theme interviews conducted in Mutianyu village with the villagers.

Qualitative research is substantially different than quantitative. Qualitative interviews are in-depth and intensive rather than numerical as in quantitative research. The aim is to acquire subjective understanding of social reality, not statistical descriptions or overall generalizable predictions. (Marshall & Rossman 1989, 2; Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2008, 156-157.) The answers in qualitative interviews are often viewed as one wholeness (Hirsjärvi et al 2008, 158; Alasuutari 1994, 28), rather than comparing each answer with another one, although that is possible too. In qualitative research conclusions cannot be made based on statistical probabilities – usually there are not enough interviews made to make the differences statistically significant (Alasuutari 1994, 28-29). That is not the idea in qualitative research, the point is to get more thorough and detailed information from lesser number of people. Qualitative interviews are based on finding differences and, particularly in this case, similarities between interviewees and their answers and then simplifying these answers to be comparable with each other and with existing theories and frameworks (Alasuutari 1994, 34). Although, it must be noted that Hirsjärvi et al (2008, 157) argues that qualitative research aims to find facts more than to prove existing theories, which is not necessarily the case in the research of this thesis.

The qualitative interviews in this thesis were sort of mixtures of half-structured and theme interviews. In half-structured interviews the questions are same to everyone, but there are no answer options, the interviewee answers with his own words. In theme interviews the themes and subjects are predetermined, but there is no exact structure or order for the questions. In other words, the interviewer exactly knows the subjects and types of questions he or she wants to ask, but the interviews vary depending on the interviewee, it is closer to a conversation than

a formal interview. Open interviews would be the closest thing to a conversation with few predetermined questions – different interviewees can even be asked different questions. (Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 26-27.) Hirsjärvi et al. (2008, 203-204) do not distinguish half structured and theme interviews from each other, but I find the categories by Eskola and Vastamäki more appropriate. The interviews in this thesis were meant to be closer to half-structured interviews, but they ended up being closer to theme interviews, for a number of reasons. They did not go as far as to be open interviews, though – I tried to remain strict that the same questions were asked from all interviewees. The answers were analysed in this thesis mostly as half-structured interviews. The answers were simplified and common themes were observed separately in each question. Non-simplified answers were also used to demonstrate more closely some results and to bring more depth to the results. The interview questions are as an appendix in this thesis.

The interviewed villagers can be divided into two groups, the purposefully selected and the randomly picked, each consisting of six people. The purposefully selected villagers were the owner and runner of the old village shop, the owner and runner of the new village shop, the village doctor, the entrepreneur who is responsible for gardening and outdoor cleaning for The Schoolhouse, the couple who receives occasional home visits organized by The Schoolhouse and a man who lives right next to two of the rental homes of The Schoolhouse. The other six villagers were picked from the street. The interviews were conducted between August 30th 2009 and September 11th 2009 in the village of Mutianyu. Some interviews were done right in the street, some in the homes of the villagers and some at the workplace of the villagers. Each interview lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the interviewees willingness to talk. Due to my inadequate Chinese language skills, my Chinese colleague Chanli Yang, the guest relations manager of The Schoolhouse, acted as an interpreter. The interviewees were clearly informed before the interview that although we were working at The Schoolhouse, the interview had per se nothing to do with The Schoolhouse and thus they should not have felt restricted to speak their mind.

Although there were twelve interviews, there were actually fourteen villagers involved in the interviews, because in two occasions a married couple answered the questions together. These have been counted as one instead of two interviews, as they agreed with each other's answers or at least were significantly influenced by each other. However, when it comes questions which do not depend on opinion such as age, occupation and time lived in the village, they have been counted as individual interviewees. Thus for example when counting the average

age of the interviewees or the number of answerers born in the village there are fourteen people, while actual results finding out the attitudes and perceptions of the villagers consist of twelve interviews.

As suggested for example by Silverman (2001, 83) the first interview was sort of a “pre-test” to discover whether the questions are easily understood the way intended, after which a few changes were made to the questions. However, as it turned out, interviewees often answered to the first questions in a way that they answered to some of the later questions as well, resulting to some interviews being mostly villagers just telling their perceptions and ideas while we tried to guide the discussion to the direction intended by the questions.

There are plenty of ways to define different types of interviews, but there is one that seems to be particularly appropriate for this thesis, because the interviews conducted fits almost perfectly to a certain definition. According to Silverman (2001, 86-87) there are three alternative versions of interview data, depending on what is the focus of the survey: positivism, emotionalism and constructionism. Interviews according to positivism focuses on facts, data which is valid and reliable independently of the research setting. According to emotionalism, interviewees are “viewed as experiencing subjects who actively construct their social world” (Silverman 2001, 87). Here the issue is to gather information based on perceptions and experiences, not on facts. Constructionism in its turn is based on the assumption that interviews are treated as topics rather than research resources, and the topic is mutually constructed by interviewers and interviewees. The interviews in this thesis are strongly based on emotionalism, and the best ways to achieve these results based on peoples perceptions are unstructured, open-ended interviews (Silverman 2001, 87). This has been the starting point during the entire process. The key in emotionalist interviews is also to avoid manipulating interviewees and provide an open atmosphere (Silverman 2001, 90) and this principle was followed to the greatest extent possible in this thesis.

8 Analysing the interviews with the villagers

The objective of the interviews was mainly to examine how the villagers of Mutianyu feel that tourism has changed their village and their life, and thus to find out to what extent the tourism development is socially sustainable in Mutianyu. As mentioned in chapter 3.2, social sustainability is a life enhancing condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition. To evaluate how tourism can sustain Mutianyu in socially sustainable way, it is crucial to see whether people perceive that their lives have been enhanced by tourism, and how the process could be changed so that lives would be enhanced. The interview questions were drawn up from this approach. The idea was that without any given options interviewees would tell how life has changed, what is different now. Quality of life is highlighted often in academic texts when discussing social sustainability, and a simplified good way to discover how the quality of life could be sustained and improved in a community is to simply ask the villagers which are the best and the worst things about living in the village. Obviously, the best things should be sustained while the worst things should become a matter of concern, something decision makers and corporations should take into their agenda. For this thesis, it is crucial to find out whether villagers perceive that tourism has improved their quality of life, and that is one objective of the interviews.

Also, as this thesis focuses to a large extent on 'The Schoolhouse', one objective was to examine the difference between how tourism as such²¹ has influenced their life and how 'The Schoolhouse' has influenced their life. The aim of this is to see whether the development concept of 'The Schoolhouse' is socially sustainable, in other words, contributes to enhancing the life of the Mutianyu village community. Other questions were for example about the sister village relationship and what recommendations the villagers would have for the future tourism development – the reason these questions were asked was to look a little bit into the attitudes of the villagers towards community involvement, which is an essential part of social sustainability but which can be extremely hard to implement in practice, especially in China.

In the next chapter are the results and analysing of the interviews, separately about each question. The chapter is divided into subsections by themes, using non-numerated headings, in the same order the themes were in the interviews. This is to make it clearer to the reader. After the results is a chapter evaluating the reliability and validity of the research.

²¹ Namely the opening of the Great Wall tourism section in late 1980s.

8.1 Results of the interviews

Demographics and village population

The average age of the interviewees was 60.2 years, which suggests an uneven age structure in the village of Mutianyu, although fourteen is not a big enough sample to draw exact conclusions. However, according to my own observations in the village, the age structure really is uneven. Seeing young people was really uncommon, elderly clearly dominated the streets of the village. This observation is reinforced by various theories about the declining and aging population of contemporary rural areas, which is considered to be one of the biggest problems in rural communities (e.g. Wilson et al 2001). The youngest one of the interviewees was 46 years old, the owner of a new village shop in Mutianyu who moved there only five years ago. The oldest one was 82, a retired farmer who used to be a soldier for the Red Army decades ago. Ten out of fourteen of the interviewees were men, but this is more result of the unwillingness of some women to take part of the interview, and the fact that women stay more at home, than any result of an uneven gender structure.

The community of Mutianyu village is an old one consisting to a great extent of families who have lived there for generations. Nine out of fourteen interviewees had been born in the village, one even said that his family had lived there for five generations. Three of the answerers married to the village from another place decades ago, while only two said to moved there as recently as five years ago, a couple that owns the new village shop. Mutianyu is largely dominated by a few families, and this is confirmed to some extent by the results of the interviews. Fourteen villagers took part in the interview but there were only five different surnames. Nine of the answerers were Liu's or Li's, which is a significant number in a survey this small. He's, the other dominating family had two representatives in this case.

Another finding that suggests an uneven age structure and points out the out-immigration problem highlighted in academic writings (e.g. Wilson et al. 2001; Page & Connell 2006) is that six of the interviewees said that they have children but all have moved to nearby urban areas. In two cases children actually did work at the tourist stalls at the Wall, but still lived in Huairou urban district. Two interviewees said that they are actually proud that their children have left the village because there is nothing there for the youth, which tells rather much about the situation in Mutianyu. What is promising is that in each of the four cases in the interviews

where one or more child still lives in Mutianyu they work in tourism sector, mostly as vendors at the wall entrance, but also at the Great Wall Hotel²². This suggest that tourism clearly offers opportunities for the youth as well in rural areas, as argued for example by Zhou and Ma (2009) although urban areas undeniably are still often more attractive.

Positive and negative aspects about living in the village

When asked what are the best aspects about living in Mutianyu, quite surprisingly the most common answer pointed out by six interviewees was The Great Wall, because it brings money and opportunities to the village. This supports the theory Närhi (2001) mentioned that well-being and social sustainability is historically measured by economic indicators, although she noted that that is not a comprehensive enough approach. Almost as common answers were clean, unpolluted, fresh air and the natural environment, which both were mentioned by five villagers. This importance of natural environment for the villagers is further strengthened by for example Närhi (2001), Sairinen and Kohl (2004) and Barron and Gauntlett (2002) who emphasize that natural environment is a crucial part of social sustainability and they cannot be distinguished from each other. These answers were almost always mentioned in comparison to Beijing, which indicates that many villagers compares their living environment to the capital 90 km away and perceives it to be better. Another popular answer was quietness and peacefulness which also were mentioned as opposed to Beijing. This emphasizes the importance that tourism should develop the village in a way it does not eventually become an urban suburb.

Other answers included good infrastructure, sense of community and the risk-free nature of doing business in the village – again, compared to Beijing. The absolutely most popular answer to the worst aspect about living in the village was the lack of water, which was mentioned six times. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the lack of water is a big problem especially in Northern China and it is argued to be one of the major obstacles for sustainable development (National Geographic 2008), and thus it is not a surprise that it is perceived to be a big problem in Mutianyu as well. On the other hand, five of the interviewees could not think of any negative aspects about living in the village. One man said that he could never say anything bad about his home village. According to previous studies, this is a common attitude in China (e.g.

²² In addition to The Schoolhouse, The Great Wall hotel is the only significant accommodation company in or near the village. It offers clearly lower quality services with significantly lower prices than The Schoolhouse and thus is not a direct competitor of The Schoolhouse.

Zhang et al. 2009; Stone 2002). Perhaps this also suggests that Hirsjärvi et al. (2008) had a point when they argued that interviewees tend to give socially correct answers.

Impacts of tourism on the community and lives of the villagers

Question three aimed for finding out how peoples' lives have changed due to the opening of the Great Wall Tourism section at Mutianyu in the late 1980s. The results show that life in the village has changed considerably, even more so than anticipated. Almost every interviewee mentioned increased living standards, eight saying that the family has now significantly higher incomes than before tourism and furthermore six mentioning improved opportunities. More money and more opportunities seemed to be the absolute most popular themes regarding this questions, and answerers seemed almost passionate about it. These results are validated to a great extend by theory: almost all writings about the benefits of rural tourism highlight the increasing incomes, opportunities and employment (e.g. Page & Connell 2006; Theobald 1998; Zhou & Ma 2009; Cooper & Hall 2008). An example describing how significantly tourism has increased incomes is a 68 year-old villager, who took part in the interview and who is a forest guard earning 200 Rmb (approximately 18€) per month. This is an amount a vendor at the wall can easily make in a day, which tells rather much about the opportunities tourism brings to villagers. Another interviewee used to be a cleaner, but after seeing how people were earning from tourism she started to be a vendor as well which has significantly made the economic situation of her family better. What supports the theory by Gosse and Jolliffe (2006) who argue that local villagers do not often recognize the positive effects of tourism is that four villagers claimed that tourism has not changed their life at all. Three of these is due to the fact that they were not at the village until some years ago, but another one who said so was the village doctor, rationalizing by the fact that patients always were and still are just normal villagers. However, she has had a guest house business as well for twelve years, but she did not give much value to that. Even though they had been away for some time, one would think they would notice the difference between the former village without virtually any infrastructure, for example, and the village now.

Now we see what benefits and negative impacts the interviewees perceive that tourism has brought to the village, and whether they feel that the quality of life is better now than before. Most commonly mentioned benefit with eight mentions was improved infrastructure, mainly clarified to mean the paved roads. Indeed, as one of the villagers told us, before the opening of the Great Wall Mutianyu was just a remote village without a decent road access, all they had

were small mud roads. Now Mutianyu is well linked to the surrounding areas with proper well-maintained paved roads, and the village itself is getting an increased number of other paved roads. Indeed, the improved infrastructure is considered to be one of the major positive impacts of tourism on rural areas (e.g. Theobald 1998; Zhou & Ma 2009) and the findings in a study about rural tourism in China by Zhang et al (2009) also supports it. There have also been new water-pipes installed and solar-power street lights in Mutianyu, but none of the interviewees mentioned those – again supporting Gosse and Jolliffe’s (2006) theory of residents not recognizing changes brought by tourism.

Almost as popular answer as improved infrastructure was, not surprisingly, increased opportunities and increased incomes, both mentioned seven times in the interviews and both really highlighted in literature. This was noted also in a study by Stone (2002) where rural residents perceived their strengthened economy to be the most significant benefit of tourism. Unfortunately, these findings also might suggest that Xu et al (2008) had a point when they warned that pressure for economic benefits easily take away attention from sustainability issues in rural China. A few interviewees clarified that before the opening of the tourism section basically all of the villagers were farmers, that was the only option. According to one former farmer, present entrepreneur, Mutianyu was a village described by a saying “Mian Chao Huang Tu, Bei Chao Tian, 面朝黄土, 背朝天” which means approximately “face facing yellow earth, back facing the sky” or in clear words that everyone had to do farming, and that was the sole option. Now there are numerous other options in the village, and according to the interviews and my own observations, villagers seem truly happy about that. In addition to answers mentioned above, four interviewees said that tourism has made the environment significantly better and three mentioned the increased interest of the government towards the village due to tourism. These two perceptions were linked by an 68-year-old forest guard, who said that the forests in the village used to be rather pest-ridden, but now the government sprays the forests from helicopters with something and the forests are now pest-free and beautiful. Indeed, the role of tourism as a conserver of natural environment has been noted by for example Hall (2008), although there are considerable risks as well of environmental destruction.

When it comes to the negative impacts of tourism on Mutianyu, the interviewees were rather reluctant to speak their mind. This can be either because they simply could not think of many negative impacts or due to the traditional discourage towards negative comments in China. Either way, the most commonly mentioned negative impacts were increased pollution and traffic (mentioned by three villagers), problems also pointed out by the study by Zhang et al.

(2009), and that former friends are becoming competitors and indifferent towards each other (three mentions as well). Increased pollution and traffic is a rather obvious negative impact and surely not to be understated, especially when they are suggested to be important aspects in social sustainability (e.g. Närhi 2001) but the latter one is highly interesting when evaluating this subject. Three interviewees said that before everyone used to be farmers and friends, but now they are all competing at the wall for the same customers and are becoming indifferent towards each other. Business is now being valued more than friendship. This is exactly what was noticed in Yubeng rural tourism case study (Sun & Bao 2008) as well. In a way, in the light of these interviews, the former warm community is becoming dominated by money, it is becoming more like the world around it. It is another question, however, if tourism is only to be blamed or if this kind of development would occur anyway in a country transforming from communism to capitalism in a globalizing world.

Furthermore, two villagers perceived that crime rates have increased due to tourism development and this is what Shepherd (2002) and Theobald (2008) have noted in literature as well. Before everyone used to know each other but now when there are more strangers, crimes do occur more often. One mentioned that other villagers hear about the money Mutianyu is earning and come to do robbing driven by envy. Last but not least, one villager said that because of tourism the income gap between villagers is increasing. Before, when everyone used to be farmers, the incomes were more or less the same. Now the ones benefiting from tourism earn considerably more money whereas the others earn just a little bit more. This is exactly what Cooper and Hall (2008) mentioned to be a possible negative impact of tourism, but otherwise this subject does not seem to be much discussed in literature about rural tourism.

Despite the negative impacts mentioned, the villagers rather unanimously felt that the quality of life is better now than it was before tourism, ten out of twelve said so, five of whom highlighted this perception by saying that it is absolutely better now. Only one villager said that he has no opinions and one did not know the village before tourism. In other words, no interviewees perceived the quality of life worse now than it was before. Money, opportunities and environment were thought to be the reasons why they prefer the village more now.

Impacts of The Schoolhouse on the community and lives of the villagers

The next questions were about how the villagers feel about The Schoolhouse and its positive and negative impacts on the village. Given the apparent change that the company has caused

in the village, the relative indifference towards the company the interviews suggested was surprising. Five of the twelve villagers admitted that they do not really care much about The Schoolhouse, not in a positive or negative way. They were willing to mention some impacts of The Schoolhouse, but they did not seem to find them important to their lives. However, the villagers were again rather unanimous that The Schoolhouse has significantly improved the built environment (nine mentioned that). In addition, seven interviewees stated that the village looks better now thanks to The Schoolhouse. As one of them said, the company has given the village a new face they can all be proud of. Before, the area where The Schoolhouse is was dirty and horrible, but now it is nice and clean. Four interviewees perceived that The Schoolhouse has made the natural environment better as well. This surely improves the image of the village, which Matthies (2001) argued to be an important aspect of social sustainability, and increases local pride which is considered to be one of the positive social impacts of tourism (e.g. Page & Connell 2006).

Other answers regarding positive impacts were that The Schoolhouse educates people about environment and management, and shows a great example to villagers, which was mentioned two times. This hopefully eventually will aid local participation in tourism development – lack of education is a common problem in that field, as mentioned by for example Okazaki (2008). Two others said that The Schoolhouse has made the community more open and less conservative. Not surprisingly, one of these two was the village shop owner who moved to the village only five years ago.

The most commonly mentioned negative impact was the noise coming from parties and special occasions from The Schoolhouse and rental homes (four mentioned). Three of the villagers who said the noise to be bothering live next to The Schoolhouse or one of the rental homes. This is supported by the study by Zhang et al. (2009) in rural China as well as in an article by Mexa and Collovini (2004). While most of the other interviewees could not think of any negative impacts, one couple complained that the rental homes use considerable amount of water and electricity, and when they are occupied the villagers run out of water and electricity. They accused the electricity systems not to be very power efficient. However, even these villagers admitted that they prefer the village now than before The Schoolhouse, mostly because of the improved built environment. Indeed, as was the case when comparing the village now and before the opening of The Great Wall Tourism Section, ten of twelve villagers assured that the quality of life in the village is now better than it was before The Schoolhouse.

Perceptions about foreigners among the villagers

Answers to the questions what the interviewees think about foreigners getting houses in the village and tourists coming in were interesting. The most common answer was that it is highly positive to get foreigners to the village, because they are more polite and have better manners than the locals. My own perceptions in China were that the manners of people are not at the level they are in Western countries, but I never expected this to have any base in reality. However, that was a common experience amongst locals as well. One villager who lives next to a house owned by foreigners said her children used to get traditional new year gifts²³ from the foreign neighbours but not from local neighbours. A 82-year-old retired villager, arguably lonely, said to be extremely happy that foreigners always greet him when passing by. This observation does not seem to have much foothold in academic literature and is perhaps something worth further research. Cooper et al. (2005) mentions that tourists may often behave in a way that causes social frictions in a community, but here the case seems to be the opposite.

Another interesting observation by two interviewees was that the security has increased because of the foreigners brought by The Schoolhouse. They mentioned that as foreigners and tourists are often “important people”, police has to pay more attention now. If crimes do happen, police arrives immediately, which in its part makes people more reluctant to do crimes. According to a villager, here is a remarkable difference between Mutianyu and other surrounding villages. Safety is an important part of social sustainability, as mentioned by Närhi (2001) for example, and exactly this potential of tourism to reduce crime rates in rural areas is mentioned by Pizam and Mansfeld (2006), although tourism’s role as “crime increaser” seems to receive more attention in literature.

Other positive remarks were the fact that the presence of tourists gives pressure in a positive way to the government, and that it is simply fun to see foreigners, which was not possible 20 years ago. When it comes to negative attitudes towards foreigners, two villagers admitted to be afraid of diseases brought by tourists, whereas two complained that the noise coming from tourism is bothering although foreigners per se are not an issue. In contrast to my expectations, it was brought up only in one interview that the foreigners occupy all the land while the villagers get few rights to build.

²³ Chinese New Year is the most important holiday of the year in China. Traditionally neighbours, relatives and friends give each other red envelopes with money inside.

Sister village relationship and community identity

As mentioned in chapter 5.3. The Schoolhouse has initiated a sister village relationship between Mutianyu and Shelbourne Falls in The USA. However, according to the interviews, this has little meaning to the villagers. In fact, few of them have even moderate information about it. Five of the interviewees had never even heard about it and the ones who had said that they do not care about it, it is merely a government thing and does not benefit the villagers in any way. Two hoped that government would make it more beneficial and would include the villagers more in the process. The only one who had plenty of information and high expectation about the relationship was one of the main members of the village government and thus no objective conclusions can be drawn from his answers. The question about how tourism has changed the identity appeared to be a rather tricky one and five of the twelve respondents did not give any answer. Majority of the ones who did answer said that tourism has made the village a less closed community and more open to the world, which is an impact also highlighted in the literature by for example Hall (2008). Two mentioned that tourism has made Mutianyu more popular and famous, in a positive way. A 58-year-old farmer even said that because of the fame brought by tourism the village has gotten an award from central government and that even Zhou Enlai visited the village before his death.²⁴ Two interviewees said simply that the village has become a better place to live, whereas only one insisted that the identity is still the same.

Recommendations from the villagers and community involvement

Next we will see what the interviewees would change in the tourism development in the village if they had the power – which turned out to be not much. This question was difficult for many to answer, and the interpreter actually preferred not to ask the question from some interviewees because she said they could not answer and would only feel awkward. This phenomenon is supported by some literate sources (e.g. Xu et al. 2008) – community members, especially in centrally governed countries like China, do not necessary want to participate in decision making and do not have the knowledge needed, although the importance of community participation is much emphasized in academic texts usually (e.g. Murphy 1985). The only suggestion that was mentioned more than once (twice) was that tourism should be even fur-

²⁴ Zhou Enlai was a Premier and Foreign Minister of People's Republic of China from its founding in October 1949 to his death in January 1976 (Barnouin & Changgen 2006, 322). Zhou Enlai could have not visited Mutianyu after the opening of The Great Wall because he died ten years before that.

ther promoted and even larger scale tourism should be developed. Not surprisingly, the reason stated was money. We have already seen in this chapter that increasing incomes are perceived to be the most important indicators of quality of life, and thus it is understandable that some villagers would want even more tourism. One villager even suggested that foreigners in the village should be made feel more welcome by for example organizing villager-foreigner gatherings. The basic idea was that the foreigners are often important people and to bring them closer to the community would eventually benefit the village. One interesting suggestion by an interviewee was that the tourist stalls up the wall (where the tourism related income mainly comes from) and their prices should be standardized in order to make it more organized and decrease the tension between villagers. Given the elderly-dominated population of Mutianyu, it is no surprise that one suggestion was also to organize charity-based activities for the elderly. Indeed, according to my observations as well, activities for elderly are inadequate, which should be changed, because community activities are undeniably important aspects of a socially sustainable community, as can be seen from Pepperdine's (2000) figure (see chapter 3.2.). Furthermore, it was also proposed that the elderly should be educated more and the cultural life should be enhanced, by government or by other means.

Can tourism help prevent out-migration?

The last question was whether tourism can help young people to stay in the village, if tourism could help to even out the uneven age structure and maintain the population. Unfortunately, seven of the twelve respondents claimed that the village does not have anything to offer for the youth and that tourism cannot really help in the matter, at least at the current scale. This finding is, to an extent, inconsistent with most of the literature, where tourism's ability to prevent out-migration is almost praised (e.g. Zhang et al. 2009; Page & Connell 2006). However, four interviewees answered that tourism in the village offers opportunities not only to the youth but for everyone, were rather positive about the matter. One man who has three daughters still living in the village said that it is not because of tourism that people stay, it is because it is a beautiful village. It should be noted, though, that of his seven daughters three work at the tourists stalls and the remaining four daughters have left the village.

8.2 Reliability and validity

When conducting interviews or any research, qualitative or quantitative, reliability and validity need to be evaluated and they are important issues in field research, although according to

varied literature it is less of an issue with qualitative than quantitative interviews due to their often emotionalist and immeasurable nature (e.g. Silverman 2001, 225-229, 231).

Reliability is a concept mainly used in quantitative research, but the idea is often used in all kind of research. It must be seen differently when talking about qualitative research, however. If reliability would be defined similarly in qualitative than in quantitative research, the result would most often be that the study is not reliable (Golafshani 2003, 601). While reliability in quantitative research is mostly about how consistent the answers are in time and how well the research can be generalized in intended population, Golafshani (2003, 601) argues that in qualitative research reliability should be measured by trustworthiness, credibility, neutrality, dependability and overall quality among some other qualities. This means that to evaluate reliability in qualitative research and indeed in the research of this thesis, the focus should be on how well the answers can be trusted or believed; were the questions neutral and not trying to lead the interviewees to a certain direction; how much the interpretations are reflective of actual answers and how much of researchers' biases; and how well the interviews were done in general (Golafshani 2003, 601; Marshall & Rossman 1989, 144-145). Triangulation, which means "looking at a phenomenon or research question from multiple perspectives and sources of data" (Stone 2002, 34), is a good tool to improve the reliability of qualitative research. In this thesis in terms of triangulation the qualitative interviews were reinforced with personal observations, casual conversations, academic research and other studies as well as information gained from various people living and operating in the village of Mutianyu. Thus both primary and secondary sources of information were used in order to increase the reliability. Official documents and documentary evidence was difficult to get, which in its part unfortunately reduces the reliability to an extent.

Also, in the reliability of qualitative interviews one of the central questions is whether all the interviewees understand the questions the same way and that answers can be coded without uncertainty (Silverman 2001, 229). Reliability can be improved by accurately explaining how the interviews were conducted (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 227) and that is taken into account in this thesis (see chapter 7).

When it comes to interviews, in a developing world context, there is always a risk of "upper-lower dominance" where typically white foreign males interview locals, which might lead to distorted reality or response bias. Answerers might say what they are expected to say. The risk of "politically correct" answers is even greater in a socialist country like China, where govern-

ment still largely controls tourism and where freedom of speech is not at the same level as it is in Western world. (Stone 2002, 46.) I did not perceive that this would have happened in this case, but there is always the risk and it should be taken into account when assessing the reliability. In general context as well the reliability of interviews can be weakened by the fact that interviewees often tend to give socially correct answers (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 201).

The questions of validity is also appropriate whether one uses qualitative or quantitative data. Indeed, if one cannot in any way convince that methods are reliable and that conclusions are valid, at least to some extent, there is little point in aiming to conclude the study (Silverman 2001, 254). At least, where there is a lack of reliability or validity, it should be recognized. Validity in short is a term that addresses if the research conducted explains or measures what they were meant to explain or measure. Validity is also about the interpretations. Interpreting interview answers is always subjective, but validity is about how the interpretations are made. If they are just hastily “invented” the results are not valid, but if the interpretations are product of conscious analysis, the validity is much better. In this sense, literature research and comparing with existing theory increases the validity of interpretations and thus the whole research. (Cano 2000.) Indeed, when it come to validity and reliability in qualitative research, the writer must show how by interviewing a small number of individuals or groups he is also studying a case of a wider phenomenon. Questions and answers should be linked to larger theoretical frameworks in order to show that they are of general significance. (Marshall & Rossman 1989, 12.) Marshall and Rossman (1989, 145) argue that validity is the biggest strength of qualitative research and interviews. It could be argued validity is the strength of qualitative research and reliability is the weakness – and this goes the other way around with quantitative research. The validity of this survey turns out to be rather good, although the sample was small.

To be able to generalize is a common aim and worry of qualitative surveys. Qualitative research should produce explanations that have a wider meaning (Mason 1996 in Silverman 2001, 249). It is, however, questionable to generalize from few cases to populations, in this case from twelve villagers to a population of 400. It is clear that the results of these interviews cannot be generalized to the whole Chinese rural population or even to the population of Mutianyu village. However, given the rather old average age of the interviewees, it can relatively reliably be generalized to the elderly of Mutianyu village. Still, interviewees tend to answer differently in interview situations than in other situations and this has to be borne in mind when trying to generalize the results (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 202).

9 Conclusions and recommendations for the future

During the last half century rural areas across the globe have faced serious problems such as declining and aging populations, large-scale out-migration, decreased employment possibilities and loss of services. These are largely due to changes in agricultural practice, technology and policies – people are not needed the same way they used to be. The case is the same in China, especially close to urban centres where the possibilities in rural areas are simply too inadequate to fight the increasing pulling power of the cities. Many rural areas have turned to tourism in search of better future and it has shown its potential to sustain rural communities by providing significant income and employment opportunities, and by increasing the living standards of the rural population. Many cases have proved the power of tourism to provide the economic possibilities to maintain rural communities and keep the population from moving to the cities. Furthermore, tourism has been noted to be more sustainable option for rural recovery than common alternatives such as industrial development, logging or mining which tend to be environmentally unsustainable and also easily destroy the special rural communities and turn them to industrial towns or rural suburbs.

However, tourism as tool for developing rural communities is not without its risks and negative impacts. Despite the undeniable positive economic impacts tourism tends to bring on rural areas, rural communities are extremely fragile to social changes and if tourism is not carefully managed it can virtually destroy the very thing it was meant to sustain in the first place. Social sustainability has received less attention in sustainability debate than environmental aspects, perhaps because social impacts occur slowly in time and are often intangible. Tourism often brings new social problems to a community such as increased crime rates, decline in social stability and in moral values, conflicts among villagers due to increased competition, and decreased access to resources. Tourism also easily creates noise, air and aesthetic pollution which lead to social problems as well. At worst, aggressive tourism development can displace people and turn the former rural community into a tourist resort or amusement park, destroying the community completely. However, tourism, when carefully managed, can bring significant positive social impacts as well such as revitalisation of local traditions, cultural exchange, opening of political atmosphere and decreased crime rates. Tourism can also significantly improve the quality of natural and built environment, and infrastructure, which all are important aspects of social sustainability, as mentioned in chapters 3.2 and 3.3, for example.

The case chosen for this thesis is Mutianyu, a small village next to the Great Wall in Beijing municipality, which has used tourism for two decades as a tool for fighting the common problems in rural areas mentioned above. Tourism has brought significantly increased incomes and employment opportunities to villagers of Mutianyu and has greatly improved their living standards, mostly through vendor activities near the Great Wall entrance. Tourism has also significantly improved the infrastructure and built environment in the village. Tourism development has clearly offered the village a more socially sustainable tool for rural development than industrialization, which originally was planned for Mutianyu. The rural essence of the village has remained and it is still a living traditional community. The villagers feel highly positive about tourism and despite some negative impacts tourism is perceived to significantly improve the quality of life in the village.

The Schoolhouse Company opened right in the middle of the village in 2006 and it has brought the tourism, which formerly by-passed the village, to the village itself. The tourism development of The Schoolhouse has brought considerable benefits to the village, such as remarkably restoring many run-down houses, giving the village a new face, offering direct and indirect employment, and encouraging locals to be entrepreneurs. The Schoolhouse has adopted a model of attracting a rather low volume but high spending tourism, which lessens the social burden on the community, as mentioned by for example Page and Connell (2006).

However, there are some negative impacts caused by The Schoolhouse and the tourism in general in the village as well, such as increased noise, pollution and traffic, and according to some villagers, The Schoolhouse occupies too much land and uses too much of the very limited water and electricity resources of the village. It all comes to the question how the benefits of tourism development could be obtained without negatively influencing the social aspects of the community. Also, The Schoolhouse involves the local community only in a limited way in the decision making, although various authors very strongly highlight the importance of active community involvement in successful and sustainable tourism (e.g. Murphy 1985, Stone 2002, Zhang et al. 2009, Sun & Bao 2008). However, here must be noted that the willingness of local people to participate in decision making in China and indeed in Mutianyu village is rather low (e.g. Xu et al. 2008), and whether increased community participation is the answer in this specific case would need further research. The potential of community participation in Mutianyu would be a useful subject for a study in the future.

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate the potential of tourism as a socially sustainable tool for rural development and it must be concluded that despite its negative impacts, the tourism development of The Schoolhouse seems to be a good option for socially sustainable tourism development, bearing in mind that no company can be perfect in its operations – especially when it is not about charity. The villagers mainly feel positive about The Schoolhouse, and the negative impacts of tourism are mostly perceived to come from other tourism development. The most essential question here is the balance, the golden middle way: on one hand, it seems to be that this development is not enough to sustain the village in the long term, because the youth still moves out and the population ages dangerously, as can be seen from the interviews. On the other hand, much more aggressive tourism development could take Mutianyu closer to the kind of development there is in Badaling, destroying the specific features of this ancient rural community. Further development is needed, but it must be carefully managed and local population must be taken into consideration.

The existing housing stock in Mutianyu and Yingbeigou villages includes hundreds of residences, and other nearby dying villages in Bohai Township also under the Great Wall have many more houses and abandoned buildings, so there is a long-term potential to continue to revitalize the communities, in a sustainable way characterised by community approach and small scale. The model for development by The Schoolhouse already seems to have an encouraging demonstration effect and other outside investors have started to lease and rebuild existing homes in the area. (Spear 2009b.) As the development by The Schoolhouse appears to be a socially sustainable tool for rural development, it would be a good idea to adopt the model in other villages, too. Still, there are always recommendations how to further ensure the social sustainability of the development, there is always room for improvements.

The first recommendation is that each time there is a new tourism development planned in the village, by The Schoolhouse or by some other developer, a thorough Social Impact Assessment would be conducted. This requires efforts but it is an efficient way to make social sustainability a part of the overall tourism development in the village. At first indicators offered by Roberts and Tribe (2008, appendix 5) could be used. To my opinion, when it comes to these indicators, the issues of cultural promotion, resident access and host reactions to tourists should be highlighted. Evaluating the changing attitudes of residents towards tourism is especially important, as noted by for example Huh & Vogt (2008). In time specific indicators for Mutianyu should be developed, which would be a good subject for further study – these indicators could be easily used for other rural communities around as well. Furthermore, local

villagers should be consulted when implementing new projects to find out their perceptions and feelings. As mentioned by for example Stone (2002), locals need to be listen to in order for tourism development to be successful and sustainable in a long term. It could be a simple survey done every time to find out what villagers feel about the development, or it could be some kinds of regularly organized gatherings where the developers and the villagers could gather and discuss the planned developments. Needless to say, the opinion of the community needs to be given weight in decision making. Also, even when there is no new development, for instance The Schoolhouse should regularly evaluate its operations in the field of social sustainability. For this, too, the indicators offered by Roberts and Tribe (2008) could be used first, and in time more specific indicators to Mutianyu should be developed.

Two recommendations given by Zhang et al. (2009) in their study of rural tourism in China would be feasible in the development of tourism in Mutianyu as well. First of all, as the development of The Schoolhouse penetrates deep inside the village, zoning by local authorities regarding the tourism development would be a good idea. There should be privacy areas for villagers, and some areas of the area should be banned for tourism development, so that everything would not be modified by tourism. This is also linked to the “resident access” indicator in the indicator set discussed above (Roberts & Tribe 2008). This might be difficult in practice, but something worth considering. Secondly, which might sound a bit “suspicious”, especially as for example Swarbrooke (1999) mentions it as a negative aspect of rural tourism, seasonality could be increased. This would help the community to recover from all the tourism hassle and to be able to live rather undisturbed life for some part of the year (Zhang et al. 2009). In this case this does not mean that tourism should be discouraged at any time of the year as it is, but to develop something more for the summer season, for example, and leave the winters as they are. A great idea would be to develop a significant and tempting tourism product out of farmers markets and associated activities during the major growing season, which according to Page and Connell (2006) is an excellent way to bring tourism to local level and which has become a thriving force in rural tourism in Canada (Jolliffe 2008). Furthermore, the village of Mutianyu should find also other forms of sustainable development than tourism, because as Page and Connell (2006) argue the social impacts of tourism on communities are likely to be less in a diverse rural community which is not solely dependent on tourism. Although, my knowledge about other possible industries in the village is inadequate, I admit.

According to the interviews, the most significant negative impact of The Schoolhouse appeared to be noise from the rental homes and various events. The problem of noise in rural

tourism is highlighted by for example Mexa and Collovini (2004) and further reinforced in a study by Zhang et al. (2009). There would be a rather simple and doable solution to this issue. The biggest restaurant of The Schoolhouse, The Roadhouse, is nowhere near local residential areas and would be an ideal place for nightly events. To decrease the negative impacts of noise on the villagers, The Schoolhouse in the middle of the village should be closed every night at 6PM (as it is on most nights presently) and all the later events should take place in The Roadhouse. Many late night events are important to The Schoolhouse, but it would be possible to implement all of them in The Roadhouse. In addition to this, further restrictions or recommendations should be made to overnight guests in the rental homes to keep it quiet at nights – they are already encouraged not to play loud music in the nights, for example, but these “pleas” could be taken into the next level and make “quietness” a company policy – indeed, that is what most guests seek from their getaway after all. It is rather encouraging that the most apparent negative impact mentioned by the interviewees seems to be rather easily solved, if there is the necessary will.

Pollution and increased traffic were other negative impact of tourism noticed by the villagers, and while there are several recommendations to reduce that impact, they are all extremely difficult to implement. One solution that would be possible to implement, but also at the same time extremely harmful for The Schoolhouse, would be to control the traffic through another road to the Great Wall. The way the system works now is that tourists go through the village to the Wall and return via another road that goes around the village. The “return-road” is a two-lane road and it would be possible to make all the traffic to the Wall via that road and only the traffic to the village itself – and to The Schoolhouse – via the road that goes through Mutianyu village. The problem with this is that it would probably significantly reduce the visitor numbers of The Schoolhouse Canteen restaurant, thus jeopardising the economic sustainability of the company, which in turn could threaten the overall sustainability of the village. The other possible solution would be to organize public transport (free or for small fee) from downhill before the village to the Wall, but this would also be rather hard to implement and would be risky to The Schoolhouse as well.

What is not due to tourism but nonetheless an important factor decreasing social sustainability is water shortage (e.g. Katko 2009), as mentioned by various interviewees and mentioned to be a huge overall problem in northern China (e.g. National Geographic 2008). The Schoolhouse should further encourage guests of the rental homes to use water sparingly and make them more aware of the situation in northern China. Water reducing shower heads could be also

installed to each of the houses, as is done by various hotels around the world today. Moreover, what has already been discussed in *The Schoolhouse*, the company should start to harvest rainwater and use the harvested water to water the Roadhouse garden, for example. Rainwater harvesting is an action taken by various “eco hotels” of the world and while it would not give any more water to the village it would lessen to an extent the burden *The Schoolhouse* has on the water supply of Mutianyu.

As mentioned by Sun and Bao (2008) tourism in a rural community can lead to increasing competition amongst villagers and thus create tension and conflict, and according to the interviews that is exactly what has happened in Mutianyu due to tourism development, mostly because of the competition at the tourists stalls at the Wall entrance. One solution to this problem, although an extreme one, would be to create an interest-sharing system similar to the one implemented in Yubeng village (study by Sun & Bao 2008), where all the income from the tourist development was collected and shared equally to the community. This would also decrease the increasing income gap that was noted by one villager. Another, less extreme, action would be to standardise the prices at the tourist stalls, as suggested by one villager in Mutianyu.

One more recommendation concerns the sister village relationship *The Schoolhouse* has developed between Mutianyu and Shelbourne Falls in The USA. The idea of the relationship is undeniably good and it has potential to increase the social sustainability of Mutianyu – Page and Connell (2006) for example mention cultural exchange as an important positive impact tourism can have on social sustainability. However, according to the interviews, the sister village relationship has virtually no meaning for the villagers and they perceive it to be solely for government benefits, if they even know anything about it. It should be made more beneficial for the villagers and they should be more involved in the process.

Overall, tourism has significant potential to be a socially sustainable tool for rural development, probably more so than any other industries. It requires careful management and there are huge risks as well, but tourism can save rural communities from perishing and tourism can help enhancing the social sustainability of these communities. The development by *The Schoolhouse* in Mutianyu village has shown to be a good model for socially sustainable development, although there are areas of improvement as well. Similar development could well be adopted in other Chinese villages as well – this would offer a more sustainable form of rural development than many alternatives. *The Schoolhouse* is constantly expanding, which is

needed because as such it cannot prevent the outmigration and thus declining of the community, although it is socially sustainable otherwise. Balance must be found so that tourism would offer enough possibilities without turning the village to a resort or amusement park destroying the rural essence. As a last part of this thesis, to summarise, there is a figure showing twelve most important social impacts of tourism on Mutianyu and how it is linked to social sustainability in the light of aspects mentioned in figure 4 by Pepperdine (2000, see chapter 3.3). There is also some recommendations for what kind of issues should be addressed in the future in order to make tourism in Mutianyu even more socially sustainable it is at the present, although even now tourism brings clearly more positive impacts to the village than negative.

Table 2. Impacts of tourism on Mutianyu

<u>Impacts of tourism on Mutianyu</u>	<u>Contribution to social sustainability</u>	<u>Further recommendations for future</u>
Increased incomes and living standards	Positive - economic viability	Encouragement for entrepreneurship, higher salaries
Improved employment opportunities	Positive – employment opportunities, maintenance of population	More tourism development, economic diversification, more local employees
Improved infrastructure	Positive – maintenance of services and facilities	More efficient water and electricity systems, more paved roads, more maintenance
Improved natural environment	Positive – environmental issues	Guest and employee education, use of local produce
Improved built environment	Positive – meeting places, maintenance of services and facilities, community mindedness	Maintaining traditional style in new developments, more activity venues for elderly
Improved security	Positive – sense of future, maintenance of services and facilities, neighbourliness	More police presence, education
Increased openness	Positive – communication, sense of future, community mindedness	Education, more organized community activities
Decreased conservatism	Positive – communication, sense of belonging	Education, revitalisation of traditions
Increasing presence of foreigners	Positive – accepting of difference, cooperation	Guest education, cultural promotion, more cooperation
Increased competition and indifference between villagers	Negative – community mindedness, neighbourliness, communication, cooperation	Standardization of tourist stalls, interest-sharing system, economic diversification
Increased noise, traffic and pollution	Negative – environmental issues	Late night events at Roadhouse, changes in traffic controlling, guest education
Water / electricity shortages	Negative – maintenance of services and facilities	Rainwater harvesting, water reducing shower heads

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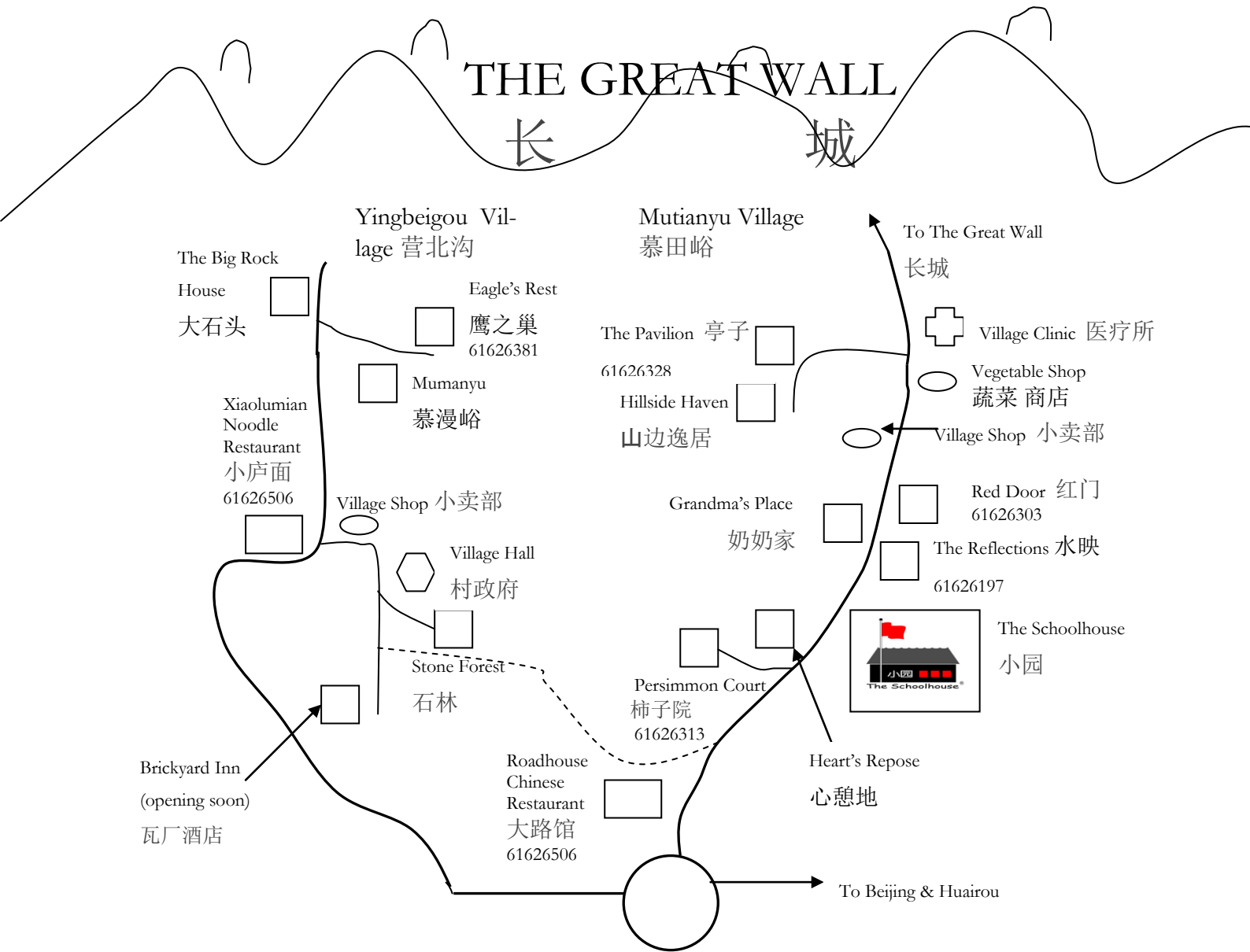
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Appendices

Appendix 1. Map of Beijing municipality



Appendix 2. The map of The Schoolhouse Rental Homes



(Pietari Sajaniemi 2009)

Appendix 3. Interview questions

Name:

Age:

Occupation:

How long have you been living in the village? Do you still have family living in the village?

What are the best things about living in the village? What about the worst?

How do think the opening of the Mutianyu Great Wall to tourism 20 years ago has affected your life? How was the life before and how has it changed?

What kind of benefits you think tourism has brought to the village?

What kind of negative impacts you think tourism has brought to the village?

How is the quality of life in the village now compared to the time without tourism? Do you prefer the village before or after tourism?

What do you think about the Schoolhouse Company that opened here in 2006? What kind of positive and what kind of negative impacts it has had?

How do you feel about foreigners getting houses in the village? What about the tourists coming to the village?

How is the quality of life in the village now compared to the time before The Schoolhouse? Do you prefer the village before or after The Schoolhouse?

Do you know about Mutianyu's sister village in USA? Has this co-operation brought benefits to you? Does it mean something to you?

How do you think tourism has changed the identity of this village?

What would you do differently when it comes to tourism development in this area?

Appendix 4. Indicators for Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

Indicators for Social Impact Assessment (SIA):

Dimension 1: Population changes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Population changes 2. Temporary employees 3. Temporary or seasonal inhabitants 4. Rehousing 5. Age, gender, social and ethnic structure of population 6. Family structure
Dimension 2: Operational conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The size and structure of local government 8. Planning activities 9. The industrial and corporate activities of the area 10. Public and private services of the area 11. Employment and professional opportunities 12. Interest group activities
Dimension 3: Characteristics of the area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Physical infrastructure of the area 14. Forms and values of land and real-estate use 15. Values of cultural history, landscape and archeology 16. Identity and image of the area
Dimension 4: Impacts on well-being and lifestyle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Changes in well-being 18. Daily living and moving habits 19. Recreation possibilities 20. Social interactions and networks 21. Safety and health risks
Dimension 5: Perceptions and conflicts of the community / people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Perceptions and valuations relating to activity and its impacts 23. Contradictions relating to activity and its impacts

Sairinen & Kohl 2004, 25

Appendix 5. Social sustainability indicators for small tourism enterprises

Social sustainability indicators for small tourism enterprises:

Sustainable tourism indicator issues	Performance indicators	Possible targets
Community involvement	Importance of community support; Forms of community involvement	Membership in NGO or CBO; Sponsorship and/or support of at least one community activity or group
Resident access	Attitudes to residents visiting business premises; Disbarring of residents from business premises	Free access to residents where there is no threat of danger to tourists and other customers
Host reactions to tourists	Increase/decrease in complaints by residents against tourists; Action taken by business to deal with complaints	Providing tourists with literature on local customs; Training given to employees
Crime and harassment	Measure taken to protect tourists against harassment; Increase/decrease in crimes against tourists: Action taken to deal with crimes	Inform tourists about areas of potential crime; Develop functional security system; Industry partnership with local police force
Cultural promotion	Willingness to provide information on local way of life; Attitude of business to cultural promotion; Action taken to promote indigenous culture	Inform customers about cultural and historic heritage; Cooperate with local NGO to promote and enhance appreciation for cultural and historic heritage
Ownership patterns	Percent of small tourism businesses owned by locals	Encourage more local ownership

Roberts & Tribe 2008, 589

Appendix 6. Pictures from Mutianyu



The Schoolhouse main building and restaurant in the middle of Mutianyu village (Picture by Pietari Sajaniemi)



Mutianyu village. The main road and virtually the only road (Picture by Pietari Sajaniemi)



Buildings in Mutianyu village.



Mutianyu village seen from The Great Wall (Picture by Pietari Sajaniemi)



Eagle's Rest – One of the rental homes of The Schoolhouse. The original building used to be an abandoned peasant house (Picture by Fred He)



Up: The Schoolhouse in 2009 (Pictures by Pietari Sajaniemi)

Down: The abandoned schoolhouse before its renovation in 2006 (Pictures by Jim Spear)