

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the nature of conflict and the logic of peasant resistance over tourism in rural China. To understand conflict in tourism, three questions concerning “what, who, and why” were investigated. What issues cause conflict? Who are the parties to the conflict? Why does conflict happen? The logic of peasant resistance was investigated through two questions: what strategies do local peasants choose in resisting tourism, and what is the logic behind their choice? To answer these questions, a case-oriented qualitative comparative method was adopted in this study. Four tourist villages with different features were selected.

The findings illustrate that local government is the most important conflicting party with local peasants. Major issues include land expropriation, house demolition, house building, tourism management rights, ticket revenue distribution, vending rights, village elections, and entry restrictions. Among these, conflicts over house-building, ticket revenue distribution, and vending rights are particularly common and severe.

From the perspective of the peasants, infringement of their basic rights and interests, their economic motivation, and unfair treatment are the three main causes for conflict. Besides contractual thinking, comparative thinking among peasants plays an important role in the process of conflict. These two ways of thinking result in contractual deprivation, relative deprivation, and opportunity deprivation, all of which serve to trigger peasants’ anger and contribute to conflict.

A new classification was adopted to analyze peasant resistance which was divided into public-power resistance and self-help resistance. Petitioning is a common resistance form used by peasants though it often does not work, followed by traffic blockades in which women and old people sometimes stand at the forefront of conflict.

Lawsuits are rarely adopted due to a number of reasons, such as limited legal knowledge and a perceived lack of judicial independence in the courts. The emergence of peasant activists/leaders makes collective resistance happen relatively frequently but it does not mean that their resistance is illegal necessarily. Based on comparisons, this study also found that ethnicity is not strongly connected with the conflicts in an ethnic minority village. Finally, models were built based on the findings. All these activities contribute to peasant resistance theory. In practice, the results of the study discussed in this dissertation may urge higher authorities to issue constructive policies. Also, it may enlighten the UNESCO and be promoted as a way for that organization to perfect its property evaluation criteria.

Keywords: Conflict, resistance, peasants, tourism, thinking, deprivation, ethnicity, China