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**Environmental Awareness In China
A Reflection on Chinese Urban (Eco) tourism Experiences**

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Awarding institution:
King's College London

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Environmental Awareness In China: A Reflection on Chinese Urban (Eco)tourism Experiences

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Geography.
Department of Geography, King's College London, the United
Kingdom.

BY

Zhen Fen SHEN

06. 2013

Abstract

The central purpose of this thesis is to explore broader issues related to Chinese environmental awareness through examining a new form of tourism - urban (eco)tourism in China. More specifically, the thesis focuses on investigating two parallel themes: Chinese (eco)tourists' attitudes towards nature/the environment and how political-economic conditions shape environmental practices as exemplified by two selected case studies. This is undertaken through examining two very different contemporary experiences of urban (eco)tourism: Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park, and by applying three different conceptual approaches: Chinese cultural/religious influences on nature ('Chinese Philosophy'), Western approaches to modernity (Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation). Disneyisation, Ecological Modernisation and 'Chinese' models of nature are not usually associated with research on environmental awareness. Combining these approaches suggests that research can stimulate researchers and policy professionals to explore the value of combining and comparing different conceptual models of nature and the environment, to better understand underlying forces of environment-related behaviour and practices.

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Abbreviations

ACE (Advisory Council on the Environment)
AFCD (Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department)
ArchSD (Hong Kong Government's Architectural Service Department)
China-MAB (Chinese National Committee for Man and the Biosphere Programme)
CNTA (China's National Tourism Administration)
ECC (Environmental Campaign Committee)
ECF (Environment and Conservation Fund)
ECP (Australian Eco Certification Program)
EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment)
ELC (Environment Liaison Centre)
GOV (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic China)
GTA (Green Tourism Association)
HKPSG (Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines)
HKTA (Hong Kong Tourist Association)
HKTB (Hong Kong Tourism Board)
HKWP (Hong Kong Wetland Park)
IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions)
MCL (Mighty city Company Limited)
NDRC (National Development and Reform Commission Republic of China)
NED (Nature and Ecology Department),
NGOs (non-governmental groups)
OCT (Overseas Chinese Town Group)
OCT East (Overseas Chinese Town Group East Resort)
SASAC (State Assets Administration Committee)
SCT (Costa Rican Sustainable Tourism Certification)
SDU (Sustainable Development Unit)
SEAS (Canadian Saskatchewan Ecotourism Accreditation System)
SEPA (State Environmental Protection Administrative)
SPC (State Planning Committee)
SSEZ (Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)
SSIO (State Council Information Office)
SUSDEV21 (Sustainable Development for the 21st Century)
SZEO (Shenzhen Environment Outlook)
SZPL (Shen Zhen Urban Planning, Land and Resources Commission)
SZWP (Shen Zhen Wetland Park)
UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)
VIM (Visitor Impact Management)
VISTOUR (Visitor and Tourism Study for Hong Kong)
WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development)

WDI (Works Digest Issue)

WED (World Environment Day)

WWFHK (World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong)

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Chapter One: Introduction

China has experienced very rapid economic growth since introducing a series of reform and open-door policies in 1978. Along with its fast industrialisation and urbanisation, China, sharing the experience of many developed countries, has paid a high environmental cost for its unprecedented economic development. When compared with ecologically advanced nations, China's approach to environmental awareness and sustainable practices is argued to be insufficient and apathetic, as Head (1996) claims that it has taken a long time for an awareness of environmental degradation to emerge in China (cited in Chan, 1999). Yet, notwithstanding, a significant change in environmental policy, linking environmental protection into economic development, began in the 1980s. It indicates the country's determination to more proactively tackle its environmental problems. Such a policy change included shifting the economic structure from heavy industry toward less resource intensive and environmentally-sound industries. In this case, ecotourism, as a 'green' or 'low-carbon' industry, has been largely promoted as a 'win-win' scenario for conservation and development since the early 1990s. At least in principle, ecotourism has become a vehicle for raising Chinese environmental consciousness and seeking sustainable development practices consistent with the governments' policies (Xu, 1994; Stone and Wall, 2005).

Ecotourism, in recent years, has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry. With increased living standards and the expansion of the middle class, there has been a rapid growth in demand among China's own citizens for leisure travel and recreational activities, in particular with seeking alternative tourist experiences. As a consequence, ecotourism is now increasing throughout China although the definition of ecotourism in China has some incongruities with the one used in Western countries. Millions of Chinese

tourists flock to natural scenic sites for an ‘ecotourism experience’ every year and eighty percent of China’s nature reserves have been allied to tourism development since the early 1990s (China-MAB, 1998).

Besides the rapid development of ecotourism in most rural areas, a new wave of urban ecotourism has emerged in the past few years. This new form of ecotourism aims, on the one hand, to mitigate the conflict between rapid urbanisation and shrinking natural resources, and on the other hand, to provide city dwellers with opportunities to access, appreciate, learn, and to protect ‘nature’. Thus, urban ecotourism is believed to have the potential to enhance environmental awareness among Chinese citizens. Due to China’s rapid urbanisation, it is argued that only when the majority of Chinese urbanites are educated about the significance of environmental protection, can there be progress in the green movement in China.

In any green movement, the actions performed by individuals, as consumers and citizens, have significant consequences for the environment. For example, McGougall (1993) argues that consumers are the primary driving force for the green revolution. The importance of consumers in driving the green movement has been intensively documented (Grunert, 1993; Chan and Yam, 1995; Martinsons *et al.*, 1997). It is argued that when consumers express pro-environmental attitudes and convert them into green purchasing behaviour, it can largely stimulate business sectors to incorporate the concept of green production into their operations, as well as the government to fine-tune its environmental programmes and guidelines. To this end, (eco)tourists are also consumers, and ecotourism has the potential to shift consumer behaviour.

Given the fast growth of ecotourism in China, research has failed to explore specific issues concerning Chinese environmental awareness associated with

ecotourism experiences. This thesis, therefore, investigates Chinese (eco)tourists' environmental attitudes and behaviour towards (eco)tourism destinations as well as the influence of political-economic contexts of these destinations on environmental practices. This investigation is informed by a multifaceted framework: 'Chinese Philosophy' drawing on cultural/religious traditions, 'Disneyisation' and Ecological Modernisation based on Western approaches to modernity. This framework is then applied to urban (eco)tourism in two case study locations - Shen Zhen Wetland Park (SZWP) and Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP).

These two locations offer an assessment of Chinese environmental awareness through urban (eco)tourism in the context of the seemingly divergent political, socio-cultural, and environmental conditions between Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. The two cities share certain similarities: for example, both of them are highly developed coastal cities. Since there is a significant imbalance in economic contributions between coastal areas and interior regions in China, southeast coastal regions have been the first to achieve China's modernity and introduce Western ideologies and systems. Accordingly, those in the coastal areas were early adopters of this newly emerged mode of tourism - urban ecotourism.

Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, two bordering coastal cities, thus, can be regarded as pioneers in developing urban-based (eco)tourism in China. This thesis is not a comparative study between the mainland and Hong Kong. Instead, Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park are of particular relevance in the way in which the issues concerning environmental awareness in China manifest in these two urban contexts.

Before outlining the specific thesis objectives and questions, the Chapter

briefly reviews existing literature on ecotourism, Chinese philosophical/religious traditions, ‘Disneyisation’ and Ecological Modernisation. A proposed framework to link the three propositions follows.

1.1. Ecotourism, ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation

1.1.1. Ecotourism

There are myriad approaches for defining ecotourism. One of the consistent themes emergent in the literature supports the fact that Ceballos-Lascurain was one of the first writers to use the term ‘ecotourism’ in the early 1980s. His definition of ecotourism is:

...tourism that consists in travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas... (cited in Boo, 1990:2)

Since then, numerous definitions of ecotourism have appeared. Some of them emphasise that ecotourism is based on both cultural and natural elements (e.g. Ziffer, 1989; Figgis, 1993; Tickell, 1994; Australia Department of Tourism, 1994), others pay more attention to natural environments (e.g. Boo, 1991b; Boyd and Butler, 1996b; Brandon, 1996). Further arguments result from the use of related terms such as Green, educational, alternative, sustainable, and nature-based tourism as synonyms for ecotourism (e.g. Mieczkowski, 1995; Burton, 1997; Dowling, 2001; Weaver 2006; Bjork 2007). A list of selective definitions of ecotourism can be seen in Appendix 1.

On the whole, there is an agreement amongst scholars that ecotourism is an

alternative to mass tourism, where the key motivation for travel is to experience and appreciate the natural environment allied to a certain level of environmental consciousness, and sustainability being central for the implementation and practices of ecotourism.

Accordingly, the popularity of ecotourism is largely due to its promised operational goal, to seek a 'win-win' scenario of economic growth and ecological conservation. In this sense, it is suggested that ecotourism has the capacity to resolve the vexed relationship between development and conservation. Nevertheless, the implementation of ecotourism is 'both multivocal and contradictory' (Gullette, 2001:67), and in many cases, leads to discrepancies between theoretical prescriptions and the realities on the ground. As many scholars contend, the popularisation of the term 'ecotourism' is beset with problems (e.g. Stark, 2002; Bjork, 2007), as well as making it the most important tourism/conservation 'buzzword' (Aylward *et al.*, 1996; Kruger, 2005). Thus, ecotourism is inevitably associated with various criticisms.

The roots of the criticisms of ecotourism lie principally in its nature of consumptive use. The discourse of ecotourism with reference to its evolution, definitions, principles, and practices reflects that it is deeply embedded, and is greatly influenced by capitalistic/modernistic 'Western' (Northern) ideology and values. Ecotourism is constructed through the capitalist model of nature consumption, which is based upon consumerism, profitability and capital expansion in line with the 'West of commodity consumption' (O'Connor, 1994:130, cited in Lima, 2008:37). As a consequence, ecotourism is associated with the commodification of nature and culture, such as transforming natural resources and indigenous lifestyles for sale by using 'green' and 'eco-friendly' labels (Johnson, 2006). Hall (1994) and Mowforth and Munt (2003) refer to it as 'eco-imperialistic or 'eco-colonialist exploration' (cited in Cater, 2006:34).

Pera and McLaren (1999) echo this sentiment by arguing:

Behind the rhetoric of sustainability, progress, and conservation lies a fundamental truth: like strip mining, cattle ranching, and other Western economic development strategies, ecotourism defines nature as a product to be bought and sold on the global marketplace. (Cited in Cater, 2006:35)

The concepts and practices such as ‘protected area’, ‘national park’ and ‘pristine land’, are products of social constructs of nature and cultural artifacts of Western society, which, in fact, facilitate the commodification of ‘virgin’ territories of other nations (Nash, 1982). As Pleumarom (1995) argues, these areas are created and packaged for so-called ‘ecotourists’ as a green commodity, and is for those who come from developed countries, urbanised societies, and the new middle-class to search for ‘alternative experiences’ at ‘untouched places’. This argument is supported by Mowforth and Munt (1998:177) who refer to ecotourism as being for ‘wealthy people from the Global North appropriating remaining pristine areas in developing countries’. Similarly, Redclift, in his case from the Mexican Caribbean, concludes: ‘the growth of a new tourist frontier as linked to consumer tastes in the developed world...space has become an object of consumption’ (Redclift, 2006:162).

Given the unequal power relations between the outsiders (e.g. developers and ‘ecotourists’) and host communities, the destinations’ environment and culture are transformed into commodities on the basis of the ideology of the outsiders. Saarinen (2004: 446) states: ‘the touristic idea and its representations of wilderness areas as places of aesthetic and scenic value may first contest ideologically and then displace in practical terms the local uses of nature as a resource for traditional livelihoods’. For host destinations/indigenous communities, one of the direct consequences of the commodification of nature

reflects a shift in the value of their environment from a use value as a life-sustaining source, to an exchange value of a marketable commodity, along with a change in the relationship with the environment, 'from one of working *with* the land to one of working *for* tourists' (King and Stewart 1996:296).

In parallel to the commodification of nature, there is a concomitant commodification of culture. This argument, made by Mowforth and Munt (1998), postulates a 'zooification' of culture by transforming native indigenous peoples and their lifestyles into tourist objects and products to be viewed and consumed. Many scholars have observed the adverse impact of ecotourism on the transformation of social and cultural traditions and structures on host destinations (Boo, 1990; McLaren, 1998; Honey, 1999a). For example, the 'moral collapse' in religious/philosophical traditions and practices for those, who see humans as a part of nature and propose a man-nature paradigm on the basis of intrinsic value (e.g. Eastern cultural society), have been submerged by modern pragmatic utilitarian practices with a focus on economic and materialist values for human well-being rather than ecological considerations. The result of the commodification of nature and culture on host communities may best be described by Hardin's (1968) term, 'tragedy of the commons', which considers the natural environment as a material foundation of socio-economic development, and places immediate and short-term human interests above the environment, resulting in both long-term environmental and human detrimental effects. Ecotourism, in this case, becomes 'eco-terrorism'.

All-encompassing criticisms have led to a common debate on the phenomenon of 'Greenwashing' of ecotourism. That is many of what are claimed to be successful ecotourism projects are best seen as exercises in public relations on the behalf of governments and private enterprises, designed to convince consumers of their good credentials, and are essentially a new market

gimmick to make money. Honey (1999) terms it ecotourism ‘lite’ by arguing that the essence of much of alleged ecotourism is merely conventional mass tourism dressed up with a green ‘coat’ with little difference from mass tourism practices.

Initially, academic research on the geographical scope of ecotourism focused on related but narrower exotic ‘natural’ environments, such as the rainforests in the Amazon Basin, wildlife safaris in Africa, and the world’s polar zones (Hinch, 1996). There has been an expansion of scholarly attention to more widely rural areas such as national parks, nature reserves, and traditional/indigenous villages. Most recently, urban ecotourism has become a rapidly developing field in much of Western Europe, North America and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). For example, many large European cities hold pedestrian ‘alternative guided city-based eco tours’ (Higham and Luke, 2002). These tours may include visiting urban farms, wildlife centres, wetland reserves, geological parks, botanical gardens and zoos. However, in China, such city-based ecotourism has been comparatively unknown until very recently.

Having briefly discussed ecotourism literature in the West, we now turn to the context of China. The term for ecotourism, ‘*sheng tai lu you*’ in Chinese, is roughly translated as nature-based tourist activities which incorporates both environmental education and nature conservation with minimal impact on natural resources and local communities. In modern times, the concept was not introduced in China until the mid-to-late 1990s, although the concept matured in the West (Western Europe and North America) in the 1980s (Ye and Xue, 2008). However, if we include pilgrimage and natural aesthetic travel as the foundations of a modern concept of ‘ecotourism’, the historical origins of ecotourism in China can be traced back to ancient times (e.g. Xu, 2002; Li, 2005). One of the key features of China’s domestic tourism lies in ‘touring in

mountains and gazing at rivers’, which is based on a long historical cultural tradition of nature worship and appreciation dating back four millennia, and now still prevalent among Chinese tourists (see detail in Chapter Two). Unlike the concept in the West, which evolved from a long history of outdoor recreation and the interest in field conservation (Buckley *et al.*, 2008), ecotourism in the context of China arose from a mixture of Chinese cultural traditions and relatively recent environmental history and development policies (see Chapters Two and Five). By reviewing relevant ecotourism literature in China, the subject can be roughly divided into two groups.

The first group analyses ecotourism from a conceptual perspective. Such research includes identifying and analysing ecotourism definitions in China as well as making comparisons between China and abroad (e.g. Li and Zhang, 1999; Zhang, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Donohoe and Lu, 2008; Buckley *et al.*, 2008); and assessing and defining ecotourism resources in China (e.g. Zhang, 2008; Wang, 2008; Ye and Xue, 2008). They conclude that definitions of Chinese ecotourism share many similarities with Western interpretations whilst retaining certain features that are characteristically Chinese.

These features include the way in which ‘nature’ is perceived, presented, and interacted with by the Chinese, benefits associated with ecotourism (in particular health considerations), size and scale of ecotourism and typologies of ecotourists. Specifically, the term ‘*jingjie*’ is almost included in every ecotourism definition proposed by Chinese scholars. *Jingjie* is one of the key ideas drawn from Chinese philosophical and religious traditions which will be elaborated and discussed in Chapter Two. Simply, it can be understood as a culturally determined desire for scenic ambience which reflects Chinese attitudes to nature - the wholeness of humans and nature. As a consequence, ecotourism resources are defined as being dualistic, combining natural

landscapes and cultural elements. Some scholars argue that Chinese ecotourism is derived from cultural tourism, and some even consider the two terms as synonymous (e.g. Xu, 2002; Zhang, 2003; Li, 2005).

The other group of scholars focuses on the operational perspectives of ecotourism, addressing the issues and challenges facing planning and management in Chinese ecotourism sites. Such research includes Han and Zhuge's (2002) study on *'Ecotourism in China's Nature Reserves: Opportunities and Challenges'*; Stone and Wall's (2004) research on *'Ecotourism and Community Development: Case Studies from Hainan, China'*; and Catibog-Sinha and Wen's (2008) research on *'Sustainable Tourism Planning and Management Model for Protected Natural Areas: Xishuangbanna Biosphere Reserve, South China'*.

The results of these studies are the awareness of a series of problems associated with ecotourism development in protected areas, such as the abuse of the concept, inefficient policies and regulations, incoherent management and weak scientific support, insufficient funding and the lack of professional staff. Correspondingly, recommended strategies in the literature include policy learning, strict legislation, more research and investment. To summarise, most of the ecotourism literature in the context of China appears to discuss ecotourism as an industry, to assess 'what it is', rather than focusing on the demand for ecotourism by examining the role of ecotourists, or 'what ecotourists actually do' and 'what ecotourists should do'. In addition, most ecotourism research occurs in rural settings. Since ecotourism is involved with various stakeholders who may have different interests, understandings and expectations towards it, which reflects their corresponding environmental consciousness and attitudes, there is a clear need to assess ecotourism from other perspectives, such as local communities, tourists and project

developers/planners. Although domestic tourist trips account for the majority of national tourist traffic, in particular with the recent fast growth of ecotourism, little research has been published on the environment-related attitudes, behaviour and preferences of Chinese domestic tourists regarding ecotourism, as well as the underlying dynamics of their attitudes, behaviour and preferences.

Moreover, in recent years urban-based ecotourism has become increasingly popular in many big Chinese cities, for example, bird watching tours in Hong Kong and urban farm tours in Shanghai. Although it has been a rapidly developing field in much of Western Europe and North America, the literature in this area is somewhat limited in the context of China. China has been experiencing a dramatic urbanisation process, with extensive rural-urban migration, during the last few decades. 'People', a variable of ecotourism market, is regarded as one of the key factors for the success of the ecotourism industry, either for profit-seeking purposes or for increasing environmental awareness and delivering ecological knowledge.

The concept of urban Green tourism (urban ecotourism) was first proposed by Toronto's Green Tourism Association, which was formulated to show how a city can capitalise on the efficiencies of the urban environment to advance sustainable practices, while providing visitors and residents with a greater appreciation of, and respect for, a city's cultural and natural heritage (Okech, 2009). Urban ecotourism can be summarised by Dodds and Joppe (2001:4) which includes:

*(1) **Environmental responsibility** - Protecting, conserving, and/or enhancing nature and the physical environment to ensure the long term health of the life-sustaining ecosystem.*

*(2) **Local economic vitality** - Supporting local economies, businesses and communities to ensure economic vitality and*

sustainability.

*(3) **Cultural sensitivity** - Respecting and appreciating cultures and cultural diversity so as to ensure the continued well-being of local or host cultures.*

*(4) **Experiential richness** - Providing enriching and satisfying experiences through active, personal and meaningful participation in, and involvement with, nature, people, places and/or cultures.*

It can be seen that attributes of urban ecotourism share many similarities with those for ecotourism in general. In light of the review of the selective ecotourism definitions and connotations, it can be observed that three key themes - tourism, environment and local communities - are embedded in the diverse definitions. For this thesis, I divide ecotourism into ‘deep’ and ‘shallow’ dimensions based on the interrelationship between the three themes. ‘Deep’ ecotourism forms a symbiotic tourism-environment-community relationship, in an approach in which each component is thought to be mutually reinforcing to the other. A nature-based site in which various stakeholders (e.g. governments, tourism developers, tourists and local communities) are allied in striving for sustainable practices aligns the seemingly conflictive goals of nature conservation and economic development. On the contrary, ‘shallow’ ecotourism reflects a more conflictive tourism-environment-community interrelationship, which is overlapping with practices of mass tourism but incorporates some light environmentally-sensitive measures - wrapped in a ‘thin veneer of green’. Having briefly introduced the notion of ecotourism, the next section focuses on the literature of Chinese philosophical/religious traditions.

1.1.2. Tradition - ‘Chinese Philosophy’

One major school of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ in Chinese culture stresses the unity of humans and nature, which is widely accepted and is still a pervasive underpinning of the modern Chinese world view (Dallmayr, 1993; Hashimoto,

2000; Li, 2006). This is largely influenced by the three moral/ metaphysical teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism (Tuan, 1968; Jenkins, 2002; Ye and Xue, 2008). In this thesis, 'Chinese Philosophy' refers to a set of religious and philosophical ideas, drawing upon Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. 'Chinese Philosophy' is used interchangeably with other terms to avoid repetition, such as: Chinese philosophical/religious traditions, Chinese philosophies of nature and environment, and Chinese models of nature.

Confucianism promotes a self-cultivated philosophy of 'harmonious social relations, moral standards and ethical behaviour in public life' (Jenkins, 2002:41). Daoist philosophy emphasises the ethical role of the inner behaviour of human beings to avoid exploiting natural resources and advocates following the law of nature because of *dao*, the path or way (Chan, 1963; Yau, 1988; Miles, 1992). Finally, Chinese Buddhism (*Chan*) focuses on the law of causation that a mutual benefit, without a harmful relationship between human actions and the natural environment, is promoted (Groot, 1910; Martinson, et al., 1997; Hu, 2006). In essence, these teachings view humans as a part of nature. To achieve 'man-nature unity', humans must strive to find balance with the natural environment. In the meantime, humans have a moral obligation not to master nature but to adapt to it.

Consequently, some evidence suggests that the way in which ecotourism resources in China are identified with the practice of interlinking cultural and natural resources, reflects the traditional philosophical/religious illumination in modern Chinese society. Many scholars conclude that nature and culture are two inseparable components of Chinese ecotourism (Chen and Liu, 1998; Zhang, 1999; Yang *et al.*, 2000; Buckley *et al.*, 2008; Ye and Xue, 2008). Some scholars claim that ecotourism in China is conceptualised both as a

cultural and natural experience (for example, Niu 1999; Zhang, 2003; Nyiri 2006). For example, at a famous Chinese nature-based tourist site - ‘*Hang Zhou* West Lake’, visitors are largely attracted by the Lake’s associated historical connections with the Chinese ancient poets (*Bai Juyi* and *Su Dongpo*), and the Chinese folk story and legend (*Xu Xian* and *Bai Niangzi*), rather than its natural features. Moreover, it is a common to see various man-made structures (e.g. sculptures, bridges, and pavilions) located inside a nature-based tourist site in China. The practice of combining human intervention and natural landscapes reveals a traditional philosophical influence on the aesthetic valuation of nature and ‘natural’ places. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a distinctly ‘Chinese’ model of nature that emphasises the syncretic mixtures of human endeavour and natural environment which differs from the model of nature in the West, with its focus on ‘pristine’, ‘unspoiled’, and ‘virgin’ status devoid of human influence. This thesis explores this assumption from a critical standpoint.

Apart from the aesthetic valuation and perception of nature, looking throughout Chinese history, the moral teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism are used to act as an effective application of conservation ethics to nature. The three teachings, as a key stream of ‘Chinese Philosophy’, encompass various ethical principles (e.g. Confucian benevolence, Daoist *wuwei* and Chinese Buddhist non-injury) as well as a series of practices of nature protection (e.g. reforestation, releasing captured animals, and non-killing ethos). Although the connection between Chinese philosophical prescriptions and modern Chinese ecological behaviour have been examined from various perspectives in the literature (e.g. Tu, 1989; Wang and Yang, 1992; Xu, 1993; Jenkins, 1998), their exact relationships have not been fully established.

For example, a number of scholars conclude that ‘Chinese Philosophy’ exerts significant influences on Chinese people’s attitudinal and behavioural responses towards nature, so that a strong relationship between ‘Chinese Philosophy’ and Chinese people’s ecological concerns can be established (e.g. Yao and Xu, 1996; Chan, 2001; Hu, 2006). On the other hand, a few studies find a relatively weak relationship between the two propositions (e.g. Martinsons *et al.*, 1997; Hashimoto, 2000; Harris, 2006). Ye and Xue (2008) argue that the philosophy of ‘man-nature unity’ is hardly put into contemporary social practice nor any effective discipline applied to environmental ethics in modern China, where it only exists as a traditional cultural memory. This empirical inconsistency regarding the relationship between ‘Chinese Philosophy’ and Chinese people’s actual ecological behaviour thus warrants further research in understanding environmental awareness in contemporary Chinese society.

1.1.3. Modernity - Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation

In the process of economic development and the search for modernity, China is undergoing a series of socio-cultural changes, in particular the penetration of consumer culture to all domains, including the field of ecotourism. To understand these trends, we consider Bryman’s (1999) concept of Disneyisation. Disneyisation refers to the diffusion of the model of the Disney theme parks to a wider range of organisations and institutional settings, extending the domain from American society to the rest of the world (Bryman, 1999).

The notion embraces four key principles: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising and performative labour. These principles are discussed through

the two parallel processes - control and surveillance - that Bryman considers as the key factors to enable Disneyisation. It is through control over and surveillance of consumers, experiences, and employees that Disneyisation is most easily feasible. The consumption of nature inherent to Disneyisation reflects a production process in which consumers are 'trained' how to consume, and nature itself is commoditised, packaged, and presented through the designs of man.

The phenomenon of Disneyisation has played a significant role in recreational tourism developments with the worldwide construction of entertainment-orientated theme parks based on Disney techniques. It has also become manifest in its application to urban space developments (see Cybriwsky's *'Changing Patterns of Urban Public Space'*, 1999). It seems that more attention and scholarly research has focused on Disneyisation in the realm of commercialisation and consumption. Research in the area of whether Disneyisation extends from the domain of consumption to the field of conservation, such as ecotourist projects, remains rare. One of the closest studies is Beardsworth and Bryman's (2008) examination of the case of the Disneyisation of zoos. Disneyisation is adopted in this thesis as one of the key Western development theories by assessing its possible significance and relevance for urban (eco)tourism development in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong and, therefore, revealing the influence of political-economic contexts of the two sites on environmental behaviour and experiences.

Aside from the concept of Disneyisation, Ecological Modernisation is the other key Western theory employed. The increasing popularity of Ecological Modernisation, to a great extent, lies in its suggestive capacity to ally notions of modernity and development, and ecology and conservation (Mol *et al.*, 2009). There are variant interpretations and applications of Ecological

Modernisation in terms of its scopes and meanings.

Christoff (1996) describes Ecological Modernisation as a ‘policy discourse’ which sketches a path for environmental policy out of the environmental crisis. It is also used as a desirable solution to guide industries to move towards more environmentally beneficial modes (Simonis, 1989; Mol, 1995; Gouldson and Murphy, 1997), such as encouraging technological innovations and adjustments to improve market competitiveness while reducing environmental externalities. Spaargaren and Mol (2009:68) argue: ‘Ecological Modernisation can be interpreted as the ecological restructuring of processes of production and consumption’. In each case, Ecological Modernisation is centrally concerned with the economic-ecological compatibility to achieve a ‘win-win’ objective and with social capacities to improve environmental performance.

The notion of Ecological Modernisation has been applied to a wide range of environmental discourses since its creation. For example, it has been used to discuss and examine transformations in environmental governance and participation (see Fudge and Rowe, 2001; Sonnenfeld and Mol, 2002; Jan *et al.* 2009; Dryzek *et al.* 2009). The notion has also been applied to the field of sustainable consumption and green lifestyles (e.g. Spaargaren and Vliet, 2000; Spaargaren and Cohen, 2009; Spaargaren, 2009). Ecological Modernisation was initially developed and applied mainly in developed countries. But, recently, interest has been growing around the world, including rapidly industrialising Asian and other emerging transitional economies such as China, Vietnam, and South Africa (Sonnenfeld and Rock, 2009; Rock, 2009; Dieu *et al.*, 2009; Mol *et al.*, 2009). Although Ecological Modernisation has a prominent position in contemporary environmental sociology, efforts to apply it to the specific institution of ecotourism to explore issues related environmental awareness are remarkably absent. Thus, this thesis links Ecological Modernisation to

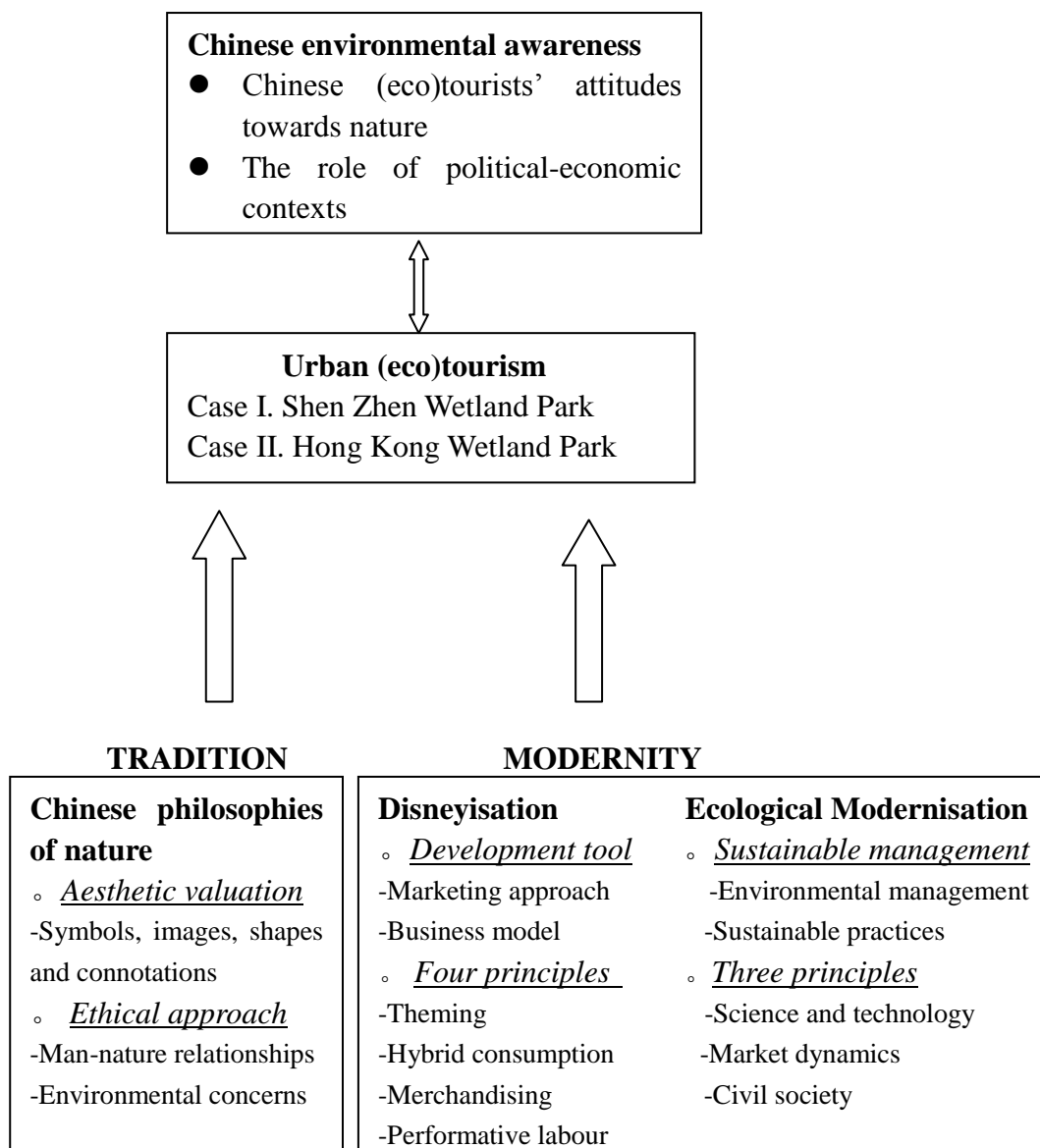
ecotourism and attitudes towards nature/the environment, by examining the role of the state versus the market in dealing with economic-ecological conflicts, and its capacity in seeking to produce a ‘win-win’ scenario, combining economic growth and environmental improvement.

1.2. Linking ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation

Having selectively sketched out the literature on the main topic areas of this thesis, it can be seen that they are presented as rather isolated from each other. This thesis explores broader issues related to Chinese environmental awareness under two parallel themes: Chinese (eco)tourists’ attitudes towards nature/the environment, and the influence of political-economic contexts on the development of the two case study destinations. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework in a figurative form.

Urban (eco)tourism in China is commonly promoted through educational venues and amenities for the public, linking it with enhancing environmental consciousness. It is also involved in more sustainable management and practice, as one important component of Chinese eco-city projects (see Chapter Five). ‘Chinese Philosophy’ promotes various practices for nature protection, stemming from its historical role as a proponent of conservation ethics. Thus, ‘Chinese Philosophy’, in the author’s view, is appropriate as a conceptual approach with reference to both aesthetic and ethical models of nature with which to assess Chinese attitudes towards nature through peoples’ experience of urban (eco)tourism.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



At the same time, ecotourism can be regarded as a business that is associated with various forms of consumption of nature and culture. With the emergence of more and more tourist projects labelled with the tag ‘eco’, critics point out that most of them indeed reflect the model of Disney theme parks, which do not put into practice the multiple principles of sound ecotourism, and are still run as a mass tourism business. Disneyisation is adopted by this thesis as a means to examine the role of political-economic contexts in the development of China’s

urban (eco)tourist projects. The thesis asks to what extent ‘Disney’ techniques are manifested in (eco)tourism practices and if they contribute to the goals of education and conservation in addition to entertainment and profit-making?

The key difference between ecotourism and conventional mass tourism is that the former is allied to sustainable practices for enhancing economic, socio-cultural and environmental integrity. In this sense, Ecological Modernisation can be envisaged as an effective tool to enable ecotourism to achieve its goals. On the other hand, ecotourism can be an institutional carrier of Ecological Modernisation. As noted earlier, the attractiveness of Ecological Modernisation derives from its suggestive power to decouple conflicts between development and protection. When applying Ecological Modernisation to ecotourist sites, for example by adopting environmentally-sensitive technologies and promoting collaborations among various stakeholders, these can foster greater resource efficiency and reduce external impacts on the environment, as well as enhance environmental consciousness and better disseminate the importance of environmental protection to the wider public. In this sense, Ecological Modernisation has the capacity to enable ecotourism to fulfil the goals of sustainable development. This thesis regards Ecological Modernisation as both a ‘political discourse’ and a desirable solution to conflictive relations between economic development and environmental protection.

After outlining possible connections between the three approaches and associated Chinese environmental awareness, the thesis examines how Chinese traditions can be fashioned and how the ‘old’ can become the ‘modern’? What are the relations and tensions between tradition/localisation and modernity/globalisation as China promotes ecotourism? Is tradition ‘colonised’ and dominated by modernity, or do the two forces show parallel characteristics?

By examining these questions, it aims to better understand underlying forces of Chinese environment-related behaviour. More specific research aims and questions are discussed next.

1.3. Research objectives and questions

The central purpose of this research is to explore broader issues regarding Chinese environmental awareness through an examination of two very different contemporary experiences of urban (eco)tourism in China: Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park. More specifically, the thesis focuses on investigating two parallel themes: Chinese attitudes towards nature/the environment and the influence of political-economic contexts of the two case study areas on environmental experiences. A multifaceted theoretical framework, combining ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation, is adopted and applied to the two wetland parks. In particular, this research, which includes six-months of fieldwork at the two sites in China, was broadly guided by the following research objectives and questions:

- **To investigate the influence of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ (‘tradition’) on contemporary Chinese attitudes towards, and on the production and consumption of, nature/the environment**
 - How do Chinese philosophical/religious traditions inform the design of contemporary Chinese ecotourism sites? Specifically, how do they inform the development of two wetland parks in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, China?
 - How do Chinese philosophical/religious traditions inform the consumption of ecotourism in China? Specifically, how do they inform the environmental perspective of modern Chinese (eco)tourists at two wetland parks in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, China?
 - Do such Chinese philosophical/religious traditions amount to conservation

ethics, that are able to shape modern Chinese attitudes and behaviour towards nature conservation and, if so, do they provide an ethical basis?

- **To assess the influence of political-economic contexts of Shen Zhen and Hong Kong on Chinese environmental behaviour and experiences**
 - How is the relationship between tourism, environment and local communities illuminated at two wetland parks in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, China?
 - How are the principles of Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation ('modernity') applied to the two wetland parks in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, China?
 - What is the relationship between 'tradition' ('Chinese Philosophy') and 'modernity' (Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation) at the two wetland parks? Do the three approaches complement each other? Are there tensions between them? If so, what are they?

1.4. Significance of the research

The research is original in several respects. Firstly, few studies examine the impact of the burgeoning Chinese national tourist industry on the nation's resources and environmental consciousness. As noted above, Chinese domestic tourism makes up ninety percent of the country's tourist traffic while nature-based tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors. The results from this thesis may help to better understand Chinese environment-related attitudes and behaviour associated with ecotourism experiences, and, therefore, stimulate policy development for Green markets and the government to advance the Green movement of China.

Secondly, the methodological approach in studying environmental awareness fills a gap in the literature. The existing literature lacks a more comprehensive study of the topic from the perspective of multi-stakeholders, as well as an in-depth political-economic analysis of the theme. An analysis of urban (eco)tourism experiences from various tourism stakeholders such as park developers, local communities and park visitors can enable us to understand the vested interests of stakeholders and existing power relations, which sets issues related to environmental awareness in political and economic contexts in addition to socio-environmental aspects.

Thirdly, from a theoretical perspective, this thesis employs three different approaches to nature to investigate Chinese environmental awareness. Neither Disneyisation nor Ecological Modernisation are usually associated with research on ecotourism as well as attitudes to nature. Specifically, no study has been found which compares Chinese models of nature ('Chinese Philosophy'), the process of Disneyisation in nature-based areas, and ecological-management approaches to the environment (Ecological Modernisation). By combining these approaches, it is suggested that the research can stimulate researchers and policy professionals to explore the value of combining and comparing different conceptual models of nature and the environment, to better understand underlying dynamics of environment-related behaviour and practices

Finally, given the increasing economic and political influence wielded by China, its domestic experiences of opening up new types of tourism are likely to have repercussions in other parts of the world - some of which might eventually be the recipients of Chinese visitors. Chinese models of nature and related Chinese attitudes towards nature may hence shape the way in which nature is constructed and presented in other countries around the world in the future.

1.5. Thesis structure

The thesis consists of eight chapters in total and can be split into two major parts. The first part concentrates on laying out the theoretical framework in relation to a selective assessment of relevant literature drawn from the three key propositions of the thesis: ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisations. Environmental policy and urban development strategies in mainland China and Hong Kong are developed and discussed to provide empirical background to the two case studies. This is then followed by a discussion of the methodology employed in collecting data and analysing the selected two case studies. The second part of the thesis provides analytical discussions on the findings of the two case studies linking to the key research objectives and questions, and the theoretical frameworks presented in the first part.

Chapter two deals with one of the key conceptual approaches this thesis employed, ‘Chinese Philosophy’, with a focus on the three moral teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. The key concepts, ethics and practices of each teaching are assessed respectively. The key ideas shared by the three teachings are then refined and their possible influences on Chinese attitudes to nature within the context of ecotourism are provided with reference to *shanshui* landscapes, Chinese gardening and the ‘tourist gaze’.

Chapter three presents an analytical discussion of Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation which are adopted as the key conceptual approaches that Western thoughts have on Chinese society. The Chapter begins with a discussion of the notion of Disneyisation and its possible links to urban (eco)tourism accompanied by a reflection of political-economic influences. The Chapter then focuses on Ecological Modernisation. Its core themes are examined and their

applications to environmental awareness within the field of ecotourism are explored. The Chapter concludes with a critique of Ecological Modernisation in the current debate.

Chapter Four explains and justifies the choice of research methodology, methods and tools. It describes the set of procedural steps undertaken to achieve the goals of the thesis, which includes preliminary visits to various tourist sites in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. A case study approach with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods was decided upon that compares and contrasts two urban-based (eco)tourism sites located in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. Data collection techniques include documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, participatory observation and tourist surveys. The final part of Chapter Four provides some of the site issues that complicated, or contributed to, the completion of the fieldwork, as well as how any problems encountered were overcome.

Chapter Five provides the empirical background of China's policy on the environment and development in the last five decades (including Hong Kong). The Chapter is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of environmental policies and development strategies on the mainland including a discussion of the development and experience of China's nature conservation. It then emphasises the development history and related urban policies in the context of Shen Zhen, which serves as a general background for the selected case study - Shen Zhen Wetland Park. The second part of the Chapter tracks the same issues as discussed in the first part, but with a focus on Hong Kong. The Chapter pinpoints the different environmental movements and philosophies in Hong Kong, which provides a foreshadowing of the other key case study - Hong Kong Wetland Park which may reflect a different narrative from Shen Zhen Wetland Park.

The detailed study of the two urban (eco)tourism sites based on data collected during fieldwork in 2010 follows. This is presented in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Six analyses the contribution of three conceptual approaches to Shen Zhen Wetland Park: that of 'Chinese Philosophy', of Disneyisation and of Ecological Modernisation. The Chapter seeks to understand issues related to Chinese environmental awareness through examining the way in which the three approaches are incorporated into the Wetland Park, and what connections exist between the three. Do they reflect complementary or contradictory visions? The theoretical and conceptual approaches discussed in the earlier chapters are revised and applied to the case. Chapter Seven continues the investigation, by combining and comparing the three conceptual approaches, but focuses instead on the different experiences of the first urban ecotourism site - Hong Kong Wetland Park. Wherever appropriate, comparative studies are made between the experiences of Hong Kong Wetland Park and that of Shen Zhen Wetland Park.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter of this thesis. It reviews the findings of similarities and differences between two contemporary experiences of urban (eco)tourism - Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park, in relation to Chinese environmental behaviour and practices. The research findings are linked to the research objectives and questions as outlined in Chapter One, and policy implications and recommendations for further research are then discussed.

Chapter Two: Tradition

Once Zhuang Zi had a dream that he was a butterfly and flew around merrily, quite unaware that he was Zhuang Zi. When he woke up suddenly, he realised that he was in fact Zhuang Zi. Then, he came to wonder whether Zhuang Zi had dreamt that he was a butterfly, or that the butterfly had dreamt that it was Zhuang Zi. (Yi, 1995, cited in Yoon 2003:133)

This famous Daoist story - *Zhuangzi* dreamed butterflies (*zhuang sheng meng die*) - may best reflect the desired man-nature relationship in a unity by minimising the differentiation of human (*zhuangzi*) and nature (butterflies). As a result, achieving such a union/oneness with nature is the ultimate goal of various schools of thought in traditional Chinese philosophy/religion. This chapter presents the theoretical insights of traditional philosophies of nature and environment that provide a foundation with which to understand Chinese approaches to 'nature' and the 'natural'. The Chapter is thus structured into two main parts. The first part (2.1) discusses 'Chinese Philosophy' with three representative schools of thought (Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism) with an emphasis on their key environmental concepts, ethics and corresponding contributions to nature conservation. The second part (2.2) elaborates the ways in which such philosophical traditions can shape Chinese attitudes to nature by examining their influences on images and models of 'nature' perceived and constructed by the Chinese within the context of Chinese ecotourism.

2.1. 'Chinese Philosophy'

In Chinese history, China has had a long tradition in upholding the 'man-nature unity' which has drawn on the core idea from Confucian, Daoist, and Chinese Buddhist relationships between humans and nature. From ancient imperial times,

there has been established the cognition that a co-dependent relationship between human beings and nature existed and, therefore, keeping a harmony and balance between humans and other creatures was promoted and practiced. This can be seen from the time of ancient emperors, on the one hand, who paid homage to ‘Mother Nature’ to seek spiritual unification and, on the other hand, who showed interest in nature conservation by establishing ‘reserves’ and ‘parks’ and appointing ‘conservation officials’ for protecting mountains and forests. The spiritual ideologies of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism are commonly regarded as the major origin of the thought of ‘man-nature unity’ (*tian ren he yi*).

2.1.1. Confucianism

Confucianism is a complex system of social, ethical, political and religious thought which continues to exert a profound influence on Chinese society even in the modern era. It was developed from the teachings of the Chinese social philosopher Confucius (*Kung Zi*) who lived between 551-479 BC (Hu, 2006). The key ideology of Confucianism is to promote harmonious relations, which starts from a small circle (a family, a society, a country) to the ultimate cosmos, with an emphasis on developing proper personal conduct and cultivating high moral standards.

Confucius and his disciples such as Mencius (*Meng Zi*, 374-289BC) and Xun Zi (313-238 BC) formed classical Confucianism. They claimed that all things in nature were inter-connected to exist in a holistic, unitary, and dynamic universe. Human beings, as an existence within the natural world, should live with nature in a harmonious and balanced way, and not a conflictive and contradictory relationship (Li, 2003). Such an idea, for example, was fully reflected in one of the Confucian main teachings - the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhongyong* in Chinese or central harmony in English) in Chapter 30: ‘All things exist together, and they

do not do harm to each other; all ways exist together, and they do not come into conflict' (cited in Li 2003:1). This served as a foundation in developing the key ideology of the unity/oneness of human beings and *tian* (nature).

The meaning of *tian* in Confucius orthodoxy contains two layers of understanding. One is to interpret it in the perspective of metaphysics. *Tian* is operating according to the natural order/law, which is the origin of all living things in the universe. Confucianism then attaches the supreme moral values to *Tian*. In this sense, *Tian* is regarded as the spiritual climax which people seek for (Wang, 2007), as stated by Mencius: 'As to the accomplishment of a great deed, that is with *tian*' (Li, 2003: 2). In other words, *Tian* is considered as a moral background and standard to assess human social practices.

The other meaning of *Tian* stands for the natural physical world which provides the context within the existence of all living things. Therefore, *Tian* is related to awe which serves as the source of human moral virtues and, on the other hand, provides material needs for human life. These two layers of exposition of *Tian* are actually a holistic and organic whole (Wang, 2007). *Tian* comes very close to the term 'nature' we use in modern days. In this sense, Chinese perception of nature may reveal a significant distinction from their counterparts (the Western model of 'wilderness') in that, the former regards nature as combined physical and spiritual sources, approaching it through 'systemic fit' and self-cultivation, whereas the latter focuses on the pristine status of ecosystem and explanation in science and mechanics.

Applying the Confucian cognition of *tian* ('nature') to contemporary environmental discourses, for example, with reference to ecotourism, 'saving' the environment requires more than just human effort in reducing externalities such as adopting scientific-environmental management which is commonly

known as Ecological Modernisation (see Chapter Three), in that it requires human reverence and ethical duty to the environment. In other words, both human physical endeavour and moral behaviour are essential to achieve a more environmentally-friendly practice and to act towards a sustainable development strategy.

The core Confucian ethics is benevolence (*Ren* in Chinese), which is considered as the ultimate moral principle and lofty ideal of Confucian teachings, as well as the most important characteristic of human beings (being a ‘Nobleman’). The spirit of it is to love and respect others which is not only limited to the practical world (e.g. family members and friends) but extends in a way to become the principle guiding people’s attitudes to nature. As noted above, nature (*tian*) is regarded as an important material foundation upon which human beings lived and, also it is a background moral force. To act as a proper nobleman, a relationship of ‘love’ with nature by regarding it as a human friend should be established. It is considered as immoral ‘to chop a tree or to kill an animal at improper times’ (Li, 2003:4). This reflects one of the key Confucian pro-environmental practices, as will be illustrated in the later section. The foundation of *ren* lies in the Confucian filial piety, which requires humans to extend their filial duty from human parents to ‘Mother Nature’. As Li (2003:4) argues: ‘This is because humans, are deeply related to Heaven and Earth, forming a triad of existence’.

Human morality is regarded as essential to produce benevolence. This results in a distinct view on which human beings and other existences were valued between Confucian thoughts and Daoist and Chinese Buddhist teachings. Confucius believed that humans had a supreme value over the other species in nature only because humans had ethical benevolence. Mencius went on to argue that there were different values attached to humans and other creatures while

various values existed among the other creatures as well. *Xunzi* also stated that the value of human beings was superior to other living things because of different evolutionary processes. Humans thus have the ability to manage and utilise nature based on human needs but it must be in accordance with social morality. This view reflects the Confucian ethical ladder - a person needs first to show respect and benevolence to other people, then such reverence and *ren* can be extended to the natural world, in other words, 'benevolent to the people and love all things'. The Confucian ethical ladder reveals a clear difference from Daoist and Chinese Buddhist ethics which promote the equality among all things in nature.

Therefore, a common criticism points out that Confucianism promotes an excessively 'anthropocentric' view. It seems to provide humans superior power to dominate nature, whilst the utilisation and development of natural resources are based on human demands. However, this criticism does not appreciate the spiritual backbone of what might appear superficial utilitarian attitudes towards nature. Confucianism attaches human moral attributes to productive activities in nature. The way in which nature is explored and utilised is in accordance with human orders and natural laws. It must adopt the principle of equilibrium/balance between living resources for human beings and the well-being of natural resources. Therefore, Confucianism is neither an 'anthropocentric' nor an 'eco-centric' ecological view, it can best be described as, in Tu's term, an 'anthropocosmic' social ecology (Tu, 2010).

2.1.2. Daoism

Contrary to the emphasis on the society-orientated philosophies of Confucianism, Daoist teachings lay importance on the spontaneous and continuous principle behind the organic processes of the constantly changing Universe, which is *Dao*. Daoism is argued to be rooted in the ancient Chinese

mystical and religious of beliefs, which evolves from primitive Shamanism and traditional ways to observe natural processes (Hu, 2006; Jenkins, 2002).

It believes that the teachings of two prominent classical philosophers - *Lao Zi* and *Zhuang Zi* - provide foundations for Daoist thoughts. *Lao Zi* lived around 500BC and his philosophy is reflected in his masterpiece, *Dao De Jing* (Book of the Way and its Power), which has influenced the Chinese worldview for more than two millennia and remains in modern Chinese society and thought. The other key philosopher is *Zhuang Zi* (369-286 BC) who wrote a self titled book (*The Zhuang Zi*) that is consistent with *Lao Zi*'s *Dao Te Jing*, although it is more mystical and complex in its viewpoint (Hu, 2006). Overall, The key principles - *dao*, *te*, *wu wei* and *yinyang* - can be considered to make key contributions to the Daoist eco-philosophy.

Dao is considered as the central concept of Daoism as a religion as well as a philosophy. '*Dao*' has been translated in numerous ways but is most often translated as 'way', 'path' and 'rule of conduct'. Baldrian (1987) argues that *dao* has both a 'metaphysical/ethical and a prescriptive/methodological sense' (cited in Jenkins 2002:42). In a metaphysical sense, *Dao* is underlying the origin of the universe which indicates a type of cosmic law from which Heaven/*tian*, Earth, and human beings are derived. Everything is stemmed from the *dao* and everything is a part of the *dao*. Because of the infinite and limitless nature of *dao*, *Lao Zi* used a metaphor to describe it as a nourishing 'mother' which gives 'birth' to ten thousand or myriad things (Wolkwitz, 2009). Such a metaphor can be found in the content of the *Dao Te Ching* (Chapter 42),

Dao gives birth to one
One gives birth to two
Two gives birth to three
Three gives birth to ten thousand things (cited in Hu, 2006:250)

Zhuang Zi went on to state: ‘Heaven, Earth, humanity, and ten thousand things, all come to one’ (Hu, 2006:250). Thus attaining the ‘oneness’ (*dao*) is the ultimate goal of Daoist attitudes toward nature. One way to achieve *dao* requires proper cultivations of *dao*, which is associated with another complex concept, *de*, a reflection of *dao*’s prescriptive/methodological sense.

De is often translated as ‘power’, ‘virtue’, or ‘intrinsic value’, which is the active expression of *dao*. Every entity possesses its own *de* or the nature potential. Respect for *de* equals reverence of *dao*. Confucianism also advocates *de* but it only focuses it on human beings which is known as ‘moral virtues’. *De* in Daoist philosophy shares the similarity with *foxing* (the Buddha-Nature) in China-based Buddhist teachings. Both of them believe that, regarding *de* (Daosim) or *foxing* (Buddhism), it reflects an equal relationship between human beings and other ten thousand things with respect to intrinsic values of everything. Thus, humans have no supreme power to control nature while acting in accordance with the natural order is promoted. This view leads to the following key Daoist principle - *wu wei*.

Wu wei is used as a concept to explain *ziran*, which literally means ‘arising from itself’, ‘so of itself’, or ‘spontaneity’ (Hu, 2006; Jenkins, 2002). For the Daoist thought, the flow of river from a higher level of a mountain down to the bottom follows its own natural route or path. It is an example of *ziran* or spontaneous actions. The concept of *wuwei* is regarded as a guiding principle for Daoists to act in harmony with natural order of the environment (Tucker, 1994). This idea has exerted a significant influence on Chinese geomancy - *fengshui*. The theory underlying it is to accommodate human structures (e.g. houses, villages, towns) to systemically fit within natural surroundings and to follow natural laws with avoidance of destructive activities such as cutting off rivers or destroying mountains. Ye and Xue (2008:577) even argue that *fengshui* is the

‘environmental science of the ancients’ in which ecological principles are incorporated into early development and design of a place/structure.

Laozi advocated the term - *ziran* - with simplicity, benevolence and humility as key virtues which are used to combat selfish and utilitarian actions. This idea is further elaborated in Liu Xiaogan’s article ‘Non-Action and the Environment Today: A Conceptual and Applied Study of *Laozi*’s Philosophy’. He defines *wuwei* as follow:

It generally demands temperance of certain actions, such as oppression, interruption, competition, strife, confrontation, and so on. However the concept also positively implies a special manner and style of behaviour, namely, ‘action as non-action,’ or ‘actions that appear or are felt as almost nothing,’ or simply, ‘natural action’. (Liu, 2001:328)

In other words, *wu wei er wu bu wei*, it does not suggest complete noninterference with nature rather it promotes a cooperative act in harmony with the natural rhythms and processes of the environment. Examples include the use of organic fertilisers and natural farming methods and non-invasive technologies.

The final core Daoist concept, *yinyang*, may best illustrate a mutually dependent relationship between man and nature. *Yin*, the shady side, represents soft and feminine characteristics, which interplays with *yang*, the sunny side, featuring hardness and masculine power. *Yin* and *yang* come in pairs under the constancy of change in the Universe, such as day and night, moon and sun and male and female. *Yin* and *yang* are opposing yet complementary forces like positive and negative poles of a magnet, integrated through the *Dao* (Hu, 2006). The Daoist *yinyang* concept plays a key role in the way in which human/landscape interfaces are ‘read’ and ‘gazed at’ by Chinese so that tourism

developers have heavily borrowed the concept to the development of China's natural resources.

2.1.3. Chinese Buddhism

Compared to Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhism is the only non-indigenous religion in China. However, it also has a significant influence on Chinese culture and worldview. It is generally believed that it was imported from India to China around the 500 AD. In the Tang Dynasty (618-906), emperors showed a protective and tolerant attitude towards the development of other religions although Daoism was a dominant form of religion during that period. Buddhism then rapidly spread across China. It experienced a setback due to the social unrest in late feudal society. The revival of Buddhism occurred after the founding of the People's Republic of China and the implementation of the policy of freedom of religious beliefs. Nowadays it has become one of the key practical religions with substantial numbers of Chinese followers, both in China and overseas countries.

Chinese Buddhist (*chan*) environmental philosophy can be argued to derive from its fundamental concept - dependent co-origination (*yuanqi*). The idea is that nothing exists alone and everything is interdependent in a form of symbiotic matrix. Applying this concept into the human-nature relationship, it is perhaps best illustrated by Yoon (2003:135): 'If nature exists, then humanity exists. And if nature arises, then humanity arises. If nature does not exist, then humanity does not exist. And if nature ceases to exist, then humanity ceases to exist'.

It shows that a closely mutual dependence exists between humanity and nature and that everything is interrelated and interconnected, which shares similarities with Confucian and Daoist thoughts, but the difference lies in the belief of cause and effect embedded in the Buddhist discourse of dependent co-origination. This

complex interrelationship between everything in the world is to some extent similar to the modern concept of ecology or ecosystem. However, the Chinese Buddhist concept is more comprehensive and metaphysical which promotes environmentally sound actions by incorporating the beliefs of ‘karma’ (the law of causation) and ‘rebirth’. The doctrines of ‘egalitarianism’, ‘non-harming’, and ‘the middle-way’ are fundamental to Chinese Buddhist ethics which guide Buddhists’ social behaviour and practices.

Equality among everything in the ecosystem is one of the key environmental ethics derived from the doctrine of ‘dependent co-origination’. Since all living things and non-living things possess the Buddha-Nature (*fo xing*), they are regarded as having an equal dignity and an intrinsic value (Sik, 03.06.2010). This idea is very consistent with Daoist ethics which believes everything in the universe has its own right (*de*). Mahayana Buddhism (including *Chan*) regards every phenomenon that has occurred in the world as the expression of the Buddha-Nature. Thus, every phenomenon (*wan fa*) has its Buddha-Nature.

Such *wan fa* includes both sentient creations (e.g. human beings, animals) and non-sentient existences such as mountains, rivers, stones and rocks. Everything in the natural world has its intrinsic value, which is the reflection of the Buddha-Nature. Therefore, Chinese Buddhism promotes a harmonious and interdependent relationship between humans and nature since humans are a part of nature. Humans cannot control nature whereas they can appreciate it. Correspondingly, appreciating and safeguarding nature is the basic environmental ethic for Buddhists.

In accordance with the ethic of equality, Buddhism implements a ‘non-killing’ precept to restrict Buddhists’ improper behaviour to other species, especially animals. In *Dazhidu* Scripture (volume 13), it states: ‘The sin of killing is the

worst among all the sins; non-killing is the best among all the virtues' (Hu, 2006:242). The Buddhist non-killing precept derives from the belief of rebirth/reincarnation. Moreover, the concept of 'karma', or the law of causation, ensures that all living creations have 'kinship' or 'blood relationship'. In other words, humankind is one kind of life in the universe within which all myriad things are influenced in exactly the same way by whatever actions take place.

Killing causes the deprivation of the rights of other living things, and not only brings suffering and pain to others but also misfortunes and disasters to oneself. This idea may best be reflected in a common expression of Buddhist teachings: 'Goodness leads to a good end whereas evil results in a bad end.' Furthermore, under the influence of Buddhist 'rebirth' theory, most people in China affirm that all sentient existence is interconnected and related by virtue of karmic ties from past lives, for example, if a person has been harmful to other creatures, his/her rebirth in non-human realms is highly possible. Therefore, the Chinese form of Buddhism implements 'non-harming' teachings to guide human beings to live with nature in a co-dependent way. Such teachings may help to enhance people's consciousness to protect natural resources in China and thus make a contribution to maintain biodiversity.

In Buddhist belief, greed is fundamentally detrimental to the core doctrine - 'dependent co-origination'. Individual or communal greed concerning consumable goods and materials directly damages the interdependent ecosystem. The current environmental crisis largely stems from over-exploiting natural resources accompanied by excessive consumption by humans. In this sense, the Buddhist teaching of the 'Middle Way' between extremes could act as an effective environmental ethic to encourage limited consumption and reproduction. Such a theory is, to some extent, consistent with the Central Harmony (*zhongyong*) teaching of Confucianism.

2.1.4. Key concepts drawn from ‘Chinese Philosophy’ and their associated environmental practices

In reviewing the various components of the three teachings of Chinese philosophical and religious traditions, at the theoretical/institutional level, they are interrelated and complementary, and form a syncretic framework although the differences are retained. It can be argued that at least three key ideas refined from them have shaped Chinese approaches to ‘nature’ over centuries. The idea of ‘balance’ provides a fundamental view of relations between man and nature. Confucian *zhong yong* (central harmony) advocates a ‘middle way’ to avoid extremes of indulgence and denial and seeks to find an optimum point. Applying this to the modern environmental discourse, it may echo the ‘trade-off’ between human development and nature conservation. The balanced force between humankind and nature is further reflected in the Daoist concept of ‘*yinyang*’. In a similar vein, Chinese Buddhism extols the practice of the ‘middle way’, which is very consistent with Confucian ‘central harmony’ in seeking a balance among *wanfa* (every phenomenon) in the universe. Such a balanced concept leads to another key idea - interconnectedness/interdependency.

Among the three teachings of traditional philosophy, Confucianism seems to lay more importance on human social relationships in which a hierarchical order within human society as well as between humankind and other species is established. However, it clearly admits the interdependency of all things in the universe, for example, the ‘Doctrine of the Mean’ - ‘the myriad of things depend on each other’, and a Neo-Confucian philosopher - Zhangzai’s metaphor for the relationship between humankind and nature as that of kinship.

As a consequence, both balance and interconnectedness contribute to the core traditional Chinese view of nature - wholeness/oneness - that Heaven, Earth and humankind are integrated and constitute an organic whole. The idea that humankind is a part of nature and needs to exist in harmony with nature is powerfully promoted, and thus achieves the man-nature unity that has become the ultimate goal of various philosophical and religious practices, such as obtaining *dao*/Way in Daoist thought and enlightenment in Chinese *chan* Buddhism. Correspondingly, a Chinese value system of morality is created which is adopted as an effective tool to direct humans to achieve cosmic harmony. Examples include ‘benevolence’ promoted by Confucian ethics and ‘egalitarianism’ advocated in Daoist and Chinese Buddhist ethics.

These key concepts provide fundamental Chinese approaches to nature, which immediately shows a different picture drawn on from many Western-European traditions. Glacken (1967) postulates three ideas to interpret the relationship between human culture and the nature in Western thought:

that of a ‘designed Earth’ divinely created for human needs, that of environmental influence on human physical and mental activity (environmental determinism), and that of humans as geographical agents bringing order to nature in the name of ‘progress’ (cultural determinism). (Cited in Jenkins, 1998:154)

Jenkins (1998) argues these ideas serve as solid foundations from which modern social sciences have evolved. The concept of nature and the man-nature relationship have been understood and explained in the Western scientific paradigm based on logical deduction, induction and concept analysis. As Passmore (1980) claims, it is with the Cartesian view that the human task is ‘to make (itself) master and possessor of nature’ using science based on technology while ignoring moral considerations (cited in Jenkins, 1998:155). On the contrary, Chinese philosophical approaches to nature focus on moral and

behavioural cultivation processes. Therefore, Li (1994) argues: 'Chinese philosophies tend to be weak in epistemology but strong in ethics' (cited in Li, 2006:81).

It can be observed, at the theoretical level discussed above, that the complementary combination of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism has produced key ecological ideas of organic balance, intrinsic interdependency, and metaphysical principles of holistic unity. These ideas, in turn, produce a conservation-based ethic when it comes to the practical level.

Confucianism promotes the 'timing prohibition', which requires humans to utilise natural resources in a way which must be in accordance with natural orders. Therefore, human activities should be conducted at a proper time and by the correct method. For example, Confucius stated: 'it would be non-filial piety if one cuts down a tree, or kills a beast for a wrong season' (Confucius *Jia Yu*). Confucius himself, in his daily life, practiced angling to catch fish, but not netting. When shooting he never made targets of birds perching (Hu, 2006). Although Confucianism attaches humankind the supreme position and value over the myriad of things of nature, it believes that the human relies on the materials from its natural resources and, therefore, advocates to utilise it abstemiously under ethical guidelines by considering 'its seasons and limitations', to avoid over-exploiting and destroying the material basis humans depend on.

Daoism and Chinese Buddhism consider human beings to be as one part of nature, in that they share equality with other creations and both of them advocate human humble attitudes towards nature. Daoism emphasises simplicity, frugality and back-to-perfectness along with reducing selfishness and restraining material desires. Its pro-environmental practices share many

similarities with Chinese Buddhism such as the encouragement of the rescue of wildlife and then releasing them in the wild, and reforestation of degraded areas (Li, 1994).

Chinese Buddhism strongly promotes vegetarianism, in contrast to the tradition of meat eating found in the Theravada Buddhism. It is a reflection of Buddhist environmental practice regarding the ‘non-killing’ doctrine. The key purpose of being a vegetarian is to cultivate the seed of individual Buddha-Nature to practice compassion and benevolence. *Dazhengzang* Scripture (Volume 16) states:

All living creatures have the Buddha-Nature which share the same destiny as humanity. Killing animals and eating them will bring retribution in ways so that it will be impossible to achieve Buddhist enlightenment - the liberation of spirit. (Hu, 2006:245)

Moreover, practising a vegetarian lifestyle leads to another popular environmental practice - releasing captured animals (*fangsheng*). If the teaching of ‘non-killing’ and vegetarianism are regarded as a passive way to protect other lives, releasing captured animals may be considered as a more active practice. During the early Buddha period, a special utensil, called a ‘releasing utensil’, was used to protect aquatic lives. When Buddhist monks went to get water in rivers, they used a filter to put the captured aquatic creatures into the ‘releasing utensil’ and release them back to rivers and lakes afterwards (Sik, 02.02.2010). This tradition may have contributed to today’s popular practice among lay Chinese of releasing animals either in the ‘wild’ or in ‘releasing ponds’ constructed around Buddhist temples.

There is a long-standing history of a proactive engagement of reforestation in the Chinese *chan* Buddhist tradition. Trees and forests constitute a significant part

of the ecosystem which are also important objects for nature worship, while their values are of more importance in the Buddhist tradition. This assertion can be traced back to the historical Buddha's life. He was believed to be born under a tree, to obtain enlightenment under a pipala tree (later named the 'Bodhi' tree), and he spent most of his life in the forests. Thus, the importance of trees and plants can be easily observed in any Buddhist temple in China.

Like Daoist temples, most Buddhist temples are also built in remote mountains, valleys, and rural areas away from city crowds and they are believed to be conducive to cultivating the spirit. A common Chinese saying says that: 'the most sacred and famous mountains in China are occupied by monks'. Planting trees and other vegetation is indispensable along with constructing monasteries. Many lands which were originally desolate and infertile (*huangye* in Chinese or 'wilderness' in the Western view) have become ideal 'natural' sites (the purified land) following the monks' environmental constructions.

The theoretical and ethical backgrounds behind the purification of the land, or arguably 'creative environmental modification', are to comply with nature, beautify nature, and produce a sublime nature resulting in harmony between human culture and the natural environment. This forms the fundamental Chinese approach to nature and nature-related tourist space (e.g. ecotourism) regarding the way in which nature is viewed, appreciated, conceptualised and constructed at the aesthetic level.

2.2. Linking 'Chinese Philosophy' to attitudes to nature

Chinese approaches to nature arising from Chinese philosophical traditions have had a deep and long-lasting influence in many domains of Chinese culture, including literature, poetry, calligraphy, arts, landscape design, medicine, etc. In

this section, I want to explore the links between the practices of these traditions and Chinese attitudes to nature through the medium of ecotourism today - in terms of images and models and the aesthetic appreciation that is given to natural tourist sites as a focus for tourists. The three domains are analytically examined - *shan shui* landscapes, Chinese gardening, and the ‘tourist gaze’.

2.2.1. *Shan shui* landscapes

Shan shui (mountains and water/rivers) have been considered as significant natural resources as well as natural landscapes, with reference to both the material and spiritual/aesthetic perspectives, from the very early history down to the modern era. In ancient China, emperors paid homage to ‘Mother Nature’ by touring various mountain and river areas to enshrine their political authority. Mountains and rivers have long been seen as homes to diverse gods and goddesses coupled with mystical and immortal connotations. They have therefore been regarded as important objects of nature worship and this tradition is still prevalent in many parts of China and forms a significant part of contemporary tourist practices.

A famous historical event occurred with the First Emperor Qin in 219 BC who designated ‘five sacred mountains’ (*wu yue*), with *Song Shan* as the centre of the Earth and the other four representing the four cardinal directions¹. Homage was paid and sacrificial rites were conducted to these five mountains as the symbols of Heaven (*tian*) which implied a supreme status above other mountains. The five sacred mountains were subsequently joined by the Buddhist ‘four famous mountains’ and the Daoist ‘four mystical mountains’. This marked a gradual changing role of mountains from the initial objects of deistic worship to a

¹ Tai (泰) Mountain in the east; Heng (衡) Mountain in the south; Hua (华) Mountain in the west; and Heng (恒) Mountain in the north.

dwelling place of Daoists and Buddhists and later the development into tourist sites. The various types of mountains were imbedded traces of emperors' worship, the practice chanting of the Buddhist monks, the search for the *dao* of immortality among Daoist priests, and the production of *shan shui* literature of the literati class, which this gives rise to the common saying: 'Touring mountains is just like studying history' (*you shan ru du shi*). Later, during the Han dynasty, 'four sacred rivers'² were also officially designated and their related rituals were established (Li, 2005). Nowadays these sacred mountains and rivers have all become popular tourist sites which attract millions of visitors who make a pilgrimage to 'Mother Nature' as well as to experience historical and cultural connections while wandering around natural landscapes. This relates to a common expression in Chinese about tourist experiences - 'touring mountains and gazing at rivers' (*you shan wan shui*).

During the evolution of mountains from the objects of ancient deistic worship to the resources of modern tourism, the emergence of *shan shui* literature (e.g. *shan shui* painting and *shan shui* poetry) played an important role in infusing human social and cultural values into natural landscapes/scenery. Such landscapes became 'objects for contemplation, reflection and reproduction in written and artistic forms, an environment in which to refine one's temperament' (Li, 2005:142). *Shan shui* literature has therefore exerted a profound influence on the aesthetic value in natural landscapes among Chinese. Historically, an academic tradition of making an excursion to natural areas (e.g. mountains, rivers, forests) to seek inspirations for literary creations existed in ancient times. This tradition was reinforced during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-221BC).

Confucian 'learning from nature' (Li, 2005:137) and 'seeking ultimate truth

² The four sacred river are the Yangtze, the Yellow, the Huai and Ji Rivers.

from the landscape' (Petersen 1995, cited in Sofield and Li 1998:366) emerged as a mainstream philosophy for literati excursion. Confucius stated: 'the benevolent adore mountains, while the wise admire waters' (The Analects of Confucius, cited in Li 2005:137). He meant that mountains provided material and spiritual resources for humankind while Heaven, Earth, the all living creatures, and the prosperity of nation were all dependent on the water (Li, 2005; Hu, 2006). Therefore, Confucian ethics promote benevolence towards nature as wise and moral. Moreover, Daoism advocates, water-and-mountain (*shan shui*), as important *yin-yang* symbolism, that humans should submerge themselves in it to obtain *Dao*. This is particularly reflected in Chinese *shan shui* painting which will be explored next.

China embraces abundant natural resources for tourism, but mountains and rivers have constituted the most important part. According to Gan (1988):

They are accompanied by numerous relics, antiquity, poems and prose, legends and myths. Chinese Scholars consider that historical and cultural resources have become an inseparable part of the scenic areas which are an integrated regional/spatial site based on the aesthetic beauty of natural landscapes permeated/embodyed with rich historical and cultural human landscapes. (Cited in Li, 2005:130)

Shan shui painting can be argued as one of the best examples reflecting Chinese philosophical approaches to nature and its mystical connotations of harmony. It also serves as a model in our discussion of nature-based tourist sites. So now we turn our attention to the principles of *shan shui* painting and its relations to modern ecotourism. Based on the ideology that humans are a part of nature, human figures or human constructions are always an inherent component of *shan shui* painting. In particular, Daoism stresses a humble attitude towards nature, reflected in small human figures on upward paths in the vastness of the

cosmos that symbolise the ascent of the human spirit to reach the Dao. In *shan shui* painting, the human presence in natural landscapes, demonstrates overall balance and harmony of the triadic tiers with Heaven (mountains with *yang* symbols), Earth (bodies of water with *yin* symbols), and the human being (Figure 2). Applying this to modern tourism practice among Chinese, human figures are always included into natural landscaping photos to show an integral image - ‘wholeness’.

Figure 2. *Shan shui* paintings



(Source: <http://www.sccnn.com/gaojingtuku/wenhuayishu/huihuayishu/20091204-51331.html>; <http://blog.ifeng.com/article/1387337.html>)

There are also certain circumstances under which the human presence is excluded from *shan shui* painting. In this case, *shan shui* is opened up to perception and conceptualisation. Most paintings do not reflect the ‘reality’ of nature, rather *jingjie* (desired scenic ambience) and spirit (virtue and knowledge) of an artist. The same principle is also applied to the way in which ‘nature’ is constructed in tourist sites. As noted in Chapter One, *jingjie* is one of the key components of ecotourism identified by Chinese scholars.

As a consequence, the value of a piece of *shan shui* painting is largely dependent on the painter’s morality. The works of famous Chinese artists in history have been viewed as treasures derived from the artists’ lofty morality

and virtue, which draws a strong influence from moral/ethical teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. The essence of Chinese painting emphasises the artists' inner virtue. A famous Chinese artist, Kuchan Li, claims that the virtue of an artist is the precondition for painting; an artist without lofty morality cannot paint with spirit (*ren wu pin ge, xia bi wu fang*) (cited in the Epoch Times, 16th June 2011).

A piece of *shan shui* painting - 'Dufu and poetry' - created by a modern Chinese artist (Baoshi Fu) was auctioned and attained a high value of approximately six million pound sterling in Hong Kong last year. The painting is considered a perfect reflection of the core spirit of 'Chinese Philosophy' - 'the unity of humanity and nature'. On the one hand, there is a harmonious composition among majestic and awesome mountains, waterfalls accompanied by small human figures (ancient poets) meandering along the winding mountain path in the forest and watching waterfalls. On the other hand, the painting shows a spiritual fusion of the artist's temperament with the mind of human characters (ancient poets) in the painting. When applying this principle to contemporary ecotourist sites in China, an immediate question is raised as to whether developers incorporate a conservation ethic to develop tourist sites and whether visitors implement pro-environmental behaviour based on the ethical prescriptions of 'Chinese Philosophy'?

Moreover, the use of writing to harmonise with the picture is a further characteristic of Chinese *shan shui* painting. As noted above, there is a long tradition in Chinese cultural history that literati made excursions to mountains and natural landscapes to seek inspiration for writing and painting. The flourishing age of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) produced numerous well-known *shan shui* poems depicting mountains, rivers and lakes which reflect an infusion of natural scenery with human feeling.

It is very common to see a Chinese *shan shui* painting accompanied by a poem. Since then, combining poetry and painting, *shi qing hua yi*, poetic sentiment and artistic spirit, have become a key aesthetic value of the Chinese viewing natural landscapes. Existing literature suggests that the general knowledge of Chinese people about nature is mostly derived from its cultural classics, notably *shan shui* paintings and poetry (Ng and Li, 2000; Wang, 2007). They appreciate nature and natural landscapes through images generated in literature and art. For example, Chinese people describe landscapes in the southern part of Yangtze River as picturesque scenery, ‘small bridges, flowing water, and local communities’, albeit some of them may have never been to those places. Similarly, Chinese people are familiar with many places and landscapes in China theoretically, through shared images of ‘Chineseness’ illustrated in literature and art. Such images ‘bring spiritual unity even if the people have never visited them; but when they do visit, the importance of the imagery and symbolism is reinforced’ (Sofield and Li, 1996, cited in Sofield and Li, 1998:367).

2.2.2. Chinese gardening

‘As places where humans exercise control over space and nature, gardens can serve as eloquent expressions of cultural ideas’ (Yu, 1993:2). This section assesses to what extent Chinese philosophical traditions exert an influence on molding and regulating Chinese garden design with reference to their orientations of space and structures as well as the aesthetic appreciation of nature, which sheds light on their influences on the design and construction of nature-based sites in China. Tuan (1968) makes a brief comparison between the formal European garden and the Chinese ‘naturalistic garden’.

The European garden is a grandiose setting for man; in deference to

him, nature is straitjacketed in court dress. The Chinese garden, on the other hand, is designed to produce almost constantly shifting scenes. The nature of the garden requires the visitor to be a part of wholeness to move along a winding path and to be more than visually involved with the landscape. (Tuan 1968:177)

One of the representative examples of the European garden might be the formal French garden which reflects a highly structured nature with an emphasis on the idea of human complete manipulation of nature and the reorganisation of nature in rigid geometry, in an expression of the supreme power of human agencies. Some may argue that the Chinese garden also features human modifications of nature. In the Chinese worldview, humankind is an inherent component of nature. The principle behind the Chinese garden design is to encourage natural curves, to imitate the ‘law of nature’, and to enable human structures to systemically ‘fit’ into the landscape rather than dominate it. According to Keswick (1986:7), ‘Chinese gardens are cosmic diagrams, revealing a profound and ancient view of the world and of man’s place in it’. Such principles also extend to other fields of construction such as developing and designing public parks and nature-based tourist sites, including ecotourist venues.

The culture of Chinese gardens provides a syncretic mixture of elements ranging from philosophy, religion to literature and art. Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, as noted above, encompassing their own ecological views respectively, constitute a different but complementary pattern in the form of Chinese gardens.

Confucianism, as the ‘art of living’, with its rigid and hierarchical conception of social structure, plays a dominating role in regulating and designing traditional Chinese architecture, reflecting a formal, axial, and symmetrical style. Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, as the ‘law of nature’, are considered as the main principle of Chinese ‘naturalistic’ garden design (Wang, 2007).

However, the orientation and construction of space of the Chinese gardens exemplify Confucian geometry combining Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, to create a series of scenes and provide a mystical appreciation of nature, which often resembles an idealised form of space/place through human creative transformation of nature (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Chinese Garden (Suzhou Garden)



(Source: <http://citylife.house.sina.com.cn/detail.php?gid=47906>;
<http://www.yuajin.com/html/62/n-262.html>)

Confucian geometry, such as the principle of symmetry, is often found in the man-made constructions like pagodas and pavilions, but which do not apply to natural landscapes. The diverse constructions play a dual role, as a place for visitors to view scenery ('view scenery'), and as an integral part of the scenery ('make scenery'). On the other hand, natural landscapes are presented as formless and indefinable with which to retain natural shapes and imitate nature. Therefore, Chinese gardens feature natural elements together with human-built structures contributing to the total design concept - harmony between humans and nature (Luo, 2003). Based on the *yin-yang* theory from 'Chinese Philosophy', the softness of water and mosses (*yin*) oppose the hardness of mountains and rocks (*yang*) as essential elements in Chinese garden design. Various types of water such as creeks, lakes, rivers, ponds, and fountains are constructed to complement the hard image of hills, monument stones and rocks.

In general, incorporating waterfalls is a common practice to balance *yin* and *yang* since waterfalls contain flowing water from a mountain or rock spontaneously, reflecting Daoist *wuwei*.

Such a balanced theory further leads to the reflection of the philosophical idea of interdependence/correlation in Chinese gardens. The Chinese carefully observe the balance or the imbalance of opposite forces and these are considered as a correlative thinking. When seeing one, one person will automatically seek or think of the other. In the context of Chinese gardens, when seeing water, the objects such as fish, vegetation, plants, boats, and bridges immediately become objects to gaze at. Thus, the lotus flower and water lilies are often found in the water which symbolises purity according to Chinese Buddhism. Sometime fish and other creatures can be found in the water as well. Various shapes of bridges are also essential elements in Chinese garden design. Here ‘men crossing the water’ may indicate several meanings. On the one hand, the bridge itself is considered as an indispensable part of scenic views; on the other hand, it serves a connective function between different spaces which overcomes isolation. It again reflects Chinese correlative thinking.

Apart from the philosophical principles underlying the design and construction of the Chinese gardens, there is a strong interrelation between Chinese gardens and Chinese literature especially *shan shui* poetry and painting. Chinese gardens are regarded as an important subject for poets, painters and calligraphers who write about, describe and draw them. Such practices endow Chinese gardens with the *jingjie* of a picturesque environment with poetic sentiment (*shi qing hua yi*), that often depicts a miniature mountain, supplemented by a lake or artificial rocks, complemented by creeks together with elegant architectures such as pavilions and bridges to create an idealised

nature. Keswick (1986) claims: ‘The garden microcosm is not to be merely a reproduction of nature in miniature, but a poetic, lyrical and artistic interpretation of it, with its own vital spirit’ (cited in Wong, 2009:3). Thus, the spirit of the Chinese gardens lies in the portrayal of a *jingjie* that the presentation of components such as mountains, rivers, vegetations and architectures as well as their spatial relationships are not just a solely physical environment but also evoke a spiritual atmosphere (Luo, 2003).

It is thus easy to observe various elements of poetry and paintings in Chinese gardens such as poetic inscriptions on rocks, the signs of calligraphy, portraits of ancient saints and wooden or bamboo tables beside the creek. All these human artefacts are considered to enhance the aesthetic value of the view and improve the attractiveness of the environment/landscapes. This view differs from artworks perceived in the West as Buckley *et al.*, (2008:961) argue: ‘Artwork on rocks or caves may still be appreciated as cultural heritage in the West, but only if it is ancient. Words written in modern paint would be considered merely graffiti, detracting from the value of the view and environment’.

In summary, Chinese gardens can be viewed as a confluence of human art and nature, referring to Bajaj and Neighbor (2012:1): ‘Chinese gardens: a gate to understanding Chinese culture’. The Chinese view natural landscapes through the lens of Chinese poetry and *shanshui* paintings, seeking out *shi qing hua yi*. Such a Chinese approach to natural landscapes now leads to the following discussion on the Chinese tourist gaze.

2.2.3. ‘Tourist gaze’

Existing literature reveals a common agreement that Chinese ecotourism is conceptualised as a combined experience of nature and culture. Many scholars even argue that cultural resources act as determinants of contemporary

ecotourism development in China (e.g. Weaver, 1998; Liu and Zhang, 2004; Nyiri, 2006; Li, 2008). The rationale behind this argument lies in the values drawing upon the Chinese philosophical/religious traditions which have a deep influence on the way in which Chinese view and appreciate nature. These traditions consider humans as a part of nature, and thus human culture intertwines with natural landscapes in a system of immanent order forming holistic unity. As discussed above, China has a long tradition of reflection on nature by infusing social contents into natural landscapes, for example the idealised form of nature, *shi qing hua yi*, is nurtured by *shan shui* painting and poetry.

When assessing Chinese perception of and gaze at the natural environment within the context of ecotourism, empirical evidence shows a ‘Chinese way’ in that visiting nature-based sites is always accompanied by experiencing historical/philosophical connotations and a collective Chinese common heritage. A widely cited example is:

When western tourists look at the Yangtze they see a river; the Chinese see poems replete with philosophical ideals and human emotions, an entry into the world of shan shui classical literature where both man and nature enjoy a shared relationship. (Li 2005:509)

Similarly, the popularity of the ‘West Lake’ (*xihu*) in *Hang Zhou*, as mentioned in Chapter One, does not rest on its naturally beautiful appeal, rather the cultural connections with famous ancient poets (e.g. *Bai Juyi* and *Su Dongpo*) and the legend of *Xuxian* and *Bai Niangzi* about the Lake draw a vast number of Chinese tourists every year.

The other example is the way in which tourists gaze at the scenery at King’s College, Cambridge. According to *The Economist* (16th December 2010):

‘King’s College grows perhaps the most famous willow tree in China’. It was attributed to Xu Zhimo, one of the most influential romantic poets and writers in modern China, who came to study at King’s College in 1920. He created an idyllic and poetic Cambridge that most Chinese yearn toward, which Ng and Tan (2011:579) termed the ‘utopian-like image of Cambridge’. Xu’s eternal legend lies in his talent, the pursuit of love and freedom and a dramatic early death at only thirty-four years old in an air crash. Willow trees of riverside were nurtured and embellished by Xu’s famous poem, ‘Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again’ which was inscribed on a white marble memorial boulder. Every year, growing crowds of Chinese tourists (outbound tourists and Chinese students in the UK) are attracted to Cambridge largely by the opportunity to connect with Xu’s splendour and aura by viewing the willow trees and Xu’s poem on the marble boulder.

Accordingly, many scholars proclaim that the pure natural landscape, referring to the ‘wilderness’ of the West, in most circumstances will prove insufficient to attract Chinese tourists. Li (2005) concludes, drawing from the results of a survey of tourism academics in China, that only the *Jiuzhaigou* Nature Reserve in China can be argued to have a capacity to attract Chinese tourists, purely based on its physically geographical features with calcareous lakes and uninhabited mountains. In all other instances, natural resources must be endowed with cultural and historic heritage, and the cultural resources even appear the driving forces to attract visitors in most cases, such as the examples of the Yangze, ‘West Lake’ and willow trees of King’s College discussed above. Ye and Xue (2008) argue that for the natural environment/place without cultural connotations, the essence of harmony and wholeness for Chinese is missing and absent. Buckley *et al.*, (2008:960), therefore, state that the practice of interweaving natural and cultural resources within a tourist environment has ‘a very strongly established philosophical background’.

When applying John Urry's concept 'tourist gaze' to the Chinese tourism context, there is support for Urry's basic notion: 'The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs' (Urry, 2002:3). As noted above, when Chinese tourists visit gardens such as in *Suzhou*, what they capture in the gaze is 'elegant, picturesque and poetic utopia'. When visiting famous mountains (e.g. Mt. *Tai* and Mt. *Heng*) what they gaze upon is 'imperial grandeur and myths of immortals'. In general, Chinese tourists are involved in collecting a series of shared common signs of Chinese cultural heritage when visiting a natural place/site.

In looking, particularly into the tourist gaze in respect of nature and the environment, Urry (2002) proposes a 'romantic tourist gaze' on the basis of an aesthetic stance in that tourists appreciate 'wild' and 'virgin' nature devoid of human presences. This approach reveals a diametrically incongruent vista to the context of Chinese tourists who view nature in a confluence of human and natural elements, drawing upon the idea of 'man-nature unity'. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a particularly Chinese-orientated tourist gaze in relation to nature and the environment which differs from Urry's 'romantic gaze', which Li (2005) termed the 'harmony gaze'. Whether this is the case in a newly emergent tourist environment, urban ecotourism, in contemporary China, will be explored in Chapters Six and Seven.

2.3. Conclusion

This Chapter provided a selective review of sources of the literature on Chinese philosophical and religious traditions, with an emphasis on their influences on Chinese approaches to 'nature' and the 'natural'. Three representative traditions, Confucianism, Daoism, and China-based Buddhism, have been analytically

discussed regarding their key environmental ideas, ethics and practices. Consequently, three key concepts - balance, interdependence, wholeness - were refined and were assessed in respect to their applications to the Chinese *shan shui* landscape, gardening design, and the 'tourist gaze'. It revealed that there was a strong cultural/philosophical influence on the Chinese perception of 'nature', the human-nature relationship, as well as the key aesthetic value of China's landscapes. This finding sets an essential scene for the subsequent investigations of empirical case studies on Chinese attitudes to nature within the context of urban ecotourism. In the final part, the Chapter suggests that a distinctively Chinese tourist gaze may exist in the discourse of ecotourism. After sketching the wealth of the Confucian, Daoist, and Chinese Buddhist heritage, infusing 'nature' with profound cultural significance to the Chinese, the next chapter focuses on Western modernistic approaches to development and the environment which constitutes the other key component of the theoretical framework this thesis employed - Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation.

Chapter Three: Modernity

The previous chapter examined Chinese approaches to nature and the environment through Chinese cultural/philosophical lenses, while this chapter focuses on Western institutional influences of modernity, development and conservation, on Chinese society in particular, concerning environmental behaviour and practices, within the 'realm' of ecotourism. Two conceptual approaches - Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation - are selectively employed and reviewed. This chapter therefore constitutes two parts. The first part deals with the process of Disneyisation (3.1), which includes defining the notion of it, examining the four principles of it, and identifying its possible links with ecotourism. Part Two is involved with explicitly assessing Ecological Modernisation (3.2). It starts with discussing the factors contributing to its emergence, the ways to define it, followed by three key themes and their relevance to ecotourism, and concludes with criticisms associated with the notion.

3.1. Disneyisation

3.1.1. Defining Disneyisation

Bryman's concept of 'Disneyisation' represents: 'the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world' (Bryman, 1999:26). The definition shows that Disneyisation takes the Disney techniques as its paradigm, as a parallel idea of Ritzer's 'McDonaldisation' drawn on McDonald's principles, to spread its influences to other geographical locations and institutions, while Bryman further argues that two notions - 'Disneyisation' and 'McDonaldisation'- show 'contrasting trends which co-exist' (Bryman,

1999:43).

In terms of theories of consumer culture, McDonaldisation is depicted as a modern phenomenon, the homogenisation of a brand with fewer choices and more cultural assimilation, while Disneyisation is envisaged as a phenomenon of post-modernity, which focuses on heterogeneity with increasing diversity and consumer choices and blurring between authenticity and fabrication (Bryman, 2004). In the meantime, there are overlaps between the two notions, and thus, the concept of 'McDisneyisation' developed by Ritzer and Liska (1997) may best describe this trend, which means a merger of the McDonald's features with the principles of Disneyisation. The authors further comment:

While McDonald's itself has not been without influence in the tourist industry, it is Disney and its phenomenal success that has been most responsible for bringing the principles of McDonaldisation ... to the tourist industry. (Ritzer and Liske, 1997, cited in Bryman, 1999:28)

Apart from the term 'McDisneyisation' which shows a close relation to 'Disneyisation', the other term 'Disneyfication' borders on 'Disneyisation' but still remains different. Bryman (1999) argues that Disneyfication has limited domains of application, mainly with regards to urban planning, so that the model of the Disney parks is conceived as 'a whole approach to urban planning' (Warren, 1994:90) (see Warren, 1994 '*Disneyfication of the Metropolis: popular resistance in Seattle*'), and literary works such as folk tales and novels in relation to Disney cultural products (e.g. Haas's novel, *Billy Bathgate*, 1994). The latter application is very often associated with negative connotations by being criticised: 'It is usually employed in a pejorative way to indicate a process of infantilisation and vulgarisation of the original content' (for example, Schickel, 1986; Haas, 1995, cited in Beardsworths and Brymand, 2001:90). In comparison, Disneyisation is regarded as a more neutral term which is employed to represent

the penetration of the principles of Disney theme park into a series of organisations and institutional spheres (Beardsworths and Brymand, 2001).

3.1.2. Four principles of Disneyisation

Like the four dimensions of McDonaldisation Ritzer identified (see Ritzer, 1993), Bryman (2004) explicates that Disneyisation also comprises four inter-related principles: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising and performative labour. Each of these principles either individually, or to some extent, a combination of, exemplify the process of Disneyisation which has been incorporated into many domains of economic life such as the restaurant industry, hotel sectors, retail industry (e.g. shopping malls), transport sectors (e.g. airports), and leisure domains (e.g. amusement parks and zoos).

The twin processes which intertwine the four principles, control and surveillance, according to Bryman, effectively assist in the feasibility and stability of Disneyisation. It is through control over and, surveillance of, employees, visitors, experiences, behaviour, and physical and the cultural environment that enables Disneyisation. For example, at a tourist site, the tourists' participation is normally confined to passive and controlled activities such as walking on trails, reading information (e.g. maps, pamphlets), viewing displayed attractions (e.g. landscapes, animals), participating in guided tours and shopping at souvenir shops, while such activities do not undermine the visitor experience because the site offers seamless narratives of tourist-expected facilities and activities. The present discussion below focuses on the manifestation and relevance of the process of Disneyisation on the tourism industry by examining the ways in which the four principles can be applied, which sheds light on the influence of Disneyisation on environment-related practices within the context of ecotourism.

Firstly, theming, in general terms, means the application of a narrative motif to a place/object or institutions/exhibits, ‘with meaning above and beyond their immediate use or exchange value and, in doing so, creating experiential destinations rather than simply consumer outlets’ (Hancock, 2005:545). Bryman provides plentiful examples of how a wide range of institutions (e.g. restaurants, hotels, pubs, museums, malls, airports and amusement parks) have been themed and are becoming themed environments. Theming is considered as a mechanism to achieve the goals of appealing to more customers and of differentiating product strategy, and therefore to increase competitive advantages in the entertainment economy.

In particular, in the tourist industry, Walt Disney distinguishes Disney theme parks from other more traditional amusement parks by contending that the former embraces coherence to rides by focusing on the theme instead of thrills. A further explanation drawing upon the Euro Disneyland shared prospectus denotes:

Rather than presenting a random collection of roller coasters, merry-go-rounds and Ferris wheels in a carnival atmospheres, these parks are divided into distinct areas called ‘lands’ in which a selected theme ... is presented through architecture, landscaping, costuming, music, live entertainment, attractions, merchandise and food and beverage. Within a particular land, intrusions and distractions from the theme are minimised so that the visitor becomes immersed in its atmosphere. (Bryman, 1999:32)

In other words, the capacity of the theming strategy lies in transforming individually ‘themed attractions into one of themed environments’ (Bryman,1999:33) and offering visitors ‘coherence and concentration of the experience’ (Marlin, 1994:105 cited in Brymand, 1999:33). When turning our

attention to the theming strategy adopted in the Chinese tourism industry (e.g. theme parks), China has experienced a fast development of theme parks over the last three decades which includes both the imported Western theme parks to China (e.g. Hong Kong Disneyland and Shanghai Disneyland) as well as the recently exported Chinese themed ones to other nations (e.g. ‘Visions of China’ in the United Kingdom).

China’s first large-scale theme park, ‘Splendid China’ (*Jin Xiu Zhong Hua*), was developed in 1989 as a joint effort between the state and a private company (Overseas Chinese Town Ltd OCT) who were also the developers of one of the key case studies in this thesis – Shen Zhen Wetland Park, in Shen Zhen Special Economic Zone. ‘Splendid China’ can be seen as an epitome drawn upon China’s long-standing history and cultural traditions.

The Park embraces approximately one hundred scenic wonders which present the best known natural landscapes and cultural heritages, such as the three Gorges of the Yangtze River, the Yunnan Petrified Forests, the Terra Cotta Warriors, the Great Wall, Confucian temples and ethnic architectures and performances, through miniature constructions. The Park is depicted as ‘a window into China’s history, culture and heritage’ (Li and Soffield, 1998:382), hosting several million visitors every year. The success of the Park largely rests on its capacity to employ various perspectives of Chinese culture and create a cohesively themed environment that enables visitors to immerse in nostalgic and utopian sentiments and atmosphere. OCT, to a great extent, has become a famous brand amongst Chinese theme parks in China. The success of OCT accords with Bryman’s term - ‘reflexive theming’ - ‘the recognition of a brand name as a theme in itself’ (Bryman, 1999:267). Since the establishment of the ‘Splendid China’, a wave of Chinese theme parks has proliferated in various regions of China.

In recent years, China has exported theme parks based on Chinese characteristics to overseas countries. According to the Anglo-China Daily (12th August, 2011), a Chinese theme park project, 'Visions of China', with a multi-million pound investment, including both distinct Chinese architecture (e.g. gardens, temples, lakes, pavilions) and Disneyland techniques (e.g. amusement parks, shops, a theatre, and restaurants), is planned to be built within the Rother Valley Country Park, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, the United Kingdom. The project is expected to create hundreds of new jobs and to attract many thousands of visitors from all over the world, which would make significant contributions to regeneration aspirations of Rotherham.

Secondly, hybrid consumption means 'the general trend whereby the forms of consumption associated with different institutional spheres becomes interlocked with each other and increasingly difficult to distinguish' (Bryman, 1999:33). In other words, it brings a collection of multiple consumer activities such as shopping, eating, entertaining, staying, and so forth, into a particularly bounded space. Such activities shade into one another, for example, shops and restaurants are appended to theme park attractions.

In many tourist sites, tourists can only exit the site through a shop, normally a souvenir shop, which contains relevant merchandise. It is a common practice to see that many tourist resorts in China provide a multi-purpose tourist experience, in a common Chinese expression, 'combining eating, drinking, playing and entertaining in one complex' (*chi he wai le*) by accommodating relevant facilities such as hotels, restaurants, bars, shops, amusement facilities, and theme attractions. This process is applied to not only the mass/conventional tourism sphere, but also to the recent emergent tourist environment - ecotourism.

A common criticism of many 'ecotourist' projects in China is that they are viewed as commercially-orientated and profit-seeking institutions, whereby the emphasis on consumer consumption opportunities seemingly overrides the purpose of environmental protection. Apart from purely research and conservation-based nature reserves, the majority of large-scale 'ecotourist' projects are developed and designed to increase human use and human comfort within nature. This assertion is exemplified by the building of cable cars and concrete trails to enable ease of access, hotels and restaurants close to, or inside, protected areas to offer tourists a 'natural' experience, various leisure facilities and performances to entertain tourists, a series of theme attractions to provide fantasy for visitors, and extensive shopping and restaurant outlets to stimulate consumption. We see in these features a tendency for the distinction between ecotourist project and theme park to become blurred. The rationale for this hybridisation of consumption and theme park attractions in an alleged 'ecotourist' site is to fulfil more needs and make more profits. Such an approach is closely interacted with the other two principles of Disneyisation - merchandising and performative labour.

Thirdly, merchandising, an essential part of business strategy, simply denotes promoting and selling an extensive range of products and services in accordance to institutions' copyright images, logos and themes. Most Chinese tourist sites provide their own merchandise deriving from characteristics specifically associated with the sites, which includes clothing (e.g. jackets, T-shirts, caps) with the name of the site on them; souvenir gifts (e.g. coffee mugs, pens and pencils, key rings) with a suitably decorated motif drawn on from the site; toys (e.g. soft animal toys, jigsaws); and books and DVDs containing virtual tours of the site. Sales from merchandise in many tourist sites are regarded as a major source of tourism revenues.

Besides these common practices of tourist sites' merchandise, Beardsworth and Bryman (2008), in their research on '*the case of the Disneyisation of zoos*', argue that the creation of representations of 'iconic animals', such as giant pandas, tigers, and manatees, and the provision of animal performances, can be directly integrated into other type of merchandise items. This practice can also be found in many zoos, wildlife parks, and even so-called 'eco' projects in China, such as dolphin performances in Hong Kong Ocean Park, taking photos with dressed-up monkeys in Beijing Zoo, panda feeding shows in Chengdu Panda Research Centre, elephant dancing in Nanning Zoo, and so on. Criticisms immediately arise, as Desmond (1999:148) observes in that, 'the commodification of wild animals is ironic in that they are invariably depicted as symbols of pristine nature and therefore as beyond the clutches of a commoditised world' (cited in Beardsworth and Bryman, 2008:96).

However, the majority of these zoos or parks serve a combined function of conservation/education and entertainment. The merchandising of animal performances, in another way, may be understood as being a tool to deliver educational purposes through entertaining visitors. Animal performances are also allied to one kind of performative labour which is discussed next. This form of hybrid entertainment and education/conservation, of reality and hyper-reality, according to Urry (1990), has been conceived as a manifestation of postmodernism.

Finally, performative labour is involved with the ways in how hosts and hostesses should interact, in that hosts (employees) demonstrate a positive attitude towards customer service. This includes showing cheerfulness, friendliness, and helpfulness to customers as the service provider; for many occasions, employees also play a role as entertainers. Performative labour is, therefore, interchangeable with the terms of emotional and aesthetic labour, but

a combination of the two may best reflect performative labour in what Bryman identified as: ‘an emotionally and more generally aesthetically pleasing show’ (Hancock, 2005:546).

Performative labour is indisputably a feature of many tourist sites in China in that employees always show smiling and helpful faces, even during the public holidays, to a vast crowd of constantly-pushing visitors. In some cases, employees are dressed up as certain objects such as tigers, ducks, clowns, and live sculptures, based on the theme of a park, to entertain visitors on the one hand, and to increase the attractiveness and interests of associated merchandise and souvenirs on the other hand. As a service sector, performative labour is increasingly expected by visitors in the process of interacting with hosts (employees), while such ‘ever-smiling’ sometimes may not reflect employees’ ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ emotions. Under this scenario, it may be best envisaged as a commercially-driven emotional ‘product’.

Besides human emotional labour, animals are also incorporated into the performative realm. As noted above, the merchandising of animal performances, in effect, transforms animals into ‘cast members’ and ‘workers’ (Beardworth and Bryman, 2008:96). Desmond takes zoos as an example by claiming: ‘Zoos have experimented with ways of getting the animals to do something, to perform behaviour, to move, so that people will be more interested’ (Desmond, 1999:172, cited in Beardworth and Bryman, 2008:97). In this sense, by simulating human behaviour and actions, animals have become ‘staged performers’ as a tourist attraction in order to entertain tourists and increase the merchandising opportunities (e.g. selling souvenirs) in relation to the animals on display, while in some instances, to arouse a human emotional attachment to animals. When applying the principle of performative labour to those ecotourist projects, an immediate concern arises as to whether when the eco-projects become more

commercialised, performative labour can also contribute to conservation/educational works. This is a field which clearly needs further investigation.

3.1.3. Disneyisation and ecotourism

With the increasing criticisms of conventional tourism practices, a need to incorporate sustainable practices to business sectors has been radically put forward by scholars and policy-makers. Ecotourism, as noted in Chapter One, can be envisaged as a business but it is distinct from conventional tourism by its suggestive power of balancing economic gains with environmental integrity.

In many developing countries, ecotourism is a frontier development because it is a relatively new, unregulated market, as Clayton (2005) argues: ‘much like the Internet a decade ago. Some pioneers have proved its viability, and now a large corporation is moving in’. Clayton further identifies two types of people who are attracted to frontiers - romantics and capitalists. Romantics are those people who love the adventure, appreciate nature, and have interests in conservation. Ecotourism, so far, has attracted substantial romantics. On the other hand, Disneyisation, excelling at capitalising frontiers, after successfully diffusing the principles of the Disney theme parks to many sectors and institutions of society, has come to transform ecotourism into a commercially-orientated agent. Such a practice is allied to the travelling public’s desire to ‘go green’ - a ‘greenwashing’ ecotourism or, what the author defined in Chapter One, a ‘shallow’ form of ecotourism. In this sense, ecotourism is becoming ‘Disneyised’.

Evidence of the ‘shallow’ form of ecotourism reflects that Disneyland is going

‘green’. Euro Disney S.C.A. Group and Group Pierre and Vacances Center Parcs³, in 2010, announced its interests to build an ecotourism vacation village (‘Villages Nature’) near Paris. The project includes a mix of recreational and educational activities with the purpose of inspiring visitors to value conservation while being entertained, coupled with some sustainable measurable targets (e.g. sustainable transportation, zero waste, and local partnerships and fair trade) (Euro Disney S.C.A. 2010). Such a form of ‘Disneyised ecotourism’ is sprouting up worldwide, for example, Disney’s Wilderness Lodge in Orlando, Florida (Cypher and Higgs, 2001); Xell-Ha Eco-park in Cancun, Mexico (Redclift, 2006) and; Ecotourism development in the Israeli desert area of the Negev (Reichel *et al.*, 2009).

A common criticism of the Disney model of business and Disney’s construction of nature is that it has had negative impacts on the quality of environments in terms of intensively constructing tourist infrastructure and selling the experience of ‘wilderness’ and adventure to paying tourists. Nonetheless, different voices arise here. Burger (2000) states that one of the major results caused by global industrialisation in the last two centuries is the creation of contaminated land due to intensive industrial processes and pollution of harmful chemicals. Both developed and developing nations have contaminated sites that need proper treatment in order to prevent humans and ecosystems suffering from adverse consequences. One suggested solution is to convert contaminated land where valuable and functioning ecosystems can be found and turning them into recreational ‘ecotourist’ uses. Burger (2000) argues

³ Euro Disney S.C.A. Group is the Europe’s largest theme-park operator which includes: Disneyland Park, Walt Disney. The Group Pierre and Vacances Center Parcs is the European biggest vacation-apartment company. The company contains seven tourism brands: Pierre & Vacances, Maeva, Center Parcs, Sunparks, Adagio, Cit   and Hotels Latitudes (Euro Disney S.C.A. 2010).

that such a solution can reduce the total expenditure of cleanup operations at the contaminated sites, while safeguarding valuable ecosystems for the future. In this sense, it indicates that ‘Disneyised ecotourism’, with appropriate planning and management has the potential to restore already-impacted lands and generate a value on them. This argument seems particularly important to sites in proximity to highly dense urban areas.

For example, the South Lake Eco-Theme Tourist Resort, located in Tangshan City, Hebei Province, was built on the site of a coal mining subsidence area in China. The area used to be regarded as *huangyie*, as noted in Chapter Two, giving a Chinese perception of ‘wilderness’, a piece of useless land. During the past few years of reconstruction, the area has been successfully transformed from *huangyie* to a modern urban amenity for the public, and a haven for many plants and animals.

The Resort has heavily borrowed from the principles of the Disney theme parks, with regards to the emphasis it places on a commercially-orientated model, such as building hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses, tourist attractions, and amusement parks within the Resort. While on the other hand, the park adopts environmentally-friendly practices in the process of design and construction, such as ‘reducing, reusing, and recycling natural and man-made materials for educational, aesthetic and functional purposes, and preserving original vegetation and natural habitats’ (Xinlang News, 27th July, 2011).

A detailed discussion on the way in which the process of Disneyisation illuminates and informs the development of Chinese urban (eco)tourism projects (Hong Kong Wetland Park and Shen Zhen Wetland Park) will be found in Chapters Six and Seven. Here, the example of South Lake Eco Theme Tourist Resort signifies that theme parks have the potential for acting as a generator to

revitalise and maximise the value of ‘abandoned’ natural capital and securing environmental vitality. A similar example may include the Eden Project in the United Kingdom which converted a clay pit into a venue of combining education, conservation and recreation.

Nevertheless, a current debate on ecotourism in China is that it has been largely promoted as a development tool by different levels of government in pursuit of modernity. Many eco-projects are developed into a form of the Disney theme park by congregating various elements (e.g. eating, shopping, hotel accommodation, entertainment, education) into one packed complex, so that those projects are often criticised as green-coated mass tourism, which is supportive of capitalism and consumption, by maximising private profits on the basis of the cost of public resources and converting recreation/leisure into saleable products.

China has a commercial tourism industry which offers ‘comfort in the wild’, such as building cable cars inside national parks and nature reserves and paying for guided nature-based experiences, and it has grown rapidly in recent years. Nonetheless, the significant difference between emergent alleged ‘ecotourist’ projects and conventional amusement parks lies in the fact that the former tries to incorporate some light sustainable practices. These include practising sustainable use of resources such as encouraging clients to reuse their towels during their stay at hotels; contributing to nature conservation such as maintenance of the original flora and fauna; and involving socio-economic investment such as providing employment opportunities to local residents. This latter contribution is particularly prominent and important in the urban context of China. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, China has been experiencing large-scale rural-urban migrating populations, and the development of these ‘ecotourist’ projects in urban areas is undoubtedly creating a substantial amount

of job opportunities across the full spectrum of the nascent ecotourism industry.

And on the other hand, China is a highly urbanised country with fifty percent of its population congregated in urban areas which leads to an increasing demand for rescuing 'Mother Nature' and for providing 'green' amenities. Instead of razing urban spaces to give room for the solely commercially-orientated sectors of urban development (e.g. high-rise finance and business buildings), it seems to be more beneficial to create a thematic all-in-one complex - 'eco' theme parks, combining commerce, entertainment, education, and conservation. The complex can be embedded in the urban landscape, promoting both the natural and man-made environments as part of its attraction, while contributing to the urban economy.

Yet, notwithstanding, when linking Disneyisation with ecotourism, it seems that more negative concerns than positive messages will arise. Perhaps the core critique against Disneyisation is related to its capacity to transform nature and culture into commodity, altering people's attitudes to nature, producing 'industrial ecotourism', which underpins a capitalist consumerism economy and gives privileges to corporations with their economic and political power to 'colonise' the mind and culture of societies. After discussing the notion of Disneyisation, attention now turns to introduce the other key Western conceptual approach, Ecological Modernisation, with an emphasis of its influence on Chinese environment-related behaviour and practices in particular within the domain of ecotourism.

3.2. Ecological Modernisation

3.2.1. Emergence of Ecological Modernisation

Ecological Modernisation is generally believed to emerge as a response to the ‘roots of the environmental crisis’ (Pepper, 1984, cited in Mol *et al.*, 2009:3) associated with industrialism in the 1970s and early 1980s (Mol *et al.*, 2009). The theory was initially developed by a small group of Western-European countries, most notably Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in the early 1980s (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000). The German sociologist Joseph Huber and the German political scientist Martin Janicke, however, can be regarded as the founders of the ecological modernisation approach (Spaargaren, 1997; Mol, 2000).

From its beginning in the early 1980s to maturing in the late 1990s, the focus in environmental sociology and politics was gradually changed from explaining and debating ongoing environmental crises towards understanding and investigating processes of environmental reforms. Ecological Modernisation therefore emerged as one of the most popular, widely employed, and constantly contested concepts and approaches of environmental sociology (Mol *et al.*, 2009).

In particular, Mol and Sonnenfeld (2000) contend that Ecological Modernisation has undergone three main stages in its development and maturation. The first stage went from the early to the mid-1980s and geographically occurred in a European context. This stage laid special importance on the role of technological innovations in environmental reform processes. Meanwhile, there emerged a positive attitude towards the role of market dynamics and economic agents in contrast with a critical attitude towards the bureaucratic state (Gouldson *et al.*,

2007; Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000).

The second period went from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Ecological Modernisation debates and research were still congregated in the European countries. Key features of this period lay in reducing a focus on technological innovations, holding a more even attitude towards state and market mechanisms, and putting more emphasis on the institutional and cultural dynamics of ecological transformation processes (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000).

The third period has involved a rapid expansion in Ecological Modernisation both in its theoretical and geographical frontiers since the mid-1990s. This period of development includes scholarship on the ecological transformation of consumption (e.g. Spaargaren and Cohen, 2009; Spaargaren 2009) and the notion of extending its origin to rapidly industrialising countries and other emerging transitional economies such as China, Vietnam, and South Africa (e.g. Mol, 2009; Oelofse *et al.*, 2009).

Moreover, Mol *et al.*, (2009) argue that three public environmental events are crucial in order to understand the evolution and development of Ecological Modernisation. Firstly, the Brundtland Report '*Our Common Future*', published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, made a significant contribution to promote the concept of sustainable development (WCED, 1987, cited in Mol *et al.*, 2009). '*Our Common Future*' examined the critical problems between environment and development on the planet and 'put the relation between economic development and environmental protection strongly on public and political agendas around the world, be it framed in new terms' (Mol *et al.*, 2009: 5). The 'new terms' can be seen to include the notion of Ecological Modernisation.

Secondly, the two-week event of the World Summit on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, facilitated a global broadening of Ecological Modernisation. As a result, a wider systematic integration of environmental concerns into policy-making and legislation occurs not only in Europe but also North America as well as Asia and Latin America (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000; Oosterveer *et al.*, 2007). Ulrich Beck claims that it is hard for individuals ‘to maintain ignorance of the environmental side effects of modernisation and industrialisation, and of the need to do something about them’ (Beck and Wilms, 2004:141). The follow-up summit in Johannesburg 2002 reinforced the globalisation of environmental concerns, and in the meantime, added a clear tendency to adopt sustainable consumption practices (Mol *et al.*, 2009).

Thirdly, the most recent example was Al Gore’s (2006) documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, which disseminates a message that in order to combat global climate change, apart from emphasising sustainable production, there is an urgent need to get global civil society involved with sustainable consumption patterns and greening lifestyles in addition to the implementation of strict government policies and legislation (Mol *et al.*, 2009).

The various factors and ‘drivers’ discussed above, together, have provided a clue to the origin and evolution of Ecological Modernisation. The next section focuses on what Ecological Modernisation is.

3.2.2. Defining Ecological Modernisation

As noted above, Ecological Modernisation emerged as the response of late-modern society to cope with the ecological crisis associated with industrialism. Mol (1997) defines the notion in both a descriptive and

prescriptive way. On the one hand, the descriptive dimension provides a series of specific ideas and concepts for analysing and characterising the possible ways to deal with the environmental risks. On the other hand, Ecological Modernisation works as a theoretical foundation from which a range of policy prescriptions can be proposed to guide to achieve the desirability of projects of environmental reform, such as implementing eco-efficient technology to aid industrial development to move towards more environmentally beneficial modes (e.g. Mol, 1995; Gouldson and Murphy, 1997).

There are diverse interpretations and applications of Ecological Modernisation regarding its scopes and connotations. Some authors define it as scientific management and technological development with benign environmental outcomes. One of the founders of the term Ecological Modernisation, Joseph Huber, in his work during the 1980s (Huber, 1982, 1984, 1985), advocates industrial innovation through the transformation of the production process by employing advanced technologies to generate a desirable solution to environmental problems - which is Ecological Modernisation (cited in Murphy and Gouldson, 2000).

For example, Huber claims: 'the dirty and ugly industrial caterpillar will transform into an ecological butterfly' (Huber, 1985 cited in Mol, 1995:37). Janicke (1988) argues: 'Ecological Modernisation is fundamentally a technical cost-minimisation strategy for industry and an alternative to labour-saving investment - a form of "ecological rationalisation" which will lead simultaneously to greater ecological and economic efficiency' (Janicke, 1988, cited in Christoff, 1996:480). Janicke (2007:558) further states that the 'eco-efficient innovation' that is associated with incorporating environmentally-sensitive technology to enhance resource productivity, has become a synonym of Ecological Modernisation.

Besides this, other scholars (e.g. Weale, 1992; Hajer, 1995; 1996) use Ecological Modernisation to analyse changes in environmental policy discourse. Hajer's (1995) approach is to move towards Ecological Modernisation that undergoes at least six 'shifts'. These include adopting anticipatory regulatory formulation to replace a reactive one; promoting the role of science and technology; moving from the ideology that environmental protection increases expenditure to the ideology that 'pollution prevention pays'; redefining nature as a public resource instead of a free good; altering perceptions of the 'value' of nature by underpinning the 'polluter pays' principles; and reconsidering stakeholders' participation in policy-making process by including new actors such as environmental organisations and local residents to smooth the traditionally conflictive relationship between the nation state and the environmental movement (cited in Christoff, 1996).

These 'shifts', according to Murphy and Gouldson (2000:35): 'concern the link between environment and economy and are mobilised by members of discourse coalitions to promote specific interests'. As Hajer (1995:25) claims: 'the discourse that recognises the structural character of the environmental problematique but none the less assumes that existing political, economic, and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment.' In this case, Ecological Modernisation is conceived rather as a series of attractive ideas which are employed and discussed by policy elites than as feasible solutions to environmental issues.

Ecological Modernisation has so far been defined by its eco-technological innovation allied with a policy discourse from the production perspective. It has been largely disregarding transformations in behaviour and attitudes of civil society, in the conceptualisation and management of environmental movements,

as well as in the process of achieving ecological sustainability. Thus, Ecological Modernisation is also interpreted as a social-institutional transformation and a new belief system (Christoff, 1996). As Weale (1992) comments:

the internalisation of externalities becomes a matter of attitudes as well as finance, and a cleavage begins to open up not between business and environmentalists, but between progressive, environmentally-aware business on the one hand and short-term profit takers on the others. Moreover, the behaviour of consumers becomes important, so that the role of government policy is not simply to respond to the existing wants and preferences of their citizens, but also to provide support and encouragement for forms of environmentally aware behaviour and discouragement for behaviour that threatens or damages the environment. Once this view has taken root, the line from mechanical to moral reform has been crossed. The challenge of ecological modernisation extends therefore beyond the economic point that is sound environment is a necessary condition for long-term prosperity and it comes to embrace changes in the relationship between the state, its citizens and private corporations, as well as in the relationship between states. (Cited in Christoff, 1996:485)

Similarly, Hajer (1995) extends his argument on Ecological Modernisation from a mere policy discourse and notion of ‘techno-corporatist ecological modernisation’ to represent a cultural tendency, which he calls ‘reflexive ecological modernisation’ (cited in Christoff, 1996:497). The same trend has also been observed by others such as Spaargaren and Cohen (2009), who state that in recent years the transition to an ecological society is characterised by shifting ‘from production to consumption’ that takes a close interest in consumers’ patterns and practices of consumption. This transition arises for reflexive Ecological Modernisation which focuses on ‘how to navigate between the dark green romantic dismissal of modernity and the naive endorsement of market-driven, liberal eco-technotopias’ (Spaargaren and Cohen 2009:257). These authors, in their work, further demonstrate the way in which the roles of greening life cycles and lifestyles among human actors ‘play as change agents in

societal transitions toward more sustainable consumption practices’ (Spaargaren and Cohen, 2009:264).

Given the range of interpretations on the notion, Mol and Spaargaren’s (2000) summarise and propose two broad versions - ‘technocratic’ and ‘sociocratic’ Ecological Modernisation (Table 1). Moreover, Christoff (1996) develops it even further by introducing ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ dimensions. Various versions of Ecological Modernisation are situated along a spectrum from weak to strong, based on their tendency to enable them to contribute to ecologically sustainable transformations and results, in relation to a series of issues and institutions (Table 2) (Christoff, 1996).

Table 1. Two dimensions of Ecological Modernisation

<p>“Technocratic” – Ecological modernisation as economic-technical transformation:</p> <p>– Incremental and radical innovations to increase eco-efficiency including the social technology to stimulate such innovations (and their diffusion)</p>
<p>“Sociocratic” – Ecological modernisation as social-institutional transformation:</p> <p>– Change of life-styles, consumption patterns, institutions, and paradigms</p> <p>– ‘Reflexive ecological modernisation’</p>

(Source: Mol and Spaargaren, 2000, modified from Janicke, 2000)

Table 2. Types of Ecological Modernisation

Weak dimension	Strong dimension
<u>Economistic</u>	<u>Ecological</u>
Technological (narrow)	Institutional/systemic (broad)
Instrumental	Communicative
<u>Technocratic/neo-corporatist/closed</u>	<u>Deliberative democratic/open</u>
National	International
Unitary (hegemonic)	Diversifying

(Source: Adapted from Christoff, 1996)

Christoff (1996) further states that the two dimensions of Ecological

Modernisation

are not always mutually exclusive binary opposites... In many cases - although not all (for instance, technocratic or neo-corporatist versus deliberative and open democratic systems) - aspects of narrow or weak Ecological Modernisation need to be subsumed into the guided by the normative dimensions of strong Ecological Modernisation. (Christoff, 1996:491)

Given the various approaches to define Ecological Modernisation, there is a need to examine the key themes drawn on the wide range of interpretations.

3.2.3. Core themes of Ecological Modernisation

Mol and Sonnenfeld (2000) identify the five social and institutional transformations of Ecological Modernisation on which much existing literature has elaborated and addressed:

the changing role of science and technology; the increasing importance of market dynamics and economic agents; transformations in the role of the nation state - often referred to as political modernisation; modifications in the position, role and ideology of social movements...involved in public and private decision-making institutions regarding environmental reforms; and changing discursive practices and emerging new ideologies - Complete neglect of the environment and the fundamental counter positioning of economic and environmental interests are no longer accepted as legitimate positions. (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000:6-7)

Based on these five transformations, this thesis highlights three core themes of Ecological Modernisation. They are working as an analytical tool drawing upon Ecological Modernisation to examine Chinese environment-related behaviour and practices in the context of the two urban wetland parks which will be explicitly examined and discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. The point here is

to provide necessary explanations of each theme and outline its possible links to ecotourism.

3.2.3.1. Promoting science and technology

The traditionally simple ‘end-of-pipe’ technological mechanisms are replaced by more advanced technologies which are characterised with preventative approaches by incorporating environmental consideration into production and consumption processes (Mol, 2000). This is often considered as the most important theme of Ecological Modernisation by many scholars. As Spaargaren and Mol (2009:68) contend: ‘Ecological modernisation can be interpreted as the ecological restructuring of processes of production and consumption’. As such, the restructured processes are largely reliant on science and technology. It features: ‘clean technology, economic valuation of environmental resources, changing consumption and production styles, prevention and monitoring of compounds through production-consumption cycles’ (Spaargaren and Mol, 1990:16).

Ecological Modernisation is thus often narrowly depicted as technical innovation with environmentally beneficial outcomes (e.g. Weale, 1992; Hajer, 1995), aiming at internalising environmental externalities and achieving ‘ecological and economic efficiency’ (Janicke, 1988, cited in Christoff, 1996:480). The most frequent link made between Ecological Modernisation and ecotourism may run through the use of science and technology. Ecotourism, like any other economic activity, survives on, and competes for, resources, while the vitality of ecotourism heavily rests on natural resources and environments. Science and technology, in this sense, play a pivotal role in the production process of ecotourism, such as design, development and management of an ecotourism site, which can prevent potential environmental problems and minimise adverse environmental impacts, and thus provide environmental

amenity to tourists and local residents without compromising environmental goals of ecotourism.

It is a common practice in many ecotourist projects to adopt various environmentally-sensitive technologies regarding construction materials (e.g. recycled materials, local products), energy generation (e.g. wind power and solar-systems), waste treatment (e.g. biogas digesters) to reduce environmental impacts and improve business efficiency. Technological integration can also help ecotourism to fulfil its dual goals - conserving nature and entertaining tourists. For example, camera traps have been commonly used in most nature reserves and national parks. They play an important role in, such as, observing wildlife habitat, monitoring interactions between human actions and animal movement and surveying particular species.

On the one hand, a camera trap is an effective tool to gain important ecological information for conservation management. On the other hand, tourists are able to clearly watch and observe wildlife habitat, such as bird nesting, through the lens of the camera trap, otherwise it is difficult to see in the field. In this sense, the camera trap provides tourists an opportunity to closely observe fauna in a natural context. This, in turn, may arouse tourists' interest in protecting natural resources. Besides this, other devices, such as interactive computer games and multi-media interpretation facilities, are commonly utilised in zoos, parks, and nature reserves, aiming to convey the message of the importance of nature conservation as well as provide an enjoyable tourist experience.

Apart from the technological integration, scientific management has been widely incorporated into ecotourism sites. For example, park zoning systems have been adopted as one of the most pivotal planning and management tools within many protected areas in order to balance preservation and recreation. An

example of zoning is explicitly explicated in the Canadian National Park system. National parks are divided into five zones with objectives ranging from complete preservation (zone one), wilderness (zone two) and the natural environment (zone three), recreational activities (zone four) and to intensive tourists' use (zone five) (Holden, 2000).

Each zone serves different purposes. Zone one normally embraces or supports an ecologically significant wildlife habitat, preserving the sense of 'wilderness', so that visitor numbers are strictly controlled or even prohibited. Zones four and five are however designated for extensive tourist uses and a wide range of tourist facilities are concentrated and placed in these areas. This zoning system can be envisaged as an effective technique for an ecotourist site to achieve a 'win-win' scenario of conservation and recreation, so that the tourist presence and their activities are managed to occur in certain areas, while the core area is kept for conservation purposes without any, or with minimum, disturbance from tourists on the other hand. Other management techniques which share a similar role as the zoning system include those such as the concept of Carrying Capacity and Visitor Impact Management.

3.2.3.2. Facilitating market dynamics and economic agents

There appears a growing importance of economic and market dynamics in pushing for environmental reforms, and environmental interests are institutionalised and standardised within economic logics of market, price and competition, in addition to articulation of state agencies and environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) (Mol, 2000; 2009). This trend can be seen from the active involvement of economic agents, such as credit institutions, insurance companies, business corporations and certification organisations in the ecological restructuring process and the increasing role of environmental standardising programmes (e.g. 'discharge fees', 'cleaner production',

certification programmes, eco-labelling systems) in triggering the need for implementation of environment-sensitive measures.

Due to China's political conditions, Mol (2009:473) contends: 'at a national level, environmental interests have not been articulated strongly to put the emerging economic and market actors and institutions under pressure', with the exceptions of some large Chinese and joint venture corporations. Not only do they incorporate environmental standards and innovations into their decision-making processes and practices but they also introduce internationally-recognised environmental schemes to the domestic markets to push for a 'green' economy such as Petrochina (see Mol, 2009).

Increasing environmental fees or environmental awards can act as effective economic and market forces to press for implementation of environmentally-sensitive practices. An example in China reflects the launching of pollution charges, such as an 'environmental tax' and 'no pollution prize', to certain economic sectors including the tourism industry, under which their construction or operations, aims to shape corporate activities to reduce negative environmental impacts to a minimal level. Xiaogan Wang (2011) from Greenpeace denotes:

The launch of the environmental tax will mark China's first real effort to use financial mechanisms to curb pollution. It's a good sign that the 'money talk' has begun, but there is still a long way to go to really charge polluters what they owe the environment and the people who rely on it.

The adoption of economic and market-based incentives and tools to articulate environmental interest within economic decision-makers represents a shift away from China's traditionally communist command-and-control regime towards a more market-orientated model. Nonetheless, an 'implementation gap' exists just

like the inconsistency between various environmental laws and regulations formulated by the government, and poor actual practices at local levels (see Chapter Five).

In particular with ecotourism, due to the lack of normative institutional models and bodies for ecotourism operation, the rise of a wide selection of ecotourism certification programmes, eco-labelling schemes and environmental award schemes, signifies the increasing importance of market-based mechanisms to standardise and institutionalise the ecotourism industry. According to Crabtree *et al.*, (2002), these programmes and schemes play an effective role in providing operational guidelines and standards for ecotourism development by incorporating environmental concerns into its practices and seeking a more sustainable performance. On the other hand, they can offer certified tourism companies and operators a marketing advantage as tourists are inclined to choose recognisable credible tourism products (Synergy, 2000; Honey, 2002).

A wide variety of ecotourism certification schemes has been developed and operated in the tourism sector around the world in various languages ranging from the highly localised and regional scales to the globalised and international scopes (Synergy, 2000; Buckley, 2002). Three widely recognised international ecotourism certification schemes include the Australian Eco Certification Program (ECP), the Costa Rican Sustainable Tourism Certification (SCT), and the Canadian Saskatchewan Ecotourism Accreditation System (SEAS) (Jamal *et al.*, 2006).

In the context of ecotourism in China, it shows that there is a limited applicability of international programmes; instead, domestic schemes prevail. Zhong *et al.*, (2007) in their research, summarise four key reasons: cost, language, culture, and governance. International programmes are considered as

expensive along with language barrier of English, hardly fitting Chinese socio-cultural conditions, and standards and certification in China should be accredited and endorsed by state agencies rather than private providers (Zhong *et al.*, 2007).

In this sense, the A-grade tourism certification schemes, the normative grading system and national standards of evaluating the quality of a tourist destination in China, play a dominant role in Chinese tourist sectors. The schemes range from one A (A- the lowest rating) to five As (AAAAA- the highest rating), under the administration of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), based on four criteria - transport (e.g. convenience, environmental-sensitive mode), educational background of employees, sanitation and visitation (e.g. number of visitors annually, visitor satisfaction rate). Besides this, there are various environmental awards and prizes administrated by the tourism or environmental agencies of the state.

While standardising is conceived as pushing the ecotourism industry for efficient and credible practices, a series of questions arise immediately, namely: Can ecotourism running through Chinese certification schemes achieve the proposed benchmark? Can they guarantee the best practices? How do Chinese tourists respond to schemes credibility and accreditation bodies? Do they favour and support recognisable certified tourism products? All these sorts of questions will be investigated and elaborated in subsequent chapters (Chapters Six and Seven).

3.2.3.3. Collaborating with diverse stakeholders of civil society

Along with the changing of environmental governance from the top-down conventional environmental regime to more market-based institutions, there is an expansion and strengthening of the role of civil society in ecological reform

and environmental restructuring. Non-state actors, which used to be positioned on the marginalisation or even exclusion from the central decision-making processes, have started to be actively engaged in the traditional roles that the nation-state played such as administration, regulatory, collaboration and mediation, as what Beck (1994) termed ‘subpolitics’ (cited in Mol, 2000). In this sense, environmental movements lead to the mode of public–private co-regulation in environmental governance.

In European countries, civil society (e.g. environmental NGOs, economic actors, societal communities) play a large role in environmental reform, as Mol (2009:469) states:

The environmental movement, environmental periodicals and the foundation of an increasingly universal system of environmental norms and values are both medium and outcome of processes of ecological modernisation in what has become known as civil society.

Civil society’s contribution to environmental reform in China, however, reflects a different mode from that of European countries although in recent years there has evolved some forms of participation of civil society in environmental issues. The landscape of China’s civil society was relatively blank until the mid 1990s. The establishment of China’s first Environmental NGO, Friend of Nature (FON) in 1994, symbolises the inception of a permissive policy environment for NGOs in China’s environmental governance (Schwartz, 2004). Since then, there has been a substantial growth in the number of grassroots environmental groups.

The majority of these groups do not work as adversarial or confrontational agencies to the government such as those in most European countries; rather, they are awareness-raising actors through environmental educational programmes, public environmental campaigns, and appeal to technical and

financial support from international organisations (Schwartz, 2004; Mol, 2009). Nonetheless, in recent years, the increasingly different kinds of green groups have played an active role in mobilising communities to build upon the idea of public participation and grassroots action for promoting environmental interests in China (see examples of ‘Green Web’ of Yang 2005 and ‘Green Volunteer League’ of China Environmental Forum 2007).

Turning attention to the discourse of ecotourism, as outlined in Chapter One, to achieve a ‘deep’ ecotourism requires a close collaboration among various stakeholders such as governments, tourism developers, tourists and local communities. As Jamal *et al.*, (2006:159) state: ‘The ecotourism landscape portrays a diverse group of players (stakeholders) that influence the conservation and use of eco-destinations’. Local community participation was considered as one of the key components of most ecotourism definitions as noted in Chapter One. It is often claimed that only when the local communities are incorporated into ecotourism projects can an increase in the chances of the projects being successful arise (Ross and Wall, 1999; Wood, 2002; Pratiwi, 2006).

Stoll-Kleemann and O’Riordan (2002), however, contend that community participation alone sometimes cannot guarantee to achieve ‘win-win’ scenarios for both the benefits of economy and the integrity of biodiversity. Thus, ecotourism needs collaborative arrangements which allow levels of communication and interaction among various stakeholders of civil society. An example is the stakeholder collaborative approach to ecotourism-related development that has been examined by many researchers at various ecotourism destinations (for full discussions, see Lamelas’s 2001 research on Dominican Republic; Lima’s 2008 study on New Zealand and Brazil; and Ngema’s 2009 case study of South Africa). Does China’s urban (eco)tourism also embrace the stakeholder collaborative schemes? Do the schemes contribute to the positive

intersections of economic obtains, nature conservation and community development and, if so, in what ways? These questions will be dealt in Chapters Six and Seven.

In summary, at the core of Ecological Modernisation is the idea that economic demands and environmental needs can be reconciled through promoting the use of science and technology, facilitating the role of economic agencies and market dynamics, and advocating public participation and stakeholder-collaborative environmental governance. The notion is supported by many scholars because of its articulation with sustainable development by focusing on the overall economic, social, environmental transformations and strategies (e.g. Weale, 1992; Hajer, 1995; Janicke, 1997; Dryzek, 1997; Blowers, 1997).

Turning our attention to ecotourism, as noted in Chapters One, the increasing popularity of it largely lies in its suggestive power to balance economic growth and ecological integrity which is consistent with the promise of Ecological Modernisation. In principle, the two notions can be closely linked through encompassing the discourse of sustainable development. In practice, Ecological Modernisation may work as an effective tool to help ecotourism fulfil its sustainable goals, as discussed above, with the application of its three key themes. Ecotourism, on the other hand, can be conceived as an institutional carrier of Ecological Modernisation.

3.2.4. Criticisms of Ecological Modernisation

Given the diverse interpretations and applications of Ecological Modernisation, reactions to the notion have been complicated. Besides its supporters, critics have raised various concerns and objections. Perhaps the most frequently quoted critique against Ecological Modernisation lies in its claim to be largely focused

on technical innovation or technocratic management, which provides ‘a techno-institutional fix for present problems’ (Hajer, 1995:32), but not addressing constitutive contradictions of capitalism regarding irreconcilable environment-economy relationships (Spaargaren and Mol, 1991; Pepper, 1998).

Capitalism is characterised by seeking economic sustainability through the constant accumulation of capital and increasing productivity to make profits. This, in turn, leads to a constant expansion of consumption (Pepper, 1998). Ecological Modernisation is predicated upon the greening of the production-consumption processes by assigning a pivotal role to science and technology in sustaining economic growth, but, in reality, this is hardly achieved because the nature of growth entails the consumption of natural and human resources at the expense of ecosystems and societies.

Hajer (1995) argues that Ecological Modernisation is largely economistic-orientated - ‘framing environmental problems in monetary terms, portraying environmental protection as a “positive sum” game and following a utilitarian logic’ (Hajer, 1995:482). This argument responds to Luke’s (1997) critique on the concept of sustainable development in which Ecological Modernisation is posited to entail - that it ‘is about sustaining development as economically rationalised environment rather than the development of a sustaining ecology’ (Luke, 1997: 85). Referring to Whiteside (2002: 45), it is an anthropocentric ecologism - ‘only how much of nature will be allowed to exist as a function of our best understanding of human interests’. Eco-efficiency in nature proposed by Ecological Modernisation emphasises an ecological economic value of nature, orientated towards an economic-conservation paradigm.

Within this context, it is argued that protected areas and other nature-based

recreational settings (including ecotourism) are increasingly institutionalised with a modernistic and commoditised paradigm by expert systems, advanced technologies and corporate capital so that human relationships to nature are treated as a ‘means to an end’ (Jamal *et al.*, 2003:145); that is ‘technical, industrial, or commercial’ (Vikka, 1997:9). Such a practice reduces nature ‘to a system or systems that can be dismantled, redesigned, and assembled anew to produce its many “resources” efficiently and in adequate amounts when and where needed. . .’ (Luke, 1997:79). In this sense, Ecological Modernisation may best be envisaged as serving as a vehicle for the post-colonisation of the world’s natural spaces and cultural societies.

This critique leads to the other key concern that Ecological Modernisation largely excludes the social dimension that constitutes one of the three key features of the discourse of sustainable development, such as overruling local knowledge and involvement (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Jamal *et al.*, 2003; Lima, 2008) and ignoring issues of social justice and equity (e.g. Gouldson and Murphy, 1997; Gibbs, 2000; Fisher and Freudenberg, 2001). As Jamal *et al.*, (2003:163) pose the question: ‘Whose heritage, history and knowledge are being privileged and whose voices are not being heard in the instrumental narrative of natural areas?’

Accordingly, Ecological Modernisation, posited to enable a sustainable society, is criticised as being an effective tool for capitalist systems and globally dominant scientific-technical institutions to find alternative ways to exploit and commodity nature and culture allied to rhetorical ploys of rational planning, scientific management and sustainable growth. As Escobar (1996:50) argues:

The narratives of planning and management, always presented as ‘rational’ and ‘objective’ are essential to developers. A blindness to the role of planning in the normalisation and control

of the social world is present also in environmental managerialism. As they are incorporated into the world capitalist economy, even the most remote communities of the Third World are torn from their local context, redefined as 'resources' to be planned for, managed.

Christoff (1996:497) thus concerns that Ecological Modernisation

may serve to legitimise the continuing instrumental domination and destruction of the environment, and the promotion of less democratic forms of government, foregrounding modernity's industrial and technocratic discourse over its more recent, resistant and critical ecological components.

Overall, Ecological Modernisation is criticised at core by adopting 'a greener face' (Blowers, 1997:854) to propose solutions to reconcile the inherent contradictions of capitalism. It represents 'different ways of writing the same old capitalist discourses that set nature as a commodity and only that' (Hajer, 1995, cited in Lima 2008:92).

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the understanding of two Western modernistic approaches to development and the environment through the discourse of ecotourism to reveal aspects of environmental awareness. Disneyisation, an important business model drawing upon Disney theme park techniques, demonstrated its significant influence on many domains of economic life, including ecotourism, through its four inter-related principles - theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising and performative labour. It is suggested that the process of Disneyisation on ecotourism may not lead to completely negative impacts such as the commodification of nature/culture and commercially-driven purposes, rather it may articulate environmental interests

such as the promotion of conservation via entertainment programmes and thus assist ecotourism to achieve its goals.

Ecological Modernisation, on the other hand, was based on its proposed capacity to reconcile economic growth and environmental protection. This is very consistent with the suggested power of ecotourism. The Chapter summarised three key themes deriving from Ecological Modernisation and their manifestations to ecotourist projects were analytically discussed. From a positive perspective, it is argued that Ecological Modernisation can act as an effective tool to enable ecotourism to achieve sustainability between ecosystems and societies, and, on the other hand, ecotourism can be conceived as an institutional carrier of Ecological Modernisation. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of criticisms regarding Ecological Modernisation and its potential commoditisation of ecotourism should be acknowledged.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This thesis aims to combine and compare the very different conceptual approaches - ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation - through two urban (eco)tourism sites to explore broader issues related to environmental awareness in China within two parallel themes: the attitudes of Chinese (eco)tourists to nature/the environment, and the influence of political-economic contexts on environmental practices as exemplified by the two selected case studies. A theoretical framework, established in the preceding chapters (Chapters Two and Three), is shaped by a Chinese traditional philosophical/religious perspective and a set of principles drawn on Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation. In keeping with that conceptual framework, the key concern of this thesis is to investigate research questions related to ‘how’, and ‘what’ as outlined in Chapter One. This chapter, therefore, will elaborate upon the methodological procedures and methods this thesis used with which to develop the research. The Chapter is divided into four sections. It begins with a discussion on a methodological approach (4.1), and is then followed by the research setting and site selection rationale (4.2). Detailed methods to select, collect and analyse data coupled with explaining how these techniques were chosen and reflected the conceptual concerns of the author is provided in 4.3. The final section presents some of the opportunities and constraints encountered during the research process itself (4.4).

4. 1. Case study research

‘If your main concern is understanding what is happening in a specific context, and if you can get access to and co-operation from the people involved - then do a case study’ (Robson, 1993:143). Since the purpose of this thesis is to investigate broader issues related to environmental awareness in China through

examining experiences of the two selected urban (eco)tourism sites in China. The researcher needs to be in the two sites and interact with people in situ, in order to obtain knowledge about what is happening and why it is that way; so a case study approach was chosen to be the most appropriate. It is a strategy for doing research which focuses on exploring and investigating a particular contemporary phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, as well as their relationships by adopting multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 1993; Zainal, 2007).

Yin's book on '*Case Study Research*' suggests that case studies are the most relevant form of research strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are raised, when the researcher has little control over events, when the emphasis is on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, and when the research is exploratory in nature (Yin, 1994). This thesis, as noted earlier, focuses on investigating three different conceptual approaches to explore Chinese environmental awareness in China through the two urban (eco)tourism parks, in assessing people's perceptions, attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. These attitudinal and behavioural conditions cannot be controlled and manipulated, rather, they need to be objectively observed and interpreted within their own environments (Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park).

In addition, the case study approach, by focusing on specific cases, allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the social fabric to observe, assess and disclose 'specific contextual factors in which the event to study is embedded' (Grix, 2001:67). Particularly, Lamnek (1988) identifies four patterns to the case study approach: *communicativity* meaning that communication and actions, constituting and reflecting the reality, are recorded by the researcher; *naturalism* indicating that social reality is not 'artificially constructed models'; *interpretativity* denoting that study relations are 'interpreted reality'; and that

openness is no standardisation to constrain the action of the researcher (cited in Carroll, 1996). As is claimed by Sarantakos (1993), the case study can be regarded both as a research model and a data collection method.

It is undoubtedly true that no research design is perfect, although the researcher may have selected the most appropriate methodology. Every methodology has some disadvantages. The case study approach has been commonly criticised for observing the data at the micro level by focusing on a very small geographical area or number of subjects, compared with a quantitative approach which investigates patterns in data at the macro level according to the frequency of occurrence of the phenomena (Zainal, 2007). Thus, biases regarding data collection and subsequent analysis processes should be taken into consideration when adopting a case study approach.

In order to address these issues, the use of triangulation is very necessary in this thesis. Triangulation, in simple terms, refers to the use of multiple methods and data sources to investigate the same research problem (Jick, 1979). Triangulation has been widely used in the social sciences as an ideal approach with which to improve objectivity of research methods and validity of research findings (Webb *et al.*, 1966; Denzin, 1970a; Decrop, 1999).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) identify three types of commonly used triangulation in ethnography, which include data-source triangulation, methods triangulation, and team research triangulation. Given the nature of this thesis, the first two types are therefore adopted. Firstly, this research embraces combined primary and secondary data sources, which allows one to compare data regarding the same research problem but is derived from different sources. Interviews, tourist surveys and participatory observation are used as a means to collect primary data coupled with various secondary data sources, such as

published books and journals, official reports and websites, and pamphlets. Besides this, primary data is also collected from diverse stakeholders, which includes site level park managers and employees, park visitors, local communities, other parks staff, tourism/environmental officials at each city, and academics and researchers. It aims to understand the research problem from diverse perspectives through such areas as experiences, opinions, feeling, expectations and concerns generated by different stakeholders. Secondly, this research uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods which include interviews, participatory observation, document reviews, and survey questionnaires although the qualitative portion accounts for the majority. The information gathered is cross-checked to provide a triangulation of data-source and methods to strengthen the validity and credibility of research findings.

Apart from the adoption of triangulation, criteria for choosing cases is a key portion of this thesis since the common criticism of the case study approach is that ‘the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings’ (Soy, 1997). The choice of two cases in this thesis reflects the specific research questions (see Chapter One) which are designed to guide the whole thesis. Moreover, those two case studies do not purport to generalise to a larger population, but rather reflect the conceptual concerns being assessed. The two case studies were selected carefully with this in mind. The first one is Shen Zhen Wetland Park (SZWP), a recreational-orientated theme park based in Shen Zhen, while the other one is Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP), an educational-orientated urban park located in Hong Kong. Why choose these two cities as research settings and then further selected these two parks? The reasons for doing so are discussed next.

4.2. Research setting and site selection rationales

4.2.1. Research setting selection rationales

Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, with close geographical proximity to each other, were chosen as research settings because they share certain common features while varying from each other in other respects. As initially pointed out in Chapter One, there are some similarities and more elaboration and discussion is made here.

Firstly, the two cities are economically developed coastal cities but under seemingly different development trajectories and histories. As mentioned in Chapter One, Shen Zhen reflects an experimental ground for modernity, projection of youth and for the practice of market capitalism, guided by the ideal of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. Hong Kong, on the other hand, shows a combined Chinese history with a capitalist/colonial-orientated past. Accordingly, each city’s experience of nature conservation, environmental protection and urban development are expected to be at variance. Thus, the two selected wetland parks would reflect these different development histories and patterns under the influence of each city’s political-economic conditions.

Secondly, in terms of civil society, both cities embrace a multicultural-diverse society. Hong Kong, at a macro level, contains a mixture of British and Chinese culture, while Shen Zhen reveals a micro level with internal rural-urban migrant features and an innovative culture. It is anticipated that the selected research sites can reflect similarities and differences in the way in which nature/the environment is perceived, understood, and nature-based tourism/ecotourism is conceptualised, promoted, and practised, by approaching a wide variety of stakeholders at each research site.

4.2.2. Research site selection criteria

In light of the defined research aims and objectives (Chapter One) as well as the reasons discussed above for choosing research settings (Shen Zhen and Hong Kong), the desired research sites would ideally fit the following three criteria.

Firstly, with respect to the term ecotourism defined in this thesis (Chapter One) and with an urban-based perspective, the desired sites would ideally provide a relatively ‘natural’⁴ feature, adjacent to local communities, where nature-based tourism /ecotourism is occurring and/or being promoted.

Secondly, the selected sites should be popular/large-scale ecotourism destinations promoted or developed by the government which are open for tourists and attract reasonable numbers of visitors, in particular with domestic travellers and local residents. This, on the one hand, reflects each city’s environmental policy and development philosophy; on the other hand, ensures sufficient respondent rates of research in order to generate valid results to assess the research objectives.

Thirdly, it is important that the selected sites should have an on-site management office/team where site-level managers and employees can be approached to assess their attitudes towards nature/the environment and their understanding and practices of nature-based tourism from the supply side.

4.2.3. Research site description

The process of selecting the two research sites went through two stages - the

⁴ The meaning of ‘natural’ here is different from Western understanding of ‘wilderness’. It means a natural environment which combines natural landscapes and human structures (see Chapter Two for details).

literature review and a preliminary site visit to various protected areas and nature-based tourist sites. This began with visits to different urban nature sites in London and subsequently to those in China, in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. Before any in-field visits, an internet search strategy was used to find out possible case studies. Key words, such as ‘ecotourism’, ‘nature-based tourism’, ‘sustainable development’, and ‘conservation’ in China, wherever possible with a specific focus on Shen Zhen and Hong Kong respectively were used, in electronic search engines, such as Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis online and Science Direct.

The first strategy was to get as much information as possible about nature-based tourism/ecotourism initiatives in the two cities. Four types became a priority: cases with government-led and conservation/research-orientated with less tourist involvement; cases with community-run; cases combining recreation and education/conservation and, cases that were more commercially-orientated with recreational purposes.

After creating a short list of possible cases, the second step was to conduct a preliminary field visit to a number of prospective tourist sites. Over a period of about three weeks at each city (between April and June 2009), a number of informal interviews were conducted with tourist site staff, environmental officials, members of NGOs, local residents, academics and researchers, to identify their opinions and perceptions of ecotourism in each city. A series of sites from each city were explored (see Appendix 2).

Based on the site selection criteria discussed above and, for comparison purposes, Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park were chosen as the research sites. Wetland, as a valuable ecosystem type in urban areas, provides many important ecosystem services to urban populations, such as

habitat for flora and fauna, protection of water flows and supplies, and the provision of biodiversity resources, ecological research, environmental education, and recreation and tourism to urban communities (Faulkner, 2004). Costanza *et al.*, (1997) argue that wetlands rank as the most valuable terrestrial ecosystem per hectare.

According to the United Nations (1997; 2002), over half of the Earth's population now lives in urban areas. At current growth rates, the number will increase to over sixty percent by 2030. However, this increasing urbanisation causes a series of problems for wetlands. This may include accelerating the loss of wetlands and diminishing the ecosystem services that those urban wetlands can provide due to encroachment of surrounding population, pollution, exploitation, and inappropriate management (Grayson *et al.*, 1999; Bolund and Hunhammar, 1999). Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, as noted earlier, two rapidly urbanised cities, face these problems in particular.

A detailed discussion on urban development processes and associated problems in each city will be found in the next chapter. In recognition of the importance of wetlands as well as their natural features, it is feasible to conduct research on the two wetland parks, (SZWP and HKWP), to investigate their roles played with respect to the urban population and therefore to reveal two cities' development philosophies under the influence of their political-economic contexts.

Both wetland parks provide a 'natural' setting in a suburb of each city and encompass local communities nearby. Particularly, the communities around SZWP are traditionally dependent on the natural resources of the area. The two parks have been developed as a popular (eco)tourism destination since their opening, and attract a large number of diverse groups of visitors. For example, during the author's preliminary site visit to SZWP in April 2009, the Park

received a considerable number of visitors every week including various tour groups and individuals. The Park is one of the major components of the Overseas Chinese Town (OCT) East Resort and is closely managed by joint effort by the central government and the OCT Group. The OCT East has been promoted as a must-see tourist attraction from various Shen Zhen tour travel guides since its establishment in 2007. It is designated as China's first 'National Level Ecotourism Demonstration Region', the 'National Ecological Resort' by the National Tourism Bureau and the National Environment Protection Bureau. These features demonstrate that SZWP closely matched the site selection criteria and would be a suitable site for the purposes of this study. In the case of HKWP, in terms of the level of visitation and popularity, it possesses almost exactly the same characteristics as SZWP, but retains differences such as the ownership and park functions and purposes. At this point, it was considered as an ideal case allowing a site comparison with SZWP to be made.

4.3. Research methods

In order to explore and investigate broader issues related to Chinese environmental awareness in contemporary China and by applying the proposed framework (outlined in Chapter One) to SZWP and HKWP, data inputs from a variety of stakeholders were required. A site-level data collection targeted groups as:

- Site level park managers and employees
- Park visitors
- Local communities

Besides this, other park staff, NGOs' members, tourism/environmental officials at each city (e.g. officials of tourism bureaus and environmental departments),

academics and researchers were also approached to supplement and provide broader information to support this thesis.

The qualitative portion of the thesis ensured that the interview process addressed all of the targeted groups, combined with on-site participatory observation as well as secondary data collection. A self-completed survey was designed for tourists in order to obtain further information to generalise facts and statistics. Each of the data collection strategies, both qualitative and quantitative, was ultimately inter-linked and cross-checked.

Document collection helped to develop an observation guide and formulate questions for interviews; participatory observation led to the identification of key informants, supplemented the interview process and increased access for further interviews; interviews contributed to appropriate questionnaire design for tourist surveys; and tourist surveys generated more information, some of which though was required to be verified through more interviews and participatory observation.

The actual fieldwork was conducted at the two wetland parks for six months (from February to July 2010), involving various data collection techniques with the different stakeholders, as discussed below.

4.3.1. Document reviews

Throughout the fieldwork, a wide variety of documents were collected, summarised, and subsequently analysed. These included project-related documents such as the two parks' annual reports, monthly published magazines/newsletters, marketing briefings, tourists' pamphlets and volunteer and membership booklets. They also included documents produced by other actors, such as academic papers and articles related to the two sites/cities, local

governments' reports and documents (e.g. Shen Zhen Urban Planning Bureau and Hong Kong Agriculture Fisheries and Conservation Department) associated with planning and management of the two parks as well as the two cities.

The information collected from the various sources of documentary review was an important secondary data source for diverse reasons. First of all, documentary sources provided important background information about Shen Zhen and Hong Kong as well as the history, philosophy and operation of nature-based tourism at each city. These historical documents enabled me to develop the research problem and further formulate research questions. Furthermore, by reviewing existing documents, it helped me develop other data collection tools for evaluation such as interviews, participatory observation and tourist surveys identified in this thesis. Finally, according to Kitchin and Tate (2000), documentary evidence helps to verify precisely names, references, and details of an event.

Although document review offers a valued source of data, this method has been criticised for various reasons. A common critique is that documentary sources contain bias because of the selective survival of information by researchers, which may include the issues of researchers' manipulation of the data in a document or distortion of the original meaning of the document. This leads to the problem of inaccurate data sources. Besides this critique, some documentary sources may be less available and accessible than other sources. This may result in the research lacking crucial data. The difficulty that occurred when accessing some sensitive documents from both research sites will be outlined in the later section of this chapter. Under these circumstances, other data collection techniques such as interviews, participatory observation and tourist surveys were employed to complement documentary sources and therefore to constitute a 'triangular' perspective to understand the reality.

4.3.2. Interviews

A second technique for data collection included a series of semi-structured interviews, on a face-to-face basis, with the four target groups - site level park managers and employees, local communities, park visitors, and outsiders (e.g. other parks' staff, NGOs' members, tourism/environmental officials at each city, and academics and researchers). Semi-structured interviews 'act as a means of developing ideas and research hypotheses rather than as a means of generating facts and statistics' (Oppenheim, 1996:67). More descriptive statements were generated by this method while tourist surveys which were conducted in the later stage of research produced more statistical facts. By interviewing the four different target groups separately, the data provided a triangular perspective which enabled me to gain a wide range of critical 'official' and 'unofficial' point of views concerning environmental awareness in China

Firstly, information collected from site level park managers and employees aimed to acquire specific details about issues of management, planning, and development of each park, as well as to gain insight into their attitudes towards nature/the environment and issues related to the influence of political-economic contexts on the development of the two case studies. Direct contacts, such as emails, were sent to park managers of each research site, to describe the research and to request the permission to access the site and conduct interviews. As will be explained in the later section of this chapter, gaining approval to access each park is via 'gatekeepers' who control enquiries by examining the researcher's motives and considering what may bring benefits or pose risks for the park (Cloke *et al.*, 2004), and which was the biggest obstacle during my fieldwork.

It took me three weeks to gain access to HKWP and four weeks to SZWP. In the case of HKWP, my enquiries were put through to a manager of the Education

and Community Department of the Park (Ms. Cary Chan). There was a very difficult negotiation process between us. Actually, it could not be called ‘negotiation’, as instead it was made clear to me that I needed to compromise to obey her rules. For example, I was required to modify interview questions and survey questionnaires several times based on her instructions and formulations, in order to gain approval to access the Park; I was restricted to stand at a certain corner of the Park to conduct research (i.e. one side of the exit of the Park). This uneven power relationship between the researcher and the authority happens very often in China. Most organisations are very concerned to protect their image and reputation, especially for tourist sites, as their reputation is the key with which to sustain their ‘business’, and therefore researchers are normally not welcomed, unless they are gathering information at the request of the park..

Alternatively, many researchers can choose using personal networks to ease their access and help their fieldwork. ‘*Guanxi*’, personal networks or social connections are common in Confucian culture, and has long been a basic element of Chinese life and still plays a crucial part in organising social life in contemporary China. In the case of Shen Zhen Wetland Park, after I failed in the initial approach via direct telephone and emails, with a given message to wait for ‘top-level approval’, I started to use my social ties/*guanxi* in Shen Zhen to approach managerial-level contacts in the Park. However, I was told that I could only produce ‘positive’ findings about the park, and not create any negative images. Otherwise, it was said, I would ruin the *guanxi*/relationship between my personal contacts and park managers.

In order to maintain objectiveness and reliability of this thesis, I decided to insist on obtaining access approval via direct contacts with the ‘gatekeepers’ of the Park. Fortunately, after a series of careful email communications with the secretary of the Tourism Department of OCT (The Department is in charge of

Shen Zhen Wetland Park), my enquiries were finally directed to a manager of Sales and Marketing Department of OCT East. In the meantime, the secretary arranged a meeting for me to conduct interviews with two senior managers of the Tourism Department of OCT.

After approaching the first contact at managerial level of each park, a snowball sampling technique was used for approaching the following contacts. The technique is a random approach to find potential respondents as recommended by the researcher's previous contacts (Dawson, 2002; Bloch, 2004). I asked for a referral to other park employees after a contact had been interviewed. In terms of the key role of social connections (*guanxi*) in Chinese life, this snowball referral method proved as an effective and efficient strategy for the research in order to obtain a sample of the desired size as well as 'more informative and insightful data' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:62). This snowball technique was particularly helpful for me to approach respondents from site level park staff. In the case of Shen Zhen Wetland Park, after I interviewed Ms. Gongru Wang (a manager of Sales and Marketing Department of OCT East), she introduced her assistant to participate in my interview. This assistant then referred her colleague as a participant to be involved in my research. After that, her colleague recommended other employees. In this way, I successfully interviewed four senior park managers and twenty-nine different level park employees.

In the case of Hong Kong Wetland Park, the similar strategy, a 'snowball' sampling, was opted for approaching key informants of park employees. As mentioned earlier, my gaining approval of access to HKWP was on many conditions. One of these was that, with exception of Cary Chan (a manager of the Department of Education and Community Development), these conditions did not allow me to conduct any interview or even talk to other park employees.

Through informal communication with a park interpreter by field participatory observation, he agreed to accept my request for interview during his break at the Park. After the interview, he asked his colleague, who participated in my research, to provide other contacts. Through this ‘snowball’ strategy, a web of key informants (nine civil servants and sixteen contract workers of the Park) were established and approached. All interviews were face-to-face. The respondents were interviewed in their own environment, either at work or after work (in nearby cafes). A semi-structured interview format was employed which covered a variety of topics relating to:

- **Park operations** - biophysical details, park design, structure orientation, management concepts and issues, development strategies, funding, etc.
- **Ecotourism** - attitudes to nature, understanding, functions, concerns, expectations, future developments, etc.
- **Local relations** - resident displacement, outreach efforts, local tourism benefits, local collaborations, etc.

By using a semi-structured interview format, it provided a string of predetermined guide questions that related directly to the research questions of the thesis (see Appendix 3 (A) for the complete list of interview questionnaire for on-site park managers/employees). Kitchin and Tate (2000) argue that this type of interview can avoid offering a limited, pre-set range of answers with the hierarchical and rigid situation such as ‘I ask’ and ‘you (respondent) answer’, as well as avoiding shifting away from the research focus by totally relying on social interaction between the interviewer and respondents in order to extract information. With the purpose of making interview discussions with park managers and employees of both parks more efficient and effective, interview topics and issues were designed and phrased with structural, descriptive and technical ways ahead of time, but the researcher can change the

sequence of the questions and rephrase of the questions which are tackled (Kitchin and Tate, 2000) based on each interviewee's own peculiarity. During my fieldwork, this indeed happened very often and some further questions were created during this type of interview discussion. The semi-structured interview, or what Kitchin and Tate (2000) termed the 'interview guide approach', provided a flexible atmosphere for both the interviewer and the person being interviewed to discuss issues and probe for details while sticking on the research focus.

Respondents from both parks were informed that each interview would last around forty minutes but it could take longer if they had more to address and add. Since this research was conducted in the context of Chinese conventions with Chinese respondents, for example tape-recording of interview conversations which is a common practice for many researchers, though conversely became a critical issue to be dealt with during my fieldwork. Most respondents refused to have the conversation recorded. They feared that the tape-recorded discussions may bring trouble to them later. I also considered that they might not reveal their real attitudes and opinions, especially critical ones, if they knew that the conversation was being recorded. Because of these reasons, I did not adopt tape-recording of the conversation with most park managers and employees apart from the interview discussions with the senior manager, Gongru Wang, of SZWP and two park employees of HKWP.

Secondly, tourists, as one of the main stakeholders at a tourism destination, are the key informants for establishing a park tourist profile and for gathering tourist-related data such as travel motivation and environmental attitudes which are crucial to assess the research objectives. Given that the focus of this research is on Chinese ecotourism and ecotourists, selective criteria for interviewees are that: they are Chinese visitors, including mainland Chinese, overseas Chinese,

and Chinese visitors from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. For comparison purposes, a limited number of foreign park visitors were approached and interviewed (twenty-three at SZWP and eleven at HKWP).

Informants were approached at different areas within the parks (e.g. the entrance, major tourist attractions, restaurants, and rest areas) with a random sampling technique. In this technique, every one of the park visitors is given an equal chance of being selected as subject and which therefore enhances its representativeness of the park visitor population and thereby reduces the researchers own bias. At SZWP, two highly frequent loci for Chinese tourists to stopover, the rest areas at the plaza of entrance/exit and inside the 'Four Season Gallery', were chose as the main sampling places. At these places, the first participant was chosen at random. The next person who sat beside the person who was just interviewed would be selected as next interviewee. A similar approach was employed at the rest area of the entry/exit plaza, of the Visitor Centre, and of the 'Wetland Discovery Centre' at HKWP. In addition, intercept interviews were conducted at major attractions (e.g. 'Wetland Corridor', 'Four Season Flower Field', and 'Church and Flower Clock' of SZWP; 'Bird Hide' and Pui Pui's Home' of HKWP). Again, the first participant was recruited at random. The next person who appeared at the end of each interview was selected.

Moreover, informants were approached by a convenience sampling technique whereby subjects are selected because of their easy accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Marshall, 1996). As will be explained in the next section, through participatory observation where I acted as a volunteer tour guide in each park, some tourists stayed and obliged to be interviewed after guided tours. For these tourists, therefore, it can be argued that they were recruited by a convenience sampling approach. Besides twelve invalid interviews, in terms of

respondents who dropped out half way: there were eighty-six valid responses from SZWP. In the case of HKWP, seventy-two valid interviews were collected apart from nine invalid responses. The shortest interview was nineteen minutes and the longest was one hour and forty-seven minutes.

The interview questionnaire consisted of three parts (see the detailed interview questionnaire in Appendix 3 (C)). The first part contained a series of semi-structured and open-ended questions relating to the topics such as: perceptions of man-nature relationship, environmental attitudes, images of 'nature' and the 'natural', expectations of 'nature' and 'natural' experiences. The second part embraced information about tourists' understanding of ecotourism, travel motivation, on-site activities participated in, and overall visitor experiences. The third part of the interview questionnaire included several questions regarding the general socio-demographic characteristics of participants, such as age, place of origin, income, occupation, educational level, and travel mode.

Thirdly, input from local communities who live around each park was crucial to investigate local views and knowledge about the realities or conflicting scenarios related to (eco)tourism practices and therefore to assess the role of political-economic dynamics played on the development of the two case study areas. Local communities, in this research, were defined as those individuals/groups which had an interest in park activities/programmes and whether these activities affected them either positively or negatively, which included both indigenous villagers and newly-arrived migrants. The method used to identify and recruit those community residents of each research site is called purposive sampling technique. This technique is often used in case studies where researchers use their judgment as to typicality or interest (Robson, 1993). Those community residents with the highest impact and

interest in the park were the core of the sample group.

In this case, three villages (*Shangping*, *Chengkeng*, and *Meisha*) adjacent to the Shen Zhen Wetland Park were selected as they have had a close relation with the land spiritually and physically where SZWP is located. Among them, *Shangping* Village, located right at the bottom of the OCT East Resort, accommodates the majority of original residents who were displaced from the area when the Shen Zhen Wetland park was later developed, showing the highest impact and interest in the OCT East project, including the development of SZWP.

In terms of community residents around Hong Kong Wetland Park, the Park is located at *Tian Shui Wai*, part of the Hong Kong New Town Development Scheme, accommodating the majority of low-income families and immigrants from mainland China. Two residential areas (*Tin Sau* and *Tin Heng*) located besides the Park, which holds a mixed population of Hong Kong natives and immigrants, and a further remaining original village (*Tai Tseng Wai*) with indigenous residents, were chosen as the core sample of local communities for the case of HKWP.

Once the sample group of community residents were selected, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the selected residential areas, to ascertain community perceptions on the park establishment, tourist impacts on their livelihoods and their involvement in park projects and activities (see Appendix 3 (B)). To approach respondents in the villages around SZWP, I encountered a high level of difficulty at the beginning. This will be explained in the later section of the Chapter. The targeted community residents also included business owners (e.g. kiosks, real estate agents) who conduct business within the defined research residential areas.

In order to achieve a high representativeness of the entire local community population at each research site, an attempt was made to include a mixture of different socio-demographic groups, containing both indigenous residents and immigrants from different age groups. Both the sample of local residents around the two parks were asked the same questions, besides the group of business owners who were, in addition, asked to respond to the establishment of the park and tourism's impact on their business. In total, fifty-two valid interview responses were collected from three selected villages around SZWP and sixty-five responses from three residential areas around HKWP. The participants were interviewed in their own environment (e.g. rest areas of villages, shops, cafes, offices). Again, I did not undertake any tape-recording of interview conversations because it would arouse suspicion, caution and even rejection among the participants. In particular, during my initial four field visits, villagers around SZWP expressed severe resistance and opposition to my appearance at their villages and some of them even displayed an extremely aggressive stance. The term 'researcher' is not new for them, but they believed that researchers must have a close link to the government. Therefore, most villagers, at the beginning, refused to accept any request for interview. After I broke down the 'wall' and built up trust between the villagers and me by contacting the first interviewee and by staying within the communities, other key respondents became amenable to give their ideas and opinions.

During the interview, group interviews were always 'naturally occurring'. This means that other participants were spontaneously involved in the conversation between me and the person being interviewed. This happened frequently at rest areas with community residents who congregated socially to have a chat or play

games (e.g. *majiang*⁵, chess, and cards) around the two research parks. In this situation, in order not to shift away from my research focus, I visibly showed my interest in what they were saying, encouraged them to express their views, and tried to get clues and leads out of their answers but ensured I followed the pre-defined interview questionnaire. One of the noteworthy advantages that the group interviews have brought was that they had the capacity to reach and include a more diverse population. For example, some of the old people from the community sample of both parks had been unable to participate in one-to-one interviews, due to the language obstacle in that I could not understand their dialects. However, they were able to contribute their point of view intermittently in a group setting with the help from other members of the group.

The final group of interviewees included a variety of tourism and environment governmental officials, members of NGOs, other park staff members, academics and researchers (twenty-two in total from the two study areas) to gather contextual and supporting data for this research. These people were approached mainly through recommendations and introductions of friends and relatives by a ‘snowball’ sampling technique. Interviews were conducted in a more open ended, flexible and free flowing format by adopting an unstructured interview. Although questions are not pre-set, certain topics were covered which generally revolved around nature-based tourism/ecotourism developments in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, the administrative structure of protected areas, planning and management issues, experiences of nature conservation, and local residents’ participation.

When one moves towards the interview data analysis phase, Lincoln and Guba

⁵ *Majiang* is one of the most popular recreational games among Chinese people in that it requires four people to play together.

argue that the data analysis ‘...involves taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Erlandson *et al.*, 1993:116). Similarly, Kvale (1996) comments that ‘the interpretation of interviews is a process of developing meanings in which the researcher provides insights for a new perspective or explanation about the studied phenomena’ (cited in Lima, 2008:148). This process, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), has three elements: data reduction, data display and data interpretation.

My thesis followed these three phases for analysing interviews. Firstly, data reduction starts with the raw data to reduce it to a more controlled and manageable format by eliminating repetitive and unnecessary information. The data was split into entities to be ready for the next step of analysis. Secondly, data display is involved in grouping information into categories based on the themes of each specific question, which aims to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible format. The interviews were classified by different themes by ‘key words’ and ‘key sentences’ in the texts and also textual similarities and differences were identified. Tape-recorded material was transcribed and mapped with ‘key words’ and ‘key sentences’ and then linked them to various themes. Thirdly, data interpretation seeks comparing, contrasting, and searches for patterns and triangulation. The interview data in this thesis was generated by multiple participants from two urban (eco)tourism sites. Much effort was focused on comparing and contrasting key themes identified in the interview responses of each research site in order to discover similarities and differences and find sequences and patterns. This was then followed by looking at the responses for both interview samples of SZWP and HKWP to summarise the commonality, dissimilarity and themes/patterns emerging from the participants across the two interview samples. Thus, the third phase of the data analysis process was involved in comparing and

contrasting responses within the interviews, and also between/across them, for the participants from SZWP and HKWP. The results were contrasted with data produced by other data collection techniques this thesis employed, such as documentary evidences, participatory observation and tourist surveys, forming a part of the data triangulation to strengthen the research findings.

During the process of interview analysis, I performed manual coding and data analysis on hard-copy printouts instead of a computer monitor. This is derived from my undeniable lack of technological expertise and old-fashioned ways of working. I tried to learn a software package, NVivo, to aid the analysis of qualitative data, but I failed to master it even though I put much mental energy into it. Therefore, as an alternative, I did it in an old-fashioned way. At first, I read through all the collected interviews to get a general sense, and then removed superfluous and repeated information. Since I adopted a semi-structured interview format which reflects a relatively fixed questionnaire, there are clear guidelines and structures for the focus and context of questions. After initial data reduction, I typed participants' answers which followed each question into word-processing software; Microsoft Word 2007. Manipulating data then started out on paper and writing codes in pen on hard copies of the data that was entered into the word processor. Although it seems clumsy and a rather labour intensive process, this manual method enabled me to view 'the smaller pieces of the larger puzzle' by spreading out multiple pages on a big desk, which is 'a literal perspective not always possible on a computer's monitor screen' (Saldana, 2012:22). In addition, working on hard-copy printouts permitted me, as someone who lacks technological capabilities, to use traditional writing materials such as coloured pens and highlighters to deal with data in a more manageable way by circling, highlighting, underlining, colouring 'key words', 'key sentences', and making margin notes and significant or illuminative participant quotes. These forms of data, according to

Lofland *et al.*, (2006), became key pieces of evidence to support my arguments, concepts or propositions, which in fact served as illustrative datum throughout my thesis. After I felt that the codes were fairly well set and organised from initial manual work on hard copies of data, they were transferred onto the electronic file.

4.3.3. Participatory observation

Field participatory observation was a fundamental part of this research. It is a crucial technique in investigating ‘what people actually do rather than what they say they do’ (Kitchin and Tate, 2000:224). It thus was carried out in this research to facilitate and supplement the interview process (what people say they do). In terms of identifying and approaching key informants, the participatory observation played a vital role. This will be discussed in detail next. This method not only contributed to the formation of important contacts and sources, it also enabled me to be available to those who were interested in discussing related topics and issues and sharing their experiences and ideas. Insights gained through this method were cross-checked through triangulating with the data collected by the other methods that this research adopted such as interviews, tourist surveys and secondary source collections.

Participatory observation can be covert and overt, with or without disclosing the research purpose and research identity to the people who are researched (Li, 2008). For this thesis, both options were adopted in order to obtain accurate, genuine, and objective data. To assess people’s on-site activities and behaviour, I ‘went native’ as a tourist by observing daily interactions among park staff and tourists’ behaviour in each park. This covert observation helped me to overcome ‘instrumental reactivity’ in that tourists/park staff might have behaved in a totally different way (socially desirable manner) if they were informed of the observer’s role. Nonetheless, this type of covert approach clearly has a

substantial threat to privacy. In pursuing the nature of my research to obtain information concerning behaviour, opinions and attitudes, it inevitably leads to an invasion of participants' privacy by concealing the researcher's role. In order to avoid this ethical dilemma inherent in research concealment, the majority of my participation in the two parks was in an overt form in that I informed the people of my role as a researcher by showing them my badge and explaining what I was studying.

I actively participated in activities and programmes organised by each park. This process was particularly important in approaching park staff in the Hong Kong Wetland Park. As noted earlier, my approval for accessing the Park was on condition, with many restrictions, for example, to conduct research in a certain area (the corner of the main entrance/exit), and I was prohibited to communicate and interact with other staff in the Park. In order to obtain inputs from various members of park staff, I attended guided tours, different handcraft workshops and public lectures. Not only did this process provide a wealth of pertinent information, it also helped to establish the building blocks upon which the latter stages of the research were based, such as to identify the interviewee portion of park staff of HKWP and to design appropriate interview questions. By interacting with park employees through various activities and programmes at HKWP, I developed informal personal relationships with four key informants. After these informants participated in my interviews, they then offered other contacts. In this way, I was able to obtain important input from the park staff's perspective which would otherwise have been unattainable.

Apart from identifying key informants of park employees at HKWP, my participation in the two parks helped me recruit interviewees from the perspective of park visitors which yielded more detailed and in-depth information on the key topics this thesis examines rather than the information

generated by participants via a random interview as mentioned above. Although both parks provide guided tours, HKWP offers free tours in two languages - English and Cantonese, while guided tours in SZWP are best depicted as 'luxury guided-tours' catering for 'wealthy' group travels with high charges (£50-£110 per group). The majority of my overt participatory presence in each park was involved in acting as a voluntary tour guide, to serve visitors who speak Mandarin from mainland China and Taiwan visiting HKWP, and to guide visitors who cannot afford the 'luxury guided-tour' at SZWP. In terms of the way to organise such tours, the participants were recruited through various queries they brought to me. As I normally spent some time conducting observation at the entry plaza of each park after I had arrived every day, park visitors of both parks always regarded me as a park member. Some visitors of SZWP complained about unclear directions shown on the park map or remarked upon the expensive guided tour. In this case, I asked them whether they would like to join a group and I would guide them around the park free of charge. When the number of participants reached five, I then started the guided tour. In fact, it was very easy to group five people together because most of the park visitors came in groups either with friends and relatives, or tour groups. In my case, two different groups of people would make up one guided tour (the smallest group was six people and the largest one was twenty-two). In terms of HKWP, I targeted the people who spoke Mandarin and approached me to ask questions. I then asked them whether they would like me to guide them around the park. Again, after the number of participants reached the figure of five, a guided tour begun.

At the end of each tour, there were always some participants who voluntarily stayed and accepted my request for further interviews. In their words, they did so to return my kindness for guiding them around the park. Each interview discussion lasted from forty minutes to one hour and a half. Compared to the

20-40 minute tourist interviews generated by a random sampling technique, the participatory tours and subsequent interviews made a complementary contribution to this research because they helped me to have sufficient time to explore tourists' needs, attitudes and motivations in detail, as well as some more personal opinions and ideas regarding the park, tourism, and development.

I made eighteen such guided tours at SZWP and ten at HKWP. In addition, my participatory observation at both parks was involved in attending various workshops/lectures and joining activities/programmes. Less structured, unscheduled participatory observation occurred frequently when I was moving about both parks and interacting with people. For example, I talked to people when having a cable-car ride to SZWP and I observed interactions between people at a souvenir shop while I was doing my own shopping at HKWP. Throughout the field trip, I always carried my notebook and a pen so that I could take notes whenever such spontaneous opportunities occurred without relying completely on memory.

For this PhD research, participatory observation was carried out throughout field visits to the two parks. Handwritten notes were taken either discreetly during the process of participatory observation or following the activity, depending on the way in which I participated. Whatever the case, in order to avoid fading of my memory of the details, notes were immediately elaborated upon and expanded into descriptive narratives and then typed into computer files on the same day as data collection. In terms of the way in which to analyse the observational data, it shares great similarities with interpreting interviews as discussed above. I performed manual coding and data analysis using paper and pens on printed-out copies of the transcriptions. The texts were read carefully and I then circled what were considered to be as key themes, key actions and key comments. A brief note of what these were had been written

besides the circling. Illuminative and important quotations were highlighted. The observational data was eventually cross-referenced with the data generated by other techniques noted above.

4.3.4. Tourist survey

A self-completed visitor survey was applied during the later stage of the research in order to gather quantitative data from a larger sampling size to complement qualitative data which had been collected by various methods described above. As Kozak (2002:223) argues: ‘The larger the sample is, the smaller the sampling error is and the more accurate the survey is’.

The questionnaire was designed in a self-completed and structured format in two types of Chinese versions⁶ (simplified and traditional Chinese versions) to collect data such as on Chinese tourists’ perceptions of nature, environmental attitudes, understanding of ecotourism, travel motivations, and activities participated in the two research sites (SZWP and HKWP). It was to further analyse how important some key topics were individually perceived and so one could find correlations and allow one to make comparisons in order to test and verify the research questions outlined in Chapter One. The questionnaire was constructed and based on a mix of input from literature review, interviews and participatory observation.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections that included a combination of multiple choice, Likert scales, and open-ended questions. Section one dealt with tourists’ perceptions and attitudes towards nature and the environment. Section

⁶ People from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan use traditional Chinese while people from mainland China use simplified Chinese.

two consisted of questions about ecotourism including tourists' understanding of the term, motivations, consumption behaviour, and the overall tourist experience. Finally, section three focused on tourists' demographic characteristics.

In order to justify the validity of the content and wording of the questionnaire, a small-sized pre-testing (thirty-seven) online questionnaire survey was conducted before the actual field work. The questionnaire was sent to my Chinese friends in various areas of China via email and required them to forward it to their friends and relatives after completion. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and to provide their comments or suggestions regarding the format, structure and context. After making corresponding revisions based on the suggestions provided by the pre-testing sample, a final edition was produced (see Appendixes 4 and 5).

The sampling frame consisted of visitors who were aged eighteen years of age or older, ethnic Chinese visitors to Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park, between May and July 2010. Two sampling techniques were adopted. Firstly, a simple random sampling technique was used so that participants were approached from main routes or exits of each research site. The first participant was chosen at random. The next person who entered the park at the end of each survey would be selected. Secondly, a purposive sampling approach was employed in which respondents were recruited from rest areas such as the entry plaza of both parks. Tourist surveys were distributed to people who were taking a rest. The latter sampling technique, in my field research, proved to be more efficient than the first method, because the researcher could reach many respondents at the same time, while the simple random sampling meant approaching respondents one by one. Two of my friends, firstly Ms. Jia Tao, kindly assisted me to conduct tourist surveys at SZWP and Ms. Lau Yue Mui helped me at HKWP. In total, there were 219 and

198 valid questionnaires were collected from SZWP and HKWP respectively.

The tourist survey data analysis was conducted in the later stage after completing the qualitative data analysis. Due to the rich data generated by the qualitative portion already, the quantitative data, as an additional part, was selectively used to mainly measure items such as percentages, frequencies and mean comparisons to supplement the qualitative section. Microsoft Excel was used to generate results.

4.4. Opportunities and constraints

Having explained the methodological tools this thesis adopted, this section discusses other factors relating to the fieldwork which created both advantages and obstacles for the completion of this research. These included positionality, approval of access, access to sensitive documents, and ethical considerations.

4.4.1. Positionality

This research was strengthened by the researcher's identity and positionality in the fieldwork. Conducting research at Shen Zhen and Hong Kong could be considered as doing research at 'home'. I was born in a city in Northern China, and had mostly grown up in mainland China, and then later moved to Hong Kong, and worked in several areas of the Northern and Southern parts of China, including Shen Zhen. I can speak two versions of Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and a few local dialects of mainland China. Since this research focused on Chinese participants, the commonality in nationality or ethnicity between me (the researcher) and the research participants would locate me as an insider in the research process.

According to Ganga and Scott (2006), it provides the researcher a degree of social proximity when conducting research within his/her own cultural community. This may have a positive effect on recruiting research participants, collecting data processes, and producing outcomes. My Chinese identity and the insider position brought me many benefits in the research process. For example, my multi-lingual knowledge (Mandarin, Cantonese, English, and some local dialects) enabled me to approach a wider range of participants. These participants included some overseas Chinese who could only understand English instead of Chinese. Some participants especially those from rural areas of mainland China could not speak Mandarin. Based on my previous work and travel experiences as well as interaction with my colleagues and local residents, I am able to understand many dialects from different regions.

In addition, due to my Chinese student identity and as one who studies in an overseas university, many park visitors volunteered to participate in my interviews after learning of my identity and research purposes. Some thought it was not easy for a Chinese student to study in an overseas institution, especially for a PhD, so they tried to contribute their knowledge and opinions through interview discussions to help with my research. Others were curious about my identity and wanted to know more about my study experiences. This occurred in both research sites. No matter for what purposes the participants agreed to voluntarily participate in my interviews, my Chinese student identity definitely located me as an insider among park visitors, which created a high degree of social proximity between me and other visitors.

Moreover, from a broad perspective, this research could be described as a journey in which I was able to gaze at Chinese ecotourism with both Chinese and Western eyes, via the lenses of both Chinese and English languages, since I am Chinese from the former British colony of Hong Kong but my education has

been in both Chinese institutions in mainland China, and Western universities in New Zealand and England. From one aspect, the Chinese voice enabled me to unveil Chinese internal forces of ecotourism practices particularly in understanding associated traditional Chinese philosophical/religious values and how these values were fashioned along with China's fast development and modernisation, which therefore helped to explore the underlying dynamics related to environmental behaviour and practices in China. From another aspect, I may act as a 'bridge-maker' to interpret Chinese environmental awareness manifested by Chinese urban ecotourism, through combined Chinese inherent cultural forces with Western development theories, with the reflexive approach, that stresses the interrelationship between Chinese society, me, and foreign audiences. This could be also considered as a potential strength of this research.

4.4.2. Approval to access research sites

Undoubtedly, the most serious problem encountered during my fieldwork, like most researchers, was gaining approval to conduct my research at the two research sites. As noted earlier, I spent a long time (around three and four weeks) and experienced a very difficult negotiation process in order to gain approval to access the two parks, in particular with the permission to access the Hong Kong Wetland Park. Not only did I encounter difficulty in gaining physical access to the two parks, I also encountered obstacles to socially access the local communities around the Shen Zhen Wetland Park, especially for *Shangping* Village that accommodates the displaced people from the site of the Park.

Although I could easily walk into the villages (*Shangping*, *Chengkeng*, and *Meisha*), most villagers refused to participate in my study, and even they stopped to talk to me after I had mentioned the OCT East Resort and SZWP. Due to some sensitivities surrounding the subjects of my research, for example, community residents' attitudes towards the policies of the state regarding the development of

the OCT East Resort, most villagers were very hesitant and self-defensive for fear of any retribution they may get if they might say the ‘wrong’ things. I failed to conduct any interview during the first four visits to *Shangping* Village and *Chenggekeng* Village.

The main reason behind this was that the villagers considered me to be a governmental official. The majority chose to keep silent whilst some of them showed resentment and even hostility toward me. In order to build trust between me and the villagers, I rented a temporary flat in *Shangping* Village. Through my daily interactions (e.g. casual chatting, watching them playing *majiang*) with locals, coupled with my showing various documents (e.g. student ID card, photos taken in the United Kingdom) whenever I had opportunities, some villagers started to show their willingness to participate in my interviews. My residence within the vicinity of the locals definitely provided an essential point of reference for others trying to understand who I was and why I was there, consequently generating a depth of contact and experience otherwise unattainable.

4.4.3. Access to sensitive documents

Along with the problem I faced in gaining approval for access to the research sites, as was anticipated, there were also some difficulties in obtaining sensitive documents which therefore challenged the credibility of data generation (Yin, 2003b). For my two case studies, it was very difficult to obtain certain information such as each park’s original strategic planning scheme, confidential executive board reports, and detailed financial statistics (e.g. actual proportion of the profit/funding to put into conservation work).

To address this problem, I adopted a roundabout method by approaching different agencies/stakeholders, in particular using important contacts with

academics and environmental governmental officials via personal networks in each city. With regard to SZWP, I was lucky to be introduced to a contact with a governmental official who works at a governmental agency based in Shen Zhen. With his help, I was able to obtain some valuable original data relating to matters, such as the planning of *Yantian* District, Shenzhen's 'Ecological Control Boundary', the development purposes and goals of the OCT East Resort, and near future development strategies and planning.

In the case of HKWP, with the assistance of a library curator of one of the universities in Hong Kong, inter-libraries database searching was extremely helpful, which allowed me to obtain many important governmental reports regarding HKWP (e.g. AFCD, the Audit Commission), and useful local universities' academic dissertations relating to the urban development and environmental policy in Hong Kong. Particularly when triangulated with other data, this indirect approach to gain the required documents on the two parks provided significant input to my research.

4.4.4. Ethical considerations

Ethical concern exists in almost all types of research in which a researcher needs to make ethical decisions throughout the whole research process, such as data collection techniques, data analysis processes, and the dissemination of results (Luxardo *et al.*, 2011). Regarding human geography, there are heated debates on ethical considerations which have contained wider social and political interests, and are therefore a vital part of research (Katz, 1994; Valentine, 2005; Roberts, 2007).

This thesis, in fact, has reflected ethical, social and political considerations as a piece of social science research in light of the researcher's own orientations, procedures, and practices in carrying out the research. This thesis was involved

in assessing intensive personal opinions towards various subjects, for example, the questions like how those displaced indigenous villagers of *Shangping* Village around SZWP perceived the role of the state government in developing the area, and what the two parks' funding sources and distribution proportion towards conservation in particular with SZWP were. All these kinds of essential data could be sensitive topics impacting on both data accessibility and ethical positioning.

To address the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced in this thesis, an informed consent agreement was given to all participants to give their consent in agreeing to participate in the study or not, as it is a common practice that the social sciences fulfil the ethical requirement of research by informed consent (Richardson and McMullan, 2007). According to Kent (2000:81): 'Consent is needed to protect the important ethical principal of autonomy - the right to exercise self-determination'.

This thesis adopted Sin's (2005) approach to the different types of informed consent - a written consent and an oral consent. A written consent letter, in many countries, is a standard procedure in research and is considered as the best way to protect the interests of the participants by signing it as a legal document. However, to ask participants to sign a written consent letter did not facilitate the interview/tourist survey process, rather it created obstacles for my research. In particular with participants from mainland China and local communities around SZWP, they feared that they would have to abide by legal obligations and commitments by signing a written consent. As noted above, local villagers around SZWP had already been very self-defensive and suspicious about my appearance in their village even without asking them to sign the document. As anticipated, all local participants from the three villages around SZWP refused to sign the consent letter except the head of *Meisha*

Village. In this case, an oral consent was offered and I asked them at the beginning of the interview whether I was authorised to ask them questions. Most of tourist participants who come from mainland China just agreed to participate in my research if they did not need to sign any documents. Nevertheless, whenever possible, the participant was required to sign a written consent. For people who refused to sign, and for illiterate participants, oral consent was provided to constitute an alternative to written consent. Accordingly, most participants requested to be anonymous, so only related socio-demographic information was provided to ensure the confidentiality of the information participants offered. The participants were described as ‘SZWP informant’ and ‘HKWP informant’ followed by numbers. Some respondents such as site level park managers, employees and outsiders (e.g. other parks’ staff, tourism/environmental officials at each city) were given a pseudonym. When such anonymity was not requested, for example, personal names are publicly mentioned in documents and websites, the practice of disclosure based on open citation were applied.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodology that was adopted in this thesis. A detailed explanation about various methods was provided coupled with the reasons for those choices. It also offered site selection rationales for Shen Zhen and Hong Kong as well as SZWP and HKWP. A case study approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques (documentary reviews, semi-structured interviews, participatory observation and tourist survey questionnaires) which formed triangulation, was deployed to gather data to assess the issues related to Chinese environmental awareness through evaluating the contribution of three conceptual approaches to the two case studies: SZWP and HKWP. This methodological procedure provided a logical and explicit guide throughout the

research process, and both the opportunities and obstacles accompanying the research were identified in the last part of the Chapter.

Before turning to a detailed assessment on empirical works relating to SZWP and HKWP (Chapters Six and Seven), the next chapter introduces the necessary background to the empirical studies, that selectively addresses China's environmental policy and practices, nature conservation strategies and urban development philosophies with a particular focus on the two study areas.

Chapter Five: Chinese Development and Environmental Policy

This chapter provides a selective overview of China's policy on development, the environment, and associated situations in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. This is a necessary background for the two case studies - Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park. This background information aims to enhance the understanding of the underlying influence of political-economic contexts of the two case study destinations on related environmental awareness through an introduction of ideas, decisions and actions made pertaining to China's urban (eco)tourism development. Therefore, this chapter sets the scene for the empirical and analytical narrative that follows in later chapters.

It begins by discussing the evolution of China's environmental policy, including the development of nature conservation strategies since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (5.1). The discussion illustrates how China's policy on the environment has been changed along with its economic development from 1949 to present. These factors together are expected to provide an overall background of the evolution and the development of China's ecotourism. Essential information on Shen Zhen is then provided, with an emphasis on its short but dramatic development history (5.2). It gives a clue with which to understand the way in which Shen Zhen Wetland Park is established and developed. In a parallel context, the history of Hong Kong's environmental policy along with its urbanised development are discussed in 5.3, which provides a general background for the reasons and purposes of building the Hong Kong Wetland Park.

5.1. The evolution of China's environmental policy

Burgeoning environmental literature on China reveals growing concern over how the environment is coping with the unprecedented rates of economic development. This section shall give a synopsis of the evolution of environmental policy since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, particularly as it relates to nature conservation, and will try to understand Chinese environmental behaviour and experiences along with the investigation of the development of Chinese ecotourism. Overall, Chinese environmental policy since 1949 can be broadly divided into three stages: the early years of indifference, the awakening years of domestic environmental movements, and the years of adopting a sustainable development strategy.

5.1.1. The early years of indifference of environmental protection and pro-active for economic growth (1949-1976)

During this early period of time from 1949 to 1976 (also known as the 'Mao Era'), it can be seen that generally, environmental protection measures were almost absent, although some efforts were made to improve public health and sanitation (Boxer, 1992). To use Glaeser's term, it is 'environmental hygiene' (*huan jing wei sheng*) (Glaeser, 1990:249). It was based on the Soviet-style model. In order to achieve modernity, societies had to be urbanised and industrialised. Cities therefore became engines for maximising production. The concept of 'environmental hygiene' was applied particularly in Chinese cities to improve medical care and to offer clean water as well as to create efficient working conditions, essentially to provide a focus on achieving economic efficiency (Edmonds, 1994).

The Great Leap Forward, starting from 1958, further highlighted the significance of economic growth in the country's policy agenda, with a priority

of developing domestic steel production over all other sectors. The backyard furnaces for steel production became the most notable phenomenon, springing up all over the country, from Beijing to the rural areas. As a result, such radical exploitation of natural resources, such as intensive mining and deforestation to fuel these steel furnaces, led to considerable environmental destruction (Edmonds, 1994; Wu and Flynn, 1995).

From the mid-1960s, the environment was further neglected because of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This period of time may best be described as the ‘national political combat’, in that political goals were the focus of the country’s agenda, supplemented by the emphasis on the output of industry, regardless of the environmental impacts. The agricultural policy focused on ‘taking grain as the key link’ and there was a lack of control over the exploitation of wildlife, resulting in substantial land and natural resource deterioration (Edmonds, 1994).

From the beginning of 1970s, along with the weakening of the Maoist political combat and the acknowledgement that severe environmental damage occurred in the past, there then emerged China’s initial effort to incorporate environmental concerns into the China’s development. In 1972, China sent a delegation to the First United Nations Conference on the Human Environment Conference held in Stockholm. This marked a milestone in China’s domestic environmentalism (Wu and Fynn, 1995). In 1973, environmental policy became included in the national plan, which was marked by the holding of the First National Environmental Protection Conference as well as the founding of the National Environmental Protection Agency (Edmonds, 1994). During most of the years in the 1970s, China’s initial practice with which to protect the environment was concentrated on the treatment of pollution from industries, referred to the ‘Three Wastes /*Sanfei*’ campaign, which included waste water,

waste gas, and solid waste (Zhang and Wen, 2007).

With respect to nature conservation during the Mao Era, although some measures were attempted, for example, the establishment of the first nature reserve in 1956 - the *Dinghu* Mountain Nature Reserve - was proposed by scientists with the aim of designating scientific research for the work of protection of natural resources at the Third Plenum of the First People's Congress in 1956 (Wang *et al.*, 1989). It was not until the beginning of the 1970s, with the weakening of the 'Maoist political combat', the passing of the 'Provisional Articles for Nature Reserves' in 1973, and the formulating plans for the establishment of nature reserves by the State Council in 1975 (Wang *et al.*, 1989), it marked the sign of China's integration of the concept of nature conservation into the government's policy framework.

5.1.2. The awakening years of the importance of environmental protection and nature conservation (1976-1990)

Since the late 1970s, particularly with the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's 'open-door' policy, the economic reforms from which altered China's planned economy to that of a market-oriented system, environmental protection has been considered as an important component of China's modernisation process. On the one hand, an environmental protection regime was developed, with reference to establishing environmental protection institutions, formulating state-driven environmental laws and regulations. On the other hand, tremendous urbanisation processes were proceeded with as the city was considered as the engine of growth with which to propel national economic development.

In 1983, the State Council of China announced that environmental protection

and population control were the two basic national policies, which constituted some of the most important components of Deng's new strategy of economic and social development (Zhang and Wen, 2008). This was followed by formulating a series of environmental policies, which included prevention rather than 'end-of-pipe' treatment, for example, conducting environmental impact studies before carrying out new development projects; adopting environmentally-sensitive technology for industrial and agricultural sectors; and increasing the liability and responsibility of polluters (the polluter pays' policy) (Qu and Li, 1994).

Accordingly, during this period of time, there was also a gradual improvement in the work of nature conservation. Apart from increasing the number of nature reserves, corresponding institutions, laws and regulations were formulated with a particular focus on protecting and managing wildlife. By 1980 there was a significant reduction in the numbers of wildlife, especially for rare and near extinction species, since wild animals were only valued from their economic returns (Greer and Doughty, 1976). Edmonds (1994) commented that China's effort in protecting wildlife lagged far behind the leading nations because the total area of nature reserves only accounted for 0.17 percent of the national territory in 1980.

The Ministry of Forestry and the China Wildlife Conservation Association were set up in the early 1980s to control import and export of endangered species. In 1985, The State Council approved the 'Regulations for Administration of Forest and Wildlife Conservation Areas' which were promoted and publicised by the Ministry of Forestry (China Forest Year Book, 1987). In November 1988 the government issued China's first Wildlife Conservation Law which stipulated details of regulation on administration and penalties (China.org, 2012).

In the meantime, the launching of economic reforms was also accompanied by a rapid urban transformation. China is probably one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world (World Bank, 1997). In 1949, China's urban population was only fifty-seven million, accounting for 10.6 percent of the total population of the country. The urban population rate was lower than the world average, so it indicated that China was a typical agrarian country (The State of China's cities, 2010/12). In 1978, the urbanisation level rose to eighteen percent, while nearly half of the country's total population lived in cities by 2010 (Xinhuan New, 2011).

Prior to 1978, China was preoccupied by the political movement and the class struggle, so China's economic development was far behind that of the leading nations. Since the introduction of economic reforms, the Chinese government has been eager to transform China into a fully developed industrial country. The promotion of urbanisation became one of the key strategies with which to achieve its economic goals. In addition, in order to increase the number of cities in China (132 in 1949, 193 in 1978 and 654 in 2009) (the State of China's cities, 2010/12), the creation of Chinese Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the early 1980s, such as Shen Zhen (one of the key study areas in this thesis which embraces the case study - SZWP), were regarded as China's 'laboratories' for testing the transition from a planned to a market-based economy, as well as seeking industrialisation and modernity. Explicit discussion on Shen Zhen will be found in the section 5.3. From the period of 1976 to 1990, it can be seen that economic development, with a focus on rapid urbanisation, dominated China's policy although the Chinese government showed 'awakening' concern to China's environment and nature conservation.

5.1.3. The years of adopting a sustainable development strategy (1990 to present)

China's fast urbanisation and industrialisation, accompanied by a large-scale rural-urban migration since 1978, has brought a series of socio-cultural and environmental problems. There appears an uneven economic distribution between different areas in China and a big gap in incomes between urban and rural residents. For example, southeast coastal areas, in which economic reforms were first initiated, show more development and are wealthier than the western areas which account for the majority of the country's total landmass (seventy percent) but most regions are struggling with poverty.

Due to the rapid expansion of city development, many agricultural lands were encroached upon and then converted to urban areas so that peasants had to abandon their traditional livelihoods to turn to the manufacturing sectors for job opportunities (Li and Piachaud, 2006). Population densities in highly developed cities remain remarkably high. For example, in the late 1990s, the population density in some downtown areas of Tianjin was around 50,000 and 60,000 persons per square kilometre and over 80,000 persons per square kilometre in central Shanghai (Chan and Yao, 1999). In contrast, the population density of urban New York City and Tokyo was 9,109 and 15,600 persons per square kilometre respectively in the late 1990s (Yeung and Lo, 1998).

As a result, the conflict between the high demand and the severe shortage of urban land has been increasingly intensified especially in the eastern coastal regions since the 1990s. Behind this conflict, land use structure is dominated by urban construction with a high proportion of industrial and commercial land use, whereas public amenity, green spaces, and conservational areas are saliently inefficient. This, as a consequence, leads to a series of environmental problems

such as air pollution, traffic congestion, noise, and urban heat island effects (Liu and Saline, 2005) as well as social-cultural issues such as the loss of cultural/historical heritage and alteration of traditional lifestyles of community residents.

To cope with these problems, in responding to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, China adjusted its environmental policy by adopting a sustainable development strategy with the publishing of China's Agenda 21 in 1994 (Wu and Flynn, 1995; Zhang and Wen, 2008). It is a White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century and serves as a critical document to guide the country's social and economic development (NDRC, 2007). Following this, a more comprehensive policy framework is developed and constructed, aiming to balance economic growth with environmental protection. This can be seen from an increasingly formulated set of environmental policies, laws and regulations (Table 3).

Table 3. Key decisions and plans on China's environment and development

YEAR	Decisions and plans
1992	The China's Ten Strategic Policies on Environment and Development announced that China would adopt the sustainable development strategy
1993	The 2 nd National Conference on the Prevention and Control of Industrial Pollution proposed the notion of "Three Shifts" (1) Shift from end-of-pipe treatment to whole-process control (2) Shift from concentration control to both concentration and total amount control (3) Shift from scattered treatment to a combination of scatter treatment and centralised treatment
1994	China's Agenda 21
1995	China sought to achieve two fundamental transformations: (1) From planning economy to socialist market economy (2) From extensive to intensive economic growth mode
1996	● The National People's Congress approved the Ninth Five- Year Plan for State Economic and Social Development and

	<p>Long-Term Objectives for 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The State Council convened the 4th National Conference on Environmental Protection and issued the Decisions on a Number of Environmental Issues
1997	Circular on Further Strengthening the Land Management to Ensure the Conservation of Cultivated Land Report on China's Situation of Biodiversity
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plotting Programs for Acid Rain Control Region and SO₂ Control Region ● National Ecological Restoration Plan ● Circular on Protecting Forest, Banning Felling to Reclaim Wasteland and Occupying Woodland ● Circular on Stopping the Production and Sales Gasoline Containing Lead
1999	Law on Marine Environment was revised and promulgated Circular on the Collection of Wastewater Treatment Fees and the Establishment of Urban Pollution Discharge and Centralised Treatment was issued
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Law on the Prevention and Control of Air Pollution was amended for the 2nd time ● The Western Great Development Strategy emphasised the importance of infrastructure construction and ecological conservation
2001	The Tenth Five-Year Plan and Sectoral Plans
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Law on the Safety Production ● Law on Desert Prevention and Transformation
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Law on the Promotion of Cleaner Production ● Law on the Environmental Impact Assessment ● Law on Radioactive Pollution Prevention and Control
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Law on Administrative Permission ● Interim Measures on Administrative Permission Hearings for Environmental Protection
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Law on the Promotion of Renewable Energy ● The State Council issued the Decision on Enforcement of Scientific Concept of Development and Environmental Protection Works ● The State Council issued the Interim Provisions on Promoting Adjustment to Industrial Structure ● SEPA issued the Measures on Preventing and Controlling Environmental Pollution due to Disused Hazardous Chemicals
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SEPA jointly issued Interim Measures on Public Participation for Environmental Impact Assessment ● The Ministry of Supervision and the State Environmental

	Protection Administration jointly issued the Interim Provisions on Administration of punishing illegal behaviours for Environmental Protection ● The State Environmental Protection Administration and the National Bureau of Statistics jointly issued the China's Green GDP 2004
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(Source: Zhang and Wen, 2008:1251)

Prior to the 1990s, it can be seen that the key emphasis on the environment was that of combating environmental pollution such as pollution of air, water, and waste whilst nature conservation was given lower priority. Nevertheless, from the late 1990s, the importance of nature conservation was further addressed by the Chinese government who promoted the principle of 'devoting equal attention to pollution control and ecological conservation' (Zhang and Wen, 2008:1251). A number of related policies were formulated and practised which can be described as 'integrated planning, active protection, scientific management and sustainable use' for natural resources and the environment (SPC, 1994). One salient result was that the number and area of nature reserves increased rapidly. By 1991 there were 708 nature reserves covering 5.6 percent of China's national territory (Jing, 1993) compared with covering just 0.17 percent of the national territory in 1980 (Edmonds, 1994). Up to 2011, 2,640 protected areas of various kinds and levels were established, occupying about fifteen percent of the country's land territory (China News, 2012).

Along with the adoption of a sustainable development strategy, there has also emerged so-called 'eco-fashion' or 'eco-phenomenon' in China such as ecotourism, eco-cities, eco-society, and eco-communities. Among them, urban ecotourism, as discussed in Chapter One, is promoted by the Chinese government as an integral component of eco-city development, demonstrating how an urban-based tourism project can balance the conflicts between nature conservation and economic growth.

The concept of the eco-city, according to White (2002:3), it is defined as ‘A city that provides an acceptable standard of living for human occupants without depleting the ecosystems and biochemical cycles on which it depends’. It has been vigorously promoted by the Chinese government in the past two decades to address and cope with particular issues regarding China’s rapid urban development and for the well-being of urban nature. Shen Zhen, in recently years, has also made efforts in transforming itself into an eco-city.

Although it shows that there have been significant improvements in China’s environmental policy framework since the 1990s, it seems that a big implementation gap exists between the political prescriptions and day-to-day practices. One of the key reasons is rooted in the conventional value that a priority is placed on economic growth, or, in an improved value, that economic growth stimulates environmental protection.

Higher incomes per head, higher tax revenues and more jobs are given precedence over environmental protection. The idea of sustainable growth in terms of preserving the capacity of the economy to provide better standards of living for the youth of today and for successive generations, has failed to take root with those in authority in most provinces, cities and counties. (MacBean, 2007:300)

At the local and municipal level, the career trajectories of environmental/governmental officials tend to tie-in primarily as to how well their region meets their primary political goals. These goals are currently measured by economic terms. In addition, low levels of central financial support have forced many regions/cities to seek revenues in any way possible, even based on substantial environmental costs.

With respect to conservation work in nature reserves, there also exists many problems. Firstly, due to the insufficient knowledge of nature conservation of some agencies and regions, it results in a disparity between the objectives of establishing reserves and the actual inputs in management. Secondly, the establishment of natural reserves is inclined to be quantity-based rather than quality-based, leading to large numbers of nature reserves but which are accompanied by poor conservation management and practices (Zhang and Wen, 2008). Currently, the majority of nature reserves in mainland China, as long as they are open for tourists, are inclined to profit-making, so that 'nature' has become a commodity and has been consumed in various ways.

The third problem lies in severe conflicts between the establishment of nature reserves and the rights of local communities. The local communities are almost excluded from accessing the natural resources after the natural reserves are designated and established. In the meantime, the lack of the financial ability of the local governments to provide redress has led to insufficient compensation for the losses of the local residents. These result in increasingly conflictive relations between nature reserves' developers and the local communities (Yan and David, 2004). Zhang and Wen (2008:1252) advocate that: 'it is crucial to establish a new management model for Chinese protected areas to balance the relationship between development, protection and local rights'.

In summary, China's environmental policy has undergone three key stages. During the early period (1949 -1976), the government paid little attention to environmental protection because of being preoccupied by a series of cultural and political movements. Since the late 1970s, particularly with the introduction of the economic reforms, it has shown a growing concern by the government to the serious environmental impacts caused by the earlier inappropriate developments. The government has started to change the environmental policy

by linking environmental protection into economic development, which includes a gradual improvement in the field of nature conservation. China's environmental policy has grown and become a more complex and integrated framework since the 1990s, by adopting a sustainable development strategy. Despite these improvements and transformations over the past several decades, China's policies on environment and development still cannot fully reflect a sustainable development approach because of the continuous priority given to economic growth. Many scholars observe that, due to the failure of balancing the trend of a deteriorating environment with rapid economic growth, there are many impediments and challenges to be faced by China to fully realise sustainable development (e.g. Wu and Flynn, 1995; Wen, 2005; Zhang and Wen, 2008) .

5.2. Shen Zhen: the rapid urban development context

Having discussed the evolution of China's policy on development and the environment in the national context, the focus now turns to the case of Shen Zhen, to assess its environmental concerns along with its rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. This information provides the essential background to understand how Shen Zhen's environmental policies and urban development strategies shape Chinese environment-related behaviour in particular within the context of urban (eco)tourism development. Shen Zhen Wetland Park is then discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Shen Zhen is located in south China, bordering the Pearl River to the west, Dongguan city and Huizhou city to the north, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to the south (Qi and Lu, 2008). Shen Zhen Municipality today consists of two administrative components - the Shen Zhen Special Economic Zone (SSEZ) which is located in the coastal area of Shen Zhen

Municipality, lying immediately to the north of Hong Kong, including four districts (*Nanshan*, *Futian*, *Luohu* and *Yantian*), and covering 327.5 square kilometres; and the other component of Shen Zhen Municipality is outside of SSEZ and which contains *Baoan* District and *Longgang* District (Figure 4) (Ng, 2002). As the fastest growing city in mainland China, Shen Zhen has experienced an incredible speed of growth within the last thirty years.

Figure 4. Shen Zhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and *Baoan* District and *Longgang*



(Source: Ng, 2002:42)

Separated from Hong Kong only by a river, ‘Shen Zhen River’, Shen Zhen was once a small farming town facing the north of prosperous Hong Kong. It was established as a city in 1979 with an initial population of 30,000 and a built-up area of only about three square kilometres (Qi and Lu, 2008). But now the previous tiny farming village has been thoroughly transformed into a modern metropolis with a population of ten million (Guangdong Statistics Bureau, 2011), expanding to an area of 2020 square kilometres.

From 1996 to 2006, real GDP for Shen Zhen increased by almost four hundred

percent, which enabled the city to become fourth richest in the country (State Statistical Bureau, various years, cited in Guneralp and Seto, 2008). Combined with economic opportunities in one of the coastal regions and increased industrial and commercial activities, Shen Zhen has become a migrant city accommodating large-scale migrations from all over China, and which ranks second only to Beijing in that it embraces all fifty-six Chinese nationalities. As a consequence, the city is characterised as a vibrant, innovative and multi-cultural society.

As China's first 'laboratory' for the transition from a central-planned economy to a free-market economy, Shen Zhen Special Economic Zone (SSEZ) was established in 1980 as an experiment to attract foreign capital, to adopt advanced technology and management skills, to foster domestic economic linkages, and to incorporate the modernist development model (Bruton *et al.*, 2005). Jenkins terms this official promotion of 'cowboy capitalism' (Jenkin, 2008:156). Consequently, Shen Zhen has accomplished an unprecedented example in the history of urban development for China in the light of its rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and modernisation. Parallel to this, the fast economic development processes have given rise to a series of environmental concerns, such as the conversion of agricultural land to urban use, encroachment upon the natural environment, deterioration in the ecological balance, and the increase of CO₂ and heat island effects.

The creation of Shen Zhen can be argued, on the one hand, as testing a Chinese approach to achieve modernity by adopting a market-orientated economic system, and, on the other hand, by showcasing the incorporation of environmental protection into economic development processes. As discussed earlier, environmental protection starting from its early years of neglect has been transformed as an important component of China's modernisation process since

the introduction of the ‘open-door’ policy in 1978.

Shen Zhen, as well as a few other cities, was initially promoted to adopt the concepts of an eco-city, circular economy, low-carbon lifestyles, and the recently emerging urban (eco)tourism phenomenon. In 1997, China’s State Environmental Protection Agency awarded the city the title of the ‘First National Model City for Environmental Protection’. In 2002, Shen Zhen received the award of the ‘Global 500 Roll of Honour’ from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) based on its achievement in both economic and environmental gains (UNEP, 2002, cited in Liu *et al.*, 2007).

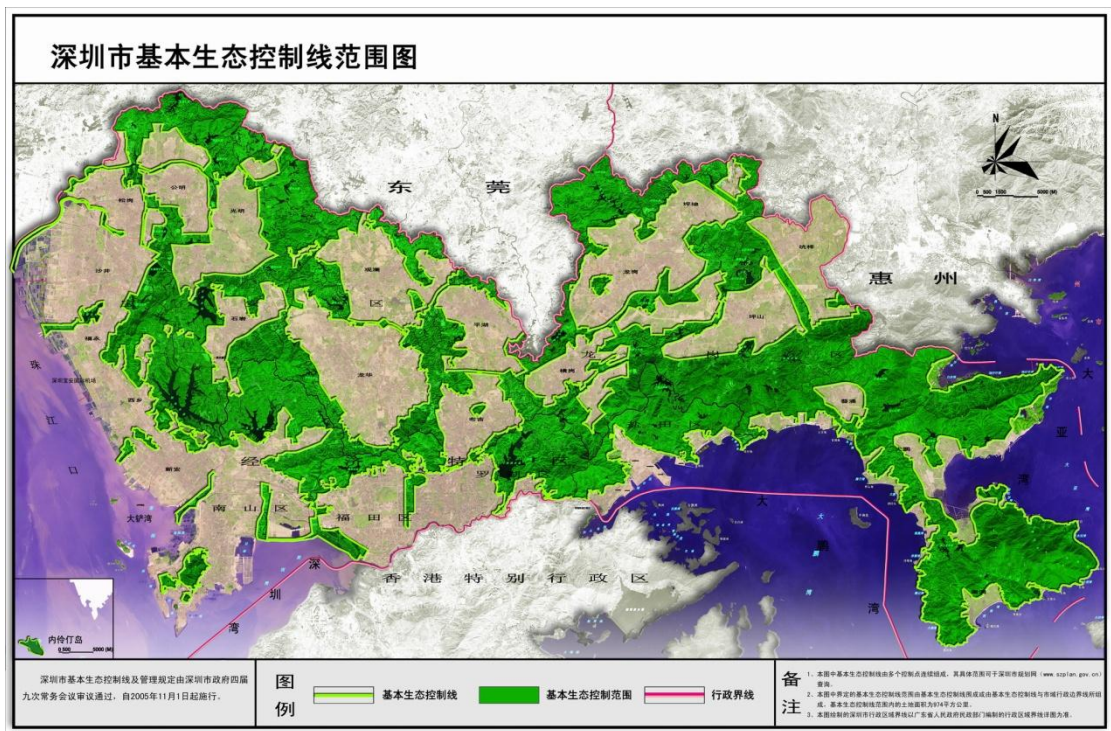
To avoid over urbanisation and maintain the city’s ecological balance, Shen Zhen is the first city in China to have identified a basic ecological control boundary⁷ and issuing of the Ordain of Shenzhen Basic Ecological Control Line in 2005 (Figure 5) (SZPL, 2012). The Ordain designates nearly half of the land area of Shen Zhen under its protection, and aims to secure the urban ecosystem, and in principle to ensure that exploitive activities are strictly prohibited within the protective boundary (SZEO, 2007).

However, Shen Zhen has also suffered an intensive tension between short-term economic benefits and long-term environmental gains which commonly exists among other rapidly developed and urbanised cities in China. When economic gains and environmental protection are in conflict, the latter always comes subordinate to the former. There is a significant implementation gap between a government-designated ‘protective area’ (Ecological Control Boundary) and its

⁷ ‘In order to protect water sources and other ecologically sensitive areas, to guarantee basic ecological security, and prevent disorderly spreading city construction, Shen Zhen issued a statutory plan and the basic ecological control boundary in 2005, in order to stipulate the nature of land uses and guide and control the development intensity’ (SZEO, 2007:139).

actual practices.

Figure 5. The Scope of Shen Zhen’s Basic Ecological Control Boundary



(Green areas are under protection) (Source: SZPL, 2012)

Taking the Mission Hills golf course in Shen Zhen as an example, with world-class pretensions and being China’s highest rated golf and tourist resort, it is located right inside the ‘Ecological Control Boundary’. Besides the proverbially negative impacts on the environment and biological system of the golf course itself, its ancillary commercial merchandising, such as five-star hotels, spas, shopping centre, and tourist attractions has also brought destructive environmental consequences (Zacharia and Tang, 2010). In this sense, it is a serious abuse of the aims of the ‘Ecological Control Boundary’, virtually privatising former public green land for the enjoyment of elite classes.

Combining the desire to give Shen Zhen citizens access nature along with the opening up more spaces for urban development, this led to the development of

the OCT East Tourism Resort which contains one of the core case studies of this thesis - Shen Zhen Wetland Park. The OCT East is located in *Yantian* district. This district was developed much slower than the western parts of Shen Zhen due to its geographical inaccessibility regarding its mountainous terrain, but it embraces significant ecological, cultural and recreational assets for Shen Zhen.

With the opening up a second public highway in 2008, the district has been developed as one of most important tourist destinations and one of the most expensive areas in Shen Zhen. The OCT East Resort, as one of pillar industries of the District, has made considerable contributions to local development. However, the Resort is also deeply located inside the 'Ecological Control Boundary' and close to one of Shen Zhen's largest domestic water reservoirs (*Sanzhoutian* reservoir). Moreover, since the District was opened up, various developments have been springing up such as tourism, high-tech industry, real estate, hotel groups, and shopping malls. According to Zacharia and Tang (2010), once an area is opened up for development, the government's policy framework shows insufficient power to control and prevent undesired development of the natural resources.

The examples of the Mission Hills golf course and the OCT East Resort demonstrate the government's dilemma in maintaining a ban on urban development within the 'Ecological Control Boundary'. In most of the cases, the government would compromise environmental costs to promote local economic growth. Zacharia and Tang (2010) suggest designating the entire 'Ecological Control Boundary' as an urban park, without any commercialisation, to solve the implementation problem between the government's legislation and actual practices. However, this proposal seems unlikely to take place in the near future because of the continuous expansion of urbanisation in Shen Zhen and the people's pursuit of material prosperity. The next sections focus on the situation

in Hong Kong.

5.3. Hong Kong's environmental policy

Situated on China's south coast and adjoining Shen Zhen (Figure 6), Hong Kong is renowned for its impressive urban landscape such as its densely packed skyscrapers. With seven million people squeezing into an area of only 1,108 square kilometers, Hong Kong is regarded as one of the most densely populated areas in the world (Jim, 2008b). Given the majority of the land of Hong Kong is unsuitable for human habitation (around seventy percent of the land mass is non built-up area including grasslands, woodlands, shrub lands and wetlands) (Planning Department, 2009), the population density is even greater than one could imagine. For example, the population density has reached over 100,000 people per square kilometre in some of the older districts of Kowloon such as Mongkok (Hong Kong Government, 1996).

Figure 6. Location of Hong Kong



(Source: <http://www.johomaps.com/as/china/guangdong/pearldelta.jpg>)

Urban Hong Kong is therefore often considered as a ‘concrete jungle’. Since the birth of Hong Kong as a British colony in the 1840s, urban expansion has been beset by a shortage of land suitable for building. Due to the fast growth of the population combined with limited developable land, land reclamation has long been adopted as a key urban development strategy by Hong Kong (Jim, 1987; Ng and Cook, 1997). This strategy includes reclamation from the sea and conversion of previous rural land into commercial or residential areas. The latter approach is also called the ‘New Town Development’. Nevertheless, around forty percent of the land area is reserved as country parks and nature reserves (HKTb, 2012). We will now focus on assessing how Hong Kong’s government resolves the vexed relationship between urban sprawl and environmental protection, especially with such scarce land for building development

Hong Kong governmental approach to development and the environment, in the light of environmental policies and strategies introduced and implemented, along with its substantial improvements in real incomes and living standards over the past several decades, can be generally divided into three stages. Each stage has its own features and contributes to the overall picture of environmental development in Hong Kong. These three stages are: (1) Pollution control and the raising of concerns for conservation (1959-1980); (2) The change towards the planning stage and the incorporation of Ecological Modernisation (1980-1997); and (3) Engaging with sustainable development (1997 to present).

5.3.1. Stage One: Pollution control and the raising concerns for conservation (1959-1980)

The first stage in the evolution of environmental protection was marked by its first piece of environmental legislation, the 'Clean Air Ordinance', which was enacted in 1959 (Reed, 1988; Jim, 1991), parallel to the promulgation of the 'Clean Air Act' in the United Kingdom. The two pieces of legislation proclaimed the same objectives as a means to control air pollution although there was revealed a slightly different focus on particular pollution issues. For example, dark smoke emissions from fossil fuel combustion was the key focus in Hong Kong whilst smog control in London showed the key concerns for the United Kingdom (Reed, 1988; Shan, 2004).

As a colony of the United Kingdom, the scope and content of the environmental policy in Hong Kong was significantly influenced by its 'parent' administration in the United Kingdom such as the enactment of the 'Clean Air Ordinance'. During this period, colonial government was also seen as the major stakeholder in shaping the policies and programmes on environmental issues.

Later in the 1970s, with the establishment of a wide range of government agencies and institutions, such as the Air Pollution Control Unit in 1970, the Advisory Committee on Pollution on Land and Water in 1972, and the Environmental Protection Unit in 1977 (Jim, 1991), pollution controls have gone beyond the previous focus of concentrating solely on air pollution to include other types such as noise and water controls.

Aside from taking measures to cope with pollution problems, the initial conservation idea was formulated to protect and promote fish and other types of aquatic life within the marine environment in Hong Kong, leading to the enactment of the 'Fisheries Protection Ordinance' in 1962 (Hong Kong Government, 1962). In the meantime, the idea of preserving the countryside emerged due to the fast population growth, urban encroachment and

inappropriate recreational use of the countryside during the 1960s (Jim, 1986). This idea of countryside protection was then followed by establishing a range of agencies and institutions to help build the foundation for subsequent implementation of administrative and legislative measures in the process of nature conservation and outdoor recreation.

The various agencies and institutions included the Provisional Council for the Use and Conservation of the Countryside in 1967, the Advisory Committee for Recreational Development and Nature Conservation in 1970 (Hong Kong Government, 1973; Jim, 1986; Jim, 1989), and the Country Parks Authority and the Country Parks Board in 1976 (Hong Kong Government, 1977). The enactment of the Country Parks Ordinance in 1976, stipulating a legal framework for the designation, management and development of Country Parks and Protected Areas (Hong Kong Government, 1977), perhaps indicated the emerging concept of 'sustainable development' in Hong Kong, which aimed to open up the countryside for amenity/tourism usage by the community and visitors while still providing for its appropriate conservation and protection for future generations.

During this period, the government also recognised the importance of promoting public awareness of environmental issues and of encouraging the general public to be involved in environmental protection. This consciousness was marked by the launching of the first environmental campaign programme, 'Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign' in 1972 by the Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign Committee. This campaign mobilised the community's involvement through promoting an awareness of keeping a clean living environment in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Government, 1973).

The other environmental campaign programme, the 'World Environment Day'

(WED)⁸, was organised by the Hong Kong government in 1978. This campaign indicated that Hong Kong took a further step to coordinate and respond to international environmental activities in the local community. Consequently, the Conservancy Association of Hong Kong launched the 'Hong Kong Environmental Festival' from June to September 1978, aiming to translate the concepts and ideas derived from WED into public practice and actions in the context of Hong Kong (Wong, 1996).

During this early period between 1959 and 1980, it can be observed that the government played a leading role in shaping the environmental policies and programmes in Hong Kong while other stakeholders such as non-governmental groups (NGOs), private sectors, and local communities were excluded from the environmental policy making process. The environmental agenda was focused on tackling pollution problems, notably air, water, and noise. In the meantime, there was the start of concern about nature conservation and the realising of the importance of raising environmental awareness among the citizens.

Nonetheless, some criticisms arose that the government played a passive role in environmental issues without actually undertaking proactive measures. This might be because the colonial government was preoccupied with more pressing issues aroused by the influx of immigrants from mainland China between the 1950s and 1960s. The improvement of living standards and the increase from a low level of per capita income were given the priority in the policy agenda. The general public at that time had little environmental concerns whilst they were preoccupied by fulfilling material needs (Jim, 1991). Therefore, this time

⁸ This programme was originally introduced in 1972 and was sponsored annually on 5th June by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Environment Liaison Center (ELC) at Nairobi. The ELC invited Hong Kong for the first time to participate in WED 1978 (Wong, 1996).

period was found to be development-orientated and much of the government's effort was focused on passively correcting the mistakes made in the past but did not prevent the possible environmental problems before they occurred.

5.3.2. Stage Two: The change towards the planning stage and the incorporation of Ecological Modernisation (1980-1997)

A major step in environmental protection was taken forward in 1985 when an 'Environmental Chapter' was incorporated into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) (Chan, 2002). It comprises detailed environmental planning and guidelines in sections on quality of water and air, management of noise and waste, urban landscape and rural environment (Hills, 1988). The incorporation of an 'Environmental Chapter' into the HKPSG indicated the government's commitment to apply environmental concerns to the planning stage of land uses by enhancing the role of HKPSG in providing corresponding planning standards and guidelines (Hill, 1988; Shan, 2004).

From the beginning of 1980s, the key feature of the environmental policies reflected that the principles of Ecological Modernisation have been embedded into the policy process. This trait can be observed from three perspectives.

Firstly, there were indications of a move away from a 'command-and-control', 'end-of-pipe' regulatory regime to a more market-orientated mechanism of instruments and incentives. Examples included the first application of the 'polluter-pays' policy with the introduction of domestic sewage, wastewater treatment, and landfill charges in the 1990s (Hills and Barron, 1997; Welford *et al.*, 2006).

Secondly, there was growing evidence of incorporating science and technology into environmental planning and development. For example, a series of mathematical models were deployed to predict environmental impacts of development proposals including local planning issues and specific development projects (Reed, 1985a). Other examples included the promotion of green technologies regarding waste reduction, recycling and energy efficiency.

Thirdly, there has emerged a green environmental movement since the 1990s particularly with the increasing importance of environmental NGOs. This can be seen from changing the role of 'green groups' from 'outsider' to 'insider' in environmental policy making processes. Since the 1990s, the green groups have been formally incorporated into the government's policy-making process. Their members were appointed to sit on different policy advisory boards, such as the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE), the Council's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Sub-committees, and the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) (Hung, 1997).

Besides this, a major step forward in the provision of financial support for green group activities was marked by the establishment of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) in the mid-1990s. The ECF provided grants to the environmental NGOs for research projects and environmental education and community-based activities. With the financial support from the ECF, it has significantly enhanced the capability of the environmental NGOs to conduct relative environmental campaigns and projects (Hills, 2002).

Although there was a trend that environmental groups had started to be incorporated into environmental policy making processes since the 1990s, some argued that these groups had weak links with local communities. Besides the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong (WWFHK) which had regular

visitors, such as bird-watchers and students, to their education centres of Mai Po and Tai Po, other environmental groups had no regular interactions with local communities. They worked more like interest groups rather than community-based organisations. Therefore, their ability to mobilise the public support for their environmental campaigns and programmes was considerably constrained, resulting in low community participations (Hung, 1997).

One of the consequences was that environmental awareness among Hong Kong's citizens remained relatively low during the 1990s. For example, two Hong Kong studies carried out by Woolrich (1992) and Hung (1995) respectively, indicated that a majority of Hong Kong participants were unwilling to pay green premiums and higher tax to fight pollution. More than half of the respondents chose economic development as the government priority, while only one third believed environmental protection as being more important. This was in contrast to the previous data from 1989 where the environment was considered as the most important issue in the USA, while it ranked after political, emigration and economic concerns, as fourth in Hong Kong (Kellogg, 1994; cited in Martinsons *et al.*, 1997).

5.3.3. Stage Three: Engaging with sustainable development (1997 to present)

The year 1997 is considered primarily as a political milestone, but it can also be seen a landmark development in Hong Kong's environmental policy and environmentalism. The discourse of sustainable development was formally introduced in 1997 in influencing the environmental policies and strategies in Hong Kong although the initial response to the discourse may be traced back to 1993 with the Second Review of the White Paper. In the period from 1997 to the present, it can be observed by a series of official movements towards

sustainable development as well as the incorporating a wide range of stakeholders of civil society in environmental decision-making processes in Hong Kong.

In 1997, the government commissioned a major consultancy study - 'Sustainable Development for the 21st Century' (SUSDEV21). This signaled the government's first formal step towards incorporating sustainability into the development process and day-to-day management and practice in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Planning Department, 2004). This study provided the following definition for sustainable development in Hong Kong:

Sustainable development in Hong Kong balances social, economic and environmental needs, both for present and future generations, simultaneously achieving a vibrant economy, social progress and better environmental quality, locally, nationally and internationally, through the effects of the community and the Government. (Hills, 2002:174)

As evidence for the above definition, the objectives of the SUSDEV21 can be seen, on the one hand, to incorporate the concept of sustainable development into the policy-making processes within the government level, and, on the other hand, to introduce the concept to the general public and raise their environmental awareness as well as get them involved in sustainable practices (Shan, 2004).

Although the government has committed itself to consider sustainability as the key concept driving environmental policy since 1997, Hong Kong's response to the outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit, in particular with Agenda 21, in terms of its concerns to address Agenda 21 and formulation of a comprehensive sustainable development strategy, lagged behind much of the other regions of China (Hills and Barron, 1997). As noted earlier, China became the first developing country to put a national Agenda in place by publishing China's

Agenda 21 in 1994, followed immediately by a number of provinces and cities in China which started preparing their own Agenda 21.

However, with the later establishment of institutions - the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) and the Council for Sustainable Development - in 2001 and 2003 respectively, it revealed the government's further commitment to seek sustainable practices (Shan, 2004). The commitment to sustainable development from the government level has been paralleled by the increasing number of stakeholders of civil society in the decision-making process.

As stated in the SUSDEV21 and by the Chief Executive, Mr. Donald Tsang, in the motion debate on 'Local Agenda 21 and sustainable development' (SUSDEV, 2002), involvement of members of the community was an indispensable component to pursue sustainable development. In the earlier periods, the government was seen as the major or the only stakeholder, while the year 2003 became a watershed in incorporating a wide range of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies and programmes. It included the NGOs, business sectors, academia and the general public. In the process, Chan (2007) identified the emergence of three identities of civil society: (1) as a defender of its own autonomy; (2) as the third party and; (3) as a partner in government.

In the late 1990s, the tourism sector had also been incorporated into the sustainable development agenda. Hong Kong is well known for its impressive urban landscape with high-rise and high-density development, attracting tourists by its images of the 'paradise of shopping' and the 'Pearl of the Orient'. Since the introduction of the 'open-door' policy in mainland China in the late 1970s, Hong Kong has been facing severe competition with fast developed neighbouring cities such as Shen Zhen, Guangzhou, and Zhuhai. To maintain

competitiveness, Hong Kong started to diversify its tourism resources and products. In the meantime, Hong Kong's 'successful' growth-orientated development model has undisputedly raised people's material prosperity while it has carried a variety of environmental impacts.

The Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, in his 1998 Policy Address, proclaimed that he was to promote tourism as a sustainable practice as one of his main policy aims (Tung, 1998). The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) (now renamed as the Hong Kong Tourism Board HKTB) jointly published 'A Green Guide to Hong Kong' in 1998, to provide citizens and visitors with information about ecological characteristics of Hong Kong, as well as natural activities and programmes that the public can take part in. (HKTA, 1998). 'A Visitor Companion', Hong Kong's other comprehensive 'green' guidebook was published in October 1999 (HKTA, 1999). The publication of these guide books marked the initial recognition of the potential for developing ecotourism in Hong Kong.

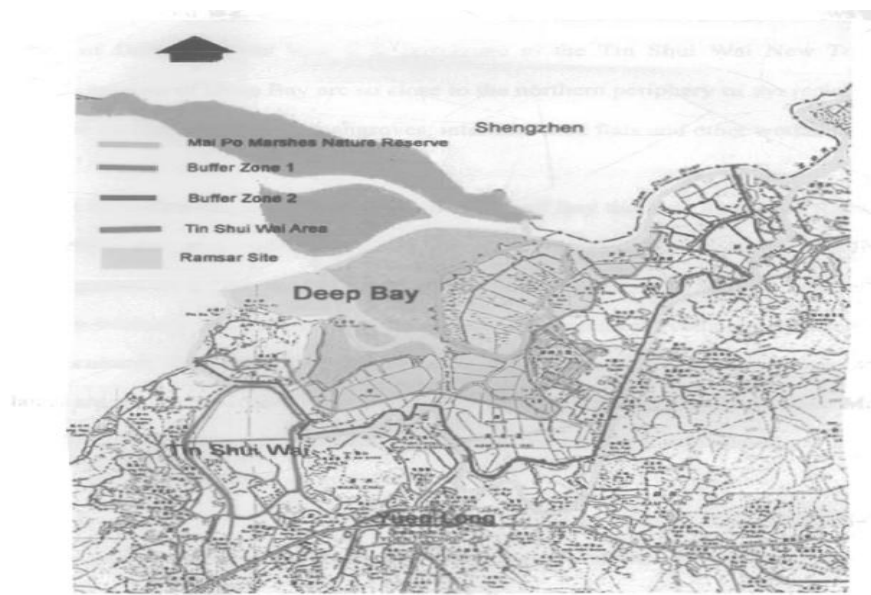
Besides the green guidebooks, an 'International Wetland Park and Visitor Centre Feasibility Study' was completed by the HKTB and AFCD in 1998. Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP), as one of the core case studies of this thesis, was approved by the Government as a Millennium Project of Hong Kong to demonstrate the feasibility of combining seemingly contradictory elements of tourist activities, environmental education/conservation, and community amenity in a wetland park.

As noted earlier, Hong Kong's urban expansion is based on land reclamation from the sea and the New Town Development. HKWP is located in one of the third generation new towns - Tin Shui Wai, the northwest part of the New

Territory at the Deep Bay close to the boundary (Figure 7). Tin Shui Wai was historically *gei wai* fish ponds until the 1980s when almost all the land was acquired by the Mighty City Company Limited (MCL) (later also referred to as the Tin Shui Wai Development Limited). Tin Shui Wai development, with a joint venture between the government and the private sector (MCL), was undertaken in two stages; the Development Zone of 220 hectares in the southern part of the new town first commenced in 1987, and a further urban expansion into the remaining areas to the north (known as the Reserve Zone), with an area of 210 hectares, began in 1998 (Law *et al.*, 2009).

In order to meet the intense housing demand, the town was constructed under a fast-paced development mode, home to many mainland immigrants and low-income families, with a population of around 300,000. As a consequence, Tin Shui Wai is normally called the ‘City of Sorrow’ embracing a series of social and economic problems such as unemployment, poverty, crime, domestic violence, and suicide (Law *et al.*, 2009).

Figure 7. Location of Tin Shui Wai and the Deep Bay



(Source: Chan, 2002:93)

Given the proximity of Tin Shui Wai to Deep Bay where international important wetlands of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site⁹ can be found, the implication of incorporating ecological considerations into developing Tin Shui Wai is considered as more significant than other new town projects (Chan, 2002). Under this situation, Hong Kong Wetland Park was built within the Reserve Zone, at the north of Tin Shui Wai, in 2006, with three key purposes; first, to compensate for the loss of wetland habitats caused by the new town development; second, to serve as a buffer between the urban developments in the Reserve Zone and the ecological fragile areas of Deep Bay; and third, to promote wetland education, nature conservation and ecotourism (HKWP, 2012). Due to the distinctive features of adjoining the Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site and the situating of Tin Shui Wai New Town, Hong Kong Wetland Park is regarded as a representative example for studying how the government of Hong Kong copes with the conflicts between urban expansion, nature conservation, and recreation.

With reference to the above discussion on the development of environmental policy in Hong Kong, it can be seen that the Hong Kong's approach has experienced a substantial change over the past a few decades. During the initial period (1959-1980), it followed a conventional 'command-and-control' model, which was driven by responses to major pollution problems, resulting in the formulating of an array of environmental ordinances and regulations

⁹ 'The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty signed on 2nd February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. It provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Hong Kong joined the Convention in 1979 and the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay was designated a Ramsar Site on 4th September 1995 due to its home to a diversity of wetland flora and fauna (HKWP, 2008)

addressing air, water and noise pollution problems. The government played a leading role in the environmental policy making process with little participation from other stakeholders. During this time period, the environmental policy was criticised with passively technical 'end-of-pipe' solutions rather preventative policies and the territory's prosperity was given priority over environmental goals.

Since 1980 it has been observed that a major step forward was taken by applying environmental protection to the planning stage, a policy shift towards an ecological modernisation framework. This includes the transition from an 'end-of-pipe' regulatory regime to the more market-orientated instruments, the adoption of scientific management and green technologies to environmental planning and management, and the incorporation of environmental NGOs into environmental policy making processes.

Since Hong Kong's official engagement with the discourse of sustainable development in 1997, a key focus has been put on achieving a balance between economic prosperity, a harmonic society, and integrity of the environment. This is revealed by both the input of the government to formulate its policy consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and the promotion of involvement of a wide range of stakeholders of civil society in the policy-making process.

Looking through the evolution of environmental policy processes in Hong Kong, it can be easily observed that nature conservation has been always integrated into the government's agenda, although the level of conservation concern and the scope of conservation policy have showed various differences according to different time periods. Parallel to the feature of the incorporation of nature conservation into the policy framework, the other consistent theme has been to

promote environmental awareness among the general public. It seems that, from the very beginning (the late 1950s), the government has realised the importance of public cooperation to achieve environmental goals which lies in getting the public aware and understanding environmental conditions and issues. This consciousness has been followed by continuously implementing various environmental awareness campaigns and education programmes over the past few decades.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a selective overview of the background and development of the environmental policy of mainland China and Hong Kong. Both the mainland and Hong Kong have long faced tensions between economic prosperity and environmental protection. To cope with the problems, both ecological modernisation models and a discourse of sustainable development have been incorporated into their policy frameworks. However, given the colonial history and the later ‘one country, two systems’ model of Hong Kong, its approaches to development and the environment retain some characteristics and differences from those on the mainland. The Chapter also examined environmental conditions and the development trajectory of Shen Zhen as well as a brief introduction of our two case studies - Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park. In the following chapters, we will explicitly discuss the issues regarding Chinese environmental awareness through (eco)tourism practices in each park and assess to what extent they reflect the environmental policy and development philosophy in which they are located.

Chapter Six: Shen Zhen Wetland Park

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research undertaken in Shen Zhen Wetland Park (SZWP). The purpose of the case study is, by assessing urban (eco)tourism experiences at SZWP, to explore Chinese tourists' attitudes towards nature and the influence of political-economic forces of Shen Zhen on associated environmental behaviour and practices. This is undertaken through evaluating applications of 'Chinese Philosophy', Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation at the Park. The Chapter begins with a study site description of SZWP (6.1) followed by the discussion of how 'Chinese Philosophy' guides ecotourism practices and tourist experiences from both the service supply side and the tourism demand side (6.2). Examination of the interpretation of ecotourism at the Park is completed in 6.3. The utilisation of principles of Disneyisation is analytically discussed in 6.4, and then followed by assessing contributions of key themes of Ecological Modernisation (6.5). The Chapter concludes with a discussion of combining and comparing the three propositions ('Chinese Philosophy', Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation) within SZWP (6.6).

6.1. Site description

Before introducing the case study of SZWP, it is necessary to briefly describe its developer - the OCT Group (the Overseas Chinese Town Group Limited). It was historically developed from *Shahe* Overseas Chinese Farm in *Baoan* County in Shen Zhen in 1985. As one of the large-scale central enterprises subordinate to the State Assets Administration Committee (SASAC), the OCT Group runs cross-industry businesses under a market mechanism with three leading core business domains - tourism industry, real estate, and manufacture of electronic

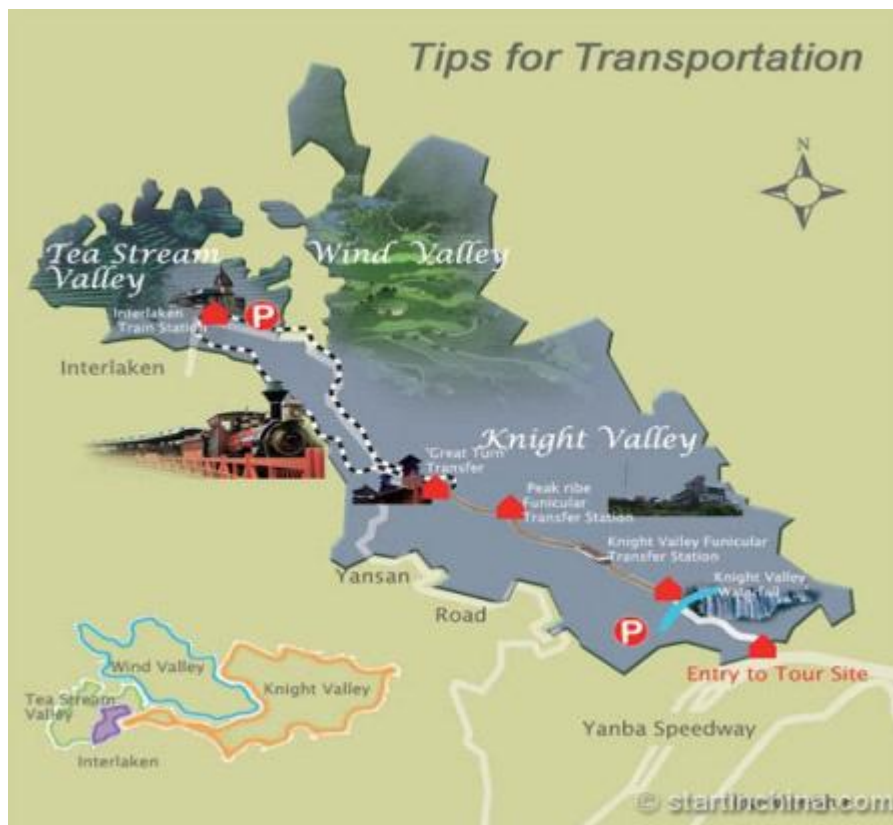
products (OCT, 2009).

At present, the OCT group has extended, and is extending, more branches towards the whole country such as Beijing OCT, Shanghai OCT, Shen Zhen OCT East, and so on. The OCT group is a typical example of a joint effort between the state and market dynamics. On the one hand, it is a state-owned enterprise and most managerial staff members are appointed by the state; on the other hand, it is operated totally on market demands and dynamics. The tourism industry is the most influential core business of the OCT. As noted in Chapter Three, since establishing the first cultural theme park- ‘Splendid China’ in Shen Zhen in 1989, the OCT has become the first brand of Chinese cultural tourism, and the OCT group has been regarded as the creator of the theme park concept in China (OCT, 2009). A series of popular theme parks and cultural tourist spots have then been developed during the past two decades such as the ‘Chinese Folk Culture Village’, ‘Window of the World’, ‘Happy Valley’ and the recently completed OCT Shen Zhen East Resort which contains Shen Zhen Wetland Park.

The OCT East Resort is located in the mountain hinterland of *Yantian* District, adjacent to the *Xiaomeisha* seaside resort area, covering an area of nine square kilometres. As mentioned in Chapter Five, *Yantian* District was historically cut off from the fast developed western parts of Shen Zhen due to its inaccessibility of mountainous topography, resulting in a relatively backward area. However, during the last decade, the District has experienced a rapid transformation process from a backward region to one of the most highly developed and luxuriant areas in Shen Zhen, in particular catering for the high-income market in terms of consumption patterns. The OCT East Resort can be argued to act as an engine for this fast development.

The Resort contains four key themed attractions (Figure 8). The first attraction, ‘Knight Valley’, located at the bottom of the mountain, as a key amusement park, provides various scales of recreational facilities. ‘Wind Valley’ works as a sport centre containing two eighteen-hole golf courses. A newly built *Huanxi* Temple features the theme of Chinese Buddhist culture. Finally, at the top of mountain, ‘Tea Stream Valley’, encompassing SZWP, incorporates a combined cultural arena between China and the West. A series of themed hotels are allocated in each themed attraction.

Figure 8. Map of the OCT East Resort



(SZWP is located at the bottom of ‘Tea Stream Valley’ besides the symbol of ‘P’. A newly built *Huanxi* Temple is located between ‘Knight Valley’ and ‘Wind Valley’)

(Source: http://www.startinchina.com/shenzhen/tourism/oct_east.html)

In addition, a group of expensive residential properties called ‘*Tianlu* Mansion’ are located inside the Resort (Figure 9). It obtained a high award by the United

Nations in 2008 as one of the ‘Best Globally Living Environment for Humans’ as stated in the OCT official website. The geographical advantage of the Mansion is that it is prominent and spectacular, being surrounded by the grandiose and spectacular scenery of mountains and sea, and is built in a scenic area within the Resort. However, when considering its environmental impacts, this group of expensive villas is constructed within the ecological fragile zone, namely, the ‘Ecological Control Boundary’ (see Chapter Five), which obviously fails to protect the government-designated greenbelt.

Figure 9. *Tianlu Mansion*



SZWP, located amid the ‘Tea Stream Valley’ and occupying an area of approximate thirty-eight hectares, was opened in 2007 (OCT East, 2008). It is claimed as an ‘ecotourist’ site, as the whole resort (the OCT East) was awarded the title as the ‘China’s First National Level Ecotourism Demonstration Region’ jointly by the National Tourism Bureau and the National Environment Protection Bureau. Moreover, Ms. Gongru Wang, a manager of the Sales and Marketing Department of the OCT East, states: ‘SZWP is a perfect place to

provide city dwellers the opportunity to access nature and to be totally relaxed and refreshed from busy city life' (Wang, 01.05.2010). In her understanding of the term ecotourism, she puts more focus on its recreational function, while environmental conservation and education came to be subordinate concerns.

The Park contains thirteen man-made tourist attractions with planted flora and various entertainment programmes for visitors, supplemented with a pastiche train hotel, miniature railway ride, restaurants, fast-food outlets, and amusement facilities. This may not reflect the key themes of ecotourism defined and operated in the West. However, the park was awarded the title as the 'National Ecotourism Demonstration Centre' as noted above. This may largely be due to the different perception and preference for 'nature' and understanding of ecotourism among the Chinese authorities and Chinese tourists which will be explored in detail in the following section.

6.2. Utilisation of 'Chinese Philosophy'

Chapter Two has reviewed Chinese philosophical/religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism relating to natural landscapes and their applications to areas such as *shanshui* painting, garden design and the 'tourist gaze'. The Chinese approach to nature derived from these traditions is based on ideas of balance, interconnectedness, and wholeness/oneness (*jingjie*), along with various ethical guidance and practices. This section, therefore, assesses to what extent such traditions shape contemporary Chinese attitudes towards, and the production and consumption of, nature/the environment, within the context of SZWP.

6.2.1. Service supply perspective- SZWP

6.2.1.1. Creating harmony

Harmony, as noted in Chapter Two, is based on the systemic fit of human elements into the vast realm of nature. In particular, in the context of Daoism, human humble attitude towards nature is addressed, with reference to *shanshui* painting where small human figures are presented on upward paths in the vastness of the cosmos, symbolising the ascent of the human spirit to reach the *Dao* (see Chapter Two). Harmony between man and nature embedded in the tradition of Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism means living without mutual harm. However, in modern practices, it seems that there is a misinterpretation and distortion of the original spirit of harmony, as instead, man dominates over nature in Chinese society. I explored this theme with informants at SZWP. Asked about the development of SZWP, Dandong Qiao, a senior manager at the OCT Tourism Department said:

The land was a piece of Huangye (abandoned land with few inhabits) before developing the OCT East Resort. We have successfully converted this piece of useless land into an attractive scenic area by blending human structures into natural landscapes to fulfil 'man in harmony with nature. (Qiao, 02.05.2010)

Shihao Chen, another manager at the OCT Tourism Department commented:

Yuanshi (primitive) nature is not attractive to Chinese people, and thus, in order to make nature meaningful, it has to be imbued with human characteristics. In other words, nature has to be repackaged by human beings for human beings. (Chen, 02.05.2010)

Many scholars assert that cultural traditions such as philosophy and religion play an influential role in people's aesthetic valuation and perception of the natural environment (e.g. Hashimoto, 2000; Li, 2005; Wang, 2007). Chapter Two

examined the influence of 'Chinese Philosophy' on the aesthetics of nature in that a creative transformation for harmony was advocated with a reference to Confucian improvement on nature and Daoist and Buddhist approaches to beautifying nature. When one applies this approach to (eco)tourism development at SZWP, however, it leads to a heavily modified natural environment with a removal of original flora and fauna, and instead, a second man-made natural world is created by claiming it as 'man in harmony with nature'.

This is not only the case of SZWP, it is a common practice of most designated 'ecotourism' sites in mainland China, as Li (2005:164) contends that tourism development based on natural resources in China 'is synonymous with building something or modifying the landscape through human intervention'. Ninety per cent of the total land area at SZWP is modified by human hands, resulting in a series of themed artificial landscapes and structures. Natural flora was removed and replaced with planted flowers and trees, and a man-made wetland was created along with ornamental ponds, gardens, arts and craftwork installations, various amusement facilities, hotels, restaurants, and performances. From the perspective of the park managerial authority, these human constructions are considered as the 'key aesthetics in natural landscapes among Chinese tourists' (Wang, 01.05.2010). Such an approach to transform the natural resources enhanced, rather than detracted, from visitors' appreciation of the Park. Qiao (02.05.2010) commented: 'Locating various man-made structures within SZWP does not mean that the human dominates nature, rather it reflects a harmony with nature through human modifications'.

This Chinese approach is thus distinct from an approach adopted and practiced by many park developers and environmental organisations in Western countries where nature and the environment of ecotourist sites are maintained and

managed with a sense of wilderness and naturalness, devoid of artificiality and human manipulations.

6.2.1.2. Application of *Jingjie*

Apart from the sense of harmony described above, the other principle is to create *jingjie* of the landscape at SZWP. As discussed in Chapter Two, *jingjie* is the core idea regarding human-nature relationships derived from ‘Chinese Philosophy’. On the one hand, it can be understood as ‘realm’ or ‘level’ to describe a person who has a high standard of morality and virtue (e.g. ‘noble man’ in Confucian teachings). The example of *shan shui* painting, ‘*Dufu* and poetry’, was highly valued in modern Chinese society partly because the painter was considered as having a lofty morality. On the other hand, with respect to natural landscapes, *jingjie* can be described as ‘scenic ambience’, or ‘*shiqinghuayi*’ (poetic atmosphere and artistic spirit). *Jingjie* was considered as one of the key components of ecotourism definitions proposed by Chinese scholars (see Chapter One)

Overall, *jingjie* is associated with human sentiment and feelings imposed on natural landscapes, which is not the intrinsic or indispensable property that landscapes have. Therefore, Kong (1988) states: ‘*jingjie* does not exist naturally in the landscape but is created through the development stages based on the cultural information with which the landscape is endowed’ (cited in Li, 2005:172).

Translating this into SZWP, the Park captures some of the key principles of traditional garden design as outlined in Chapter Two, although it seems that Western theme park techniques, the phenomenon of Disneyisation, show a dominant role. Inside the Park, various human structures, in particular with trails and bridges, link separate scenery and space into a holistic view. As

noted in Chapter Two, these structures play a dual role of a means of viewing scenery as well as making scenery. Bridges are always an important integral part of Chinese garden design. Apart from serving as a connective function of ‘men crossing the water’, a bridge also adds a vantage point and increases the aesthetic value to an otherwise flat area.

Due to the idea of interdependence/correlation in Chinese gardens, a flat area or a round hill without human modifications is considered as something absent and unattractive. A zig-zag wooden bridge crossing a man-made lake leads tourists to a seemingly distant ‘train hotel’, as well as adding a focal point to break the flat vista of the lake view (Figure 10). A winding-shaped bridge is a common construction in many Chinese garden designs, which exhibits rich ethnic and cultural characteristics. This type of bridge is also called the ‘Nine Curving Bridge’ (like a dragon) which connotes good luck to the person who has just walked through. In the meantime, it follows the Daoist principle of imitating the ‘law of nature’ with natural curves.

Figure 10. Zig-zag Wetland Bridge



According to the interview discussions with a park employee who is in charge of inspecting and maintaining the order of tourists on the bridge, when I asked him the functions/purposes of the bridge, he commented:

Visitors can stroll on the bridge and enjoy the scenery of the lake. This long and winding bridge links the 'train hotel' at the end which provides a mysterious atmosphere. If you see it from an aerial view, the bridge looks like a dragon lying on the lake, very pretty. (SZWP informant 101, 23.04.2010)

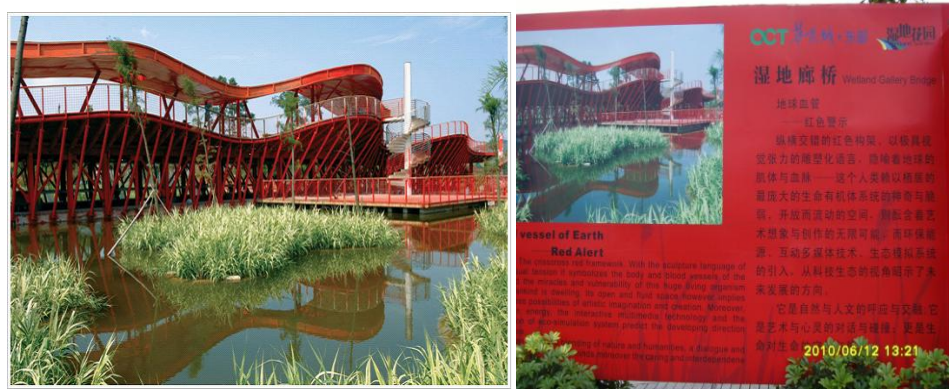
In this case, such a cultural storyline embedded in the bridge created 'scenic ambience', as Qiao (02.05.2010) claimed: 'One of the most important principles for our park design is to apply Chinese cultural traditions to revitalise the natural landscape, and add cultural colour to bring nature alive'.

The other example is reflected in the Wetland Corridor. It is located in a relatively flat area with an artificial wetland on one side and a planted flower field on the other side. The Corridor is also described as the 'Vessel of the Earth' presenting a striking red colour with two implications (Figure 11). One is based on Chinese cultural and aesthetic values in that the colour red stands for good fortune and happiness, plus the colour red better fits into the surrounding green landscape, as a common Chinese expression illustrates: 'red flowers match green leaves'. The second implication, according to Ms Wang (01.06.2010), is: 'to use the colour red to draw visitors' attention to the importance of ecological conservation'.

Such a highly visible construction design, to the park developers' eyes, was not only perfectly integrated into the surrounding landscape but added detail and enriched the scenery. In the Western paradigm of ecotourism, a secluded architectural design principle is more commonly practised aiming to maintain the sense of 'wilderness'. The Chinese approach, however, shows the opposite.

Therefore, a series of ‘scenic construction’ (e.g. pagodas, statues, and temples) is overtly constructed, especially at the ridgeline or the summit of a hill to create the sense of ‘*jingjie*’. Such examples include the pagoda on the top of the hill of the Summer Palace in Beijing and the Buddha statue on the summit of *Dayu* Mountain in Hong Kong (Figure 12). Li (2005:170) states: ‘Culturally, buildings being visible from below are considered to enrich the landscape and enhance the viewers’ appreciation of the scenery’.

Figure 11. ‘Wetland Corridor’

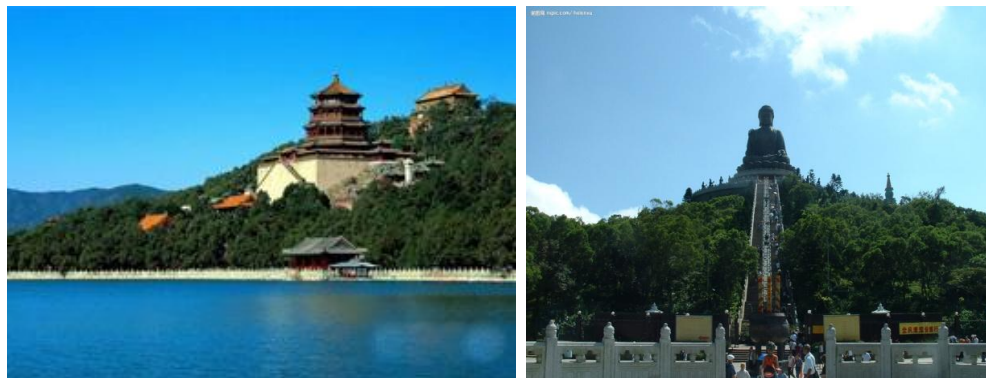


(Source: <http://www.octeast.com/hd/sd.shtml>)

Figure 12. ‘Scenic construction’

(a) The pagoda in the Summer Palace

(b) The Buddha statue on *Dayu* Mountain



(Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/75/13e1d3658d337ae9.html>
http://app.travel.ifeng.com/scenery_detail-946.html)

Such a Chinese approach is also reflected in the building design principle of SZWP, instead of traditional Chinese architecture, a pastiche European church is constructed on the summit of a round hill (Figure 13). A combination of concrete steps and winding footpaths provide the tourists a direct visual involvement as well as an illusion of depth and space. The miniature church serves a function not only a tourist attraction for visitors, especially for couples to pose for photos, but also a ‘scenic construction’ to add a delicate interest and enhance aesthetic value of the overview landscape.

Figure 13. A mimic church on the top of the hill



(Source: <http://www.fotoe.com/image/20362014>)

From the perspective of park design and development, it can be seen that the developers incorporate some principles of traditional Chinese philosophies of nature into the physical design of the landscapes and the structures within the Park. Nonetheless, it seems that Chinese philosophical traditions (discussed in Chapter Two) are not fully understood and comprehended by the park developers, rather presenting a facade of ‘man-nature harmony’. By solely focusing on its aesthetic valuation of nature and the environment, it has been proclaimed as the essence of ‘Chinese Philosophy’, while the more important principle of emphasising an ethical approach to nature has been totally ignored. In the park developers’ eyes, to create ‘harmony’ and ‘*jingjie*’ by

accommodating human structures within natural landscapes is to enhance tourists' appreciation of nature. The 'appreciation' mentioned here focuses more on enjoyment and even comfort rather than its original connotation embedded in 'Chinese Philosophy' - respect and reverence.

In this case, 'man-nature harmony' is conditioned to consume nature as a visual amenity rather than any sort of spiritual or ethical experience. Moreover, in order to create and highlight the sense of 'harmony', human structures and buildings are designed and constructed based on human feelings and preferences without considering any intrinsic properties of biodiversity or conducting environmental impact assessments. This approach, placing human enjoyment and comfort over nature conservation and environmental protection, forms the foundation of an anthropocentric approach to the design and development of nature and natural landscapes at SZWP, which is apparently contradictory to the creeds and ethics of Chinese philosophical models of nature as defined in Chapter Two.

6.2.2. Tourism demand perspective - park visitors

As we have seen the way in which nature has been perceived and presented at SZWP by the park authority, has resulted in a heavily modified vision of nature with an exotic atmosphere of 'Westernness'. In this section, the focus turns to examine to what extent traditional Chinese philosophies of environment and nature exert an influence on Chinese tourists' practices of ecotourism at the Park, with a focus on assessing Chinese tourists' perceptions and preferences for 'nature' and the 'natural' as well as their environment-related attitudes and behaviour.

6.2.2.1. Images and preferences of 'nature' and the 'natural'

The empirical work shows that Chinese attitudes towards nature as well as their

preferences for a natural environment are deeply influenced by Chinese cultural heritage namely in the philosophical-ethical precepts of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism, which promotes a harmonious coexistence between human and nature or what is termed ‘man-nature unity’ (see Chapter Two). In the case of SZWP, this type of harmony or unity, to most tourists’ eyes, is reflected on the anthropomorphised nature in that natural landscapes are imbued with cultural/philosophical colour and human sentiments.

The majority (sixty-eight percent from interview results and seventy-one percent from tourist surveys) of park visitors agreed that modified nature through human effort was more attractive than pristine nature. One of the respondents from a rural area in Northern China, for example, stated:

Nature without human package and decoration is more like ‘huangye’, for example, some areas (e.g. mountains and forests) in our village, with a bland outlook and unsafe feelings such as wild animals roaming. It can not reflect beauty of nature at all, but trees here are properly trimmed, a variety of flowers are planted, various walking trails, elegant bridges are built on the lake Such a picturesque nature is much prettier than ‘huangye’. (SZWP Informant 68, 25.05.2010)

The other respondent, a middle-aged woman with her daughter, commented:

Man-made structures and facilities are an indispensable part of a natural area because they provide great convenience for tourists to better enjoy (xinshang) nature. For example, a mini ‘forest train’ provided in this Park enables us to enjoy the beauty from train windows, going closer to nature, and even become ‘man in nature’. (SZWP informant 09, 12.04.2010)

In many national parks and protected areas of mainland China, large-scale constructions such as motor transport and hotels are built to serve tourists. This practice is indeed different from the approach in many Western countries

adopted where intrusive building facilities (e.g. highways and hotels) are normally prohibited in a national park or protected area. These facilities are considered not only an aesthetic degradation but also a means of environmental deterioration. This is further confirmed by the interview findings of twenty-three foreign park visitors; a remark made by one of the respondents who is from Australia succinctly summed up the comments made by the others:

I don't think this park can be classified as an ecotourist site, instead an amusement park is more suitable. Ecotourism should be based on ecological principles but the environment has been heavily modified in this Park with too many building activities.
(SZWP informant 64, 25.05.2010)

In literature regarding the environmental preference in Western countries, the majority suggest that people prefer 'wild'/natural to built landscapes (e.g. Ulrich, 1981; Herzog *et al.*, 1982; Herzog, 1987). Some scholars (e.g. Schroeder and Anderson, 1984; Li, 2008) further argue that man-made structures such as buildings, fences and parking lots are normally considered as a degradation of the attractiveness of a nature-based park. On the contrary, in the case of SZWP, to most Chinese visitors' eyes, incorporating various types of human constructions into the Park can enhance the opportunities for visitors to be close to nature and to better enjoy and appreciate nature. It is a case of humans improving on nature and creating harmony. This finding is consistent with Lin's (2000) argument: 'the close interweaving of nature and human artefacts yields a feeling of consonance rather than dissonance in Chinese parks' (cited in Buckley *et al.*, 2008:961).

Since society is diverse and different people hold different attitudes to nature and the 'natural', preferences for natural landscapes vary among Chinese respondents in SZWP although the majority shows a preference towards ornamental landscapes. A significant difference lies in the respondents' living

environment. People who came from urban areas expressed a desire to see more wild areas with less human influence, such as a visit to the snow plateau in Tibet, minority villages in Yunnan, and grassland in Inner Mongolia. In their views, these places were ‘beautiful but dangerous’, or ‘*yuan sheng tai*’ (uncivilised nature). This may share certain similarities with some Western scholars’ arguments such as Huyssen (1990) and Sutton and House (2000) for Postmodern and ‘New Age tourists’ who are ‘going to the countryside in a nostalgic search of a golden era of a purer, simpler life’ (cited in Li, 2005:366), or in Urry’s term, ‘the romantic gaze’.

The difference here with Chinese tourists is that their views about ‘wilderness’ associated with the countryside do not reflect the value of ‘pristine natural beauty’ of rural landscapes emphasised in Urry’s term. As noted in Chapter Two, ‘wilderness’ (*huangye*) is normally perceived as negative images such as uncivilised, untidy, and bad land. In addition, China’s development history traditionally based on agriculture and later massive rural-urban migration (Chapter Five) yields a negative perception of ‘countryside’ - backward and degraded. Therefore, at SZWP, many urban dwellers revealed an ambivalent attitude towards their natural preferences, in which they were eager to see a bit of a ‘wild’ part of nature in the countryside, but were also associated with fears regarding lack of facilities, absence of services, and inconvenience.

On the other hand, cultivated and ornamental landscapes were most preferred by rural respondents at SZWP because of their novelty and modernity related to the materialistic reflection on comfortable and luxurious lifestyles in these landscapes. In this sense, some scenes, which were considered as ‘fake’, vulgar and even a degradation of natural scenic beauty by many urban dwellers, were however, highly appreciated and valued by rural respondents, with examples of luxurious hotels (e.g. ‘train hotel’), the golf course, entertainment performances

and so forth. An over sixties couple who came from a rural area of Guangdong Province said:

Nature will become more visually attractive only after human modifications, otherwise, it is 'huangye' in relation to the times when China was very poor. Natural landscapes of this park are presented in such an elegant way combined with exotic (wai guo de) constructions and performances such as a foreign village, a foreign church, and beautiful flower fields, leading to an exciting, interesting and modern place to visit. (SZWP informant 26, 19.04.2010)

Despite the above discussion which reveals that different living environments had an influence on people's natural preference, a noteworthy point is that Chinese respondents' perception of nature and the 'natural' is based on 'perceived naturalness' rather than 'ecological naturalness'. In other words, they are selective about why they see something as natural with fewer considerations about intrinsic features of the ecosystem. Although SZWP is notably a built environment, the majority of respondents found it 'natural' and the Park provided them with a 'nature-based' experience. This may echo the argument of Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 95) 'there is no single "nature", only natures, it therefore follows that "nature tourism" will be variously constructed by different societies, and that therefore there will be multiple nature tourism' (cited in Cater, 2006:23). The Chinese approach to nature, by appreciating an interweaving human influence and natural landscapes, is thus different from a 'no-touch' principle to nature which comprises much of the recent ecological practice in ecotourism sites in the West.

6.2.2.2. Images and symbols of 'nature'

As discussed in Chapter Two, China has a long literary tradition of producing nature-related images and symbols, for example, *shan shui* (mountain and water)

literature (e.g. paintings and poems) which infuses the human spirit into natural landscapes. Such landscapes within ecotourism today, in turn, become metaphors or catalysts, to evoke tourists' emotions related to Chinese cultural traditions such as travelling to a famous scenic spot to partake in cultural and historical connections, or a modern 'pilgrimage', and watching waterfalls to recall associated ancient poems and paintings. Hence, this section examines a series of related questions. For example, what do particular images and models of nature Chinese tourists seek in SZWP? How do such images and models reflect upon Chinese philosophic/religious practices?

When investigated, it was found that the most liked natural elements in the Park, mountains and water, were the most preferred by the park visitors. The respondents gave various descriptions on their idealised form of mountains and water, such as sacred mountains, undulating hills, meandering streamlets, and flowing rivers. The majority of respondents used a common Chinese phrase to describe their nature-based experience: 'touring mountains and gazing at river' (*you shan wan shui*). An elderly man said: 'As long as a site embraces mountain and water elements, it must be a good place' (SZWP informant 39, 24.04.2010). This type of preferred landscape finds fitting expression in a poem by *Yuxi Liu*, a poet and philosopher in the Tang Dynasty (772-842):

*A Mountain does not need to be high,
It will be famous as long as immortal abide there;
Water does not need to be deep,
It will be full of spiritual power as long as the dragon resides there
(cited in Li, 2005:151)*

As noted in Chapter Two, *shan shui* philosophy reflected deeply these Chinese cultural traditions, for example, as objects of natural worship, and as metaphors drawn on philosophies such as Confucian teachings where mountains stand for benevolence and water represents wisdom. This cultural tradition has exerted a

profound influence on the aesthetic preferences for natural landscapes among modern Chinese tourists. A young couple stated: ‘Waterfalls in this park are our favourite landscape, because they contain both the elements of flowing water as well as a mountain background. They look very pretty’ (SZWP informant 07, 06.04.2010). Other respondents added: ‘Waterfalls are the best example to show a balance between *yin* (water) and *yang* (yang). They indicated good *fengshui*’ (e.g. SZWP informants 10 and 39). In fact, during my field observations, various waterfalls in the Park were the most popular spot for tourists to pose for photos (Figure 14), in the meantime, they became the key objects of the Chinese tourist gaze.

Figure 14. Waterfalls



In Chinese tourists’ eyes, through standing under waterfalls and viewing them, it could create an atmosphere, *shi qing hua yi*, poetic sentiment and an artistic spirit. A middle- aged man said: ‘Whenever I see a waterfall, it always reminds me of ancient poets who created graceful poems elicited from such a landscape’ (SZWP informant 10, 12.04.2010). The right hand side of Figure 14 displays an idealised form of natural landscape that tourists seek for, it is, in their words: ‘a harmony-inspiring picturesque scenery’; a delicate and demure waterfall (*yin*) flowing from the mountainside (*yang*); artificial rocks (*yang*) etched calligraphy (*yin*) were allocated in front of the waterfall; an arched bridge was built to enable

‘man crossing river’; an imitated ancient pavilion accommodated the sculptures of three famous ancient beauties situated at one side of the waterfall.

All these landscapes, in tourists’ eyes, were interdependent and fitted aesthetically into the surrounding environment. Most respondents expressed their complete satisfaction with the scenery. Although they knew that such harmonious landscapes were created by humans, there was no question in their minds regarding whether it is authentic or not. Moreover, the way to experience these sceneries seemed institutionalised, such as when tourists stood under the waterfall and looked upon it to evoke their poetic and artistic emotions; such as when they strolled over the bridge to partake in cultural traditions for example bringing good luck; such as when sitting down in the pavilion to view the surrounding beautiful landscapes while drinking Chinese tea and chatting with friends and relatives; and, such as when they took photos of human figures with the landscapes to reveal ‘man in nature’. Nature imbued with cultural connotations became an idealised form which was loved and appreciated by Chinese tourists.

Besides the symbols of water and mountain, other natural elements such as animals and plants that tourists gazed at were also used metaphorically and were endowed with rich cultural implications. For example, butterflies are normally associated with a Daoist story, *zhuang zi* dreamt butterflies, as described in the beginning of Chapter Two, as well as a love folk story involving incarnation about how *liang* and *zhu* became butterflies¹⁰. In the ‘Four-season Greenhouse’ of SZWP, there is an exhibition area where various types of specimen butterflies

¹⁰The story occurred in Eastern Jin Period (317-420). Liang and Zhu, a pair of young lovers, were deeply in love with each other. Due to their different social classes, their love was prohibited by their families. Finally they both died for love. It is said that they reincarnated as butterflies to enjoy freedom.

were displayed.

On the interpretation board, not only are butterflies' biological features provided, but in addition their related philosophical and cultural storylines were also highlighted. When tourists were questioned about whether these specimen butterflies degraded the sense of nature and the 'natural', many respondents commented that they could see a wide range of butterflies through these specimens, otherwise it was difficult to see any in their daily life. So, they considered the specimens were perfect for displaying the natural beauty while at the same time promoting its related traditional cultural values to people. A mother with her eight-year-old son commented: 'Butterflies' lifecycle is very short. In order to enable more people to see and appreciate them, the best way is through making specimens' (SZWP informant 44, 03.05.2010). Two men, aged around their twenties, who came from a rural area, stated: 'Although these butterflies here are fake and artificial, they look more beautiful and diverse than the ones that we used to see and catch in our hometown' (SZWP informants 29 and 30, 21.04.2010).

These findings, to some extent, echo why aviaries and caged animals are highly appreciated by Chinese people. Some scholars (e.g. Gao, 2001; Feng, 2006; Cheng, 2007) even argue that Chinese people prefer to view nature-related paintings, rather than nature itself; and to appreciate wooden carvings of the Buddha, rather than the forest where wood grows. In addition, empirical case-study analysis regarding Chinese visitors to protected areas in China reveal that Chinese tourists are motivated by passive involvement with nature, relying on the opportunity through viewing scenery and visual amenity to connect with its cultural and historical significance and implications (e.g. Deng *et al.*, 2005; Nyiri, 2006; Li, 2008).

‘Nature’, in this sense, has become an aesthetic abstraction and a metaphorical interpretation of cultural heritage that has few links to a truly ‘natural’ ecosystem. This may indicate that people are now so detached from nature that they are accepting a form of artificial nature and using ‘Chinese Philosophy’ to justify it. The approach of Chinese philosophy to nature is not merely focusing on aesthetic enjoyment on the natural environment; rather it advocates an ethical obligation to follow the law of nature. The next section therefore examines whether the ethical teachings of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ are applied to Chinese attitudes and behaviour towards nature conservation.

6.2.2. Tourists’ environmental attitudes

As discussed in Chapter Two, traditionally the Chinese perceived that the man-nature relationship was deeply influenced by the philosophical-ethical precepts of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism, which promotes ‘man in harmony with nature’. According to White (1967:1205), ‘what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny’.

Accordingly, scholars have developed various approaches to examine the influence of cultural values and beliefs on human environmental attitudes and behaviour. For example, Homer and Kahle’s (1988) ‘value-attitude-behaviour’ (VAB) hierarchy demonstrate a close relationship between a person’s collective cultural value and his/her recycling attitudes and behaviour. Using the structural-equation modelling, Chan (2001) specifically finds that traditional Chinese man-nature orientation and collectivism had a significant influence on Chinese consumers’ green purchasing attitudes and behaviour. As noted in Chapter One, this empirical inconsistency existed in light of the relationship between Chinese philosophical/religious traditions and Chinese people’s

ecological concerns. Thus, as one of the objectives of this thesis, this section aims to assess the possible influence of Chinese philosophical/religious values on Chinese attitudes and behaviour towards nature conservation, so a discussion on whether these values provide an ethical basis is therefore considered necessary.

An examination of how Chinese tourists view the human-nature relationship, and how they feel about environmental issues, and how they behave and practise accordingly, serves as a good starting point. When assessing modern Chinese perceptions on the man-nature relationship, most respondents from interview discussions gave an opinion that human beings should follow nature and preserve the environment because humans were a part of nature, leading to a desire to return to some extent to traditional values, ‘man in harmony with nature’, or ‘man-nature unity’. This finding was supported by the follow-up tourist survey as sixty-nine percent of park respondents chose the first statement (Table 4).

Table 4. The perceived man-nature relationship

● Here are three opinions about man-nature relationship. Which one of these do you think is closest to the truth?	
<i>Statements</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Human beings are a part of nature, so humans should understand the ways of nature and act accordingly to maintain harmony with nature (man-nature unity).	69
In order to fulfil human needs, human beings have the right to reasonably utilise and modify nature (such as by adopting science and technology)	23
Being the master of the world, human beings are entitled to master and conquer nature, to utilise the natural resources as they like.	8

For example, SZWP informant 07 further claimed:

Although it seems that western ideologies such as science and technology have played a dominant role in modern Chinese society, our traditional philosophical values, as an inherent cultural force, still exert an important impact on people's inner thoughts and behaviour such as attitudes, morality, and beliefs.

A man around thirty years old stated:

We started to learn Chinese culture from very early age, beginning to recite traditional poems at three or four years old, to study Chinese literature (e.g. arts, calligraphy, paintings) and courses about Chinese philosophy and history in schools. This cultural background shapes my worldview and attitudes towards others. (SZWP informant 36, 25.04.2010)

During the interviews, most respondents indicated that they realised that modern Chinese society was facing various environmental problems such as air pollution, all kinds of waste disposal concerns and the loss of much biodiversity. Accordingly, they showed strong pro-environmental attitudes. These included, for example, revealing an understanding of the importance to protect and maintain the balance of the ecosystem, proclaiming the need to keep a mutually beneficial relationship between man and nature, and expressing concerns about negative impacts on future generations of the current pattern of material-orientated production and consumption. Most of the respondents showed a high degree of appreciation of nature. This appreciation, in turn, exhibits a strong emotional attachment to environmental issues.

The respondents who demonstrated strong support for pro-environmental attitudes listed a series of self-defined environmentally responsible behaviour. These include saving energy, recycling, classifying garbage, and buying green products. A middle-aged lady even stated: 'In order to make contributions to the environment, I started to adopt a vegetarian diet a few years ago' (SZWP informant 38, 26.04.2010). The respondents also cited their environmentally

responsible behaviour whilst travelling. This included obeying the rules and regulations of a tourist destination without dumping garbage, destroying natural resources and disturbing local inhabitants; minimising resource and energy consumption (e.g. reuse towels, switch off power sources after use) when staying at a hotel; buying local products instead of outside or imported goods; and making donations to conservation projects or joining volunteer programmes. Undeniably, the results of face-to-face interviews could lead to a positive desirable social response bias because respondents may have pretended to be concerned about environmental protection, even if their actual behaviour were not. The follow-up self-completed tourist questionnaire surveys reveal some different results.

With respect to the question of who is responsible for solving environmental problems (Table 5), although most respondents in the interviews expressed the view that individuals should take more responsibility to protect the environment, the tourist survey disclosed that a large majority of respondents (sixty-eight percent) identified the government as the primary actor, followed by society with twenty-one percent, and individuals (myself) accounted for the least numerical with eleven percent in total. This finding is consistent with other scholars’ research results (see Hashimoto, 2000; Chan 1999).

Table 5. The primary party for protecting the environment

‘Who should take the primary responsibility for environmental protection?’	
Government	68%
Society	21%
Individual (Myself)	11%

Chinese respondents relied heavily on the government for solving environmental issues. This may in part connote, given the continued existence of authoritarian government in China, that Confucian precepts still shape

Chinese attitudes, which emphasises the importance of social hierarchy and the leadership of political institutions. Although, in the last decade, the national government has shown a tendency to de-conceptualise authority and empower civil society as noted in Chapters Three and Five, the government believed by most Chinese citizens should play a leading role in controlling environmental issues, for example, by formulating laws and legislation and facilitating the role of advanced technology.

Nevertheless, the low personal responsibility towards environmental issues, from another perspective, reflects that egocentrism is manifest within Chinese society. People pay more attention to events which have direct impacts on a small family or a clan circle, and show indifference to events outside that circle. For example, a wider ecosystem and environmental protection are considered as ‘public’ areas belonging to nobody, which expects others, particularly the government, to take care of. This echoes a Chinese saying: ‘People will only clear the snow from their doorstep without worrying about the snow on their neighbour’s roof’.

In this sense, the Confucian ethical ladder, or an ‘anthropocosmic’ social ecology in Tu’s term, envisions that a person needs first to show respect and benevolence to other people within a small circle (e.g. family, community), and then such reverence and benevolence can be extended to a bigger circle such as the natural world, or be ‘benevolent to the people and love all things’ (see Chapter Two). It is historically invoked as a model for environmentalism but hardly produces pro-environmental behaviour among modern Chinese people. On the contrary, the practices of ordinary people in contemporary China are inclined to an anthropocentric paradigm by placing short-term personal satisfaction above all other things such as the environment. Is it a misinterpretation of ethical prescriptions of philosophical traditions by the

general public, or where the Communist rule changed these concepts in such a way that focus on individualism, pragmatism and materialism, are making a meaningful difference to the ethical traditions embedded in Chinese philosophies? This may best be responded by Jenkins (1998:158): ‘An ethic is ultimately an ideal and a normative standard: it can be disregarded by individuals and insufficiently backed by law and regulation at societal level, and this puts limits on its practical efficacy’.

Moving to the most important factors which influence tourists’ decision-making processes in selecting a tourist destination, it showed that a destination’s characteristics, comfort/luxury, and expenditure were dominant elements while the factors of eco-certificates and environmental/cultural impacts were rated significantly lower (Table 6). In contrast to the preferences of North American tourists, for example, in a Tourism Canada (1995) adventure survey, it reveals that most tourists do not prefer luxury. In Wight’s (1996) North American study, a wilderness setting is rated as the most important feature for selecting an ecotourism destination.

Table 6. The rank of important factors when choosing a tourist destination

FACTORS	RANK
Destination features (e.g. nature, culture, amenities)	1
Comfort/luxury (e.g. facilities, accommodation, and restaurants)	2
Expenditure /price/cost	3
Convenience/distance/transport	4
General sense of safety	5
Reputation/credibility(e.g. eco-certificate)	6
Environmental/cultural concerns	7

A strong majority of respondents revealed that they would continue selecting and going to the tourist destination even if they knew it had a negative impact on the environment/local community (Table 7). Although half of respondents had heard of green products before (Table 8), fifty-five percent of respondents,

however, espoused a willingness to only pay up to five percent more for green products while only eight percent would pay over twenty percent more for a ‘green premium’ (Table 9). This finding echoes the argument made by Harris (2006:9): ‘Chinese people will generally choose comfort and convenience over environmental protection, especially if they expect to incur some cost associated with pro-environmental behaviour (e.g. buying green products).’

Table 7. Intention to continue going to a tourist destination

<i>‘What would you do if you know that a tourist destination has a negative impact on the environment/local community?’</i>	
Continue choosing and going	79%
Do not go	21%

Table 8. Awareness of the sale of green products

<i>‘Have you heard about the sale of green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations in China?’</i>	
Yes	52%
No	48%

Table 9. Willingness to pay for green products

<i>‘How much more would you be willing to pay for green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations?’</i>	
<i>Green premiums</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1-5%	55%
6-10%	16%
11-15%	11%
16-20%	10%
20% and above	8%

The results from interviews and tourist surveys show that a respondent’s verbal commitment was not always consistent with their actual practices and actions. Although respondents demonstrated a strong pro-environmental attitude in the interviews, their environmental behaviour and practices were not reflected the same way as in the tourist surveys. Much of the potential to transform green attitudes into actions remains unrealised. The above environmental attitudes

indicate that there is, to some extent, a trend among the Chinese respondents to return to their traditional values - 'man-nature unity', or in their word '*fanpuguizhen*' returning to a traditional harmonic relation between man and nature and obtaining simplicity and happiness. This cultural tradition portrays a co-dependent relationship between man and nature, either through Confucian ethical cultivation ('noble man'), Daoist adaptative attitudes based on the way or *Dao* of nature, or Buddhist egalitarianism according to the law of causation (see Chapter Two).

This tradition has shown its application to modern Chinese perceptions of man-nature relationship in the foregoing analysis. A strong majority stated that human beings were a part of nature and should not try to master it and instead learn to live in a mutual beneficial way. This perceived relationship made Chinese tourists express their environmental concerns in that they felt a strong obligation to safeguard its well-being. This in turn exhibits a strong emotional attachment to the environmental issues.

Using Maloney and Ward's (M & W) ecological scale (Maloney *et al.*, 1975), it demonstrates a strong ecological affect. However, to assess their actual environmental behaviour and practices, environmental protection would become subordinate when conflicts happened between environmental protection and individual interests. This indicates that people's intention to protect the environment is conditioned by its associated economic returns. As Kalland (1996:255) argues: 'The persons who are most likely to protect the environment are those with vested economic interests in it, like fisherman, farmers and loggers - or the tourist industry if nature is turned into a commodity for their use'.

One apparent finding of the above analysis is that Chinese

philosophical/religious traditions do have a strong aesthetic influence on and an emotional appeal to Chinese people regarding the appreciation of nature, but they hardly act as an ethical basis, working as a moralising agency, to guide contemporary Chinese environmental behaviour.

6.3. Interpretations of ecotourism

The attractiveness of ecotourism largely rests in its potential role as a tool for balancing conservation and development as discussed in Chapter One. Accordingly, the relationship between tourism, environment and local communities has become the key theme emphasised by literature on ecotourism. In an ideal form, a symbiotic relationship exists among the three propositions that each makes positive contributions to the others. For example, tourism can advance conservation objectives by generating revenues, creating jobs, increasing awareness, and educating tourists and local communities. On the other hand, environmental goals can be jeopardised by the adoption of the ecotourism label that does not put into practice the principles of sound ecotourism, but rather a new market gimmick, a form of ‘greenwashing’, to make money. In Chapter One, I described this situation by offering a classification of ‘deep’ ecotourism and ‘shallow’ ecotourism. In this section, I will focus on assessing how the tourism-environment-community relationship is reflected in SZWP, and how tourism development in the Park contributes and detracts from nature conservation and community development. By examining these questions, it aims to reveal attitudes of diverse stakeholders of (eco)tourism particularly of local communities towards nature and ‘protected areas’ and the influence of political-economic contexts of Shen Zhen on the development of nature-based tourism/(eco)tourism.

6.3.1. The natural environment and local communities

A frequently reported problem of the establishment of protected areas/resorts/parks is to restrict the use of, and exclude from, access to natural resources upon which local livelihoods are heavily dependent. This is particularly the case in SZWP which has led to a continuous conflict between locals and the developer of the Park. The site of OCT East, which includes SZWP, was originally an uncontaminated mountain area with approximately eighty to one hundred inhabitants who were heavily reliant on the natural resources of the mountain to survive. During 1979 and 1980, their land was appropriated by the government which compensated them with a grant of other types of land (*'fan liu di'*) at the bottom of the mountain. The displaced indigenous people subsequently lived in a village called '*Shangping Village*' which is located right at the bottom of the OCT East Resort (Figure 15). There are two other villages around the Resort - *Chengkeng Village* and *Meisha Village* but they do not share the same proximity as *Shangping Village* to the OCT East Resort.

Interviews with residents from *Shangping Village* who were displaced from the mountain area revealed a high degree of resentment and hostility toward the OCT East Resort. A middle-aged woman complained:

We had got used to making a living by carrying out agricultural activities such as farming and planting on the mountain. Since we were displaced to this village (Changping Village) we have lost our jobs and land and that now makes it harder for us to earn our livelihoods. (SZWP informant 136, 18.04.2010)

Another similarly aged woman added:

We prefer our previous life on the mountain which provided us with an everlasting green environment, fresh air, and simple

lifestyle. However, with the development of the OCT East Resort, this area has become so crowded, especially during weekends and public holidays so that we cannot go out at all, due to the surge in tourists. (SZWP informant 127, 15.04.2010)

Furthermore, a woman aged over sixty argued:

When we lived on the mountain, we could do physical exercises at anytime and at any place. However, nowadays, we are even not allowed to do morning exercises (between 5am and 7am) in the square in front of the ticket office of the Resort. (SZWP informant 124, 15.04.2010)

Figure 15. Shangping Village

(a) The entrance of the Village



(b) Inside Village (The OCT East Resort is just behind the buildings)



(c) The construction in process at the left side belongs to the OCT East Resort



The empirical research denotes one of the key values of nature that Chinese people believed is to improve human health both spiritually and physically (e.g. Buckley *et al.*, 2008; Donohoe and Lu, 2008; Ye and Xue, 2008). The outdoor morning physical exercise is a common practice for the majority of Chinese people to keep fit. Therefore, it is commonplace for residents of all ages (though the majority are middle-aged and elderly people) to practise various physical exercises such as *tai chi* and dancing in urban parks, community squares, and even the roofs of buildings.

The land of the Resort is not only valued by the locals in terms of its role in providing livelihoods and improving human health, it is also valued for its historical connections and spiritual attachments. For example, a seventy-year-old man claimed:

We lived on that piece of land for a few generations. We were all well protected by that piece of sacred land, so that we had a much happier life on the mountain than the life in this village. Giving you an example, when we lived on the mountain, we seldom got ill. We could recover from illness by the blessing of the gods of mountains, river, and forest without taking any medicine. We just needed to take natural herbs even if we were really sick. (SZWP informant 159, 27.04.2010)

This point is very consistent with the findings of many Chinese researchers (e.g. Chen and Liu, 1998; Dai and Qi, 2001; Hu, 2006) who found in their studies that there is a strong attachment to nature among some indigenous Chinese groups, and they believe that they are under protection from gods and goddesses who dwell in sacred mountain and river areas. Besides this, a middle-aged man continued complaining:

The land of the OCT East Resort used to belong to us, but we have been prohibited from entering the site, even for worshipping our

ancestors, since our land was appropriated by the government. You know it is one of the most important traditional events for us to worship our ancestors during the Tomb-sweeping Day (4th April). We have to submit an application to the Resort authority for the purpose of going back to our land to make our ancestral worship every year. However, for most of the time, our applications were refused. We tried to protest against it, but they have got a large number of security guards. We are so powerless that we have to buy entrance tickets (£22 very expensive) to enter the site as normal tourists. (SZWP informant 138, 22.04.2010)

Regarding the power relationship between the locals and the developer of the Resort, all the interviewees expressed the view that their power was too weak to make a protest. Since politics is still a sensitive topic in mainland China, most villagers were very suspicious and self-defensive, so the author initially encountered significant difficulties in approaching local villagers in *Shangping* Village and *Chengping* Village as identified in Chapter Four. After one-month of communication and interaction with the villagers and by accommodating myself inside *Shangping* Village by renting a flat, I gradually obtained respect and trust from the villagers. A group of villages (seven people) from *Shangping* Village first accepted my request for interviews and two of them said:

We now believe you are a research student, but you are still powerless and you cannot help us to make any changes. During the initial establishment of the Resort, we tried to make a complaint and give some suggestions regarding the usage of land to our district authority as well as the relevant departments of the government, but nothing has been changed (e.g. SZWP informants 117 and 118, 07.04.2010).

A fifty-seven-year-old lady commented:

Although the government gave us some compensation for appropriating our land, it is not adequate. We always admire those villagers in Hong Kong who can become a millionaire in one night because the Hong Kong government gave them adequate compensation for their land. So we have a saying -

'villagers here are crying while villagers in Hong Kong are laughing when the government comes to levy their lands'. (SZWP informant 133, 17.04.2010)

From the above interview evidence, we can see that local residents around the Park, especially for the indigenous groups, expressed considerable dissatisfaction and resentment towards the way in which the natural environment was developed by the OCT developer, leading to a conflictive relationship.

6.3.2. Local communities and tourism

Along with the exclusion of the indigenous group from accessing the Resort, there are few ecotourism-related benefits of SZWP that have contributed to this group, although local economic gains from ecotourism have been widely discussed with reference to improvements in employment and income, and local sharing in the distribution of tourism revenues. A different result was however, disclosed, regarding such socio-economic benefits, between the two types of local community as defined in Chapter Four - indigenous villagers and newly arrived migrants. Based on the interviews with Guanpin Yang, the head of Meisha Village, he commented:

There is almost no indigenous resident employed in the OCT East Resort mainly for two reasons. One is that, outside migrants are a much cheaper labour force compared to the locals. The other reason is that, outsiders are believed to be more easily managed since they belong to a 'floating' population who has no social network in the area, which makes them more tolerant to various harsh conditions than local residents (Yang, 01.07.2010).

In the author's interviews with twenty-nine park staff members, no one was found to be from the indigenous resident group. The majority of them came from different regions in southern China. One exception is that, there are a small proportion of indigenous tea planters who work in a tourist attraction called 'Sanzhoutian Tea Garden' beside SZWP. This can be argued, on the one hand, as

an effective way to promote the local tea culture as well as to bring economic returns to a small number of locals. It can also be seen as the park operators capitalising on this group of locals who have become an attractive selling point for the Park to maximise its profits.

In terms of the other group of local residents, newly arrived migrants who live around the Park, they expressed a somewhat different narrative from that of the indigenous group. This group mainly constitutes the low-level work force of SZWP such as park guards, cleaners, and car drivers. For example, a middle-aged woman who was originally from a rural area of *Hubei* Province, Southern China, now rents a flat and lives in *Shangping* Village said:

My daughter works in the Park as a scenic car driver. She enjoys working there because of the beautiful working environment as well as a decent income. Her current job is much better than working in our hometown. Her monthly income is sufficient to support our whole family. (SZWP informant 155, 28.05.2010)

The other respondent around his fifties, working as a cleaner in the Park, commented:

Not only does the park provide me a job opportunity to change my traditional hard livelihood as a farmer in a poor village in Sichuan Province, I am also able to see new things and broaden my horizon (yanjie) through interacting with park visitors and other park staff members. (SZWP informant 142, 21.04.2010)

Moreover, few local entrepreneurs can benefit from the tourism development of the area with just two examples of local restaurants (*Wugu Fang* and *Shensui Fa*) operated by indigenous villagers. Nevertheless, there is an unequal economic distribution between local entrepreneurs and the developer of OCT East Resort. Tourists' expenditure can be regarded as a direct income source for the local communities. However, a tiny portion of that money generated is kept in the

community since the majority of tourists are organised in tour groups who come and leave the Resort by tour buses. Their spending opportunities are mainly made inside the Resort. Low levels of local ownership enables locals to share only a tiny slice of the ecotourism ‘pie’.

Besides the limited economic benefits among the locals, ecotourism may also contribute to improved infrastructural components (housing, roads, electricity, etc.) to host communities and intercultural appreciation and understanding between host communities and tourists (Wearing, 2001; McNeely *et al.*, 1991). Although road improvements were observed, for example, a second highway to *Yantian* District (the OCT East Resort is located inside) has been built since the development of the Resort, the establishment of the highway has not brought significant benefits to locals. On the contrary, traffic congestion has become one of the biggest complaints among local villagers. With the opening up a second highway, it has brought greater convenience to tourists who can easily flock into the *Yantian* District, as the majority comes by tour buses and private cars. Some villagers who were interviewed complained that it was very hard for them to go out to buy daily groceries during weekends and public holidays due to the serious traffic jams. The road improvement, in this sense, may best be seen as degradation on the simple and peaceful livelihoods of most local residents.

6.3.3. The natural environment and tourism

There is no doubt that one of the direct economic benefits from (eco)tourism are tourism revenues. They can be an indispensable source to contribute towards nature conservation projects of protected areas. The various ways for the Park to collect revenues are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Options for revenue collection

1. Entrance fee

- £13 per adult; £6.50 for senior citizens (65-69 years old); and free of charge for the elderly (over 70 years old) and children (below 1.2 metre in height)

2. User fee (for facility use, e.g. gear rentals, camping spots, bicycles etc)

- Cable car ride: £2 per person
- Bicycle rentals: £5 per person/hour
- Tour guide fee: £50- £110 per group
- Scenic tour car ride: £3 per person
- Hot balloon ride: £1 per person

3. Merchandising

- Films/performances
- Shops/Souvenirs: e.g T-shirts, wallets, pens and pencils, postcards, CDs, etc
- Hotels and restaurants
- *Tianlu* villas

SZWP has achieved financial self-reliance from its tourism revenues as shown above since its opening in 2007. Moreover, the Park started to make profits from the second year of its opening. Ms. Wang (01.06.2010) further stated:

Approximately £40 million (RMB 400 million in Chinese currency) have been invested into various environmental conservation projects in the Resort. These included integrating advanced environmental technologies such as wind power, biogas systems, wetland purifying system, etc.

Although some efforts have been made to protect the natural environment, more conflicts between conservation and development are revealed in the Park. It is claimed that ecotourism has the potential to transform use and non-use values of natural resources into obvious economic returns while at the same time contributing to its preservation and conservation (Dharmaratne *et al.*, 2000). In the case of SZWP, there is a significantly different view in the way in which nature is valued between local communities and the developer. The developer holds the view that the only way to save nature is to express its value in a 'price'. For example, Mr. Qiao (02.05.2010) went on to argue:

The original site of SZWP was a piece of 'huangye' (useless land) which had no value at all. A small group of farmers lived there and in fact their activities were detrimental to the natural environment. For example, rubbish and sewage were dumped everywhere because of no proper refuse treatment. Random cutting and logging occurred frequently. However, since the site was converted into a park, we have implemented a sustainable management to better protect the natural resources which includes integrating renewable energy, establishing sewage and waste systems, and recreating natural habitats for wildlife. We have also developed a series of hotels with different themes as well as high-income housing estates, to further add its economic value to this piece of land.

On the contrary, the local residents, with a focus on the indigenous villagers interviewed, expressed a high social and spiritual value which attached to the land. For example, (SZWP informants 127 and 159) continued to claim:

That piece of land is priceless to us because we had made a living on it for several generations. The land provided us not only material needs but also spiritual fulfilment. We had our traditional ways to live with the land in harmony. For example, we recycled most of our domestic waste into agricultural fertilisers. We lived in a certain part of area and left the rest of land untouched for wildlife habitats. There used to be a wide variety of wild animals such as wild pigs, rabbits and all kinds of birds. But now we can hardly see any since converting the land into a park.

Mr. Datong Zhang, a member of a Chinese environmental NGO, has criticised thus:

Tourism developers in China cannot simply claim that they are operating an environmentally friendly ecotourism site, by fencing up a piece of natural environment and excluding local residents without compromising their commercial profits. (Zhang, 30.06.2010)

Moreover, Junfeng Zhou, a manager of real estate in the area, gave both positive and negatives views towards development of the Park. He commented:

The development of the OCT East Resort has to some extent triggered Yantian's economic growth. For example, nowadays the whole area (Yantian) has been categorised as one of the most expensive areas in Shen Zhen with reference to luxury villas, high-class properties, and superior hotels. It has attracted a large number of private investments in real estate since starting the project of the OCT East Resort in 2005. The population has also increased sharply during the past six years from initially several thousands to nowadays twenty-five thousand. In the meantime, the whole area has been transformed from a small peripheral village into a modern popular tourist destination. From a negative perspective, the massive development of the real estate inside the protected area (the OCT East Resort) has definitely damaged ecological resources. (Zhou, 15.05.2010)

Kent (2003) makes the point that, sound ecotourism can act as a generator to maximise the value of natural resources, by modifying and reshaping various natural characteristics. During the process, although the construction of tourist facilities and over-exploitation of attractions may damage the quality of environments, ecotourism has the potential for securing environmental vitality. Based on the different ways in which nature is valued between local communities and the park developers, the case of SZWP, however, reflects a contradictory situation, compared to Kent's statement which is more consistent with the phenomenon 'greenwashing', or Honey's term 'ecotourism lite'.

The Park reflects a typical example of the exercise of human power to manipulate the natural environment. The Park contains thirteen man-made tourist attractions such as an artificial wetland, European style church, and Swiss Garden. Based on the interviews with local residents, they claimed that the original flora was completely erased while visually appealing flowers and vegetations were planted as well as various structures being built. Moreover, the

Park experiences a heavy pressure from an over-load of tourists especially during weekends and public holidays, which results in a series of park problems such as deteriorating soil and land, disturbing community residents and conflicts between park staff and disorderly crowds. For example, a park employee, Mr. Junhui Ma (20.06.2010), stated:

We received around fifty thousand tourists on the 'Labour Day' (May 1st) and approximate thirty thousand tourists on the 'Dragon Boat Festival' (June 15th) in 2010, which led to total chaos with the tourist facilities of the Park.

From the author's field observations, on the 'Labour Day' in 2010, the author spent nearly three hours getting to SZWP from the 'Knight Valley' (the bottom of the OCT East Resort, the main entrance), because of the enormous long queue of traffic for both commuting buses and cable cars from the 'Knight Valley' to SZWP (the top of the Resort) (Figure 16). The crowds can best be described as 'mountain people, mountain sea'. It takes around one hour to get to the top on a normal day.

Figure 16. Crowds of visitors

(a) Waiting for cable car ride



(b) In front of the Ticket Office



The Park receives at least several thousand tourists even on a week-day. 'Ecotourism' in SZWP, in this way, has started to evolve into 'mass ecotourism'

(Campbell, 2002), or, referring to Neto's argument, that it has been turned into a means for seeking for solely commercial benefits and even for promoting ecologically-damaging activities in natural environments, by absorbing mass tourism without considering the limited capacity of natural areas (Neto, 2003)

Moreover, the mode of (eco)tourism developed in SZWP also reflects the term coined by F. Hirsch, that of 'positional goods'¹¹. He argues that nature is valued by its scarcity so its value will diminish as a natural area becomes popular (Hirsch, 1977). Millions of visitors to SZWP every year may eventually lead the Park to experience a similar result as many Chinese 'hot spots' have experienced. For example, Chinese 'Land's End' (*Hainan* Island in southern China) has now lost its popularity due to extensive constructions of tourist facilities along the beach, as well as receiving enormous number of tourists.

In summary, (eco)tourism in SZWP, as discussed above, reveals a 'shallow' ecotourism as defined in Chapter One. A conflicting relationship between tourism, environment and local communities very much reflects a political ecology approach¹²: the dynamics of material and social struggles over natural resources, and power between local communities and the state-linked park developer. Central to this conflict is the unequal power relations leading to conflicts over access to natural resources. This is largely linked to systems of political and economic control in Shen Zhen. Chapter Five provided a detailed review on China's policy on development and the environment. It was argued that although China's environmental policy has grown and become a more

¹¹ The term coined by F. Hirsch in *Social Limits to Growth* (1977) to denote goods which are valued for their scarcity, and they tend to lose value as their use increases (Hirsch, 1977).

¹². 'Political ecology applies the methods of political economy in ecological contexts and can thus, in short, be interpreted as the study of ecological distribution conflicts' (Martinez-Alier 2002, p vii).

sophisticated and integrated framework since the 1990s, the environmental policy improvements reveal an incapacity with which to resolve the problem of a deteriorating environment under rapid economic growth.

Economic development is still a driving force in fulfilling China's modernisation process. In particular, Shen Zhen, as one of the earliest Special Economic Zones established in China, plays a key role as China's demonstration area with which to achieve modernisation in the country. Along with dramatic urbanisation over the past three decades, the first theme park in mainland China, 'Happy Valley' emerged in Shen Zhen, and the concept of 'urban ecotourism' and 'low-carbon economy' were initially promoted and developed in Shen Zhen when the OCT East Resort (which includes SZWP) was established as a demonstration base for combining the two concepts.

However, the case of SZWP reveals exactly the 'greenwashing' phenomenon of ecotourism, in which the park developer adopts the label of ecotourism to convince tourists of its good credentials, while essentially marketing strategies to make profits. Ironically, the Park is owned by the central state and developed and operated as a joint-effort of the state and a private corporation. However, the Park is established deeply within the government-designated ecological protection zone. This proves Gossling's argument:

The interest of the government to protect certain areas or to implement strict environmental legislation is often ambiguous because governments are usually proactive forces for economic growth and development. (Gossling, 2003:25)

In addition, regarding the Chinese political system, one party (communist-led) government implements absolute power, although it is claimed that decentralising the role of the nation state and empowerment on the public have

occurred in recent years. For example, it is argued that environmental NGOs within China have begun to shape the government environmental policy making process. However, based on the author's interviews with twelve Chinese environmentalists (including scholars, NGOs' members and governmental officials), the development and movement of NGOs in mainland China is still in an early stage, and their power is accordingly marginal.

In the context of SZWP, tourism development is dominated by a powerful government-led format in a large-scale and top-down approach. State planning has largely focused on the speed of regional economic growth while ignoring uneven economic distribution between local communities and other tourism stakeholders. Local communities are completely excluded from decision-making and planning process, so the majority of them cannot obtain economic benefits generated by tourism such as job opportunities, except the new migrants.

From what has been discussed above, it can be seen that SZWP demonstrates a more conflicting, rather than symbiotic relationship between tourism development, environmental protection and local involvement, and is a form of 'shallow' ecotourism. Such a mode of (eco)tourism development as manifested in SZWP is very much shaped by Shen Zhen's political-economic conditions regarding the city's development philosophies and conservation strategies. The context of SZWP, on the other hand, is exhibiting a tendency towards Disneyisation, a Western institutional influence on Chinese (eco)tourism projects. The possible significance and relevance of the idea of Disneyisation for SZWP is the focus of the next section.

6.4. The Disneyisation of SZWP

As defined in Chapter Three, Disneyisation means where Disney culture has been diffused into a wide range of sectors beyond the realms of the Disney theme parks, and become a successful business model of entertainment and reproduced in other nations such as China. I am proposing that one way of understanding the ‘shallow’ mode of ecotourism in SZWP is through the process of Disneyisation by examining the following interconnected features: theming; hybrid consumption; merchandising; and performative labour.

6.4.1. Theming

Theming, *zhuti* in Chinese, as defined in Chapter Three, means the application of a narrative motif to a place/object or institutions/exhibits. According to Ms. Wang (01.05.2010), ‘the key theming strategy of the Park is based on the idea of “1+6” (Table 11). Under the main theme (1) as an ‘International Eco-leisure Destination’, six sub-themes (6) interlocking in the four tourist attractions (‘Knight Valley’, ‘Wind Valley’, *Dahuaxing* Temple, and ‘Tea Stream Valley’) coupled with various transitional themes.

Table 11. The theming strategy of the OCT East Resort

The main theme (1)	International Eco-leisure Destination
Six sub-themes (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adventureland (e.g. the ‘Knight Valley’) ● Cultureland (e.g. Mayan Village of the ‘Wind Valley’, <i>Dahuaxing</i> Buddhist Temple) ● Fantasyland (e.g. Interlaken Town of the ‘Tea Stream Valley’) ● Natureland (e.g. Shen Zhen Wetland Park of the ‘Tea Stream Valley’) ● Luxuryland (e.g. <i>Tianlu</i> Mansion of the ‘Tea Stream Valley’ and

Transitional themes	<p>Interlaken Hotels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sportsland (e.g. Golf course of the ‘Wind Valley’) <p>e.g. ‘Picking tea-leaves Festival’ in spring every year and the ‘Chinese Dragon Festival’ in the middle of June.’</p>
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It can be seen that the way in which themes are identified by Wang is very consistent to that used by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), which embraces the main theme, the sub-themes, and the transitional themes (cited in Wong and Cheung, 1999). One important advantage in the adoption of the multi-themes is where Wang (01.05.2010) claimed: ‘it has enabled the Resort to create a competitive advantage over the others by attracting tourists of all ages’. The evidence shows that the Resort has started to make profits from the second year of its opening. Compared to other theme parks in mainland China, the OCT East Resort is one of the few successful examples. According to China Economic Reviews 1st December 2011, there are 2,500 theme parks in China at the moment. Seventy percent of them are in a loss status while twenty percent are managed to be self-reliant, and only ten percent are making profits. Wang further commended:

Although entertainment is the most visible facet of our Resort, we have strictly incorporated the principles of ecotourism into our planning and operation. Our goal is to provide a high quality tourist experience that enables city dwellers to be close to nature whilst learning from nature and making contributions to nature.
(Wang, 01.05.2010)

When closely looking at SZWP, the Park is themed as ‘Natureland’, presenting a series of floral displays, horticultural gardens, ornamental landscaping, and domesticated animals along with exotic architecture and performances. Such an artificial setting may best refer to what Desmond (1999:164) termed ‘faked

organic realisms’.

To ascertain tourist motivations for visiting SZWP, the opportunities to ‘enjoy elegant scenery’ and to ‘experience exotic culture’ were the primary reasons for visiting the Park (Table 12). This can be seen from the high popularity of themed natural/cultural attractions for visitors to take photographs (Figure 17). For example, the name of ‘Four-Season Flower Field’ displays more than forty red, yellow, green, purple and orange plants and flowers as a belt of flowers. The ‘Sunflower Garden’, is made up of a vast expansive piece of planted golden sunflowers. This scenery provides tourists with a great visually aesthetic satisfaction so that tourists posed for photographs to show them inside ‘nature’.

Table 12. Tourist motivations to SZWP (*Five-score evaluation*)

Reasons	Mean
Enjoy elegant scenery/nature	4.18
Experience exotic culture (curiosity)	4.03
Have fun with family/friends	3.72
Improve physical/spiritual health	3.20
Learn about nature/culture	3.16
Rest/relax/get away	2.84
Take adventure	2.03

Besides these nature-themed attractions, various imitations of Western architecture and performances have created an exotic atmosphere with which to fulfil tourists’ curiosity and fantasy (Figure 18). A miniature version of Philadelphia’s ‘Love Park’ provides visitors a chance to pose for photographs as if they were truly in Philadelphia. Strolling in the ‘Interlaken Town’ creates a sense of being in Switzerland. There are similar effects to go to watch the ‘British Royal Guards Performance’, ‘Russian Circus Shows’, and take photos with clowns and ‘live sculptures’.

Figure 17. Various themed attractions



(Source: OCT East, 2011)

Figure 18. Theme attractions and performances

(a) 'Love Park'



(b) British Royal Guards Performance



(Source: OCT East, 2011)

(c) Russian Circus Shows



(d) 'Live Sculptures'



Two-thirds of park visitors mentioned that the interlinked themes of European culture and natural landscape were the key features drawing them to visit the

Park. SZWP Informant 39 further commented:

The foreign cultural attractions presented in this park are a perfect complement to the surrounding landscape. For visitors like me who have never been abroad, it is a good opportunity to experience occidental culture whilst relaxing in an elegant natural environment.

A mother with a ten-year-old daughter claimed:

My colleague recommended me to come here. There are various types of flowers, plants, and green elements so it is an ideal venue for us to experience nature. The striking point is that nature is presented in such a pretty and delicate way. Combined with a series of foreign buildings and performances, the Park provides me with a very enjoyable visitor experience. Meanwhile, for my daughter, the foreign cultures can broaden her horizons. (SZWP informant 24, 19.04.2010)

For most park visitors, there was a general agreement that the visit was worth the admission fee - £13. When questioned about whether they would have taken the trip if the area was kept in a status of pristine nature without the human-made elements, most of them commented that ‘there would be *huangye* without anything to see’.

6.4.2. Hybrid consumption

The second principle of Disneyisation is to encourage and stimulate consumption by combining various institutions in one complex which makes it hard for tourists to differentiate each institutional sphere. This is directly applied into SZWP where different theme attractions, hotels, restaurants, amusement facilities, and shops are interlocked with each other in a 38-hectare area. As noted in Chapter Three, what the majority of Chinese seek for when travelling to a place is largely based on a multi-purpose tourist experience ‘eating, staying,

playing, shopping, and entertaining' (*chi he xing, you gou yu*). All these elements directly determine the way in which they evaluate their experiences in a place.

When questioned: 'How would you rate your overall experience at SZWP'? thirty-eight percent of respondents from the tourist survey proclaimed 'excellent', forty-three percent with the answer 'good', twelve percent with 'neutral', and only seven percent chose 'bad'. It shows that the majority of the respondents satisfied with their visits, leading to an invariable comment: 'Diverse tourist attractions and facilities created rich tourist experience (*hao wan*)'. Many claimed that they would come again because the Resort, which contains four theme parks including SZWP, was too big to see all in one day. A family (five people) from Hong Kong stated:

We bought the hotel special ticket that includes accommodation in the 'Train Hotel' and entrance admission to the Park. This type of ticket provides us great advantages in that we are able to be very close to 'nature' or more accurately in 'nature' by staying at the 'Train Hotel' which is located inside the Park, and have privileges to enter the Park before the opening time (9am) to avoid the crowds. This park offers so many things (attractions, rides, entertainments, accommodations, etc.) that it is hardly comparable to have the same experience in Hong Kong. Although the Ocean Park and Disney Park in Hong Kong share some similar features with this Resort, they are on a much smaller scale. (SZWP informant 51, 03.05.2010)

This family further stated:

Due to the rich natural/cultural resources and diverse tourism services, there are more things to see and experience in tourist sites on the mainland compared to those in Hong Kong. We spend most of our free time travelling to the mainland and to see different parts of China.

These comments made by this family, to a considerable degree, mirrored the

reasons given by most of the majority of Hong Kong citizens who visit SZWP and other parts of the mainland. In terms of the sample of mainland respondents, most of them expressed a high appreciation of a wide range of products/services offered by the Park. In their eyes, to be a successful/popular tourist site which includes ecotourism, it has to be a tourism complex that enables it to fulfil the various needs of tourists. For example, SZWP informant 07 continued to claim:

When we feel hunger, we can immediately find dining outlets; when we feel bored, we can participate in amusement facilities or go shopping; when we feel tired, we can find a place to have a rest (resting areas or hotels) or find a way to relax such as have a spa or watch 3D movies, performances, and shows ... A tourist site which contains all these functions can definitely enhance our tourist experiences. SZWP is one example in this regard.

This comment is very consistent with the findings of Li's study on a few nature-based tourist sites in China. She argues: 'Comfort of visitors was paramount over conservation of nature and maintenance of biodiversity' (Li, 2005:201). Therefore, it is a common practice to incorporate extensive human-made constructions such as cable cars, hotels, souvenir shops, karaoke, and restaurants into nature-based tourist sites (Li, 2005). In this respect, the way to describe SZWP may best fit into the description on Marine World Africa in California made by Desmond (1999:193) 'Part zoo, part theme park, part circus, even part carnival'.

6.4.3. Merchandising

Along with the technique of hybrid-consumption that SZWP has adopted, another closely related technique is merchandising. The Park sells a very extensive range of merchandise from small items such as caps, wallets, pens, pencils, postcards, and soft toys to expensive houses (i.e. *Tianlu Mansion*). Mr. Qiao (02.05.2010) commented: 'the merchandise is a vital part of our business

because it produced most revenue that directly contributes to our environmental conservation projects'. When questioned about the difference in park operation between SZWP and HKWP (Hong Kong Wetland Park), he commented:

The funding resource is one of the key differences between the two parks. The Hong Kong Government is the major funding provider to HKWP while we have to manage our finance by ourselves although SZWP is owned by the state. (Qiao, 02.05.2010)

He went on to argue:

The tourism industry in China is currently still in a developing stage, the majority of tourists belong to organised scenic tour groups who pay more attention to being entertained and relax with less interest in studying and learning. In order to sustain our business and further make profits, we have to attract more visitors and sell more products. Therefore, we have heavily adopted theme parks' techniques and methods (e.g. Disney World) in terms of park marketing, visitor service and management. (Qiao, 02.05.2010)

As a result, the current development model in SZWP is to cater to the demands of mass tourism. The number of tourist is the crucial factor as to how much revenue the Park can obtain. Although there is no exact number for tourists visiting SZWP, there were about three million tourists visiting the OCT East Resort in 2009 (Wang, 01.05.2010).

As noted above, the OCT Group has started to make profits after the second year of opening the Resort, where the Group initially invested £350 million in 2006 (Wang, 01.05.2010). The admission fee is comparatively higher than other tourist sites in Shen Zhen. For example, the admission charge for the whole resort (the OCT East Resort) is £27 and £13 for the 'Tea Valley' which includes SZWP, compared to other 'ecotourist' sites, such as *Qingqing* World in Shen

Zhen with £5 for the entrance fee and £3 for HKWP. Moreover, almost all amusement facilities in SZWP have different fees applied even for the scenic electric tour car with a charge of £3 each person. Since most park visitors came in a group either with families or relatives and friends, some of them complained that it was too expensive to have a car ride for a group of people.

With regard to a wide range of merchandise, the majority of tourists revealed a positive attitude towards small items such as postcards, umbrellas, caps, toys and T-shirts. They claimed that, although this merchandise was slightly more expensive than those in the market, they would like to buy some as souvenirs. There are also some negative voices against these products. For example, a local tour guide (Yumei Xu) criticised the fact that some merchandise sold in the Park was very harmful for the environment such as disposable plastic raincoats, and plastic-bottled water. She argued:

Since this park is claimed as an 'ecotourist' site, they should pay more attention to environmental issues. The disposable plastic raincoat is one of the best-selling goods in the Park, because it is cheap at £1 and it is convenient that can be immediately thrown away after usage. It is inappropriate for the park operator to emphasise earning money, by selling extensive amounts of raincoat, without considering their impact on our environment. The same goes for the bottled water. I think the Park should set up self-filling water facilities, as is the practice of many parks in Hong Kong, to encourage tourists to reuse their bottles and reduce environmental damage. (Xu, 21.06.2010)

The harshest criticism among park respondents arises from the expensive/luxury merchandise of the Park - real estate (*Tianlu Mansion*). Many park visitors argued that SZWP and the whole Resort (the OCT East Resort) did not address any environmental issues; rather, their key purpose was to develop and sell expensive houses by adopting a green rhetoric. A middle-aged man who came with a tour group from *Xinzhu*, Taiwan, stated:

This park is so commercialised that it is hardly able to consider it as a 'wetland' for the purpose of conservation and education. It is rather a subsidiary product of real estate development of a private corporation (cai tuan). To build so many luxury villas inside this mountain area, it has inevitably brought damage to the original flora and fauna. In our region, we also have similar development modes. However, for the wetland, we have Xinzhu Wetland Park along the coastline for sixteen kilometres where wetland conservation is the key purpose (SZWP informant 46, 03.05.2010).

An environmental official, Youlan Zeng, from Fuzhou Environment and Planning Bureau argued:

It is a common practice to combine tourism and real estate in most tourist sites of China. Promoting tourism can bring more people to an area. Accordingly the price of the land around the tourist site will go up quickly. At moment, most parts of China are in the process of marching towards modernity. With the permission and support of local governments, most tourist sites, including those of 'ecotourism', have incorporated expensive house projects into their planning and development. Such a combined tourism and real estate is further expected to stimulate the development of the regional economy. (Zeng, 05.04.2010)

During my field visits, Tianlu Mansion was developed over two phases. Most villas were sold out with at least an eightfold higher price than the normal houses in the general market. When questioned about the future development of the Park, Ms Wang (01.06.2010) commented: 'more hotels and villas will be built'.

6.4.4. Performative labour

The final technique that SZWP has borrowed from Disney ideas is that of performative labour. This is reflected by both park staff members and animal inmates. The Employee Handbook which is provided to every park employee,

clearly identifies that, the first role of being an employee was to show cheerfulness, friendliness, and helpfulness to park visitors. If any park employee was complained about by the visitors regarding his/her negative attitudes, he/she would incur cash penalties. Under this system, most of the time, we can see ever-smiling and ever-helpful faces among the park employees, even during the public holidays to a vast crowd of constantly-pushing visitors (Figure 19). Some employees in the interview discussions showed their frustration about presenting such an ever-smiling face. A male park staff member around his twenties claimed:

We have to keep a cheerful and smiling face to the visitors all the time although sometimes we are really reluctant, for example, if we feel exhausted or meet rude and obstinate visitors. But here the visitors are the 'God', we have to perform and pretend to be friendly otherwise our salaries will be deducted by our supervisor. (SZWP informant 92, 12.04.2010)

This comment confirms what Hochschild (1983) has claimed in that the use of 'unreal emotions' leads to distress among the employees. In this sense, the use of a performative human smiling face in SZWP can be regarded as another form of merchandise, as noted in Chapter Three; a commercially-driven emotional 'product'.

Besides the human performative labour, animals were also incorporated into the performative realm. Although the presentation of animals and animal performances are a common practice of the Disney theme parks, when such a practice is integrated into 'ecotourism' projects, this will inevitably bring about controversial opinions from the different stakeholders.

Figure 19. Performative labour of employees



(Note: the left side photo shows that a female employee was waving her hand to say ‘goodbye’ to visitors who were taking a cable car ride - a type of performative labour. The right side photo demonstrates that a foreign employee dressed up as ‘Chaplin’ to provide photography-taken opportunities for tourists - another type of performative labour.)

One of the most popular activities in SZWP is the ‘parrot performance’ (Figure 20). The parrots were trained to perform various acts such as ‘play basketball’, to act as cleaners to pick up rubbish, and to ‘ride bicycle’. They were also trained to intimately interact with park visitors, for example, standing on visitors’ shoulders or heads, opening up wings to provide photography-taken opportunities under the trainer’s instruction. Moreover, the parrots were trained to have an ability to distinguish the different values of pieces of Chinese currency. The parrots only picked up Chinese notes from visitors’ hands with big nominal values like five *yuan* (Chinese currency sign) and ten *yuan* while the face value of notes with one and two were always ignored (Figure 21).

Figure 20. Parrot performance



Figure 21. Parrots were picking up Chinese money from a visitor's hand



These practices can be criticised as contradictory to animal rights which concerns animal ethics and intrinsic habitats, supported by many animal welfare groups. They can also be considered as making a mockery of conservation in that wild animals are commoditised, referring to Beardsworth and Bryman's argument, that 'they are "staged" as attractions and are "workers" or "cast members" in the playgrounds created by the leisure industry' (Beardsworth and Bryman, 2001:99). A similar argument can be found in Desmond's example of the killer whale 'Shamu' shown in Sea World theme parks, who claims that such animal performances 'are not only spectacular performances in themselves, but also serve to increase the attractiveness of merchandise and souvenirs based on the animals concerned' (Desmond, 1999, cited in Beardsworth and Bryman, 2001:98).

When we turn our attention to the response of the park authority of SZWP, it reveals a totally different perspective. Mr. Qiao (02.05.2010) proclaimed:

Our parrot performances are not only for entertainment, but we hope evoke tourists' emotional attachment and environmental consciousness, through the parrots mimicking human behaviour and actions, as well as their 'love' of their trainers. In other words, we use such performances to indirectly promote education and conservation under a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere.

Ms. Wang supported Qiao's statement by further claiming:

Most Chinese people travelling to a place seek out experiences which are spectacular, compelling and entertaining rather than detailed interpretations and intensive educational programs. We have to tactfully combine entertainment and education, for example, use our members, parrots, etc., to arouse the tourists' interest in animals and further influence their environmental behaviour. (Wang, 01.06.2010)

This is consistent with the results of Li's study on Chinese tourists' attitudes towards nature-based tourism. She claims:

A generalised attitude about tourism stresses entertainment and rejects deep scientifically based interpretation of tourist sites, since 'being educated' is regarded as a kind of 'work' not leisure; and this leads to a rejection of a common western view that deep interpretation will enhance visitor satisfaction. (Li, 2005:350-360)

With respect to the reactions of park visitors, the majority expressed their preference for parrot performances because they were able to closely interact with them; otherwise it was even difficult to see any birds if they were in the 'wild'.

In the context of Disneyisation discussed above, it shows that SZWP has become heavily 'Disneyised'. The Park, despite being cloaked in a green-coated label, in practice, is a business. This business is based on the Disney model to sell commodities and experiences to paying visitors, and the more things that can be made into commodities (merchandising), the more things that can be sold and consumed (hybrid consumption). In this sense, nature is themed and transformed into marketable goods, including human emotional forces and animal habits (performative labour). This, consequently, shapes people's understanding and views of the 'real' thing, blurring the lines between reality and hyperreality. Making nature a theme enables tourists to experience wetland, flowers, trees, waters, and all sorts of natural resources in an artificial 'wild' setting without any danger or getting dirty. In other words, the Chinese philosophical/religious idea, 'man in harmony with nature' has been transformed into 'man in comfort with nature' and 'man is entertained by nature'.

Ecotourism, as the primary institution of conservation and education, thus has become a form of entertainment-orientated consumption in SZWP. The creation of such a luxury 'ecotourist' resort is, in reality, to attract 'egotourists', in Wheeler's term. Wheeler (1993) describes this group of tourists as pretending to see the 'wild' and have a concern for the environment, but, in fact, are opting for comfort over conservation. Since they have paid higher prices, they believe that they are entitled to visit more pristine and fragile natural environments, or, in most park visitors' words, 'to enjoy nature without the torture'. Such an ideology/activity of comfort/privilege in the 'wild' inevitably contradicts the essence of ecotourism. Although the Park seeks to promote public education, such an attempt is subordinated to that of entertainment and commercial goals. The Disneyised SZWP becomes an explicit model of the widespread character of 'ecotourist' projects in China, implying the lack of resistance of ethical prescriptions of 'Chinese philosophy' to the modern Western consumption culture. Having assessed the process of Disneyisation on SZWP, attention now turns to the other key Western development theory in which this thesis emphasised - Ecological Modernisation.

6.5. Application of Ecological Modernisation

From the above discussions, it reveals that SZWP fails to handle the vexed relationship between conservation and development. Many scholars, as discussed in Chapter Three, believe that Ecological Modernisation has a capacity to combine benefits between the two. In other words, Ecological Modernisation is closely allied to the discourse of sustainable development. It can be argued that sound ecotourism can be achieved through Ecological Modernisation. Ecological Modernisation subsumes three key themes; (1) the integration of science and technology; (2) the influences of market dynamics and economic agents; and (3) the involvement of civil society. Chapter Two assessed

the extent to which these themes could contribute to both environmental and economic vitality. The following section examines whether they are also applied to SZWP.

6.5.1. The integration of science and technology

Science and technology have been widely adopted as a powerful tool to reduce environmental externalities, and produce environmentally beneficial outcomes. Therefore, incorporating scientific-technological approaches into SZWP's design and management is expected to deliver a positive result for the environment and development.

The Park integrates a series of advanced eco-technologies into its design and operation. Such a synthetical utilisation of environmentally friendly technologies has enabled the Park to be awarded a prize as a 'pioneer and promoter in achieving low-carbon economy in mainland China'. 'In the initial planning of the OCT East Resort, we had decided to invest £2 million to build a group of wind mills in the middle of mountain' (now called 'Cloud Tribe') (Wang, 01.05.2010). A large scale windmill project occupies approximately ten thousand square metres which is expected to effectively utilise wind power to reduce the consumption of commercial electricity, and therefore achieve dual goals of increasing visual appeal as a tourist attraction as well as benefiting the environment.

The Park also adopts solar power which installs 644 streetlights by utilising wind and solar complementary power. It is claimed that such power can save about 330 thousand kwh electric energy consumption every year. Beside this, bio-energy is integrated into the Park. £1.3 million was invested to build a biogas collection system. It is said that it produces biogas of sixty thousand cubic metres which is equivalent to fossil fuel of thirty thousand kilogrammes.

Moreover, in terms of water resources, ten sewage management spots have been established in the Park which disposes of 3,500 cube metre sewage every day. Used water is recycled to irrigate vegetation. An artificial wetland with an area of 500 thousand square metres integrates an advanced water-purified technology to work as a natural filter screen for nearby *Sanzhoutian* Reservoir (one of the most important water resources in Shen Zhen). Other energy efficient saving features include six-litre water closets in the Interlaken Hotel, recycled heater energy for the central air conditioners, and the promotion of recycled materials (OCT East, 2007).

Based on the various advanced green technologies incorporated into the Park, the Park has been awarded the title of the 'National Model of Ecotourism Zone' jointly by the National Tourism Administration and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the 'Recycled Economy Demonstration Base' by the Shen Zhen municipal government. During the inspection visit by a group of officials from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, led by the deputy director - Lijun Zhang on January 9th 2008, Zhang claimed:

The green technologies adopted in environmental protection of the OCT East Resort can be promoted to achieve the recycled economy in medium-small cities, which can eventually produce a chain of environmental protection industries throughout the country. (Cited in OCT East, 2008)

Despite these positive comments and achievements, different views are held by park staff and visitors. A male park employee around thirty years old, who has worked in the Park for sixteen months, states:

Our park claims that we are heavily reliant on renewable energy such as solar and wind power with less consumption on the commercial electricity. In fact, those new energies can only supply a tiny proportion of power; even if they cannot sustain the

energy consumption of staff dormitories inside the Park. So the key energy resource is still from the Shen Zhen electric power station. (SZWP informant 112, 15.05.2010)

Moreover, one of the key green technologies the Park promoted is the utilisation of water resources to generate power. A female park staff member, aged twenty, presented the water electric generators in a display room: ‘We seldom use this machine although it can work. The machine is mainly used as a model to be exhibited to the public’ (SZWP informant 96, 13.04.2010). Many tourists, though, expressed their preference for watching an actual demonstration rather than an exhibited item for publicity. This echoes the statement made by a Chinese scholar, Yabin Li, who works in Nanjing University of mainland China. He argues:

For many so-called ‘ecotourist sites’ in mainland China, it is a common to see that they just simply display a few environmentally sound facilities such as windmills and solar panels, and then they proclaim that they are running ecotourism. For example, there is also a wetland park in Nanjing. The Park is labelled as a green ecotourist site because a few windmills are established inside. However, they act as a mere embellishment rather than as a conservation tool. (Li, 30.05.2010)

6.5.2. The influences of market dynamics

In Chapter Three, it was claimed that one way to reflect the importance of economic and market forces in ecotourism is to increase environmental fees or environmental awards to stimulate the implementation of environmental measures. This is similar to the rise of various ecotourism certification programmes, and eco-labelling schemes, which are used as effective marketing tools to standardise and institutionalise the ecotourism industry, by providing it a mechanism to improve the total performance regarding environment, socio-culture, and economy towards long-term sustainability.

In the case of SZWP, apart from the titles awarded above, it has also been awarded the title of ‘Shenzhen’s Educational Centre’ and ‘China’s 5A (AAAAA) Tourist Destination’. Its hotels (e.g. the Interlaken Hotel) have obtained a wide range of honours such as the ‘Annual Tourism Contribution Award’, the ‘Global Hotel Five-star Golden Diamond Award, the ‘Top Ten Themed Hotels in China’, the ‘Top Ten Charming Hotels in China, and the ‘Best New Hotels in China’. As noted earlier, its real estate development - *Tianlu* Mansions - has been awarded the ‘Best Globally living Environment for Humans’ by the United Nations.

Such numerous and diverse forms of certifications the Park has obtained have aroused a heated debate on its accreditation. Firstly, with respect to the award of the ‘National Model of Ecotourism Zone’, based on the tourism-environment-community relationship discussed above, the Park reflects a very weak form of ecotourism. It has put its primary emphasis on making profits, so entertaining tourists has outweighed any environmental conservation and public education objectives.

In essence, the Park was established through destroying original flora and fauna according to the interviews with local residents. Taking the Interlaken Hotel and the *Tianlu* Mansions as an example, they were built in an ecologically fragile area within the governmental designated ‘Ecological Protective Zone’. In this sense, they have become another way for high-income people to consume ‘nature’. Such massive constructions of hotels, luxury villas, and tourist facilities inside an environmentally sensitive area contradict the purpose of ecotourism. Many park visitors, especially for the age group of those between 26 and 35 who have travelled to many places both domestically and internationally, claimed that, ‘nature’ presented in the Park is ‘artificial’ and ‘fake’.

Secondly, in terms of the label 'Shenzhen's Educational Centre', the Park can hardly fulfil this role although it has made some effort. When Ms Wang was asked about her expectations and concerns about ecotourism development in the Park, she stated: 'My biggest concern is how to find an interactive way to convey environmental knowledge to park visitors while they are being entertained. At the moment, the educational role of our park is not very strong' (Wang, 23.04.2010). She further commented: 'HKWP is a good example of how to combine the two elements'.

Some interpretive materials are available inside the Park, but most of them cannot play an effective role in promoting public education. The 'Interactive Educational Room' inside the 'Four-season Botanic Garden' can be regarded as a key educational venue in the Park. It is supposed to serve a similar educational role as the indoor museum of Hong Kong Wetland Park, which showcases the importance of wetlands in relation to human culture, biodiversity and conservation. However, there are a limited number of information boards and interactive machines in the spacious room, while the majority of the machines do not work. The Room is located in the basement with no obvious signage, so only a small number of tourists have visited the Room, and most of them regarded it as a resting area instead of an educational venue (Figure 22). Moreover, all the interactive computer machines along the Wetland Corridor are covered with a label on the top stating 'They are in the process of being repaired'. Many park visitors, especially those who came with children, claimed that the Park should integrate appropriate educational programmes and interpretive media facilities to provide the opportunity for the public to learn about nature.

Figure 22. ‘Interactive Educational Room’



(Note: the right hand photo shows an ‘educational machine’ (no interpretive information about how to use it and what functions it is) that was used as a drying rack by visitors to dry their disposable raincoats.)

Finally, with regard to the question about the credibility of various awards and the certifications that the Park received, the majority of park visitors demonstrated a sceptical attitude. It can be seen that most of the awards belong to domestic Chinese designed certification schemes which have a different criterion and standardisation norms from those of internationally accepted schemes as discussed in Chapter Three. For example, SZWP informant 08 and a man aged forty (SZWP informant 40, 28.04.2010) argued:

I do not believe those certifications were issued under Chinese schemes. A recent example is a famous Chinese branded milk powder which has poisoned so many infants. Moreover, this park is owned by the central government so it is very easy to obtain all kinds of awards.

This may be one of the key reasons why the factor - ‘credibility (eco-certification)’ - was considered as one of the least important factors for tourists’ decision-making process in selecting a tourist destination as noted in the section of tourists’ environmental attitudes (6.2.2) (see Table 6).

6.5.3. Involvement of civil society

The final principle of Ecological Modernisation is stakeholder collaboration in

civil society. In terms of ecotourism, many scholars focus on the role of community participation to achieve ‘win-win’ scenarios for both economic gains and biodiversity integrity (e.g. Ross and Wall, 1999; Stoll-Kleemann and O’Riordan 2001). As the earlier section of the interpretation of ecotourism in SZWP (6.3) has revealed that there are fewer opportunities for local involvement in the Park’s planning and management, so a conflictive relationship between the locals and the Park exists.

Nonetheless, on a positive note, the Park is planning to cooperate with the Shen Zhen Broadcast University to set up a ‘National Low-carbon Tourism College’ which will also work as a ‘Low-carbon Information Centre’ in Shen Zhen. Ms. Wang (25.06.2010) stated:

The reasons for establishing this college are, on the one hand, to promote knowledge and concept of low-carbon economy to the public and, on the other hand, to provide staff educational opportunities for enhancing management effectiveness.

Many researchers have identified the lack of professional staff as a key problem in the majority of ecotourist sites in China (e.g. Stone and Wall, 2004; Ma, 2012). SZWP is particularly facing this issue as most park staff show limited knowledge about key themes promoted by the Park such as low-carbon, wetland conservation, and sustainable management. A few park visitors complained that they were given the wrong information by park employees.

When the author asked seven park interpreters some basic questions, such as the function of building the artificial wetland and water resource systems for irrigating vegetation, five of them said that they were not sure. Therefore, in order to deliver high-quality tourism experiences and promote ecotourism themes, it is essential for the Park to establish an educational venue, to increase

the knowledge of park staff as well as training professional tourist consultants to fill key park management positions. Ms. Wang (01.06.2010) further said: ‘We encourage all our employees to apply for a position in the College as we pay the half tuition fees’.

We can see that the Park reflects a weak form of Ecological Modernisation, which cannot provide a path to achieve its purported ability towards sustainable development. This is largely based on the very foundation upon SZWP that it is built of and developed - the overarching principle of economic growth. The Park does not implement fundamental environmental management and practices of Ecological Modernisation. Rather, it exploits the power of human ingenuity to present a seemingly environmentally sound site by adopting some green technologies. Such practices, in essence, hardly reach a trade-off between economic progress and environmental responsibility. Ecological Modernisation, in the context of SZWP, has thus become a ‘green’ embellishment.

6.6. Drawing on ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation

The form of tourism development of SZWP reflects the core criticism of ecotourism outlined in Chapter One, in relation to the nature of the consumption of ecotourism. The Park is seen as a typical example of modernity/consumption-inspired form of ‘Westernisation’ (Disneyisation) distorting and submerging Chinese home-grown philosophical values, orientated towards nature transformation, maximum profit and visitor ‘satisfaction’. This Disneyisation process is supported and reinforced by Ecological Modernisation in which advanced technologies are adopted to re-invest and reformulate the natural environment for themed leisure use and

nature appreciation, blurring the line of tourists' perception and attitudes between 'harmonic nature' and 'plastic nature'. Hendry (2000) refers to this as '*The Orient Strikes Back*, (the) putting on display of many features of western culture for Asians to wonder at, and to exoticise, a kind of reverse-orientalism' (cited in Urry, 2001:2).

The Park capitalises upon Chinese philosophy of nature and the environment by taking advantage of cultural traditions to sell tourism-related commodities. There is a profound discrepancy between philosophical creeds and practical applications. The Park does not put into practice the metaphysical insights and ethical prescriptions of 'Chinese Philosophy', whereas it instead adopts only its facade, a 'man-nature harmony' from a merely aesthetic perspective. The application of the two principles, harmony and *jingjie*, are used to guide the park's construction and architectural orientation. For example, a bridge links separate space; a pavilion is strategically placed on a round hill to enhance the vista; a winding trail encloses a space; waterfalls indicate balance between *yin* and *yang*. These practices, to some extent, echo aesthetic principles towards natural landscapes drawing upon Chinese philosophical traditions.

Accordingly, evidence shows the high degree of Chinese tourists' appreciation for such a modified 'natural' world in the Park as well as their search for particular natural symbols and objectives (e.g. water, mountain, butterflies) to partake of embedded connections to a cultural and philosophical heritage. Nonetheless, to further look into this, it also implies the result of human detachment from nature in modern society that make people adopt artificial nature as an acceptable reminder of 'man-nature harmony', instead of the real thing, drawing upon a form of plastic coated 'Chinese Philosophy'.

In contrast to environmental tools such as the Environmental Impact Assessment

(EIA) and the Visitor Impact Management (VIM), which are commonly adopted in management and planning of national parks and nature reserves in the West, SZWP incorporates *feng shui* into its planning and development, which spans a whole range of philosophical ideologies from Confucianism, Daoism to Chinese Buddhism. As discussed in Chapter Two, *fengshui* is considered as the environmental science of the ancients and an art of placement, requiring human beings to locate their objects in a very structured and appropriate way inside the natural environment, to achieve a mutual beneficial outcome between human agents and the natural environment. According to Ms. Wang (01.05.2010):

Although the exterior appearance of our park tends to be more dominated by Western theme park which features with a series of mimic western architectures and tourist facilities, we have incorporated the principles of fengshui into allocation of various man-made buildings and the construction of specific structures such as a body of water, the shape of mountains and a winding bridge, in order to enhance a harmony-inspiring environment.

Wang's concept of 'harmony-inspiring environment' can be easily observed to solely focus on visually aesthetical 'harmony' rather than ecological sustainability, because such 'harmony' is created on the basis of destroying original flora and fauna. In this case, *fengshui* has become an agent of environmental destruction instead of environmental science. As a result, it can be argued that the Chinese approach to nature lays importance on perceived aesthetic values about landscape and wilderness that necessarily allows modifying the biological and physical environment in order to create an idealised form of harmony, which is different from Western biocentric-orientated ecotourism paradigms which focus on sustainable development, with the principle of nature conservation taking primacy over economic benefits.

Overall, under the influence of political and economic contexts of Shen Zhen,

profit-making is the main driving force behind (eco)tourism at the Park which is led by the principles of Disneyisation in that both natural resources and cultural traditions have become marketable commodities. The original natural resources are erased, and instead a 'manufactured natural world' is established to make tourists 'comfort in nature' and 'be entertained by nature' by adopting the marketing gimmick of 'man in harmony with nature'. The effects of the commodification of nature and culture lead people to mislay their sensitiveness for the meanings of the natural world and cultural traditions. In this sense, Chinese tourists are conditioned to consume nature as entertainment, rather than any sort of ethical or harmonious experience.

Such a practice, with fewer attempts at conservation, but more focus on the utilisation of natural resources for human appreciation and comfort, indicates that localisation of ecotourism in SZWP takes precedence over the ideal form of ecotourism identified and practised in the West. The Park is developed to make money, rather than make benefits for the natural environment and local communities. It fits into the category of 'shallow' ecotourism as defined by the author in Chapter One. The claim of being a successful ecotourist site such as SZWP makes, is best seen as an exercise in public relations on behalf of the private company (OCT Ltd) and the government that is meant to offer the credibility and competitive advantages of consumer recognition and product differentiation. In essence, it is 'Greenwashing', another marketing strategy to make profits from expounding green rhetoric.

6.7. Conclusion

To summarise what has been discussed in this chapter, SZWP was examined by both the Chinese approach drawing on Chinese philosophical/religious traditions in terms of the Chinese attitudes towards 'nature' and the 'natural' and

their possible role as ethical prescriptions to environmental behaviour, as well as Western development theories, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation, in light of their influences on aspects of Chinese environmental awareness within the context of (eco)tourism development in the Park. The Park reveals an example of the Western modernist development model transforming local tourist place and space, reflecting globally influenced production and market-driven consumption on local natural resources and cultural traditions. SZWP embodies a 'shallow' form of ecotourism framework with a strong reflection on the process of Disneyisation which is enhanced by the principles of Ecological Modernisation. A specific Chinese way of conceptualising and appreciating 'nature' and 'natural space', to some extent, indicates its roots in Chinese philosophical/religious traditions, but with some discrepancy and distortion. In fact, such traditions hardly play a role as an effective ethical guidance towards nature and the environment among contemporary Chinese tourists. Overall, the underlying political-economic dynamics of mainland China plays a key role in Chinese environment-related behaviour and practices with a reflection on the way in which 'ecotourism' (SZWP) is developed. The forces of modernity and tradition are best seen as contradictory in the Park. Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation are clearly influencing and changing cultural values and practices towards the natural environment as well as related tourist activities, while providing opportunities for economic transformation and diversification at the cost of biodiversity conservation. Having assessed the case of SZWP, we now turn to the other key case study of this thesis - Hong Kong Wetland Park.

Chapter Seven: Hong Kong Wetland Park

The preceding chapter explored the issues related to Chinese environmental awareness by drawing on the context of urban (eco)tourism as manifested in the case of SZWP. It examined how ‘traditional values’ (derived from ‘Chinese Philosophy’) and Western development theories (Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation) were incorporated into Chinese attitudes towards nature as well as Chinese environmental practices and experiences. This chapter concentrates on the case of Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP), following a parallel approach to SZWP, by examining the role these three propositions have played in HKWP. The Chapter is thus organised into five main sections. The first one provides a brief description of the Park (7.1). The second section then examines how the manifestations of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ are applied to Chinese attitudes to nature with references to both the service provider (HKWP) and the tourism demand side (the park visitors) (7.2). The third section explores the possible process of Disneyisation (7.3), and the application of Ecological Modernisation is analytically discussed in the fourth section (7.4). This is then followed by interpretations of ecotourism at the Park (7.5). The Chapter concludes with a discussion on comparing the three propositions and their interrelationships reflected in the Park (7.6).

7.1. Site description

Hong Kong Wetland Park is located to the north of *Tin Sui Wai*, New Territories, Hong Kong (Figures 23), close to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, which serves as an important stopover station for water birds during their migrations between Arctic Russia and Australia with a seasonal population of over 100,000 waterbirds every year (AFCD, 2011). As noted in

Chapter Five, the idea of building a Wetland Park arose from three key stages. Firstly, the site was originally proposed as a sole conservative and ecological mitigation area, to compensate for substantially lost wetlands due to the urban development of *Tian Shui Wai* (TSW) New Town which was partly built on land reclaimed from fish ponds and *gei wai*. In the meantime, the area acted as a buffer between the urban expansion and the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, so meeting the demand for citizens to access nature and the wetlands while avoiding human impacts on the ecologically fragile Ramar Site (AFCD, 2011).

Figure 23. The location of Hong Kong Wetland Park



(Source: modified from HKWP, 2008)



(Source: modified from Yau, 2008)

Secondly, the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA, now renamed as Hong Kong Tourist Board HKTB) commissioned the Visitor and Tourism Study for Hong Kong (VISTOUR) in 1995. It suggested the need to diversify tourist attractions and products in order to sustain the long-term growth of the tourism industry (HKTA, 1999). On the one hand, due to the increasing competition from neighbouring mainland cities such as Shen Zhen and Guang Zhou, the development of new attractions seemed essential to sustain Hong Kong's long-term tourism market share. On the other hand, having witnessed the associated ecological problems brought about by continuous urban expansion, the promotion of nature conservation, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas such as Inner Deep Bay and Mai Po marshes, became an urgent issue. Following a study jointly conducted by AFCD and HKTB, it was decided to build upon the initially envisaged ecological mitigation area to create a world-class ecotourism site which combines tourist activities, education and community amenities, and promotes wetland conservation (HKWP, 2012).

Thirdly, to respond the statement made by the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, in his 1998 Policy Address, the Government designated the proposed Hong Kong Wetland Park as a Millennium project (WDI, 2005). This demonstrated the government's approach to nature conservation and urban development in the territory, by placing an importance on combining conservation, education and recreation within HKWP.

However, not all people supported the decision to develop the Park, and there was a key criticism that the government should develop the land for housing rather than setting it aside for a wetland park. The main reason for this is due to the scarcity of land to accommodate the huge population. For example, a park visitor from Kowloon, Hong Kong, said:

The majority of the land of Hong Kong is mountain area which is not suitable to develop high-rising buildings, so most of the population has to be concentrated in highly congested areas - Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. If the land of the Wetland Park was converted into residential areas, it could alleviate the problems of densely populated areas. (HKWP informant 62, 09.06.2010)

Besides this, two staff members from the Hong Kong Geological Park shared their opinions by claiming: ‘The construction of the Park removed most of the original and indigenous flora and fauna, which was detrimental to the natural environment’ (Tiny Cheung and David Pang, 30.05.2010). They further raised questions such as:

Does this mean that we educate our visitors on the need to appreciate and protect ‘nature’ by recreating an artificial landscape which is based on the destruction of the original? Or does it show evidence that no matter what natural environments human beings destroy, we can always use our intelligence to recreate the other ones?

Despite these criticisms, Hong Kong Wetland Park has received over 500,000 visitors annually since its opening (HKWP, 2010). The large majority of park visitors in my interview discussions expressed their high appreciation to preserve the Park as a green ‘lung’ of a dense city. They also showed their support for the Park in various ways which included making donations, joining volunteer schemes, and recommending their friends and relatives to come. The park’s high numbers of visits, accompanied by visitors’ supportive attitudes, in part, proves that the government made a sound decision when it decided to set aside the land for a wetland Park, rather than utilise it for housing or other commercial uses.

HKWP, sixty-one hectares in size, was opened in May 2006. The Park includes an indoor visitor centre of about one hectare and sixty hectares of outdoor wetland reserve for wildlife (Figure 24). The Park is developed as a venue for combining public education, wetland conservation and recreational amenities, through a wide range of themed exhibitions, interactive programmes, and aesthetically appealing ‘natural’ landscapes which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Figure 24. The Map of HKWP



(Source: http://www.tourism.gov.hk/english/current/current_wetland.html)

7.2. Utilisation of ‘Chinese Philosophy’

The case of SZWP (Chapter Six) revealed that an idealised form of ‘nature’ which combines natural resources with human intervention was highly valued and appreciated by the Chinese tourists. To their minds, such a form of nature reflects a ‘man-nature harmony’ derived from traditional Chinese cultural

influences. In fact, there is a cognitive gap between the original idea of ‘harmony’, notably drawing upon the traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism as discussed in Chapter Two, and the actual practice of contemporary ordinary Chinese people. This section focuses on the case of HKWP, following a parallel approach to SZWP, by examining the influence of the philosophical traditions on contemporary Chinese attitudes towards, and on the production and consumption of, nature/the environment.

7.2.1. Service supply perspective - HKWP

HKWP is regarded as one of the representative examples in Hong Kong in terms of illustrating the systemic fit between human effort and the natural environment, the ‘harmonious environment’ (good *fengshui*), referring to the term of ‘Chinese Philosophy’, or ‘sustainable practice’ drawing on Western environmental ideologies. Firstly, it is reflected in the park’s architectural and landscape design; and secondly, various man-made tourist attractions encompass a distinctively Chinese world view.

7.2.1.1. Architectural principles

The philosophical teachings of Confucius, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism often determine the location, placement and type of human structures and human presence within natural landscapes in order to create an idealised space and place, which reflects ‘man in nature with harmony’ without mutual harm. According to Mr. Fung (2008), a former senior architect of the Architectural Service Department of Hong Kong, proper blending of human structures with the surrounding natural landscape is the key principle in the Park design, while the human structures complement ‘the spirit of mind and human to target in three dimensions: Harmony, Environmental Conservation and Culture’ (cited in HKWP, 2008:1). The main Visitor Centre building, accommodating 10,000

square metres, with exhibition galleries and extensive tourist facilities over two storeys and, is unobtrusively concealed beneath the landscape. It provides tourists with the impression that a green hill arises from the entry plaza, maintaining an overall natural and green outlook (Figure 25) (Tang and Zhao, 2008).

Figure 25. An aerial view of HKWP



(Source: HKWP, 2008)

The design of the entire structure incorporates some traditional Chinese architectural principles, as discussed in Chapter Two. For example, the symmetrical balance between the structures elicited from Confucian traditions, in that a half-moon-like grass roof, in a two-dimensional view from the top, was divided by a water channel in the middle (Fung, 2008, cited in HKWP, 2008). A manager of Education and Community Department of HKWP, Ms. Kary Chan claimed:

The water channel is running through from the Visitor Centre to

the Outdoor Reserve, connecting to the water surface of the artificial wetland. It acts as a middle axis of the entire park area which plays a key role in the principle of balance and symmetry. (Chan, 08.03.2010)

Except for the green visual outlook of the Visitor Centre, the ethics of traditional ‘Chinese Philosophy’ are embedded in the design concept. It conveys a message that a traditional relationship between humans and nature that human deference to the natural order has been altered, resulting in human overexploitation of nature, based on pragmatic and hedonistic values and attitudes. The Visitor Centre, in this case, is designed to represent a bird cage, to demonstrate an ironic situation of the exchange of roles between humans and birds, in which human beings are placed into the ‘bird cage’, and so become the objects for outside free flying birds to gaze at (Figure 26).

Mr. Fung (2008) further argues: ‘Do the birds realise the immensity of the universe or is it just their behaviour’ (Fung, 2008, cited in HKWP, 2008:3). In Chinese, ‘道者万物知所以然’, this is particularly borrowed from the ideology of Daoism. *Dao* is the underlying origin of the universe which indicates a type of cosmic law from which myriad things including human beings are derived (see Chapter Two). Here, Mr. Fung commented that the birds were derived from *tao* and were a part of *tao*, enjoying the equality and rights of others, so that they fly freely to gaze at ‘caged humans’ in their natural behaviour.

Moreover, the Park uses artistic elements to promote the ethics that needs to protect our environments. For example, the entrance is placed with an ornament ‘oyster wall’, which increases the visual appeal whilst also evokes in visitors a sense of ‘guilt’ on the human exploitation of nature, for such as to fulfil our material need, the dead oysters caused by human destruction and pollution in the nearby Inner Deep Bay (Figure 27) (HKWP, 2008). This information is, not only written in various park documents (e.g. newsletters,

brochures), but also delivered by tour guides who explain the importance to reconcile the traditional ethics with a reasonable balance between environmental protection and human development by using the ‘oyster wall’.

Figure 26. A bird cage view of the Visitor Center



(Source: HKWP, 2008)

Figure 27. ‘Oyster Wall’



(Source: HKWP, 2009)

7.2.1.2. Man-made tourist attractions

Besides the fact that the architectural design of the Park reflects a closed combination of human effort and natural environment, various tourist attractions also demonstrate an interlinking between the two. *Shan* (mountains) and *Shui* (water) are two particularly important natural elements in Chinese

eyes, with evidence of *Shanshui* philosophy, *shanshui* literature, and the objects of the Chinese tourist gaze discussed in Chapter Two. A body of water and mountains (*Shanshui*) are two complementary force fields of man and nature which constitutes the key concept of ‘yin-yang’ - just as two indivisible forces of a magnet are required to come together to function (Spence, 1992). In ‘Eternal Happiness’ of Confucian Analects, it is said: ‘The wise find pleasure in water; the noble find pleasure in mountains...The wise are joyful; the virtuous are immortal’ (Hu, 2006:230).

China has a long tradition of using massive natural landscapes, in particular with *Shanshui*, as backgrounds for paintings and poems. Such *shanshui*-picturesque and poetic-atmosphere, in turn, have become the key experience for Chinese tourists to seek out a natural site. Corresponding to Chinese visitors’ preferences, various types of man-made structures relating to the key themes of water, river, mountains, waterfalls, fountains, and artificial rockwork are commonly built and displayed in Chinese tourist sites.

In the context of HKWP, an artificial waterfall is located right in front of the entrance plaza (Figure 28 a). This attraction draws many park visitors to stop and pose for photography. Passing through the Visitor Centre, a rushing mountain stream cascading over boulders down from the roof of the Visitor Centre is in the first of a series of recreated habitat displays in the Outdoor Reserve (Figure 28 b). When asked, the park staff commented that the reason for building such an artificial waterfall in the Outdoor Reserve was that: ‘Our visitors like this type of structure. We believe in the concept of *fengshui* in which the hills and watercourses are the key elements for a place to bring fortune to people’ (HKWP informants 76, 28.03.2010 and 89, 15.06.2010).

During a guided tour, the tour interpreter asked the visitors:

Look at our beautifully presented rockwork and waterfall, does it not remind you of the famous ancient poem written by Libai about a 'waterfall'? Although ours is much smaller than the one described in his poem. (HKWP informant 81, 23.05.2010)

The other *shanshui* symbols presented in the Park include a wide range of rocks, streams, ponds, and lakes (Figure 29)

Figure 28. Waterfalls

(a) A waterfall at the entrance plaza (b) A waterfall in the Outdoor Reserve



Figure 29. A series of *Shanshui* symbols



Not only do such man-made structures improve aesthetic standards and fulfil tourists' visual enjoyment, but they also are expected to convey the conservation message to the public. A series of new animal sculptures, highlighting the vibrancy of life and the biodiversity of wetlands, were displayed at the Entry Plaza of HKWP from Autumn 2009 onwards (Figure 30). HKWP informant 76 (a park interpreter) further stated:

We hope these new sculptures will enable visitors to appreciate the wonders of the wetlands and the life of the living wetland in an artistic way, giving them excitement and expectations towards nature.

Figure 30. A series of animal sculptures



(Source: HKWP 2009)



(Source: <http://blog.goodbaby.com/blog/1znda6>
http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4996904f0100d3eg.html)

The artist behind the animal sculptures, Mr. Lai Xi-kang (2009), commented that the principles of the sculptures' presentation were to 'hope to strive for a balance between artistic order and biological order'. He further claimed: 'I wish to arouse a passion in the visitors to love and protect our environment through the appreciation of the beauty of nature' (cited in HKWP, 2009:8).

Moreover, the Park utilises natural elements, based on traditional artistic techniques, to enhance aesthetic appreciation as well as to disseminate the idea of wetland conservation. For example, signposts of the park are decorated with lively kingfishers, frogs and butterflies, by traditional woodcraft techniques, and are allocated inside the Park to direct visitors on their way (Figure 31) (HKWP, 2010). HKWP informant 76 continued to comment:

Our new waymarks have recently been decorated with vivid wooden animal sculptures. The wooden material together with animal images can better fit into the surrounding environment. They draw more attention from our visitors so as to stop and read waymarks while observing the animal sculptures. We hope to use these animal-decorated waymarks to arouse visitors' interests in learning about nature.

Compared to the way and purpose of presenting various man-made structures in the case of SZWP, the park developer of HKWP shows more effort in promoting wetland conservation to the public along with an aesthetic appeal while a more visual attraction by emphasising on entertainment is reflected in SZWP.

Figure 31. Aesthetic appeal of signposts



7.2.2. Tourism demand perspective - park visitors

Having discussed the way in which Chinese philosophical/religious traditions inform the design and construct ‘nature’ at HKWP from the production perspective (the developer of HKWP), the focus now turns to assess how such Chinese philosophical traditions shape Chinese tourists’ perceptions of nature and their practices with the environment and ecotourism at the Park.

7.2.2.1. Perceptions and preferences of ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’

Similar to the findings in the case of SZWP, Chinese tourists to HKWP also expressed a preference and liking of, an idealised form of nature which combines natural and man-made structures. The majority (seventy-three percent) of respondents believed that ‘nature’ should be a combination of the natural environment with human intervention. In their eyes, appropriately incorporating human efforts (e.g. various man-made structures, proper management) into the natural environment does not jeopardise environmental goals, rather it enhances the aesthetic value of nature.

With respect to differences over the basic definitions of what constitutes nature and ecotourism, there is a significant divergence towards understanding ‘wilderness’ between Chinese respondents and Western tourists. Based on interviewing eleven tourists who came from Europe, America and New Zealand, the majority of them stated: ‘Nature should be kept “pristine” without human influences, which provides the essence of “wilderness”’ (e.g. HKWP Informants 43, 23.05.2010; 58 and 59, 03.06.2010). Thus the sense of ‘wilderness’ seems a primary element of ecotourism. By contrast, Chinese park visitors, similar to the Chinese sample at SZWP, expressed their understanding

of ‘wilderness’ (*huangye*) that implied negativity in association with ‘ugly’, ‘dirty’ and ‘laggard’ without human civilisation or ‘dangerous’, with fears of physical danger such as encountering wild animals.

Although ‘nature’ was perceived to be a mixture of natural and human elements, to most Chinese visitors, there was an agreement on proper proportional distribution between human elements and natural landscapes within a natural place. Drawing on the Chinese philosophical perspectives, the two portions should show a balanced view which is essential for the creative transformation of an idealised natural place and space. Fifty-nine percent of respondents stated that an ecotourist site should contain twenty to thirty percent of human culture and seventy to eighty percent of the natural environment. The rest of the respondents (thirty percent) claimed that there should be an equal proportion between the two or more human elements with sixty to seventy percent. Eleven percent of the respondents expressed that nature should be kept in its original status without any human interventions (Table 13). However, they added: ‘But the basic facilities such as walking rails, toilets, resting areas, and cafes should be provided in a natural site to provide convenience for visitors’(e.g. HKWP informants 12, 22.03.2010; 44, 23.05.2010; 47, 23.05.2010). This comment still signifies a preference for mixed ‘nature’, nonetheless, incorporating lesser human effort into the natural landscape.

Table 13. Proportional distribution between human elements and natural landscapes

Statements	Percentage(%)
Natural landscapes 70-80% & Man-made element 20-30%	59
Natural landscapes 50% & Man-made element 50%, or, more man-made elements (e.g. 60-70%)	30
Natural landscapes 100% & Man-made element 0%	11

With respect to the nature presented by the park, sixty-two percent of the

respondents thought the park ‘natural’ with an appropriate proportion of human presence and natural landscapes, while another group of respondents (twenty-five percent) believed that the park was highly ‘managed’ and ‘artificial’ but still provided them with natural experiences. The last group of respondents (thirteen percent) found the park was just a normal urban park without any specific natural features.

Besides this, the perception differs according to a multitude of variables relating to the respondents, though the greatest difference lies in the respondents’ living environment (urban vs. rural), which shares a similarity with the results of SZWP. It seems that those people who live in urban areas and have never been to rural areas do not delineate between human influence and ‘naturalness’, even though the areas are highly ‘artificial’, in their eyes, they are nevertheless still natural. In other words, ecological naturalness and perceived naturalness are equivalent. For example, a middle-aged couple from Hong Kong Island (central Hong Kong) claimed:

We have seen many concrete urban high rising buildings in our daily life, but HKWP is a natural place which contains a large area of green space as well as a variety of wild species such as crabs and birds. The Park provides us with the experience of being close to nature and even inside nature. (HKWP informant 28, 14.04.2010)

For the majority of urban dwellers, they are familiar with ‘man-made wilderness’ and thus normally perceive it as ‘natural’. On the contrary, a respondent from a nearby area, *Yuen Lang*, commented:

When I was a child, this area was a piece of rural land with fish ponds and farming. People could easily see various kinds of wildlife and have access to natural resources, but now the land has been either converted for residential buildings or commercial usage. Although the nature presented by this

re-created wetland park is different from its past, it is better to have this park than not. (HKWP informant 06, 09.03.2010)

In most mainland Chinese eyes, Hong Kong is a prosperous metropolis associated with a 'shopping paradise'. After visited HKWP, they were impressed that such a large green 'natural world' could be preserved in the severely scarce land area of Hong Kong. The majority of mainland visitors are day-trippers who are families with children from the neighbouring cities - Shen Zhen and Guang Zhou. One family stated:

HKWP is a good example as to how to carefully integrate human effort into the natural environment. All man-made structures, such as bird hides, bridges and streams, are properly designed and built to reflect a harmony with the surrounding environment. When strolling in the Outdoor Reserve, one is hardly aware that we are still in a concrete 'jungle' - Hong Kong. The Park is an ideal outdoor classroom for children but it is also a green world in a city for adults to enjoy 'nature'. In contrast, most nature reserves in mainland China are driven by profit gains, paying more attention to commercial activities and less focus on environmental protection (huan bao) and public education. (HKWP informant 19, 01.04.2010)

In general, most mainland families with children expressed similar feelings that this family stated. However, there are also different opinions from mainland respondents, in particular with organised scenic tour groups, who complained that the park was small, and without sufficient amusement facilities. They preferred the Hong Kong Ocean Park and the Hong Kong Disney Land which provide more fun and entertainment.

7.2.2.2. Perceptions of man-made structures

According to a series of Western literature, it has often been suggested that 'wild' and natural landscapes are more favoured than built landscapes in the

West (Kaplan *et al.*, 1972; Kaplan, 1978; Ulrich, 1981, 1984; Herzog, 1987). This point was supported by personal interviews with a few Western park visitors. Most of them held a negative view on the incorporation of man-made structures and attractions into the HKWP. For example, an environmentalist from America (HKWP informant 58) commented: ‘This park is more like a urban zoo, good for educating children, but not suitable for adults because of too many artificial products with a fake expression’. The other respondent from Norway (HKWP informant 43) argued:

As a wetland park, we should be able to see many birds, but in fact we have seen more artificial ‘birds’ than live ones. It seems that the Park has no limitations on the visitor numbers. Too many visitors inevitably have disturbed bird habitats, which contradicts the goals of ecotourism.

Compared to the comments made by Western visitors, the views held by Chinese respondents, however, reveal the opposite. The majority of Chinese visitors (seventy-seven percent) stated that they enjoyed various man-made structures in the Park. In summary, they gave three reasons. Firstly, they could increase the aesthetic beauty of ‘nature’. Many respondents commented that natural landscapes with pronounced man-made structures had more scenic value. Secondly, integrating man-made structures into the natural environment reflected the ‘man-nature unity’. To most Chinese minds, if nature does not contain a human presence, it will become ‘*huangye*’ - a piece of desolate and unvalued land. Thirdly, man-made structures could raise the public’s awareness as a means to protect nature such as through observing the various animal sculptures. A mother with a six-year-old daughter said: ‘The animal sculptures in front of the Entry Plaza are so vivid and lively that it immediately invokes our consciousness to protect animals’ (HKWP informant 69, 11.06.2010).

The findings of Chinese visitors' perceptions and preferences for nature and the 'natural' in HKWP share many similarities with those in the case of SZWP. Nature is valued and appreciated in a form of a syncretic mixture of natural and man-made attractions, in particular with a preference for *shanshui* symbols and images. It differs from the Western concept of nature which places value on the basis of pristine 'wilderness', untouched by humans.

Thus, man-made structures are considered as an indivisible complement to natural landscapes by Chinese visitors to the two parks. Nevertheless, a significant difference lies, in the case of HKWP, where human structures not only evoke tourists' sentiment related to philosophical/religious connotations in art and literature similar to that in SZWP, but also promote an ethical valuation of nature and the environment aiming to arouse tourists' environmental awareness. Chinese philosophical traditions, as noted in Chapter Two, contain a series of environmental principles to guide people's behaviour throughout Chinese history. The following section focuses on whether they still have a capacity to influence modern Chinese environmental practices.

7.2.3. Tourists' environmental attitudes

According to WCED (1987): 'Our cultural and spiritual heritage can reinforce our economic interests' (cited in Jenkins, 1998:152). This suggests the feasibility of resurrecting cultural traditions to be an effective force for cultivating an ethical basis towards the natural environment. As discussed in Chapter Two, among the three leading Chinese philosophical/religious traditions, Confucian ethics stresses benevolence (*ren*), frugality and the relation of the individual to the whole; the Daoist moral system emphasises reverence, non-interference (*wu wei*) and deference to nature's own course (*dao*); and Chinese Buddhism advocates egalitarianism, non-harm, belief in causality, and dependent co-origination (*fo xing*).

Moral cultivation and human social relations are the central debates of Confucianism, which ostensibly promotes anthropocentrism but is, in Tu's term, an 'anthropocosmic' social ecology, which stresses the fusion of moral virtues to the natural order, a beneficial relationship between human virtues and the natural environment. Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, on the other hand, advocate an adaptative approach and intrinsic value to and of nature, because they believe that nature has its own way (*de* in Daoism and *fo xing* in Buddhism) by which everything becomes what it is. They are more consistent with the eco-centric orientation found in Western literature.

The three philosophies encompass their own environmental ideas, ethics and practices which constitute seemingly different but complementary ecological views - maintaining a harmonic balance between humans and nature. These traditions formulated key ecological knowledge and ethical frameworks with which to sustain a large and dense agricultural population in pre-modern times. This section examines whether these traditions are conducive to generate a more environmentally-friendly attitude among modern Chinese people, and to what extent there is a divergence between the traditional precepts and actual behaviour.

Given that a central tenet of environmental concern is associated with defining the human position and responsibilities to nature, it begins with assessing modern Chinese (eco)tourists' perception of the human-nature relationship in HKWP (Table 14). The results show a great similarity with that of SZWP. The majority of respondents (seventy-one percent) hold the view that the man-nature relationship is governed by moral principles in that, being part of nature, humans should adapt to natural laws and seek a harmonic balance. Regarding current environmental problems, respondents express a high level of

concern over their living environment. In particular, air pollution is regarded as the most serious environmental problem. This is consistent with the results generated by other studies (see Chau, 1993; Wang and Wan, 2011). Although Hong Kong's government has continuously laid importance on combating air pollution as one of key policy agendas (Chapter Five), such an institutional approach seems not so efficient to solve current environmental issues.

Table 14. The perceived man-nature relationship

Here are three opinions about the man-nature relationship. Which one of these do you think is closest to the truth?	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1. Human beings are a part of nature, so humans should understand the ways of nature and act accordingly to spiritually maintain harmony with nature (man-nature unity).	71
2. In order to fulfil human needs, human beings have a right to reasonably utilise and modify nature (such as by adopting science and technology)	21
3. As humans are superior to nature, and we are entitled to master and conquer nature, and to utilise the natural resources as we like.	8

Due to the high level of environmental concern among Chinese respondents, the question now turns to the attitudes and beliefs they hold with regard to their environment. It shows that a considerable portion of the respondents encompass a certain specific pro-environmental attitude. For example, many respondents strongly agreed that environmental protection should be given priority over economic growth when the two aspects are in conflict, or an adoption of the principle of the trade-off, the middle-way in Chinese philosophical terms. Regarding Chinese people's faith in science and technology, the majority did not believe in the power of modern science to solve environmental problems. This corresponds to the findings of Wong and Wan (2011).

Nearly half of the respondents strongly held a belief in the causality of human actions in the natural world. The idea is derived from Chinese Buddhism, which places an emphasis on human ethical sensibility and moral obligations to ecological problems, through the ideas of *samsara* and retribution (Chapter Two). Many Chinese tourists in the interview discussions mentioned that the motivations for most of their daily environmental-friendly behaviour such as saving energy and recycling were, on the one hand, to save on their own expenditure and, on the other hand, to sow good seeds (*karma*) for the sake of themselves and for the future generation. For example, a middle-aged senior manager stated:

What we have done to the natural world will have a direct impact on our later life. To act responsibly and accumulate virtues are essential to ensure good retribution in the future. I always teach my children some principles drawing on our traditional Chinese thoughts such as compassion (tong qing), benevolence (ren ai), and frugality (jie jian). I hope these ideas can help them cultivate a high moral standard and therefore guide their actions in a more responsible way. (HKWP informant 42, 23.05.2010)

A family with two children stated:

Our family has taken part in the Buddhist tradition, 'animal releasing', at least once or twice every year for many years. Most times we buy fish or turtles to then release them in the 'releasing pond' of Buddhist temples. Last year, during our holiday in Guangzhou, we bought five captured birds from a market and released them in a national park. We feel very good to do something beneficial to others. This in turn, will bring good karma to us and our family. (HKWP informant 15, 22.03.2010)

This finding suggests the fact that current Chinese attitudes to nature, to some extent, are still influenced and shaped by philosophical and religious traditions,

which stresses an ethical valuation of nature and the environment and aims at harmony and moral well-being. An immediate question is raised: if this is the case, then why this has failed to mitigate ongoing environmental problems? Empirical studies have shown the evidence that an ‘attitude–behaviour gap’ exists (Wang and Wan, 2011). According to Harris (2006:9):

People’s environmental attitudes and behaviour are ambivalent. Although people often express concern about environmental conditions and even say they are willing to act to protect the environment, this does not often coincide with their behaviour, which is normally not favorable to the environment.

This happens worldwide not exclusively in China. For example, as found in the Euro barometer survey, ‘nearly sixty percent of Europeans say they are willing to switch to green consumption but have not crossed the threshold between intention and action’ (European Commission, 2008:28).

When Chinese tourists’ environmental behaviour is assessed in relation to tourist activities and green consumption in HKWP, similar to that in SZWP, an inconsistency exists between people’s pro-environmental attitudes and their associated environmental behaviour. In terms of the question to rank the most important factors when choosing a tourist destination, although the factor of environmental concern was rated higher than that in the case of SZWP (the least important element), the majority of the respondents chose comfort and convenience over environmental concerns (Table 15). Fifty-six percent of the respondents claimed they would continue going to a tourist destination even if they knew that the tourist site had negative impacts on the environment or local communities (Table 16), as compared with seventy-nine percent in SZWP. Slightly more visitors in HKWP than those in SZWP have heard of green products (Table 17), with sixty-nine percent and fifty-two percent respectively.

Table 15. The rank of important factors when choosing a tourist destination

FACTORS	RANK
Destination features (e.g. nature, culture, amenities)	1
Comfort/luxury (e.g. facilities, accommodation, and restaurants)	2
Convenience/distance/transport	3
General Sense of safety	4
Environmental/cultural concerns	5
Expenditure/price/cost	6
Reputation/credibility(e.g. eco-certificate)	7

Table 16. Intention to continue going to a tourist destination

<i>‘What would you do if you know that a tourist destination has a negative impact on the environment/local community?’</i>	
Continue choosing and going	56%
Do not go	44%

Table 17. Awareness of the sale of green products

<i>‘Have you heard about the sale of green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations in Hong Kong?’</i>	
Yes	69%
No	31%

With respect to the amount of extra cost that the respondents were willing to pay for supporting pro-environmental behaviour such as buying green products, one third espoused a willingness to pay up to five percent (fifty-five percent in SZWP), and ten percent would pay a greater premium over twenty percent (eight percent in SZWP) (Table 18). Compared with the results of Hong Kong consumer attitudes towards environmental issues generated by Martinsons *et al.*, (1997), there were forty-three percent and fifty-one percent of the consumers who would pay up to five percent on green products in 1992 and 1995 respectively, and three percent would pay over twenty percent during the same research years. The findings of HKWP indicate that there has been an increasing willingness among Chinese people to pay more for green premiums. This finding can be partly attributed to improvements in living standards

during the past two decades which enables more people to have a greater financial ability, as well as the gradual rise of environmental consciousness.

Table 18. Willingness to pay for green products

<i>'How much more would you be willing to pay for green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations?'</i>	
1-5%	33%
6-10%	24%
11-15%	19%
16-20%	14%
20% above	10%

The findings of tourist surveys summarised above, indicate that the modernist paradigm of materialism and development remains dominant in Chinese society. When personal prosperity and environmental protection are in conflict, the latter is always submerged by the former. For example, as noted above, tourists chose comfort and convenience over environmental concerns as determinant factors for their tourist destination selections. Hong Kong is frequently described as a place where 'East meets West', manifesting the mixed culture of Chinese roots with Western influences due to its British colonial history. It is the first industrialised region in China, maintaining a highly developed capitalist economy. Under the predominant Western modernist development model, Chinese people have become obsessed with wealth creation and material consumption. Hedonistic values and convenient lifestyle are leading the mainstream of consumption patterns.

As Holdgate (1990) argues, under the powerful influence and diffusion of lifestyles of Western societies, in many other nations, even their religious and philosophical traditions encourage a different attitude towards nature and the environment (e.g. pro-environment) from that held in the West, have shown a lack of ability to resist Westernisation. For example, Gosling (1990) remarks that the commitment to rapid industrialisation and the pursuit of a

consumer-based lifestyle in India have led to rapidly deteriorating natural resources and human communities.

Chinese people are no exception. The home-spun ethical and spiritual approach to nature, ‘adaptation to nature rather than exploitation of it, with human life forming a link in the organic circulation process’ (Fei, 1953, cited in Jenkins 1998:156), has been altered by the modernist paradigm of development with a focus on a sustained increase in material well-being. Like the findings of the case of SZWP, Chinese tourists in HKWP show a strong emotional attachment to nature and a desire to re-adopt traditional ethics. This trend can be described as ‘*fanpuguizhen*’ originally derived from the Daoist tradition. It refers to a return to simplicity, frugality, sincerity and to obtain ethical/spiritual sublimation. It is the key motivation mentioned by Chinese respondents to participate in (eco)tourism in the pursuit of going ‘back to nature’. This finding corresponds to the argument of Xu (2002) and Liang and Zhang (2003) that emphasise a ‘spiritual movement’ and the achievement of ‘the unity of man and Heaven’ as the core features of Chinese ecotourism (cited in Ye and Xue, 2008).

Many tourists from both parks (SZWP and HKWP) expressed a view that with improvements in their material prosperity and its associated environmental/social costs, they have gradually realised what they have lost - an ecological conscience. This view echoes an increasing level of environmental concern among Chinese respondents and their pro-environmental attitudes drawn upon Chinese philosophical traditions discussed earlier.

Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory, after lower-level needs such as food, shelter and economic security are met, people will then start seeking

spiritual fulfilment. With improvements in living standards and an enlarging middle-class in China, '*fanpuguizhen*', a desire to return to the tradition, has emerged among many Chinese people. The findings from both parks reveal that respondents who are more educated, wealthy, and urbanised have more pro-environmental attitudes than their counterparts. This finding accords with the results of empirical studies (e.g. Harris, 2006; Hong, 2006; Gong and Lei, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2011). In this sense, it suggests that Chinese philosophical traditions have less capacity to establish a Chinese 'ethic' of nature, rather, it instead heavily depends on people's economic welfare. So only when people reach a certain level of economic satisfaction, will they then start to view nature differently, and start to more deeply consider their philosophical traditions.

Due to the existence of the 'attitude-behaviour gap' found among the Chinese respondents of the two parks, the real task is to cultivate an appropriate conservation or environmental ethic in ecotourism, which draws upon Chinese philosophical traditions in which an ecological morality exists. Ecotourism, besides utilising artificial landscapes and attractions to remind people of their ancestral heritage and relationship with the natural environment, also urges that policy makers should shift away from an instrumental ethic as a basis for the utilisation of nature in the pursuit of short-term financial benefits, to a more conservation-based ethic.

Having discussed the expressions of 'Chinese Philosophy' in Chinese attitudes to nature through ecotourism practices in HKWP, the next section focuses on one of the Western development theories that this thesis adopted, Disneyisation, to examine to what extent the principles of Disneyisation have an influence on aspects of Chinese environmental awareness through their applications to HKWP.

7.3. Illumination of Disneyisation

The case of SZWP (Chapter Six) disclosed that the park is dominated by the process of Disneyisation with its four principles (theming, hybrid consumptions, merchandising and performative labour), which leads to business success but hardly fit into the defined ‘ecotourism’ project. In the context of HKWP, not all of the four principles are applied to the Park, but ‘theming’ and ‘performative labour’ show the relevance of this analysis, although they perform a different role in contrast to SZWP.

7.3.1. Theming

Theming, creation of a master narrative, can be seen as a common practice in various types of tourist sites. For example, Beardsworth and Bryman (2008) claim that theming has become a key feature of many Western zoos. The case of SZWP demonstrates that various themed and simulated environment/attractions were created as the primary goal with which to increase the park’s competitive advantage, and therefore achieve its financial sustainability. On the contrary, HKWP adopts the theming strategy to address wetland conservation and education. This practice corresponds to the argument made by Beardsworth and Bryman (2008:94): ‘At many zoos, the theming of areas or attractions within the site has gone hand in hand with the introduction of the conservation theme’.

HKWP is divided into two key themed areas: (1) ‘Wetland Interactive World’, and (2) ‘Wetland Reserve’. The ‘Wetland Interactive World’, located inside a one-hectare indoor visitor centre, and further contains four sub-themes reflecting different aspects of wetlands (Table 19) (Figure 32). The second themed area is made up of three sub-themed attractions (Table 20) (Figure 33), also known as the Outdoor Visitor Area with an area of sixty hectares.

Table 19. ‘Wetland Interactive World’

<i>1. Wetland Exhibits</i>	<i>2. Living Wetland</i>	<i>3. Human Culture</i>	<i>4. Wetland Challenge</i>
Various types of mechanical devices are used to demonstrate the functions and values of wetlands, and the importance of wetlands to wildlife.	Three forms of wetland-themed environments - Frozen North, Tropical Swamp and Hong Kong Wetlands - are on display to represent wetlands throughout the world from the poles to the tropics.	The incorporation of technological facilities such as a 3D theatre and cartoon film illustrates the relationship between humans and wetland (nature).	Multi-media appliances are adopted to promote wetland conservation by providing tourists hands-on experiences through various interacting games such as being a wetland reporter in ‘Wetland Television Room’.

Figure 32. ‘Wetland Interactive World’



(Source: HKWP, 2008)



Table 20. ‘Wetland Reserve’

1. <i>Crocodile Home</i>	2. <i>Nature Walk</i>	3. <i>Butterfly Garden</i>
A crocodile, named ‘Pui Pui’, meets visitors in her 72-square-metre outdoor enclosure.	Four types of walk guide visitors to discover diverse wetland habitats - Stream Walk (e.g. terrapins), Open Water Walk (e.g. water lilies, reeds), Mangrove Boardwalk (e.g. mudskippers, fiddler crabs), Wild Walk (e.g. dragonflies, butterflies).	A garden is built in a relatively remote area in the Park by establishing sixty purpose-built plantations to attract butterflies and provide public enjoyment.

Figure 33. ‘Wetland Reserve’



In contrast to the theming strategy of SZWP, exotic theme-related environments such as the ‘European Church’, ‘Interlaken Town’, and ‘Philadelphia Love Garden’, or, in Desmond’s term, ‘faked organic realisms’ (Desmond, 1999:264), serve a key role in entertaining tourists. The motifs of wetland conservation and education are major components of HKWP. In other words, the park publicises and justifies itself as not only as a traditionally museum-inspired venue for tourists to gaze at, but also as an active agency to

promote wetland importance and public education through various themed attractions and environments.

7.3.2. Performative labour

The other principle of Disneyisation which shows relevance in HKWP is that of performative labour or emotional labour. This principle can be seen as, on the one hand, a form of ostensible acting, as discussed in the case of SZWP, in that an ever-smiling and ever-helpful face has to be provided by the park employees to adhere to the principle of consumer sovereignty, or the concept of ‘unreal emotions’ termed by Hochschild (1983), which, on the other hand, is a form of deep action in relation to environmental concerns and conservational appeals.

A smiling and welcoming face is also shown among members of staff in HKWP, but the difference from the situation of SZWP rests with the employees’ positive attitudes towards their jobs in HKWP. Based on the interview discussions with twenty-six park staff members, ranging from managerial-level to low-skilled general employees, they demonstrated a highly passionate attitude to their jobs as well as a strong commitment to environmental protection. The primary motivation to work in the Park is that they love nature, which is distinct from the situation in SZWP that most employees were attracted by the park because of its decent salary.

According to Cheng Chui Yu Josephine, a manager of Education and Community Services at the Park, ‘Most of the staff at the supervisor level are civil servants who have at least a university degree in either natural science, biology, geology or environmental science and a passion for nature and outdoor work’ (cited in Classified Post, 22nd January, 2011).

Compared to the work attitude of employees of SZWP, the staff of HKWP showed a more helpful and positive attitude regarding their abilities to provide sufficient and accurate ecological knowledge to visitors, and their passion to promote the importance of wetland conservation to the public. Many park visitors expressed a sense of guilt in terms of environmental degradation caused by human beings after they saw the active devotion of park employees to the conservation works. For example, in the hot summer time, with a minimum temperature of 35/36 degrees centigrade outside, park guides persisted in leading tourists to visit various outdoor thematic zones and meticulously provided detailed interpretations on wetland ecology and the park's conservation works (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Guided tour



A middle-aged woman in a guided tour stated:

The enthusiasm of this guide for the wetland conservation works has deeply touched me, which evokes my extreme self-blame because I always take the utilisation of natural resources for granted in my daily life. This has caused considerably unnecessary waste. After participating in this guided tour, I will definitely make some changes to my lifestyle such as reducing the use of air-conditioning, using public transport instead of private cars, and purchasing environmentally-friendly products and goods. (HKWP informant 72, 21.06.2010)

The other woman, a senior manager of a company, commented:

In such hot weather, the guide still passionately and patiently offers interpretations to visitors without any slackness. Such a dedicated attitude has greatly aroused my interest in wetland ecology and wetland conservation. After I retire, I will join a volunteer team at this park to make my contributions to 'Mother Nature' for the sake of future generations. (HKWP informant 70, 21.06.2010)

Many respondents who had taken part in guided tours expressed various ways to support the conservation works of the Park such as making a donation, recommending friends and relatives to come, and joining volunteer teams.

From the above discussion on the principles of theming and performative labour, it can be seen that the application of the principles of Disenchantment can go beyond the realm of commercialisation/consumption into the domain of conservation/preservation. The Park conveys environmental knowledge to the visitors through a series of wetland-related thematic zones as well as the employees' dedicated work attitudes. By interacting with open facilities/games and enthusiastic park staff, this in turn, arouses visitors' environmental consciousness which may have a positive impact on their environment-related behaviour and practices, such as changing their lifestyle to a more environmentally-sensitive way and involving themselves in conservational projects. The following section then assesses the relevance of Ecological Modernisation to the Park.

7.4. Application of Ecological Modernisation

In Chapter Five, it emerged that Ecological Modernisation has been utilised as

a policy framework to guide a ‘green’ environmental movement in Hong Kong. Chapter Three discussed the possible influence of Ecological Modernisation on aspects of environmental awareness through the context of ecotourism. The core features of ecotourism are to prevent ecological degradation, promote nature conservation, and seek sustainable development, which are consistent with the themes of Ecological Modernisation. Ecotourism, therefore, can be conceived as a form of Ecological Modernisation. In other words, Ecological Modernisation can be achieved through the institution of ecotourism. At this point, we return to an analytical discussion that was made earlier to find out to what extent HKWP encompasses Ecological Modernisation by examining its three core themes - integration of science and technology, facilitation of positive roles of economic agents and market dynamics, and incorporation of civil society.

7.4.1. Integration of science and technology

Referring to Chapter Three, the use of science and technology is considered the most frequent link made between Ecological Modernisation and ecotourism. A number of scholars even believe that Ecological Modernisation refers to a techno-centric approach to conservation, by adopting scientific management and environmentally sensitive technologies to solve problems associated with the environment (e.g. Weale, 1992; Hajer, 1995). With regard to HKWP, the proper utilisation of science and technology enables green concepts to be embedded in the park design and operation. According to Ms. Chan (08.03.2010): ‘The Park has won fifteen awards regarding its achievement in environmental sustainability from 2000 to 2007’. This includes awards such as the ‘Medal of the Year in the Hong Kong Institute of Architects Annual Awards 2005’, and the ‘Green Building Awards 2006’.

7.4.1.1. Green design concepts

Sound environmental principles in the park design can be seen from many perspectives. The Park adopts various energy efficient materials and technologies to reduce environmental externalities. During the process of the park construction, recycled materials were used as far as possible. The large majority of structural concrete (seventy-five percent) is made up of recycled aggregate or Pulverized Fuel Ash as a partial cement replacement which was primarily generated from a nearby recycling site. A brick wall with re-used abandoned Chinese bricks from traditional village houses is built on the south face of the Visitor Centre and the Ticket Office, to screen direct sunlight, thus reducing the effects of heat to the building, and to provide visitors with a sense of traditional Chinese architectural style (HKWP, 2008).

A 'reedbed' system was incorporated into the overall wetland design in the Park. As one of the first natural wastewater treatment facilities in Hong Kong, it provides a key function for cleaning up a portion of stormwater flowing from the urban development area into the nearby Inner Deep Bay (Lynn, 2001). Moreover, the Park is heavily reliant on natural lighting/ventilation and renewable energy wherever possible in order to reduce power consumption. Skylights are installed at the Atrium of the Visitor Centre and toilets at the Outdoor Reserve, to facilitate the utility of natural light. Other energy efficient devices include photovoltaic panels for oscillating fans for three bird hides, six-litre water closets for toilet flushing, and the wind sensors for controlling toilet ventilation (HKWP 2008; Tang and Zhao 2008).

In addition, an innovative energy saving technology employed by the Park is a Geothermal Heat Pump Air-Conditioning (GHP A/C) System which is designed by the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD). In comparison to the conventional heat exchange system, this system has distinctive advantages

of saving a considerable amount of energy (twenty-five percent), keeping the surrounding environment quiet, giving greater flexibility in the design of the exterior building, and providing no direct rejection of wasted heat into the atmosphere (HKWP, 2004).

The information about these environment-efficient facilities and practices are outlined in various park documents such as newsletters and brochures. In addition to this, tour guides of the Park take such green concepts as one of the key components of their interpretations to promote a mind of sustainable development to visitors.

7.4.1.2. Scientific management

In order to achieve a sustainable development goal, scientific management is an indivisible component of an ecotourism site. Since annual visitation to HKWP is around 540,000, in contrast to the 30,000 visitors to the adjacent Mai Po Nature Reserve (Smith, 2008), a proper visitor management scheme has played a pivotal role in fulfilling the park's goals to provide an enjoyable visitor experience while not compromising wetland conservation. Accordingly, the Park adopts a park zoning system and the concept of carrying capacity as the main controlling mechanisms.

Regarding the park zoning system, as discussed in Chapter Three, the Park is divided into four zones (Figure 35). Zone one serves the role of complete preservation for ecologically significant wildlife habitats where visitors are prohibited. Zone two is maintained in a wilderness status. Zone three provides a natural environment but featuring a blend of tourist facilities and natural habitats. Finally, zone four is designated for extensive tourist use.

Figure 35. Zoning system

(a) Zone One (conservation area)



(b) Zone Two ('wilderness')



(c) Zone Three (a natural environment)



(d) Zone Four (visitor uses)



The Visitor Centre (Zone four) is the main welcoming point for the visitor and which holds the largest number of visitors. It functions not only as a transitional area from a concrete urban 'jungle' to a green 'natural world', but also as a major educational venue to provide diverse wetland knowledge and a conservation message to visitors. As noted above, there are four themed galleries which are purposely designed for demonstrating 'the importance of wetland on biodiversity, civilisation and conservation' (HKWP, 2012).

Walking through the Visitor Centre, visitors first enter the outdoor Wetland Reserve (Zone Three). Along with a series of recreated habitats, aesthetically attractive structures, exhibition ponds, and cultivated gardens, visitors then arrive at a key functional 'outdoor classroom' - the satellite building - the

Discovery Centre. The building is surrounded by interpretive zones where visitors can involve themselves in various wetland-related activities, such as a pond-dip to investigate the life that constitutes organisms commonly found in water resources. Inside the Discovery Centre, different interpretive programmes and exhibition facilities provide visitors with opportunities to learn, for example, how the park is managed, what functions flora and fauna of wetlands have, and what relationship there is between a traditional way of life for the people of Hong Kong and the mainland, and a wide range of wetland agricultural practices (Figure 36).

Figure 36. The Discovery Centre



Beyond the Discovery Centre, following four themed walking trails, namely Stream, Succession, Mangrove, Wildside, visitors are led to Zone two - three bird hides and more remote outer habitat areas with smaller visitor numbers. Further to these areas, closer to the Mai Po Ramsar site, it is designated as Zone One (complete conservation area) where visitors are not permitted.

The zoning system in the Park distinguishes areas from intensive tourist facilities (i.e. the Visitor Centre) then gradually diminishes as visitors move further into a more naturalistic area towards the Ramsar site, which enables visitors to escape from the bustling urban life and immerse themselves in a

‘wild’ natural world. From the perspective of the park management, the zoning system is claimed by HKWP informant 76 that: ‘it is regarded as an effective technique to plan and manage tourist presences at the park in order to retain environmental sustainability’.

Besides the parking zoning system, the concept of carrying capacity is also adopted. In order to provide satisfactory visitor experiences while not disturbing natural habitats, Ms. Chan (08.03.2010) stated:

Our limitation on the maximum number of visitors entering the Park per day is between 8,000 and 9,000. Since seventy per cent of park visitors are tour groups, they are required to book tickets in advance. In this case, we are able to foresee approximate numbers of visitors and thus make correspondent arrangements.

She also mentioned:

Accommodating between 1,000 and 3,000 visitors per day is an ideal state which can provide a high quality of visitor experiences without compromising conservation goals. The worst experience we have ever had was that the park once received 26,000 visitors for a day which put the park in a situation of total chaos.

Although there is a quota setting for visitor numbers per day, the actual numbers may exceed such limitations especially during public holidays. Based on the author’s field observations, for example, during the ‘Easter Holiday’ and ‘Children’s Day’ in 2010, the number of park visitors obviously far exceeded the proposed quota setting. Both the indoor visitor centre and the outdoor wetland reserve held a large crowd of visitors. Visitors had to queue up in a long line to use the visitor facilities (Figure 37). Many bird lovers complained that too many visitors flocked to the Bird Hides and made loud noises which

therefore scared birds away.

Figure 37. Crowds in the Park

(a) Queue outside Children Playground (b) Crowds in the Cafe



As shown in the zoning map of the park (Figure 38), tourist facilities and visitor activities (Zones Two, Three and Four mentioned above) are highly concentrated in one quarter of the total land area of the Park (areas in orange and purple). The majority of land is set aside for conservation purposes with no permission for public entry (Zone One). This may explain the intensity of usage of tourist facilities during public holidays. According to a park interpreter: ‘Although the area for tourists’ use is relatively small, it embraces diverse wetland features which can satisfy visitors’ needs in terms of learning experiences and recreational opportunities’ (HKWP informant 93, 23.06.10).

Figure 38. The zoning map of HKWP



(Source: Tao and Fung, 2011:14)

The proportion of the land area in the Park for tourist use and for conservation, on the other hand, reflects the park's commitment to a conservation-orientated goal which provides an enjoyable visitor experience without degrading natural resources, and acts as a mitigation area to supplement the ecological importance of the nearby Mai Po Ramsar Site.

7.4.1.3. Educational interpretive programmes

The use of science and technology discussed above focuses its roles on: to first reduce environmental external impacts and to seek an environmental responsible practice and, to second balance recreation and conservation via the zoning system and the concept of carrying capacity. In addition, the science and technology is adopted to aid the Park to fulfil its educational goals, by conveying environmental knowledge and facilitating public awareness of the importance of maintaining biodiversity and protecting wildlife and ecosystems.

Various technological devices are installed in the four exhibition galleries in the Visitor Centre, aiming to disseminate wetland information and promote wetland conservation to the public. For example, in the Human Culture Gallery, multi-media facilities and interactive computer games are used to illustrate the enduring importance of wetlands to development of human culture (Figure 39). Based on the author's participatory observations, most visitors at first found it curious having these different technological facilities, and they discussed with their companions how the facilities worked, and most of them thereafter tried to interact with the different facilities to get hands-on experiences. Parents spent more time with their children in each facility to help their children to understand how the machines work and the message they tried to deliver.

Figure 39. Interactive games



When visitors were asked their opinions about these technological facilities, for example, ‘whether the facilities can help you better understand the wetland?’ A young couple responded: ‘It is the best way for us to learn about wetland knowledge aided by these technological devices. We can learn things via playing games. We don’t feel bored’ (Mr. and Mrs. Tang, 23.05.2010). Some parents with their children commented: ‘I think it is a very good way to trigger children’s interests in learning, through participating in these computer games. It is much more efficient and effective than reading books’ (e.g. HKWP informants 42 and 69).

The other example is in the Wetland Challenge Gallery where visitors can become reporters for Wetland TV to investigate wetland environments under threat and to learn about what can be done to solve the problems. Through a series of multi-media interactions, many respondents stated: ‘It is fun, while I learned something about wetlands and our living environment which I did not know before’ (e.g. HKWP informants 28 and 42).

When asked about whether the information obtained would encourage their actions and lifestyle adjustments to a more environmentally-friendly practice, the majority answered ‘yes’ and a small group of respondents said: ‘I am not

sure or I do not know'. A further question was asked to the respondents who answered 'yes' - 'how are you going to make a change to your lifestyle?' The majority claimed to save energy (e.g. only use a washing machine with a full load; try to use public transport instead of private cars), and recycle things. A middle-aged lady added: 'I will start to support and buy fair-trade products' (Ms. Yau, 16.03.2010).

Except for the multi-media interactive facilities, the Park also offers the Audio Guide Set, to provide the interpretation relating to knowledge of vitality of nature and diversity about the Park. Four languages are available: Cantonese, Mandarin, English and Japanese. There are generally two groups of visitors who use the Audio Guide facility for different purposes. Firstly, local visitors (Hong Kongnese) (e.g. HKWP informants 15 and 69) claimed:

The facility can help us much easier to obtain the knowledge of wetland ecosystems and understand the reason to conserve and protect it via listening compared to read them on information boards.

For example, HKWP informant 15 further stated:

Children normally have not much patience to read either in pamphlets or on information boards. The Audio Guide Set enables them to listen to the interpretive materials whilst walking/playing around.

The second group are the visitors from mainland China who stated: 'Since no guided tour provides Mandarin, the Audio Guide Set enables us to access to the park's information' (e.g. HKWP informants 63, 03.06.2010). In this case, the Audio Guide facility can be regarded as an effectively interpretive tool to facilitate different groups of visitors to obtain knowledge about nature and biodiversity, and this, in turn, aims to enhance visitors' environmental

awareness.

7.4.2. Facilitating positive roles of economic agents and market dynamics

One of the key marketing strategies the Park adopted is to collaborate with various economic actors to actively promote environmental interests. In order to promote green living by using public transportation with more environmentally friendly and efficient modes, HKWP and MTR (Hong Kong West Rail provider) worked together to present the 'Triple Offers'. Visitors travelling on the MTR to Tin Shui Wai Station (HKWP is located nearby) by using an Octopus Card (a travel card) and got a coupon to enjoy: (1) Ten per cent off a HKWP admission ticket; (2) A Light Rail/MTR Bus 1-Day Pass and; (3) A limited edition bird pin (HKWP, 2009).

A couple with a seven-year old daughter from Hong Kong Island commented:

I think the main purpose of the 'Triple Offers' organised by HKWP and MTR is to encourage the public to use the mass transport instead of private cars. We took the MTR to come here today. Although it took nearly one hour, we are happy that we could do something good for the environment. My daughter is very happy to get a free limited edition bird pin from the Park. (HKWP informant 03, 01.02.2010)

Moreover, in order to encourage local corporations to participate in wetland conservation works, the park launched a Corporation Community Service Programme. Under this programme, the park provides training for participating corporation staff, aiming at enhancing their understanding and awareness of wetland conservation, as well as benefiting the community, by obtaining contributions from corporations in collaborative programmes, such as

providing guided tours to visitors and sponsoring disadvantaged groups to visit the park. In 2007, three corporations joined the programme and sponsored over 3,000 community participants to visit the park (AFCD, 2007). Besides supporting the local community programme, some corporations also sponsor various study competitions and eco-tours organised by HKWP (Figure 40).

Figure 40. Organisations participated in the ‘Corporate Community Service programme’



(Source: HKWP, 2012)

According to Mol (2000), the other way to reflect the importance of economic and market forces in ecotourism is to increase environmental fees or environmental awards to trigger an implementation of environmental measures (see Chapter Three). In the context of HKWP, based on its environmental-friendly design and innovation, it has obtained a series of awards since its opening (Table 21).

Table 21. Awards obtained by HKWP

YEAR	AWARD
2005	The ‘Medal of the Year from the Hong Kong Institute of Architects Annual Awards in 2005’,
2006	The ‘Green Building Awards 2006’ The ‘Gold Medal for Landscape Design Awards 2006’ The ‘Excellence in Landscape’ from the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects
2007	The ‘Global Awards for Excellence 2007’ from the Urban Land Institute The ‘Honour Award of the 21 st Annual Excellence on the Waterfront Awards Programme’

(Source: HKWP, 2008)

Compared with the credibility given by the park visitors towards the ‘green’ awards and certificates that HKWP and SZWP obtained, HKWP shows a much higher profile than SZWP. A number of visitors (e.g. architects) stated that a series of environmental certificates awarded to HKWP were the key ‘driver’ to visit the Park.

In addition, the Park also conducts the ‘Outstanding Sales Award Scheme’ to encourage travel agents to promote ecotourism and wetland conservation to a wider public by introducing more visitors to the Park. The Award is based on the calculations on the travel trade partners who purchased the highest cumulative number of tickets during a certain period of time. In 2009, five travel agents with top sales records were given the Award and this has been increased to ten in 2010 (HKWP 2009; HKWP 2010).

7.4.3. Involvement of civil society

As discussed in Chapter Three, according to Jamal and Stronza (2008:23): ‘The ecotourism landscape portrays a diverse group of players (stakeholders) that influence the conservation and use of eco-destinations’. Stoll-Kleemann and O’Riordan (2002) argue, in order to achieve a ‘win-win’ scenario for both economic growth and biodiversity conservation, collaborative and cooperative arrangements among the diverse players of civil society are needed for ecotourism. They further state: ‘Participation as a prelude to partnerships that bind government, agencies, and communities through coordinated funding is much more likely to be successful’ (Stoll-Kleemann and O’Riordan 2002:161). HKWP, therefore, demonstrates a combined effort between the government and a wide range of members of society to promote wetland conservation and public education.

Except for the park's collaboration with various economic agencies discussed above, a wide range of organisations and communities are involved in different programmes offered by the Park. Since opening, the Park has organised a wide variety of educational activities and public events that has reached participants including corporations, educational institutes, other departments, NGOs, and the general public. The following section focuses on some of the key partners and stakeholders who work closely with the Park.

7.4.3.1. School partners

Since one of the key objectives of HKWP is to provide opportunities for education and public awareness of the importance of wetlands, the Park organises diverse school programmes and events which have attracted all levels of educational institutes to participate since its opening (Figure 41). For example, one of Wetland Park Education Programmes - the 'Park Experience' was launched in early July 2006. The programme targets groups of educational institutes and schools. There are different activities for every school year, aiming to help participants to learn about wetlands via group activities and guided visits, and therefore facilitates motivation and interest in preserving wetlands (HKWP, 2006).

Based on the author's on-site observation, school tours account for the majority of park visits from Monday to Friday. During weekends and public holidays, family groups, tour groups, and individuals are the main source of park visitors. On weekdays, it is common to see that higher educational level students provided guided services to lower level students. A high school student stated:

*I feel excited to act as an interpreter to a group of secondary school students. I am very happy to help enable to deliver the knowledge what I've learned about the wetlands to others.
(HKWP informant 12, 26.03.2010)*

HKWP informant 93 (a park interpreter) continued to comment:

It is very interesting to see that, in particular, primary school students hold hands with kids from kindergartens to participate in various learning activities through our school visit programmes. Primary school students are given opportunities to work as guides to illustrate wetland knowledge and answer the questions raised by the kids from kindergartens. In this way, it can greatly enhance their motivation to learn about nature.

A secondary-school teacher said:

This is our first visit to HKWP through participating in the 'Park Experience' programme. It is an excellent educational venue for students to understand the importance of wetland conservation as well as being close to 'nature'. We will definitely organise groups of students to come again. (HKWP informant 40, 27.04.2010)

His two students expressed their views that:

We have seen a live crocodile, a snake and a few birds. We have also obtained some knowledge about mangroves, wetlands, the Ramsar Convention, etc. However the trip is short, so we will come again with my friends. (HKWP informants 38 and 39, 27.04.2010)

The Park has attracted a large number of school participants since its opening. During the Wetland Conservation Week (26th June 2006 - 30th June 2006), through a guided tour programme - the 'Park Experience', more than five hundred visitors of various age groups had joined the event and experienced the wetland habitats in the Park (HKWP, 2006).

Figure 41. School visits



(Source: HKWP, 2013)

Besides the school visit programmes, HKWP implements the School Partnership Programme with the objective of establishing volunteer networks with local schools in nearby areas such as Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long, acting as a platform for students to serve the community. The programme is well supported by a number of primary and secondary schools since its launch at the end of 2006. ‘A total of two hundred trained students have joined the programme, they began from scratches and bits, but now they can promote wetland conservation messages to the public’ (HKWP, 2008). When interviewed, local residents of three residential areas around HKWP between February and July in 2010, respondents from *Tin Sau* and *Tin Heng* acknowledged that they had seen some workers/students from HKWP distributing pamphlets and interpreting knowledge of wetland wildlife to the local residents. In 2008, the School Partnership Programme was extended, to be supported by tertiary institutes (HKWP, 2008).

Moreover, HKWP launched the HKWP Summer Internship Programme targeting university students by providing front-line training and services during the summer holiday periods, to demonstrate their potential career path in nature conservation. A total of thirty intern students joined the Internship Programme in 2009 (HKWP, 2009). Some of the intern students joined volunteer schemes in the Park after completing their summer internships. One university student volunteer claimed:

I enjoyed doing an internship at HKWP as I have increased the knowledge about nature conservation through interacting with various visitors and park staff as well as accessing diverse resources. So I have decided to register as a volunteer to continue promoting wetland conservation to the others. (Charlie Ho, 21.06.2010)

7.4.3.2. General public involvement

Apart from attracting various levels of educational institutes to participate in the wetland conservation programmes, HKWP also launches a wide range of public events to get more of the general public involved. Here the author categorises the general public into three groups, based on their prime travel motivation and the on-site activities they undertook. They are: general park visitors, special interest groups, and family groups.

General park visitors are defined as the people who stated that enjoying nature and sightseeing were their main purposes to visit the Park. Correspondingly, watching displayed animals, strolling, and taking photos were the key activities they undertook in the Park. Most of the park visitors belong to this group. Special interest tourists include bird watchers, amateur/professional photographers, environmentalists, architects, and attendees for lectures who

have a particular interest that can be pursued at the Park.

Given the proximity to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, HKWP is one of the important stopover spots for migrating waterbirds, recording some visits of globally threatened species, such as the Black-faced Spoonbill and the Baikal Teal. Thus, bird watching at the three Bird Hides as well as various sites in the Outdoor Reserve, was often claimed as one of most popular activities at the Park. Accordingly, the Park launched a series of specific bird watching guided tours and events such as the “Bird Watching Festival” (HKWP, 2009) to fulfil visitors’ demand for watching birds whilst promoting avian and wetland conservation.

There is also a group of respondents who stated that photography was their primary reason to visit the Park. To encourage visitors to enjoy observation of wetland habitats, plants and animals, HKWP has organised a series of photographic activities, called ‘Snap Shot’, with different themes during various periods. For example, From October 2009 to February 2010, the park organised a ‘Birds and Wetlands’ Snap Shot as a Photo Collection activity. Visitors can submit their best ‘snap shot’ soft-copy to redeem a souvenir. Outstanding images would then be displayed for the exhibition of ‘Birds and Wetlands’ Art Gallery at HKWP (HKWP, 2010). A photographer who lives nearby stated:

I began to indulge in wildlife photography at this park two years ago when I retired. I have been very enjoying observing various wetland habitats, and the most exciting thing is that I can get good shoots. HKWP organises various photo collection activities. Two of my photos were chosen and displayed which gave me some form of self-realisation. Moreover, through interacting with other photography lovers and participating in the programmes organised by the park, my knowledge about wetland habitats has greatly improved. For example, I can

identify different types of dragonflies and butterflies. I come to this park nearly every day except rainy days and park closure days. (HKWP informant 21, 04.04.2010)

HKWP also attracts a small number of architects (five from mainland China and two from Hong Kong, from my interview discussions) who claimed that learning the style and design of the Park was the main purpose for the trip, since the park has won many awards in terms of its sustainable architecture and landscape. This, in part, echoes the fact that HKWP reveals a higher credibility towards the ‘green’ awards given by the park visitors than the situation of SZWP as mentioned above.

The final group of special interest visitors are lecture attendees. The Park organises monthly public lectures with various themes on nature. There are a number of regular visitors whose primary drive for visiting is to attend lectures. According to HKWP Official Website (2012), the Park held fifty-nine public lectures and attracted around 6,500 participants in 2011. The author attended three lectures and interviewed nine attendees during the fieldwork at HKWP in 2010. They include nature lovers, students and teachers with a particular interest in nature conservation. A lady from Yuen Lang (a nearby region) said:

I have attended public lectures four times. I am a nature lover so I want to increase my knowledge about biodiversity and nature conservation. Besides listening to the lecture, I can also benefit from having a discussion with the speakers and other attendees. (Chi Chu, 20.05.2010)

Finally, family groups account for a comparatively large proportion of general park visits totalling nearly half of total respondents. The Park organises a wide range of family-based programmes ranging from guided tours to activity participating such as making origami, playing games, and role-play drama (Figure 42).

Figure 42. Family-based activities



During weekends and public holidays, it can be seen that the majority of park visitors are families. The parents stated that the key purpose for their visit was to get their children educated through participating in various ‘parent-children’ (*qin zi*) activities. The Park is well supported by families from the neighbouring city, Shen Zhen, who normally make a day trip, an ‘educational day-out’, to the Park due to its geographic proximity between the two cities. HKWP informant 63 (03.06.2010) (parents and two children) said:

This park is an excellent venue for children to learn about nature, wetlands, and environmental protection. In particular, children are really enjoying the various activities. We attended the DIY Origami Workshop. The best feature of the Park is to educate children through an interactive way, making them gain more interest in learning things.

7.4.3.3. International cooperation

In order to build a cooperative network and exchange experiences in wetland conservation and education worldwide, HKWP has established a twin-centre relationship with the London Wetland Center and the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in Singapore. In December 2007, two supervisors from HKWP (Ms Wendy Chen and Mr. Sam Cheung) visited the London Wetland Centre to

exchange management experience, conservation resources, and to promote education programmes and cooperation between the two centres (HKWP, 2008). HKWP and the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in Singapore organised a 'Sister Wetland Affiliation Programme' in 2008. Three teams of local school students from each wetland centre were selected to visit each other's site. The visit aimed to facilitate in-depth learning among students from each park about wetland habitats, ecotourism resources and the experience on how to promote wetland conservation (HKWP, 2009).

In summary, this section provides an insight into the way in which Ecological Modernisation is integrated into the ecotourism practice in HKWP. The Park shows a balanced role of wetland conservation, environmental education and recreational amenity. This attributes to the success of bringing forth the three key principles of Ecological Modernisation in the park's management and development, with the application of a scientific approach to the environment (e.g. green technologies and the zoning system) to increase efficiency in resource use, with the promotion of market-based incentives (e.g. environmental awards) to encourage a desirably environmental and beneficial social effects of development, with the collaboration of a wide range of members of civil society (e.g. economic agencies, educational institutions, and local communities) to propagate sustainable practices to a wider public. In contrast to SZWP, HKWP depicts a strong form of Ecological Modernisation that contributes to the sustainable development goals that the park seeks, whereas Ecological Modernisation is adopted as a rhetorical ploy to disguise the essence of SZWP - its commercially-orientated business. Such a result is very much shaped by Hong Kong's political-economic contexts on ecotourism development and associated environmental practices. As discussed in Chapter Five, Ecological Modernisation has been incorporated into Hong Kong's environmental policy framework since the 1980s. The case of HKWP proves

that Ecological Modernisation has been not only adopted as a policy discourse but also a practical solution to Hong Kong's environmental issues.

7.5. Interpretations of ecotourism

When assessing the ecotourism framework as defined in Chapter One, in contrast to SZWP, HKWP illuminates a 'deep' ecotourism, in that a symbiotic relationship among tourism-environment-community exists. Firstly, with respect to the relationship between tourism development and the natural environment, a common agreement is that tourism revenues obtained from tourism development on a natural environment can be an indivisible source with which to contribute to nature conservation. According to AFCD (2011), during the year 2010/2011, HKWP received tourist revenues mainly from admission fees and cafe rentals with HK\$10.5 million (£1 million), while operating expenses were HK\$43.7 million (£4 million). Ms. Chan (08.03.2010) claimed: 'We receive HK\$30 million (£3 million) annually from the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). Most of the funding is used on conservation projects and the facilities' maintenance'.

Given the key objective of the Park is to enhance awareness of importance of wetland conservation among Hong Kong residents and tourists from outside Hong Kong, the Park charges a much lower admission fees (e.g. £3 per visit and £10 annual pass for adult, £1.50 per visit and £5 annual pass for students and senior citizens) than that of SZWP (£13 per visit and £55 annual pass), aiming to attract more visitors and convey the conservation message to a wider public. In fact, as noted above, there are diverse stakeholders of civil society which are involved in conservations works, educational programmes, and tourist activities offered by the Park. As a result, ecotourism development of HKWP, with the financial support from the government, shows a distinct

difference from the commercially-orientated tourism business of SZWP.

Secondly, in terms of the relationship between the natural environment and the local community, a frequently reported problem associated with the establishment of protected areas or parks is to exclude former residents from access to, and use of, the natural resources on which they once made a living. This causes social conflict and hostility of community residents towards park developers such as in the situation of SZWP discussed in Chapter Six, whereas, this does not occur in the case of HKWP.

As noted in Chapter Five, the original site of HKWP was on *gei wai* fish ponds and the land was acquired by MCL in the 1980s under the Tin Shui Wai New Town Development project. The actual development on the land of HKWP started in 1998. Nowadays, community residents who live around HKWP are largely new immigrants from mainland China and low-income Hong Kong families. During the author's interviews with fifty-four community members of two residential areas (*Tin Sau* and *Tin Heng*) adjacent to HKWP, most of them moved to the area less than ten years ago so they did not know too much about the historical narrative about the land developer and indigenous fishermen. What they provided were their opinions and experiences based on the changes during their time living in the area. An elderly gentleman who moved from the city centre, Mongkok, to a public housing of Tin Shui Wai in 2001, said:

I heard that the original fishermen were given compensation for the appropriation of their land and then they moved to nearby regions such as Yuenlang, or even more developed areas (e.g. Kowloon) to have a better life there. The compensation should be sufficient. Otherwise they would not agree to give up their land. The way in which the land is appropriated here is very different from that in most mainland cities. Normally there is a more peaceful process to conduct an exchange between the land and money, unlike that on the mainland, a brute-force approach is

frequently adopted. There is a small proportion of gei wai fish ponds maintained in a relatively far distance of HKWP where the indigenous fishermen did not sell their lands, but most of them do not make a living by it anymore. They rented their lands to others and moved to other areas to have a city life. (HKWP informant 159, 21.06.2010)

This respondent's comments, in part, echo the expression of a village respondent around SZWP: 'villagers here are crying while villagers in Hong Kong are laughing when the government comes to levy their lands' (SZWP informant 133, see Chapter Seven).

Another female respondent who has lived in the area for six years stated:

The land was 'lantang' (abandoned fish ponds with weeds springing up) before HKWP was established. It increased the sense of 'huangliang' (desolation and uncivilisation) of this area. That is partly the reason why this area has been regarded as one of the poorest and toughest regions in Hong Kong so that few people are willing to move here except for poor people. Therefore, this area is normally called the 'city of tragedy' in relation to many problems such as crimes, suicides and violence. Nevertheless, with gradual improvements on infrastructure during the past few years, including the opening of HKWP, more visitors and tourists have come to visit this area which brings 'shengji' (vitality) and increase 'renqi' (popularity) to this region. (HKWP informant 124, 06.04.2010)

The author also approached eleven respondents in one of remaining traditional fish villages (*Tai Tseng Wai*), to find out the indigenous villagers' opinions towards the building of HKWP. Due to the geographical distance of the Village to HKWP, the respondents showed little impact and interest in the Park. For example, an elderly lady said:

Because our village is far away from HKWP, the government and

the developer did not come to appropriate our land. We, the elder people, are still engaged in agriculture and farming for a living, while most young people go out to work in other regions. I know the government built a wetland park on the abandoned fish ponds. I have been there a few times with my relatives who were visiting me from the mainland. The Park is modern, but lacks amusement facilities. (HKWP informant 112, 02.04.2010)

In general, despite most community residents revealing a positive attitude to the way in which the original fish ponds were transformed into HKWP, there exists some dissenting voices. For example, when interviewed, a group of community members (six people) at *Tin Sau*, two of them argued:

We do not think that it is reasonable to establish a wetland park. Instead, due to the serious scarcity of land in Hong Kong, the government should use that piece of land to build more residential buildings in order to accommodate more people. We have a saying here: 'the value of one inch of land equals that of one inch of gold in Hong Kong' (cun tu cun jin). Building a wetland park is just wasting our precious land resources. (HKWP informants 144 and 145, 10.06.2010)

This comment is consistent with the results generated earlier in that environmental concerns are directly linked to a certain level of economic satisfaction among Chinese. Referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, only after lower-level needs are met, will people then start seeking a higher level of concern and fulfilment. In the case of local communities around HKWP, most residents are low-income families and struggling with physical needs. It is plausible for some respondents to advocate establishing residential buildings instead of a wetland park.

Thirdly, in the light of the relationship between the local community and the ecotourism development of HKWP, a direct benefit to the community residents comes from economic contributions, in particular with employment

opportunities generated by the Park. Since the geographical location of Tin Shui Wai is peripheral to most well-developed areas of Hong Kong, as well as its limited job opportunities, unemployment is one of the serious social problems of the area. One third of middle-aged people and youngsters are unemployed, and nearly fifty people strive for one job opportunity in Tin Shui Wai, compared to two people for one job in city centres such as Hong Kong Island and Mongkok (China Review News, 12th June, 2010). According to AFCD (2011), HKWP creates seventy-seven full-time job opportunities which include thirty-three non-civil-service contract staff members. Although these job opportunities cannot solve the fundamental problem of unemployment of the region, they have made considerable contributions to many community residents who work at the Park.

A middle-aged mainland immigrant who has worked at the Park for one year as a security guard claimed:

I feel very lucky to get this job. On the one hand, I live nearby so it saves me a considerable amount of time to commute between the park and my home, which enables me to have more time to look after my family. On the other hand, working at this park helps me to build up self-confidence because I am in the process of continuous learning such as wetland habitat knowledge and the English language for serving foreign tourists. In the meantime, the salary I earned can offset a significant part of my household expenditure, and therefore reduce the economic burden of my husband. (Ching Cheung, 22.03.2010)

HKWP informant 93 (a civil servant) continued to comment:

One of the key advantages of working at this park lies in the convenience. My journey from home to the Park is within walking distance (around 7-8 minutes). If I were not employed by this park, the nearest area I could get a job in is Yuenlang, which takes at least two hours every day for commuting. In addition, the

transport fare is expensive. When taking commuting time and transport cost into consideration, the income of working outside of Tin Shui Wai would not be higher than working here.

Besides the above stated employment opportunities, the community residents benefit from other amenities provided by the Park. As noted in the section on Ecological Modernisation, a retired local resident (HKWP informant 21) came to the Park to learn wildlife photography and to actively participate in photographic activities. This has greatly enriched his life after retirement. A female respondent who is a nurse stated:

I live nearby which provides me with the privilege to visit the Park wherever I want, even when the Park is closed, I am still able to walk around outside the Park, and stand at the top of the Visitor Centre to view the wetland vistas. The Park is an ideal place to reduce my pressure from work and life. I bought an annual pass so I come here very often, sometimes with my family members and friends. (HKWP informant 16, 22.03.2010)

In summary, the three key themes of ecotourism definition - tourism, environment and local community, in the case of HKWP reveals a symbiotic interrelationship. Accordingly, the Park is operated with a combined role of nature conservation, tourism development and public recreation. Central to this form of ecotourism as manifested in HKWP is a strong influence derived from Hong Kong's experience of nature conservation and its development philosophy. Based on Hong Kong's long-standing capitalist political and economic contexts, it has undergone more of a Western-style institutional development which, at present stage, focuses on more quality development rather than merely quantitative economic growth (e.g. Shen Zhen). The government takes a proactive role in seeking a sustainable development approach by formulating regulatory frameworks, using economic incentives, and collaborating with various stakeholders, to combine economic prosperity with ecological health.

The establishment of HKWP, in this sense, becomes an active reflection of such an approach to sustainability.

7.6. Drawing on ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation

From what has been discussed above, it can be seen that HKWP combines seemingly contradictory notions, ‘Chinese Philosophy’, Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation, in an example of ‘hybridity’ - a term for a wide range of social and cultural phenomenon involving ‘mixing’ (Brah and Coombs, 2000). Hoogvelt (1997:158) claims it is ‘celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference’. This is particularly the case in Homi K. Bhabha’s discussion of cultural hybridity. Accordingly, Pieterse (2004) states that hybridity can be envisaged as the rhizome of culture, which is indivisible to its dissemination and closely allied to globalisation. It is associated with a conceptual re-ordering made necessary by globalisation, producing new combinations and mixtures and the design of new understandings.

The ecotourism development and practices of HKWP provide evidence of a mixture of encompassing an aspect of globalisation with reference to the applicability of Disney techniques and principles of Ecological Modernisation, and retaining the tradition of ‘human-nature unity’ regarding the Chinese perception and experience of nature and the ‘natural’.

In principle, the ecotourism framework of HKWP is based on the principles of environmental conservation, public education, and recreation-amenity uses,

which is very consistent with the key themes of ecotourism as defined in the West. Many scholars claim: 'We are moving towards definitional consensus or a universal understanding of ecotourism' (e.g. Fennell, 2001; Weaver, 2005; Donohoe and Needham, 2006). Referring to Chapter One, extensive ecotourism literature advocates that ecotourism derives from, and is significantly impacted by, Western traditions and ideology (Fennell, 2003; Cater, 2006). A series of scholars further suggest that ecotourism can be envisaged as a phenomenon 'in the broader contemporary context of globalisation and the internationalisation of human development' (Holt-Jensen, 1999; Hall and Page, 2002; Nyiri and Breidenbach, 2005; cited in Donhoe and Lu, 2008:2).

Due to Hong Kong's long-standing importance as an international port, as well as its colonial history, it has become one of the frontier cities in China's process of modernisation and globalisation. The notion of ecotourism in HKWP can be seen as an introduction of the Western concept, while its implementation and practice reveal a fusion of Chinese and Western thoughts, and traditional and modern ideologies.

The aspects of tradition/localisation find expression in cultural values drawing upon thousands of years of Chinese philosophical/religious traditions that are imbued within a Chinese approach to or model of nature and the environment. This approach/model, in turn, paves the way in which ecotourism sites are constructed to cater for tourists' experiences and preferences for nature and the 'natural'. As noted earlier, to make nature attractive and meaningful to Chinese, human elements have to be properly accommodated within it to reflect 'harmony', 'balance', and 'interconnectedness'. Otherwise, nature would become '*huangye*' which is totally different from the term 'wilderness' in the West.

As a result, at a macro level, a quarter of the total area of HKWP is concentrated on having extensive human elements (e.g. tourist facilities, man-made structures, and recreated habitats), while the rest of the large proportion of land is kept as a conservation area in a ‘naturalistic’ state for visitors to appreciate (see the zoning map of HKWP, Figure 38). At a micro level, within the area of extensive human use, human structures are carefully designed and integrated into the surrounding landscape, to provide an overall harmonious outlook, such as the Visitor Centre and the bird hides. Simulated attractions are presented and constructed based on the ‘natural law’, for example flowing water from the mountainside, streams gurgling through rambling rocks, and zig-zag bridges across water.

To the large majority of Chinese tourists, their visitor experiences can be improved by viewing human structures and simulated environments, in particular with those images and symbols associated with a *Shanshui*-picturesque atmosphere (e.g. flowing stream, elegant mountain, and waterfalls). On the one hand, this reflects *shan shui* literature (e.g. *Shanshui* painting and poetry) drawing on the principles of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ as discussed in Chapter Two, which still exerts an influence on an aesthetic valuation among Chinese viewing natural landscapes. On the other hand, with the increasing capability and power of humans controlling nature and the environment in modern era, humans have realised that they are becoming more and more detached from nature so that artificial nature becomes an acceptable reminder of the ancestral heritage - ‘man-nature harmony’.

Although it is also common to see tourist infrastructure located in nature-based areas in the West, such infrastructure mainly contains light tourist facilities such as walking trails, shelters, cafes, and aesthetic sculptures. The key

purpose of provision of such facilities can be argued to ease visitors' access and provide convenience to visitors, while to enhance visitors' appreciation of nature comes to be subordinated. Notwithstanding this, in examples of Western history, Buckley *et al.*, (2008:959) argue:

There have indeed been periods when particular social groups in particular countries also held the view that human intervention would improve the aesthetics of natural landscapes. Many large estates owned by wealthy individuals in Europe, for example, were historically laid out with this idea in mind; and this attitude was also part of the pioneer culture in the American West and in early European settlement of Australia. During the period when ecotourism concepts have evolved, however, there has been a strong and dominant cultural perception in the West that for recreation as well as conservation, nature in protected areas is at its best when unsullied by human impact. Even though many protected areas are heavily managed, the goal of management regimes is generally to maintain the protected ecosystems in a pristine and primeval state.

The key distinction in integrating man-made structures into a natural area, between China and the West, may lie in that the former considers man-made structures as indispensable components of natural landscape, while the latter regards them as ancillary facilities in protected areas. Moreover, in Chinese eyes, combining artificial human work with natural landscapes reflects the ideal harmony between nature and the humanity. Based on this view, although ninety percent of the total land of HKWP is an artificially re-created venue, the majority of Chinese visitors perceived the park as 'natural'. This is largely facilitated by Western/global forces, such as the assistance of Disney techniques and Ecological Modernisation, in particular with science and technology, which enables human structures to be properly blended with the surrounding natural environment, and thus creates a seemingly harmonious space and place. On the other hand, modernity and technology have blurred the line between the real and the hyperreal - people accept man-made secondary nature as the way nature

‘used to be’.

The design of the Visitor Centre of HKWP is a good example of mixing ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. The building contains extensive exhibition galleries over two storeys with an area of 10,000 square metres, which is constructed so as to be hidden under the landscape. It gives the impression of a green hill rising above the entry plaza, and maintains an overall natural environmental vista. The Visitor Centre in HKWP serves the similar role as it does in the Western tourist sites which works as an indoor museum, to provide extensive tourist facilities (e.g. cafes, souvenir shops, toilets, rest areas, etc.) on the one hand, and to deliver information and knowledge to the visitors through interactive games, information boards, interpretations, and pamphlets on the other hand. The Visitor Centre utilises various scientific-technological methods to embed the green concepts in both the design and operation, which helps HKWP win many environmental awards.

In addition, HKWP is designed by a cooperation between the Hong Kong Government’s Architectural Service Department (ArchSD) and British design agency MET Studio Design. Thus, the park reflects a fusion of the traditional ethics of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ and the Western concept of nature conservation. Besides the consideration of environmental impacts when building the park, the design of the entire structure also incorporates Chinese traditional architectural principles - such as the Confucian symmetrical balance between the structures, the practice of *fengshui* with an allocation of a water channel running through the Visitor Centre to the Outdoor Reserve and articulating the surface of wetlands, and Daoist natural-looking outdoor spaces. The ethic of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ is also rooted in the design concept of the Visitor Centre. As noted earlier, the Visitor Centre is presented as a bird cage to denote that humans are bound inside while birds enjoy the freedom and fly outside. It

indicates that, due to human over-exploitation of nature in modern society, humans have become detached from nature and eventually they will need to pay for what they have done to the natural world, such as being trapped inside the ‘bird cage’ they have built.

Accordingly, a different ecotourism framework between HKWP and SZWP can be observed. The process of Disenchantment shows a dominant role and nature has become a package of commodities to increase merchandising and revenues in SZWP. HKWP, however, demonstrates an integration of ecotourism products with themed and simulated attractions to seek a model of sustainable tourism development. For example, the Park provides a wide array of thematic attractions ranging from indoor wetland exhibitions and interactions to outdoor natural walks and themed gardens/enclosures. In this sense, such a theming strategy can cater to Chinese visitors’ tastes, in favour of combined natural and man-made attractions and an appreciation of nature through man-made structures. In the meantime, it can arouse visitors’ interest in nature and promote the importance of maintaining biodiversity through simulated environments. The role of the theming strategy is further enhanced by modern technologies.

A wide range of animal sculptures related to the theme of wetlands are purposely built and displayed. They demonstrate a utilisation of natural elements by modern technology to invite visitors to appreciate nature. Besides this, a modern cartoon pig ‘McDull’ is adopted as a character in a mini-film called ‘McDull at Wetlands’ which is presented at the Human Culture Gallery of the Visitor Centre. The film aims to convey the message of the long-standing relationship between humans and wetlands through illustrating the Chinese character ‘Home’ (家) by McDull, and therefore calls for a behaviour change of modern people towards nature.

Finally, applying Urry's term 'Globalising the Tourist Gaze' to HKWP, he claims: 'In certain cases becoming a tourist destination is part of a reflexive process by which societies and places come to "enter" the global order' (Urry, 2001:2). All tourist sites embrace some similar core components which constitute part of a global ordering of tourism. Visitor centres, for example, are commonly constructed at various tourist sites to reflect an emerging pattern of the globalisation of the tourist industry. Pearce and Burke (2003:525) define visitor centres as 'a new cultural institution, arising exclusively from the needs of the tourist industry. Unlike hotels, highways and other transport facilities, the visitor centre is typically purpose built just for tourism'. The Visitor Centre at HKWP, playing a similar role as that in other tourist destinations, was established to become part of the global tourism phenomena.

Moreover, in Chan's (2009) study on Chinese outbound tourists, Chan found the Chinese gaze was driven by a 'modernity urge'. This gaze 'acts like a torchlight searching for signs of modernisation when visiting other places' (Chan, 2009:201). This view has been confirmed by the findings of this research, as many tourists from mainland China who visited HKWP, in part, were looking for signs of development and modernity, especially for those families with children who showed an active involvement in the various interactive computer programs provided by HKWP. This may best be described as the practices of 'tourist reflexivity' (Urry 2001:7) within the global culture of tourism.

However, some scholars contend that globalisation is spontaneously allied to localisation (e.g. Cox, 1997; Smith, 2001). For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, there is a Chinese 'harmony gaze' whereby Chinese tourists gaze at a 'cooked' nature combining human elements with natural landscapes, and

drawing upon the influence of Chinese philosophical heritages. This is evident in HKWP which embraces elements of global tourism and, on the other hand, retains a Chinese approach to nature in that human effort should be integrated into the natural landscape to create a harmonious space and place, albeit a misinterpretation on the origin of 'man-nature harmony'. Given the influence of cultural traditions as well as political and economic conditions of Hong Kong, Swyngecouw's (1992) term - 'glocalisation' may best fit into the case of HKWP, or what has been identified in the beginning of this section in that tradition and modernity are integrated into one approach - 'hybridity'.

7.7. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated Chinese attitudes towards nature/the environment and the influence of Hong Kong's political-economic contexts on Chinese environmental experiences by assessing three approaches - 'Chinese Philosophy', Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation - within the ecotourism practices of HKWP. 'Chinese Philosophy' has a significant influence on the aesthetic value of nature and the environment among park developers and Chinese park visitors. A hybridised nature in particular with *shanshui* symbols and images is aesthetically appreciated by the visitors. Through this appreciation, an ethical valuation of nature is also promoted, which aims to generate environmental reverence and arouse visitors' environmental conscience, albeit a weak ethical response, towards the environment among the park visitors. The principles of theming and performative labour, drawing upon the process of Disneyisation, demonstrate that Disneyisation can go beyond the realm of commercialisation and into the domain of conservation. Ecological Modernisation, focusing on the scientific management of the environment, has made a considerable contribution to the

sustainable development goal that HKWP seeks. Ecotourism of the Park, therefore, illuminates a 'deep' framework. Such a framework is strongly influenced by political and economic contexts of Hong Kong. Overall, the three approaches are complementary, and provide evidence of the value of thinking in terms of 'hybridity' when they are combined.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis provides insights into understanding the issues related to Chinese environmental awareness through examining urban (eco)tourism practices in China, drawing on multifaceted theoretical influences, notably a combination of Chinese philosophical/religious traditions, the process of Disneyisation, and Ecological Modernisation. These conceptual approaches were analytically reviewed in earlier chapters (Chapters Two and Three). A case study approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative research methods, provided a comprehensive comparison of two urban (eco)tourism sites: Shen Zhen Wetland Park and Hong Kong Wetland Park, which are based in two different regions of China. The choice of these two parks offers an assessment of contemporary environmental behaviour and experiences associated with urban (eco)tourism in the context of seemingly dissimilar political, economic, and environmental contexts between Shen Zhen and Hong Kong. Accordingly, Chapter Five provided background information on environmental policy and urban development philosophies in the two study areas. They were followed by the empirical investigations in the two wetland parks, which revealed different narratives, albeit sharing similarities in certain aspects.

In the concluding chapter we revisit the application of multifaceted conceptual approaches in the two case studies with the intention of providing comparative conclusions and research implications. Therefore, the structure of the Chapter starts with a summary of the main research findings (8.1), followed by appropriate policy implications (8.2), and concludes with suggestions on possible avenues for future research (8.3).

8.1. Research findings

In a general overview, the two case studies have demonstrated more differences than similarities in terms of the issues concerning Chinese environmental awareness by examining three very different ideas and approaches to urban (eco)tourism. In the case of SZWP, both Chinese models of nature and Western institutional influences are evident in the Park, whilst the process of Disneyisation displays a dominant role. (Eco)tourism in SZWP reflects the ‘greenwashing’ phenomenon, which has a strong influence from China’s experience of nature conservation and Shen Zhen’s development philosophy. In contrast, HKWP, under a different environmental policy and urban development strategy, reveals a ‘deep’ ecotourism practice, which is more consistent with ecotourism as defined in the Western literature, whilst still retaining its own features. Chinese philosophies of nature and Western development theories are seemingly integrated into one approach - ‘hybridity’ in the case of HKWP. Comparing these different approaches in the two urban (eco)tourist sites helps us to better understand Chinese environment-related behaviour. Specifically, the key findings of this research are related to five dimensions: (1) interpretation of ecotourism; (2) Chinese models of nature; (3) Disneyisation; (4) Ecological Modernisation; and (5) combination and comparison of Chinese approaches to nature and Western ideologies of development and the environment.

8.1.1. Interpretations of ecotourism

Based on the ecotourism definitions reviewed in Chapter One, I identified ‘deep’ and ‘shallow’ interpretations. ‘Deep’ ecotourism encompasses a symbiotic tourism-environment-community relationship, whereby each makes positive contributions to the other. In contrast, ‘shallow’ ecotourism forms a more conflictive interrelationship, where profit-making dominates while adopting

some lighter environmentally-sensitive practices.

In the findings in Chapter Six, SZWP demonstrates a very conflicting interrelationship between tourism, environment and local communities. In particular, there is antagonism between community residents and the state-linked park developer. Central to this antagonism are the unequal power relations leading to conflicts over access to and use of natural resources. Local communities are largely excluded from the park decision-making and planning processes, so few economic benefits are gained by the locals. Tourism development of the Park is dominated by a powerful government-led regime in a large-scale, top-down approach. Given the economic-driven development mode, the Park reflects characteristics of an entertainment-orientated venue, while conservation and education, as one of the key functions of ecotourism, become deeply subordinated to profit and earnings. Therefore, the Park falls into 'shallow' ecotourism, where 'ecotourism' has largely been used as a 'green' label for promotional reasons without making changes to mass tourism practices.

In contrast, Chapter Seven finds a more symbiotic relationship among the three components of ecotourism in HKWP, with a reflection of a balanced role in nature conservation, public education and as a citizens' amenity. One of the key reasons behind such different scenarios between the two parks rests in each city's own development philosophies and variant levels of government commitment to environmental legislation and goals.

As discussed in Chapter Five, although there have been significant improvements in China's environmental policy framework since the 1990s, these improvements have had little capacity to keep pace with economic growth. This is particularly the case in Shen Zhen, which has been applauded as a

pioneer city in realising modernisation in mainland China. Environmental protection, in most cases, has become subordinated to rapid urbanisation and economic development. SZWP is owned by the central government, but ironically it is built within the government-designated 'Ecological Protection Zone'. This supports Gossling's (2003) argument that, since governments are usually an active force for economic development, there is a blurred intention of governments in the implementation of strict environmental laws. In other words, a significant implementation gap exists between policy prescription and practice.

Moreover, Chapter Five showed the tendency for the nation state to decentralise its power, and to empower the public in recent years. However, the case study of SZWP reveals that the role of civil society in the Chinese process of environmentalism is still marginal. Consequently, state-led tourism development in SZWP leads to a complete exclusion of local communities from decision-making and planning of the Park.

In the case of HKWP, due to its long-standing capitalist economic and social conditions, as well as a recent colonial-orientated past, environmentalism in Hong Kong revealed a different narrative from that of Shen Zhen. Chapter Five outlined the fact that environmental policy and development strategies in Hong Kong have experienced four important stages starting from the late 1950s to the present. It can be seen that nature conservation has always been a component of the overall environmental strategy, albeit historically more effort has been placed on pollution control. The establishment of HKWP reflects the importance of wetland conservation in Hong Kong's nature conservation policy. The Park, on the one hand, serves as a buffer between the urban development of the Tin Shui Wai New Town and the Mai Po Nature Reserve, and on the other, acts as a public venue for promoting wetland conservation, providing public education,

and offering amenities for citizens in a crowded city.

In addition, the Hong Kong government shows a high awareness that public environmental education plays a key part in achieving their environmental goals and the objectives of sustainable development, which can be seen from the environmental awareness campaigns initiated by the government since the 1970s, and the more comprehensive environmental education programmes were introduced since the 1990s. Public education is one of the key roles played by HKWP and this has even outweighed the other roles proposed for the Park, such as that of amenity and entertainment.

With respect to the force of civil society in Hong Kong, this has become more mature since the 1990s and has found an increasing number of stakeholders engaged in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies and programmes (Chapter Five). This trend is supported by the case of HKWP which displays a wide diversity in civil society, including the corporate sectors, the NGOs, the academia, park visitors, and local community members who are actively involved in activities and programmes offered by the Park and closely cooperate with the Park.

Overall, it can be argued that the different ecotourism models developed in SZWP and HKWP indicate divergent environment-related behaviour and practices of the two case study destinations. Behind this, it lies in the variance in each city's environmental policies, development philosophies, experience of nature conservation, the government's awareness of and commitment to promoting public environmental education, and the roles of various stakeholders in civil society.

8.1.2. Chinese models of nature

Chapter Two provided a detailed discussion of some of the fundamental paradigms that govern the Chinese approach to nature both aesthetically and ethically, which are derived from the philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism. The core idea of such traditions is to achieve a state of ‘man-nature unity’/‘man-nature harmony’ in which humans and nature coexist in balance. In the case of SZWP and HKWP (Chapters Six and Seven), such a balance found expression mainly from an aesthetic perspective, with little application to individual Chinese behaviour towards nature/the environment, with reference to both the production side and the consumption side.

From a service supply view (the production side), Chinese philosophies of nature inform the design of ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ landscapes in both parks. This can be seen in the incorporation of various types of man-made structures (e.g. bridges, trails, pavilions, waterfalls and sculptures) in the ‘natural’ environment as well as the geomantic orientation of these structures and ‘natural landscapes’ to create *jingjie* and harmony allied to the principle of *fengshui*. Such human modification/improvements to raw nature is essential to enhance the aesthetic value of nature. This is a key procedure to produce a Chinese tourist gaze at nature and the ‘natural’.

As a result, ‘nature’ is structured and presented in the two parks in a hybrid way with a high degree of mutual interpenetration of natural elements and human effort. Of course, such a hybrid nature is not exclusive to China. For example, Redclift (2006) provides a few examples of eco-parks in Mexico (e.g. Xcarnet and Xell-Ha), which also blur the line between natural and human-made constructions, with a combination of diverse tourist facilities (e.g. restaurants, hotels, and shops) and nature-based activities (e.g. kayaking, snorkelling, and

swimming) as well as contrived cultural elements (e.g. Mayan cuisine and music). Although nature in this hybridised context, in the face of global tourism development, has been adopted in many other nations in addition to China, Chinese tourists' attitudes towards such forms of nature utilise particular images and symbols of nature which connote and embed Chinese cultural and philosophical values.

With reference to the Chinese tourists to the two parks, it was found that the majority of tourists appreciate 'nature' through images illustrated and generated by human modifications, such as man-made sculptures and attractions, with particular preference for the *shanshui* elements (e.g. rivers, lakes, mountains, rocks, waterfalls). These elements are the lens through which the Chinese appreciate nature and they structure the Chinese tourist's view as they observe nature and the 'natural'.

As noted in the empirical case studies (Chapters Six and Seven), in Chinese eyes, appropriate human modification on the natural environment does not denote human domination over nature and degradation of the essence of 'wilderness', rather, it suggests human improvements to nature, and the creation of harmony while not destroying natural resources. This view is resonant with the key ideas of Chinese philosophical traditions discussed in Chapter Two in that humans have the responsibility to beautify the natural environment and enhance the view of 'oneness' of man and nature - the idea of creative transformation of nature.

There is a significantly different conceptualisation of the term 'wilderness' as it is defined and perceived by Chinese respondents and their Western counterparts. For Chinese tourists, a natural environment without human elements implies that the place/space has no value and is referred as to '*huangye*', meaning 'unpopulated countryside', and is associated with uncivilised and backward

feelings and images, and does not encompass the same connotations of pristine, ‘unspoiled’, and ‘virgin’ nature as in the Western term. As such, the findings of the two case studies reveal that, in order to make a natural site meaningful and attractive to Chinese tourists, human elements must be presented and allocated inside the site and in doing so are denigrating the site in the eyes of Westerners.

Such a Chinese approach to nature produces a distinctively Chinese tourist gaze, referring to Li’s (2005) term, ‘harmony gaze’. The gaze is involved in an infusion of human constructions with natural elements into a natural setting, which is viewed as complementary and is balanced with the essence of *jingjie*. Therefore, the Chinese ‘harmony gaze’, with respect to an aesthetic stance towards nature and the environment that was found in the two case studies, demonstrates divergence from Urry’s ‘romantic gaze’, which gazes at ‘wilderness’ involving ‘the solitudinous contemplation of an undisturbed nature’, with an exclusion from human appearance (Urry, 1990:17).

Apart from the aesthetic influence of Chinese philosophical traditions on the way in which nature is viewed and valued among the Chinese, such traditions encompass ethical teachings and guidance towards environmentally-responsible attitudes and behaviour (see Chapter Two). In practice, the findings from the two case studies suggest that these philosophical traditions exert little effective moral impact on Chinese tourists in terms of their environment-related behaviour within the two wetland parks. Although most respondents from both parks expressed a strong emotional attachment to environmental issues, in actuality their actions lagged far behind in going ‘green’.

The rapid economic development of China during recent decades, as well as the capitalistic pursuit of material well-being, has promoted a style of life which has transformed China into a consumer society. Consumption has become an

important indicator of social and economic achievement. Tangible goods and aspects relating to the intangible spirit (such as traditions, love and affection) have become commercialised. Consequently, 'nature' has also become a commodity to be consumed. This is consistent with the core criticism of ecotourism discussed in Chapter One. Since ecotourism is always involved in consuming nature and culture in either a direct or indirect way, it cannot be labelled as a 'non-consumptive' activity (Meletis and Campbell, 2007).

In the context of SZWP and HKWP, nature has been found to be consumed in both parks, but with certain differences. The two parks are similar in that (eco)tourism is associated with the visual consumption of natural resources. Because of the Chinese 'harmony gaze' - infusing human endeavour with a natural landscape - the natural resources of the two parks have been modified in various scales in order to cater for Chinese tourists' tastes. However, this 'harmony' of artificial structures and natural elements is based on destroying original flora and fauna in SZWP, which can be best seen as commercialising 'nature' with the purpose of maximising profits by adopting the rhetoric of 'man-nature harmony'.

It can be argued, therefore, that an ethical approach to nature advocated by 'Chinese Philosophy' - that humans should have an adaptative attitude towards nature - has been replaced with a pragmatic utilitarian view that humans should use or even conquer nature for human needs in modern China. Although many Chinese expressed a desire to re-adopt the traditional ethical approach to alter their consumption patterns, when conflicts happen between environmental protection and individual interests in this consumerist era, the former normally becomes subordinate. Such a consumerist attitude, in part, can be explained by the phenomenon of Disneyisation.

8.1.3. Disneyisation

After discussing the Chinese models of nature, the thesis examined the manifestation of the process of Disneyisation in the two case studies. Disneyisation, encompassing four principles: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labour, refers to dissemination of the model of Disney techniques to other realms and societies. It plays different roles in the context of the two wetland parks.

In the case of SZWP, Disneyisation shows a dominant trend in which the primary role of ecotourism has been transformed from conservation and education towards entertainment and commerce. SZWP becomes a carrier of Disneyisation through the rhetoric of ecotourism. The tourist economy has structurally transformed both the environment and human perception, so that the culture of consumption permeates the operation and experience of the Park. This can be seen in the way in which the four principles of Disneyisation are reflected in the Park.

Firstly, the theming strategy produced a series of ‘natural’ attractions and simulated environments to attract tourists who prefer to relish and enjoy the carefully crafted natural landscapes. As noted in Chapter Six, to ‘enjoy elegant scenery’ and ‘experience exotic culture’ were the primary stated motivations for Chinese tourists visiting the Park. They expressed a clear preference for the transformation of ‘ecotourism’ products (e.g. natural landscapes, culture) into themed and simulated attractions, in their terms, a ‘comfort in nature’. They do not see a contradiction between the seemingly incompatible ecotourism elements and themed attractions/environments.

Behind the popular appeal of theming, the Park’s success lies in its

merchandising to encourage and stimulate tourists' hybrid consumption. Since most Chinese tourists seek a multi-purpose tourist experience, 'eating, staying, playing, shopping, and entertaining', SZWP is developed as a tourist complex which includes theme attractions, hotels, restaurants, amusement facilities, and shops, coupled with selling an extensive range of merchandise, from small items such as pens, wallets, postcards, and soft toys to luxury villas (i.e. *Tianlu Mansion*). Beside this, both human labour (park employees) and animals (e.g. parrots) are involved in the performative realm, becoming 'staged' as attractions and 'cast members' in the tourist playgrounds. Overall, SZWP demonstrates an explicit Disney business model, selling a wide range of commodities and experiences to paying visitors. It has successfully achieved financial sustainability while environmental and socio-cultural effects are largely ignored.

In contrast, HKWP demonstrates a different aspect. Disneyisation can go beyond commercialisation/entertainment to demonstrate conservation/education. This is evident by way of the contribution of the principles of theming and performative labour that is made to the wetland conservation work at the Park. The Park incorporates the motifs of wetland conservation and education, unlike entertainment which is used in SZWP, into its various thematic zones. Through viewing themed attractions and interacting with simulated games, it hopes to arouse tourists' interests in learning about, and protecting, wetland and other natural resources.

Besides this, emotional labour - the dedicated work attitude towards wetland conservation amongst the park's employees - takes a different form to that of SZWP, making significant contributions in formulating positive moral environmental attitudes, and conducting conservational appeals to the park visitors. Such a dedicated and enthusiastic workforce evokes in the tourists a sense of sympathy and guilt in terms of human exploitation of natural resources.

This, in turn, aspires to exert a transformative influence on tourists' attitudes and behaviour. It is possible to argue, therefore, that the principles of Disneyisation can also contribute towards nature conservation. On the whole, the different results of Disneyisation disclosed by SZWP and HKWP are a reflection of different development philosophies wielded by Shen Zhen and Hong Kong.

8.1.4. Ecological Modernisation

Chapter Three provided a conceptual discussion of Ecological Modernisation as well as its possible influences on attitudes to nature within the context of ecotourism. As already noted, Ecological Modernisation has been developed both as a way of analysing emergent policy discourses and as a desirable solution to environmental problems associated with industrialism. Similarly, Mol (1995) argues that the theory has been used in both a descriptive and prescriptive way. Looking through China's environmental policy (Chapter Five) in particular starting from the 1990s, Ecological Modernisation has been incorporated into the country's environmental reform framework. It has been reflected in the development of comprehensive environmental policies and regulations to stimulate and facilitate industrial innovations. This has given rise to research and development of new and innovative environmental-friendly technologies, whilst promoting their applications, and restructuring industrial economies from resource intensive heavy industry toward less resource-consumed industries such as the tourism and service sectors. Ecotourism, as one 'green' option, has been vigorously promoted by the government.

Turning our attention to the associated policies and practices in Hong Kong, Chapter Five indicated that Ecological Modernisation has also been embedded in the policy-making process, although not in a consistent and integrated way.

Evidence includes transformation from a command-and-control regime to one more broadly based on a mix of regulations, economic and market instruments, and the promotion of the mode of environmental co-governance. This movement has enhanced the role for environmental regulation in encouraging and forcing the adoption of environmentally-beneficial innovations.

Moving to the application of Ecological Modernisation in the empirical work of the two wetland parks (Chapters Six and Seven), both parks have found evidence of its presence. In general, the two wetland parks can be argued to be the outcome of economic restructuring carried out in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong over the past few decades, in which economic emphasis has shifted to the service industry instead of manufacturing. As discussed in Chapter Three, Ecological Modernisation is involved in the macro-economic restructuring of advanced industrial economies. Consequently, tourism has become a pillar industry in both cities and ecotourism has been promoted as a form of ‘green industry’ which has grown rapidly in the two cities.

Moreover, the two parks can be considered as a type of innovative tourism industry which tries to balance the vexed relationship between development and conservation, although the outcomes of the two cases vary. This assertion was examined and analysed through applying three core themes of Ecological Modernisation as underscored in Chapter Three. They are: facilitating the role of science and technology, boosting the role of market dynamics and economic agents, and collaborating with various stakeholders of civil society.

The most prominent similarity between SZWP and HKWP rests in the adoption of various environmentally-sensitive technologies to reduce environmental externalities such as utilising clean energy (e.g. wind power and solar power). Besides this, the science and technologies adopted by each park, such as

multi-media facilities and interactive computer games, is supposed to fulfil an educational goal, by conveying environmental knowledge and facilitating public lifestyles changes. One of the key differences between the two parks is reflected in this point.

The case of HKWP illustrated the positive educational role that technologies can play, whereas it is hard to see in SZWP that any effective educational purpose has been achieved by the various technologies. Although a series of 'interpretive' computing facilities are installed, most of them cannot work, so they are presented more like an embellishment rather than as workable interpretive machines. This situation relates to the different development philosophy behind 'ecotourism' in the two parks. SZWP in Chapter Six demonstrated a form of themed urban park which serves largely recreational purposes, while Chapter Seven found that HKWP has been established as a venue for combining education, conservation and public amenities, leading to a more education-orientated mode.

With respect to the role of market dynamics and economic agents, another key component of Ecological Modernisation, the two parks disclose various results. Although both parks have incorporated a series of 'green' labels and eco-certification schemes, Chapter Six found that the park visitors gave little credibility to the accreditation bodies and various awards and certifications that SZWP obtained. While, despite the sample group of HKWP having expressed a slightly higher reliability to green certifications that HKWP possessed, in general, a low level of consumer recognition of 'green' products and credibility of eco-certificated products exists among Chinese citizens. Apart from the certification schemes, HKWP revealed a more active collaboration with various economic actors, such as banks and corporations, to advance environmental interests. Consequently, this leads to a significant difference between the two

parks in the third core theme of Ecological Modernisation - the involvement of civil society.

Chapter Six showed that there was an absence of participation from various players of civil society in SZWP's planning and operations, especially the exclusion of the involvement of the local community. This echoes the findings of Mol (2009) in his comparison study between Chinese and European styles of Ecological Modernisation, in particular with the role of civil society

...because the economic liberalisation and market reforms in China have not been accompanied by a parallel process of political liberalisation and democratic reform, civil society in China remains underdeveloped and has been unable to match the role played by civil society institutions and actors in most OECD countries. (Mol, 2009)

In contrast, the case of HKWP demonstrated a close collaboration between the government and a wide range of civil society in promoting environmental interests. Due to Hong Kong's political legacy and social conditions, it has undergone more of a Western-style institutional development. As noted in Chapter Four, an increasing civil society pressure has accompanied the process of environmental reform in Hong Kong. From what has been discussed in this section, the underlying forces of the different narratives manifested between SZWP and HKWP largely lie in the variant political and economic influence wielded by Shen Zhen and Hong Kong.

8.1.5. Combining and comparing tradition and modernity

After having assessed and discussed the three conceptual approaches ('Chinese Philosophy', Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation) both in a theoretical perspective (Chapters Two and Three) as well as in a practical perspective with

the two case studies (Chapters Six and Seven), attention then turns to examine the extent to which these approaches are combined and compared in the two parks to better understand Chinese environment-related behaviour. The two cases revealed very different scenarios.

The case of SZWP reflects a model of a Disneyised theme park, cloaked in an ecotourism label with distorted Chinese philosophical models of nature, and so becomes orientated towards consumption-based entertainment, industry profit and visitor 'satisfaction'. The evidence of Ecological Modernisation did not play a role in balancing development with conservation as it promised, rather, it helped to facilitate and reinforce the process of Disneyisation of the Park, by utilising high-technology devices and certification schemes to brand and transform the natural environment into a themed leisure venue for consumption.

Behind the rhetoric of ecotourism, Chinese philosophies of nature and environment were capitalised and converted into tourism-related commodities by a powerful modernist consumption force (Disneyisation). There is a serious distortion of the traditional philosophical idea of 'man-nature harmony' in modern Chinese society. As noted in Chapter Two, 'man-nature harmony' promoted a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature and emphasised human moral obligations to safeguard ecological integrity.

However, in practice, SZWP was developed on the basis of replacing the original natural resources with a 'manufactured natural world', and with the assistance of advanced technologies, provided tourists with the illusion of 'man in harmony with nature'. Just like the abuse of the term 'ecotourism', 'Chinese Philosophy', in this instance, has been utilised as a marketing tool to train tourists to consume culture-based commodities with few connections with its inherent ethical prescriptions. The Park is best seen as an exercise in public relations on behalf of

the private company (OCT Ltd) and the government, that is meant to offer the credibility and competitive advantages of consumer recognition and product differentiation. In essence, it is 'Greenwashing', another marketing strategy which is used to make profits from using traditional philosophical/religious rhetoric. Chinese philosophical models of nature in SZWP show vulnerability in resisting the Western modernist consumption culture and so is transformed and commoditised by the process of Disneyisation.

In contrast, HKWP demonstrates that the three approaches are integrated into an example of 'hybridity', which shows strengths in two key respects. One is to enhance the visitor experience by creating an idealised form of space and place. As discussed in Chapter Two, under the influence of traditional ideas of 'human-nature unity', humans are a part of nature so that they are interacting with the surrounding natural environments all the time. To make nature attractive and meaningful to the Chinese, humans have to be accommodated within it. Otherwise, nature would become '*huangye*' which, as we have seen, is very different from the Western conception of 'wildernesses'.

Therefore, to most Chinese tourists, their experience can be improved by viewing human artistic and architectural structures or themed/simulated attractions in the Park. In other words, nature can be better appreciated through the display of man-made structures. Consequently, although ninety percent of the total land area in HKWP is artificial, the majority of Chinese visitors perceived the park as 'nature' and 'natural'. This finding can largely be attributed by the assistance of the theming strategy of Disneyisation and Ecological Modernisation, in particular, with its incorporation of science and technology into the park, which enables human structures and various thematic zones to be properly blended with surrounding natural environment, and thus provide tourists with the sense of 'harmony'.

Besides enhancing the visitor experience, the other strength of combining the three approaches in HKWP lies in better advancing environmental interests and conveying environmental knowledge. One obvious example is shown in the design of the Visitor Centre of the Park. The concept of a 'Visitor Centre' is one originally introduced from the West, and is now incorporated into a Chinese context, acting as a key indoor educational exhibition centre, disseminating the message of the need to protect the environment, as is the function of visitor centres established in most Western nations.

However, through a cultural lens, the architecture of the Visitor Centre reflects the ecological ethics of 'Chinese Philosophy'. It metaphorically uses the Visitor Centre as a bird cage, to express the idea that humans are trapped inside the 'cage' and become the objects of gaze for the flying birds outside. This message implies the collapse of the traditional reciprocal man-nature relationship and its replacement, instead, with a dichotomy in modern society, because of human greed and over-exploitation of natural resources. This hidden information of the design of the Visitor Centre is vigorously promoted and conveyed by 'emotional labour' through the park staff members and tour guides.

The other example is that of the utilisation of natural elements by modern technology and materials, to create man-made sculptures and thematic attractions, which invites visitors to appreciate nature while at the same time arousing their interests in protecting it. This approach is reflected in a wide range of wetland-related exhibitions such as vivid animal sculptures displayed in the Park. Some of them are made with modern materials to replicate Chinese traditional arts. For example, a series of aluminium animal structures in the Visitor Centre are used to imitate Chinese traditional origami. As noted earlier, the visitor experience can be enhanced by viewing the display of artistic

artefacts. The purposely built human structures created by modern technology and materials aim to fulfil the Park's roles in raising public awareness, promoting environmental knowledge, and providing enjoyment of nature.

8.2. Policy implications

From the key research findings summarised above, it is clear that the two case studies demonstrate different narrative storylines regarding the issues related to Chinese environmental awareness. This is very much shaped by the two cities' distinct characteristics and approaches to (eco)tourism in terms of development philosophies and environmental policy, planning and management. A number of officials in China, including senior managers at both SZWP and HKWP, have requested either a summary of the research's findings and recommendations or full copies of this thesis upon its completion. It is hoped that this thesis can contribute to policy makers and tourism developers better understanding the underlying forces of environment-related behaviour in China. Such understanding can provide useful insights into further advancing the green movement in China as well as better developing Green tourism in China.

Firstly, this thesis has revealed that environmental consciousness among tourists in both wetland parks is low. Both cases embrace the idea of 'Chinese Philosophy' but mainly confined to the perspective of the aesthetic appreciation of nature and natural places; it does not play an effective role for ethical guidance in modern China. In other words, the traditional cultural value, man-nature orientation (analogous to eco-centric orientation in the Western literature), has not been channelled into responsible environmental behaviour among contemporary Chinese. As a result, changes in tourist behaviour have become one of the paramount needs of advancing the idea of green consumption and a more sustainable tourist policy. Much research has claimed that

environmental education plays a key part in fostering awareness and promoting pro-environment behaviour. For example, Orams (1995) argues that incorporating education into ecotourism practices can change the tourists' behaviour and lifestyles, and lead them to adopt more environmentally-friendly actions.

The most noticeable difference between the two cases is the mission of ecotourism: that of an educational ecotourism model is developed for HKWP, while a recreational mass tourism venue is reflected in SZWP. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Hong Kong government has paid more attention to combining public environmental education along with environmental planning and policies. SZWP may be best described as the 'ecotourist bubble' termed by Carrier and Macleod (2005), similar to the 'tourist bubble', that 'is like a theme park, in that it provides entertainment and excitement, with reassuringly clean and attractive surroundings' (Judd and Fainstein, 1999: 39). Carrier and Macleod (2005:315) further argue: 'Within this bubble, the destinations and experiences sold to tourists are abstracted from their contexts, thus inducing a distorted image of them and of ecotourism itself'. Tourists within SZWP do not realise the impact they have and will have on the environment because of the absence of education for tourists, the situation is more of a 'how to' embellish the Park as a 'Green' destination in which tourists satisfy their desire to consume. This is a common problem which exists in many alleged 'ecotourism' projects in China.

China's rapid urbanisation and need for natural resources to fuel industrialisation and manufacturing is leaving a rapidly dwindling natural environment for future generations. Unless the majority of its citizens are educated about the natural environment there will be little value placed upon it and little preservation taking place. To do so will require a more sophisticated and sincere application of the environmental education to the green movement, such as ecotourism

practices, to encourage 'green' consumption. Despite tourists' environmental awareness of the two cases being rather low, the findings show that most respondents expressed a strong emotional attachment to nature and environmental issues, as well as a desire to re-adopt traditional conservation ethics and to alter their consumption patterns. It may be worth emphasising and promoting the ethical prescriptions of 'Chinese Philosophy', in order to awaken modern Chinese to practise their moral obligations to the environment.

In the meantime, there is a need to facilitate the role that science and technology and 'performative' labour (e.g. tour guides) have played in providing environmental interpretation/knowledge to the public in ecotourism venues. For example, multi-media facilities and interactive computer games provided in the HKWP work as an effective tool of environmental interpretation to convey environmental knowledge to the tourists. Moreover, many researchers have addressed the significant role played by tour guides and environmental interpreters in outdoor education programmes (e.g. Wearing and Metry, 1999; Beaumont, 2001). This assertion is supported by the findings of HKWP. The environmental knowledge makes tourists aware of the importance of maintaining biodiversity and safeguarding natural resources and further promoting tourists' attachment to nature, which leads to an increase in tourists' desire to support the conservation work and environmental programmes. Eventually, it aims to convert tourist experiences into 'transformative values' which encourage changes in tourists' behaviour and lifestyles and the adoption of more environmentally-friendly practices. Thus, policy makers and tourism developers could seek out and adopt different methods to offer environmental interpretation and knowledge to make ecotourism an active medium to facilitate environmental awareness. Beyond the context of tourism, it also sheds light on the significant role of environmental education plays in achieving China's 'green' economy and harmonious society.

Secondly, in terms of tourism planning and management of the ecotourism sector in mainland China, ecotourism, at present, is vigorously promoted as a fashionable idea. In contrast, its practical role as a desirable ‘solution’ to environmental problems is largely overlooked. Because of China’s different political system (one-party led) and China’s transitional economy, a collaboration which involves diverse stakeholders of civil society and various economic actors is at a very early stage. Thus, this needs strict environmental regulations and legislation to be enacted by the government and, to guide and monitor the Chinese ecotourism industry to deliver sound outcomes. As discussed in the case of SZWP, it reveals the irony that the Park is deeply embedded within the government-designed ‘Ecological Protection Zone’. In this case, the environmental legislation was subordinated to the government’s pro-active policies for economic development.

Thirdly, in addition to enhancing environmental education and strengthening strict environmental legislation, it is necessary for the Chinese government to develop a comprehensive eco-certification scheme and explicit promotional procedures to convince consumers of good credentials on any alleged eco-products in the marketplace. This research has shown that there is a low level of consumer recognition of ‘green’ products and credibility of eco-labelled tourism products, in particular with the case of SZWP. One main reason is consumers’ lack of trust in accreditation bodies since most of the ‘green’ awards and eco-certifications are accredited and endorsed by state agencies rather than collaborative stakeholders or private providers. As noted above, due to the significant implementation gap between environmental regulations and actual performances, it leads to dubious attitudes toward the quality assurances the eco-certification programmes claim to offer by Chinese designed schemes. Under this scenario, the government may consider

introducing recognised international eco-certification schemes (e.g. the Australian Eco Certification Program and the Costa Rican Sustainable Tourism Certification), to work in collaboration with diverse special interest groups (e.g. economic agencies, Environmental NGOs, and societal communities) to establish a mutually agreed 'green' product certification scheme, and to formulate a set of explicit promotional/marketing guidelines to standardise environmental accountancy procedures for efficient and credible practices.

Despite consumers' low confidence in the current eco-labelling scheme, the sample group of HKWP shows that there has been an increasing willingness among Chinese people to pay more for green premiums compared with the situation a decade ago. With increased living standards and the expansion of the middle class derived from rapid economic growth, there has been a gradual rise of environmental consciousness among Chinese citizens and a rapid growth in demand for environmentally-responsible products for the sake of themselves, as well as the environment. Thus, if 'green' products and environmental product certification schemes can be properly promoted, marketed and normalised, it can greatly enhance consumers' intention to buy advertised environmentally sensitive products. This, in turn, may enable more Chinese citizens to be involved in the China's green movement.

8.3. Recommendation for future research

This thesis can be concisely described as explorative research on the way in which the issues related to environmental awareness in China are approached and assessed. Given the innovative nature of both the methodological procedure to the topic and the conceptual frameworks employed, there are many areas in which possible future research could be undertaken in order to build on the insights generated in this thesis.

Firstly, the thesis has taken a macroscopic snapshot of how the Chinese view nature and their environment as a prelude to explore and understand the underlying variables of particular attitudes and behaviour. This is undertaken through examining two very different contemporary experiences of urban (eco)tourism in two economically developed coastal cities. Since China is a vast country where ecological conditions, socio-economic development, traditions, lifestyles, and civil societies vary from one region to the other, future research could investigate the same topic by drawing on the context of urban (eco)tourism in other major cities which may include both political-economically important cities such as Beijing (China's political, cultural and educational centre) and Shanghai (a global city and a major financial centre), and culturally and ecologically appealing cities such as Xian (one of the oldest cities in China) and Guilin (picturesque and poetic 'utopia'). All of these areas are subject to rapid environmental degradation. It is hoped that findings from this thesis would provide a foundation for detailed investigation in those locations. How does the growing Chinese urban (eco)tourism interact with a dwindling natural environment? How do (eco)tourists view and feel about nature and environmental issues, and how do they behave accordingly? What is the political and economic influence exerted upon the development philosophy of the study area? To what extent can the conceptual framework employed in this thesis be applied to other cities? What are the similarities and differences between the outcomes generated from this thesis and those of other locations? Why are they different? Are the differences attributed to specific dynamics? In this way, a broad picture can be painted of the underlying forces of environmental awareness in China, which enables researchers to undertake in-depth comparative studies and policy makers to fine-tune their environmental policies and development strategies.

Secondly, this thesis reveals that there is a divergence between ‘high’ Chinese philosophical traditions (Chinese philosophies of nature) and the actual practices of ordinary people (park developers and park visitors). The metaphysical insights and ethical prescriptions of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ were not fully applied to the two wetland parks; rather, distortions and misinterpretations occurred. This, in part, can be argued in that the focus of this thesis on the two recently developed urban parks, are dominated by modernist development models and thus encompass a relatively weak form of Chinese philosophical traditions. Future research might focus on specific religious sites such as Daoist and Buddhist temples, located in sacred mountains. As noted in Chapter Two, most of the sacred mountains have all become popular ecotourism venues in modern China. How is the idea of ‘man-nature harmony’ interpreted in these sites? Is there congruity between traditional philosophical teachings and actual practices? Can environmental concern be converted into environmentally responsible behaviour and if it can, in what ways? How is ‘Chinese Philosophy’ engaged with modernity in these sites?

Thirdly, with the increasing influence of China’s political and economic power, its domestic experiences of opening up new types of tourism are likely to have repercussions in other parts of the world - some of which might eventually be the recipients of Chinese visitors. This thesis has assessed the influences of the Western institutions on environmental awareness within the context of Chinese (eco)tourism industry and Chinese tourists in particular, with reference to the process of Disneyisation and principles of Ecological Modernisation. Would it be worth future research considering how Chinese models of nature shape the way in which nature is constructed and presented by their Western counterparts? In fact, it demonstrates that Chinese forms of nature have already started to influence Western societies. As noted in Chapter Two, a Chinese cultural theme park project, ‘Visions of China’, is planned to be built in the ‘Rother Valley

Country Park', South Yorkshire, in the United Kingdom, which incorporates typical landscaped Chinese environments, in particular the *shanshui* elements, to enhance its aesthetic appeal, such as *shi qing hua yi*, the poetic sentiment and artistic spirit (Anglo-China Daily 12th August, 2011).

The existing literature has provided evidence of the influence of the Western concept of 'wilderness' on other nations, in particular with countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa, in terms of aesthetic values of nature and the 'natural', with appreciation for 'pristine' and 'virgin' forms, as well as the philosophy behind the designation and management of wild areas, through the concepts of national parks and protected areas. The work includes John Shultis's research on the manifestations of the American concept of 'wilderness' in New Zealand (Shultis, 1997), and Roderick P. Neumann's study on the impact of the Anglo-American model of 'wilderness' on South Africa (Neumann, 1998). In this context, it would be an interesting and important topic to investigate the influences of Chinese models of nature in other societies.

Finally, although this thesis has focused on Chinese tourists, an attempt was made to make comparisons wherever possible between Chinese participants and Western visitors in the two case studies, regarding their perceptions and attitudes towards nature. Such insights immediately raise a feasible research agenda in that a comparative study on different approaches to nature could be conducted between Chinese and Western (such as British) tourists visiting each other's nature-based sites. What are their travel motivations? Do Chinese tourists seek the same things as defined in this thesis when visiting Western nature-based sites? How do tourists gaze at each other's 'nature' and the 'natural'? How do tourists behave at each other's nature-based sites? What are the similarities and differences between Chinese tourists and their counterparts in their values on, and attitudes, toward nature/the environment? What is the influence of

socio-cultural and political-economic contexts on the development of each other's nature-based sites? This idea is partly derived from the author's original research interest of examining the motivation and behaviour of British and Chinese tourists visiting each other's country, which was the topic of the author's Master's thesis (see Shen, 2007). The doctoral research suggests it might be taken forward in the specific context of nature-based tourism.

These sorts of research agendas underscore a wide range of topics that could be addressed in future research in both the context of China and other destinations. It is hoped that this thesis, exploring the issues concerning Chinese environmental awareness through examining experiences of two urban (eco)tourism sites based in Shen Zhen and Hong Kong, and combining and comparing three different approaches to nature that they devised, has made a contribution to the knowledge of environment-related behaviour and practices in China.

To close this thesis, I would like to draw from my Chinese 'voice' by quoting an ancient *Shanshui* poem (Zhihuan Wang, Tang Dynasty 688-742) to complete this four-year journey: the experience of climbing the Yellow Crane Pagoda.



At Yellow Crane Pagoda

白日依山尽
黄河入海流
欲穷千里目
更上一层楼

The horizon ends at mountains silhouetted by the setting sun
The Yellow River flows into the vast ocean
If one wants to look a thousand miles beyond the mountains
One has to persevere with the climb

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Appendix 1. Selective definitions of ecotourism

‘Ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The ecotourist visits relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourist practices a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labor or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents...’ (Ziffer, 1989: 6)
‘Ecotourism is a nature tourism that contributes to conservation, through generating funds for protected areas, creating employment opportunities for local communities, and offering environmental education.’ (Boo, 1991b: 4)
‘Nature-based tourism that is focused on provision of learning opportunities while providing local and regional benefits, while demonstrating environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability’ (Forestry Tasmania, 1994: ii)
‘Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable. This definition recognizes that natural environment includes cultural components, and that ecologically sustainable involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of the resource.’ (Australia Department of Tourism, 1994: 17)
‘Travel to remote or natural areas which aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of natural environment and cultural heritage, avoiding damage or deterioration of the “environment and the experience for others”.’ (Figgis, 1993: 8)
‘Travel to enjoy the world’s amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either.’ (Tickell, 1994: ix)
‘A responsible nature travel experience, that contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of host communities and, where possible, ensuring that activities are complementary, or at least compatible, with existing resource- based uses present at the ecosystem.’ (Boyd and Butler, 1993: 13, 1996a: 386)
‘An ecotourism experience is one in which an individual travels to a relatively undisturbed natural area that is more than 40 km from home, the primary intention being to study, admire, or appreciate the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas. An ecotourist is anyone who undertakes at least one ecotourism experience in a specified region during a specified period of time’ (Blamey, 1995a:24).
‘Ecotourism is a form of tourism which fosters environmental principles, with

an emphasis on visiting and observing natural areas'. (Boyd and Butler, 1996b: 558)
'Low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.' (Goodwin, 1996: 288)
'Ecotourism is tourism and recreation that is both nature-based and sustainable.' (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997: 67)
'Ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment . . . enhances the cultural resource base of the destination and promotes the viability of the operation' (Weaver, 2001: 15, cited in Garrod 2003: 33)
'Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented (control, benefits and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas and should contribute to the preservation of such areas' (Fennell, 2008: 24).

(Source: Modified from Daimantis, 1999)

Appendix 2. Tourist sites were explored during a preliminary field visit to Shen Zhen and Hong Kong in 2009

A. Tourist sites were visited in Shen Zhen

	<i>Tanglang Country Park</i>	<i>China Folk Culture Village</i>	<i>Shen Zhen wildlife park</i>	<i>Shen Zhen western pastoral scenic resort</i>	<i>Shen Zhen Wetland Park</i>	<i>Shen Zhen Qingqi ng World</i>
The Year of Establishment	2003	1988	1993	2001	2007	2007
Area (hectare)	100	18	120	170	22.8	20
Ownerships	Shen Zhen City Government	Private	Shen Zhen City Government	Private	Private	Private
Site features	A wealth of natural resources (tropical forests, vegetation, mountains, valleys, and rivers	A cultural resort combining folk art, customs and residential architectures	Animals, plants, new sub-tropical garden area of the ecological environment	‘Three high’ agricultural demonstration base, a landmark eco-tourism attractions	A mixture of human art and natural landscapes; Recreation and ecological education	Combines recreation and education

B. Tourist sites were visited in Hong Kong

	<i>Clear Water Bay Country Park</i>	<i>Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG)</i>	<i>Hong Kong Wetland Park</i>	<i>Tai O Fishin g Village</i>	<i>Hong Kong Park</i>	<i>Hong Kong Zoological and Botani c Garde n</i>	<i>Mi Po Nature Reserve</i>
The Year of Establis hment	1979	1949	2006	2003	1991	1861	1976
Area (hectare)	615	148	61	13.47	8	5.6	380
Owners hips	The HK's governm ent	Private	The HK's govern ment	Private	The HK's govern ment	Private	The HK's governmen t
Site features	Nature study program mes , Hiking, playing golf, Buddhist temple	Improvi ng wildlife habitat, art and environ ment worksho ps, outreach program mes for schools and the local commu nity	Bird watchin g, learning, experien cing nature	Traditi onal culture, houses, lifestyl es and custom s, Watchi ng dolphi ns	Bird watchin g, physica l exercis e	Educatio n centre, Variou s plants and animal s	Strictly conservatio n/research-based for birds

Appendix 3. Interview questions

Interview discussions focus on mainly three target groups at both wetland parks - site level park managers and employees, local communities and park visitors. The original questionnaires were written in Chinese and the author's English translations are provided as follow.

A. Park Manager Interview Questions

1). Park management and operations

1. What is the Park's budget and funding sources (e.g. governments, NGOs, entrance fees, etc.)? Does it operate at a profit or a loss? Do you have revenue retention powers?
2. Are there any funds specifically put towards conservation works? If so, what percentage of them?
3. Do you keep visitor statistics? If not, can you estimate the number of tourists received annually?
4. Can you estimate the percentage of visitors who are from different regions (e.g. locals, other parts of China, overseas countries)? What percentage comes in tour groups, families and individuals respectively?
5. What kind of management tools do you employ to manage natural resources and park visitors? (e.g. zoning regulations) Do you have core areas for conservation purposes?
6. Do you adopt any environmentally-sensitive technologies to either reduce external environmental impacts or improve visitor experiences? If yes, what are they and in what ways?
7. How do you facilitate public support and action for wetland conservation?
8. How do you market and promote the Park?
9. What is the biggest constraint for Park managers (e.g. funding)?
10. Who manage and operate concessions (food and beverage, souvenirs, etc.) within the Park? (e.g. local communities, Park staff)
11. Did you consider the influence of Chinese culture (e.g. 'man-nature unity') into the design and operation of Park and how? (e.g. integrating *Fengshui* into the Park design)

2) Ecotourism

1. What is your understanding of 'ecotourism' and its development?
2. How do you perceive 'nature'? Do you think 'nature' should be kept in a sense of 'wilderness' or in a modified form by human hands?
3. What do you think 'nature' presented in this park? Is it articulated with your definition of ecotourism?
4. What types of tourism and ecotourism attractions and activities are available in this Park?
5. What are your expectations and concerns about ecotourism in the Park?
6. Do you think this park fulfil the roles of ecotourism?
7. Do you achieve a 'win-win' situation where the locals and the tourist are both satisfied?
8. Since the establishment of this park, what have positive messages and negative impacts been?
9. Do you have any future development plan for this park?

3) Park staff

1. How many staff work for the Park? What percentage is from the local community?
2. What is the educational background of park staff (e.g. managerial-level staff and general employees)?
3. Do you provide ongoing training opportunities to staff?
4. Can you comment on your impressions of the staff's attitude to their work and the Park?

4) Relations with local communities

1. What was original status of this area before the establishment of this park?
2. Were any local residents displaced when the Park was set up? If so, did they receive any compensation? In what forms?
3. Are local communities permitted to use resources of the Park? If so, in what ways? Are there any illegal activities?
4. Have local communities been involved in park planning and management? If so, in what ways? What level and degree of participation are the local communities involved in?
5. What have been the benefits and negatives to the local communities since the establishment of this park (e.g. employment, infrastructure)?
6. Do you provide local community outreach/education programmes and activities regarding wetland conservation?
7. In what ways do you encourage and help local involvement and participation? How is the community involved in the ecotourism project of this park

(individuals, group of individuals, the whole community)?

8. Do you think that local residents have opportunities to continue benefiting from the Park in the future? If so, in what ways?

5). Participant's profile

1. What is your position in the Park?
2. Are you from the local community or the other area?
3. What is your education level?
☐ Primary Education or Below ☐ Secondary/High School
☐ College/University/Postgraduate

B. Local Communities Interview Questions

1. Are you aware that there is a Wetland Park near your community?
2. Do you know the reason why it was designated a Wetland Park?
3. Could you please tell me about the community/village that you live in? What is the social structure, the compositions of ethnic groups and indigenous groups and migrants?
4. What's your perception and image of this area before the Park was established?
5. Has the Park impacted your livelihood? Are there any positive ways, how about negative perspectives?
6. How long have you been living here? Were you displaced when the Park was established? Did you receive any compensation from the government or the developer? If so, in what forms?
7. Do you participate in any activities and programmes organised by the Park?
8. Have the park staff members interacted with you personally or the community in any way (e.g. disseminating wetland information and promoting education opportunities)?
9. How do you think about this park? Overall, is it a good or bad thing and in what ways?
10. Do you support the continuous development of ecotourism at this park? If so, in what ways?

Participants' demographic features

1. Where are you originally from _____
2. What is your age? ☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66+

3. What is your occupation?
☐ Professional/Managerial ☐ Proprietor/Owner ☐ Junior White Collar
☐ Blue Collar ☐ Peasant ☐ Other
4. What is your education level?
☐ Primary Education or Below
☐ Secondary/High School
☐ College/University/Postgraduate

C. Chinese Tourist Interview Questions

Part I. Man and nature

1. How do you perceive man-nature relationships? For example, do you think humans should conform to nature without making any modifications? Humans can make use of nature or even have rights to conquer nature?
2. What factors make you to think in such a way? (e.g. traditional Chinese philosophical ideas, science)
3. What do you think that 'nature' should be? What image of 'nature' do you have when we talk about nature and the environment?
4. What is your perception of '*huangye*' (wilderness)?
5. Do you think 'nature' should be kept in a pristine status without human intervention or in a mixed form of natural landscapes and human elements?
6. What proportion between natural elements and man-made structures do you think that a nature-based site should contain to reflect a balanced view? (Total percentage is 100%).
7. What factors influence your perceptions and images of 'nature'? (e.g. poetry, painting, *shan shui* philosophies, media)
8. Who do you think should take a primary responsibility for protecting our environment? (e.g. governments, ourselves, the society)
9. Do you participate in any activities related to environmental protection? Do you have environmentally-friendly practices in your daily life?
10. What are your opinions about the roles of science and technology played in nature and the environment? Do you support to adopt science and technology to manage a nature-based site?

Part II. Ecotourism

1. What is your understanding of ecotourism?
2. Do you think that this park is running ecotourism?
3. How do you perceive 'nature' is presented in this park? Does it match your expectations of 'nature'?

4. Do you prefer travelling to a pristine natural area without human modification or a mixed natural site with human alterations (e.g. tourist facilities, aesthetic sculptures)? And please provide reasons why?
5. How do you perceive man-made attractions (e.g. sculptures, waterfalls, bridges) of this park? Do you think they are an indivisible part of tourist attractions of this park? If so, in what ways? Or do you think they are intrusive and should not be located there? Why is that?
6. What motivates you to come to visit this park? What are your motivations to participate in ecotourism in general?
7. What other ecotourist/nature-based sites have you been to? (domestically and internationally)
8. What activities did you participate in while you were in the park?
9. What kind of transportation did you use to come to this park?
10. What factors do you consider as importance to choose a tourist destination? (e.g. price, convenience, environmental impacts)
11. How do you perceive the role of eco-certificate schemes or environmental awards in Chinese tourist industry? Do you think they can guide tourist industry to have an environmentally-sensitive practice? Do you consider eco-certificate schemes as one important factor when choosing a tourist destination?
12. How would you rate your experience in this park?
13. How would you rate this park's facilities?
14. List up to four things you liked best on your visit to this park? (You may consider for example park's facilities, natural features, guards, information, etc.)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
15. Please list up to four things you did not like
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
16. Have you learned something about wetland conservation and biodiversity after visiting this park? Do you think that multi-media interactive facilities provided by the Park are helpful? Do you think you will adjust your lifestyle to be a more environmentally-friendly way?
17. Do you support to continue promoting ecotourism in this park? If yes, in what forms?
18. In your opinion, what should be done to improve the quality of the visit experience?
19. Do you think this park (including tourist activities) are or will be having any

impacts on the natural environment of this park and local communities who live nearby?

Part III. Participants' demographic features

1. Where are you from?
2. Do you live in an urban area or rural area?
3. Are you
 - a) Hong Kong Chinese b) Mainland Chinese
 - c) Overseas Chinese d) Chinese from Macau or Taiwan
4. What is your age?
☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66+
5. What is your occupation?
☐ Professional/Managerial ☐ Proprietor/Owner ☐ Junior White Collar
☐ Blue Collar ☐ Other
6. What is your education level?
☐ Primary Education or Below
☐ Secondary/High School
☐ College/University/Postgraduate

Appendix 4. Tourist survey at SZWP

PART I. Humans and Nature

1. Here are three opinions about man-nature relationship. Which one of these do you think is closest to the truth?

1. Human beings are a part of nature, so humans should understand the ways of nature and act accordingly to spiritually maintain harmony with nature ('man-nature unity').	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. In order to fulfil human needs, human beings have rights to reasonably utilise and modify nature (such as adoption of science and technology).	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. As humans are superior to nature, we are entitled to master and conquer nature, to utilise the natural resources as we like.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Who should take the primary responsibility for environmental protection?

Government	<input type="checkbox"/>
Society	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual (Myself)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please indicate in what ways you participate in environmental protection (Please choose the appropriate number: 1=I'm already doing this and intend to keep it up; 2=I haven't really thought about doing this; 3=I don't really want to do this)

Saving energy	1	2	3
Rubbish classification	1	2	3
Recycling	1	2	3
Vegetarian	1	2	3
Releasing captured animals	1	2	3
Reducing pollution	1	2	3
Promotion of environmental protection	1	2	3

4. Please indicate your agreement on the following statements. (Please choose the appropriate number: 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral, 4=agree; 5=strongly agree).

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Natural resources in China are inexhaustible and will not be used up.	1	2	3	4	5
Our society should adopt a trade-off (middle-way) to solve the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, wherever possible the latter should be given the priority.	1	2	3	4	5
Everything in the natural world has an equal dignity and an intrinsic value, existence in a co-operative and inter-dependent way. So they should not be destroyed without good cause.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe in the law of causation ('karma'). We should care and respect other creatures. Human actions on over-exploiting natural resources and excessive consumption will inevitably bring disasters to us.	1	2	3	4	5
No matter what types of damage we have done to the environment, they can always be remedied and solved by modern science and technology.	1	2	3	4	5
There is nothing I can do personally to help improve the environmental problems.	1	2	3	4	5
The government should take the primary responsibility for environmental protection (e.g. enforcing environmental regulations)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Do you think a nature-based (ecotourism) site should encompass man-made structures'?

YES



NO



(If you answered 'No', please go straight to PART II).

6. Given below are three reasons that a nature-based site (ecotourism) should encompass man-made structure. Please choose the appropriate number to show how important each reason is: 1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important

1. Increasing aesthetic beauty of 'nature'	1	2	3	4	5
2. Reflecting the 'human-nature unity'	1	2	3	4	5
3. Raising environmental awareness	1	2	3	4	5

7. There are three statements on proportional distribution between human elements and natural landscapes in an ecotourism site. Please choose the one which you think is the most appropriate.

Statements	
Natural landscapes 70-80% & Man-made element 20-30%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural landscapes 50% & Man-made element 50%, or, more man-made elements (e.g. 60-70%)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural landscapes 100% & Man-made element 0%	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Do you think the proportion between natural landscapes and man-made structures is appropriate at SZWP?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered 'NO', please choose the one from the following statements or state your opinions.

A) The Park is highly 'managed' and 'artificial' but still provides us with natural experiences ☐

B) The Park is just a normal urban park without any specific natural features ☐

C) Other opinions (please state : _____)

PART II. Ecotourism

9. Have you ever heard about ecotourism?

YES ☐ NO ☐

10. Below are a number of characteristics of ecotourism. Please read each one and indicate how important each factor is (1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important)

Involving small-scale	1	2	3	4	5
Nature-based	1	2	3	4	5
Minimising environmental/cultural impacts	1	2	3	4	5
Generating economic benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Providing educational/conservational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Encompassing local culture and communities	1	2	3	4	5
No difference from conventional tourism	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate how the following statements important to you for visiting Shen Zhen Wetland Park. (Please choose the appropriate number: 1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important)

I visit this wetland park as I want to...					
enjoy elegant scenery	1	2	3	4	5
study/learn about nature	1	2	3	4	5
experience exotic culture	1	2	3	4	5
improve physical/spiritual health	1	2	3	4	5
rest/relax/get away	1	2	3	4	5
have family fun	1	2	3	4	5
Take adventure	1	2	3	4	5

12. If you feel that there are other important reasons for you to visit this park that are not listed above, please state below:

13. Please indicate most liked landscape feature at SZWP. Please rank them with number 1 being the most liked and number 2 being the second most liked... 11 being the most disliked.

Landscape features	Rank
Natural paths	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shrubs or bushes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flower beds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mountains and artificial rocks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greenhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water, lakes, ponds and waterfalls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Animals, fish, and birds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paved areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specimen butterflies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wild flowers and plants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sculptures and architectures	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Please rank from the most important factors to the least important factors when choosing a tourist destination? Please rank them with number 1 being the most important factor and number 7 being the least important.

Convenience/distance/transport	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental/cultural concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expenditure / price/cost	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comfort/luxury (e.g. facilities, accommodation, and restaurants)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation/credibility (e.g. eco-certificate)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Destination features (e.g. nature, culture, amenities)	<input type="checkbox"/>
General sense of safety	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. What would you do if you know that a tourist destination has a negative impact on the environment/local community?

Continue choosing and going	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not go	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Have you heard about the sale of green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations in China?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. How much more would you be willing to pay for green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations?

1-5%	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-15%	<input type="checkbox"/>
16-20%	<input type="checkbox"/>
20% above	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. How would you rate your Overall experience of visiting this Park?

Bad ☐ Good ☐ Excellent ☐

19. Do you think that your visit to SZWP is a kind of ecotourism experience?

YES ☐ NO ☐

20. Which type of visitors do you belong to?

A. Ecotourist ☐ B. Nature-lover ☐ C. General park visitor ☐
D. Special interest visitor ☐

PART III. Demographic Information

1.Original Place :

2. Live in:

A. City ☐

B. Countryside ☐

3.Age Group :

☐ 25 or below

☐ 26-35

☐ 36-45

☐ 46-55

☐ 56-65

☐ 66 or above

**3. The highest level of education
that you have attained**

☐Primary or lower

☐Secondary school

☐Certificate or Diploma

☐Bachelor's degree or above

☐Postgraduate's degree or above

4.Occupation:

☐ Senior manager

☐ Environmental/tourism professional

☐ White collar

☐ Blue collar

☐ Self-employed ☐ Housewife

☐ Full time student ☐Retired

☐Unemployed

☐Other (Please specify)

5. Your monthly personal income:

☐ RMB 5,000 or below

☐RMB5,001-RMB10,000

☐ RMB 10,001- RMB 20,000

☐RMB 20,001- RMB 25,000

☐RMB 25,001- RMB 30,000

☐RMB 30,001- RMB 35,000

☐RMB 35,001- RMB 40,001

☐RMB 40,001 or above

**7. What is your travel companion
for this trip?**

☐ Alone ☐ Spouse

☐Family ☐ Friends

☐School ☐Tour group

-The End-Thank You-

Appendix 5. Tourist survey at HKWP

PART I. Humans and Nature

1. Here are three opinions about man-nature relationship. Which one of these do you think is closest to the truth?

1. Human beings are a part of nature, so humans should understand the ways of nature and act accordingly to spiritually maintain harmony with nature ('man-nature unity').	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. In order to fulfil human needs, human beings have rights to reasonably utilise and modify nature (such as adoption of science and technology).	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. As humans are superior to nature, we are entitled to master and conquer nature, to utilise the natural resources as we like.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Who should take the primary responsibility for environmental protection?

Government	<input type="checkbox"/>
Society	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual (Myself)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please indicate in what ways you participate in environmental protection (Please choose the appropriate number: 1=I'm already doing this and intend to keep it up; 2=I haven't really thought about doing this; 3=I don't really want to do this)

Saving energy	1	2	3
Rubbish classification	1	2	3
Recycling	1	2	3
Vegetarian	1	2	3
Releasing captured animals	1	2	3
Reducing pollution	1	2	3
Promotion of environmental protection	1	2	3

4. Please indicate your agreement on the following statements. (Please choose the appropriate number: 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral, 4=agree; 5=strongly agree).

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Natural resources in Hong Kong are inexhaustible and will not be used up.	1	2	3	4	5
Our society should adopt a trade-off (middle-way) to solve the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, wherever possible the latter should be given the priority.	1	2	3	4	5
Everything in the natural world has an equal dignity and an intrinsic value, existence in a co-operative and inter-dependent way. So they should not be destroyed without good cause.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe in the law of causation ('karma'). We should care and respect other creatures. Human actions on over-exploiting natural resources and excessive consumption will inevitably bring disasters to us.	1	2	3	4	5
No matter what types of damage we have done to the environment, they can always be remedied and solved by modern science and technology.	1	2	3	4	5
There is nothing I can do personally to help improve the environmental problems.	1	2	3	4	5
The government should take the primary responsibility for environmental protection (e.g. enforcing environmental regulations)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Do you think a nature-based (ecotourism) site should encompass man-made structures'?

YES

☐

NO

(If you answered 'No', please go straight to PART II).

6. Given below are three reasons that a nature-based site (ecotourism) should encompass man-made structure. Please choose the appropriate number to show how important each reason is: 1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important

1. Increasing aesthetic beauty of 'nature'	1	2	3	4	5
2. Reflecting the 'human-nature unity'	1	2	3	4	5
3. Raising environmental awareness	1	2	3	4	5

7. There are three statements on proportional distribution between human elements and natural landscapes in an ecotourism site. Please choose the one which you think is the most appropriate.

Statements	
Natural landscapes 70-80% & Man-made element 20-30%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural landscapes 50% & Man-made element 50%, or, more man-made elements (e.g. 60-70%)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural landscapes 100% & Man-made element 0%	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Do you think the proportion between natural landscapes and man-made structures is appropriate at HKWP?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered 'NO', please choose the one from the following statements or state your opinions.

A) The Park is highly 'managed' and 'artificial' but still provides us with natural experiences ☐

B) The Park is just a normal urban park without any specific natural features ☐

C) Other opinions (please state:_____)

PART II. Ecotourism

9. Have you ever heard about ecotourism?

☐ YES ☐ NO

10. Below are a number of characteristics of ecotourism. Please read each one and indicate how important each factor is (1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important)

Involving small-scale	1	2	3	4	5
Nature-based	1	2	3	4	5
Minimising environmental/cultural impacts	1	2	3	4	5
Generating economic benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Providing educational/conservational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Encompassing local culture and communities	1	2	3	4	5
No difference from conventional tourism	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate how the following statements important to you for visiting Hong Kong Wetland Park. (Please choose the appropriate number:

1=extremely unimportant; 2=unimportant; 3=neutral, 4=important; 5=extremely important)

I visit this wetland park as I want to...					
enjoy elegant scenery /nature and be close to nature	1	2	3	4	5
study/learn about nature	1	2	3	4	5
experience local culture and history	1	2	3	4	5
improve physical/spiritual health	1	2	3	4	5
rest/relax/get away	1	2	3	4	5
view wildlife	1	2	3	4	5
have family fun	1	2	3	4	5
experience wilderness	1	2	3	4	5
Take adventure	1	2	3	4	5

12. If you feel that there are other important reasons for you to visit this park that are not listed above, please state below:

13. Please indicate most liked landscape feature at HKWP. Please rank them with number 1 being the most liked and number 2 being the second most liked... 11 being the most disliked.

Landscape features	Rank
‘Wild’ nature	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shrubs or bushes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planted vegetation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mountains and artificial rocks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water, lakes, ponds and waterfalls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Animals, fish, and birds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paved areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural paths	<input type="checkbox"/>
Butterfly gardens	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wild flowers and plants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sculptures and architectures	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Please rank from the most important factors to the least important factors when choosing a tourist destination? Please rank them with number 1 being the most important factor and number 7 being the least important.

Convenience/distance/transport	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental/cultural concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expenditure / price/cost	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comfort/luxury (e.g. facilities, accommodation, and restaurants)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation/credibility (e.g. eco-certificate)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Destination features (e.g. nature, culture, amenities)	<input type="checkbox"/>
General sense of safety	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. What would you do if you know that a tourist destination has a negative impact on the environment/local community?

Continue choosing and going	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not go	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Have you heard about the sale of green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations in Hong Kong?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. How much more would you be willing to pay for green products including eco-certificated tourist destinations?

1-5%	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-15%	<input type="checkbox"/>
16-20%	<input type="checkbox"/>
20% above	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. How would you rate your overall experience of visiting this park?

Bad ☐ Good ☐ Excellent ☐

19. Do you think that your visit HKWP is a kind of ecotourism experience?

YES ☐ NO ☐

20. Which type of visitors do you belong to?

A. Ecotourist ☐ B. Nature-lover ☐ C. General park visitor ☐
D. Special interest visitor ☐

PART III. Demographic Information

1.Original Place :

2. Live in:

A. City ☐

B. Countryside ☐

3.Age Group :

☐ 25 or below

☐ 26-35

☐ 36-45

☐ 46-55

☐ 56-65

☐ 66 or above

**3. The highest level of Education
that you have attained**

☐ Primary or lower

☐ Secondary school

☐ Certificate or Diploma

☐ Bachelor's degree or above

☐ Postgraduate's degree or above

4.Occupation:

☐ Senior manager

☐ Environmental/tourism professional

☐ White collar

☐ Blue collar

☐ Self-employed ☐ Housewife

☐ Full time student ☐ Retired

☐ Unemployed

☐ Other (Please specify)

5. Your monthly personal income:

☐ HK\$10,000 or below

☐ HK\$10,001-\$15,000

☐ HK\$ 15,001- \$20,000

☐ HK\$ 20,001- \$25,000

☐ HK\$ 25,001- \$30,000

☐ HK\$ 30,001- \$35,000

☐ HK\$ 35,001- \$40,001

☐ HK\$40,001 or above

**8. What is your travel companion
for this trip?**

☐ Alone ☐ Spouse

☐ Family ☐ Friends

☐ School ☐ Tour group

-The End-Thank You-