

## Article

# Tourism Imaginary and Landscape at Heritage Site: A Case in Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, China

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**Abstract:** The relationship between tourism and landscape has been extensively studied, but a conceptual framework to study cultural relationships between tourism and landscape is not specified in the literature. On the basis of the theory of social imaginary, this article takes China's Honghe Hani Terraces as an example to study how the landscape is imagined in tourism and the potential cultural conflicts. Content analysis on tourist discourses and images in social media was conducted in order to identify tourist imaginaries about the landscape. A gap between tourism imaginaries and the Hani landscape was found: the latter was imagined as an overlooking view of stereotyped terraced imagery, a schema separated and independent from other landscape components. In-depth interviews on stakeholders and participant observations were used to study the production process of tourism imaginaries. Findings show that the viewing platforms and roads provided an enclave space from local contexts, wherein the Hani landscape was staged for gazing. The tourism company's strategies dominated the process, leading to local communities' marginalization and threats to the landscape. We suggest that tourism planning and marketing should maintain the integrity of landscape in tourism imaginaries and empower the local communities, thereby reducing cultural tensions between tourism and the landscape.



**Citation:** Wang, Z.; Marafa, L. Tourism Imaginary and Landscape at Heritage Site: A Case in Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, China. *Land* **2021**, *10*, 439. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land10040439>

Academic Editor: Theano S. Terkenli

Received: 28 February 2021

Accepted: 17 April 2021

Published: 20 April 2021

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**Keywords:** tourism; landscape; imaginary; cultural heritage site; cultural conflict; local communities

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between tourism and landscape has been extensively studied [1–7]. As an image and representation of a place and the medium of contact between the tourist and place of travel [3], the landscape satisfies tourists' needs for pleasure sought and is the core of tourism planning and marketing. Many studies have explored the way in which to develop landscape resources in tourism planning for successful tourism business [4,8–10]. However, the pursuit of economic value in these efforts often causes conflicts between tourism development and the landscape. Some studies have therefore explored the impact of tourism on landscapes [11,12]. Influenced by post-modern sociological methods, recent studies on the relationship between tourism and landscape in geography have begun to explore deeper cultural conflicts [7,13], including identity and symbolics [14–17], exploring the newly emerging cultural economy of space [2], especially the cultural landscape [18–20]. However, a conceptual framework to study the relationships between tourism and landscape is not specified in the literature [3]. In the contemporary world, tourism has become a major industry and one of the most important forces shaping landscapes. From a cultural perspective, tourism essentially involves the production of culture and, more specifically, the production of imaginaries.

The term “imaginary” is used in cultural studies to refer to the ability to see in a thing what it is not [21], a kind of fantasy [22] (p. 35), and a cultural model [23,24]. The study of the social imaginary has only entered the field of tourism research in recent years [25–29]. Hughes [25] studied the way that tourists see places, and Salazar [26] proposed the concept

of the tourism imaginary, which is a shared imaginary about the Other. Tourism imaginaries are features of modern human cultural systems that describe places that we might like to visit or worlds that we might like to inhabit [29] (p. 1). Tourism imaginaries are essential, since they “allow concerned individuals to approach the tourist destination in its various dimensions, without their getting physically and symbolically lost” [30]. Tourism imaginaries are closely related to geopolitics and power [31,32]. For certain social groups, tourism imaginaries forge their own frame of meaning and identity expressions [33]. From a political ecology perspective, Mostafanezhad and Norum [34] pointed out that tourism circulates an “anthropocenic imaginary” of the Humanity/Nature dualism, such as the expectations and impressions of culture/nature, alienation/authenticity binaries; these social imaginaries about the Anthropocene, in turn, develop new tourism space, reshaping the tourism industry itself. It is hard to think of tourism without imaginaries [26]; it is perhaps the largest conceptual frame within which tourism operates [35].

However, the relationship between tourism in terms of imaginary and landscape has been insufficiently discussed in literature. The concept of tourism imaginary provides a new framework for understanding the cultural conflicts between tourism and landscape. When a tourism imaginary is created for tourists, it focuses more on their needs and aesthetics, and the landscape is thus staged for gazing [11] (p. 132), [36]. The dialectical relationship between landscape and tourism imaginaries may add a new theoretical perspective for solving the potential cultural conflicts in this process.

The focus of the empirical research in this article is cultural heritage sites, especially the landscape and tourism imaginary of agricultural cultural heritage sites. The Honghe Hani Terraces (Honghe) studied in this paper were listed as a cultural landscape in terms of the world cultural heritage, representing the combined work of human beings and nature [37]. The landscape of the agricultural cultural heritage site is closely connected to the economic, social, and cultural system of the local people. As an important shaping force, tourism should be included in the discourse of cultural landscapes, in which the power relations between stakeholders should be analyzed. Cultural landscapes are not only the product of collaboration between people and nature, but also the product of the collaborative practice of people [20].

On the basis of the theory of the social imaginary and tourism imaginary, this article aimed to understand how the imagery is seen by the tourists in cultural heritage tourism through the case study of Honghe. The research objectives of this article also involve understanding how the tourism imaginary is produced by stakeholders, what impact it has on landscape and tourism, and the role of power relations. Through a content analysis of user-generated content (UGC) posted by tourists on social media, as well as in-depth interviews and participant observations on site, this article studied the following research questions: What is the tourism imaginary about the landscape in the tourist discourse and images on social media? How is the tourism imaginary of the landscape produced, and what are the effects? What is the role of power relations in the production of the tourism imaginary?

Through a literature review, this paper proposed a conceptual framework of tourism imaginary for empirical research. The study found a gap between tourism imaginaries and the actual landscape in the tourism of Honghe, which has marginalized essential elements in the landscape, such as communities, in tourism development, thus posing a threat to the landscape. The tourism company’s strategy dominated the production of the tourism imaginary, yet the community is less involved in decision making. However, a broader partnership is also emerging, adding new representations to the landscape’s tourism imaginary.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theories of the Social Imaginary and Tourism Imaginary

The term “imaginary” has appeared widely in scholarly work in philosophy [21]; psychoanalysis [22]; political science [23,24,38]; anthropology [31]; and, most recently,

tourism studies [25,26]. In *The Imaginary Institution of Society* [21], Castoriadis proposed the concept of the “imaginary” as an essential and decisive component of every symbol: something “invented”. The imaginary is a kind of capacity “to see in a thing what it is not, to see other than it is” [21] (p. 127). “The social imaginary” in Castoriadis’s sense refers to the actual imaginary of a society, the ethos of a group [38] (p. 4) in the sense of a society’s shared, unifying core conceptions, as well as a society’s imaginings rather than ideas about society [39]. For Castoriadis, there is a one-to-one correspondence between societies and imaginaries. In other words, he treats the culture of a (bounded) society as a unified and homogenized abstraction [39]. For a society, an imaginary is “an original investment by society of the world and itself with meanings” [21] (p. 128). Though “the social imaginary” is mystifying and believed to be invisible in Castoriadis’s concept, which may be a major problem in his conception [39], it has real effects on people’s social practice [21] (p. 129).

Unlike Castoriadis, Lacan refers to the imaginary as a fantasy, an illusion created in response to a psychological need [22] (p. 35). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real are three registers of the human mind or self-consciousness. For Lacan, the subject of the imaginary is a person rather than an abstracted society.

The use of the term “imaginary” in social science is cited most from Anderson [23] and Taylor [24]. Anderson studied the origin of the nation state by analyzing “imagined communities”. Imaginaries in Anderson’s sense are similar to cultural models, which are similarly shared, implicit schemas of interpretation [40]. Taylor referred to the “social imaginary” as the ways in which people imagine their social existence: it incorporates “a sense of the normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life, and how we fit together in carrying out the common practice” [24]. For Taylor, the social imaginary is both factual and “normative”, and it is carried in images, stories, and legends. The social imaginary is shared by “average people” or large groups of people, if not the whole society. This imaginary may be initially held by a few people, e.g., elites, then extend to society; thus, at any given time, it is complex. The social imaginary is significant because it makes social practice possible and makes sense to common practice. Taylor’s conception of the social imaginary differs from the abstract culture by Castoriadis and is more similar to shared cognitive or cultural models [39].

From a person-centered ethnographic approach, Strauss pointed out that imaginaries can only belong to real people rather than the imagined people of Castoriadis or the individual person of Lacan, and he thus framed the analysis of social imaginaries using cultural models, which are cognitive schemas or combinations of schemas [39]. For Strauss, imaginaries cannot be fixed or homogeneous. There are three levels from the earlier discussions of the imaginary: the inner life of individuals (e.g., Lacan), manifestations of people’s inner lives and social constraints in their publicly observable behaviors, and widely available public culture productions.

It is hard to think of tourism without imaginaries [26]. Tourism refers to the activity of visitors, who are travelers taking a trip to a main destination outside their usual environment for less than a year for any main purpose other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited [41]. Tourists seek an authentic experience when visiting a destination [42]. Hence, the most fundamental imaginary in tourism refers to that in the tourist’s experience. Salazar refers to “tourism imaginaries” as shared imaginaries about the Other [26]. Here, tourists are the subjects of tourism imaginaries; other people and other places are the objects of imagination.

“Prospective tourists are invited to imagine themselves in a paradisiacal environment, a vanished Eden, where the local landscape and population are to be consumed through observation, embodied sensation, and imagination.” [26]

Salazar’s idea of the imaginary is closer to the fantasy of Lacan, and the imaginary of otherness is of particular interest. However, the tourism imaginary in Lacan’s sense can also be tourists themselves, supporting them in making sense of the experience. This

“self-imaginary” of tourists is reflected in Wang’s notion of “existential authenticity”, which refers to a potential existential state of being that is to be activated by tourist activities [42].

“Tourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the Other. They also search for authenticity of, and between, themselves. The toured objects or tourism can be just a means or medium by which tourists are called together, and then, an authentic interpersonal relationship between themselves is experienced subsequently.” [43] (p. 364)

The tourism imaginaries of the other and the self may exist in the whole process of tourist gazing [44], whereas the object of gazing is often staged [36]. Hughes noticed that the fusion of tourist representations and marketing philosophy blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction through the commodification of the place imaginary [25]. These tourist ways of “seeing” places often “differ from other presentations because places are being fashioned in the image of tourism”. In other words, tourism imaginaries are socially produced. From this perspective, tourism is part of the “image production industry” [45], in which identities of destinations and their inhabitants are endlessly (re)invented, (re)produced, (re)captured, and (re)created in a bid to obtain a piece of the lucrative tourism pie [26].

Tourism imaginaries do not only exist in the minds of tourists: their production and circulation involve a group of people who are “stakeholders” in tourism. This imaginary on the supply side of tourism is similar to the social imaginaries in Taylor’s sense, which are shared imaginaries of real stakeholders: they are tourists, local communities, companies, and governments. Tourism spaces, set apart from the mundane world for tourists, are in part spaces of the imaginary, fantasy, and dreaming [26].

For the purpose of this paper, tourism imaginaries of the landscape are of special interest. Landscape is a particular concern in the placemaking of tourism destinations and thus an important component in tourism imaginaries. Instead of focusing on the imaginaries of a tourist, we examined how social imaginaries of landscape are produced, consumed, and distributed. In this study, “tourism imaginary” refers to a socially shared imaginary of tourism stakeholders about other places and people. This definition adopts Taylor’s concept of social imaginaries, Salazar’s notion of “the other” in the tourism imaginary, and Strass’s “people-centered” approach. It is compatible with Lacan’s notion of “the imaginary”, as a shared imaginary is evident through the careful analysis of tourism imaginaries of individual tourists, local community members, tourism enterprises, and governmental officials. Tourism imaginaries about landscape can be operationalized by analyzing what Salazar called “channels”, including the visual and textual content, e.g., art, photographs, literature, and advertising.

We combined the ideas of Taylor, Strauss, and Salazar [24,26,31], and Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework used in this study for tourism imaginaries about landscape. Because of the intangible nature of tourism imaginaries, “the only way to study them is by focusing on the multiple conduits through which they pass and become visible in the form of images and discourses” [26]. These social imaginaries can be viewed as including three types of knowledge: a prototype, exemplars, and background understandings [39]. A prototype is a real or constructed good example of a category [46]. Exemplars are specific examples. Background understandings include other information that is part of the concept, such as how and why features of the prototype are present, how they are related, and when variations of the prototype would be expected. As long as tourism imaginaries about landscape are recognized, it is important to realize that they are dynamic rather than fixed. The movement process of tourism imaginaries can be framed by “the circuit of culture” model [47], which places imaginaries in the circulation of culture. According to Du Gay et al., five moments can be identified in the circuit of tourism imaginaries: representation, circulating production, consumption, regulation, and identity. The imaginaries circulate unevenly and non-linearly [26], and the movement is embedded in the social practice of tourism stakeholders. Power relations influence this process, strengthening or restricting certain imaginaries.

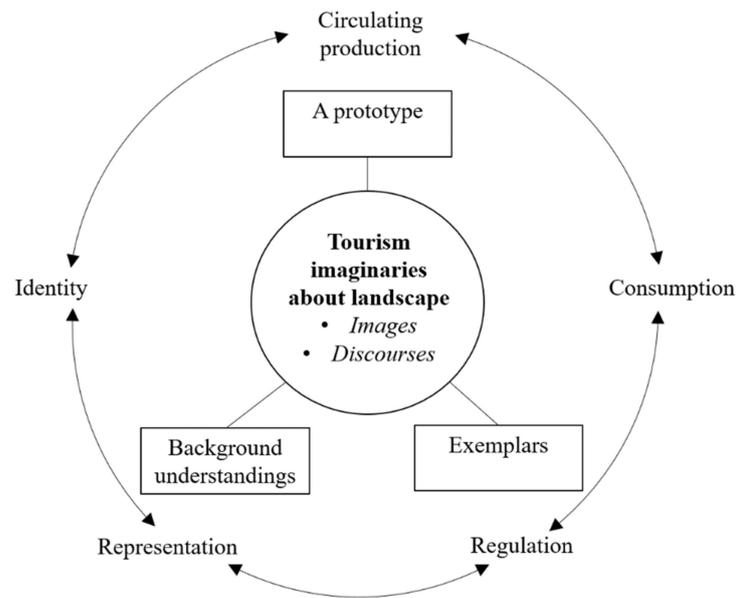


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for tourism imaginaries about landscape.

2.2. The Hani Landscape

The Hani moved to Ailao Mountain 1300 years ago and began to construct terraced fields and plant rice on the mountain slopes of the Red River Valley. As a result of inconvenient transportation and little communication with the outside world, the Hani people living in mountainous areas have developed and maintained unique agricultural traditions and lifestyles. The Hani’s agricultural planting is dominated by red rice, and the terraces are mostly cultivated on slopes of 900–2000 m. There is abundant rainfall due to water vapor from the Red River Valley, and the annual precipitation is more than 1400 mm. Because the climate on the hillside is colder than the Red River Valley, water vapor often forms a lot of clouds at this altitude. The Hani people use the abundant precipitation to build layers of paddy fields with rocks and soil along the hillside contours. Additionally, they built a sophisticated irrigation system to distribute water between plots. Most of the Hani’s villages are located on the upper edge of terraces between 1400 and 2000 m. Above the village is the forest (Figure 2).

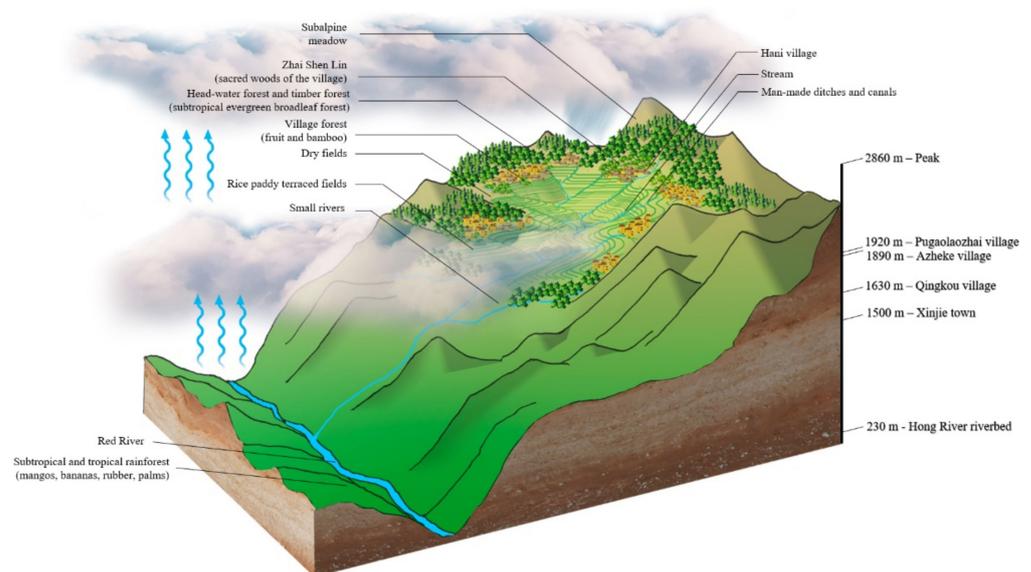


Figure 2. The Hani landscapes.

The integrated fourfold system of Hani terraces has been extensively studied as a representative of an ecosystem where people and nature coexist harmoniously [48–50]. The four parts of this complex system include terraces, villages, water system, and forests [48]. The various parts of the human–nature system that support this have different functions.

The terraced fields include paddy fields and dry fields. The paddy fields are mainly planted with red rice, which is the source of food for the Hani people. The slopes of the terraces range from 10 to 25, and the steepest terrace exceeds 60 [48]. In addition to growing rice, the terraces are also a place for collecting vegetables and keeping ducks and fish, which enrich the food of the Hani people.

The forest is located above or around the village. These sub-tropical evergreen broadleaved forests are composed of head-water forest, Zhai Shen Lin, village forest, and timber forest [48]. The head-water forest is the water source for the Hani people's drinking water and terraces. Zhai Shen Lin is the sacred woods of the village, the place where the gods live in the hearts of the Hani people and the place where they worship. Village forests are usually fruit forests and other forests planted in and around the village. The timber forests, assigned and maintained by the village committee, provide fuel and construction materials for the Hani people. Forests also serve the functions of maintaining soil and water and strengthening hillsides, which are very important for the safety of Hani villages and terraces.

The village is where the Hani and other ethnic minority people live. Since cultivating, maintaining, and irrigating terraces require heavy human labor and labor's full cooperation, people have to settle together in a village to cope with complicated farm work [51]. A village usually has one significant ethnic minority, which makes up the majority of the population. They cultivate terraced area adjacent to the village. For example, Pugaolaozhai village is a typical Hani village, while Mengpin village is a Yi village on the other side of the hillside. The settlement of such ethnic villages allows the unique social organization and culture of each ethnic group to be preserved and continued. As the population grows, new villages will form near the original village; thus, the terraces system can expand spatially. In the Hani village, the traditional "mushroom house" consists of walls made of soil, stone, and wood and a roof made of rice straw. The bottom layer is often for raising livestock, the top layer is a barn for storing rice, and the middle layer is for people. This mushroom house can withstand the cold well, and the middle-level Huo Tang (fire pond for cooking) also keeps the house and barn dry. In addition, there are shared water mills and waterwheels in the village. The village is also a place for water worship and holding animal sacrifices. These religious facilities can be found beside the canal and in the lower part of the village.

Hani terraces have a special water system that combines nature and man-made elements. Precipitation is stored in forests and soil, and water flows from springs in the forests into the canals of the village for people to use and then flows further down into the terraced fields. Water is allocated to terraces through irrigation ditches. Finally, the water runs into a stream and flows into the river at the bottom of the valley. The Hani manage a huge irrigation system, accurately allocating water resources to match cultivation seasons. This imparts Hani terraces with a high resilience against droughts and floods [51].

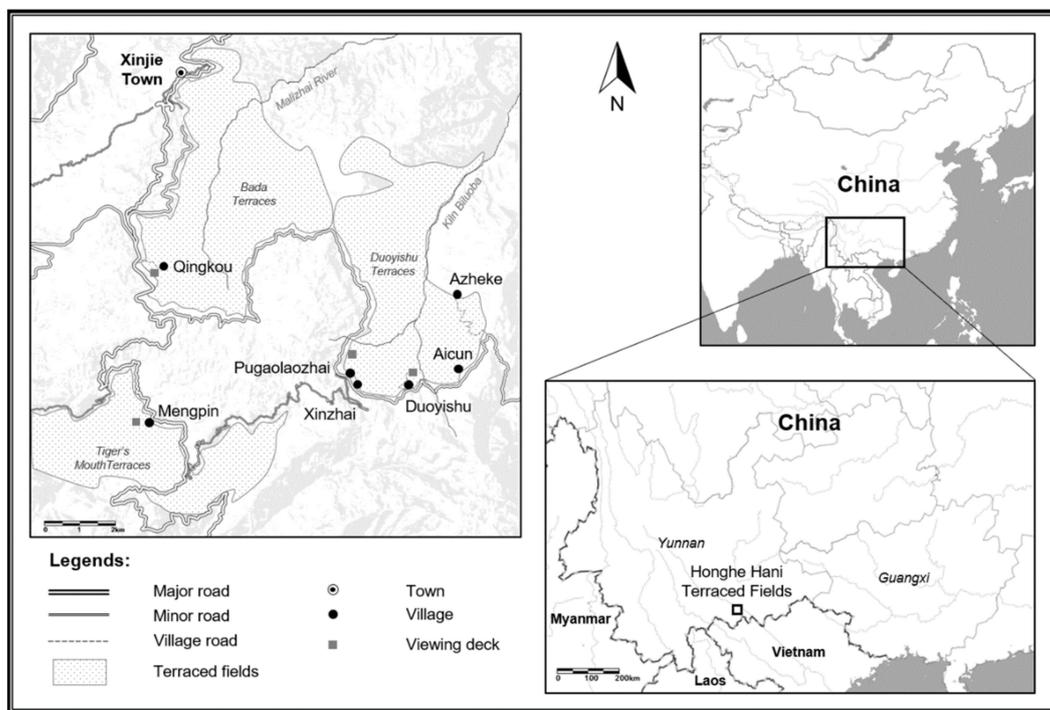
In addition to the functions of the ecosystem, the operation and maintenance of the Hani landscape system also rely on the unique livelihood system, social organization, and cultural beliefs of the Hani people. The leader of the Hani village is Zhai Lao, who is the most prestigious person in the village. These leaders are the officiants of religious ceremonies and decision-makers who direct villagers' agricultural activities, such as the distribution of water, and they are also the supervisors of the Hani's regulations.

The Hani people worship nature. Trees and water are regarded as spiritual and are worshipped. This belief has influenced the Hani society's norms regarding access to natural resources, for example, deforestation. Anyone who illegally enters the Zhai Shen Lin and cuts down the trees inside will be punished. The worship of the Hani is also reflected in the fact that they set up altars in the village. Every year during the Angma Tu Festival and the Kuzhaza Festival, they sacrifice cattle at the altar for a good harvest.

In 2010, the First World Conference on Terraced Landscapes was held in Mengzi, Yunnan, focusing on the Hani landscape of rice terraces. The terraces have scientific, cultural, historical philosophical religious, ecological, and aesthetic value [52]. The “Forest–Village–Terrace–River” system was identified as the historical values of Hani landscape [52]. Meanwhile, the conference raised concern on the dilemma between conservation of the historical landscape and tourism development. In 2013, the Hani rice terraces were designated as a World Cultural Heritage Site for their universal values, both as a reflection of finely tuned agricultural, forestry, and water distribution systems reinforced by their socioeconomic-religious systems and as an exceptional landscape of the complex system [51].

### 3. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in the Honghe Hani Terraces in Yuanyang County, Yunnan, China (Figure 3). It investigated seven villages in three terraced areas, which cover the main areas visited by tourists. Sightseeing started in Honghe in 2006, and now Honghe is a major domestic and international tourism destination.



**Figure 3.** Map of the study area.

A mixed research method was used in this study. Content analysis was used to identify and systematically study tourists’ imaginaries of the Hani landscape. In-depth interviews and participant observations were used to study the production of imaginaries in tourism development and to understand the influence of different stakeholders in this process.

The main target of the content analysis was user-generated content (UGC) by domestic tourists who had visited Honghe. UGC has been widely used in the recent study of tourism and hospitality for analyzing tourist perceptions and behaviors [53–55], but it has not been used to analyze tourism imaginaries. The UGC data in this study were collected from Mafengwo.cn, a major Chinese travel guide and review website. The website had more than 100 million active users in China in 2019, and it includes both domestic and international destinations. Comments from tourists who visited Honghe Hani Terraces in 2018–2019 were collected. These comments, including text and images, were posted by visitors who intended to portray their experience or recommend that other people visit.

The content analysis of tourists' discourses in their comments explicitly revealed their imaginaries about the landscapes in Honghe. After removing irrelevant words and coding to combine similar words, we summarized the frequency of words (more than 1 Chinese character) mentioned in the comments. According to the meanings and implied objects, we grouped these words into themes to reflect different aspects of tourism imaginaries.

The analysis of tourist photography was used to identify tourism imaginaries about the Hani landscape. Compared to other non-visual techniques, photography has the richness to convey multi-layered meanings, and it readily facilitates comparison among places [56]. What is captured in tourist images reflects their preferences and is embedded with meaning. Therefore, tourism imaginaries of landscapes can be carefully recognized by identifying what landscape patterns tourists believe are meaningful and why. The photographs in tourist comments reveal more than imagined landscape patterns: they post photos to show readers examples of the landscape. In other words, tourist photographs in this case contain imaginary exemplars that are more likely to be circulated in the circulating production of the imaginary. The UGC data in 2018–2019 from Mafengwo.cn were collected in 2020. Due to the impact of COVID-19, tourist comments in 2020 were unavailable. In total, 75 comments and 195 photos posted from 2018 to 2019 were collected.

For the purpose of understanding the production process of tourism imaginaries, in-depth interviews and participant observations obtained during field studies were used to collect information about tourism development, stakeholders, landscape changes, and power relations. Specifically, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out to understand local tourism development, landscape changes and policies, the government system, and major events. For example, when inquiring about tourism development, stakeholders were asked "can you talk about how tourism has started in Honghe and in this village?" and "Can you describe the process of tourism development in this village and the whole Honghe?" The snowball method was used to select interviewees and identify stakeholders. Participatory observation was used to understand the characteristics of the Hani landscape and understand the development of tourism. Two field studies were carried out in April and July 2017. In total, 22 interviews were conducted, including 15 local Hani villagers, 4 village heads, a Tourism Company official, a governmental official, and a landscape architect. The average time for an interview was approximately 30–45 min. The conversations were transcribed into text for identifying themes and further analysis.

The interview record and the UGC data were coded and analyzed using a qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 12.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *Tourism Imaginaries in Tourist Discourses and Images*

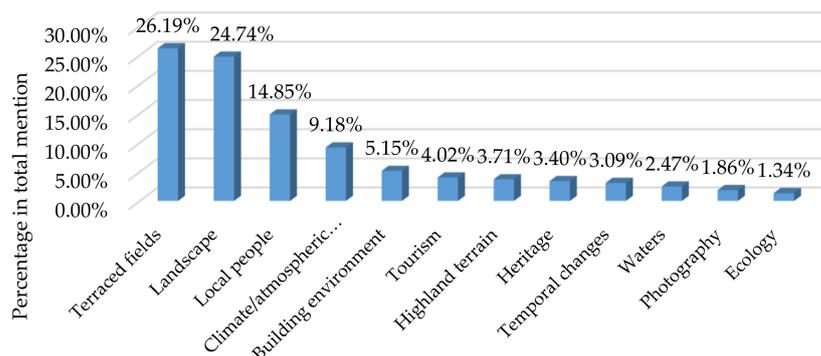
#### 4.1.1. Discourse Analysis

The content analysis of tourists' comments identified 12 themes from the mentioned words, reflecting different aspects of tourist discourses relating to the Honghe landscape. Words related to the tourist experience were mentioned 970 times in 75 comments (Table 1). The percentage of each theme shows how frequently the landscape is imagined as a particular representation (Figure 4).

**Table 1.** Frequency of words mentioned <sup>1</sup> in tourists' comments about Honghe on Mafengwo.cn (2018–2019).

Themes/Words	Frequency of Mention	Percentage	Themes/Words	Frequency of Mention	Percentage
<b>TERRACED FIELDS</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100%</b>	Life	9	6.25%
Pattern	224	88.19%	History	4	2.78%
<i>Terraces</i>	178	70.08%	Yi people	3	2.08%
<i>Layers</i>	13	5.12%	Custom	2	1.39%
<i>Rice fields</i>	13	5.12%	Folklore	2	1.39%
<i>Curves</i>	5	1.97%	Language	2	1.39%
<i>Continuous</i>	4	1.57%	Local customs	2	1.39%
<i>Shape</i>	4	1.57%	<b>CLIMATE/ATMOSPHERIC CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Steep</i>	4	1.57%	Sun/sunshine/light and shadow	48	53.93%
<i>Color</i>	3	1.18%	Cloud/mist	21	23.60%
Soil/landform	18	7.09%	Weather	10	11.24%
Rice	12	4.72%	Sky	7	7.87%
<b>PANORAMIC LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100%</b>	Wind	2	2.25%
Aesthetics	118	49.17%	<b>BUILDING ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Scenery</i>	31	12.92%	Trails and roads	27	54.00%
<i>Colorful</i>	19	7.92%	Village	13	26.00%
<i>Masterpiece</i>	18	7.50%	Vehicle	3	6.00%
<i>Beautiful</i>	14	5.83%	<b>TOURISM</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Dynamic</i>	13	5.42%	Tourists	9	23.08%
<i>Chinese ink painting</i>	8	3.33%	Food	8	20.51%
<i>Boundless</i>	5	2.08%	Accessibility	6	15.38%
<i>Misty</i>	2	0.83%	Accommodation	4	10.26%
<i>Strange</i>	2	0.83%	Seasonality	3	7.69%
<i>Vibrant</i>	2	0.83%	Service	3	7.69%
<i>Vivid</i>	2	0.83%	Tourism	3	7.69%
Spatial features	40	16.67%	Tour guide	2	5.13%
<i>Grand/vast view</i>	22	9.17%	<b>HIGHLAND TERRAIN</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Shock</i>	8	3.33%	Mountainous terrain	18	50.00%
<i>Remote</i>	6	2.50%	Mountain locations	9	25.00%
<i>Deep</i>	3	1.25%	Altitude	4	11.11%
Authenticity	31	12.92%	Natural hazard	3	8.33%
<i>Unique</i>	18	7.50%	Valley	2	5.56%
<i>Genuine</i>	5	2.08%	<b>HERITAGE</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Local</i>	4	1.67%	Heritage	15	45.45%
<i>Original</i>	3	1.25%	Culture	8	24.24%
Illusion	19	7.92%	Core zone	3	9.09%
<i>Hidden paradise/wonderland</i>	10	4.17%	Maintenance/sustain	3	9.09%
<i>Illusion</i>	4	1.67%	Bells	2	6.06%
<i>Magical</i>	2	0.83%	Historical stories	2	6.06%
<i>Simple</i>	2	0.83%	<b>TEMPORAL CHANGES</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Famous	10	4.17%	Season/time of day	30	100.00%
History	7	2.92%	<b>WATERS</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>History</i>	3	1.25%	Water reflection	16	66.67%
<i>Old</i>	3	1.25%	Pool	2	8.33%
Hygiene	7	2.92%	Spring	2	8.33%
<i>Dirty and messy/poverty</i>	4	1.67%	Water resource	2	8.33%
<i>Dirty/poverty</i>	2	0.83%	<b>PHOTOGRAPHY</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Countryside	7	2.92%	Photography	7	38.89%
Feeling	5	2.08%	Photos	6	33.33%
<i>Mood</i>	2	0.83%	Photographer	3	16.67%
<i>Safe</i>	2	0.83%	Media	2	11.11%
Tranquil	5	2.08%	<b>ECOLOGY</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>LOCAL PEOPLE</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	Animals	2	15.38%
Hani people	61	42.36%	Forest	2	15.38%
Agricultural activities	37	25.69%	Nature	6	46.15%
Generations	16	11.11%			

<sup>1</sup> This table only shows words mentioned more than once.



**Figure 4.** Themes in tourists' comments about Honghe on Mafengwo.com (2018–2019).

The tourist imaginary in Honghe was most frequently connected to terraced fields and the panoramic landscape, followed by the impression of local people and climate/atmospheric characteristics. The rest of the themes were less frequently mentioned, including some important intrinsic elements of the Hani landscape, e.g., the building environment, including roads and villages; waters; and ecology. This implies that scenic beauty—terraced field views with featured atmospheric imagery and local people—constituted tourism imaginaries of the Hani landscape. Although the function of terraced fields, as places where rice is grown and water is contained, is important in the Hani system that their tangible representations are mostly observed and emphasized by tourists. Other components, including the Hani village, irrigation system, and ecology, are equally important for the landscape but were marginal in the tourism imaginary. This gap between the tourism imaginary of the place and the actual Hani landscape is evident and understandable: the tourism imaginary may have its own life in tourism institutions.

Next, we revealed the imaginary of each themed object by looking at the frequency of mentioned words under each theme, together with analyzing the corresponding comments (Table 1). The results show that tourists had mixed imaginaries about the landscape that they saw. Some imaginaries appeared more frequently than others.

For the theme “terraced fields”, their layered “pattern” was the primary tourist imaginary, while the crop in the terraces—rice—was secondary.

Another main theme of the tourism imaginary was the “panoramic landscape”. This panoramic perspective presented tourists' overall impression of the Hani landscape. The imaginary of the beauty of the Hani landscape (aesthetic and spatial characteristics) constituted the primary tourist imaginary in the panoramic landscape. The following tourist comments show how these elements were mixed to constitute the tourist imaginary of the place.

“Climbing to the top of the terraced fields to see the erratic sea of clouds, the looming half-mountain villages, the majestic terraces, the scenery will change with the ethereal light and fog, forming a beautiful landscape and countryside scenery. It is a paradise of light and shadow for photography lovers. But what you see now is 1300 years of the Hani!” (Tourist comment, 2019)

“Most of the beautiful pictures of Hani terraces we saw were from the same perspective: looking down. It is an ink painting drawn by a large number of curves that are never repeated on the edge of the terraces, and it is better to be supplemented with colorful rays of the sky. This turns the terraces into a simple flat object. But you can only realize the greatness of Hani people when standing on the side of terraces, seeing the level and height of terraced fields with the naked eye.” (Tourist comment, 2019)

These comments show that the pre-visiting experience, background knowledge, and the original cultures of tourists influenced the tourism imaginary of landscape. Tourists imagined the Hani landscape as a “heaven on earth”, an ideal place for human life, although

this interpretation is separate from the Hani's notion of the world that the spirituality of natural objects should be worshiped. In Chinese culture, heaven is often imagined as a kind of Taoist wonderland, a blissful world [57]. These Chinese imaginaries of the landscape were used by tourists to make sense of what they saw. In this case, the tourism imaginary and the local landscape were separate in tourist discourses, adding to the further distribution of this landscape interpretation. In this way, the tourism imaginary has imparted new meanings to the observed landscape.

In addition, the tourist comment analysis revealed how a certain tourism imaginary can imply and influence the visiting behaviors of tourists and the type of landscape that they value. This is clearly shown in the tourist discourse on photography.

"During the Chinese New Year, rice fields are filled with water. It is the best moment of light and shadow. In the early morning or at dusk, there are different visual effects under different refraction. This is a paradise for photography." (Tourist comment, 2019)

"Among them, Bada and Tiger's Mouth are the best places to watch the sunset, and Duoyishu is the best place to watch the sunrise. The best time to shoot Yuanyang terraced fields is from November to April of the following year, because the terraced fields will be filled with water after the autumn harvest until the seedlings are planted in the following year. At this time, the terraced fields have a strong sense of hierarchy, sparkling under the sunlight. Many of the photos of terraced fields we saw on the Internet were taken during this time." (Tourist comment, 2019)

It can be seen from these texts that photography, as a major tourist activity, has been influenced by tourist imaginaries of the landscape. Tourists expected to take pictures that they see on the Internet or in travel guides. This expectation determines the season in which they should travel and how they arrange their own itinerary (when and where to see what), because only in this way can they seize the moment of the expected and replicate what is considered the best photo. Since the Hani landscape is seen as composed of abstract lines and colors presented in water-filled fields, for many photographers, the meaning of the landscape lies in this abstracted beauty. It is not difficult to comprehend how the various chains of the tourism industry are organized around the production, distribution, consumption, and reproduction of this tourism imaginary.

Moreover, "local people" are frequently mentioned in tourist comments. When referring to "Hani people", except for a few who called them as such in terms of the ethnic group, tourists often call them "people", "locals", "folks", "villagers", or more specifically described as "older brothers", "women", "children", and "the elderly" in their encounter. The tourism imaginary about the Hani people focuses more on their agricultural activities, inheritance from generation to generation, and virtues. The tourist discourse shows that Chinese tourists' imaginary about Hani people does not focus on ethnicity or indigeneity in western terms, which relates to underdevelopment, but a secular view: they are imagined as simple, hardworking, or kind hosts, rather than objects of seeing. Tourists imagined the terraced field landscape as the product of hardworking farming and inheritance-like many other rural areas in China, rather than the components of a specific ecological-sociocultural system. In addition, this imaginary may contain such a risk: that the bonds between Hani people's unique social organization and cultural beliefs and the terraced landscape are neglected.

#### 4.1.2. Image Analysis

Figure 5 shows the themes and proportion of the tourist photos. The vast majority of captured landscapes are terraced fields, accounting for 79.92% of all photos. Other inherent elements of the Hani landscape, including local people and village buildings, have attracted less attention from tourists. This again supports the findings from the discourse

analysis: there is a gap between the tourism imaginary of the place and the actual Hani landscape, and the imaginary primarily contributes to the tourist experience.

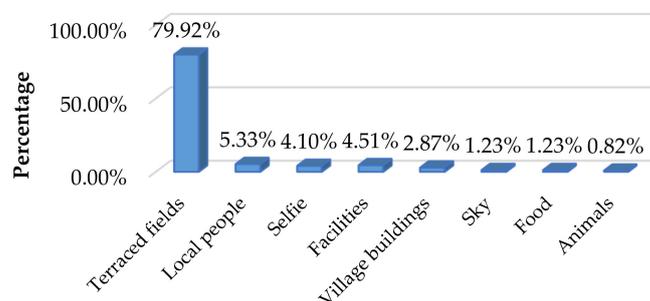


Figure 5. Themes of tourist photos in tourists' comments about Honghe on Mafengwo.cn (2018–2019).

For tourists, the terraces are the center of the tourism imaginary of the landscape, and the place is imagined as a stereotyped overlooking scene of terraces, a schema, separated and independent from other components of the Hani landscape. Table 2 shows patterns of image formations in tourist photos related to terraced fields. We identified seven image compositions. Among the photos, more than half used the entire picture to show the layered pattern of the terraces (32.31%) or the panorama taken from the viewing deck (23.08%) (Figure 6a,b). “Sunrise” (14.87%), “terraced fields amid fog/sea of clouds” (11.28%), “sunset” (10.26%), and “blue terraces” (4.62%) were also frequently used patterns by tourists who took photos of terraced fields (Figure 6c–f).

Table 2. Image formation analysis on “terraced field” photos in tourists' comments about Honghe on Mafengwo.cn (2018–2019).

Image Composition	Duoyishu		Bada		Tiger's Mouth		Aicun		Grand Total	Percentage
	F <sup>2</sup>	P <sup>3</sup>	F	P	F	P	F	P		
LAYER PATTERN	31	36.90%	9	17.31%	19	45.24%	4	23.53%	63	32.31%
Overlook of TF <sup>1</sup> + Layer/curve pattern	31	36.90%	9	17.31%	19	45.24%	4	23.53%	63	32.31%
VIEWING DECK PANORAMA	9	10.71%	31	59.62%	5	11.90%			45	23.08%
Overlook of TF + Mountain + Villages + Sky	9	10.71%	27	51.92%	1	2.38%			37	18.97%
Overlook of TF + Mountain			4	7.69%	4	9.52%			8	4.10%
SUNRISE	28	33.33%	1	1.92%					29	14.87%
Overlook of TF + Sunrise + Mountain + Sky	12	14.29%	1	1.92%					13	6.67%
Overlook of TF + Reflection of sunshine	10	11.90%							10	5.13%
Overlook of TF + Sunshine refraction + Fog	7	8.33%							7	3.59%
TERRACED FIELDS AMID FOG/SEA OF CLOUDS	14	16.67%	2	3.85%	2	4.76%	4	23.53%	22	11.28%
Overlook of TF + Fog	12	14.29%	2	3.85%	2	4.76%	4	23.53%	20	10.26%
Overlook of TF + Sea of clouds + Sky	3	3.57%							3	1.54%
SUNSET			4	7.69%	16	38.10%			20	10.26%
Overlook of TF + Sunset + Mountain + Sky			4	7.69%	8	19.05%			12	6.15%
Overlook of TF + Reflection of sunshine					8	19.05%			8	4.10%
BLUE TERRACES							9	52.94%	9	4.62%
Overview of TF + Blue water surface + mountain + sky							9	52.94%	9	4.62%
CLOSE-UP VIEW OF RICE FIELDS			7	13.46%					7	3.59%
Close-up view of TF			7	13.46%					7	3.59%
Grand Total	84	100.00%	52	100.00%	42	100.00%	17	100.00%	195	100.00%
Percentage	43.08%		26.67%		21.54%		8.72%		100.00%	

<sup>1</sup> TF = terraced fields. <sup>2</sup> F = frequency. <sup>3</sup> P = percentage.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

**Figure 6.** Examples of image composition patterns in tourist photography: (a) layer pattern; (b) viewing deck panorama; (c) sunrise; (d) terraced fields amid fog/sea of clouds; (e) sunset; (f) blue terraces.

The “overlook perspective” of seeing terraced fields is again proved in the image analysis. Only 3.59% of analyzed photos had adopted a close-up view, and no tourist image has a looking-up perspective. Moreover, we found that tourism imaginaries are geographical related. “Sunrise” was prominently found in the photos of Duoyishu, whereas

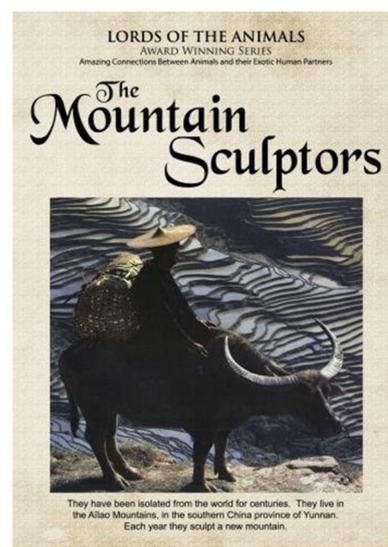
“sunset” was specifically found in Tiger’s Mouth. Most photos in Bada were panorama from the viewing deck, while Aicun was the only place with “blue terraces”. This shows again how tourism imaginary can influence tourist’s travelling behaviors and their interpretation of the landscape.

Both discourse analysis and image analysis on the tourist comments identified several exemplars of tourism imaginaries on the Hani landscape. Tourists have mixed imaginaries about the seen landscape, reflecting consumed tourism imaginaries of the place. However, some imaginary appears as frequent schemas in interpreting the landscape. Tourism imaginary of Hani landscape showed an overlooking view of stereotyped terraced field imagery with irregular curves of field edges, and mirror-like appearance (filled with water and reflecting colorful lights). Some essential elements of the Hani landscape are marginalized in this imaginary. Tourism imaginary is thus alienated from the local landscape, implying and influencing potential tourist behaviors.

#### 4.2. Tourism Development and the Shaping of Landscape Imaginaries

##### 4.2.1. Production of Tourism Imaginaries about the Hani Landscape

In-depth interviews with local people, the Tourism Company officials, and the village heads revealed the tourism development process in Yuanyang, which showed how the production of tourism imaginaries was carried out. The unique landscape created by the Hani people has not been attracting international attention for a long time. When asking how tourism started in Yuanyang, interviewees all mentioned that photographers first visited the place and spread the beauty of terraces to the outside world. According to the interviewees, the first person who introduced the landscape of Hani terraces to the international public was French photographer Yann Layma. In 1993, he stayed in Honghe and published a photo album and film called “*Les Sculpteurs de montagnes*”, which quickly attracted international attention and introduced the landscape of Hani terraces to the world. This collection of photography created early prototypes of imaginaries about the Hani landscape, especially the terraced fields. Most of these photos were taken from an overlooking perspective, with layers of terraces filled with water (Figure 7). After that, more domestic and foreign tourists began to visit Honghe.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 7.** The mountain sculptors: (a) cover of the photo album; (b) a photo of Hani terraces by Yann Layma.

However, early visitors had to overcome extremely poor traffic conditions, as only dangerous dirt roads could reach deeper villages to see the terraced fields. The earliest

tourism development was carried out in Qingkou Village, which is closer to Honghe County (Figure 3). The interviews to Qingkou villagers showed how tourism was developed in Qingkou. In 2001, the village started selling tickets as a closed scenic spot. The tourism plan of Qingkou has positioned this village as an ethnic cultural village. Tourists were guided to watch ethnic performances by villagers, experience ethnic culture in the stone-paved alleys, and visit an ethnic museum, not to watch terraces. At that time, although the Duoyishu terraces have not yet been developed for tourism, some foreign investors and photographers have built inns on the edge of the terraces. Interviews with local people revealed that most of the original sites and angles suitable for viewing terraces were discovered by photographers. These photography spots provided ideas for subsequent tourism development.

Early photographic works created rich prototypes for the imaginaries of the Hani landscape and also unearthed attractions for sightseeing. In 2006, the Honghe County Government contracted the tourism development of Honghe terraces to the private Yuanyang Shibo Tourism Company (Tourism Company). Qingkou Village, originally operated by the County Tourism Bureau, was involved in the new scenic area. The new scenic area includes three scenic spots, Bada, Duoyishu, and Tiger's Mouth, covering the main parts of the Hani terraces. The Tourism Company employed terraced field sightseeing as its strategy for tourism and built four viewing platforms in popular terrace viewing spots. These viewing platforms are located on the upper edge of the terraces so that they can overlook the whole view of the terraces from the best angles. The local government also supported tourism development by repairing roads from the entrance of the scenic area to the various viewing platforms.

The tourism development strategies in Yuanyang were mentioned by the Tourism Company. After the sightseeing facilities were completed, the Tourism Company focused on promoting a number of terrace field landscapes to the tourists: "Watch the sunrise at Duoyishu, watch the sunset at Tiger's Mouth, and watch the blue terraces at Aicun." This way of seeing the Hani landscape was recommended by travel agents, local tour guides, and travel guidebooks. Tourists must buy tickets to enter the viewing platforms and arrive at the "best" spot for viewing and photographing terraces. At the same time, activities such as visiting the villages, e.g., Qingkou, were downplayed because the Tourism Company believed that "the sanitary condition of the village is a big problem."

The sightseeing imaginaries have also influenced tourism development and tourist behaviors. The desire for sightseeing the terraces has led to the concentration of hotel and inn development in the villages closest to the viewing platform. For example, the hospitality industry has boomed in Pugaolaozhai and Huangcaoling. Tourists choose to live in these two villages, which are closest to the viewing platform, to watch the sunrise the next morning. In contrast, there is no hotel in Aicun, because tourists usually make a short stop in this village after watching the sunrise to see the blue terraced fields that only appear from 9 to 10 in the morning. In addition, as tourists spend most of their time visiting viewing platforms along the road, periphery villages in the scenic area have had few visits. Many adults have migrated to the outside cities for their livelihoods, leaving abandoned terraced fields uncultivated, which has threatened the sustainability of the Hani landscape.

In order to maintain the promoted tourism imaginaries, the Tourism Company signed agreements with some farmers to stop planting rice in their terraces and fill them with water in all seasons to show the reflection of lights during sunrise and sunset. The Tourism Company also hired local people to maintain abandoned fields to avoid negatively affecting the landscape. These measures have helped maintain tourism imaginaries but have quietly changed the traditional Hani landscape system.

In the development of sightseeing tourism dominated by the Tourism Company, the Hani landscape was staged by creating tourism imaginaries of terraced field sceneries. The tourism imaginary was produced through marketing, tourism planning, landscaping, and the provision of tourism facilities. The development of the tourism industry, including

travel agencies and hotels, has further strengthened these imaginaries. By promoting a special way to view the Hani landscape and monopolizing the best viewing spots, tourism companies could continue making profits from selling tickets. The photography activities of tourists at these viewing platforms have reproduced tourism imaginaries and attracted potential tourists on travelogues, photo albums, and social media sites.

#### 4.2.2. Power Relations, Community Resistance, and New Landscape Representations

Although the tourism imaginary was given its own life in tourism institutions, the role of the local community was diluted in the promoted imaginaries. The viewing platforms and the roads provided an enclave space from the local context, staging the prepared Hani landscape for tourists. In this process, the community was marginalized and disempowered. In fact, our interviews with the villagers showed that local communities rarely had the opportunity to participate in the decision making of tourism development; more often, they had to obey the policies and regulations specified by tourism companies. Tourism companies have dominated tourism development in Honghe, but they have not subsidized local villagers for cultivating the terraced fields. This uneven company–community power relation has been a root of the separation between tourism imaginaries and the Hani landscape.

Although we do not have direct evidence that proves how this sightseeing tourism based on tourism imaginaries affects the identity of Hani communities, we can derive some clues from the conflicts between the company and the villagers. We learned from interviews that tourism companies have repeatedly acquired terraced fields from villagers for the construction of viewing platforms. The latter were dissatisfied but dared not fight against government-supported tourism companies. In the end, most of the villagers sold land to the Tourism Company at very low prices. In another case, the villagers succeeded in protecting their identity. In this conflict, the Tourism Company tried to cut down the sacred woods in a village for road construction and was confronted by villagers. Eventually, the Tourism Company succumbed and changed the plan, and the sacred place of the Hani people was preserved. These conflicts indicate that the sightseeing tourism in Honghe was superficial, as it neglected the integrity of the Hani landscape and could threaten the Hani people's identity. A worrying fact is that when a tourism imaginary is produced, value is defined at the same time. Honghe's tourism imaginaries emphasized the "photographic value" in order to please tourists, while other values of the landscape, e.g., the value to the lives of the Hani people, were ignored in tourism.

In addition, forces of resistance against superficial sightseeing tourism have also been noted. Recently, some scholars and landscape architects have come to Honghe from cities. These are people with more knowledge about the Hani landscape, usually with purposes of cultural conservation and poverty alleviation. They are committed to protecting the habitat of the Hani people, consequently adding to new tourism imaginaries about the Hani landscape. The "Red Rice Project" in Azheke is an example. The plan, jointly led by some scholars and local government officials, focuses on protecting the traditional village. The Hani traditional houses, roads, and religious ceremonies in the village have been preserved or revitalized. Since then, Azheke has become a new tourist destination, but the livelihoods of villagers have not been improved. A more recent plan proposed by scholars is to allow villagers to invest in shares and jointly establish a company with the government to develop tourism in the village. The effectiveness of this approach remains to be seen. However, a broader partnership is emerging in tourism development, reflecting scholars' knowledge of the Hani landscape and new demands of the urban capital. These new social forces have helped empower the community and regulate tourism development; landscape knowledge has been incorporated in producing new representations for tourism imaginaries. Although the dilemma between tourism development and protecting the Hani landscape still exists, tourism imaginaries may provide an insightful framework to examine cultural processes and understand the effects of power relations.

## 5. Discussion

Tourism imaginaries showed a schema of viewing the Hani landscape: overlooking terraces from above. More importantly, this analysis reveals a gap between tourism imaginaries and the actual landscape, reflecting tourist “ways of seeing” places that differ from other representations [25]. This separation is determined by the nature of imaginaries: they are essentially different from the seen objects [21] (p. 127). The production of tourism imaginary lies in the “circuit of culture”, a dynamic process [47] in which different stakeholders participate in the production and dissemination. Our findings confirm that commercial logics played a significant role in producing tourism imaginary led by the Tourism Company [25].

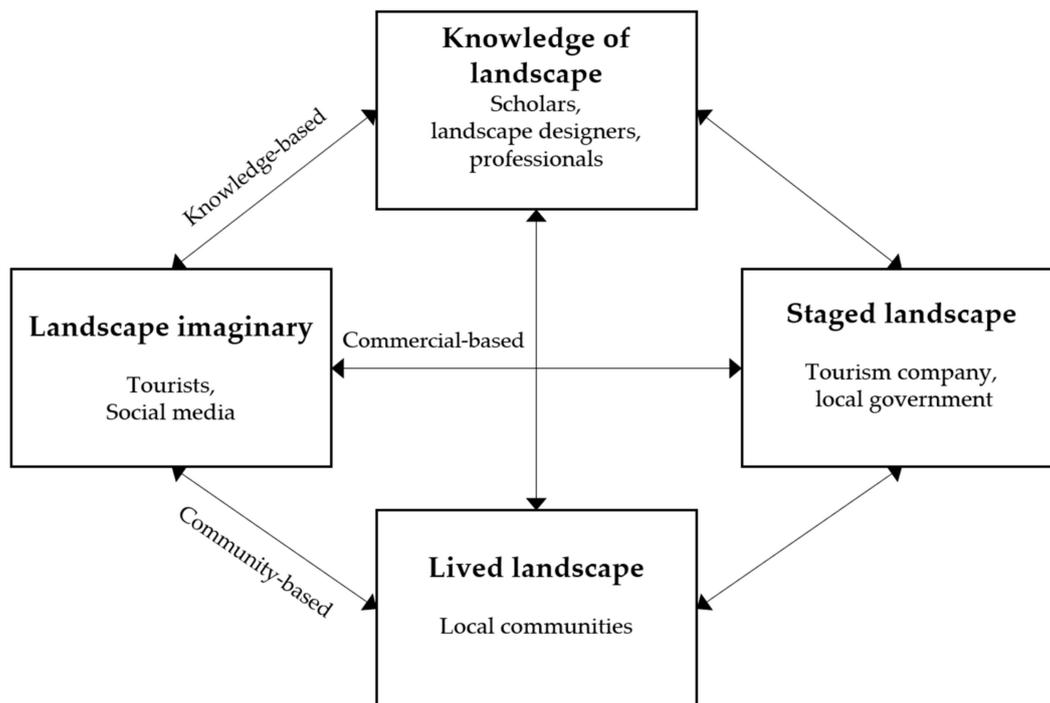
The production of tourism imaginary, in this case, has revealed such relationship between tourism and landscape: for tourism, the landscape is the raw material for creating tourism imaginaries that meets the needs of the mass public, rather than the opposite, the production of tourism imaginary that is based on a deep understanding of the landscape. In other words, the production of tourism imaginary is a vessel of cultural changes that tourism exerts on the landscape, reflecting how cultural and semiotic elements of landscape is commodified in tourism [58], and thus alienated from original meanings [36]. In Marx’s sense, it reflects the capitalist cultural production [59] and how the principles defined by domestic and global market [60] extends to remote areas through tourism. In addition, the production of imaginaries forms what Lefebvre [61] calls social space, a political-economic arena [33], or according to Bourdieu [62], a tourism field, where the tourism company is the dominating agent, defining the use of resources and landscapes, and the connection between local communities and landscapes has been weakened. Similar uneven power relations in tourism destinations were found in the Kanas, China, where the minority peoples had little power in politics [63].

According to Lefebvre [61] (p. 33), the social space is produced within the interactions among spatial practice, representations of space and representational space. In this regard, the production of landscape space in tourism can be conceptualized as the result of interactions of “staged landscape”, “knowledge of landscape”, and “lived landscape” (Figure 8). The staged landscape represents the landscape experienced by tourists and is the landscape staged for gazing by the tourism industry for commercial goals. Knowledge of landscape is the concepts of landscape, constructed by experts such as scholars, landscape architects, and professionals. Lived landscape is the landscape created by residents or users in their daily activities, in this case, the Hani landscape as cultural heritage. The “landscape imaginary” of tourists is generated from the three elements, including commercial-based, knowledge-based, or community-based imaginaries.

In this case of Honghe, the tourism company represents a spatial practice about the staged landscape that dominates the imaginaries about the landscape. However, lived landscape of the Hani people has been being eroded in the process. The selective use of the landscape based on uneven power relations forms a kind of spatial violence, which normalizes tourism’s exploitation of the landscape [58] and breaks the landscape’s integrity.

This study’s findings imply that imaginaries’ production should also be based on knowledge and communities to keep the integrity of the landscape, as it is important that tourism stakeholders can “carefully attune the narratives emanating from tourism attractions that are founded on heritage, so that conflicts can be minimized” [32]. The staged landscape in the tourism industry should not only consider commercial factors, but also be based on the knowledge of the landscape and allow the communities’ creation of lived landscape. Therefore, tourism in cultural heritage should be developed through a partnership among different stakeholders in tourism. Local communities should be empowered and allowed to decide what of their landscape to show in tourism. Scholars and professionals’ role is important, as the knowledge of the landscape will help the tourism industry understand the landscape and avoid destructions. For cultural heritage sites, in addition to formulating resource management policies to protect the physical landscape, attention should also be paid to the preservation of the cultural significance

of the landscape, the empowerment of communities, and promoting knowledge-based and community-based tourism. Sustainable tourism development policies should balance the power of various stakeholders, especially empowering fragile local communities and enhancing their identity in the landscape, so that the environment value and the intrinsic value of the traditional landscape are recognized and maintained in tourism [64]. Tourism planning and marketing should focus on maintaining the integrity of landscape elements and their intrinsic connections in the production of tourism imaginaries, thereby reducing conflicts between tourism and the landscape, reducing vulnerability [65] and enhancing sustainability.



**Figure 8.** Landscape imaginary and the production of new landscape space.

This research contributes to the understanding of tourism imaginaries about landscape, providing insights into cultural processes in tourism. This study proves that tourism imaginary can provide a useful conceptual framework for further research on the interactions between tourism and landscape. However, due to the limited time and budget given, only the tourism imaginaries of domestic tourists were studied, and therefore the effects of international markets and globalization in the production of tourism imagination cannot be identified. Moreover, as a limitation of using UGC data, only tourists who are social media users have been surveyed. Tourism imaginary is a relatively new concept. Future theoretical research can also focus on the relationship between tourism imaginary and authentic experience, tourism imaginary and globalization, and the relationship between tourism imaginary and tourists' sustainable behavior.

## 6. Conclusions

This research studied how the landscape is imagined in tourism using a cultural heritage site as an example. The Hani terraced landscape of Honghe is an integrated fourfold system, including terraces, forests, villages, and water system. However, our analysis of tourists' discourses and images found a gap between the tourism imaginaries and the real landscape. Hani landscape was imagined as an overlooking view of stereotyped terraced imagery, a schema, separated and independent from other landscape components. Tourist imaginary about the Hani landscape is more frequently connected with terrace patterns and

panoramic landscapes, yet villages, water, and ecological elements are rarely mentioned. This implies that tourism imaginary has its own vitality in tourism institutions.

This tourism imaginary was produced and circulated in the tourism development process. The photo collection created an early prototype of Hani's landscape imagination, providing ideas for subsequent sightseeing tourism development. The company's strategies had dominated the production of tourism imaginary. The viewing platforms and roads provided an enclave space for sightseeing from the local context, where the Hani landscape was staged for creating tourism imaginaries. The uneven company–community power relation aggravated the separation between tourism imaginary and the actual Hani landscape. Local communities were marginalized in the process. However, the recently emerging tourism partnerships reflected the scholars' knowledge of the Hani landscape and the new demands of the urban capital, empowering communities and creating new representations of tourism imaginaries.

The findings imply that for cultural heritage sites, in addition to formulating resource management policies to protect the physical landscape, attention should also be paid to the preservation of the cultural significance of the landscape, the empowerment of communities, and promoting knowledge-based and community-based tourism.

This research contributes to understanding the relationship between tourism imaginaries and landscape, providing insights into cultural conflicts in tourism. For further studies, tourism imaginary can be used to frame the study of tourism and landscape from a cultural perspective.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, Z.W. and L.M.; methodology, Z.W.; software, Z.W.; validation, Z.W. and L.M.; formal analysis, Z.W.; investigation, Z.W.; resources, Z.W. and L.M.; data curation, Z.W.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.W.; writing—review and editing, L.M.; visualization, Z.W.; supervision, L.M.; project administration, Z.W. and L.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. Data was obtained from Mafengwo.cn and are available from the authors with the permission of Mafengwo.cn.

**Acknowledgments:** Thanks to Long Yousuo, a Hani student, for translating the Hani language and assisting in-depth interviews in the investigation. Thanks to Wang Qi and Shen Mingyu for their assistance in in-depth interviews. Thanks to Xie Yuqing for the useful information on the research site.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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