WHEN TRUTH IS POWER

Institutional Ethnography of a Think Tank

Abstract: This study offers an institutional ethnography of a tourism think-tank in a large origin/destination economy. The roles of China Tourism Academy as advisors, academics, advocates and brokers are discussed in the context of theory and practice, where government think-tank researchers are found to be speaking truth both to and for power as they develop an ambition or sense of loftiness of serving and contributing to the state through doing research and mobilizing knowledge (*zhishi baoguo*). While the inquirers' positions or perspectives should be acknowledged, this ethnography contributes to future research into think-tanks or other knowledge agencies in different origin/destination societies.

Keywords: Theory and practice, think tank, institutional ethnography, tourism policy, China Tourism Academy

Introduction

This article deals with "think tank" as a knowledge-based strategy for tourism policy and development. The study presents an institutional ethnography of the China Tourism Academy (CTA) as such a knowledge agency. The research's objectives are three-fold: 1) to describe and analyze "think tank" as a knowledge mobilization mechanism to foster evidence-based practice in tourism, 2) to identify and critique on the role(s) of "think tank" in facilitating policy-oriented learning in/for tourism, and 3) to contribute to knowledge on the use of research for tourism policy and development in a rapidly developing origin/destination economy. Three research questions are used to guide this interpretive/constructivist inquiry: 1) What are the roles, responsibilities and challenges of CTA as a think tank in fostering tourism research and practice? 2) How does CTA facilitate knowledge-based practice in tourism policy and development? 3) What distinguishes CTA from traditional academic institutions in their respective undertakings? (Semi-)insider's perspectives are adopted and acknowledged as potential

limitations in the doing and writing of this institutional ethnography. Contextually, the study is discussed in the contexts of think tanks and praxis.

Literature Review

The increasing complexity of policy and development calls for the use of knowledge, and consequently, the role of expertise in the policy process has resulted in the proliferation of think tanks (Ladi, 2006). As a type of organization as much as knowledge-based activities, think tanks have emerged as a focus of attention in policy research. As noted by Stone (2004), governments and international organizations often regard think tanks as a means to extending policy analytic capacities, fostering civil society development, and promoting human capital. As civil society organizations, Weaver and McGann (2017, p.3) note that think tanks often play mediating roles between the government and the general public; identify, articulate and evaluate current or emerging issues, problems or proposals; transform ideas and problems into policy issues; serve as informed and independent voices in policy debates; and provide constructive forums for the exchange of ideas between key stakeholders in the policy formulation process. More specifically, think tanks are delineated with tasks in doing research to solve policy problems, providing advice on immediate policy concerns, evaluating government programs, facilitating issue networks, (re-)developing personnel for government through continual education or training programs, and policy interpretation for the media (Weaver & McGann, 2017).

Think Tank in Policy Research and Practice

As a knowledge agency, think tanks have been widely applied to organizations undertaking policy-related, technical or scientific research and analysis (Stone, 1996), and they often vary in size, structure and culture. While think tank found its origin in Anglo-American utilization research, prior studies on knowledge use have problematized or challenged the original notion of think tanks as "a relative autonomy" or relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the analysis of policy issues independent of the government, political parties and pressure groups, in order to be "free-thinking" (McGann & Weaver, 2017; Stone, 1996; Stone & Denham, 2004, pp.2-3; Weiss, 1992;

Xiao & Smith, 2007). Country-based studies add to the complexity or dilemma of defining think tanks, as such organizations may operate within the government as in the case of Russian and Central/Eastern European think tanks (Sandle, 2004), or run as independent non-profit organizations, or be attached to a profit-making corporate entity, which is often the case in Japan (Ueno, 2004). In the instances of French and Chinese think tanks (Fieschi & Gaffney, 2004; Shai, 2004), the lines between policy intellectuals and the state are often so blurred that to speak of autonomy or independence as a defining characteristic of think tanks is to be virtually out of the cultural contexts.

While think tanks take different forms, their relationships with or distances from the government are central to the studies of these phenomena. They operate "within the government machine but outside the 'line departments', funded by government but formally autonomous, partly funded by government, even entirely independent in financial terms" (Wallace, 2004, p.282). Through maintaining a distance from government's daily operational mandate while keeping in close contact with the policymakers, researchers at think tanks are often in a privileged position due to their (semi-)detachment from the immediate policy problems.

Stone (1996), in her seminal work on think tanks and the policy process, grouped this line of research into two categories: Those with a focus on organizational forms, and those who view think tanks as a vehicle for broader questions about the policy process and the role of ideas and expertise in decision-making. Notably, the former addresses why and how think tanks have emerged and why some are more influential than others, through distinguishing independent public policy institutes from academic research centers, government research units, and lobbyists, whereas the latter tends to employ network approaches such as "policy community", "advocacy coalitions" and "epistemic communities" to explain why ideas matter in the broader contexts of public policy (Stone, 2004, p.2).

In the same line of clarifications, Rich (2004, p.11) defined think tanks as "independent, non-interest-based, non-profit organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policy process". He further classified such organizations into marketing-oriented and non-marketing-oriented think tanks. In reality, however, it is often difficult to classify think tanks into distinct

types or categories, as they share common characteristics with overlapped mandates and responsibilities (Abelson, 2002).

Moreover, in terms of organizational characteristics, recruitment patterns, and aspirations to academic standards of research, Weaver and McGann (2017, pp.7-8) classify think tanks into four basic types: 1) academic (or universities without students), 2) contract researchers, 3) advocacy tanks, and 4) party think tanks. It is noted that the first two types recruit staff with strong academic credentials, emphasize the use of rigorous methodologies and strive to have their research perceived as objective, credible and truth-seeking by a broad audience, whereas the last two types share commonalities in terms of their links to ideological groupings or interests, as well as issues or needs of a political party. While these typologies have distinctive advantages in their efforts to "speak truth to/for power", Weaver and McGann (2017, p.8) observe that each type faces particular challenges and tensions between "the objectives of scholarly objectivity and completeness in research on the one hand, and policy relevance on the other".

Speaking Truth to/for Power

Theoretically, Michel Foucault's (1972, 1990) notions of knowledge and power have served as useful concepts in this discussion on the role of think tanks in policy and policymaking (Richardson, 1996; Xue & Kerstetter, 2018). Notably, knowledge or truth is often seen as a (or the) basis on which power could be built or formed. Thus, policy as a political process or form of decision-making may be appropriated as "truth" through the exercise of power (Richardson, 1996, p.283). Likewise, in light of praxis, the longstanding debate about the role of academics in policy research, their relationships with policymakers, as well as the implications of such relationships for what is researched (or practiced) could help form an agenda to reveal some of the hidden values underpinning policy research (Thomas, 2011; Thomas & Ormerod, 2017).

In line with such Foucauldian notions or discourse, political involvement of intellectuals is thus the result of their positions as individuals in society in general and in a political system in particular, which is consequently reflected in their discourses (e.g., conscience, consciousness and eloquence) to the extent that it reveals a particular truth. Arguably, Foucault's view of the relationships between truth and power is indicative of a

misplacement in the focus of prevalent policy research. Instead of seeking (the) ultimate truth of arguments supporting a policy, researchers should focus more on how, why, and by who, truth is attributed to power behind a policy (Richardson, 1996, p.283). Hence, to understand policy as a process, a multiplicity of discourses or discursive elements can come into play.

> "It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects – according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated – that it implies; and with the shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes. Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are" (Foucault, 1990, p.101).

According to Richardson (1996), power not only exists in political structures, institutions and social relations, it is also expressed through languages and texts generated by specific agencies or embedded in institutional contexts. The two positions of truth and power are thus not mutually exclusive and could be readily fused depending on policy processes or contexts. "The intellectuals spoke the truth to those who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth" (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p.207). In much the same vein, Bourdieu (1989), in what he called "the field of power", compares policy situations as social space within which regions or powers are divided up. This space, as he observes, "is constructed in such a way that the closer the agents, groups or institutions are situated within this space, the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer" (Bourdieu, 1989, p.16).

In terms of understanding how think tanks play such "speaking-truth-to/for-power" roles, Stone (2004) alludes to wild fluctuations in these assessments resulting from methodological problems. Due to the complication of policy process in a specific context or situation, Stone (2004) notes, "it is rare to find uncontested examples of a one-to-one correspondence between a think tank report and a policy adopted subsequently by government" (p.11). While prior studies are sceptical of any direct impacts of think tanks on policymaking or policy change, the social relevance of these organizations as agenda-

setters as well as their roles in creating policy narratives and capturing public imagination are widely acknowledged (McGann & Weaver, 2017; Stone, 1996; Stone & Denham, 2004, pp.2-3; Weiss, 1992). Research also suggests that the fluctuating influence has much to do with the ways in which think tanks interact in "policy communities", "epistemic communities", "advocacy coalitions", and "discourse coalitions" (Stone, 2004, p.13). In view of such challenges or difficulties in quantifying influences, Stone (1996) suggests an alternative focus, "by looking not at the *degree* of influence but at the role think tanks see themselves playing, the contributions they see themselves making to the policy process…" (p.4, italics in original).

Think Tank in China Policy Contexts

In the Chinese history, and indeed after the tradition of the Chinese imperial examination, intellectuals have often been seen as synonymous or identical to government officials, or official scholars who are members of the government bureaucracy. As a unique brokering typology in the knowledge spectrum, think tank researchers are also referred to as "establishment intellectuals", who have increasingly come to play a major role in providing political leaders with expertise and policy advice in a range of policy areas (Shai, 2004, p.141). Drawing on the claim that serving and contributing to the state is a hallmark of Chinese official scholars (Goldman, 1981; Goldman, Cheek & Hamrin, 1987), Shai (2004, p.145) categorized establishment intellectuals as 1) scholars serving and operating within governing institutions such as official or semi-official think tanks or universities, 2) experts who are generally well educated and specialize in political and economic issues serving the ruling party's interests, 3) intellectuals who play a crucial role in policymaking by providing leaders with policy suggestions through informal channels, and 4) scholars who seek to join official associations or to be recruited into the bureaucracy, which leads them to play an ambivalent role as both servants of the regime and critics of society.

In light of an implicit reciprocal relationship of mutual interest between establishment intellectuals and political leaders, think tanks in China are further typologized in four specific roles in the policy process: 1) information filters – providing leaders with analyses of raw data, 2) policy defenders – justifying policies of current

leaders and legitimating their positions, 3) introducers of new ideas – introducing important ideas or good practices prevalent in foreign countries, and 4) interlocutors – gathering information through attending or convening conferences with foreigners or maintaining dialogues with foreign researchers, which are often seen as instrumental in providing Chinese policymakers with insights into the perceptions and intentions of foreign powers (Shai, 2004, pp.148-152).

Specific to the Chinese policy process, Zhu (2009, 2011) stated that different types of think tanks operate through different mechanisms to fulfil policy impacts. Notably, expert knowledge, government linkage and personal ties are major factors in determining a think tank's influence in China. Using "autonomy" as a criterion, think tanks are defined as "stable and autonomous organizations that research and consult on policy issues to influence the policy process" (Zhu, 2009, p.337; Zhu & Xue, 2007, p.453). According to organizational identity, think tanks in China are divided into 1) government-sponsored semi-official public institutions, which have well-defined administrative connections to the government by means of personnel and financial resources, and 2) non-governmental think tanks, which include policy research institutes registered as enterprises, civilian non-profit institutions, or affiliated institutes within universities (Zhu, 2011, pp.671-672). Historically, think tanks in China have evolved from their initial stage (1949-1977) of "official research system within a government agency", onto their emergence as a semi-official genre (1978-1989), and finally the rise of civilian think tanks from the 1990s onto the present (Zhu, 2012; Zhu & Xue, 2007).

Along with China's recent development, think tanks have started to transform their roles as (or into) "soft power agents" (Menegazzi, 2018, p.93) through activities of international relevance, and influences on promoting the country's image or interests. They are viewed as playing a central part in China's economic progress, political reform, international relations, global governance, and the country's position in world affairs.

In an earlier stage, Airey and Chong (2010) explored how the nature of China tourism and its fragmented power structure have resulted in the development and implementation of its policy by a variety of policymakers, with a diversity of values and interests. They demonstrated how policy-oriented learning has allowed the policymakers to succeed in a number of key areas, often with support from the state leaders. Like other

industries or economic sectors, tourism – as a multifaceted phenomenon highly integrated in almost every aspect of the country's overall development – has involved a range of key players and institutional processes in national policymaking for China's tourism (Airey & Chong, 2010).

Theorizing Theory-practice Relationships

Conceptually, this undertaking is contextualized within utilization studies in pertinence to praxis or theory-practice relationships. In particular, notions such as knowledge management and mobilization (Ives, Torrey & Gordon, 1998), utilization of research for public policy (Bardach, 1984; Oh & Rich, 1996; Saxe, 1986), policy-oriented learning (Airey & Chong, 2010), and learning organizations (Senge, 1990) serve as sensitizing concepts to inform the analysis and discussion.

Notably, studies on praxis are indicative of a paradigm shift in producing, diffusing and using research for better practices (Crane, 1972; Hagstrom, 1965; Latour, 1987). Central to these discussions is utilization of knowledge for informed (or evidence-based) practice. Such discussions are built on, and related to, a number of theories about knowledge production, dissemination, and use, including the two-community theory (Caplan, 1979), the systems theory (Wingens, 1990), social interaction models (Yin & Moore, 1988), and problem-solving theories (Rosenberg, 1982). These conceptualizations contribute to theoretical understanding of mobilizing knowledge in relation to various knowledge-use outcomes (Deshpande & Zaltman, 1983), the variety of stakeholders involved in knowledge use (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003), and the complication in the process of constructing or managing a research-practice relationship (Beesley, 2005; Cooper, 2006; Shaw & Williams, 2009; Xiao & Smith, 2007).

Methodologically, a shift of focus from positivist's measurement to constructivist's engagement is notable in dealing with the academic-practitioner relationships (Dunn, 1983a, b; Patton, 1997), giving rise to different notions to theorize or account for the use of knowledge (Rich, 1997). These include 1) knowledge transfer—a positivist model of knowledge use on the assumption of the two-community theory typical in physical science and engineering (Patton, 1988); 2) knowledge exchange—cooperative efforts that support the use and development of infrastructure and culture for knowledge use (Weiss,

1992); 3) knowledge management—an extension of the utilization theories into the domains of business and information management (Beesley, 2005; Ives, Torrey & Gordon, 1998; Shaw & Williams, 2009); 4) organizational learning or learning organizations embedded in organizational studies (Senge, 1990), and similarly policy-oriented learning from policy research (Airey & Chong, 2010); 5) knowledge networks—a social network approach to sharing knowledge (Schonstrom, 2005); and 6) communities of learning and practice — a community paradigm of mobilizing knowledge and promoting better or informed practices (Wenger, 1998).

While the above theorizings are useful to understand the constituents, processes and outcomes of producing and using research for informed practices, the roles and typologies of research producers, disseminators and users in the knowledge development spectrum have been under-researched and have consequently remained rather poorly understood. This study, through an institutional ethnography of the CTA, attempts to focus on the role of "think tank" in facilitating policy-oriented learning and fostering knowledge-based practices in the tourism sector.

Institutional Ethnography of the CTA

Originally introduced by Dorothy Smith (1987, 2002, 2005, 2006), institutional ethnography (IE) is variously referred to as a holistic approach to understanding systems (Wright & Rocco, 2018), a way of thinking about the relationships amongst individual activities, knowledge, society and political actions (Campbell & Gregor, 2002), or a form of critical ethnography to investigate institutional conditions of experience (Darville, 2002). Its central premise, as alluded to by Wright and Rocco (2018, p.1659), is the idea that people's individual experiences are organized, connected to, and shaped by larger power relations, known as "ruling relations" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p.18), which serve as contextual venues to generate or perpetuate power in an organization or society (Campbell & Manicom, 1995).

China Tourism Academy (CTA, www.ctaweb.org) is selected as the subject of this study due to its unique role as a knowledge agency in researching China tourism policy and advocating its development. Inaugurated on 6 June 2008, CTA was established as a specialized institute directly under the leadership of the then China National Tourism

Administration (CNTA), aiming to fulfill the missions of "a think tank for the government, a brainpower of the industry, and a highland of the academia" through conducting research and promoting the use of knowledge for tourism development, providing technical support for tourism policy and planning, developing high-level and professional talents for tourism industries, and fostering international exchanges in tourism research and practice.

Institutional Contexts and Standpoint

After organizational restructuring at the ministerial level (effective since March 2018), CTA is currently under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT). By organizational structure (Figure 1), CTA is headquartered in Beijing with three general administrative departments and six internal institutes, and supported by specialized tourism research expertise from fourteen universities/institutes which are designated as CTA's external branches or research centers located in twelve cities of eleven provinces. In addition, CTA has earned the status as a state-designated "postdoctoral workstation", and has appointed established experts and scholars from home and abroad as members and consultants of its Academic Committees.

Insert Figure 1 here

Notably, institutional ethnography involves the standpoint of the inquirers – an epistemological position into the analysis of how participants' everyday experiences are shaped by larger social processes of an institution (Slade, 2010, p.462). In this study, standpoint should not be understood as identities of the researchers; rather it works as an instrument or means by which organizational dynamics and subtle work relationships can be captured. Hence, approaching the problem from (semi-)insiders' standpoint helps understand the work and reveal its processes resulting in policy impacts and implications.

For this undertaking, the long-term interest of the lead author in knowledge development, and his long-term service as a member of CTA Academic Committee (2012-2019) and member of the former CNTA Tourism Reform and Development Consultation Committee (2015-2018), have been useful for the implementation of, and

gaining access for the study. The collaborator's role further reinforces such an ethnographically insider's standpoint for the analysis to be fully grounded in the institutional situation, and for the reporting or interpretation to be sufficiently reflexive and free from its embedded influences. As Slade (2010) observed, the role and presence of the inquirers are integral and acknowledged parts of an IE research. Paradigmatically, it is not possible for an IE to be absolutely objective, as all knowledge is grounded, and both researchers and informants are people living in their world of experience. Hence institutional ethnographers often draw on their own insider's knowledge of a phenomenon to map the ruling relations (Campbell & Manicom, 1995).

Investigative Methods

To fulfil the study's objectives, multiple sources of data from documents/archives, informant interviews, and observations are converged for analysis and interpretation of how applied tourism research is organized and coordinated by/in the CTA to shape the way it exerts influences on tourism policy and development.

Textual Analysis. As Slade (2010, p.463) noted, analyzing texts is critical for an IE to uncover the instructions embedded within documents that shape people's work processes and coordinate actions between institutions. Smith (2005) referred to such coordination and processes as "a text-mediated social organization", in which texts are not static documents but rather the means by which ruling relations exercise power (Slade, 2010, p.463). For this IE, a series of CTA documents and publications (http://eng.ctaweb.org/html/PublicationsofCTA/index.html) have been collected for analysis (Table 1).

Insert Table 1 here

Additionally, CTA's official website and wechat/weibo platforms (https://www.weibo.com/p/1006061976676651/home?from=page_100606&mod=TAB&is_hot=1#place) have been regularly visited, where relevant to this research, news reports, event postings and press releases were retrieved for analysis and triangulation. As Wright and Rocco (2018, p.1664) asserted, IE researchers look for such textual clues to help understand how the

power of a think tank is embedded within social media and institutions, and to help identify the discourses that are present in the language of think tank researchers as they describe their everyday work experience or practices.

Key-informant Interviews. In doing IEs, interviews are often unstructured and open-ended, like "talking to people" (Caspar, Ratner, Phinney & MacKinnon, 2016, p.953; Devault & McCoy, 2002), in order to anticipate natural flows of ideas or thoughts from the mind of an informant (Smith, 2005). Thus the interviews with CTA researchers (both in its headquarter in Beijing and in its external research centers) were conceived and conducted around the broad objectives of the inquiry. Typically, a key-informant interview began with general questions such as "what are the roles of CTA as a think tank?" or "how does it fulfil its think tank role(s)?". The interview then proceeded with more specific questions regarding its mobilization or use of research for China tourism policy and policymaking. Subsequently, other related questions evolved or naturally arose out of the course of conversations (Smith, 2005). In an inductive and iterative manner, a prior/completed interview helped inform a subsequent/forthcoming one in terms of raising and phrasing questions, and continuing with a conversation.

Over the years (2016-2019), fourteen interviews were conducted with informants from CTA, its academic committee, and/or its external research centers in Beijing, Guangzhou, Guilin, Hangzhou, Jiangmen, Nanjing, Quanzhou, Shanghai, and Xiamen (Table 2). Lasting variously between 45-90 minutes, these interviews were recorded verbatim in Chinese with the participants' consents, and were later transcribed in the same language for repeated reading and grounded/inductive analyses.

Insert Table 2 here

Naturalistic Observations. Ethnographically, this naturalistic inquiry of CTA as a think tank has also been "shadowed or embedded" in the regular work of the two investigators (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One is a complete insider, who has been observing himself as well as his CTA colleagues on what they see, perceive, and expect (or are expected) to perform as think tank researchers, and how they could perform such roles to fulfil CTA's

missions. He is philosophic and strategic as an inquirer for this IE, quintessentially reflexive, and highly rhetorical and eloquent in speaking of or writing about CTA as a think tank. The other's semi-insider engagement (2012-2019) has given him regular access to CTA members and their meetings. Longitudinally, data collection for this IE has been cyclical, iterative and indeed still ongoing.

Moreover, meetings or conferences during 2012-2018 have served as useful venues for participant observations through meeting minutes or memos, causal/informal conversations with conference participants, and interactions with CTA/CNTA members. These include the annual CTA Summits in Beijing (21-24 April 2012, and 22-23 April 2017 respectively), the CTA seminar and discussion on internationalization of China tourism research (8 November 2012), and the inaugural meeting (11 October 2015, Zhuhai) and its subsequent "sit-and-talk" meeting (26 February 2016, Beijing) of the CNTA China Tourism Reform and Development Consultation Committee. Notably, participant observations in naturalistic settings like these have added to the understanding and perspectives on this IE.

Data Analysis

The raw materials for this project were all in Chinese and took various forms such as interview transcripts, institutional texts/documents, observation notes and meeting memos, and online articles and postings from CTA official websites or social media. These multiple sources and forms of data were synthesized for grounded/inductive analyses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The initial rounds of reading documents and coding transcripts were conducted iteratively in Chinese. As we moved on, the sorting of concepts and grouping of themes were double-checked by both authors before translating into English for reporting and communication. Where a quote was extracted for reporting, its English translation was faithfully made in the actual context of the excerption so as to eliminate erosion or potential loss of meaning of a text from its context. In this process of rendering between the two languages, trustworthiness was observed through "increasing our awareness to help us control intrusion of bias into the analysis while retaining sensitivity to what is being said in the data" (Strauss & Corbin,

1998, p. 43). Notably, the authors of this paper are comfortable and competent in both languages for scholarly communication.

Smith (2005) alluded to data analysis for an IE to follow no prescribed approaches. Guided by the aim of exploring and explicating the role of CTA as a think tank in mobilizing research for China tourism policy and development, this inductive analysis was iterated until the extracted four-role typology (as advisor, academic, advocate, and knowledge broker) was felt to be at the point of "saturation" to interpret or understand the positions and processes (or channels), as well as responsibilities or obligations of CTA as a unique knowledge agency in fostering China tourism research and practice. As noted by Caspar et al (2016, p.954), "having the analysis grounded in the multiple sources and forms of data provided an essential foundation from which to determine when the data collection and analysis was 'complete'".

Findings and Discussions

As a government-affiliated research institute, CTA's basic tasks are to conduct research and participate in research activities, to develop expertise for the tourism industry, and to create impacts on tourism academics, industry professionals and policymakers through publishing and communicating research. Yet, CTA is unique in its capacity in maintaining "a sense of autonomy" and "a sense of sublimity or loftiness" in terms of what it plans to achieve, the resources it has been mobilizing for achieving its missions and goals, as well as the way it positions itself and communicates to the public. Contextually, in leveraging applied research for industry and policy, CTA has been developing itself in coopetition with top think tanks such as the Chinese Academy of (Social) Sciences or the State Council's Development Research Center, international organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization, similar agencies such as Korea Culture and Tourism Institute (www.kcti.re.kr/eng/user/main.do), and the numerous policy research centers or tourism research institutes within universities. However, unlike a university, CTA has no students, but it holds a mission of developing talents for China tourism. From an organizational standpoint, "the system" (or, *tizhi*) is referred to as the means by which such intellectual or human development goals can be achieved.

"*CTA is a knowledge-intensive organization. It serves as an incubator to develop talents for the industry. Such high quality professionals could not only contribute theories or wisdoms to China tourism, they could also practice what they preach, and become sources of inspiration for other people or organizations to learn to better serve the industry*" (No.5, CTA senior researcher, April 2017 interview).

Accordingly, talent development (or, "*rencai peiyang*") should pay attention to cultivations in three types of qualities: ideology or value for doing the right things in the right directions, theory and methodology for conducting solid scientific research, and humanistic care or mindset for long-term and all-rounded development of scholarship.

In terms of responsibilities and influences, CTA was found to have simultaneously played advisory, academic, advocacy, and knowledge broker/disseminator roles in China tourism development and policy. While each of these roles appears distinct on the surface, they are, in essence, related to one another in the deep structure of CTA as a think tank.

CTA as Advisors of Tourism Policy and Development
A major role of CTA is to serve as advisors to government authorities and to consequently exert influences on tourism policy. It acts as a technical and intellectual arm to support MCT/CNTA strategies or policies. Typically, such advisory roles are fulfilled through creating and disseminating internal research reports for leaders, including *Tourism for Internal Reference* ("lvyou neican"), *Information Express* ("xinxi kuaibao"), and *Tourism News* ("lvyou yaowen"). Such quick internal communications are intended to provide highlights and spotlights on tourism and its related issues.

Attending government meetings (either invited or mandatory), and delivering seminars, workshops or talks to government officials are also important activities to potentially influence policy. As indicated from the interviews, there are usually two types of seminars for government officials – "General tourism talks/workshops" to officials from non-tourism departments/bureaus, and "Theme/topic-specific seminars or talks" to MCT/CNTA officials. Perceivably, speeches to both types of government audience are of

importance to the advisory role, as the former helps make tourism better understood by other (non-tourism) departments and bureaus, whereas the latter tends to more immediately inform tourism policy regarding hot/emerging issues. As one informant cheerfully recollected from his prior meetings and conversations with top CNTA leaders, "*Ever since the establishment of the CTA, not every piece of your recommendations or reports was adopted. But whenever there were big issues, I have always sought your advice*" (No.1, CTA senior researcher, April 2016 interview).

Additionally, CTA members are heavily engaged in government research projects. The deliverables from such undertakings have influenced tourism policies at national, provincial or regional/local levels. As an anecdote of CTA research potentially informing policies, one informant was really proud of her involvement in the completion and communication of research projects such as The Tourist Satisfaction Survey, The Tourism Economy Monitoring and Warning System, and China's Economic Operation and Development Forecast, "*It is truly rewarding to see that local authorities in tourist cities actually read these reports, with notes and circles marked on the book*" (No.13, CTA senior researcher, June 2019 interview).

CTA as Practitioners of Academic Research and Scholarship

In essence, the resemblance of CTA to an academic institution is most notable. All its full-time research staff are academics with formal research training. Over 90% of them have earned doctorates in disciplines/areas such as economics, management, business administration, geography, ethnology, and architecture. CTA has also been designated as a workstation for post doc fellows to pursue further research on China tourism. As of 2018, it has hosted seven post doc researchers to complete their studies on sustainability, tourism impacts, cultural heritage, policy and planning, and industry development. In addition, its research staff have been active applicants and regular recipients of grants from the National Social Science Fund, and the National Natural Science Foundation. They have published journal articles as well as scholarly books and monographs, in addition to a whole range of applied tourism research publications and industry/project reports (http://eng.ctaweb.org/html/PublicationsofCTA/index.html). They hold, regularly attend and present research at academic conferences such as the annual *CTA Summit*

every April and the *Tourism Tribune* conference every October. Furthermore, CTA has been administering a research funding scheme set up by CNTA/MCT in terms of developing guidelines; inviting, reviewing and funding research proposals (most of which are from university academics); and evaluating the completion of these grants. Notably, in 2012, CTA has also worked as the major compiler to edit and publish the grand *China Tourism Dictionary*.

Developing CTA as a "highland of the academia" is constantly seen as a high goal for the whole team. On the one hand, its regular mandatory activities and its relative autonomy from the ministries make it assume the role and responsibility of a traditional university. On the other hand, its close connections with government and the fact that CTA has no students nor educational/degree programs make it different from a traditional academic institution. Nonetheless, "*if the 'academic highland' goal is not achieved, there will be no way to act as 'think tank' for the government and 'brainpower' for the industry*" (Type 4 document, 2010 transcript).

Such a duality identity has resulted in its own approaches to developing and preparing staff to achieve organizational goals. Unlike university academics, CTA researchers are expected to do research with impacts on the academia and the government. They are advised "*to go beyond merely publishing journal articles, completing projects, or winning awards, but more importantly to produce high-quality research with long-lasting impacts, so as to be remembered in the community in the future*" (Type 4 document, 2012 transcript).

Hence, to critically reflect upon the prevailing academic assessment exercise, one's research should not be evaluated merely by numbers or metrics. "*A good academic should learn to develop a sense of 'serenity' and 'freedom' from anxiety for quick publications. While having directions would be useful for career development, setting quantifiable goals or benchmarks for publications could do a disservice to the growth of an academic. One should first enjoy the process of learning and researching, and take publications as by-products out of the process, rather than as an ultimate goal*" (Type 4 document, 2013 transcript).

To effectively perform its academic role, CTA was found to have been extensively committed to theoretical advancement over the years. In light of generating indigenous

knowledge characteristic of China tourism, useful and interesting attempts have been made to theorize tourism development in the new millennium. For example, in a theoretical account of contemporary tourism development in modern China, Dai, Zhou and Xia (2012) have eloquently addressed fundamental questions such as what tourism is developed for, and what ultimate goal(s) its development is to serve. CTA researchers are encouraged to "*walk into the reality and practical worlds of China tourism, so as to understand patterns and stages, and systems and dynamics of its growth. On such bases, grand theories on contemporary China tourism can be eventually developed*" (No.9, CTA external research center professor, November 2017 interview).

From CTA's standpoint, a good and much needed academic research is "*one with a high level of theoretical abstraction and capacity of explanation of problems or phenomena from industry practice, as much as one that is easy to be understood and accepted by readers and the general public*" (No.11, CTA external research center professor, August 2018 interview). Nonetheless, this is the very aspect that CTA has found itself short of:

> "*In view of the vitality and vibrancy of China tourism in the new era, theories are inadequately/insufficiently developed to account for further integrations of tourism with culture, quality tourism development to satisfy people's multiple and massive needs for such away-from-home experiences, as well as coordinating and balancing the rights and interests of governments, businesses, tourists and residents in contemporary China tourism development. Such issues are strategic and imperative for governments, academics and think tanks alike. They call for grand theories, and not just articles in academic journals. Frankly speaking, we are still very weak in such abilities*" (Type 4 online document, 2018 featured interview).

Compared to university academics, CTA researchers see themselves uniquely and more favorably positioned. "*Affiliation with a government think tank could often facilitate further development or transitions from industry projects into research council grants,*

from policy-responsive research into theoretical undertakings, and from domestic research into publications at international outlets" (Type 4 document, 2014 transcript).

CTA as Advocates of Tourism in Contemporary Society

The advocacy role has manifestations in such activities as publishing articles in the mass media; establishing and maintaining official websites, blogs and social media to promote tourism and its development to the general public in an effective, widespread and timely fashion; accepting or being invited for mass media interviews on hot/emerging tourism issues; and delivering tourism lectures/workshops to the public for education/publicity. As an advocate of tourism, CTA is found to have been serving four distinct types of audience: 1) the government (inclusive of central/state/provincial/municipal governments and sectoral/ministerial administrations at different levels) by means of submitting trajectory reports and economic forecasts, 2) the industry, in terms of conducting market research and feasibility studies for new/existing businesses, 3) society in general, including visitors, destination communities, media and the general public, and 4) international communities such as governments, industries and societies from other countries or regions.

To build the capacity for professional communication, a mutually beneficial relationship with the media (particularly the new media) has been developed. "*Media need authentic contents and authority of texts while a think tank needs a wide platform for communication. On this ground, CTA has been proactive to interact with the new media. As long as our research is cutting-edge and useful to the industry or society, the media will always approach us. Thus to enhance the readability of CTA research by the non-academic general public, researchers are encouraged to write and communicate their work in easy-to-understand languages*" (Type 4 document, 2013 transcript).

CTA as Knowledge Brokers or Disseminators of Tourism Information

In the context of big data, this knowledge-brokering or information-disseminating role of the CTA is more recently or more readily seen through its function as the National Tourism Data Center, established in December 2015. With the president acting as director of the Data Center, a chief statistician was also appointed to facilitate the collection,

analysis and use of data on/for China tourism. "*Without the support of data, a think tank will not get anywhere….; hence metaphorically, courage and wisdom are called for from colleagues 'to build another CTA' with subdivisions such as 'tourism literature and information center', 'tourism surveying and monitoring center', 'grey literature', 'oral history', 'tourism corpus', 'statistics and index', 'tourism impacts', and so on*" (Type 4 document, 2016 transcript).

While annual recording and processing of data are regular and routinized work, the irregular short-term collections of tourism data for immediate public release (e.g., after the golden weeks such as the Lunar Chinese New Year, or the National Day long weekend) could be highly task-specific and create enormous time pressure for the whole center. Anecdotally, in response to a request from a Master's student who claimed she had civic rights to access such information for her graduate studies in a tourism program at a university in Zhejiang Province, "*the whole team had to work day and night at the center to analyze the data and make it presentable to the student as one example of the many end users from the general public*" (No.14, CTA senior researcher, June 2019 interview). This level of attention and efficiency in disseminating information to the public is an impressive feature of CTA in performing the role as a public service agency.

"Truth and Power" vis-à-vis "Xueshu and Qinghuai"
CTA researchers are dually perceived as "traditional university academics" as much as "official scholars or semi-government officials". Such a dual identity is reflected, either implicitly or explicitly, in their ambitions/feelings, ideologies, and actions/behaviors at work. Quintessentially, such an ambivalence of "speaking truth to power" or "speaking truth for power" is deeply rooted in traditional academics' yearning for freedom and knowledge through rigorous research on the one hand, vis-à-vis government think tank officials' concerns and constraints in handling information or disseminating knowledge to the general public in a civil society on the other.

Extending from this ambivalence, an equally perplexing yet powerful state-of-mind could be felt in terms of "*xueshu baoguo*". Deeply embedded in the Chinese education history and intellectual traditions, the most impactful scholars are often seen as those who "can create knowledge or develop theories" (*xueshu*) in order to "contribute to the state"

(*baoguo*). Such ambitions or loftiness are remarkable in CTA communications, where "contributing to the state" is often noted as "*the initial or original goal for the establishment of the think tank*", and "*to serve the people, the general public and the industry is to contribute to the state*" (No.10, CTA academic committee member and professor, March 2018 interview).

> "*Like university academics, we also publish articles, apply for grants, win awards, and submit portfolios for promotions. But unlike them, we have higher ambitions and more practical goals. We live in the best of times and CTA serves as the best platform, for which we should be grateful. Our state, our people and our industry need our knowledge and talents. What can be better contributions to the state than our knowledge? If we do not serve our state and its people with our knowledge, what is the use of writing volumes and volumes of books*" (Type 4 document, 2015 transcript).

In prospect, contributions to theory and practice are called for in areas such as hosts-and-guests' mutual enjoyment of quality life in destination communities, revitalizations of culture and heritage through new technologies to reorient new tourism developments, the governance of tourism through marketing and regulations, and "China dream" serving as the platform for international communication and collaborations through tourism (Type 4 document, 2019 online source).

Conclusions, Limitations, Future Research

This article presents an institutional ethnography of a think tank for tourism policy and development in one of the largest origin/destination economies. The various roles of a government think tank are strategically and meticulously reflected in the many responsibilities or activities such as 1) advising policy on tourism as a government agenda and national development strategy, 2) pursuing academic research and theory development to advance the field and to offer theoretical accounts for new tourism in the new era, 3) advocating tourism as an expression of (or a means to) quality of life and wellbeing of its people, and 4) disseminating tourism information or data to various end users and the general public. Embedded in and drawing from the Chinese culture of

scholarship and intellectual traditions, government think tank researchers are found to have developed a duality of identity in their handling of relationships between truth and power, and an ambition or "*qinghuai*" in serving and contributing to the state through research, knowledge and expertise (*zhishi baoguo*).

In conclusion, this research contributes to the tourism and praxis literature in a number of ways. To begin with, this study is presumably one of the first of its kind to look at the unique knowledge mobilization roles of think tanks in fostering tourism policy and development. Its findings could add to recent discussions on tourism praxis (Cooper, 2006; Martinez-Martinez, et al., 2019; Xiao & Smith, 2007), and to the think tank literature in general (McGann & Weaver, 2017; Stone, 1996; Stone & Denham, 2004). In the various knowledge-in-action or research-in-motion scenarios, think tanks and policy research institutes have played multiple roles, speaking truth to/for power amongst the state, the industry and the society. In addition to other brokering roles such as consultants (Feighery, 2011; Xiao, Liu & Cheng, 2017) and tourism organizations (Liu, 2018; Shaw & Williams, 2009; Thomas, 2012), investigations into the much under-researched roles of think tanks could enrich and indeed complete the circle of knowledge development spectra in/for tourism.

Second, the political, economic and sociocultural contexts for doing and writing this institutional ethnography is likely to (in)form future discussions or debates on the dynamics and complex theory-practice relationships amongst the state, the industry, the academia, and the various other knowledge brokers in/for tourism. As one of the largest origin/destination economies moving beyond conventional ideologies (e.g., post-colonial representations, dependency theories) and entering into the new era of tourism for the wellbeing of its people, China tourism, along with its evolving polices and development (Airey & Chong, 2010), has served as a unique instance for researching into theory-practice relationships, for deepening, expanding or even negating our understandings of its nature and positions in a neo-liberal Asian society (Bourdieu, 1989; Foucault & Deleuze, 1977), and perhaps for advancing theories in tourism studies (Xiao, 2013; Xiao & Li, 2015).

Third, for knowledge-based policy and development in Asian destinations in general and in China in particular, "contributing to the state through knowledge" (*zhishi*

baoguo) could be a culturally-embedded tradition or perspective to look at the roles of tourism think tanks. Hence in a comparative lens, "*zhishi baoguo*" or "*xueshu and qinghuai*" could add to the interpretation of the relationship between truth and power (McGann & Weaver, 2017), and enrich our understanding of the ambitions or ambivalence of establishment intellectuals or official scholars (Goldman, 1981; Goldman, Cheek & Hamrin, 1987; Shai, 2004).

Fourth, methodologically, this article introduces institutional ethnography (IE) as a useful approach to studying tourism organizations. Notably, doing an institutional ethnography from a (semi-)insider's perspective could both inform and challenge the writing and (re)presentation of an IE report (Caspar, et al., 2016; Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 2005, 2006; Wright & Rocco, 2018). While institutional ethnography has not yet been applied in tourism studies, the potential of using such an approach to studying tourism organizations or institutions could be further explored.

As a reflection, this study is not free from limitations resulting from the positions or perspectives of the informants as well as of the inquirers. On one hand, while partiality and bias are cautiously watched for in the sense-making process, subjectivities or inter-subjectivities of the researchers and their informants (e.g., the inclusion or exclusion of contents and views, even unknowingly) have to be acknowledged. On the other hand, while both authors share interest in theory and practice, they are affiliated with two distinct types of institutions, with different positions, exposures and mandates or obligations in the scientific tourism communities. Hence their background knowledge, positionalities, sensitivities to issues under discussion, and organizational/ethical concerns could all be reflected in the doing and writing of this institutional ethnography. Notwithstanding this, what is observed, described or discussed in this ethnographic account could contribute to further studying think tanks and other knowledge agencies in different origin/destination societies or economies. ▲

References

Abelson, D. (2002). *Do think tanks matter? Assessing the impact of public policy institutes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Airey, D., & Chong, K. (2010). National policymakers for tourism in China. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*, 295-314.

Bardach, E. (1984). The dissemination of policy research to policymakers. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 6*, 125–144.

Beesley, L. (2005). The management of emotion in collaborative tourism research settings. *Tourism Management, 26*, 261-275.

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory, 7*(1), 14-15.

Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. (2002). *Mapping social relations; A primer in doing institutional ethnography*. Toronto: Garamond.

Campbell, M., & Manicom, A. (1995). *Knowledge, experience and ruling relations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Caplan, N. (1979). The two communities theory and knowledge utilization. *American Behavioral Scientist, 22*, 459-470.

Caspar, S., Ratner, P., Phinney, A., & MacKinnon, K. (2016). The influence of organizational systems on information exchange in long-term care facilities: An institutional ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*, 951-965.

Cooper, C. (2006). Knowledge management and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 33*, 47–64.

Crane, D. (1972). *Invisible colleges: Diffusion of knowledge in scientific communities.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dai, B., Zhou, X., & Xia, S. (2012). Contemporary tourism development: Concepts, framework and highlights. *Tourism Tribune, 27*(3), 11–17.

Darville, R. (2002). Policy, accountability and practice in adult literacy work: Sketching an institutional ethnography. *Proceedings of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education*. Retrieved 15 January 2019 from www.casaeaceea.ca/sites/casae/archives/cnf2002/2002_Papers/darville2002w.pdf

Deshpande, R., & Zaltman, G. (1983). Patterns of research use in private and public sectors. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 4*, 561–575.

Devault, M., & McCoy, L. (2002). Institutional ethnography: Using interviews to investigate ruling relations. *In* J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview* (pp.751–776). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Dunn, W. (1983a). Measuring knowledge use. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 5*, 120–133.

Dunn, W. (1983b). Qualitative methodology: Research in progress in knowledge. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 4*, 590–597.

Feighery, W. (2011). Consulting ethics. *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*, 1031-1050.

Fieschi, C., & Gaffney, J. (2004). French think tanks in comparative perspective. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions*(pp.105-120). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality*. *Volume 1: An introduction*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M., & Deleuze, G. (1977). Intellectuals and power. *In* D. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, counter-memory, practice* (pp.205-217). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goldman, M. (1981). *China's intellectuals: Advice and Dissent*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Goldman, M., Cheek, T., & Hamrin, C. (1987). *China's intellectuals and the state*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hagstrom, W. (1965). *The scientific community*. New York: Basic Books.

Ives, W., Torrey, B., & Gordon, C. (1998). Knowledge management: An emerging discipline with a long history. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 1*(4), 269–274.

Ladi, S. (2006). Think tank traditions (book review). *Public Administration, 84*, 1100-1102.

Landry, R., Lamari, M., & Amara, N. (2003). The extent and determinants of the utilization of university research in government agencies. *Public Administration Review, 63*, 192–205.

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Liu, C-H. (2018). Examining social capital, organizational learning and knowledge transfer in cultural and creative industries of practice. *Tourism Management, 64*, 258-270

Martinez-Martinez, A., Cegarra-Navarro, J-A., Garcia-Perez, A., Wensley, A. (2019). Knowledge agents as drivers of environmental sustainability and business performance in the hospitality sector. *Tourism Management, 70*, 381-389.

McGann, J., & K. Weaver (2017). *Think tanks and civil societies: Catalysts for ideas and action*. London: Routledge.

Menegazzi, S. (2018). *Rethinking think tanks in contemporary China*. Springer: DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-57300-7_3.

Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). The knowledge-creating company. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oh, C., & Rich, R. (1996). Explaining use of information in public policymaking. *Knowledge and Policy, 9*(1), 3–35.

Patton, M. (1988). The extension's future: Beyond technology transfer. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 9*, 476–491.

Patton, M. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Rich, A. (2004). *Think tanks, public policy, and the politics of expertise*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rich, R. (1997). Measuring knowledge utilization process and outcomes. *Knowledge and Policy, 10*(3), 3–10.

Richardson, T. (1996). Foucauldian discourse: Power and truth in urban and regional policy making. *European Planning Studies, 4*(3), 279-292.

Rosenberg, N. (1982). *Inside the black box: Technology and economics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandle, M. (2004). Thank tanks, post communism and democracy in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions* (pp.121-137). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Saxe, L. (1986). Policymakers' use of social science research: Technology assessment in the US Congress. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 8,* 59–78.

Schonstrom, M. (2005). Creating knowledge networks. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 9*(6), 17–29.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Shai, M. (2004). The Chinese tradition of policy research institute. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions*(pp.141-162). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Shaw, G., & Williams, A. (2009). Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organizations. *Tourism Management, 30*, 325-335.

Slade, B. (2010). Institutional ethnography. *In* A. Mills, G. Durepos & E. Wiebe (eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (pp.462-464). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Smith, D. (2002). Institutional ethnography. In T. May (ed.), *Qualitative research in action*(pp.17–52). London: Sage.

Smith, D. (2005). *Institutional ethnography*. Toronto: AltaMira.

Smith, D. (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stone, D. (1996). *Capturing the political imagination: Think tanks and the policy process*. London: Frank Cass.

Stone, D. (2004). Think tanks, policy advice and governance. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions*(pp.1-16). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Stone, D., & Denham, A. (2004). *Think tank traditions: Policy research and the politics of ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Thomas, R. (2011). Academics as policy-makers: (Not) researching tourism and events policy formation from the inside. *Current Issues in Tourism, 14*(6), 493-506.

Thomas, R. (2012). Business elites, universities and knowledge transfer in tourism. *Tourism Management, 33*, 553-561.

Thomas, R., & Ormerod, N. (2017). The (almost) imperceptible impact of tourism research on policy and practice. *Tourism Management, 62*, 379-389.

Ueno, M. (2004). Think tanks in Japan. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions*(pp.163-178). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Wallace, W. (2004). Soft power, global agendas. *In* D. Stone & A. Denham (eds.), *Think tank traditions*(pp.281-289). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Weaver, K., & McGann, J. (2017). Think tanks and civil societies in a time of change. In J. McGann & K. Weaver (eds.), *Think tanks and civil societies*(pp.1-35). London: Routledge.

Weiss, C. (1992). *Organizations for policy analysis: Helping government think.* London: Sage.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wingens, M. (1990). Toward a general utilization theory: A systems theory reformulation for the two-communities metaphor. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 12*, 27-42.

Wright, U., & Rocco, T. (2018). Institutional ethnography: A holistic approach to understanding systems. *In* IRMA (ed.), *Operations and service management:*

Concepts, methodologies, tools and applications (pp.1657-1672). Hershey: IGI Global.

Xiao, H. (2013). Dynamics of China tourism and challenges for destination marketing and management. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management, 2*, 1-3.

Xiao, H., & Li, M. (2015). *China tourism: Cross-cultural studies*. London: Routledge.

Xiao, H., Liu, Z., & Cheng, C. (2017). Consultants as knowledge brokers: Issues and implications for China tourism research. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, *13*(1), 103-122.

Xiao, H., & Smith, S. (2007). The use of tourism knowledge: Research propositions. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*, 310-331.

Xue, L., & Kerstetter, D. (2018). Discourse and power relations in community tourism. *Journal of Travel Research, 57*(6), 757-768.

Yin, R., & Moore, G. (1988). Lessons on the utilization of research from nine case experiences in the natural hazards field. *Knowledge in Society, 1*(3), 25-44.

Zhu, X. (2009). The influence of think tanks in the Chinese policy process. *Asian Survey, 49*(2), 333-357.

Zhu, X. (2011). Government advisors or public advocates? Roles of think tanks in China from the perspective of regional variations. *The China Quarterly, 207*, 668-686.

Zhu, X. (2012). *The rise of think tanks in China*. London: Routledge.

Zhu, X., & Xue, L. (2007). Think tanks in transitional China. *Public Administration and Development, 27*, 452-464.
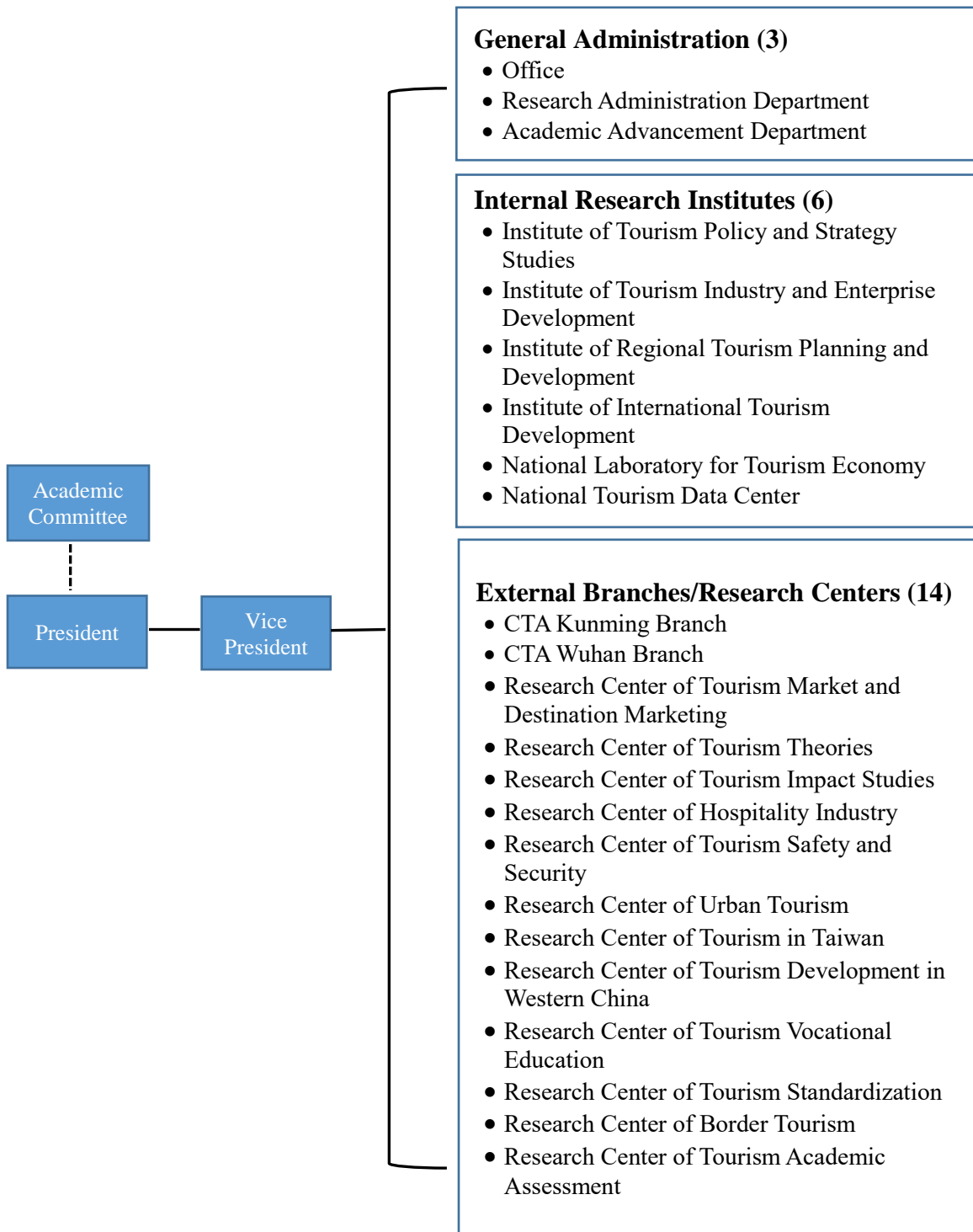
Figures and Tables

General Administration (3)
- Office
- Research Administration Department
- Academic Advancement Department

Internal Research Institutes (6)
- Institute of Tourism Policy and Strategy Studies
- Institute of Tourism Industry and Enterprise Development
- Institute of Regional Tourism Planning and Development
- Institute of International Tourism Development
- National Laboratory for Tourism Economy
- National Tourism Data Center

External Branches/Research Centers (14)
- CTA Kunming Branch
- CTA Wuhan Branch
- Research Center of Tourism Market and Destination Marketing
- Research Center of Tourism Theories
- Research Center of Tourism Impact Studies
- Research Center of Hospitality Industry
- Research Center of Tourism Safety and Security
- Research Center of Urban Tourism
- Research Center of Tourism in Taiwan
- Research Center of Tourism Development in Western China
- Research Center of Tourism Vocational Education
- Research Center of Tourism Standardization
- Research Center of Border Tourism
- Research Center of Tourism Academic Assessment

Academic Committee

President

Vice President

Figure 1. Organizational Structure of China Tourism Academy

Table 1. CTA Documents Collected for Analysis

Type	Title of Document
1	CTA charter (2008)
2	Guidelines for CTA construction (2008-2010)
3	• Guidelines for CTA five-year development plan (2011-2015) • CTA five-year development plan (2016-2020)
4	President's speeches on think tank construction (2009-2019, in official transcripts) • 2009 Centering around disciplinary development and steadily moving forward CTA as a think tank, so as to serve the industry and to contribute to the state – A speech at the CTA "Disciplinary Construction" seminar (28 June, Beijing). • 2010 Qualities of tourism academics and their ability enhancement – A speech at the CTA talent development conference (23 July, Xiangtan, Hunan Province). • 2012 What kind of research outputs are needed in the era of mass China tourism? – A speech at the CTA "Research Output Construction" seminar (22 July, Erguna, Inner Mongolia). • 2013 Holding fast to the ideal of academic research in the reality of social service – A speech at the CTA "Professional Competence and Social Service" seminar (13 July, Yan'an, Shaanxi Province). • 2014 First class think tank calls for first class academic thoughts – A speech at the CTA "Academic Thoughts Construction" seminar (13 July, Wuyuan, Jiangxi Province). • 2015 Government think tank and strategy scholars should pay attention to academic platform construction – A speech at the CTA "Academic Platform Construction" seminar (12 July, Linyi, Shandong Province). • 2016 Big data for tourism and academic think tank construction – A speech at the CTA "Tourism Data Construction Year" seminar (20 July, Beijing). • 2018 "Grinding a sword for ten years" – An interview by the China Tourism News on the 10th anniversary of the founding of CTA <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/XUuWUpgMdYFBrmYZlQJ_WQ> (Online document). • 2019 "The tourism economy enters a new era and needs new kinetic energy" – A speech made at the CTA-CHINAUMS joint meeting (29 January, Shanghai) on the release of *Blue Book of China's Tourism Economy* (No.11) and *The 2018 China Tourism Consumption Big Data Report* <www.ctaweb.org/html/2019-1/2019-1-28-10-50-77703.html> (Online document).
5	Bi-weekly internal communication ("*lv-you-nei-can*" 2015-2017)
6	CTA Summits (2012-2017) – Conference programs and proceedings
7	Annual industry reports and yearbooks (2015-2018), known amongst CTA members themselves as "1+8+X" (where, 1=The annual *Blue Book of China's Tourism Economy*; 8=The eight annual reports on inbound tourism, outbound tourism, travel agency, hotel/lodging industry, scenic areas/attractions, leisure development, regional tourism, and tourism groups, respectively; and X=Irregular reports on emerging themes such as "red tourism", "ski resorts", or "summer resorts")

Table 2. Profiles of Interviewees

No	Gender	Profession/Rank	Internal/External to CTA	Interview Time/Place
1	Male	Senior researcher	Internal, CTA member	April 2016, Beijing
2	Male	Professor	External, CTA academic committee member	October 2016, Guilin
3	Male	Professor	CTA external research center	March 2017, Quanzhou
4	Male	Professor	CTA external research center	April 2017, Xiamen
5	Male	Senior researcher	Internal, CTA member	April 2017, Beijing
6	Male	Professor	External, CTA academic committee member	April 2017, Nanjing
7	Male	Professor	CTA external research center	July 2017, Guangzhou
8	Male	Professor	CTA external research center	July 2017, Shanghai
9	Female	Professor	CTA external research center	November 2017, Beijing
10	Male	Professor	External, CTA academic committee member	March 2018, Hangzhou
11	Female	Professor	CTA external research center	August 2018, Jiangmen
12	Male	Professor	External, CTA academic committee member	December 2018, Guangzhou
13	Female	Senior researcher	Internal, CTA member	June 2019, Beijing
14	Male	Senior researcher	Internal, CTA member	June 2019, Beijing