



The choice of a park management model: A case study of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Vietnam



Tuan Phong Ly^{a,*}, Honggen Xiao^b

^a Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Macau University of Science and Technology, M107, Macau University of Science and Technology, Avenida Wai Long, Taipa, Macau

^b School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, No.17 Science Museum Road, TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 September 2015

Received in revised form 9 October 2015

Accepted 29 October 2015

Keywords:

Concession

Park management

Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park

Vietnam

ABSTRACT

Establishing balance among the mandates for recreation, conservation and economy makes sustainable tourism management of parks and protected areas a challenge. The Vietnamese park system continues to transform into different management models. In 2006, the Special-Use Forests Policy introduced the co-existing management model, under which power is distributed between the public and private sectors. The unique model has long been applied to the management of parks in Vietnam, but no explanation has ever been given on how the model was chosen. This study investigates the co-existing management model in the Vietnamese park system using the Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park as a case study. The research examines the development process of the Vietnamese park system and identifies the factors behind the transformation into the current management model. As such, the study provides a theoretical explanation of the choice of the co-existing management model in Vietnamese national parks, and discusses its practical implications to park management in other countries.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Sustaining the dual mandate of recreation and conservation in national parks (NPs) and protected areas (PAs) is more challenging in developing countries than in developed ones. Economic factors may overshadow ecological considerations (Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). Ma, Ryan, and Bao (2009) argue that, in developing countries, the mandates for parks and PAs are not only based on recreation and conservation but also on their economic value in terms of, “the role of national parks as an asset in tourism policies directed by centrally determined economic objectives of income and employment generation” (p.2). Unlike park governance in developed countries, the researchers found that adding economic development is more appropriate for developing countries such as Vietnam.

The *doimoi* (renovation) was a period of reform that started in 1986 in Vietnam. The reform introduced “open-door” policies that encouraged a shift from a socialist-oriented to a market-driven economy. Before *doimoi*, only the government had the right to operate businesses in the country. After the renovation era, Vietnam witnessed several changes, not only in education and agriculture, but also in tourism and other industries with the participation of different economic sectors. Apart from the public sector, private companies have started to join business management in the country. A similar idea was applied to the tourism industry (Cooper, 2000). The *doimoi* policy has called for the *decentralization* of the NP management model. In a dynamic and complex setting, conventional

management structures and roles based on a centralized and hierarchical authority are no longer believed to be adequate to achieve the three mandates of park management (Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner, & Heylings, 2003; Lockwood, 2010). Uniformity is no longer the core in order to serve the best interest of the tourism industry or its stakeholders. The Vietnamese Government has been handing over part of its management power to the provinces in some areas of tourism, such as nature reserves and NPs, both controlled by the Vietnamese Government in the past (The Government of Vietnam, 2006, 2010).

Vietnam has two types of NPs: the cross-provincial parks, under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; and the within-provincial parks under the administration of the Provincial People's Committee. Among the 30 NPs in Vietnam, eight of them are under the management of the former while 22 belong to the latter (The Government of Vietnam, 2003, 2010). The Vietnamese National Park Management Board (NPMB) is considered a young and scarcely developed system. It lacks management experience in tourism and recreation activities, especially after the decentralization of the power to the lower levels of the government. Thus, the latter has even less management experience than the former (Creswell & Maclaren, 2000; Elliott, 1997; Phan, Quan, & Le, 2002; Suntikul, Butler, & Airey, 2010). The Vietnamese park system continually searches for and applies new tourism policies that assist the NPMB in managing parks efficiently and effectively (Suntikul et al., 2010; The Government of Vietnam, 2010).

In 2006, the Special-Use Forests (SUF) Policy obtained a revolutionary update in the management bodies of ecotourism/recreation activities in parks and PAs. The first legal article dealt with ecotourism

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: tply@must.edu.mo (T.P. Ly), honggen.xiao@polyu.edu.hk (H. Xiao).

activity organization methods in Vietnamese NPs, which was announced in Article 55 of Decree No. 23/2006/ND-CP on implementing the Forest Protection and Development Law (The Government of Vietnam, 2006). Then, it was updated and redeveloped in 2007, 2010 and 2011 respectively (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2007, 2011; The Government of Vietnam, 2010). According to the new SUF Policy, the NPMB is the forest owner and has the right to manage ecotourism activities within a park under the following three models: 1) ecotourism activities managed by the NPMB (the state-management model); 2) leasing forest environment for private groups/companies to operate ecotourism businesses (the private-management model); and 3) joint venture, associations and other forms of investment in ecotourism (the joint-venture model).

Since the SUF ecotourism management policy was introduced in 2006, the Vietnamese park system has witnessed a change from a parastatal to a new management model, which includes other bodies apart from government agencies in tourism (Eagles, 2009). This development is a core step toward decentralization in the SUF system from de-concentration to delegation (Ribot, 2002). According to Decision No. 104/2007/QĐ-BNN (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2007), the new management model has the following criteria: 1) ownership of lands and resources still belong to the government; 2) the income for management mostly comes from fees and charges, while the government grant is small; 3) combinations of any three types of management bodies could exist simultaneously within one NP, in which the Tourism Management Unit could belong to the NPMB (state-management model), or to individuals/for-profit organizations (private-management model), or as a cooperation between the NPMB and a private organization (joint-venture model); and 4) the NPMB is responsible for the supervision of all tourism/recreation activities in the parks (Eagles, 2009; The Government of Vietnam, 2006). In this study, the researchers refer to the stance of two or more management bodies concurrently managing tourism/recreation services in a NP as the co-existing management model. The public and private sectors simultaneously manage tourism activities within the same park is not novel. Eagles (2008, 2009) and More (2005) call this type of park management model the “public and for-profit model” existing in other countries.

Given the announcement of the co-existing management model in 2006, its first and only application has been found in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (PNKB NP) in Quang Binh Province, Central Vietnam in 2010. The PNKB Natural Reserve was upgraded to a national park in 2001. Before and after 2001, the park has witnessed several modification of its management models: 1) provincial administrative management (from 1995 to 2001); 2) state-owned enterprise (from 2001 to 2003); 3) parastatal management (from 2003 to 2010); and 4) co-existing management model (from 2010 until now). Notably the co-existing management model is a special form of concession (Gold, 1958). Such public-private management practices, which aims for better efficiency and effectiveness and determines the best alternative for fulfilling the triple mission of park management, are not novel to the park management sector (Su & Xiao, 2009). Different approaches can be used to managing recreation/tourism services in parks (Buckley, 2002; Eagles, 2008, 2009; Glover & Burton, 1998). No research explains how the Vietnamese park system has ended up using the co-existing model to plan, manage and govern its parks and PAs. If the co-existing model is the solution or option for Vietnamese park system, what are its prerequisites and outcomes? To fill the knowledge gap, this study aims to describe the process that leads to the current management model of Vietnamese park system, and intends to offer a theoretical explanation on the choice of the park management model with evidence from PNKB NP. The study addresses two key questions: 1) what is the development process of Vietnamese park system as seen from PNKB NP? 2) what are the factors that drive the Vietnamese park system to use the co-existing management model to operate tourism/recreation businesses in a park?

This study is hoped to contribute to the growing body of knowledge by enriching the understanding of concession in Vietnamese

park management (Buteau-Duitschaever, McCutcheon, Eagles, Havitz, & Glover, 2010). Moreover, by identifying the factors behind co-existing management, the design, expertise and intelligence of the model can assist park managers in achieving management effectiveness. Finally, the practice of co-existing management in Vietnam may facilitate transferability of the model to other countries in South East Asia (Yin, 2003a, 2003b).

2. The management of parks and protected areas

According to the development of public product theory, scholars recognize that the supply of public services, including their provision and production, is a complex process. As some limitations of national governments have become more apparent, addressing issues of public concern has become a more complex topic (Su, Wall, & Eagles, 2007). In this dynamic setting of park management, conventional management structures and roles, based on a centralized and hierarchical authority, are deemed to be inadequate. Government agencies are not necessarily the only supplier of the service (Abrams et al., 2003). Over the last three decades, park and PA governance has moved away from being a central state-based responsibility and has become a polycentric regime under which powers are distributed among a diversity of government, private and community-based stakeholders (Abrams et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2010). Various forms of collaboration among communities, governments, businesses and other actors have emerged. Often, national governments empower their subordinate entities, and other parties or stakeholders, through a variety of initiatives under the theme of *decentralization*. The United Nation Development Program (UNDP) identifies four approaches to decentralization, namely *devolution*, *delegation*, *de-concentration* and *divestment* (Graham, Amos, & Plumptre, 2003). In the realm of PAs, practitioners recognize that adaptive institutional arrangements are necessary to manage natural resource systems which have complex social, political, cultural and ecological dimensions (Abrams et al., 2003). The idea of polycentric regimes comes from the need to overcome some pitfalls of traditional state-based governance (Abrams et al., 2003; Graham et al., 2003).

The World Parks Congress (2003) recommended to the World Commission on Protected Areas that governments and civil societies should not only recognize the legitimacy and importance of a range of governance types for parks and PAs, but also identify the need to refine its “protected area categorization system” to include a governance dimension 1) to recognize the legitimacy and diversity of approaches to park and PA establishments, and 2) to make it explicit that a variety of governance types can be used to achieve conservation goals (World Parks Congress, 2003). Therefore, new forms of governance are formulated through a tripartite arrangement, including the category, management objectives and governance authority (Fig. 1).

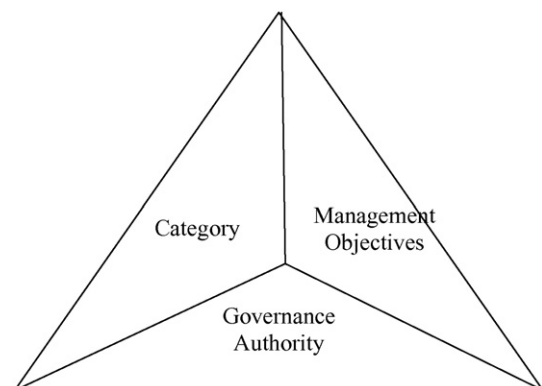


Fig. 1. Tripartite arrangement for protected areas management.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013601>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013601>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)