

The Choice of a Park Management Model: A Case Study of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Vietnam

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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.

Keywords: *Concession, park management, Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, Vietnam*

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, Bulter & Airey, 2010). The Vietnamese park system continually searches for and applies new tourism policies that assist the NPMB in managing parks efficiently and effectively (The Government of Vietnam, 2010; Suntikul et al., 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 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 (The Government of Vietnam, 2010; Ministry of

Agriculture and Rural Development, 2007, 2011). 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 towards 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 modifications 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 (Bulkley, 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 Nations 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 (Figure 1).

[Figure 1 near here]

2.1. Management Models under Tripartite Arrangements

The World Parks Congress (2003) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommend that governance dimensions recognize at least four broad types applicable to all IUCN protected area categories: 1) governance by the government (at federal/state/sub-national/municipal levels), 2) shared governance (multi-stakeholder management), 3) private governance and 4) governance by indigenous people and local communities (Dudley, 2008). Category assignments and management objectives are usually decided by policy authorities. Under different jurisdictions, different combinations of governance systems may provide varied results for park and PA management (Eagles, 2009). Among the three dimensions, governance authority is recognized as the key factor for the survival and success of a park in achieving the triple mandates of conservation, recreation and economy (Dearden, Bennett & Johnston, 2005; Ma et al., 2009; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; World Parks Congress, 2003).

Many approaches are used to arrange governance authorities or management models. Glover and Burton (1998) propose four types of institutional arrangements for the provision of tourism/recreation services in parks and PAs: 1) *governmental arrangements* represent government agencies alone in providing public services; 2) *cross-sector alliances* develop contractual relationships between a government agency and a for-profit or not-for-profit organization through partnerships and/or management contracts; 3) *regulated monopolies*, in which a non-public organization is granted a monopoly to directly provide public services (e.g., through franchising); and 4) *divestiture*, in which public services, lands, or facilities are sold or leased to for-profit or not-for-profit organizations.

Buckley (2002) summarizes four partnership options for tourism in parks and PAs and discusses the issues, principles and practices associated with each option. He states that private tourism on public land is the most common category of partnership or concession for nature-based tourism. More (2005) synthesizes and proposes five models to describe parks and PAs in terms of who is paying and who is doing the work. These are known as 1) the *fully public model*, which represents a government agency operating all services through decision making and tax financing; 2) the *public utility model*, in which a government agency operates as a private corporation; 3) the *outsourcing model*, in which the government provides funding, whereas private companies compete for production rights; 4) the *private, non-profit ownership model*, in which a non-government organization owns and operates the parks and PAs; and 5) the *private, for-profit ownership*, in which a private company owns and manages the parks and PAs.

Eagles (2008, 2009) recommends analyses of management models by separately investigating its three functional aspects: 1) ownership of the land and associated resources; 2) the source of income; and 3) types of management bodies. These could result in 60 possible combinations, in terms of four ownership alternatives (i.e., by government agency, non-profit institution, for-profit corporation, or the community), three income sources (i.e., societal taxes, user fees, or donations), and five types of management bodies (i.e., typical government agency, parastatal corporation owned or wholly controlled by the government, non-profit corporation, for-profit corporation, or the community). His research explains most of the management models in nature-based tourism; however, only eight of them are believed to be widely used (Eagles, 2008, 2009): 1) *national park model*, 2) *parastatal model*, 3) *non-profit organization model*, 4) *eco-lodge model*, 5) *public and for-profit combination model*, 6) *public and non-profit combination model*, 7) *aboriginal and government model* and 8) *traditional-community model*.

The proposed park management models mentioned above have one commonality, which is the different type or degree of combination between public and private partnership. According to Su and Xiao (2009), much of the scholarly discussions focuses on public-private partnerships or networks to deliver public services. This phenomenon can be explained through research on privatization, outsourcing and contracting out government services (Cohen, 2001; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Peters, 2001; Rehfuss, 1989; Savas, 1987). Gold (1958) called such arrangements park concessions, which aim to offer better efficiency and are not new in the park, tourism and recreation sector. The above-mentioned models give a hint to park authorities that there are more than one choice of park management models. The issue is to how to choose the proper one to fulfill each park authority's need.

2.2. Park Concession Model

Gold (1958) has defined park concession as “any public park facility of a good, merchandising, or public accommodation type which is owned, operated, or maintained by a public agency or leased out to a private individual or corporation, and whose primary function is public service with a by-product of some profit to those parties responsible for its ownership, operation, or maintenance” (p.1). In a dynamic and complex setting, conventional governance structures and role based solely on centralized authorities are no longer believed to be adequate (Abrams et al., 2003). In the current decade, various forms of collaboration among governments, private businesses, communities and other actors have been growing in many countries. The emergence of private-management models is deemed valid for better efficiency and effectiveness of park and PA management (Su & Xiao, 2009).

Despite the importance of private-management models, Su and Xiao (2009) point out notable gaps in the growing body of literature on park and PA management: 1) attention from the academia in this highly multi-disciplinary subject area was not extended to PAs until recently (Glover, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Glover & Burton, 1998; Havitz, 1999; Havitz & Glover, 2001); 2) park tourism remains an under-researched area (Beilock & Nicolich, 2002); and 3) practical evidence about the provision and delivery of public services in PAs was primarily dominated with case studies conducted elsewhere in the world, mostly in developed countries with fewer in developing ones and probably none in Vietnam. Limited research has been undertaken to provide proper understanding and knowledge of the various management models for parks and PAs (Buteau-Duitschaeffer et al., 2010).

2.3. Management Effectiveness

In selecting a model for park management, two conditions need to be fulfilled. First, it should be suitable for a country's situation and context in order for the intent and direction of governance to be realized. "Governance problems do not exist a priori but depend on concrete institutional, technical and social contexts in which they are embedded. Different contexts imply different coordination problems and different regimes give rise to different institutional control problems" (Schneider, 2002, p.253).

Second, the model provides value for better efficiency and effectiveness of park management in obtaining the balance of the triple mandates (Ma et al., 2009; Su & Xiao, 2009). Efficiency and effectiveness are cornerstones of good management. Managing parks and PAs is a difficult and complicated task. Management decisions must take the dynamics of natural cycles and other pragmatic factors into account. These factors include political considerations, economic limitations, existing policy and the necessity of satisfying the needs and perceptions of the public visiting the areas. The degree to which each of these considerations influences the management decision-making depends on the related condition (Wright, 2008). Hockings and Phillips (1999) state that parks and PAs can only deliver their environmental, social and economic benefits if they are effectively managed.

The study of management effectiveness in parks and PAs can assist the understanding of developments in the field (Hawthorn, Kirik & Eagles, 2002). By evaluating management effectiveness (Hockings, Stolton & Dudley, 2000; Hockings, Stolton, Leverington, Dudley & Courrrau, 2006), researchers can explain the rationales behind the choice of a co-existing management model. In short, understanding the effectiveness of management is important. As suggested by Singh (1999), if the old management models need to be changed and updated, the first step is understanding current limitations and identifying areas for improvement.

To assess the effectiveness of management of parks and PAs, the World Commission on Protected Area proposed a Management Effectiveness Evaluation Framework (Hockings et al., 2000, 2006; Hockings, 2003). It is based on the idea that park and PA management follows a *management cycle*, which 1) begins with understanding the *context* of the park, including its values, the threats that it encounters, available opportunities, its stakeholders, the management and political environments, and description of sites; 2) develops through *planning*, which includes establishing goals, objectives and strategies to conserve values and reduce threats; 3) allocates resources (*inputs*), which include staff, money and facilities to work towards the planning objectives; 4) implements management actions through accepted *processes*; 5)

produces goods and services (*outputs*), which are outlined in management and work plans; and 6) ultimately results in effects or *outcomes* to achieve defined goals and objectives. These elements in the management cycle reflect three larger themes, namely, *design* (including context and planning), *appropriateness/adequacy* (including inputs and processes) and *delivery* (outputs and outcomes). When carrying out an evaluation, it is necessary to recognize and consider that each element may interact with the other five to holistically assess the comprehensive picture of management effectiveness and to cultivate greater explanatory power (Hockings et al., 2006; Leverington, Hockings, Pavere, Lemos Costa & Courrau, 2008). Notably the above framework is observed in the following case study of PNKB NP to describe and explain the management model adopted by Vietnamese parks.

3. PHONG NHA-KE BANG NATIONAL PARK: A CASE STUDY

PNKB NP is located in the western part of the Quang Binh Province, Vietnam, which is approximately 500 kilometers south of Hanoi (Figure 2). Situated in a limestone zone that stretches 2,000 square kilometers, this park is the largest limestone area in Asia and the second largest in the world (Nguyen, Dang, Nguyen, Nguyen & Phan, 2006). The primordial forests on the site are the richest biological system in Vietnam. The whole core zone of the park has been recognized as a World Nature Heritage Site since 2003 under Criteria VIII (Geological and Geo-morphological) and become the fifth World Heritage site in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2013) (Figure 3).

[Figure 2 near here]

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The park's core zone is divided into three functional areas: strictly protected area (64,894 ha), ecological restoration area (17,449 ha) and administrative and service area (3,411 ha). The buffer zone has a total area of 217,908.44 ha, including 13 communes with a population of more than 64,000 (only 1,000 to 2,000 people living and working within the core zone) (People's Committee of Quang Binh Province, 2010). The present study focuses mainly on tourism activities in the core zone because this area is an official NP and a World Heritage site.

3.1. Vietnamese National Park System

Although the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and/or Provincial People's Committee take responsibility to manage NPs directly, they are not involved in daily operations and management. This task is separated to another unique organization called: the NPMB, a state-owned organization, which has the functions and tasks of a forest owner and the state-assured conditions for managing, protecting and developing SUFs. In addition, it is responsible for conserving and promoting special values in terms of nature, standard specimens of ecosystems, biodiversity, gene sources, historical-cultural relics and landscape, and conducting scientific research and provision of forest environmental services (The Government of Vietnam, 2010).

The NPMB is the management unit that conducts and manages tourism/recreation business in parks and PAs (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2011). However, the NPMB has different sub-units under its control. Normally there is a sub-unit named *Tourism Management Unit*, which conducts, manages and operates all of the tourism and recreation activities regarding the state-management model, such as the *Phong Nha Tourism Centre* (PNTC) of PNKB NP. At the same time, there are private companies or groups joining park tourism sites management since the allowance of the SUF policy in 2006. The private companies or groups are the representatives of the private-management model and under the supervision of the NPMB. Therefore, there are three major stakeholders involved in decision-making and management effectiveness of park tourism/recreation businesses: the NPMB, the Tourism Management Unit (PNTC) and the private company (Truong Think Group).

3.2. Major Stakeholders in Park Tourism Management

PNKB NP belongs to the provincial-management category in Vietnamese park system. The Provincial People's Committee of Quang Binh has the highest level of authority and responsibility for managing and monitoring all relevant park activities in this park. Daily management of the park is overseen by its National Park Management Board (Group 1: representatives of the National Park Management Board), which was created in 2000 and further strengthened in 2002 when the management plan of the park was implemented (Nguyen et al., 2006). In terms of organization, the board has one director and two vice-directors with Forest and Protection Unit, Scientific Research and Rescue Centre, and PNTC being its three departments, and Planning and Finance, and Administration and Organization being its two functional divisions. The PNTC (Group 2a: officers of the PNTC) is the most relevant unit with

mandate to oversee tourism activities in the park under the state-management model (People's Committee of Quang Binh Province, 2010).

Apart from the state-owned tourism management unit, the park has one international non-government organization concurrently working on tourism development in the region [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)]. Additionally two private-management companies operate tourism activities at the park, the Oxalis Company and the Truong Think Group. Oxalis does not invest and operate tourism activities within the core zone under the co-existing management model. Thus, it is not included as one of the core private companies examined by this study.

The Truong Think Group (Group 2b: representative of Truong Think Group) is a local company in Quang Binh Province. In 2010, the Province People's Committee allowed the group to invest and operate tourism in the Paradise Cave under a 50-year forest renting contract. This cooperative form can be considered a format of the private-management model. Research data show that this site is the only tourism site in PNKB NP operated under the private-management model. It serves as an important site for this study to investigate the co-existing management model (Figure 4).

[Figure 4 near here]

3.3. Data Acquisition through Case Study

PNKB NP was selected as a case study for several reasons. The main purpose is to explain the Vietnamese co-existing management model under the *decentralization* trend (Ribot, 2002). Compared with state-management parks, the provincial-management parks would have a more typical and representative role to understand the empowerment issue (Yin, 2003b). The idea of polycentricism overcomes the pitfalls of traditional state-based management. Therefore, state-management parks may not be appropriate when compared with provincial-management ones, as the latter explicitly elaborates on empowerment and engagement. Hence, any one of the 22 provincial-management parks can be a case for this study. Nonetheless, among them, PNKB NP is the only one on the World Natural Heritage list (The Government of Vietnam, 2010; UNESCO, 2013). Its world heritage status gives the park greater accountability in managing tourism and recreation in a sustainable way (Hall, 2006). Moreover, its world heritage status has an endorsement effect, as other parks also want to achieve the same status and hope to improve their management effectiveness where PNKB NP can be used as a role

model (Dean & Biswas, 2001; Ryan & Silvanto, 2009). More importantly, according to the manager of NPMB, PNKB NP is the only one currently adopting the co-existing management model in Vietnam.

The lead researcher conducted several studies regarding tourism and recreation management in the PNKBNP. The researcher has longitudinally observed the changing system of the park's governance since 2006, especially after the implementation of the Vietnamese new SUF policy about the co-existing management model (The Government of Vietnam, 2006, 2010) and has witnessed the transformation of park management from the "old" to the "new" models. In 2010, after the park's endorsement of the co-existing management model, Truong Think Group contributed to the management of Paradise Cave. Truong Think Group's involvement has confirmed the existence of the co-existing management model at the park. This incentive served as a signal to the researcher to conduct the current study.

A pilot study was conducted from 14-18 June 2011 at PNKB NP in Phong Nha Town of Quang Binh Province. This aims to minimize misinterpretation while maximizing access to the case study site for in-depth information. A case study protocol was developed to confirm the existence of the co-existing management model at the park by identifying its use of both state management and private management. Hence, the analysis mainly focuses on the two management models in this case study discussion. The pilot study also helped to confirm the four locations (or specific sites) for this research. Among the many visited sites in the core zone, only the Paradise Cave has been characteristic of the private-management model since 2010 (Figure 5). The Cave hence became the main target or object of this study on the private-management model. Various types of tourism/recreation products are managed by the PNTC under the state-management model, such as the Phong Nha-Tien Son Cave, representative of ecological cave visit (Figure 6); the Eight Heroic Volunteers Cave, representative of historical cave visit (Figure 7); and the Nuoc Mooc Spring Eco Trail, typical of hiking and forest trail (Figure 8).

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[Figure 6 near here]

[Figure 7 near here]

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Data for this research were collected in two phases: 10 July to 13 September 2012 and 14 February to 15 April 2013. The lead researcher stayed at the park for approximately four

months for building connections or developing rapport with stakeholders or informants in park tourism management (Parameswaran, 2001). To facilitate access to information for this case study, the four-stage model of *getting in*, *getting on*, *getting out* and *getting back* was applied twice in the field research with a different focus in each of two phases (Buchanan, Boddy & McCalman, 1988). Phase 1 has witnessed the practice of getting in (i.e., asking for formal entrance), getting on (i.e., rapport building, participant observation, document collecting and interviewing), and getting out (i.e., leaving the field and going back). Phase 2 has continued with getting back (i.e., returning to the field), getting on (i.e., continuing unfinished observations, documentary and interview work), and getting out (i.e., finishing the data collection and leaving the park).

There are two major reasons for this separated management. First, rapport, which is often used to confirm acceptance and warm relationships between interviewees and researchers, was something difficult to establish and needs a long time to process (Parameswaran, 2001). In reality, after obtaining the formal entrance to the park for data collection, the researcher is still not accepted by the interviewees. Most of the potential interviewees rejected or ignored the interview invitation politely during Phase 1. Apart from the observation/research time in the park and tourism sites, the researcher acted as the volunteer to assist the PNTC in guiding international tourists and taught local staff and residents English language during the first two months. Nonetheless, the situation changed completely when the researcher returned to the park six months later. Based on the rapport built in Phase 1, the locals understood the academic purpose of the researcher to the park. During data collection in Phase 2, they welcomed the researcher and treated him as a friend and willingly took part in interviews and shared their thoughts about tourism management in their park. Given the established trust, possible distortions in the data could be identified and corrected (Creswell, 2003; Li, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). Therefore, the setting and conduct of the data collection in two phases have benefited interpersonal reflexivity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

Second, the two-phase field research enables reflexivity (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Nonetheless, to probe on the transformation of tourism management in the park, the researchers drew upon their prior research and experience as well as relevant literature and documents, to develop interview guides for different stakeholders in different groups. Where appropriate, after Phase 1, interview questions were modified and perspectives adjusted in Phase 2, in light of *theoretical openness* reflexivity (Green & Thorogood, 2004).

Hockings et al. (2006) confirm that full evaluation needs to be rooted in a sound understanding of every single condition related to a park, including careful planning,

implementation and regular monitoring, leading to changes in the management if required. To fully understand the management effectiveness of parks, the researchers assessed the six elements of the management cycle (i.e., context, planning, inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes). The prompt questions to evaluate the management effectiveness of the park are showed as Table 1. The researchers evaluated each element of the management cycle (Hockings et al., 2006) through studying certain major questions and follow-up questions that based on the national park context and responses from interviewees.

[Table 1 near here]

Qualitative research uses selective methods of participant recruitment or purposeful sampling (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Individuals involved in the day-to-day management of the four selected tourism sites were recruited to evaluate the change in park tourism management after the introduction of the new model. These seven distinct categories of informants for the case study interviews are shown in Figure 9. They are program executives (Group 1: a representative of the National Park Management Board, with one interviewee); program administrators (Group 2a: officers of the Phong Nha Tourism Centre, with two interviewees; Group 2b: a representative of Truong Thinh Group, with one interviewee); program participants (Group 3a: site managers of the PNTC, with three interviewees; Group 3b: a site manager of Truong Thinh Group, with one interviewee); program staff (Group 4a: staff of the PNTC's sites, with seven interviewees; Group 4b: staff of Truong Thinh Group's site, with three interviewees); end users of the park (Group 5a: local community members participating in tourism activities and Group 5b: tourists, no interviewees for this group); and external auditing group (Group 6: GIZ staff, with three interviewees) and internal auditing group (Group 7: forest rangers, with two interviewees).

Direct stakeholders (Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) have significant power and influence on park tourism management and businesses. Auditing indirect stakeholders (Groups 6 and 7) has an important role in the member-checking process to increase the validity and credibility of obtained information from the interview process (Hennink et al., 2011). Therefore, these six groups provide the major information to understand the study purposes through in-depth interviews. Group 5 offers supplementary information that helps the researchers gain a fuller understanding of park tourism management through personal discussion and short survey. Because of their limited influence on park tourism management issues, they were not selected for in-depth interview. The number of participants for interview is determined by the

principle of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Notably theoretical saturation varied by group because of the different characteristics of the participants. The researchers stop recruiting interviewees when no newer information is obtained (Hennink et al., 2011). In total, 23 interviews were conducted at different management levels from the six groups (Figure 9).

[Figure 9 near here]

Interviews were audio-taped after obtaining participant consent. For anonymity and confidentiality, where appropriate, pseudonyms are used in the subsequent report. Besides, the researchers took notes and wrote diaries during field research. Digital voice recordings were transcribed and translated from Vietnamese to English verbatim by the lead author whose first language is Vietnamese. Only one interview with a GIZ staff was conducted in English and transcribed verbatim in the same language. The transcripts were then checked for accuracy (e.g., by English and Vietnamese scholars and linguists). Notably, interview transcription started during the data collection process, usually after every interview was conducted. Triangulation involves the investigation of a subject from two or more angles to enhance reliability and validity of a research (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993; Padgett, 1998). Notably, observation, documentation and in-depth interviews were employed to capture relevant data to address the study's objectives.

3.4. Data Analysis

This study aims to examine factors driving the Vietnamese park system to use the co-existing management model to operate tourism/recreation businesses in a park. It does not start with any pre-conceived set of hypothesis/proposition nor does it attempt to test theories. The prompt questions based on the management cycle of Management Effectiveness Evaluation Framework of Hockings et al. (2006) provide ideas prior to empirical inquiry. In light of theoretical sensitivity, the researchers are open to emerging concepts, patterns or themes from data. Grounded theory provides an approach through which theory can be built up from careful observation of the social world and generated initially from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The inherent inductive strategies and theoretical sensitivities of grounded theory to review and at the same time analyze interview data, documentary evidence

and observation information were deemed appropriate in order to understand the co-existing management model in a Vietnamese NP context.

A systematic procedure of open, axial and selective coding was conducted in accordance with the procedure that allows theory to be generated from the data (Strauss, 1987). Grounded theory involves conducting a series of tasks that are continually repeated through the process of data analysis: developing codes, description, comparison, categorization, conceptualization and theory development. Hennink et al. (2011) call it a cyclical process of analysis. Tasks are closely connected. Not only are they conducted in a cyclical manner whereby tasks are repeated during data analysis, but they are also conducted simultaneously at different points in the analysis. The process of grounded theory is therefore described as “consisting of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data. The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules” (Charmaz, 2006, p.2). The analysis began shortly after data collection was initiated. These steps were repeated throughout the data collection process. Interview transcription and translation were conducted in the field, but the analyses of the transcripts were finished in mid May 2013 because of the large amount of data from the interview. Analysis of the 23 interview transcripts were facilitated by NVivo 10 (Bazeley, 2007; QSR International, 2013) in terms of storage, organization, coding and management of the collected data.

For the sake of conformability and validity, techniques such as consistency checks, constant comparison and member checks were applied in the analysis to maximize the utilization of grounded data in generating theory (Hennink et al., 2011). However, due to time constraints, the four-month field research could not claim to have explored all issues, particularly the emerging ones on park tourism management. To overcome this limitation, the researcher used both longitudinal data from his prior research and the sub-set of information obtained in the two phases of field research to analyze the study's questions/objectives.

4. THE EVOLUTION OF PHONG NHA-KE BANG PARK MANAGEMENT

The park has a long history of tourism development. It has passed through three management models before reaching the current co-existing management model. The following speaks of the evolution or transformation of management models since tourism began in the park.

4.1. Provincial Administrative Management

In 1995, the Provincial People's Committee established a unit called Quang Binh Heritage and Scenery Management Department (Heritage Management Board). Apart from the management of all heritage sites within Quang Binh Province, the Heritage Management Board was tasked to manage and develop the tourism value of the Phong Nha Cave. As a response to the Heritage Management Board, the Phong Nha Tourism Centre was established to organize, sell tickets, interpret and arrange tourism boats for tourists to visit the Phong Nha Cave. This step was recognized as the first tourism activity and the first management model of the Phong Nha Reserve Area.

In 2000, the Tien Son Cave was invested and introduced to tourists. The Heritage Management Board was also responsible for its management. Established by the PNTC, the management model of Phong Nha Cave and Tien Son Cave at that time was merely an extension unit of the Heritage Management Board.

4.2.State-owned Enterprise

In 2001, the Provincial People's Committee sustained a change in the provincial tourism management system. The Committee passed the management task of the Phong Nha-Tien Son Cave to the Quang Binh Tourism Company, which is a state-owned enterprise that mainly develops provincial tourism activities. When the two caves were handed over to the Quang Binh Tourism Company, the company created a new structure by establishing a tourism management unit called Phong Nha-Tien Son Tourism Centre (PNTSTC). PNTSTC is a division that accounts and reports to the company about tourism management of the Phong Nha-Tien Son Cave. On 12 December 2001, PNKB NP was established as an upgraded version of the Phong Nha Natural Reserve.

4.3.Parastatal Management

PNKB NP was nominated and recognized as a World Natural Heritage Site on 5 July 2003. At that time, the Provincial People's Committee of Quang Binh reconsidered the management model of the park because the Phong Nha-Tien Son Cave was located within the World Heritage site. The Provincial Committee decided to merge PNTSTC under the Quang Binh Tourism Company into the NPMB system. Since then, PNKB NP was assigned with an official management unit for its tourism activities. The PNTSTC was renamed as Phong Nha Tourism Centre. The PNTC was a business management unit under NPMB. This unit had its own stamp and accounted for managing the tourism sites assigned to it. The state-owned enterprise model

shifted to the *parastatal management model* (Eagles, 2009). This is also called the *public utility model*, wherein the park is operated like a government-owned company (More, 2005). The parastatal management model had been in use to manage the PNKB NP since 2003. It is the first official park management model in the PNKB area since it was announced as a national park.

Until 2008, under the direction of NPMB, PNTC recognized the need to explore and utilize different values of the park for tourism development. Among the values of the park, PNTC chose to utilize the scenery value first. Thus, the NuocMooc Spring Eco-trail was established and operated in 2009. Similarly, PNTC created the Eight Heroic Cave site as a spiritual destination within the park to diversify tourism activities.

4.4. The Current Co-existing Management Model

After the nomination for World Heritage Site status in 2003 and the discovery of the Paradise Cave in 2005, the Provincial People's Committee of Quang Binh provided licenses for tourism management to several private companies. An example of this is the Dong Duong Company, which obtained investment allowance for Paradise Cave. However, the company did not deploy the investment plan for unknown reasons. In 2009, NPMB revoked the investment license and asked for investment from another province-based company, the Truong Think Group. In 2010, the Provincial People's Committee allowed the Truong Think Group to survey, invest and operate tourism in the Paradise Cave area. Truong Think Group operates tourism businesses at the park under a forest area leasing contract of 50 years, which is paid back to the park at 1% of its annual tourism revenue (Eagles & Legault, 2012). The co-existing management model has been adopted at the park since then.

5. THE TEMPORARY DESTINATION OF PHONG NHA-KE BANG PARK MANAGEMENT

5.1. Prerequisites: The Decentralization Trend

The first prerequisite leading to the transformation into the co-existing management is the ineffectiveness of the previous three models in park management. Several studies about management effectiveness of the parastatal model in Vietnamese parks confirm that the country cannot maintain balance on the triple mandates, especially in the conservation aspect (Suntikul, 2010; Suntikul et al., 2010). Conservation may be seen as a luxury item and appears less urgent

than other facets of development in a developing country like Vietnam (Suntikul et al., 2010). Notably, the three management models belong to the socialist-oriented or state-based management. The models' management ineffectiveness confirmed the inability of centralized and hierarchical authority in Vietnam case (Abrams et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2010). The Vietnamese Government was required to add fresh blood into park management model for survival and development need.

The second prerequisite relates to the decentralization trend of park management in the last three decades up until now (Abrams et al., 2003). This trend has explained to the Vietnamese Government that the power of a central state-based responsibility is limited and a polycentric regime under which powers are distributed among a diversity of government, private and community-based stakeholders is much stronger (Abrams et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2010). The idea of polycentric regime comes from the need to overcome some pitfalls of traditional state-based management. Luckily, the country is experiencing the positive benefits of the *doimoi* era, which has the same pattern with the decentralization trend of park management model by empowering other stakeholders (i.e., provincial government and private company) through the market-driven strategy (The Government of Vietnam, 2006; 2010). It means that decentralization trend of park management model is matching with the political milieu of Vietnam in promoting the polycentric regime. According to the officers of the PNTC (Group 2a) and the representative of Truong Thinh Group (Group 2b), after the announcement of *doimoi*, the country has recognized that a multi-component economic model is better than the monopoly state-management model.

The third prerequisite is the announcement of SUF's policy in 2006, which allowed concurrent management of tourism sites between public and private sectors within one national park. The updated park management policy has established the legalized basis for the push of co-existing between public and private sectors within parks in the Vietnamese context (The Government of Vietnam, 2006, 2010). The new SUF policy not only maintains the same decentralization trend in park management, but also adds the new blood into park system development (i.e., the private sector and/or the cooperation between public and private ones).

Last but not least, the increase of private companies/groups in Vietnamese tourism industry also brings the basis for co-existing model development. After the *doimoi* era, tourism needs grow more diversified and could not be satisfied solely through state-based management. Similarly, the Vietnamese Government witnessed good economic efficiency in private-management units within tourism businesses. Moreover, some private companies frequently encountered the incapacities of the Vietnamese Government as they approached and requested

relevant park and PA governmental departments to invest in tourism businesses. Thus, the Vietnamese Government transferred its management power outside the state-management units by allowing concurrent participation of private companies or joint-venture units in park tourism management (Figure 10).

5.2.Solutions: A Choice of Mature Reflection

All interviewees claimed that the co-existing management model is new to park tourism management in Vietnam. PNKB was regarded as the first NP operating under the new model since 2010. When asked about the origin, no one in the park management groups (Group 1, 2 and 3) could explain where the model has actually come from. The representative of the NPMB stated that “I have asked the managers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development about why we use the co-existing management model instead of the others. I can only get a very official answer that this is what the Vietnamese park system needs at the moment”. However, the park management groups (Group 1, 2 and 3) believe that the model is a result of the investigation of experts and social scientists of the Vietnamese Government based on learnt lessons of park management from the past or in developed countries. The Vietnamese Government applied or transferred those models in a flexible way to suit the Vietnamese situation.

Based on the above prerequisites’ analysis, it is clear that the Vietnamese Government did not choose the co-existing management model by accident. A few factors are notable. First, the Government diagnosed that failure of the previous management models in obtaining the three mandates of park management is due to the inability of state-based management only; therefore, incorporating a new sector in addition to the public sector (i.e. private sector) to activate the stagnant situation of park management is required. Second, the maturing of private sector in tourism/recreation business and the proactive reaching of such sector to park tourism development seems to give the Vietnamese Government a reference to include this stakeholder into park model. Third, after taking the current decentralization trend in park tourism management and matching with the development process of Vietnam’s renovation era, the Vietnamese Government has decided to announce the new SUF’s policy in 2006 and it has delivered the official and legalized platform for the development of the co-existing management model.

There is no universal guarantee of success of the choice; however, the Vietnamese Government and the NPMB cannot find any reference to guide them in their adaptive

management. It is the same situation facing the Vietnamese park system and also other developing countries in South East Asia, where there is a lack of past park management experience. What Vietnam and other countries could do and are doing now are based on the management issues, current resources and context of the countries to develop a park management model that will assist them to fulfill the three mandates. Therefore, the researchers argue that the choice of co-existing management model is a temporary phase and not an end of the park management model development process in Vietnam (Figure 10). A representative of the NPMB reported that the co-existing management model is actually a form of concession. He states that, “concession means the park has potential tourism resources, but the park would not develop them for tourism itself, maybe the park does not have efficient human resources and investment budget conditions. Therefore, the park may sign a contract with another private company so they can invest, do business, and utilize tourism resources. However, they have responsibility with the park in paying the forest renting fee. While other responsibilities are with the Vietnamese Government, they could work directly with the tax department. They simply need to take all investing responsibilities in park tourism development”.

5.3. Outcomes: Sardine and Catfish Effect

In many ways the choice of the current management model is also the result of efficacy and effectiveness considerations. These can be seen from the impacts and competitions demonstrated after the adoption of different models.

Impacts of the Private-management Model (Truong Think Group).

The Truong Think Group has had impacts on park management effectiveness since the establishment of the Paradise Cave in 2010. The Cave is managed using the private-management model, wherein investors use their own capital to invest in the tourism site. Compared with the government-management model, private groups in Vietnam normally have stronger financial capabilities in terms of efficiency in fund-raising flexibility in its use. This model results in better infrastructure and more tourism facilities in the Paradise Cave.

Under the supervision of park management specialists, the Truong Think Group has conducted and implemented a feasibility plan. The Group also invited domestic and international experts to guide cave management before and after the opening of the site (for example, expert in geology and geomorphology of PNKB NP, who helped with staff training

in KARST/limestone knowledge of the park; as well as Director of the Mulu National Park of Malaysia who helped with management review in the park). The Cave management has therefore benefitted from such expertise and management experience. Field research found that all interviewees believe in the high standard of the private-management model. The shift of focus for management from “hardware” to “software” is found to be the main reason leading to better visitor service. This explains why all interviewees claimed that the private-management model is more effective than the state-management model.

The entering of the Truong Think Group into park tourism business has caused competitions between the state-management and the private-management model. The Site managers of PNTC largely believe that when more external private companies join park tourism management, the PNTC may face greater difficulties or challenges in operating tourism business because of such competitions. A representative of the NPMB (Group 1) stated that, “if there is only one service provider [PNTC] to offer ‘exclusive’ service, it is good for itself, but not for tourism development in the park. We want tourists to spend more nights here and to generate more tourism revenues”. Hence competition from private management is seen as a good sign. About 80% of the interviewees confirmed that the current competition between the two management models is healthy. Competition has helped improve the quality of products and fulfill different tourists’ needs. The site manager of Truong Think Group (Group 3b) stated that, “competition between the two models is not in terms of economy, but in terms of customer service and management. The results of competition are thus good for park tourism management”. More importantly, competition has brought about some changes in the evolution of park management models.

Change of the State-management Model (Phong Nha Tourism Centre).

Two of three site managers of the PNTC (Group 3a) showed concern that the state-management model cannot compete with its private-management counterparts. Nonetheless they believed that the co-existence of public and private management models and the possible emergence of a joint-venture model could facilitate further development of park tourism. According to a representative of the NPMB (Group 1), “the PNTC will never be ready, if it never tries, or you never put it in a position for competition”.

Facing a financially strong competitor, the state-management model should upgrade its tourism facilities to narrow down the hardware gap presented to tourists. However, because of

bureaucracy and inefficiency of the approval procedure, the upgrade of hardware has taken a long time. The first and latest infrastructure and facility improvement was the upgrading of the Tien Son Cave site in the summer of 2013, nearly two and a half years after that in the Paradise Cave site.

To enhance competitiveness, hardware upgrade should be combined with software upgrade (i.e., staffing and human resources). Two aspects are particularly notable: management style and staff awareness of tourism services. The management style of the officers is essential when considering a new management model. A former officer of PNTC was dismissed because of bad management and inability to compete with private management of the Paradise Cave. Since February 2012, a new officer has taken over PNTC with a young, smart, dynamic and stringent style of park tourism management. Experts have high assessment of the new management style because it has brought efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness to park tourism management. Staff awareness toward tourism service has also been enhanced (when compared with old management) under the leadership of the new officer of the PNTC (Group 2a), as he noted,

“Our staff’s attitude could not be supervised in the past, they were drunk all day long. They went to drink coffee in the working hours, or tourists needed to wait for tour guides for a long time at the pier. But now this has changed. They are listening better. No more wine or coffee during working hours. They put on a smile in order to serve tourists while on board. So, as I said, competition brings benefits to tourists”.

Reflection on the management style was meant to raise competitiveness of the PNTC. When the interviewees (Group 4a) were asked about the reasons behind this reflection, the researchers obtained surprising answers. They believe that the major pressure comes not from the direct competitor (i.e., the Truong Think Group), but from the social and economic needs of the Vietnamese park system development. The new officer can manage the PNTC effectively because he has management intentions as he was deputy officer of PNTC. He and the PNTC staff already intended to change things substantially in the past. The PNTC seemed to recognize some inadequacies of the state-management model and it was only waiting for the right time to make the necessary change. The introduction of the private-management model triggered the action.

Competition between the Two Management Models.

The staff of GIZ (Group 6) stated that PNTC and the Truong Think Group are undoubtedly direct competitors of tourism management at PNKB NP. The two models have competed in a healthy manner and can claim mutual support of each other. However, the degree of support is not strong enough. The staff of GIZ (Group 6) and staff of both management models (Group 3 and 4) claimed there is a lack of communication and connection between the two management models. Each unit organizes tourism by itself and does not connect and communicate with other tourism sites within the park.

The PNTC and Truong Think Group allow tourists to solve overloading issues by themselves. One site manager of the PNTC (Group 3a) reported, “on a public holiday, I see many tourists going to Phong Nha Cave in the morning and the Paradise Cave in the afternoon or vice versa in order to avoid overcrowding. However, I did not see any arrangement or communication between the two management sites. It would be great if they could communicate to each other”. The staff of GIZ and site managers of the PNTC shared a possible solution. They argued that operating tourism is trying to keep tourists to stay in Quang Binh province as long as possible. Therefore, the public and private sectors should support each other more. All sites within the park should communicate to create a PNKB NP tourism cluster. They should not separate into this or that area, public or private ownership.

Regarding recreation issues, both management models are relatively new when applied to tourism management in the Vietnamese park system. Similarly, these models have shown the lack of deep cooperation and appropriate communication when operating tourism activities in the park. On a micro level, competition exists between the state-management and the private-management model. However, on a macro level, the park and PA system in Vietnam is fighting for destination competitiveness with other natural PAs in the country, the region and the world. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) suggest that, in order to succeed, destinations must ensure that their overall attractiveness and the integrity of the experiences they deliver to tourists must be equal to or surpass other alternative destination experiences open for potential tourists. There is neither a state-management nor a private-management model for external stakeholders, not even a joint-venture model. PNKB NP is seen as a nature-based destination, in which the park demands greater cooperation and collaboration at the local level to ensure quality tourism products that can compete effectively at the global level. Some authors refer to this paradigm as *coopetition* (Edgell & Haenisch, 1995). The co-existing management model lacks the spirit of coopetition at the moment.

The new phenomenon can be simply explained under the sardine and catfish effect. Before the involvement of the private group (the catfish), the public sector (the sardine) managed park tourism with no pressure. Not much effort has been input to the park management effectiveness. However, the entry of the Truong Think Group in 2010 introduced competition to the state-management unit. The Truong Think Group has brought a catfish effect to the park management. It has motivated the PNTC and its staff (the sleeping sardines). With the arrival of a hard-working catfish, each member of staff of the PNTC feels strong competition, thus keeping up the competitiveness of the whole unit. Despite its early stage and incomplete application of the co-existing management model, the sardine and catfish effect plays its role in establishing the competition atmosphere for better management effectiveness in the PNKB NP (Figure 10). However, the researchers are concerned about the incomplete application of the model. Since 2010, it has been five years after the first catfish has been brought into the PNKB NP (i.e., the Truong Think Group), however the NPMB seems to have no desire or intention to receive more private companies joining tourism sites management in the park. Furthermore, the NPMB has not mentioned about the activation of joint-venture model. This ambiguous attitude of NPMB toward the full application of the co-existing model somehow delays the normal development of the model. The researchers concern that it might take a longer time for the Vietnamese park system to witness the real management result of the co-existing management model.

Based on the above discussion, the theoretical explanation of the factors driving the Vietnamese park system to use the co-existing management model to operate tourism/recreation businesses in national parks is presented in Figure 10. In general, the choice of a park management model is based on the following sequence. After confirming prerequisites of park system, the national government and/or national park management board diagnosed the major management issues of park system, and based on the country context, they utilized resources to make a temporary choice of a park management model. Normally, the choice is legalized by an updated park management policy. The choice would be applied in national parks to monitor its management effectiveness. If its efficiency and effectiveness could not reach or moderate the three mandates of park management, the national government and/or NPMB would start the above-mentioned sequence again to name another appropriated model based on the updated situation.

[Figure 10 near here]

6. CONCLUSIONS

Since the announcement of the Special-used Forest policy in 2006, no research studies how the Vietnamese park system has ended up using the co-existing management model to manage its parks and PAs. This study describes the process that leads to the model of Vietnamese park system and offers a theoretical explanation using PNKB NP as a case study. The research addressed the factors (i.e., prerequisites, solution and outcomes) behind the selection of this model, which appears to be a transformation from the *parastatal management model* into a new form of the *public and for-profit model* (Eagles, 2008, 2009; More, 2005). The researchers refer to this new form of public and private management model as a co-existing management, which has the following characteristics: 1) the owner of the land is a government agency; 2) the source of income is user fees/tickets (for the state-management model) with 1-2% of the lease contract of the forest areas being annual tourism revenue tax (for the Truong Thinh Group); and 3) the body of management is a combination of state-management, private-management and joint-venture models.

After applying the three models (provincial administrative management, state-owned enterprise and parastatal management), the PNKB NP has used the co-existing model for park management. Theoretically, the co-existing management model (the central phenomenon) was developed as a solution to the triple mandates of recreation, conservation and economy; and was introduced in the contexts of a market-oriented economy, the new SUF policy, and polycentric management allowances. Given the involvement of private management in park tourism business (intervening condition), the model initiates or brings about changes in state management of the park (action/interaction). The core strategies of the new model are the co-existence of public and private sectors in establishing cooperation for park management. In the end, the application of the new model has, to some extent, eased the triplex-objective obstacles of the Vietnamese park system. However, the obstacles were not completely overcome because of the non-sustainable development culture of Vietnam in operating tourism businesses, the short-term application of the new model and hesitation of the NPMB in fully applying the designed model.

The major contribution of the current model is the addition of the competitive element to park tourism management, which cannot be found in any previous models. The integration of private management under the Truong Thinh Group has brought some positive impacts to park management. The private sector acts as a catfish to keep the sardines (i.e., the state-

management model, such as the PNTC) active to avoid being eliminated by the free market. The captains (the Vietnamese Government and/or NPMB) seem to have made a right choice to keep the catfish in the same tanks with the sardines for the improvement of park management effectiveness.

Despite its early stage and incomplete application of the co-existing management model, this study offers a theoretical explanation of how to make a choice of a park management model. It includes the following four steps: 1) diagnose the key issues which postpone the achievement of the three mandates of park management; 2) base on the current trend and resources of the country to develop policy and to choose the proper model to ease the management issues; 3) apply the model and evaluate its management effectiveness; and 4) modify the model to suit the updated situation of a park.

The study phenomenon can be explained through the new social approach in Vietnam. The Vietnamese Government has started to use the decentralization strategy in park tourism management, especially in NPs with World Heritage status. Public-private partnership has been established to ease the country's management issues. The above theoretical explanation of the Vietnamese model could be of use to park management instances in other countries, especially in the South East Asian countries which share the same development tasks in park tourism management. For those countries, park tourism has become a vital source of economic development, foreign exchange and employment generation (Hall & Page, 2000; Hitchcock, King & Parnwell, 2009); therefore, it is difficult for them to keep the balances of three mandates of recreation, conservation and economy. If any country is facing the same management issues as Vietnam, it can take the co-existing management model as a choice for park management. However, it may be useful to note that *analytical generalization* in alignment with a country's situation should be borne in mind when making model choices (Yin, 2003b).



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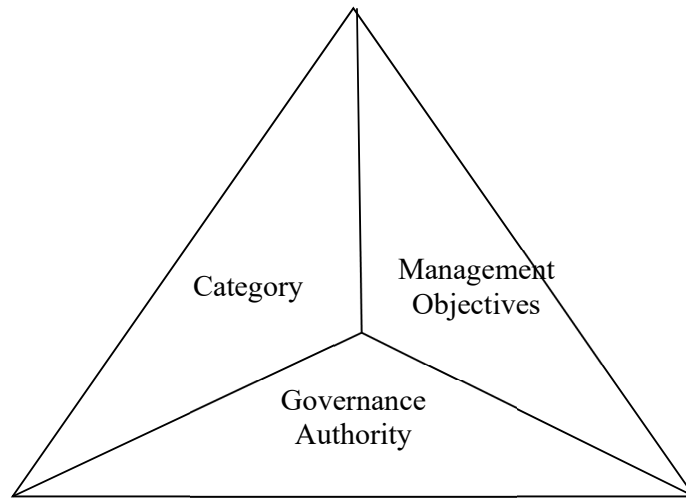


Figure 1. Tripartite Arrangement for Protected Areas Management



Figure 2. Map of Administrative Borders of PNKB NP, Quang Binh Province
 (Source: Adapted from People’s Committee of Quang Binh Province, 2010, p.19).



Figure 3. Boat Station at the Phong Nha Tourism Centre

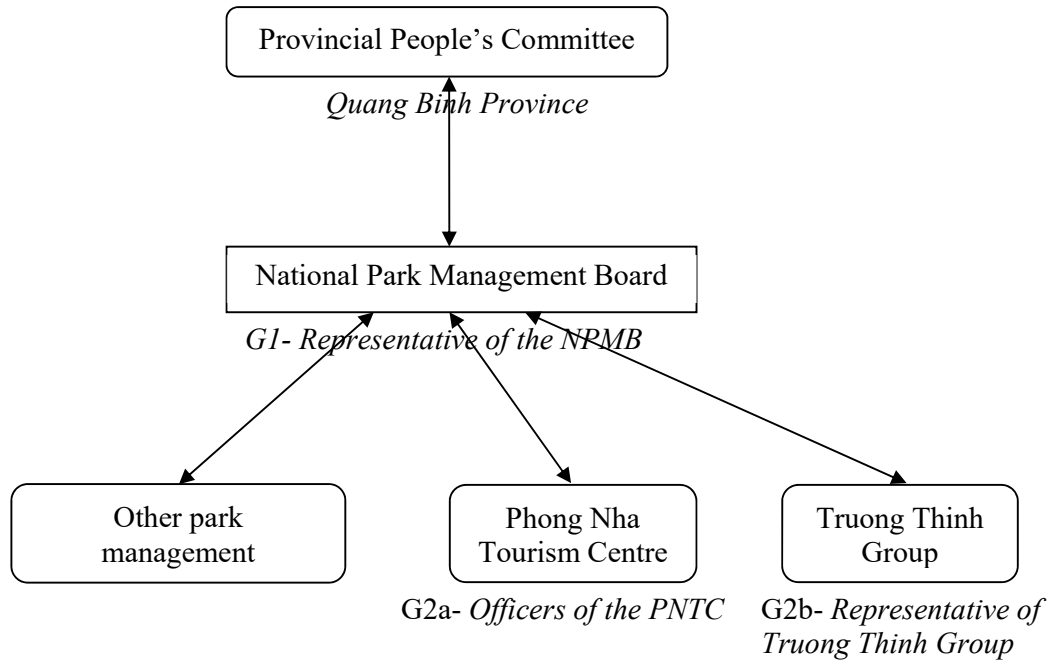


Figure 4. Key Stakeholders of the Co-existing Management Model



Figure 5. The Paradise Cave Site



Figure 6. Transiting Tourists by Boats within Phong Nha Water Cave



Figure7. Eight Heroic Volunteers Cave Site



Figure8. Tourists Using Kayak Boats at Nuoc Mooc Eco-trail Site

Table 1. Questions for Assessing Management Effectiveness of the PNKB NP

| Elements of Management Cycle | Context | Planning | Inputs | Process | Outputs | Outcomes |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| Focus of Evaluation | Assessment of importance, threats and policy environment | Assessment of park design and planning | Assessment of resources needed for management | Assessment the way in which management is conducted | Assessment of the implementation of management programs and actions | Assessment of the outcomes and the extent to which they achieved objectives |
| Major Questions | Where are we now? | Where do we want to be? How do we get there? | What do we need? | How do we go about management? | What do we do and what products or services were produced? | What did we achieve? |
| Follow-up Questions | What are the values and significance of the area? What are the threats and opportunities? Who are involved? | Is the legal tenure of the site clear? How adequate is the protected area system? | What resources are needed for effective management? Are sufficient resources being involved to managing the park system? | Are agreed policy and procedures in place and being followed? How can the management practices be improved? | Has the management plan and work program been implemented? What are the results or outputs of management? | Has management resulted in the achievement of the objectives of, and desired outcomes for, the park? |

Source: Adapted from Hocking et al. (2006)

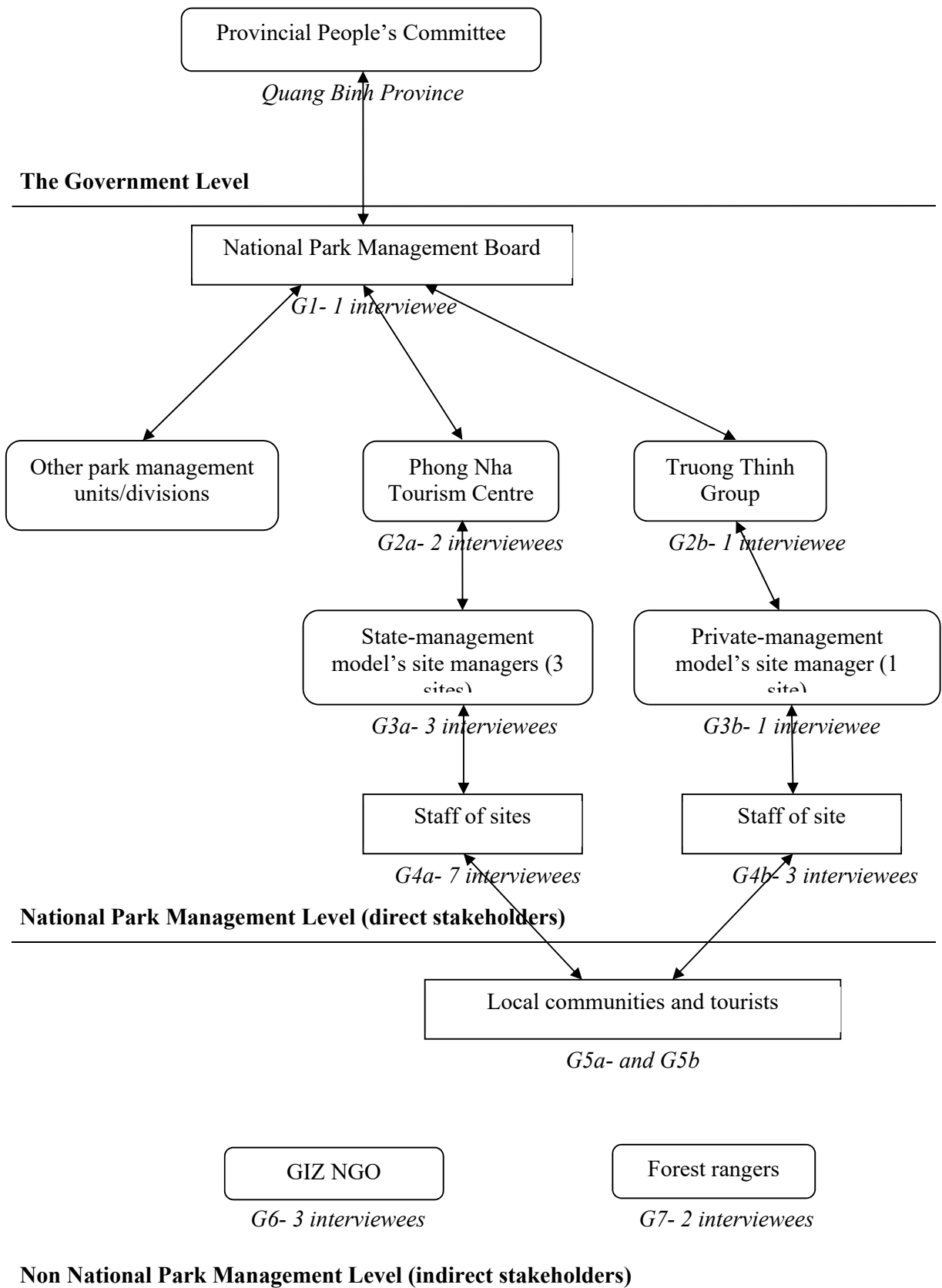


Figure 9. Stakeholder Interviews on Park Tourism Management

Outcomes: Sardine and Catfish Effect

- Impact of private-management model: the Truong Thinh

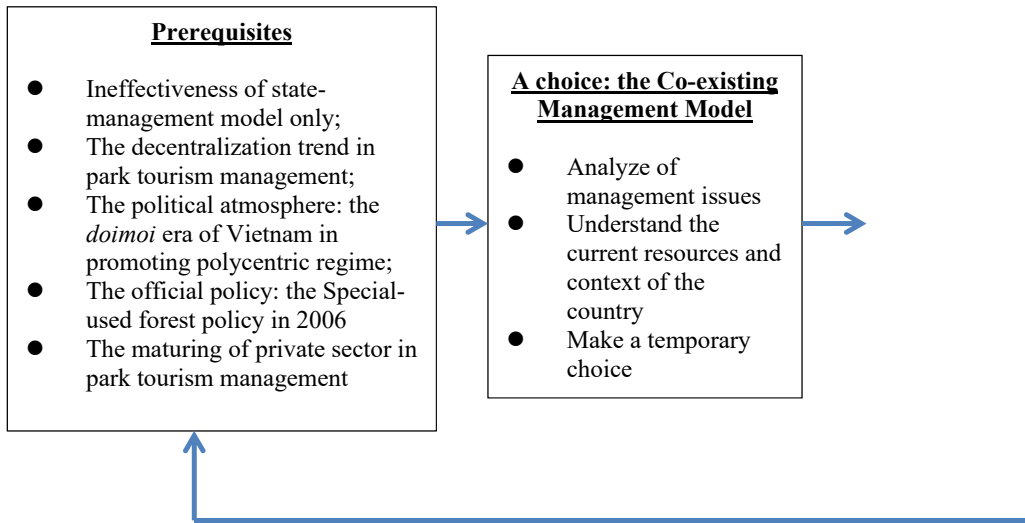


Figure 10. The Choice of Vietnamese Park Management Models