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The Integration of Tourists into Sustainable Heritage Management:

An experience of forest management based on the partnership between government, local community, NGO and tourists



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INTRODUCTION

- In recent years, there has been a great deal of afforestation activity in China.
- “*Forest Ecology Programs*” such as the “*Mountain Afforestation Program*” ---as national projects.
- At present, **international cooperation** between private groups and tourists from foreign countries, and local administrative organizations and inhabitants has been making progress in various areas in the interior of China.
- However, cooperative enterprises undertaken by such domestic and foreign participants have been **largely limited to instances of transient events**.
- The reality is that **formation of equal collaborations and partnerships by a wide range of participants** aimed at achieving sustainable forest management is **as yet inadequate**.

PURPOSE of MY PRESENTATION

- to present the afforestation activities of "*IEGC (Organization for International Exchange of Green-Culture, Japan)*," an NGO that was established mainly by young researchers and students, including the author.
- This presentation attempts to understand the benefits and problems of afforestation endeavors, *including tourism*, and look into the potential of the formation of a "*forest community*" through a tripartite collaboration comprising the local administration, local inhabitants, and tourists (offshore residents).



ISSUES

of FOREST MANAGEMENT in CHINA

- The overcutting of forests has resulted in *floods and other disasters*, which has led to the frequent occurrence of a wide range of problems, including great difficulties in the *restoration of wooden cultural assets*.
- Consequently, interest has come to focus on the public interest functions of forests.
- In contrast, almost no discussions have taken place about forest management, and not much consideration has been given to *the concrete roles of the local inhabitants and tourists....*





**Traditional wooden
buildings having
restoration
difficulties due to
the lack of wood**

In order to carry out the appropriate management of natural resources....

- there is a need for proper administrative guidance.
- At the same time *local inhabitants and tourists must have a deep understanding* of forest management as well as *actively and voluntarily participate in it*.
- In the case of areas that do not have such a partnership, there are high expectations toward the role of *NGOs* as “*third sector organizations*”, which lead toward the development of a framework of sustainable forest management based on collaborative management between local administration, local inhabitants, and tourists.

The IEGC

- The IEGC (established in 1999) was founded by graduate students of the graduate school of Tokyo University (including visiting students from China and Japanese students, all in their thirties or younger) who shared a common recognition of such issues.
- The objectives of IEGC are "*regional development through afforestation activity*" and "*international interchange between different cultures.*"
- The initial members of IEGC decided to focus its main activities on a farm village on the outskirts of *Lijiang in Yunnan Province.*



The IEGC

- having received subsidies from Japanese foundations since 1999, the IEGC goes onsite every year in a group of 10-20 people, including tourists in addition to group members, in order to carry out afforestation activities called "*Green Hope Project and Environmental Education Undertaking.*"
- In addition, the young researchers and graduate students who are the regular IEGC members have made the IEGC *a place of interdisciplinary research activities*, including agriculture and the humanities, urban engineering, ecology, environmental education, and cultural anthropology.

THE SETTING OF ACTIVITY CONTENT AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

- IEGC is carrying out an afforestation project with the cooperation of the local administration, local inhabitants, and elementary and junior high schools on lands where cultivation has been abandoned, and the riverbeds along the *Chang Jiang*.
- The objective of this project is to alleviate flooding, restore places that have been devastated, recover the natural ecosystem, and to elevate the environmental awareness of the people by assigning this forest a role in environmental education.

- Nonetheless, from the very beginning of the project it has been difficult for participants to gain an understanding regarding the various related targets.
- In order to eliminate difficulties in theoretical understanding, the initial activity targets were simply defined as “***communicating the enjoyment of forest management to children and inhabitants***”.
- For this reason, ***edible fruit trees*** were chosen for the first tree-plantings so that people would be able to see the concrete benefits of planting commercial trees within a short time.



- More specifically, chestnuts, pear trees, and walnut trees were chosen.
- These are regional fruit trees that the local inhabitants were familiar with.



A pear tree

- These trees produced concrete benefits leading to the short-term goal of bearing fruit within 3 to 4 years, which could be seen by children and participating tourists.



- *The tourists*

took part, paying their own expenses, in annual ten-day afforestation tours sponsored by IEGC, in which they contributed their own labor. Besides IEGC members, groups of around 20 tourists comprised largely of university students and retirees have taken part annually in the tours, and the repeat rate is remarkably high.



BEVEFITS of ACTIVITIES (1)

Local youth member and NGO member carry out a survey for an afforestation project

- IEGC, namely, *interdisciplinary young researchers*, plan their activities from the standpoint of their respective technical specialties while respecting the basic structure of the community, and tourists who approve of this participate in the program at their own expense.

BEVEFITS of ACTIVITIES (2)

*a meeting with
local authorities*

- By securing *the support and cooperation of the local administrative bodies*, the local inhabitants have become aware that the activities of *IEGC* are *"interdisciplinary, international NGO activities."* Consequently, it has become possible for them to be accepted as tourists and members of an NGO by the local community.

*Commemoration monument
established by local authorities:
NGO staff explain to local children*



BEVEFITS of ACTIVITIES (3)

Local and Japanese students celebrate after the afforestation activities

- Working in collaboration with the local inhabitants, *the tourists carry out exactly the same tasks as the inhabitants.*
- Besides such tasks, IEGC frequently arranges meetings for interchange with the local inhabitants and for exchanging views. Such meetings encourage proper understanding of the local community and forest-related issues. In addition, *interchange meetings are also arranged between students.*
- The building of friendly, forward-looking relationships is paving the way for high percentage of repeaters.

CONCLUSION:

The Key to Success

in the activities of the NGO



(1) Interdisciplinary Research

(2) Education

(3) Strategy

(1) Interdisciplinary Research

- This NGO was established based on the research know-how contributed by young researchers participating from a variety of fields.
- All the members are *in their thirties or below*, and by not adhering simply to already existing study fields, makes it possible for them to progress into *an interdisciplinary discussion*.
- This factor contributes largely to (2) education.

(2) Education

- The aim of these afforestation activities is based on the development of an *“environment education forest” for children*, allowing primary and junior high school pupils in the area to actually take part in the planting work.
- In this way, the organization succeeds in gathering the attentions of a broad range of people beginning with the parents of the children, teachers and scholars, a comparatively high level of educated society, and *domestic and international tourists*.

(3) Strategy

- Having received the offer from the local government of an abandoned cultivation area within the village, that area became the target of afforestation.
- In this way, the inhabitants can actually see the effects of plantation.
- Furthermore, the species of trees planted in the beginning are fruit trees, which have traditionally been used by the local inhabitants for food. This fact links to the creation of a concrete sense of purpose in which some years later, the trees can be harvested for food, thus, in the minds of the tourists and inhabitants, triggering a positive consciousness for the revisit to the forest and the management of it.

The role of tourists

- The role of tourists who have become *repeaters* is to make regular visits to the locality while living elsewhere and to provide labor, new information, and other support.
- The role carried out by the tourists also deserves attention in their aspect of making the inhabitants discover new value systems.



TO BE CONTINUED ...

