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Governance of Marine Protected Areas in Developing Countries: an Analysis Framework. Evidence from Thailand

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is the design of an analysis framework for the governance of MPAs in developing countries. The working-out of this analysis framework makes use of contributions from the governance of hazardous activities, the interactive fisheries governance, the ecosystem-based management applied to marine protected areas, the MPAs governance indicators, the anthropology of brokerage. This analysis framework takes in count four main issues of the MPAs governance in developing countries pointed out from two representative case studies (Mu Ko Chumphon National Park in Thailand and Ca Mau National Park in Vietnam): the revitalization of regulatory systems of the access to fisheries resources, the simplification of the administrative processes, the control of the demographic pressure which result from a high increase of the populations and a strong mobility, the lowering of the economic vulnerability and poverty alleviation due to the deregulation. This analysis framework makes it possible to characterize the governance systems and to put forward the weaknesses: the excessive role play by the international organizations, the too sectorial and technical aspect of fisheries management measures, the incomplete decentralization, the fragmentation of the States and the civil society. To mitigate these deficiencies, four general public policy options adapted to developing countries are proposed.

Key words

Marine protected area, governance systems, analysis framework, Thailand, public policy options

The need for an analysis framework and its inspiration sources

In order to identify marine protected areas (MPAs) governance issues in developing countries, and propose suitable public policy options, a complete statement of governance for each MPA or network of MPAs is required, while a literature review has shown the dominance of a normative or prescriptive approach towards good governance principles to the detriment of thorough analyses (Noël and Weigel, 2007). This leads one to the conclusion that, first, there is a lack of analysis framework for MPAs' governance and, second, this framework has to take into account the governance particularities in developing countries.

The research effort on MPA governance in developing countries suppose to shift from environmental or fisheries science to political science or socio-anthropology of development, and so to include new theoretical and methodological sources which could be the governance analytical framework, the interactive governance, the inclusive governance of hazardous activities, the socio-anthropology of mediations and brokerage. Due to these new sources, governance can be regarded as a tool, first, to understand the processes of interactions between the actors involved in a collective action that leads to the formulation of social norms and, second, to grasp the complexity of these interactions in developing countries due to the plurality and intricacy of socio-economic organizations, the socio-cultural features as well as the emergence of new mediators and development brokers.

The institutional context of the elaboration of an analysis framework for the MPAs' governance is the AMPHORE Project funded by the French National Research Agency. Governance characteristics in developing countries through the Thai example have been pointed out in the frame of ECOST Project funded by the European Commission and SAMPAN Project funded by the French Agency for Development (AFD). A sample-based survey on the five components of governance and investigations on legislative and regulatory framework have been completed in Mu Ko Chumphon National Park (Gulf of Thailand).

The contents of the analysis framework and the characterization of governance systems

The analysis framework for MPAs' governance can be divided in five components (problems, actors, nodal points, norms and processes) connected as follows: the collective action by a plurality of actors including individuals and institutions (to be identified and classified) causes interactions which converge to nodal points where the problems are discussed, and which lead to the formulation of norms through a series of sequences defining an evolutive process (Hufty *et al*, 2007).

The problems

The environmental and socio-economic contexts of developing countries impose some common but also particular constraints on the governance of MPAs (Weigel *et al*, 2007; Christie *et al*, 2007). The twenty four Thai MPAs covering 6231 km² are not exempted from the following problems:

- an accelerated loss of biodiversity and declining fish stocks due mainly to a natural resource overexploitation
- a strong demographic pressure in and around MPAs resulting from a high increase in population and a strong mobility of natural resource users
- an inefficient controlled access to marine resources leading to inter- and intra-sectoral conflicts and linked to a low enforcement capacity
- a pauperization of natural resource users communities related to the rent dissipation and the overcapacity, and to the lack of economic alternatives
- an unequal wealth distribution which hampers the reconversion of residents
- inconsistent or fragmented policies and programs for sustainable natural resource uses with continued investments in production-oriented programs while resources decrease
- a weak institutional and stakeholder capacity to plan and implement natural resource uses connected with the absence of incentives and inadequate technical and financial support

The actors

The classification of actors involved in MPAs makes possible a typology according to their origin (civil society, formal sector actors, state actors), to their community (belonging, membership,

administration), to their organization (unintentional, intentional, bureaucratic, market-related), to their social commitment (voluntary or hierarchical), in order to analyze their interactions. As an application of this typology, some actors of civil society can be presented.

In and around Thai MPAs, major active actors from civil society are, on the one hand, coastal or island communities (mainly fishers, farmers, informal sector workers) organized in village committees, and international NGOs on the other hand. Coastal and island communities can be considered as complex and deeply embedded arrangements of people with kinship, generational, religious, economic and political ties: the best example is the Moken (sea gypsies) community in Mu Ko Surin or Mu Ko Similan National Parks. MPAs residents are defined by their unintentional belonging to coastal or island communities, their intentional and voluntary membership of village committees, their market-related and voluntary membership of producers associations.

Local NGOs like *Seub Nakhasathien* Foundation, and international NGOs like WWF, IUCN or UNESCO involved in Thai MPAs, are intentionally and deeply concerned by conservation policies and by development or cultural heritage policies concerning local communities thanks to international donors. Local NGOs can be likened to mediators or, in some cases, to development brokers insofar as they managed a proportion of the «development rent».

The nodal points, the norms and processes

Nodal points are real or virtual spaces, physical or institutional places, a forum or arena, around which the interaction of actors get organized. Household surveys in Mu Ko Chumphon National Park and at its periphery allows to point out the main nodal points: the village committees, the fishers or producers associations, the hotel-keepers or diving clubs associations, the Community Development Department or Fisheries Department sub-district offices, the *tambon* (sub-district) administrative councils within the frame of 1994 *Tambon* Administrative Organization.

The constitutive norms defining the organizational and institutional mechanisms as well as the regulating norms defining the rules of conduct can be legal (statute law) or informal (referring to practices of actors). Surveys carried out in and around MPAs show a contrasted situation: on the one hand the unicity of norms imposed by the Direction of National Parks in the MPAs, on the other hand a plurality of norms at the periphery of MPAs. Quasi-fixed processes inside MPAs contrast with evolutive processes around MPAs; these evolutive processes are also distinguishing the governance of ecosystems along the Thai seashore following a relative delegation of powers granted by the community-based management policy in the 1990s.

The adopted analysis framework makes possible the characterization of different MPAs governance systems in developing countries: hierarchical systems with the predominance of the paradigm of authority, systems of community concession with a predominance of paradigm of mutual confidence, systems of competing legitimacies between communities and state authorities which reveal the difficulty to hang together the paradigms of authority and of mutual confidence (Weigel *et al*, 2007). In Thailand, the governance system of MPAs is marked by a hierarchical system: the norms are quasi-exclusively established by the State and the sequences defining evolutive processes are reduced, the number and activity of nodal points are weak. At the opposite, the governance system at the periphery of each Thai MPA comes under a heterarchy (defined as an auto-organized steering of various communities, formal sector actors and state actors) which favours a consensus and a strengthening of the community identity (Weigel *et al*, 2008). The results of surveys and investigations on Thai MPAs governance lead to propose five public policy options: the revitalization of regulatory systems of access to renewable natural resources to control the demographic pressure in and around MPAs and decrease the overexploitation, the lowering of economic vulnerability and poverty alleviation of MPAs residents by the management of overcapacity and the development of new opportunities, the strengthening of coherence of policies and programs to further adequate interagency coordination mechanisms and efficient law enforcement, the reinforcement of institutional and stakeholders capacity with incentives to support sustainable renewable natural resources uses.

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