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### The Institutional Sustainability in Protected Area Tourism—Case Studies of Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area, China and New Forest National Park, UK

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## **The Institutional Sustainability in Protected Area Tourism—Case Studies of Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area, China and New Forest National Park, UK**

自然保护区旅游的制度可持续性—

中国九寨沟和英国新森林的案例研究

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This paper considers sustainable tourism development in two protected areas, Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area in China and the New Forest National Park in the UK. An inductive approach is used to explore the ‘fourth component’ of sustainable tourism development that is institutional sustainability. Primary data from in-depth interviews, together with a range of secondary data sources, are analysed to understand the governance and management of each area. These reveal that whilst each area is committed to sustainable development their approaches differ because of the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts. The implications for policy and practice are then discussed.

**KEYWORDS.** National park, sustainable tourism, Jiuzhaigou, New Forest, institutional sustainability

本文对中国九寨沟国家风景名胜区和英国新森林国家公园的可持旅游行了比研究。文章采用演法探可持旅游的第四个度，制度可持性。通深度采

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数据以及一系列二手资料的分析，文章探讨了制度可持续性如何影响两个案例区的公园管制和管理。研究结果表明，尽管两个案例区都致力于可持续发展，可是由于不同的政治，经济和社会文化背景，两个保护区却有着不同的可持续发展模式。文章对两个案例区提出了相应的策略和建议。

关键词：自然保护区， 可持续旅游， 九寨沟， 新森林， 制度可持续性

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## Introduction

Protected areas contain some of the planet's most important ecosystems and many also 'serve as important cultural places where people contemplate and understand the natural world through visitation and tourism' (Eagleset al., 2013, p. 60). Different protection is afforded to these natural

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areas and activities such as tourism are managed in varying ways, influenced by the area's categorisation by national and international organisations. International guidelines are provided, for example, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1994) and their second category of protected area is National Park. These areas 'provide protection for functioning ecosystems, but tend to be more lenient with human visitation and the supporting infrastructure' (United Nations Environment Programme, 2013) and can contribute to their local economy through educational and recreational tourism; but like other protected areas, there is no single approach adopted as to their management.

However, tourism activities and facilities can create major threats to ecological integrity (Rollins & Robinson, 2002) and globally, many national parks are under increasing pressure to provide more visitor facilities; increase the provision of overnight accommodation; accommodate more visitors and provide different types of visitor activities (Huang, Deng, Li & Zhong, 2008). As commercial temptations may override conservation concerns (Novelli & Scarth, 2007), Boyd (2000, p. 162) argues that: '...attention must shift towards how tourism, in line with sustainability principles, is planned, developed and managed to suit national park environments'.

Cater (2000, p. 474) summarises the inadequacies of sustainable tourism as 'a failure to recognize the economic and societal contexts at all spatial levels, from the global to the local, in which it is cast as a process'. The implication for sustainable tourism in protected areas is particularly challenging as it involves different stakeholders with contrasting obligations and interests (McCool, 2009). At a national level, governance is important and at a local level

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management works within the governance framework (Eagles, 2009). Of major importance therefore, is ‘the institutional framework, within which activities are conceived, planned, funded, implemented, and managed’ (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 1990, p.4); that is the institutional sustainability. Additionally, culture is a critical factor contributing to conflicts and challenges in the implementation of sustainability (Hawkes, 2001) and a cross-cultural context is therefore important in understanding the management of national parks (Hall & Frost, 2009). Hence, a practical insight of sustainable tourism development in national parks with a consideration of values, systems and practices in other cultures, contribute to an understanding of sustainability. Because sustainable tourism has been described as a ‘western construct’, when applied to developing countries, careful consideration is needed (Lu & Nepal, 2009).

This paper uses an inductive approach to consider the management of tourism in two protected areas, Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area in China and the New Forest National Park in the UK. The rationale for selecting these two particular case studies goes beyond the political, social and economic contrasts between the two countries. Further differences include the New Forest having had a long history of tourism, whilst it is one of only decades at Jiuzhaigou. Also, the New Forest National Park is recognised as a National Park by the IUCN, whilst Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area is not yet recognised internationally in the same way. However, Wang, Chen & Gao (2011) note that since the 1990s, national scenic areas have begun to be officially promoted as national parks in China. Thus for the convenience of comparison in this paper, the term ‘national park’ is used to refer to both case study areas. Also, there is an important commonality, in that each area has a local population living within them, making them very different from the North American concept of parks, which contain large amounts of wilderness

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area, without human development (Frost & Hall, 2009). Consequently, how to develop tourism activities, conserve the ecosystem and support the wellbeing of local communities, are important issues for both areas. This research, however, concentrates on governance and institutional sustainability and how they influence the different approaches to sustainable tourism in these areas. This research is therefore important as Smith, Muir, Walpole, Balmford & Leader-Williams (2003) found that better quality governance of parks leads to higher quality biodiversity conservation and Eagles (2009) suggests that more research is needed in this area.

## Literature Review

### *Institutional Sustainability*

The mainstream concept of sustainable development supports a balance between environment, economic, and social sustainability (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). However, besides these traditional dimensions, there is a fourth dimension of sustainability, namely institutional sustainability, sometimes referred to as cultural sustainability. This has only recently been considered in the tourism literature (Cottrell & Cutumisu, 2006; Cottrell & Raadik, 2008), but is a key factor influencing the implementation of other dimensions of sustainability (Johnson & Wilson, 2000; Puhakka, Sarkki, Cottrell & Siikamaki, 2009). Agenda 21 consequently recognizes sustainability has having four dimensions, social, economic, environmental and institutional (Spangenberg, Pfahl & Deller, 2002). Spangenberg et al. (2002) argued that institutional sustainability is a broader concept than simply referring to an institution; it should also refer to institutional mechanisms, such as procedures, legal norms and societal

norms. They explain further that this should include ‘the system of rules governing the interaction of members of a society’ (p. 66). According to Puhakka et al.(2009, p. 532) institutional sustainability refers to the ‘institutional flexibility to new circumstances to adapt to the challenges of changing social-ecological systems’. In this conceptualisation, an institution is based on neo-institutionalism and it refers to ‘the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction’ (North, 1991, p. 97). Although different disciplines have focus differently on the concept of institution, they tend to agree that institutions can be understood as the rules by which political decision making and implementation are structured (Spangenberg et al., 2002). This emphasis on how institutions work has an inherent impact on sustainability (Pfaha, 2005).

Broadly, several efforts have been made in conceptualizing institutional sustainability. Jorissen et al. (1999) suggest six principles for political-institutional sustainability, which include responsiveness, reflexivity, steering capacity, balance of power, self-organization and conformity to expectations. Pfaha (2005) develops a set of criteria for institutional sustainability which include public participation in decision making, transparency, accountability and support for decisions. These guidelines are very generic and highly abstract and need to be discussed further when applied to specific cases (Vogelpohl & Aggesta, 2012 ).

In a national park context, institutional sustainability relates to whether park agencies can govern and facilitate changes (Cottrell & Cutumisu, 2006). March and Olsen (1984) suggest that the relationship of governance and institutional sustainability reflects the dialectic relationship between agency and structure. In this paper, governance is conceptualized as one specific form

of institution that regulates the behaviour of actors. Governance, as public policy, represents the central rules governing the behaviour of individuals and organizations (Pierson, 2006), reflecting the principles of institutional sustainability (Sidney, 2007). In environmental politics, governance is regarded as a way of enhancing the legitimacy of environmental policies to achieve sustainability (Backstrand et al. 2010). Vogelpohl and Aggestam (2012) agreed that governance as public policy affects the sustainability performance of a given sector and should be regarded as one of the main components of institutional sustainability. In the remainder of the literature review, we consider how the development of national parks, their governance, the park authorities and the local community influence sustainable park management.

## ***The Development of Parks***

The focus of park management has changed over the years (Rollins & Robinson, 2002). In the early days of park management, the focus was on preservation. Large lands were left undeveloped, with no active human intervention, as evidenced in Yellowstone National Park, US. Later, the focus of management was on environmental protection rather than preservation. As the concept of national parks spread from North America around the world, it evolved to adapt to the various physical, political and social environments locally.

The two over-arching purposes of national parks are conservation and recreation (Eagles & McCool, 2002). Barros (2005) suggests the western perspective tends to see a tension between these two aspects and that it is resolved in ways determined not only by the natural environment



of the park but also the political, economic and legal frameworks within which it operates. However, in many developing countries, parks are set up not only for environmental protection and recreation, but also as engines for sustainable rural development (Novelli & Scarth, 2007). This has led to a new model of integrated management being suggested, with attention being given to the integration of the ecosystem, tourism and scientific and community development (Mose & Weixlbaumer, 2007). Finally, parks are also used to demonstrate national identity and unity (Frost & Hall, 2009; Wang et al., 2011).

## **Park Governance and Its Relationship to Institutional Sustainability**

The concept of governance is not new, but its relevance to protected areas is a relatively new area of research (Eagles et al., 2013). The governance of protected areas refers to the regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations that determine the direction of management, the use of power, and how stakeholders are included in decision-making (Eagles 2009). Balloffet & Martin (2007) believe the quality of governance significantly influences the achievement of sustainability in protected areas. Ervin (2007) agrees that governance is important for increasing the ecological connectivity across landscapes and enhancing long term sustainability in protected areas. Balloffet & Martin (2007) supports that by stating governance contributes to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of protected areas. Furthermore, Borrini-Feyerabend, Johnston and Pansky(2006) suggest the governance model of a protected area determines whether the protected area achieves its management objectives; whether it has the support of local communities, politicians and the broader society; and whether it is sustainable. In summary, the

governance model of protected areas influence sustainability in terms of the effectiveness of management, the fairness of sustainability and the long term sustainable development.

The influence of institutional sustainability on governance includes political, cultural, norms and values (Spangenberg et al., 2002). The political structure of a country influences park administration (Landorf, 2009), particularly who manages the parks and who establishes what the roles and responsibilities are for achieving sustainable tourism. The complexity of tourism management in parks is frequently underestimated; park managers must deal with the demands of visitors, local residents, regional interests, the national government and the private tourism industry (Eagles & McCool, 2002). Eagles (2009) suggests that there are four key elements of governance in protected areas, namely, (1) the management body and its power; (2) the sources of income; (3) the ownership of resources and (4) the community involvement.

He identifies five types of management bodies: (1) a government agency; (2) a parastatal (that is a government owned corporation); (3) a non-profit organization; (4) a for-profit company and (5) a community. There is, however, an emerging trend of co-management in parks, for example, a combination of government agency and local communities, as in the case of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Australia (Brown, 2012). However, there is relatively little research published regarding the role of park agencies (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007).

Funding is fundamental to effective governance (Balloffet & Martin, 2007) and income, Eagles (2009) suggests, derives in three ways, through taxes, users' fees and donations. In cases where the majority of the park budget is provided by government, typically from general tax revenue, user fees maybe non-existent or very low, (Eagles & McCool, 2002). In other parks there may be

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a balance between government grants, derived from taxes, and user fees, derived from park visitors. However, over time they suggest the balance is shifting from taxes to user fee revenue. In the third instance, the user fees provide the largest proportion of a park budget. This is usually the case in countries with low tax-earning ability and strong competing demands for government resources. User fees are found to be cost-effective, improve park management, enable better visitor facilities and services and engender more positive public attitudes towards the park and the park agency (Eagles & McCool, 2002). Yet, there are strong concerns among many environmental groups that user-pay systems will lead to commercialization of parks, to the detriment of environmental quality (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

Ownership can be through a government agency; a non-profit institution; a for-profit corporation or a community. Home (2009) argues that land ownership has a significant influence on environmental protection. Geographically and over time, different combinations of these three elements, the management body, income source and land ownership have merged into four key models of park governance.

The most common and popular model is the national park model, often referred to as the ‘American model’, with government funding from social taxes and a government agency managing the park (Eagles, 2009). The UK has used this traditional model (Thompson, 2005), although it has been criticised as ineffective as it can concentrate too much on politics (Crompton, 1999). An alternative is the parastatal approach in which the park is owned or controlled partly by the government with the majority of funding coming from tourism fees and charges. This has been found to be financially efficient (Eagles et al., 2013). A third approach,

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popular in the USA, China and New Zealand, is the emergence of a public for profit model, whereby a government owns the resources, but park services are delivered by outsourcing for profit to companies (Buteau-Duitschaeffer, McCutcheon, Eagles, Havitz & Glover, 2010). A fourth model is a public non-profit combination model, where a government owns the resources but management and financing are undertaken by a combination of private and public bodies, such as ‘friends of’ groups and local volunteer agencies. This has been adopted in some Canadian parks and Eagles (2009) suggests that this model provides evidence of good governance.

In developing countries, such as China, Indonesia and South Africa, the economic benefits of tourism are one of the main drivers for the establishment of national parks (Frost & Hall, 2009) and the parastatal approach and public for profit model have been widely adopted in China (Su, Wall & Eagles, 2007). Eagles et al. (2013) observe that there is a tendency for parks to become more financially independent from their government.

The balance of power and communication with other stakeholders is a key element of institutional sustainability and in the next section we consider management relationships with the local community.

## **Community Involvement in Park Tourism**

In the past, protected area management has tended to treat people and nature as separate entities (Novelli & Scarth, 2007), however, the 5<sup>th</sup> World Parks Congress in 2003 emphasised that the local community with appropriate education, should participate in decision making and should

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become the co-protector of the natural resource (Eagles, 2004). This can be evidenced in many developed countries, for example, in Britain, the Countryside Agency (1995) emphasised the focus of community involvement in its advisory booklet on sustainable rural tourism. However, in developing countries, there are often conflicts between indigenous peoples and the protected area (Hannam, 2005). Nepal (2000, p.73) argues that ‘... if parks and protected areas are to remain viable in future, local communities must be given a greater role in park management, and livelihood issues must be adequately addressed in park policies’.

Community involvement in tourism includes both sharing the benefits of tourism development and participation in the decision making process of tourism planning. Benefit sharing is commonly accepted in many national parks in which the local people engage in different forms of tourism business activities, such as acting as tour guides, selling handcrafts and souvenir (Xu & Wall, 2007). However, involvement in management and planning is still debatable. Local involvement in park planning is one of the sustainability principles identified by Boyd (2000) and has become a focus of research (Hall, 2000; Nepal, 2000; Haukeland, 2011). However, Tosun (2000) argues that there are operational, structural and cultural constraints for local communities to become involved in tourism planning, particularly in developing countries. Boyd (2000) also suggests that the local community might not always be in the best position to make appropriate decisions and to take effective action when planning in parks is involved, as most communities are usually small, rural communities who may face cultural and social constraints to their participation. Besides, as the communities have strong business and financial interests in a park, they usually have a greater interest in the economy than the biodiversity of the park (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

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A review of the literature suggests that community involvement in management includes the transfer of ownership of protected areas (Brown & Kothari, 2011) to joint management with indigenous people, such as in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Australia. A variety of shared governance-stewardship models were also found (Ballofett & Martin, 2007).

## Case Study Areas

The two study areas in this research are the New Forest National Park in the UK and the Jiuzhaigou National Scenic Area in China. Jiuzhaigou is located in Sichuan province in south west China and covers an area of 651km<sup>2</sup>. The New Forest is located in southern England, with an area of 571 km<sup>2</sup>.

The two protected areas are similar in size, have similar features of natural and cultural landscape, have large local communities living in and around the area, and tourism development is important in both areas. Detailed information about the two parks and their current governance models can be found in Table 1. In Jiuzhaigou, a parastatal model is used, whilst a traditional national park model is used in the New Forest.

## Methodology

A case study is a research strategy which usually studies one or a small number of cases in detail, and uses whichever methods seem appropriate as the objective is to develop as full an understanding of the case as possible (Punch, 2005). Yin (1994) describes a case study as an

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empirical inquiry in which multiple sources of evidence are used. In this research, a multiple case study has been used.

A combination of secondary data from Chinese and UK sources and primary data from interviews and field observation were used in this case study. Interviews are a good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005). As Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000) note, semi-structured interviews provide the flexibility of the unstructured interview but with comparability of key questions. It allows the interviewees to develop ideas and to talk more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. Thus, semi structured interviews were chosen in this research. Pilot interviews were carried out to check the wording of the interview schedule; minor changes were subsequently made to ensure the clarity of the questions. A total of twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, (a list of interviewees can be found in Table 2). For confidentiality, the names of interviewees have been replaced by pseudonyms. Five interviewees represented the national park management (two in the New Forest and three in Jiuzhaigou); questions were asked about the role of tourism in the park; their views of local communities and visitor management strategies in the park. Then as tourism is a relatively new phenomenon in Jiuzhaigou, a further seven interviews were conducted with residents. A local interpreter nominated by the village head man (Valentine, 2005) was used, as the researcher was unable to speak the Tibetan dialect. Interviewees were chosen with a snowball sampling technique starting with the village head man. Questions were asked about the residents' involvement in tourism; the perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism; the benefit from tourism and the role of the national park authority in the development of the park. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes,

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interviews 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were recorded and transcribed. The remaining interviewees did not consent to being recorded, so notes were taken during those interviews, a regrettable but unavoidable limitation (Denscombe, 2007). A further limitation was that interviews could not be undertaken with residents in the New Forest because of time and economic constraints. However, because tourism has been established in the area over a considerable period of time and because there is quite a considerable literature detailing community involvement in the public domain, this use of secondary rather than primary data was not considered to be problematic.

Field trips were undertaken to each study area to observe current levels of tourism development and observations of existing tourism activities were recorded through field notes (Sarantakos, 2013). Secondary data from tourism planning reports, visitor surveys and management plans from the two areas were collected, as was legislation and regulation related to national parks in the two countries. Thematic analysis was used to analyse both primary and secondary data (Seale, 2004). Open coding was used first to develop a coding framework and code the transcripts and other documents (Sarantakos, 2013). Working iteratively and integrating the analyses of the various data sets, enabled categories to be developed and finally the key themes emerged, such as the responsibilities of the organisations.

Sarantakos (2013) describes numerous criteria for evaluating qualitative research, but this study adopts validity and credibility as being the most pertinent. First, consideration can be given to whether the findings are valid and it is argued that this research has ecological validity as in Sarantakos's words it was 'carried out in the natural environment of the subjects, using suitable



methods and taking into consideration the life and conditions of the researched' (p. 102). Credibility is often used as a way of assessing reliability and refers to how believable the findings are: in response, it is suggested that this research has been carried out in accordance with good practice and is therefore credible. Finally, it is suggested that multiple researchers undertake a study and in this research that recommendation was enhanced through collaboration by researchers of both Chinese and British nationalities.

## **Results and Discussion**

Although there are some similarities between the two areas, they have very different approaches to tourism development in terms of the governance model; the influence of park authorities; the role of tourism and of local communities.

### ***Governance at the National Level***

In Britain, during the early 20th century, there were increasing public demands for access to the countryside, culminating in 1949 when an Act of Parliament was passed establishing national parks to preserve and enhance their natural beauty and provide recreational opportunities for the public (Miller, Dickinson & Pearlman-Houghie, 2000). The Peak District was the first of 10 to be designated under the legislation. In 1977, the Council for National Parks was created to be responsible for managing and protecting national parks in the country. Today, there are 15 national parks in the UK (ten in England, three in Wales, two in Scotland) (Natural England, 2010).

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Parks were originally managed by local committees made up of members from County Councils and were therefore little more than extensions of local government (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). Since the 1995 Environmental Act, all National Park Authorities (NPAs) have become independent bodies (Thompson, 2005), which are managed by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The NPAs role is about planning; they produce management plans, and in terms of tourism, are able to provide facilities such as car parking and visitor and information/education services. Their role 'requires them to foster local socioeconomic wellbeing and to follow the principles of sustainable tourism development, but within an ecocentric bias in favour of conservation over development' (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007,p561), the so called 'Sandford Principle'. This recommendation, named after Lord Sandford, states, "Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority" (National Parks, 2011). This change was made to address the growing recreational pressure in parks. The NPA's responsibilities require them to work in partnership with other bodies and organizations, from tourist boards to conservation groups (Sharpley, 2009).

In China, the idea of protecting natural beauty and providing recreational activities appeared in the 1930s, but it was not until 1982, that the first National Scenic Area, Zhangjiajie, was established to protect its unique natural ecosystem and associated species (Deng, Qiang, Walker& Zhang, 2003). On 1st Dec, 2006, a new 'National Scenic Area Management Act' was approved by the State Council (MHUD, 2011). According to these Regulations and Acts, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development of the People's Republic of China (MHUD) is currently responsible for the management of 208 National Scenic Areas in China, of which 22

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are also recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as World Heritage Sites (MHUD, 2011).

The concept of a national park ‘has been, and still is evolving in to a genuine variety of many innovative park programs’ (Wang et al., 2011, p. 893). The Chinese National Scenic Area Planning Act (2.0.1) states that: ‘Scenic Areas refer to areas with scenic attractions, a beautiful environment, which provide recreational and appreciation opportunities for visitors and scientific research...*National Parks in western countries are **equal** to National Scenic Areas in China*’ (The Central Government of People’s Republic of China, 2006). However they are not yet recognised as national parks by the IUCN.

In China, Scenic Areas were set up to protect and ensure reasonable use of the resources (Management Act of Scenic Areas, Action 7.0). Each area has a park administration/authority, which in practice is a branch of local government, who manages and protects it. Each park authority is managed by a high level urban and rural construction committee which is in turn managed by the Chinese Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection (Management Act of Scenic Areas, Action1.6). The role of the park authority is to manage activities, the priority being to protect natural and culture resources but which also includes development, construction and business activities (Management Act of Scenic Area Action 2.9). The park authority has the right to plan and manage any resources within the area relating to gardens, agricultural, environment, research, religion, and business. There is little published literature on the role of park authorities in China (Cheng, Xu & Zhang, 2009).

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## ***Responsibilities of the Management Body***

The Chinese parastatal model and the UK's traditional national park model are two of the five types of management bodies, identified by Eagles (2009) and reflect the different roles and commitments of the management organisation. In Jiuzhaigou the park authority has more commitments in terms of tourism development and management and hence there is more centralized power, as it is an organization representing the government.

In his interview, Yuan said '*...we are responsible for tourism, marketing, residents' management and research, a lot of work, makes us too busy...too much work*'. Wang confirmed '*Our roles include: promoting tourism; protecting the resources and environment; planning, including master and detailed planning; providing and maintaining public facilities; responsibilities for visitor safety and entertainment*'. The first commitment they both mention here is 'tourism', suggesting tourism plays an important role in Jiuzhaigou. The park authority has many commitments and concomitantly more power, reflecting the centralization of power of Chinese park authorities.

As an independent body in England, the New Forest NPA has a clear responsibility for planning. John stated '*...We don't promote tourism, marketing and promotion is done by the local New Forest District Council; we only deal with planning issues. We (The National Park Authority) are the local planning authority; we control development to a certain extent. We work closely with the New Forest District Council, the Forestry Commission and other organizations*'. As suggested here, the main responsibility for them is planning; tourism is a co-management responsibility with other stakeholder groups.

The role and commitments of park agencies reflects the political structure in each country. Centralization of management and planning powers in Chinese NSAs gives them more commitments and management roles, while a separation of power in Britain suggests a co-management role of the park, a conversation between different stakeholders. But a limitation is its expense, it slows down the process considerably (Tosun, 2000). Such as when considering managing environmental impacts, John said he '*...needs to talk to other stakeholders to raise the car park charges in order to encourage people coming by public transport...it takes a long time, still has not been agreed.. Basically different groups have different interests...we can't do anything about it*'. It is also reflected in the nine year nomination of the South Downs as England's 10th national park (Natural England, 2010). In contrast, their Chinese colleagues have more power and can make quicker decisions, however whether these decisions consider the views of other stakeholders sufficiently is discussed further below.

## ***Managing Visitor Impacts***

Although a strong environmental focus is present in Jiuzhaigou, environmental protection is undertaken predominantly to attract more tourists. Wang stated: '*eco-lavatories are used inside the park; rubbish will be collected every day and taken outside of the park; water quality is monitored every 2 months...environmental protection is our focus. We need to make sure we protect our environment. If environment deteriorates, tourists will not come*'. With these effective management measurements, the vegetated area increased by 6% and bare land decreased by 12% (Li, 2006). These results suggest that the strict environmental management tools are effective in managing natural impacts. However, this also determines visitor

experiences, which currently are restricted to sightseeing within the park and tourists are physically separated by barriers from the forest and natural water (field observation). This results in limited impact to the environment (Huang et al., 2008) but there were tourists who complained about the lack of interaction with nature (notes from field observation). To date, soft management tools have little importance in Jiuzhaigou (see Table 3).

Compared with Jiuzhaigou, there are less strict environment measurements in the New Forest with minimal use of hard management tools (see Table 3). In addition to walking and sightseeing, there are diversified activities such as horse riding and cycling (field observation), which are regarded as moderately sustainable (Huang et al., 2008). Neither zoning nor carrying capacity are used as management tools. John said: *'The most important environmental issue is transportation, most visitors (90%) come by car. The NF NPA provides cycle routes all the way from Southampton and a recreational bus route, but, they are not used very much, people still come here by car, we suspect we made it too easy for people to come by car'*. Both he and Richard agreed that more needs to be done to improve sustainable transportation in the New Forest. A proposal by the NF NPA, for a plan which included zoning and seasonal road closures generated about 2,500 complaints from local residents in its consultation in 2008 (BBC, 2010) and therefore was revised. Local residents did not understand why some areas were proposed as a no entry zone for visitors, as they are the guardians of the forest. This demonstrates the power and influence they have over decision-making. However, this decision put more pressure on managing environmental impacts in other ways.

## *Sources of Income*

In China, the role of national parks is associated with generating economic income and employment to lift people from poverty (Ma, Ryan & Bao, 2009). Zhang (2005) recognises that many Chinese parks are operated on principles of generating a desired monetary return. Ma et al. (2009, p 22) agree, but add the justification, by stating ‘the more commercially successful a park is, the greater becomes its potential ability to place resources into environmental protection’.

When asked about the role of tourism in parks, Wang said: *‘Tourism is important here. It creates jobs for local communities, it also provides money for conservation in our park so that we could protect the forest, invest on environmental issues, such as landslides... farming is not allowed inside the park in order to protect the environment.’* Yuan said: *‘Tourism is important to us. There is no funding from the central government, our funding comes mainly from entrance fees, about 500 million RMB (approximately \$75m); other income comes from our tourism businesses, such as hotels, about 20 million RMB (\$3m).’* In this parastatal model (Eagles, 2009), the park authority belongs to the government and it has full control of its revenue, through a tourism corporation, which owns a restaurant, tourist shuttle bus company and several hotels. The parastatal model of Jiuzhaigou causes it to focus on the single sector approach of tourism development as most of its funding comes from tourism revenue and there is no other alternative land use in the park.

In contrast, the traditional national park model enables the New Forest NPA to obtain funding from central government, enabling them to support sustainable tourism projects. Therefore whilst both park managements think tourism activities are important to the parks, Jiuzhaigou relies

almost entirely on tourism, but in the New Forest, tourism is only part of the economic system. Sharpely & Pearce (2007) state that the New Forest NPA receives approximately £3.6m (\$5.4m) every year from central government, which includes a core grant, an access improvement grant, and funding under the sustainable development grant which is about £200k (\$300k) per year. With this funding, tourism revenue is not vital to the national park authority, however the funding is important to local landowners and farmers who manage the landscape. Every year, visitor related revenue is £120m (\$160m) in the New Forest (New Forest National Park Authority, 2009). The New Forest model therefore represents a traditional government funding and management model, with a multi-sector approach of sustainable development with tourism being one of the sectors.

The differences referred to here illustrate the two different approaches of tourism sustainable development, a multi-sector approach or a single sector approach. Tourism could bring extra funding for the protected areas, but the danger of that is an over-reliance on the tourism industry (Eagles & McCool, 2002). In Jiuzhaigou funding is mainly from tourism revenue and accordingly there is increasing pressure on the use of nature resources for tourism.

## ***Ownership of Land***

Four types of ownership were identified for parks, namely a government agency; a non-profit institution; a for-profit corporation or a community (Eagles, 2009). In the UK, national parks consist of extensive areas of open countryside in which large numbers of people live and work and which are important tourist attractions. Furthermore, the holding of land is complicated, as the majority is not publicly owned, but privately owned or held in perpetuity by the National



Trust, a charitable organization that maintains access to the country's natural and built heritage (Fox & Johnston, 2009; Sharpley, 2009). Due to the complicated land ownership, conflicts over land use allocation are increasing, and the planning system struggles to mediate in these disputes (Home, 2009). This becomes particularly important in managing protected areas where conflicts arise on private or common land, regarding activities such as tourism, recreation, farming, forest and fishing. In the case of the New Forest, the Forestry Commission (a governmental department) is unusual in owning 50% of the land, with the remainder owned by the National Trust, Hampshire County Council, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and private landowners. As John acknowledged, 'therefore, when it comes to decision making, we have to speak to each other, to work a way out. We (national park authority) don't own any land. It is a very complicated process.'

In contrast to Britain, the land in China is collectively or state owned (Sofield & Li, 2011), within the 'publicly owned socialism system', under The Land Management Legislation Act, 1998, 2.0. As many rural areas are collectively owned, due to the temptation of economic benefits, the buying, selling and illegal transfer of land ownership is a concern in some National Scenic Areas (Cai, 2004).

## ***Community Involvement***

In the New Forest, local communities are involved in tourism businesses to a lesser extent and tourism contributes less to family incomes than in Jiuzhaigou, but generally speaking, the community has more power in influencing decision making. Although no interviews were conducted directly with the local community, secondary data sources were used to compensate.

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Community involvement is part of the post-Fordist planning orthodoxy in the UK (Bahaire & Elliott-White 1999), in which the key to success for sustainable tourism is the involvement of local communities (DCMS, 2009). The New Forest National Park considers residents as equally important as other stakeholders. This ‘illustrates the interaction between visitors, the tourist industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the environment’ (DCMS, 2009). The management therefore involves residents and the community in the development of their vision. Cheng, Zhang, Xu and Liang (2010a) conducted a survey in the New Forest, suggesting about 33% of residents have at least one family member involved in tourism, with tourism contributing 35% of local GDP.

In the New Forest, Richard stated: *‘If there is no commoning, there is no forest’*. Therefore management understand the traditional way of commoning is very important for preserving the ecological landscape in the New Forest and reflecting a Forestry Commission (2002) report. John said *‘we try to empower the local community by informing visitors of the community, encouraging the tourism enterprises to buy local food; involving local community tourism groups. There are six community tourism groups, they decide what to promote in the advertisement. We support local farming, such as, the farmers market’*. Both interviewees from the New Forest indicated that community involvement in tourism is very important, but acknowledged that park management is *‘not doing enough, and there is a lot to be improved’*.

In Jiuzhaigou, tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon and therefore in order to find in-depth information about the involvement of the local community, seven interviews were conducted with residents inside the park. The results suggest that the current level of involvement is mainly

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in tourism businesses, with a very limited level of involvement in planning and management. The identified way of participation include selling souvenirs, hiring traditional costumes for souvenir photographs and working for the national park authority, the restaurant and transportation company. When asked about their involvement in planning and decision making, six out of the seven said they had never been involved in the planning process. *'Nobody asked me, I don't know anything about it'* one interviewee said. The only person, who said yes, is a manager who runs the restaurant within the park. When asked how he was involved, he said: *'through meetings. We can discuss things at the meeting...Meetings are regular, usually once every month...Some of my suggestions have influenced the management decision...as long as reasonable, the management will support it(my suggestions).'*

When asked about their awareness of future planning strategies, only one, the restaurant owner referred to above, said *'sustainable development, I got the message from meetings with the national park authority'*. But he could not comment in detail. As Quan said: *'nobody told me, but we should protect environment, if we don't, tourists will not come, we will not have good income'*. These results show ineffective communication from the management to the residents and that the latter are still excluded from the planning process, although they are gaining from the economic benefits.

The management, however, thinks that the current level of local involvement is good. Fu said that his role is to look after the local residents and it is the management's responsibility to consider local people in planning, *'we will consider automatically for local people'*. *'They have a lot of money from the park authority. We give them compensation from the ticket revenue every*

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year...*We give some shares in running the restaurant. We have tried our best to consider the locals. They should be satisfied*'. When asked about how to identify the locals' concern, he said '*we have an open door policy; they can come at any time to raise their concern*'. As we can see, what Fu refers to here is sharing of economic benefits, namely the local involvement in tourism business, but not in decision making.

The difference between the two communities in terms of involvement reflects differences in the political, economic, social and cultural backgrounds of the two countries. Sofield & Li (2011) point out that the central government in China has strong control over its tourism industry, with top-down policy making and very limited involvement of other stakeholders. Whilst in the UK, after the economic and political restructuring of the 1980s, private sector and public involvement in decision making is strongly preferred (Bahaire & Elliott-White, 1999).

The above results show a different view of management towards the local community, suggesting more respect and attention should be paid to Jiuzhaigou's local community. This actually reflects the unbalanced power distribution between the local community (a small minority rural community) and the park authority (government agency). This questions whether the economic benefit gained for local communities is the ultimate goal of sustainable tourism development (Li, 2006) or is the social empowerment of the local community a more important goal.

## Conclusions

This study suggests institutional sustainability has a great influence on the approaches to sustainable tourism in protected areas. It explores an under researched area in tourism, namely the dialectic relationship of institutional sustainability and park governance in park tourism. It translates an abstract conceptual framework into a research framework in protected areas through two case studies in two different institutional contexts. The cross cultural study reveals how political, social and cultural norms influence park governance and how in turn governance influences long term sustainability. This provides empirical support for Spangenberg et al.'s (2002) concept of institutional sustainability. The results suggest that the way institutions incorporate sustainability has an inherent importance to the traditional three dimensions of sustainability, namely, ecological, social and environmental aspects, supporting previous research (Johnson & Wilson, 2000; Puhakka et al., 2009).

The Chinese case uses a parastatal governance model, driven by the economic benefits of tourism, but also keeps a strict focus on environment protection. The management body has centralized power for decision making. In contrast, the British case uses a traditional national park governance model, adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and is less tourism driven, the management body has a more balanced power of decision making with other stakeholders. These differences in approach reflect the political, social, cultural and economic contexts and suggest that institutional sustainability influences sustainable tourism in protected areas. Therefore a western construct of sustainable tourism might not be appropriate in a Chinese

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context given those differences, and institutional sustainability should not be ignored (Lu & Nepal 2009).

However, there are challenges for sustainable tourism development in both cases. In Jiuzhaigou, local involvement in tourism planning and decision making should be encouraged more. At the moment, tourism is almost the only income for the national parks, which is a vulnerable state of affairs because the tourism industry can be influenced by many factors. This could be seen after the Sichuan earthquake, when visitor numbers dropped dramatically in the park (Cheng, Zhang, Zhu, & Xu, 2010b). Therefore, for its sustainable development, tourism should be one part of the integrated management plans of the park, and alternative ways of funding should be sought from other possible land uses. In the New Forest, zoning and other hard visitor management tools could also be used in planning and management of the park, and alternative means of sustainable transportation should be provided to support the goal of sustainable tourism development.

As the research only investigates the policy makers' and residents' view, in the future, views of other stakeholders such as tourism businesses, and Non-Governmental Organizations (such as the National Trust in the UK) could be explored to bring a diversity of opinions. In this research, limitations included the interviews with Jiuzhaigou residents which could not be recorded and the lack of interviews with New Forest residents. This research only compares two national parks in England and China; future research could be expanded to consider a wider range of parks from both these countries and others.

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**Table 1.** Background Information on Jiuzhaigou and the New Forest.

Items	Jiuzhaigou	New Forest
IUCN category	V (protected landscape)	V (protected landscape)
Natural landscape	Located in western China, covers an area of 651km <sup>2</sup> . It is a combination of mountains, valleys, lakes, waterfalls, virgin forest. UNESCO World Heritage Site.	Located in southern England, covers an area of 571 km <sup>2</sup> . It is a combination of woodland, grassland, and the largest extent of lowland heath in Britain.
Cultural landscape	Tibetan and Qiang minority and their traditional farming system	Commoners and their traditional pastoral system
Special conservation area	588 km <sup>2</sup> of special area of conservation, 12 km <sup>2</sup> of protection area, 43 km <sup>2</sup> of	310 km <sup>2</sup> of special area of conservation, 326 km <sup>2</sup> of special protection area, 347

	special scientific interest	km <sup>2</sup> of special scientific interest
Management objectives	Protection of regional landscape, tourism development, and contribution to regional development	Protection of natural and country side landscape, provision of recreational opportunities
Official management authority	Jiuzhaigou Scenic Area Authority, designated by the local government, approved by the regional and central governments	New Forest National Park Authority , include elected members from different stakeholders, such as local authorities, parish councils, and some are appointed by central government
Funding	No central or local government funding	Funding from central government annually
Historical origin	Tibet and Qiang minority people have inhabited the	Medieval hunting area for King William II , special

	area for centuries	commoner system established
Management model	Parastatal model	Traditional national park model
Land tenure State, regional or private ownership	The land is wholly owned by the state	50% of the land is owned by the Forestry Commission, the remainder of the land is owned by local councils, charities and private land owners
Public consultation/involvement reinforced or guaranteed by law	No	Yes
Local community	There are 1,120 people living within the park. The	Over 34,000 people live in the national park, making it the

	town of Zhangzha (population over 30,000) is close-by and serves as the tourist reception area	most densely populated national park in Britain. There are 590 commoners still maintaining the traditional pastoral system
Tourism development	Natural tourism destination in an advanced stage; mainly package tourists who come from all over China and stay overnight. In 2007, it attracted 2.5 million tourists, ticket revenue 420million RMB (approximately £42M); provides 30,621 tourism related jobs.	Natural countryside tourism destination in an advanced stage , mainly day visitors who live nearby. In 2005, it attracted 3 million visitors ; provides 2,500 tourism related jobs. Tourism is a traditional part of the local economy, there are 500 tourism enterprises, generating £150M per annum in direct income.

Sources: information provided by Jiuzhaigou and New Forest park authorities.

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**Table 2.** List of Interviewees.

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Interviewee	Gender	Age	Occupation
1 John	Male	30	Tourism and Transport Manager (New Forest National Park Authority)
2 Richard	Male	54	Destination Manager (New Forest District Council)
3 Wang	Male	31	R&D Officer (Jiuzhaigou National Park Authority)
4 Yuan	Male	26	Marketing Department (Jiuzhaigou National Park Authority)
5 Fu	Male	47	Community Management Officer (Jiuzhaigou National Park Authority)
6 Wang	Male	38	Resident: Manager of the restaurant (Jiuzhaigou National Park)
7 Jia	Female	74	Resident: retired at home

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8 Liang	Female	50	Resident: individual souvenir seller
9 Zhang	Male	63	Resident: souvenir shop owner
10 Feng	Female	25	Resident: hires costumes to tourists
11 Xie	Female	63	Resident: handicraft maker
12 Quan	Male	32	Resident: shutter bus driver

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# ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

**Table 3.** The Use of Hard and Soft Visitor Management Tools.

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	Jiuzhaigou	New Forest
Hard Tools:		
Regulating access by area:	Visitors are prohibited from visiting highly sensitive sites; strict zoning is used; physical boundaries are used to separate to visitors; guards are used	Visitors are prohibited from visiting highly sensitive sites; no zoning used now, proposed zoning is challenged by local community
Regulating access by transport	Access is regulated to pedestrians	Access is regulated to pedestrians or bicycle
Regulating visitor numbers and group size	Daily max carrying capacity of 12,000 visitors; using internet booking to control numbers	No
Regulating type of visitor	No, visitors are mainly package tourists	No, visitors are mainly day visitors

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Regulating behaviour Restrictions on length of 1 day stay No, a range of diversified activities in the park; only sightseeing activity is allowed; tourist accommodations have been moved outside of the park; only one restaurant inside the park

Regulating equipment Vehicular access restricted, eco-friendly transportation provided for the public within the park No

Implementing user fees Yes, different price for peak season and low season; a portion of user fees collected is returned to local community as a means of demonstrating the value of tourism and local compensation No

Soft Tools:

Education program No No



Interpretation	Interpretation centre at the entrance of the park; free guided tour within the park; maps provided but not free; sites signs	No guide used; maps provided free in visitor information centre, so does the visitor stewardship package
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Marketing and promotion messages	Message focus on natural environment and minority Tibetan culture	Visitor code of conduct; the term ‘sustainable tourism’ clearly identified; information on the environment and local culture mentioned
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Sources: information provided by Jiuzhaigou and New Forest park authorities and also based on marketing/promotional material used by both authorities