

Papers

Partnerships and concessions for the development of tourism in Brazilian parks: possibilities and limitations of a new governance model

Parcerias e concessões para o desenvolvimento do turismo nos parques brasileiros: possibilidades e limitações de um novo modelo de governança

Parcerias y concesiones para el desarrollo del turismo en los parques brasileños: posibilidades y limitaciones de un nuevo modelo de gobernanza

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Keywords:

Tourism;
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Abstract

Private sector participation in the provision of tourism support services in parks is encouraged by environmental agencies in several countries as a strategy to improve the implementation of these areas. The objective of this article is to analyze the main aspects that guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of partnerships between public and private sectors, with emphasis on concessions and initiatives at the federal level and in the states of Minas Gerais (MG), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), and São Paulo (SP). Based on the analysis of a theoretical/conceptual framework on public values in partnerships and a qualitative approach with the managers, some analytical aspects were identified to support the understanding of this management model. Partnerships have the potential to favor park management in terms of innovation, human resources, efficiency, and others. But this possibility of advancement depends on the characteristics of the governance established, through three main elements: transparency, in order to increase the capacity of regulators and society to control performance; the creation of effective communication, which builds trust among the sectors involved; and social participation, which strengthens accountability and increases the legitimacy of the process.

Palavras-chave:

Turismo;
Concessões;
Regulação;
Áreas protegidas.

Resumo

A participação privada na prestação de serviços de apoio ao turismo em parques é estimulada por órgãos ambientais de diversos países como uma estratégia para aprimorar a implementação dessas áreas. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar os principais aspectos que orientam o planejamento, a implementação e o monitoramento das parcerias entre as esferas pública e privada, com ênfase nas concessões e nas iniciativas no âmbito federal e

nos estados de Minas Gerais (MG), Rio de Janeiro (RJ) e São Paulo (SP). A partir de análise de referencial teórico-conceitual sobre valores públicos nas parcerias e uma abordagem qualitativa junto aos gestores, foram identificados alguns aspectos analíticos para subsidiar a compreensão sobre esse modelo de gestão. A possibilidade de avanço na gestão dos parques por meio de parcerias depende de características da governança estabelecida por meio de três elementos principais: a transparência, de modo a aumentar a capacidade de os reguladores e a sociedade controlarem o desempenho; a criação de uma comunicação eficaz, que estimule a confiança entre os setores envolvidos; e a participação social, que fortalece a accountability e aumenta a legitimidade do processo.

Palavras clave:

Turismo;
Concessões;
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Resumen

La participación privada en la prestación de servicios de apoyo al turismo en parques es estimulada por organismos ambientales de diversos países como una estrategia para mejorar la implementación de esas áreas. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar los principales aspectos que orientan la planificación, la implementación y el monitoreo de las alianzas entre las esferas pública y privada, con énfasis en las concesiones y en las iniciativas en el ámbito federal y en los estados de Minas Gerais (MG), Río de Janeiro Y en el caso de las mujeres. A partir de análisis de referencial teórico-conceitual sobre valores públicos en las alianzas y un abordaje cualitativo junto a los gestores, se identificaron algunos aspectos analíticos para subsidiar la comprensión sobre ese modelo de gestión. La posibilidad de avanzar en la gestión de los parques a través de asociaciones depende de las características de la gobernanza establecida a través de tres elementos principales: la transparencia, para aumentar la capacidad de los reguladores y la sociedad para controlar el desempeño; la creación de una comunicación eficaz, que estimule la confianza entre los sectores implicados; y la participación social, que fortalece la accountability y aumenta la legitimidad del proceso.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Recreation and tourism are motivations that take people to natural environments, leading to new forms of occupation and appropriation of these areas. National parks, a type of protected area existing in various parts of the world (Balmford et al., 2015), comprise territories in which environmental quality, scenic beauty, leisure options, and cultural elements are features that attract social and economic interests, but which must be regulated by public authorities.

Private participation in the provision of tourism support services in parks has been encouraged by environmental agencies in several countries as a strategy to improve the implementation of these areas. Thus, through different institutional arrangements, the public authorities promote partnerships with the private sector—profit and non-profit organizations—seeking support to achieve the objectives of protected areas (Eagles, 2009; Wyman et al., 2011; Thompson, Massyn & Pastorelli, 2014).

In the Brazilian case, parks are established by government as a measure to protect natural ecosystems and are subject to a special protection regime (Brasil, 2000). Therefore, they are public goods whose use is guided by standards and regulations that aim to ensure environmental quality and the experience of the visitor in these spaces.

Therefore, to diversify the offer of services and activities to support visitation and attract investments to improve tourism in parks, the public sector uses instruments—such as the concession, permission, and authorization for the private use of public goods or the provision of services—that make possible the participation of for-profit organizations.

In this process, one of the challenges is the need for adopting different models of management and integration between the fields of knowledge of public administration—related to environmental policy—and the planning of supply and demand of services, linked to the tourism industry.

Some studies (Rocktaeschel, 2006; Rodrigues & Godoy, 2013; Braga, 2013; Matheus & Raimundo, 2017) highlight the topic of partnerships in park tourism, but the discussion about implementation strategies and

the effects of these initiatives is incipient and, thus, innovative with regard to its contribution to the management of tourism in public areas, such as parks.

In this context, this article aims to analyze the main aspects that guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of partnerships for the development of tourism in Brazilian parks, from the perspective of the managers of the agencies responsible for these areas at the federal level and in the states of Minas Gerais (MG), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), and São Paulo (SP). This discussion aims to present the assumptions of this governance model, highlighting its possibilities and limitations.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Activities in nature: some theoretical notes on partnerships for the development of tourism in conservation units

The dynamics of tourism in conservation units is part of a broad discussion about the different forms of appropriation and access to parks and other nature protected areas. Activities in nature—such as recreation, tourism, sports, environmental education, etc.—can be included within the scope of “public use”, which characterizes the use of protected areas by the general public through visitation, regardless of the motivation, origin of the visitor, or segment of tourism (ecotourism, adventure tourism) (Brasil, 2006).

Thus, since tourism has been addressed within the scope of public policy in different countries—including Brazil—as an important strategy for nature conservation, the need for a greater integration between tourism and environmental policies arises (Buckley, 2012; McCool & Spenceley, 2014; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2015; Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade, 2018). In this sense, the environmental agencies that administer protected areas, by allowing and encouraging visitation for tourism purposes, also seek to invest in infrastructure and visitor management techniques compatible with the specificities of each area, especially regarding the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

It is against this challenging background—the planning and management of tourism in conservation units—that partnerships and concessions appear as one of the alternatives for public authorities. However, the topic of partnerships and how the public good should be managed and used is much debated. The idea that partnerships are part of a neoliberal agenda to transfer increased responsibilities to the private sector, or that concessions can lead to elitism of access to public goods are some vehement criticisms of the process. On the other hand, partnerships and concessions are advocated as a way to expand private participation, considering the experience and the investment capacity of the sector, allowing the expansion of infrastructure in the parks.

Positions express different views about the management of public affairs. In this article we will explore some aspects of this debate, however, the analytical approach chosen prioritizes the analysis of the perspective of public managers involved in the process, seeking to uncover the perception of key actors in this new form of governance. This is an important and different approach in the literature on the subject, which in the context of implementation may highlight critical variables of this management tool. Certainly, this view does not exhaust the phenomenon, but it can contribute to a better understanding of it.

Partnerships can be regulated by a wide range of institutional arrangements. The provision of tourism support services in parks, although not expressed in the concept of public service, has used, in the alternative, legislation for the provision of public services such as Law 8,987 of February 13, 1995 (Law of Concessions and Permissions), which regulates the “common” concession, and Law 11,079 of December 30, 2004 (Law of Private-Public Partnerships–PPP), which establishes two types of concession, sponsored and administrative (Rodrigues & Godoy, 2013).

In addition to this legislation, Law 13,688, dated May 28, 2018, provides for the concession of services, areas, or facilities of federal conservation units for exploration of activities in nature, through bidding. The instrument also exempts the public call for the conclusion of partnerships, under the terms of Law 13,019 of July 31, 2014 (Regulatory Framework for Civil Society Organizations), with associations representing traditional populations for the exploitation of public use activities. With the publication of this law, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMbio) can develop initiatives that promote the role of local

enterprises in the provision of tourism support services. These types of partnerships are also being studied in the scope of the “Public-Private Environmental Partnerships—PAPP” project, carried out in partnership with the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM) and with the cooperation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Caixa Econômica Federal.

In this article, the concession to private for-profit institutions will be emphasized due to the expansion of initiatives of this model in the parks. Frame 1 presents a summary of the main instruments that can be used in the management of conservation units.

Frame 1 - Institutional arrangements for the management of tourism in conservation units in Brazil

Private for-profit institutions	Private non-profit institutions
Concession	Cooperation agreement, terms of development, and terms of col-
Permission	laboration with civil society organizations
Authorization	Terms of partnership with social organization of public interest

Source: The authors (2018)

The characteristics of each type of agreement between the public and private for-profit sectors involve issues such as the economic scope of the project; type of partner (natural person, legal person); type of formal procedure (administrative act, contract, cooperation agreement, terms of development); duration of the contract. Thus, in the case of concessions, for example, contracts involving large and medium-sized long-term investments are signed. The authorizations are short-term administrative acts, that aim to regulate the provision of small services such as tour guiding or boat rental (Botelho & Rodrigues, 2016).

In addition to the management aspects of the conservation unit and tourism, the process of establishing partnerships involves the consideration of issues relevant to public administration, since the locus of implementation of these partnerships is a public good of special use, created for the protection of environmental and cultural heritage. It is against this background that the debate over the governance of natural and cultural resources—largely influenced by the benefits received (and perceived) by different sectors of society—emerges (Eagles, 2009).

Based on a survey of national park concessions in New Zealand, Dinica (2017) points out that this partnership model is part of a set of tools for the implementation of broader governance arrangements, which influence the prioritization of the objectives in protected areas. The author refers that, encouraged by neoliberal policies as of 2009, several concession agreements were signed, but the environmental conservation and infrastructure gains agreed upon in the process are questionable, raising concerns of sustainability of tourism in protected areas.

In this context, we highlight the elements of governance theory, according to which collective issues are defined today through mechanisms of articulation and interaction between government, society, and the private sector, developed from certain regulatory models that seek to improve both the performance and democratization of public policies (Torfing, Peters, Pierre & Sorensen, 2012). The concept of public is extended to encompass certain public values, going beyond the state only.

The question of public values is thus central to governance. Following this line and seeking to elucidate the different roles between the public and private spheres in partnership management, Reynaers (2013) developed a study on public values, such as accountability, transparency, and quality, which should be addressed in concession and partnership processes with the private sector. Although the author’s study has focused on the infrastructure sector (road, sanitation, transportation), it can provide clues to partnerships for tourism in protected areas. The author points out that public-private partnerships are often analyzed and praised in terms of efficiency, but the impact of these initiatives on public values is often neglected. She emphasizes that public values can be threatened, safeguarded, or even strengthened, depending on the project phase and how public management monitors and discloses the results of partnerships (Reynaers, 2013; Reynaers & Grimmelikhuisen, 2015).

Accountability—which will be further emphasized later in this article—can be understood as a multidimensional concept, since it is accomplished through different actions and instruments (accountability to society, results-oriented management, social control and participation) in order for public services to conform to public values, regardless of the providers (state, private, or civil society organizations).

In the light of this debate on public values in partnerships, the management of tourism in conservation units tends to be permeated by issues such as the responsibility of different subjects towards the use of natural and cultural heritage; monitoring the impacts of concessions and partnerships; access to and diversification of recreational opportunities; the mediation between public and private interests in the management of these areas, among other issues that concern the management of public goods.

3 METHODOLOGY

Based on the analysis of the theoretical framework on public values within the scope of partnerships between public and private sectors for the provision of services to society and using a qualitative approach to survey public managers involved in protected areas policy, some analytical aspects were identified to support the understanding of partnerships for tourism development in parks.

To identify the advances and challenges of partnerships and concessions in the last five years, interviews were held with interlocutors of environmental agencies responsible for the management of protected areas at the federal level and in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais.

The interviews were conducted between October 2017 and March 2018. They were recorded with a tape recorder and later transcribed with the authorization of the interlocutors, who signed a term of free and informed consent.

We interviewed sixteen professionals working in the institutions responsible for the administration of protected areas at the federal level (8 - ICMBio) and in the states of São Paulo (3 - state government and Forestry Foundation [FF]), Rio de Janeiro (3 - State Environmental Institute [INEA]), and Minas Gerais (2 - state government and State Forest Institute [IEF]). These states were chosen because they present examples of partnership and concession contracts in the last five years (2014-2018), inspired by similar processes.

Participants' identities were protected and referred to by numbers from 1 to 16, corresponding to the number of professionals participating in the research.

The selection of the interviewees was guided by the identification of key interlocutors who act and have a direct influence on visitation policies, focusing on the concession processes and other partnerships for the provision of services. We decided to interview the staff of the central offices of the institutions responsible for the protected areas. The selection of the interviewees in the research is a critical point in the investigation because it interferes greatly in the quality of information and, consequently, in the understanding about the problem under study (Duarte, 2002). Bearing this in mind, we should note that the article presents a discussion from the point of view of managers acting in the partnerships and concessions, revealing an important facet of the question—given their privileged role in the implementation of the model—but which does not exhaust the subject matter. For a more comprehensive analysis of the topic, further research could address, for example, the views of visitors and local community.

The interviews followed an interview protocol with a script of semi-structured questions, elaborated from a reflection on public values and the different stages of a partnership.

The analysis of the interviews began with a reading which was a first filter for “codification” of patterns and fragments that allowed categorization of research subjects (Duarte, 2002), considering the following topics:

- Meaning of partnerships and accountability;
- Planning of partnerships and concessions;
- Partnership monitoring and challenges on the agenda for the coming years.

The organization of the analysis in topics facilitates the approach to subjects, but does not confine interpretation to separated “boxes”, because the subjects are correlated and influencing each other, reinforcing the complexity of the subject.

The results of the interviews with the managers of the federal and state agencies will be presented jointly and, when necessary, specific observations or caveats are noted for each case.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 An overview of the provision of tourism support services in national parks and in the states of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.

Conservation units (known in Portuguese as UC) are a special type of protected area, created by the public power, under a special administrative regime to which adequate protection guarantees apply. Among the existing management categories of UCs we will be focusing on parks, created for the preservation of natural ecosystems of great ecological relevance and scenic beauty, where activities of environmental education, recreation and tourism in nature are encouraged (Brasil, 2000).

The Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) is responsible for the management of 324 conservation units, of which 74 are national parks. Four of these have advanced concession agreements— Iguaçu National Park (PR), Tijuca National Park (RJ), Fernando de Noronha Marine National Park (PE), and Serra dos Órgãos National Park (RJ). In addition to these contracts, some parks have issued more than 250 permits for the provision of services such as tour guiding, boat activities, and other activities.

In the planning of the institution for the period 2018-2020 the implementation of the service concession process was prioritized in seven parks. Between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, three concession contracts were signed in the National Parks of Pau Brasil (BA), Chapada dos Veadeiros (GO), and Itatiaia (RJ/MG).

In Minas Gerais, the State Forest Institute is responsible for the management of 79 conservation units, of which 36 are state parks. In 2014, the state government initiated a series of studies, in partnership with the Semeia Institute¹, to promote the process of implementing a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), through an administrative concession to support the management of three conservation units, known as the “PPP Lund Route”. However, although the process even went as far as to select the winning bidder, the partnership agreement was not signed by the state government. In 2017, based on a new understanding of the state, the IEF re-examined the model for the management of the Lund Route units, which includes the Sumidouro State Park, in addition to conducting studies with a view to the provision of services in the Itacolomi State Park.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, also driven by a partnership with Semeia, the State Institute of the Environment (INEA) promoted the development of studies for the implementation of a PPP in the Ilha Grande State Park. However, the project was not concluded due to issues of continuity and management in INEA and because of the opposition of residents and several segments in Ilha Grande to the model presented by the state.

INEA is responsible for the management of 29 conservation units, of which 11 are state parks. Until October 2018, no park had a concession contract. However, according to information provided by this agency, the processes of concession for cafeteria and souvenir shop services in the state parks of Pedra Branca and Cunhambebe are ongoing.

It was also reported by the INEA that for smaller-sized enterprises, such as the sale of food and handicrafts, provided in private areas that have not yet been regularized, the common procedure is to register these providers and organize the activities considering the management of environmental impacts and the quality of the services provided.

In the state of São Paulo, the Forestry Foundation (FF) is responsible for 110 conservation units, of which 34 are state parks. In some parks, such as Campos do Jordão, Intervales, or Serra do Mar, services such as cafeteria, camping, souvenir shop are made available by permission for private initiative. And in 2016, the state government of São Paulo issued State Law 16,260, dated June 29, 2016, authorizing the concession for exploration of services or use for the development of activities inherent to ecotourism and commercial

¹Agency that works in partnership with federal, state, and municipal governments with the objective of supporting projects that seek new management models for nature and urban parks.

exploitation of timber or by-products. Based on this law, the FF is coordinating the concession process in some parks, such as Campos de Jordão and Cantareira.

4.2 The understanding of partnerships and the meaning of accountability

One of the first questions was to point out the direction of partnerships and the meaning of accountability in this process. The partnerships were approached in the broad sense, understood as the different adjustments between the state and for- or non-profit private sector. However, some interlocutors stressed the difference between a partnership also understood as a “business” for private for-profit enterprises, and partnership as a way for the third sector to achieve social, environmental, and educational goals.

Two main arguments were presented to explain and justify the understanding of partnerships. The first one, stated quite strongly, is related to the state's management capacity—in terms of financial and human resources—to efficiently manage conservation units.

The second point highlighted by some interlocutors is the impact of partnerships on the achievement of the institutional goals of the state which, in the case of the environmental agencies that administer UCs, are associated with nature conservation, on a sustainable and participatory basis, as expressed in the guidelines of Law 9,985 of July 18, 2000, which established the National System of Nature Conservation Units (Brasil, 2000).

Regarding state's management capacity, one of the interlocutors stressed that partnerships are a matter of “survival” for conservation units.

It's a matter of survival. The weakness of governments is increasing. The partner is not going to invest in the park because he thinks I'm cool, he's going to invest because he's interested, because he sees a business. And I'm going to make the partnership because I want him to cover a shortfall. Private participation requires a break with a closed management model, based only on government structure. But like any other process of rupture, it raises fears and doubts... (interlocutor 14, INEA, 2017).

A shortfall associated with lack of financial and human resources in the environmental area was also highlighted by another interlocutor who understands that partnerships are an essential condition for the environmental institutions to fulfill the institutional mission of the State, otherwise it would not be possible to carry out the functions.

However, one of the functions of conservation units is to promote society's access to recreation, education, and tourism in nature. In this sense, to the extent that the state creates a conservation unit, which is an instrument of environmental public policy, its basic management requirements should be guaranteed. But increasing budget cuts in the environmental area tend to create a dependency relationship on private investments and not a partnership perspective with a strong and qualified structure on the part of the state.

It was also highlighted the issue of “expertise” of private sector, especially regarding the provision of tourism support services such as lodging, food, and transportation. In this way, the state seeks in the private partner the knowledge of the dynamics of the tourist market to provide quality and efficient services. In this sense, one of the interlocutors points out that:

We want to make partnerships for a few reasons. I think one important reason is that we are not experts at all. We will have much more quality of service and better collection if we have a tourism expert, even because the public service is very time consuming, we delay to hire. Another point is that we bring the private to work with us, which is important to boost the economy, and we can work with small owners, we can work with traditional communities, so we end up creating development opportunities for the region as well. (interlocutor 4, ICMBio, 2017).

In addition to each sector competencies regarding the different services provided—conservation and support to tourism—the above statement stresses the issue of the impact of private participation in the local economy, also associated with the potential of institutional arrangements involving small and medium entrepreneurs.

The topic of effective participation of local populations in the development of tourism, as Botelho and Rodrigues (2016) point out, is still incipient in the scope of programs and initiatives of environmental institutions, which have prioritized large investment concessions agenda. Thus, it is not only a question of emphasizing the generation of jobs and income through concessions, but mainly of adopting a model that looks into

the quality of jobs generated, the involvement of the population in the concession decision-making process, and the socioeconomic impact of concessions on the local context.

Regarding the understanding of partnerships linked to institutional objectives, some interlocutors believe that partnerships should take as a precondition the primary function of nature conservation agencies, functioning as a means for UCs to achieve their goals, among which is to promote the public use in nature. In this sense, an interlocutor reinforces that: “the partnership must be aligned with the institutional objectives of the state and with the general principles of public administration” (interlocutor 8, ICMBio, 2017). And another interlocutor adds:

The area remains public, management becomes private. It is not my dream of consumption, but it works, especially in countries that have no resources. If the state does its part, which is monitoring, the concession is a form, it is a means. In my head the ultimate responsibility is always from the state, so you must be able to keep track of the execution. What differs from a privatization partnership, right? In privatization, you sell and forget, in a concession you outsource, but ultimately it still is the state's responsibility. (interlocutor 3, ICMBio, 2017)

The competences and attributions of the public sphere in the management of natural and cultural heritage are, in this sense, the foundation on which the state must stand against the capture of the “public thing” and in defense of what Bresser-Pereira calls “republican rights”, associated with the citizens' access to public goods (Bresser-Pereira, 1998, p. 162).

An important point highlighted by one of ICMBio's interlocutors was the need to take a broader view of partnerships. This issue is key to thinking about governance beyond the relationship with the private sector. For the interviewee, the concession is “more business, like a business contract” partnership, but he believes in less business-like partnership with civil society organizations. He cited the example of the partnership signed, through a cooperation agreement, with the Ekos Institute, a non-profit civil society organization, to support the execution of activities of the public use plan in the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park located in the state of Minas Gerais.

Another aspect emphasized by some interlocutors is the partnership carried out with the objective of increasing social participation in the management of the UCs. This means, as one of the interlocutors pointed out, putting into practice one of the SNUC guidelines associated with the cooperation of non-governmental organizations, local populations, and private initiative for the development of leisure and tourism activities in nature. This question returns to the beginning of the article: governance proposes a simultaneous search for the best performance and democratization of public policy (Torfing, Peters, Pierre & Sorensen, 2012).

Regarding the understanding of the concept and ways of implementing accountability in partnerships, although some interlocutors have asked for a more precise explanation of what the term meant, as they expressed their opinions, issues such as accountability to society and the way in which the state monitors and discloses the results of partnerships were raised as key to interpreting accountability. This situation indicates a broad approach, reinforcing the importance of thinking about the multidimensional nature of accountability (Conselho Latinoamericano de Administração Pública [CLAD], 2006; Reynaers, 2013).

In the state of Minas Gerais, for example, the testimony of one of the interlocutors reinforces the different dimensions of accountability in the contract of a standard concession or a public-private partnership:

Here we are very concerned about the issue of accountability. We try to work from the outset, for example, with the Court of Auditors [Tribunal de Contas], with the Office of the Comptroller General [Controladoria Geral do Estado]. And we also think of accountability beyond the control bodies, seeking to apply it internally as well. For example, thinking about the continuity of teams that participated in shaping a partnership. It is important to ensure the minimum maintenance of these people to have retention of knowledge and legitimacy in the control and monitoring of private partners. (interlocutor 16, governo do estado de Minas Gerais, 2018).

The term accountability was also addressed as a process of allocation of responsibilities between public and private entities, in the words of a professional from the state of São Paulo: “accountability in my head is the clear definition of which actors are responsible for certain activities, certain risks, certain attributions that were defined in the contract, in the bidding” (interlocutor 11, governo do estado de São Paulo, 2017).

Regarding the monitoring of the contract, ICMBio and Minas Gerais State interlocutors emphasized the importance of the management council of the conservation unit as the locus for the disclosure and discussion of the results of the concessions and partnerships.

We already have a history of failure of projects that were misunderstood by the local population. And we have the unit council. I think our great move to social participation in the monitoring of the contract is via the council. The council is where we have to submit periodic reports and follow up on how it is being done. For example, we also post on the web how many visitors we receive, what we collect, and what the concessionaire has collected. For a citizen who wants to know how the concession works in Iguaçu or Serra dos Órgãos, how many direct and indirect jobs were created with the concession. (interlocutor 1, ICMBio, 2017)

In this sense, responsibility through accountability and social participation has in the management council a promising environment for its development. In Minas Gerais, one of the interlocutors also emphasized that part of accountability to society can be carried out by the unit's management council. The council's meetings and activities function as channels for generating knowledge and dissemination of information and, at the same time, an instance of decision-making and definition of shared responsibilities. In this sense, accountability through social control tends to generate greater democratization in the process of public policy implementation (CLAD, 2006; GRAU, 2006).

In the state of São Paulo, the interlocutors highlighted the complexity associated with the concession process, considering the sectors interested in the proposal and the local residents who will be affected directly and indirectly by the proposal. In addition to the external communication and consultation stages, the Forestry Foundation must internally carry out a flow of analysis and approval in some bodies of the institution. Thus, as one of the institution's interlocutors points out in relation to the long period invested in the process of preparing the concession announcement until its launch: "If we lose a month, it is not that we are losing the month, we are winning the month ahead because we are consolidating a process that will have fewer questions and obstacles in the future" (Interlocutor 10, Fundação Florestal, 2017).

But even though the state has adopted different ways of promoting participation, positions against the concession, motivated also by the history of conflicts, among which the overlap between conservation units and territories where traditional populations live, are led by social movements and civil society organizations that question the legitimacy of the process (Braga de Souza, 2017).

4.3 Planning of partnerships and concessions for the provision of tourism support services

The planning of a partnership or a concession is a multi-stage process, such as compliance with legal requirements and instruments governing partnerships in the public administration; definition and modeling of the most appropriate institutional arrangement for each context and conservation unit; conducting economic feasibility studies; the adoption of mechanisms of social participation in the definition of models (Rodrigues & Godoy, 2013). These aspects were addressed by the interlocutors during the interviews and express the actions that the environmental agencies have been taking towards the consolidation of the partnerships.

Interlocutors frequently raised issues related to the studies and investments made to enter into public-private partnerships (PPP)—under the terms of Law 11,079 of December 30, 2004—in the management and provision of tourism support services in conservation units. With the support of the Semeia Institute, especially between the years of 2013 and 2016, the states of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro have developed several initiatives to enter into concession agreements, in the PPP format. However, until October 2018 no partnership using this model was signed in a conservation unit.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, the INEA has sponsored studies aimed at the development of a PPP in the Ilha Grande State Park. This process triggered a series of questions from organizations and the local community that, together with the challenges of the state to work towards such a partnership, resulted in the suspension of the process. INEA interlocutors reported on the experience that the agency has had in the PPP process in the Ilha Grande State Park, emphasizing some misunderstandings of the process:

The main thing would be to work out all the aspects of what would be needed for the region and then choose the model. Another point is communication. Society still sees with great prejudice the partnership of the state with the private entity. (interlocutor 13, INEA, 2017)

The above report indicates learning in the process of interacting with the local community. Thus, the investment made in PPP studies seems to have resulted in a cycle of maturation for the professionals involved, both in the public and private sectors.

In Minas Gerais, the “PPP Lund Route” project, also carried out with the support of Semeia, was not implemented. There is an understanding on the part of the interviewees that the political issue, expressed in the opposition to the project due to the change of government, was one of the main obstacles to the continuity of the process. In addition, the issue of the provision of public resources for the project was also compromised by the high cost of the payments that the state should allocate. Therefore, in February 2018, the state government manager reported that they were resuming the project, but now with another focus and scope. The PPP project included management and conservation actions, as well as activities related to the provision of tourism support services.

In the context of partnerships to support the management of UCs, it is important to reflect on the role of the Semeia Institute, which was created with the objective of increasing private participation in this process. At a given moment, the institution, also driven by a tendency to promote PPPs in various sectors of government, established cooperation with state governments to apply the model to the parks. However, as pointed out earlier, models imported from other countries and sectors, decontextualized, and imposed on populations, tend to create conflicts and opposing positions, which are intensified due to the history of use and occupation of space. In this sense, the planning of these partnerships must gain legitimacy in the local context and respect for the different views on how to enjoy natural and cultural heritage in a broad sense.

At the federal level, some studies have also been conducted to support the modeling of a PPP in national parks. One of ICMBio's interlocutors drew attention to the fact that there was a time when the PPPs in public policy were encouraged. Thus, in his view, ICMBio “embarked” on this trend, but no proposal was put into effect.

We missed the PPP momentum and now we need to invest in a proper path for the UC. We need to invest in the understanding of the different instruments of delegation and partnership. And we need the support from academia and experts to build this. The fact that we do not have our structured legal and conceptual basis means that we are always at the mercy of other sectors and diverse interpretations of ICMBio's proxies. (interlocutor 5, ICMBio, 2017)

Likewise, another ICMBio interlocutor points out that the institution needs to have its own legislation, adequate to the main function of protected areas related to conservation. He believes that the institution should avoid models that create management problems with more risk of turning a “National Park into an Amusement Park”, referring to the excess and type of infrastructure that encourages consumption of services, detached from awareness and knowledge purposes. In this way, to the extent that the visitation is planned based on a vision that prioritizes economic viability through the implementation of services, equipment, and infrastructure, some topics such as the diversity of recreational opportunities, the notion of public heritage and the public perception about the function of space can take on different contours (Rodrigues & Irving, 2015).

Another topic that affects the planning of the partnerships and which was often mentioned during the interviews was the diversity of arrangements between the public and private sector, whether for profit or not. A recurring topic in this debate is the participation of initiatives carried out by local enterprises, micro and small.

The testimony of one of the interlocutors of the ICMBio reinforces the issue of the diversity of arrangements, accompanying different contexts and dynamics of visitation in the parks. In his opinion:

The concession is feasible for units that have mass visitation, even because it depends on an economic viability. So, it is not a model that fits all categories and all the diversity of situations in the units. So, we work too hard with the permits. It is a very interesting process because it can serve to register service operators and as ordering rules. (interlocutor 7, ICMBio, 2017).

In this sense, authorizations have been used as a relevant instrument to formalize, mainly, the actions of initiatives led by local entrepreneurs. However, while the adoption of other instruments is advancing, concessions are more often cited on the agenda of the federal government (ICMBio, 2018) as well as in some states.

One of the interlocutors of the state of São Paulo emphasizes his work focused mainly on the concession processes:

The concession process occupies 100% of my time, so it is important to structure this core of partnerships better. There is a myth that some managers believe the grant will solve all the problems. And this is not so, the manager will have to devote much of his time to the proper management of contracts. (interlocutor 9, Fundação Florestal do estado de São Paulo, 2017).

Appropriate management and monitoring of partnerships, therefore, depends on a structure in quantitative and qualitative terms to conduct the process in an appropriate manner, considering aspects such as nature conservation, diversity of opportunities and access, prominence of local enterprises, quality services provided, among others. Thus, the process of granting or partnership requires a strong and empowered state, so that the governance agenda goes far beyond a transfer of functions to the private sector or to civil society.

4.4 Monitoring of partnerships and concessions and agenda challenges.

Identifying, understanding, and disseminating the results of partnerships and concessions for conservation and tourism is a challenging compromise for the institutions involved in this process.

Although some progress has been made in institutionalizing the procedures for contract supervision, an ICMBio interlocutor has highlighted the agency's challenge to register, systematize, and disseminate the results of the concessions to society, thus guaranteeing greater transparency in the process. In his opinion, it is not just a question of checking, through a check-list, whether the concessionaire is complying with all contractual clauses. Monitoring would not act as a "straitjacket" to restrain and limit the concessionaire's performance, but an instrument to strengthen the "partnership", co-responsibility, and dissemination of benefits to society.

In this sense, one of ICMBio's interlocutors highlights the recent initiatives of the Iguazu Falls holding, which operates in the Iguazu, Tijuca, and Fernando de Noronha National Parks, to analyze and disseminate the impacts of the concessions as part of its socio-environmental responsibility strategy and sustainability.

Most of the company Iguazu Falls was acquired by an American investment fund. They keep an eye on some parks because this business is good. But their concern is not only profit, it has to do an institutional marketing too, they have to conquer the market and this achievement necessarily requires a broader view of area management, so the group Cataratas today has in its annual budget a funds for institutional development and sustainability. (interlocutor 6, ICMBio, 2017)

Therefore, it is noted that the company has a research and marketing team, and resources to invest in advertising. And, on the other hand, ICMBio has made efforts to improve monitoring and accountability to society, but this is a major challenge—as ICMBio's interlocutor emphasizes—due to lack of staff and efficient communication strategies.

But the idea that with the arrival of the concessionaire we'll be able to focus on other tasks, this is not true. Monitoring the contract requires too much and, depending on the partner you have, the work increases. When you have a good partner, things go smoothly. When the partner is not so good, it requires a lot in terms of you having to ensure they fulfill certain obligations, sometimes having to prosecute them. And this process is not always accompanied by a reinforcement in the team to be able to provide support, so we really get overwhelmed. (Interlocutor 7, ICMBio, 2017).

Within monitoring, also based on the experiences of other sectors, ICMBio is studying the adoption of performance indicators that aim to reward the concessionaire on the achievement of quality standards and investment in projects for the benefit of conservation and local development. The bonus can be a reduction of the granting rate or even the extension of the contract time, according to the ICMBio's interlocutor.

These measures encourage the performance of concessionaires through accountability for results. This aspect of accountability arises in the 1990s, in a context of model transition in public management as a way to encourage effectiveness, efficiency, and performance in government management. However, as highlighted in the study developed by CLAD (2006), this logic would not only apply to management, but also as a form of social control. Thus, in a current context of expanding partnerships between the public and private sectors, accountability for results tends to affect the concession processes, seeking to highlight environmental and socioeconomic indicators as a performance measure of private sector.

Performance indicators are also being discussed and incorporated into the concession process in the state of São Paulo. Aspects such as nature conservation, quality of services, cleanliness, and safety standards are

categorized through performance indicators that should be evaluated in the implementation of the concessions.

If the company meet 100% of the requirements it only pays 5%, if it meets only 90% it will pay 5.8% of the variable grant, if it meets 70% well it will pay 7% of the variable grant. That is, the worse the service performed the less it will earn in revenue at the end of the year. Is it in the interest of the state to punish? No, of course not. Our interest is that the service is well provided. The objective of the state, is not to obtain millionaire grants and lots of money with this project. (interlocutor 11, Fundação Florestal do estado de São Paulo, 2017)

The above statement addresses a relevant and complex issue in the process of concessions and partnerships that concerns the collection of the state from the grants to the private initiative. The economic-financial balance of the contract is an important aspect in the concession and requires the mediation and regulation of the state in order to make compatible the investments made and the income earned by the private initiative, but also to implement a policy of inflows and rates that do not burden the visitor and address the diversity of audiences and motivations (Rodrigues & Godoy, 2013).

In this sense, a challenge in the planning of visitation management is the diversification of recreation and tourism opportunities, considering that some activities can be carried out with limited infrastructure and equipment offered by the park, such as hiking on trails and access to rivers and waterfalls.

An ICMBio interlocutor, addressing the different ideological positions on access to parks and the model of concessions, emphasizes the issue of revenue collection as a relevant topic to be discussed.

I think that the reaction against the concessions has, in the first place, a clearly ideological stance, that of the state being responsible and not looking favorably upon the private sector. But on the other hand, I think there is the fear that is usually real, that when you work with concession contracts, you end up creating charges that, say, restrict the access of the economically disadvantaged. Therefore, it is important to think of special programs for price tickets, discounts, diversity of attractions. (interlocutor 2, ICMBio, 2017)

At the heart of the discussion about collection and prices charged to visitors, there is a concern on the part of the state regarding the improvement of contract management instruments, especially regarding “economic and financial balance”. The field of knowledge related to the supply and demand of services requires a market approach that needs to be understood and incorporated into the preparation of the bidding documents and, later, into concession contracts.

On the one hand, the question of the economic feasibility of the contract is a priority for the progress of a concession and the proposal must be attractive to the private investor. However, the state—based on principles and guidelines for the access to public goods and services—should ensure a public use proposal that includes different audiences and opportunities for recreation and learning in and with nature.

In this sense, one of the main challenges mentioned by research participants, at both the federal and state levels, is the continuous training for managers and capacity building in the face of new management challenges related with public use in the parks. That is, there is a double meaning that the public use agenda can assume in a park, depending on the way in which management understands and implements the activity: “business” viability for the private sector and promotion of access to a public good for society. The combination of these two perspectives depends on the quality of governance in terms of transparency, communication with users, and participation of civil society.

In addition to the topic of managerial training, another point frequently highlighted by the interviewees was the improvement in communication with society, seeking to underline the functions of conservation units, the role of environmental institutions, and institutional identity in the scope of concessions. In this line, an ICMBio interlocutor emphasizes that the topic of public use must be effectively adopted in the institution as

a conservation strategy, and not just as a “cash register or as an obligation that one has to fulfill” (interlocutor 3, ICMBio, 2017).

Finally, the challenge related to the bureaucratic flow in the concession process—which is still being discussed and incorporated into environmental agencies, considering the different sectors and their respective points of view on the process (legal, administrative, financial, technical)—was also highlighted, especially at the state level.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Concessions or partnerships processes in public parks—in Brazil or internationally—are part of a broader model of creation of a new form of governance, in which collective decisions, provision of services, and accountability involve participation and adjustment of the three sectors (government, companies, and civil society organizations) for a joint action.

There are many challenges to building this new governance, and there is a wide-ranging research agenda on this subject (Eagles, 2009; Torfing, Peters, Pierre & Sorensen, 2012). There is, of course, a wider range of public park management models, including those led by local communities. However, we sought to understand the institutional format of the concession, recently implemented in Brazil, but which remains little explored in the literature.

In the scope of this research, the present article presented the following challenges in the adoption of concessions and different management models:

- 1) The possibility of progress in park management through partnerships depends on the characteristics of established governance, both in terms of regulation—the elaboration of good contracts—and the capacity of government and society to act upon this model. A caveat is in order: according to the interviewees' statements, a strengthened public power, in terms of management and monitoring, is critical to enable a non-state model of this policy;
- 2) The shortcomings of the state should not be used as the main argument for the use of concessions. In this perspective, which characterizes the neoliberal agenda, the concessions tend to generate a situation of dependency, compromising the public functions of the parks. In this sense, instead of starting from a dualistic and excluding view, one must think of a model of articulation between the parts around common goals. Considering this context, it is important that the sectors involved focus on defending certain public values, such as the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the legitimacy of the process through the effective participation of local populations in decision-making on the tourism model that is desired for the parks;
- 3) Accountability, in its multiple dimensions, must be the basis of the processes of park concession or partnership. In this sense, three key elements stand out: transparency, to increase the capacity of regulators and society to control the performance of those who provide the service; effective communication, which promotes trust among those involved; and social participation, which strengthens accountability and enhances the legitimacy of the process. Strengthening accountability, it should be stressed, is not just a question of regulatory instruments. Above all, it is important to highlight the public values that guide partnership processes.

In summary, the new governance proposed by the literature (Torfing, Peters, Pierre & Sorensen, 2012) involves the combination of performance and democratization, and the empirical analysis of the Brazilian case indicated a greater concern with efficiency than with transparency and participation. This mismatch can undermine the reach of public values that should guide the management of parks and natural heritage.

The new model of governance for Brazilian public parks, characterized by the adoption of partnerships, moved the debate beyond the public/private dichotomy. The study highlighted the potential of this proposal: new management tools and public values of accountability and linked to the specificity of the public policy in question—the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and its enjoyment by the public—influence the traditional paradigm of service provision for the society. However, this change also depends on a government structured to regulate private entities and promote understanding of the impact of concessions on society and nature conservation.

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