

STATE INTERVENTION IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: FESTIVALS AND SUSTAUNABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN BAIHE, TAIWAN

方偉達, 黃躍雯, 韓國聖

Leisure and Recreation Management

Tourism

wtfang@chu.edu.tw

Abstract

Under the influence of globalization, many traditional local industries are coming under pressure to transform themselves, especially in newly industrialized countries like Taiwan. An example can be found in Baihe, Taiwan's first instance of large-scale state intervention in transitioning the local economy from agriculture to tourism. Beginning in 1996, Baihe began to stage an annual festival focused on a key local agricultural product - lotuses. At the start of the program, Baihe attracted significant tourism traffic, with annual visitors peaking at 700,000 in 2006, bringing in revenue of NT\$400 million(US\$ 13 million). However, the annual number of visitors has gradually declined since then. Why has it become so difficult to develop sustainable tourism in Baihe? Why are local residents unable to build on the government-promoted mass tourism model? Results of a multi-year investigation that show tourism development places inadequate emphasis on local conditions, is unable to take complete advantage of unique local features. At the same time, unempowered local communities do not develop the knowledge and skills required for tourism development. Tourism development based on one specific industry fails to fully present local attractions and is easily duplicated elsewhere. This type of forceful, state-led tourism development results in environmental, social, and economic costs which far outweigh the benefits, making it very difficult to meet Hall's (1998) framework for sustainable tourism development. Nevertheless, the process of developing the Baihe Lotus Festival and the unintentional establishment of community networks has contributed to the accumulation of social capital and is worthy of further study.

Keyword : Governance, locality, lotus-based event, sustainable tourism,
place