

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The past four decades have witnessed a worldwide acceleration in policies to privatize support for the provision of park and recreation services. While in some countries, such as the United States, this process started in the early 1970s, in other countries, such as Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, it is a relatively new trend stemming from the shift of these countries towards a free market system. In spite of differences in geography, political philosophy and commencement dates, the process of privatization in the park and recreation field is characterized by at least four general trends.

First, it appears that governments across the world have tended to reduce their responsibility and financial support for public recreation, emphasizing greater reliance on alternative financial sources such as, for example, user fees.

Second, nonprofit and commercial institutions have been encouraged to enter the recreation field, to supplement or supplant public sector efforts.

Third, public recreation agencies have entered into a variety of types of partnership with organizations from the nonprofit and commercial sectors.

Fourth, academics through their journals and training programs have introduced business methods, techniques and tools to the public sector where environmental changes made managers receptive to such efforts.

Indeed, public administration scholars have actively sought to develop new, or borrow and adapt existing, private sector tools and concepts. Thus, public park and recreation administrators have sought to understand, and have attempted to transfer, commercial marketing tools and concepts to the fundamentally different operational environment of the public sector (Payne, 2013; Tower and Zimmermann, 2016).