

Hammer, T., I. Mose, D. Siegrist & N. Weixelbaumer (eds.) 2016. *Parks of the Future. Protected Areas in Europe Challenging Regional and Global Change*. 278 pages. ISBN 978-3-86581-765-5

Protected areas, such as national parks, regional nature parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites have gained increased attention as places to study the interplay of environmental, economical and social dynamics to gather new insights in sustainable development. Since 2001 four professors from the universities of Bern, Oldenburg, Rapperswil and Vienna, the NeReGro Group (New Regional Development in Protected Areas) have taken a scientific and practical approach to the role of protected areas in the context of sustainable development in general and of questions regarding the contribution made by protected areas to sustainable regional development in particular. In their latest publication, *Parks of the Future. Protected Areas in Europe Challenging Regional and Global Change*, they gathered the experiences of 28 authors from all over Europe to analyse and comment on challenges of regional and global change in parks. One of the main underlying questions in this book is if and how parks can successfully function as experimental and learning spaces, as a major contribution to coping with the challenges related to sustainable development in Europe.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section introduces articles on how parks tackle the challenge of regional and global change, which approaches are used, and the experiences gained with these approaches. The presented methods and approaches range from resilience concepts to societal mirrors to land use and spatial planning to urbanization processes to collaborative regional governance and adaptive management.

In the second part, case studies from Spain, Scandinavia, England, Austria and Hungary, Germany, the Carpathians and Azerbaijan illustrate how parks deal with global and regional transformation.

In the third section, the editors complement a synthesis of the collected papers with an evaluation of experiences and pending challenges by selected practitioners from science management, park management and international protection.

It is a very informative, well-illustrated and well-structured book focusing on the issue of societal challenges of protected areas in Europe. The target audience of this book is very wide, ranging from scientists to park managers and governmental agencies. The clear structure of the book helps to pick out articles by personal interest, either in the approaches or the case studies or a combination of them.

The synthesis section of the book is something not often found in a book compiling articles from different authors. In this section, four people look at the articles presented in the book from their specific angle. They raise questions in relation to the challenges of coping

with regional and global change which could easily be neglected when focusing on single articles. Thus the authors of the synthesis papers not only provide the reader with their professional view of individual articles, but at the same time they contribute greatly to the discussion of how to cope with challenges of regional and global change in general.

Overall, this book is of high relevance for anybody working on sustainable development.

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Siegrist, D., S. Gessner & L. Ketterer Bonnelame 2015. *Naturnaher Tourismus. Qualitätsstandards für sanftes Reisen in den Alpen*. (Nature-oriented Tourism. Quality standards for gentle travel in the Alps). 309 pages. ISBN: 978-3-258-07922-6

Even if regional geography only features in the subtitle of this 309 page volume, what the three authors present here is essentially a book about the Alps, with a clear focus on aspects of leisure travel and tourism, which play a key role in these European mountains. Global tourism started here more than 200 years ago. The Alps are not only the most densely populated mountain area in the world but also the one with most tourism. In many Alpine regions tourism is the main economic sector – and it often triggers negative side effects, such as direct and indirect pollution, landscape fragmentation (think second homes) and damage to sensitive environments. Since the mid-1970s this has been a major topic in the Alps, viz Krippendorf's „*Die Landschaftsfresser. Tourismus und Erholungslandschaft, Verderben oder Segen?*“ (1975), who would have deserved a stronger mention in this volume.

In what way then is nature-oriented tourism better? The authors state a growing demand for and trend towards nature-oriented touristic options. This takes the form of activities and spaces without technical infrastructure, as well as culinary offerings based on regional produce. It means fewer groomed pistes, roads or large car parks, and more (snow-shoe) walking, e-bike cycling or canoeing, in sum, less overall environmental load and land consumption. What it needs, however, are intact natural spaces that attract backcountry skiers and via ferrata climbers, a concept already realized in the mountaineering villages of the Austrian Alpine Club (*Bergsteigerdörfer*, an idea introduced by Hasslacher, the Austrian president of CIPRA). One key aspect of nature-oriented tourism is its function as a resource for funding environmental protection and the preservation of the countryside. The authors also note that nature-oriented tourism is health-enhancing and, being essentially geared towards sufficiency, might be expected to need less energy and other natural resources. However, even landscape-oriented outdoor sports may cause problems, for instance when snow-shoe

walking disturbs grouse habitats and reaches further into hitherto untouched spaces.

The book opens with a broad, substantial terminology debate and defines *naturnah* (nature-oriented), the authors' chosen term (Chapter 1). Chapters 2 and 3 present the current state of debate about nature-oriented tourism in the Alps. However, this reader has his doubts about the terms *first nature* (natural assets) and *second nature* (infrastructures) used in Figure 9 and subsequently. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of the empirical studies, using six cases and the following study design:

1. a classic desk research and guided expert interviews to draw up draft quality standards,
2. followed by an online questionnaire on quality standards (reaching 1 365 participants, distributed rather unevenly across the Alpine states, with an overrepresentation of Switzerland)
3. followed by an international workshop to fine-tune the quality standards, which are then
4. tried out in practice.

The selected six cases cover the Alpine Space fairly well, but including a tour operator seems equivalent to introducing a foreign element, however important these actors may be within the tourism sector. Other than that it is always large protected areas that are being compared. Altogether, the authors set down ten quality standards and attempt to operationalize them using five criteria each (of a more qualitative nature, i.e. not quantifiable). A given destination would therefore have to enter 50 criteria to find out its standing in terms of nature-oriented tourism. Even the authors seem to have found this too cumbersome and offer a short checklist, reduced to six key issues, on p. 192, which serves as a tool for quick self-evaluation.

One thing is clear: Even nature-oriented tourism is no universal remedy for *saving the Alps* (which begs the question: What kind of Alps?). However, currently about 20% of the total turnover in Alpine tourism comes from nature-oriented tourism, with the authors projecting a further 20% increase over the next 15 years. This considerable potential for regional economies certainly warrants a closer interest in the quality standards presented here, especially for Alpine valleys not yet given over to mass tourism. The book at hand provides a solid base for the main actors in the destinations in their decision-making. And this is a declared aim of the authors who see the role of these actors as crucial in a shift towards nature-oriented tourism. They should not forget, though, that tourism is a consumer-driven business. Holiday makers themselves will also have to be encouraged to engage in nature-oriented outdoor pursuits.

This monograph adds neatly to a multitude of writings on *gentle tourism*, first on the agenda in the Alps in 1983 at the CIPRA annual conference in Chur. The Tourism Protocol of the Alpine Convention also aims to enhance conservation in the Alps. However, to this

day CIPRA has not succeeded in setting clear boundaries for the expansion of mass tourism infrastructure, either for skiing destinations or lifts. Here it would be good to apply pan-Alpine spatial planning with clear rules to regulate land use claims and to save resources (like the Ruhegebiet category in Tyrol or the Bavarian Alpenplan) – in addition to the existing large areas of strict protection. The book could have devoted more than just one page of text to this aspect. This omission apart, the book is definitely worth reading – its first part will be more interesting for tourism researchers and academics, the second part (from Chapter 5) more for managers of tourism organizations and actors offering destination options.

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