

Abstract submission for IPA 2010 Grenoble:

Discourse and Policy Practices: Politics – Legitimacy – Power

Suggestion for a paper presentation in the panel:

“Discursive Practices and Legitimate Power in Forest and Nature Policy”

**An emerging paradigm for sustainably managing
conservation areas - examples from Europe and the US.**

Carsten Mann¹ and James Absher ²

¹“Innovation in governance” research group

Center for Technology and Society

Berlin Institute of Technology

Hardenbergstr. 36A

D-10623 Berlin, Germany

Phone: ++49 30 314 28872

Fax: ++49 30 314 25654

e-mail: mann@ztg.tu-berlin.de

²US Forest Service – PSW Research Station

4955 Canyon Crest Drive

Riverside, CA 92507

Phone: ++1-951-680-1559

Fax: ++1-951-680-1501

e-mail: jabsher@fs.fed

Keywords: Conservation areas, planning and management, paradigm shift, participative methods, institutional fit

Abstract

Conserving natural and cultural lands have become increasingly important for societal well-being in many western countries. Continuous urbanization, detachment from nature and demographic changes are among the main reasons fostering political discussions about strengthening the social and cultural dimension for sustainable and multifunctional land use. However, planning schemes differ in their ability to sustainably cope with the complexities and subtleties of incorporating (new) conservation objectives, like recreation and nature tourism into existing governmental and societal contexts, particularly on the regional/local level. In this paper, institutional problems that have arisen in conservation areas are explored and an emerging paradigm suggested that might deal with them.

One trend in conserved area planning is to incorporate decision-making that is closer to its point of application and emphasize partnerships, strategic alliances and broader consultation with those who are likely to be responsible for, or experience impacts from, policy decisions. Participative approaches offer flexibility to resource management through adaptive governance, and may provide a dynamic, tailored result that is specific to place and institutional context (cf. Borrini-Feyerabend, 2003; Folke et al., 2005). However, conserved areas are often characterized by large-scale diverse ecosystems, multiple levels of policy implementation, different perceptions of problems, policy objectives, and different preferences for strategies and instruments what makes management difficult.

Two case studies illustrate these problems for outdoor recreation and present governance solutions that integrate user demands and management solutions into their institutional contexts. One case study is from the Black Forest Nature Park, Germany and the other from a national forest in California, USA. In the Black Forest recreation management principles were developed jointly, suggesting shifts in conflict management objectives, participative planning approaches, communication strategies and the assessment of institutional fit of policy decisions. In California recreational uses are addressed as one resource issues within a broad forest plan. People are engaged through public comment on, and reactions to, proposed directions prepared by forest staff. Specific recreation conflict potentials are left to emerge in later, specific programmatic plans. The examples illustrate how the suggested governance principles for conservation areas are addressed in practice and how they might contribute to a better understanding of the social functions of nature.

Permanent communication platforms established by local authorities serve to create partnerships between individuals and between individuals and authorities, allowing local actors interested in the quality of the living environment to participate in a common visioning and consensus building in their region with shared interests (cf. Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2006). Knowing more about use preferences and conflict perceptions, together with the provision of a platform for mutual exchange and participatory decision making, helps to facilitate the design and management of sustainable future conservation areas (Sievänen et al., 2008). The two case studies suggest a sociologically robust paradigm that balances between a bottom-up approach for conservation areas that must be weighed against the values achieved from the more traditional top-down planning and management systems.

References:

Borrini-Feyerabend, G. 2003. Governance of protected areas – innovation in the air. *Policy Matters* **12**: 92-115.

Folke, C., Hahn, T., Olsson, P.; & Norberg, J. 2005. Adaptive governance of socio-ecological Systems. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* **30**: 441–473.

Masschelein, J., & Quaghebeur, K. 2006. Participation making a difference? Critical analysis of the participatory claims of change, reversal, and empowerment. *Interchange* **37(4)**: 309–331.

Sievänen, T., Arnberger, A., Dehez, J., Grant, N., Jensen, F. S., & Skov-Petersen, H. (Eds.) 2008. *Forest recreation monitoring–A European perspective* (pp. 14–33). Helsinki: Working Papers of the Finnish Forest Research Institute.