

Types of Conflicts between Recreational Use and Nature Conservation – a contribution to Conflict Analysis, Resolution and Prevention in National Parks and Biosphere Reserves

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Abstract

Conflict types provide the possibility of structuring the extremely complex conflict area recreational use – nature conservation in national park and biosphere reserve regions. This conflict typification is based on the findings of spatial and social-science conflict research as well as on extensive conflict analysis carried out in the six areas which were investigated. In this process, both general tendencies in conflict development and resolution as well as specific regional features became evident. In this lecture, the typification will not be dealt with as the result of, but as the starting point for, the analysis of conflicts and the development of strategies for solving and avoiding conflicts. Using several conflict types as examples, the differences between the conflict situations and their resolution will be described and the varying roles of national park and biosphere reserve managements in the conflict process demonstrated. Even though each conflict situation demands an individual, conclusive analysis, they can provide the basis for the discussion of fundamental procedures and generalization of experience.

Keywords

Conflict, Types of Conflicts, National Parke, Biosphere Resere, Tourism, Recreational Use, Nature Conservation, Conflict Analysis, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Prevention.

Project

Habilitation Thesis, 1996–2002 (cf. ZIENER 2003).

Regions

Spreewald, District of Rügen, Harz and Rhön in Germany, Lake Neusiedl and Danube floodplains in Austria.

A wide range of differing conflicts concerning spatial use, interests and goals arises during the establishment and development of national parks and biosphere reserves. These influence the implementation of protection goals, hinder and block the activities of the management of the conservation area. However, conflicts can also lead to development (e.g., changing ideas in tourism and leisure-time sport towards sustainable tourism and the environmentally-friendly performing of leisure-time activities). Unlike problems, conflicts cannot be solved unilaterally but require the reciprocal action of both (all) parties.

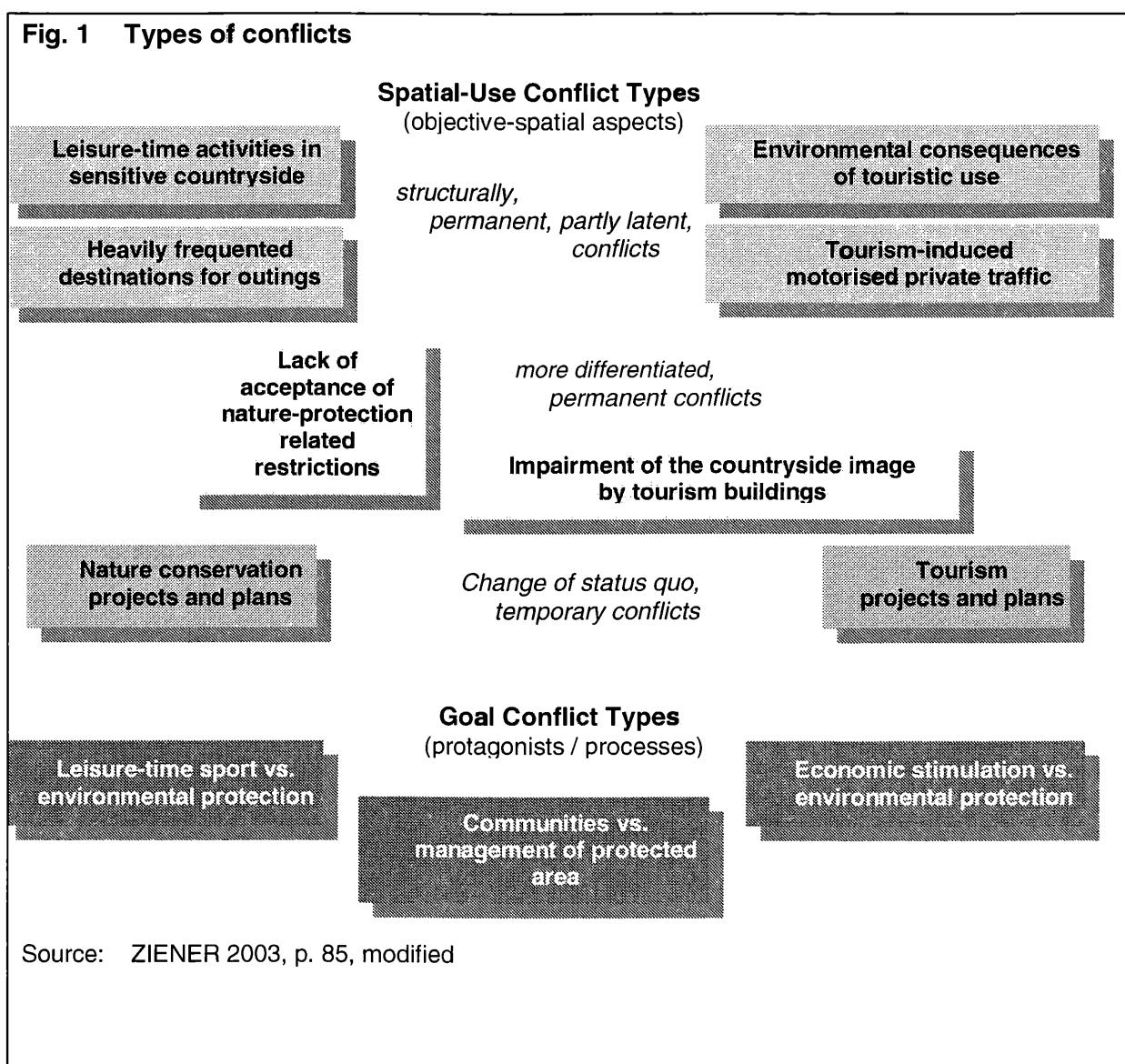
The modelling of the conflict area recreational use – nature conservation demonstrates the variety and complexity of the spatial-use conflicts and goal conflicts in the field of tension of ecology, economy (tourist industry) and social aspects (recreation and leisure-time use) as well as the interaction between them and, at the same time, serves as an example for other fields of conflict. The core of the modelling is the establishment of conflict types. The fundamentals of the methodology: Due to the complexity of the data structure – varied individual conflicts and a wide range of conflict properties – deductive and inductive procedures were linked. The conflict structure – the (objective) conflict subject, conflict parties, (subjective) points of contention, form, connection with space and time, conflict result and long-term effects – provided the analysis raster for real conflicts. And, the systemisation of the registered conflicts permitted the identification of typical conflict situations, development, and approaches to solution, their concretisation and characterisation. Three sources were used for the conflict analysis in the regions being investigated: scientific studies, concepts and plans dealing with conflicts, the regional press as well as interviews with regional decision makers.

As a result of the typification, eight types of conflicts concerning spatial use and three concerning goal conflicts could be formulated and described. Whereas conflicts over spatial use could be typified according to objective-spatial aspects, in those dealing with goals, the aspects dealing with the protagonists and processes were in the foreground. Two examples of the (qualitative) description of the spatial-use conflict types are shown in table 1. The characterization of the goal conflict types was carried out according to the three distinctive groups: conflict parties / issue / points of contention, spatial relationship, outward form / time relationship / conflict result / conflict effect. The application of the spatial-use conflict types on the six regions being investigated showed that almost all recorded conflicts could be assigned to the eight types and the typification was confirmed.

Conflict analysis

The conflict types can support the structure of the field of conflict recreational use – nature conservation in a region and the analysis of individual conflicts. The point of departure is formed by questions such as: Which conflict types exist, and/or existed, in the region and what are the characteristics of the individual conflicts? Are there dominating conflict types and specific regional features? The conflict types can be processed as a checklist. The confrontation concerning heli-skiing in the Grosses Walsertal can be categorized under the conflict type leisure-time activities in sensitive areas. Its analysis and characterization can follow the type description and substantiate or modify the individual points.

Fig. 1 Types of conflicts



Source: ZIENER 2003, p. 85, modified

Fig. 1: Types of conflicts

Table 1 Examples of the Description of the Spatial-Use Conflict Types between Recreational Use and Nature Conservation

Conflict subject / Points of contention / Spatial relationship	Conflict participants	Outward form / Time relationship / Conflict result	Long-term conflict effects
Leisure-time activities in sensitive areas			
<p>The demands placed on the landscape and spatial use when performing certain leisure-time activities collide with goals for conservation and restrictions in sensitive areas, worth protecting, → conflicts, because restrictions on use or control measures were, or should be, threatened, implemented or increased, usually small-scale, sensitive areas such as the banks of lakes and rivers, the upper reaches of flowing waters, steep and flat coasts, moors and silt areas, dry-grass areas, close-to-nature woods, subalpine meadows.</p>	<p>leisure-time sport clubs and societies, homeland and hiking associations, tourism providers, societies and organisations, communities, national park or biosphere reserve management, environmental protection clubs and associations, ecologists</p>	<p>In principle, permanent and not capable of being conclusively solved, fluctuation between latent and active conflicts, in recent times numerous examples of agreements and negotiations between management of protected areas, environmental protection bodies and users concerning routing, control measures, etc., compromises, temporary or permanent regulations, e.g., closing off of paths and water areas, relocation of paths and ski-trails, total or limited bans on admission, measures to control visitors and traffic guidance systems.</p>	<p>Partial solutions which permit a reduction in the conflict potential concerning spatial structure, e.g., relief for sensitive biotopes, reduction of the occurrence of erosion, cooperation with environmental protection and leisure-time sport organisations in the field of visitor management and environmental education, increase in the acceptance of national park or biosphere reserve.</p>
Tourism projects and plans			
<p>Above all, large-scale tourist facilities and construction, and those in sensitive landscape areas, are seen as an attack on nature and the landscape, e.g., large-scale recreational facilities, harbours, winter sport facilities → conflicts result from the resistance of environmental protection and other groups against tourism plans, small-scale, large-scale projects spreading across the region.</p>	<p>environmental protection clubs and associations, nature conservation authorities, national park management or biosphere reserve management, landscape and regional planning, communities, civic action groups, investors, tourism providers, leisure-time sport clubs and societies</p>	<p>Open carrying out of conflicts, partly strong escalation, creation of coalitions for and against the project, limited-period conflicts, partly long-lasting, counter-suggestions, alternatives, discussion of variations, e.g., in the press and at events, protest meetings, statements by public agency concerning the project, approval, partially with stipulations (compromises), or refusal of the project.</p>	<p>Effect of tourism plans on nature and the landscape as well as the economic development of the community and region, discussions on the problems of tourism development and maintaining the landscape.</p>

Source: ZIENER 2003, p. 88, abridged

Tab. 1: Examples of the Description of the Spatial-Use Conflict Types between Recreational Use and Nature Conservation

Two key factors must be taken into consideration when dealing with, and solving, conflicts: The conflict parties and the different roles of the management of the nature reserve in the conflict process. In conflicts over leisure-time activities in sensitive areas the administration of the conservation area and environmental protection organisations have leisure-time sport clubs, tourism providers and organisations, as well as the communities as their opponents. The more a leisure-time sport is organised, the more can be achieved through regulations and agreements. The national park, and/or biosphere reserve, management is a conflict party but increasingly also a moderator in conflict management. In this double capacity, it should take a direct approach to the process of problem solution and be actively involved. Conflicts based on an individual's lack of acceptance of restrictions resulting from environmental protection are usually carried out by single persons, mainly local recreation seekers living in the vicinity, residents and property-owners, and only secondly by clubs, organizations and communities. Here, the main necessity is to prevent an escalation of the conflict spreading over the entire region through targeted intervention and intense negotiation. However, sometimes it is necessary to take legal action when dealing with violations of conservation area regulations. There are usually two camps when dealing with tourism projects and plans – supporters and opponents. Today, the latter are not only comprised of nature and environmental representatives. The group also includes residents, communal representatives, tourism providers and businesspeople who fear additional competition or influence from outside and can, therefore, be won as partners.

Conflict prevention

Targeted conflict prevention must take its start from the conflict potential. The conflict potential of spatial structures can be categorized as pairs of opposites:

- ◆ A landscape is evaluated as being both **worth protecting** and *attractive for recreation and leisure-time activities* (general view).
- ◆ An unfavourable relationship exists between the **sensitivity of a landscape** and the *intensity of its use for recreation and leisure-time activities* (ecological view).
- ◆ *Demands on using the area* by those seeking recreation and leisure-time activity, are opposed to **restrictions resulting from environmental protection** (user's view).

Conflict potential can also be a result of the persons involved, their interests and demands, deficits in information and communication, through misunderstandings and a lack of involvement by the relevant users and interest groups. Divergent conflict, and conflict avoidance, potentials exist in the individual conflict groups.

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