

Introduction

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Management and monitoring of visitor flows in recreational and protected areas are topics of growing importance worldwide. Today more than 100,000 protected areas exist globally, and the trend shows that their number is increasing, as the IUCN statistics demonstrate. To these, we must add numerous smaller areas that also have special natural or cultural heritage values, but do not have a special protected status. Many of these areas do not only serve the protection of natural and cultural values or biodiversity, they are also important points of attraction for tourism and recreation. These areas must be professionally maintained and managed if they are to conserve their natural and landscape values in the future.

After Vienna, Austria (2002) and Rovaniemi, Finland (2004), the third international conference “Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas” (2006) takes place in Rapperswil, Switzerland. Both of the previous host countries have pursued large scale park management strategies and established numerous new protected areas. Accompanying this, research is evolving, in which visitor flow management is finding an increasingly important place. Switzerland also has a long standing tradition in research on protected areas, although it has until now mainly concentrated on the only large protected area, the Swiss National Park in Engadin.

The creation of new parks in Switzerland has met opposition for a long time. Only lately two large protected areas have been established: the UNESCO Biosphere reserve Entlebuch and the UNESCO World Heritage site Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn. At the moment, a modification of the Swiss federal environmental legal framework is in progress in the Swiss parliament, which should facilitate park creation in the near future. Three categories of protected areas are planned: “National Park”, “Nature Experience Park” and “Regional Nature Park”. In the coming years at least one new National Park is to be established.

With the ongoing legal revision, the debate about the protection of nature and landscapes as well as the issue of the future of remote regions enjoy new dynamics. As a result, current strategies promote the defusing of the classical antagonism between “conservation” and “development” through new synergies between protection of nature and tourism. Remote regions will benefit from a new economic functionality due to the creation of protected areas, and it should be expected that natural and cultural heritage will be professionally managed. Since human use is a central issue of the newly created parks, funded monitoring and expert visitor flow management will gain increasing significance.

From this background, these proceedings contain contributions pertaining to four central questions:

1. Which impacts do tourist use and recreational activities have on recreational and protected areas and how can these be presented?

This question addresses the advancement of research in visitor monitoring methods, visitor modelling and data management. What new results have been found in recreation ecology and visitor impact research? What are the latest developments in the study of visitor/user conflicts, behaviour studies, sustainability and carrying capacity studies? How are new methods for simulating recreational behaviour through agents progressing? How can we bridge the ecological and social science divide in visitor impact monitoring and management?

2. Which images of landscape, nature and wildlife are the basis for the use and management of recreational and protected areas?

This question aims to investigate society's perception of landscape as well as the implications for visitor management. How do landscapes act as push and pull factors of leisure motivation? Which images of the landscape are tied to the concept of sustainable development? What is the state of research in exploring the foundations of human-wildlife conflicts in parks and protected areas?

3. What requirements must be met for regional development and nature based tourism to take place in relation to recreational and protected areas?

This question addresses new paradigms of regional development in the context of large protected areas. Which concepts and experiences arise in the domains of nature recreation and nature tourism and what economic and social effects are to be expected? How can one increase the value added of a protected area without diminishing the quality of the landscape and biodiversity?

4. How relevant is research for actual practice and how are research results integrated into planning and management?

This question examines the significance of visitor monitoring data for management, planning and policy and for visitor information. Which requirements exist for recreation and how can they be integrated into landscape planning? What value can be given to participation processes? What do good solutions between sports, nature and landscape look like?

These questions are discussed by scientists and managers from almost 30 countries and we are pleased to welcome so many to this MMV3 conference. This active participation is a positive sign for the network of experts that has developed to such prosperity in few years. The following proceedings contain the contributions which were accepted for presentation at the MMV3 conference. The choice was offered to the contributors to submit a short abstract or a longer extended one. The sessions are listed here in the order they are given at the conference. Within the different sessions, the presentations are sorted alphabetically by the first author's name. The full speeches made by the invited keynote speakers are also included. An index of authors at the end of the volume will make finding a contribution easier.

To guarantee scientific quality, each submitted presentation was given a blind reviewing by two international experts who read the contributions critically and commented them anonymously. Many were accepted, others were returned for a minor or major revision. As linguistic quality was not a criterion for acceptance, the contributions were edited in the compilation of the proceedings. We would like to give sincere thanks to all the reviewers for their support.

At this point we would like to recognize all those who contributed to the success of the MMV3 conference. Special thanks go to the partner institutions and the members of the National Organizing Committee for their active assistance in making this conference possible. We thank the members of the International Steering Committee for their valuable guidance and suggestions. In particular we thank the University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil, the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland, the University of Applied Sciences Wädenswil, the SANU – Training for Sustainable Development, the Swiss National Fund and the Swiss Academy of Sciences for their financial and material support. Last but not least we would like to thank the session and workshop chairs as well as all the contributors, upon whose work the scientific quality of the MMV3 conference depends.