

An Improved Methodological Approach to Recreation Conflict Analysis in the Black Forest

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Introduction

Germany's recreation management is traditionally integrated into spatial planning systems oriented towards the protection of ecosystems. The scientific inputs to management have been largely determined by quantitative impact and conflict studies with an emphasis on nature protection (e.g. Schemel & Erbguth 2000). Conclusions of far most studies were that careful conflict and visitor flow management is needed for a sustainable landscape development. Today, however, Germany's recreational situation has changed: New activities and increased participation by people seeking different recreational experiences challenge management in many areas (Schmied et al. 2002; and others). Apart from ecological problems, social conflicts occur between and within user-groups and land management agencies (e.g. Pröbstl 2000). Because systematic sociological studies of Germany's natural resource management are rare, there is a lack of understanding of the leisure differences that might lead to conflict. In turn, this leads to incomplete management and, at times, wrong management decisions (e.g. Mann 2006).

This paper begins with a review of the scientific literature that underlies this situation and proposes a model, based on the methodological work of Mayring (2001) and others, that better integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. While inductive and deductive approaches are often viewed as incompatible scientific approaches (Kelle & Erz-

berger 2000), new attempts combine the two methodological steps in order to evaluate the validity of results and to gain a greater ascertainment, description, and understanding of a subject (Flick 1998). To analyze user-groups' recreation conflict potentials, an integrated methodological design using a triangulation technique was chosen for this study.

Methods

This study empirically tests a model derived from the work of numerous recreation and resource management authors (e.g. Jacob & Schreyer 1980; Graefe & Thapa 2004; and Opaschowski 1999). Possible impacts were evaluated with the addition of questions about the infrastructure, visitors encountered, forest management and experiential impacts.

These items originate from recent German and American recreation conflict literature. Additional questions of how impacts affect the individual satisfaction rate, visitor reactions and management preferences complete the model's explanatory power (figure 1).

The adequacy of the model to explain conflicts was tested with two key ideas:

- 1) The sensitivity to conflicts as described by a combination of factors and motives,
- 2) The ability of the model to better understand recreation conflicts through the user group's social world.

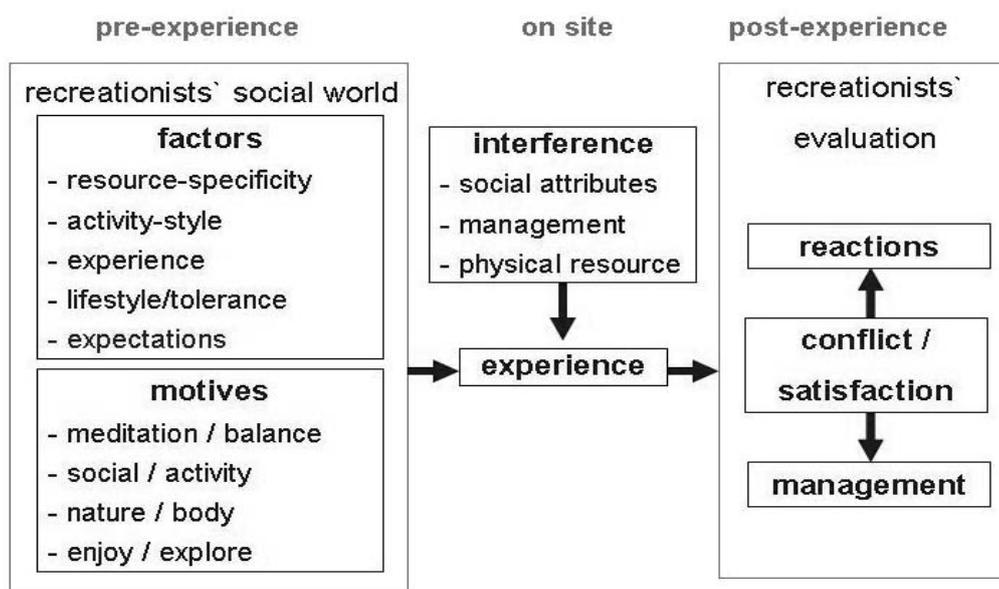


Figure 1: The conflict analysis model.

A purposive sample from six distinct nature sport organizations and 200 activity clubs was obtained. For the data collection, various methods were employed, dependent upon the activity's organization and the expected demography of the members. From the 845 returned questionnaires, 805 were useable. This was followed by 16 structured, validating interviews. Using data from the Black Forest nature sport groups, five activity factors and four motive groups were derived to encapsulate the recreationists' "social world" that exists independently of a recreational stay (pre-experience). This re-integration of social dimensions into planning processes and management concepts results in a new method for exploring visitor demands and conflict perceptions for forest-based recreation.

Conclusion

The results from this study confirm the validity of this mixed-method, triangulation approach and suggest the importance of using it to enhance the accuracy of management decisions where conflicts may occur due to the differences in the interests and values of recreationists and on-going social development. Moreover, recognizing local social worlds and recreational needs and linking them in a directed fashion into the planning process should improve sustainable landscape management and protect nature from an uncontrolled use.

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