

Norwegian protected area policy, tourism and recreation: A comparative analysis of the international context with reference to New Zealand.

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This paper reports on the preliminary stages of one part (Task D) of a programme of research funded by the Norway Research Council, titled '*Prospects for Managing Tourism Development in Protected Areas in a Period of Transition (PROTOUR)*'. This research programme sets out to analyse the potential for fostering and managing nature-based tourism development in and in association with Norwegian national parks. *PROTOUR* is organised into six key objectives, the fourth of which (Task D) seeks to position Norwegian protected area policies with regard to tourism and recreation in the international context. The initial phase of Task D entails a comparative analysis of protected area policies as it relates to tourism and recreation using New Zealand as a basis for comparison.

The first national park in Norway was established in 1962 and today national parks and other protected areas comprise 17 per cent of the land mass on the Norwegian mainland. The nature protection policy has thus been quite extensive over a short period of time but still little management attention has been given to the potential for nature based tourism. In the last decade political signals at the national level indicated growing support for tourism development in association with the national parks and management models and practices from other countries like New Zealand are thus seen as increasingly relevant to, and informative of the Norwegian context.

The management of the natural resource base in Norway, both within and outside protected areas, has historically been founded on the general principle of "common access" (*allemannsretten*), on which Norway's Outdoor Recreation Act (*Friluftsloven*) is based (Miljøverndepartementet 2007). The Act allows for unrestricted foot access to all in wilderness areas (areas which are not regarded as cultivated) such as national parks throughout the year. The principles of the *allemannsrett* are the foundation for mostly self-organised independent activities and visitor services are traditionally not seen as necessary in protected areas. Norway has typically upheld a tradition of limited facility development and commercial activities in its national parks (Haukeland & Lindberg, 2001). The Norwegian management system is therefore short of expertise in managing visitor needs and desires in the national parks, and there is a need to develop capacities to ensure the supportive handling of local tourism industry interests. Existing national park management plans are designed to clarify management rules and regulations for use of the parks, yet no visitor strategies are developed (Haukeland 2011). The majority of existing national park management plans make little or no reference to

tourism businesses (Heiberg, Hagen & Christensen 2006). In recent years there has been an increase in the budget for management of Norwegian national parks. So far, the majority of these resources has been allocated to the demanding processes associated with the launching of new national parks – the important question hereafter will be how the established national parks should be managed in practice (NTB, 2010). Insights based on international experiences and comparisons will hopefully be beneficial in this respect.

The New Zealand conservation policy context is selected for the purposes of this comparative analysis because the long-standing and generally successful association between tourism/recreation and conservation management in New Zealand. The *New Zealand Department of Tourism and Publicity* (NZTP), now *Tourism New Zealand* (TNZ), was established by the New Zealand government in 1901 – the first government agency responsible for international tourism promotion in the world. NZTP was established to promote the wonders of New Zealand's natural environment and to foster tourism, particularly from the 'Old Country' (England) and particularly to visit the developing National Park system that existed at that time. Today New Zealand's 'clean and green' image is an essential element of its attractiveness as an international tourism destination. That image is formalized through the highly successful global marketing campaign '*100% Pure New Zealand*' which has been the flagship of TNZ's marketing efforts for over a decade (initially launched in 1999). The '*100% Pure New Zealand*' brand is based primarily on perceptions of unpolluted rivers and lakes, and alpine wilderness which centre on an extensive system of protected conservation lands (which collectively represent over one third of New Zealand's land area) based on an extensive system of national parks (Higham & Maher, 2006; Hall et al. 1997).

Environmental administration in New Zealand was overhauled by the fourth Labour Government (1984–1990). One important part of the major reform to environmental administration at that time was the enactment of the *Conservation Act 1987* and the creation of the Department of Conservation (DOC) which came into existence on April 1, 1987. Since that date DOC has been the single and coordinated government department responsible for the management of the 'conservation estate' (PNAs) including all national parks. Under the *Conservation Act 1987* DOC is obliged to foster tourism and recreational use of heritage resources (Cahn & Cahn 1989) "*so far as it is consistent with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage*

values” (*Conservation Act 1987*). In addition, the management of reserves, forest parks and other state forests, wildlife and native plants, historic foreshores, seabeds, lakes and rivers, marine resources and marine mammals were from 1987 drawn together under the DOC umbrella (Molloy 1993; Hall & Higham, 2000). DOC was established on a four-tier structure consisting of Head Office (Wellington), eight regional offices, 34 district offices and numerous field centers (which provide critical coalface visitor services for tourists and recreationists alike). The New Zealand context, therefore, offers a comparative case that is unique in the longstanding and formalized relationship between tourism/recreation and conservation management.

This conference paper will provide an introduction to PROTOUR Task D. It will present initial comparisons (convergences and divergences) between the Norwegian

(basis of comparison) and New Zealand (subject of comparison) cases, highlighting the key elements/dimensions that will be the subjects of comparative analysis (1. Environment, society and economy; 2. Conservation status and designations; 3. Conservation policy; 4. Public use of conservation areas (tourism/non-tourism); 5. Visitor services and facilities; 6. Key issues in tourism/recreation and conservation management). Methodological challenges and research design considerations will be reviewed before conclusions are drawn.

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