

## The expansion of the Kalkalpen National Park from the perspective of political ecology

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### Keywords

political ecology, National Park Kalkalpen

### Summary

The Kalkalpen National Park was founded in the year 1997. Its statutes declare that the national park area should grow continually. The reasons why this has not happened to the necessary extent until today are complex. On one hand the economic crisis and its aftermath led to a discontinuation in negotiations between representatives from the federal state Upper Austria and landowners in the year 2009. On the other hand some stakeholders are acting vehemently against the expansion of the national park. The investigated areas for an expansion include the nature reserves Haller Mauern, Bosruck and Warscheneck. In this scenario, the national park would grow from the current 208.5 km<sup>2</sup> to a total area of 267.86 km<sup>2</sup>.

The empirical research method chosen in my master-thesis is the qualitative problem-centered interview. This method was used to summarize the opinions about the conflict potential from different perspectives. Afterwards, the findings were interpreted in the context of political ecology.

The results of the research show that the national park expansion has a high conflict potential, although the areas of the expansion scenario have already been designated as conservation areas. In case of dedication as a core zone of the national park, the protection measures in the investigation area would become stricter. Especially hunters would be affected because conventional hunting would no longer be possible. Another conflict potential results from the fact that the nature reserve Warscheneck has always been a very interesting development area for the tourism industry. There are plans to connect the ski resort Hinterstoder-Höss with the ski area Wurzeralm and for that purpose parts of the protected landscape would have to be utilized. Advocates of this project emphasize the importance for the regional economy and the creation and preservation of jobs. Opponents rate the project as an economic and ecological disaster.

Such conflicts over environmental resources can trigger a decision-making process in which politicians and local residents decide if they want or do not want to develop their region complying with the national park concept.

### References

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