

NATIONAL PARKS AS TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

**Increasing numbers of tourists and their
effects on these protected areas**

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Statutory Declaration

“I declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this bachelor thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or resources other than stated for its preparation. I further declare that I have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This bachelor thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for examination purposes.”

Date: 29.04.2013

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English Abstract

Ensuring that visitors are highly satisfied with their experience and at the same time protecting the natural resources by minimizing the negative environmental impacts of visitors are key management tasks of national parks. This paper examines how knowledge in carrying capacity and visitor management can be used to assure the fulfillment of these objectives. An extensive literature review was undertaken investigating what theories already exist and what concepts are presently applied in these fields. Moreover, expert interviews in five Austrian national parks were conducted in order to learn about how they approach these issues and to find out about new and innovative concepts in contemporary national park management. Literature is used as a basis for the interpretation of the findings. It is shown that even though there are many approaches to deal with carrying capacities and negative visitor influences on nature exist, there are difficulties in applying them globally. Interrelations between different management concepts are investigated, and it is demonstrated how the gained knowledge can be applied in practice.

German Abstract

Die Sicherstellung von Besucherzufriedenheit und der gleichzeitige Schutz von natürlichen Ressourcen, durch Minimierung von negativen Umwelteinflüssen durch Besucher, sind Hauptaufgaben eines Nationalparks. Diese Abhandlung untersucht, wie das Wissen über das Management der Tragfähigkeitsgrenze und von Besuchern benutzt werden kann, um die Erfüllung dieser Ziele sicher zu stellen. Eine umfangreiche Literaturrecherche wurde durchgeführt, bestehende Theorien untersucht und zeitgenössisch angewandte Konzepte identifiziert. Des Weiteren wurden Experteninterviews in fünf österreichischen Nationalparks durchgeführt um über deren Vorgehensweise, als auch über neue und innovative Konzepte im Nationalpark-Management zu erfahren. Literatur diente als Basis für die Interpretation der Forschungsergebnisse. Es wird aufgezeigt, dass obwohl viele Vorgehensweisen bezüglich der Setzung von Tragfähigkeitsgrenzen als auch bezüglich negativer Besucher-einflüsse existieren, Schwierigkeiten bestehen, diese global umzusetzen. Zusammenhänge und Verflechtungen zwischen Managementkonzepten werden im Zuge dieser Arbeit untersucht und es wird dargelegt, wie das Wissen darüber in der Praxis angewandt werden kann.

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List of Abbreviations

AL	Alois Lang, National Park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel
AVL	Acceptable Visitor Load
AW	Alois Wick, National Park Kalkalpen
CB	Dr. Christian Baumgartner, National Park Donauauen
CÜ	Christian Übl, National Park Thayatal
DI	Director
EU	European Union
HW	DI Herbert Wölger, National Park Gesäuse
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
NPS	United States National Park Service
ORF	Österreichischer Rundfunk
PAOT	People at one time (at one place)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
U.S. / USA	United States of America
VERP	Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Framework
WTO	World Tourism Organization

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study and Problem Definition

Both, managing carrying capacity and developing proper concepts to minimize the environmental effects of tourists, constitute a major challenge to national park authorities. While some national parks have tourism master plans in place, others do not. This poses a threat to the fulfillment of their key functions. It is essential to bring the different stakeholders in a national park and its surrounding region together in agreement, in order to ensure regional acceptance and support for the protected area. Good cooperation allows growth and development for the region. The overall purpose should be an increase in value for the region, the visitor and the nature of a national park. Depending on the country or the region, there are different laws and statutes regulating a national park. Not uncommonly there are requirements and guidelines for a national park from an international, national and regional level. Especially recreation areas in Europe are often managed on state or regional levels (Burns, Arnberger, & von Ruschkowski, 2010, p. 31). Some laws are even contradictory. This leads to flexibility for interpretation of the laws from region to region. In practice this means that national parks do not all work according to the same rules and regulations and often even develop their own, more detailed goals. On the one hand each national park is different and requires specific handling, on the other hand the current situation leaves a lot of room for mistakes. Having clear and well-functioning guidelines and management tools is therefore indispensable.

Even though a large amount of research and literature in the fields of carrying capacity, environmental impacts of visitors, behavior monitoring and sustainable tourism exists, there is little research showing their interrelations. In addition, research in these areas has a strong focus on North America as this part of the world played a leading role in early national park history and development. Some of the biggest and most well-known national parks are located there and are a living experiment for scientists and researchers from all over the world. There are new concepts and theories developed for American national parks on a regular basis; however, there is a lack in providing ideas and management tools that can be applied in protected areas on a global scale. The number of protected areas and people travelling to them has grown heavily throughout the last centuries.

“[R]ecreation visits to the U.S. national park system has grown from less than 40 million after the Second World War to almost 300 million“ (Brandt, & Holmes, 2011, p. 4). Statistics from Europe show a similar development. Therefore, it is of highest importance to combine the above-mentioned fields of research in order to guarantee the protection of the natural resources and the enjoyment of the visitor.

1.2. Objective of the Paper and Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to examine the current situation of carrying capacity and visitor management in national parks with the ultimate objective to enable responsible authorities to live up to their purpose of protecting the environment and at the same time making a good visitor experience possible. The following three research questions have been identified and will be answered in the course of this paper:

“What do national parks think that tourists currently find appealing about these protected areas and how far can they fulfill these expectations?”

Investigating the travel motivations of national park visitors helps ruling authorities to develop products and services in order to meet or even exceed the expectations of guests. It is important to know why people come to a specific national park. By providing high-quality information, visitor centers and guided tours, a national park can meet guest expectations and make visitors aware of the high value of this protected landscape and of nature in general. It can be assumed that a person who sees this value is more likely to try to preserve it. That is why fulfilling customer expectations is so important for national parks, because satisfied visitors help a national park to protect the nature therein. As a second affect, the acceptance and understanding of the benefits of having a national park increases within the local population.

“How can national parks meet the requirements of the increasing numbers of tourists while still protecting natural resources?”

Examining how to best manage this double function is extremely important for each national park no matter where it is located. Different emphasis is put on the different tasks. North American national parks, for example, have a different strategy than European ones in regards to how this is managed. The threats and impacts of visitors to the ecosystem in national park are handled very differently.

It can be said that ensuring this balance is one of the most, if not even the most important task of all protected areas. There is no single answer on how this issue should be regulated. However, it is in the scope of this paper to provide profound inputs and ideas on how to approach these divergent goals.

“What are the measures to minimize the environmental impacts of tourists on these protected areas?”

There are, of course, many attempts by national parks to minimize negative environmental effects of visitors. Carrying capacity management and visitor monitoring are just two of the concepts investigated in the paper. A high focus is put on exploring what measures, banal or complex, can lead to positive results for nature protection and the visitor. The investigated real-life practices are very powerful. An example for a conflict between different visitor groups will be given, and it will be indicated how this conflict can have a positive effect on nature.

It is not within the scope of the Bachelor Paper II to explain and interpret national park systems on a global scale and the carrying capacity methods they apply in detail. The objective is to give a insight into what is done in contemporary national park management concerning this issue and to mention some famous concepts.

Information about the Austrian national parks where the expert interviews were conducted will only be provided to an extent the researcher finds necessary in order to make the reader understand the ideas that are presented. No detailed information about history, conditions, numbers, etc. will be provided. Moreover, well-known carrying capacity concepts like the VERP framework, LAC, PAOT, etc. will be mentioned and explained by the author insofar as they are regarded as supporting the content of this paper. For more details on them, it is recommended to refer to the publications of the original researchers.

To summarize, it is the objective of this paper to contribute to showing how combinations of the different concepts, like carrying capacity management, visitor monitoring, visitor management and others, can be used to effectively and efficiently lead national parks towards the fulfillment of their objectives. The author chose the topic simply out of personal interest.

1.3. Research Design

An extensive literature review has been conducted to find research that was already done by others, as a source for theoretical ideas and definitions, as well as a source for example data used to support parts of the research (Veal, 2006, p. 121). Secondary data has also been used to identify relevant variables of the research. For these purposes, books, edited publications, journals by well-known authors in the respective fields and electronic sources have been examined. Qualitative research, obtaining non-numeric data, forms the basis of this paper as carrying capacity, as well as visitor management, both include components that cannot be assessed using a quantitative research approach only. Such aspects comprise, among others, perceptions, subjective motivations, expectations and emotions of national parks visitors on the one hand and perceptions of national parks authorities on the other. Throughout the paper, theory and findings will be demonstrated by real-life examples, as transparency is an essential aspect in the value of qualitative research (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001, p. 69). Qualitative research also was chosen due to its distinctive features summarized by Malhotra (2010, p. 171) stating that its objective is to obtain a qualitative understanding of the underlying motivations, the sample is small and non-representative, the data collection process is unstructured, the data analysis non-statistical and the outcome is the development of an initial understanding.

Furthermore, five expert interviews have been conducted directly in five out of the six Austrian national parks in order to obtain primary data. The interviewees have years of experience in the daily work of a protected area and have high positions in their respective fields within the different national parks. Experts from many different areas of national park management have been interviewed having nature protection, tourism, public relations and ecotourism and/or visitor management backgrounds. All the national parks where the expert interviews took place have different natural conditions and topographies that require distinctive management actions. Throughout these interviews, best-practice examples and innovative management initiatives were discussed that cannot easily be found in literature. The main reason for interviewing experts of different professional backgrounds and in different national parks was to achieve maximum variation and to get as many different ideas and perspectives as possible. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in German, summarized by theories and concepts, and statements of the experts were handpicked and later translated to English by the author and sub-grouped into nine topics by content.

1.4. Chapter Outline

After a short introduction to the topic of this paper in chapter one, indicating the problems addressed, the status quo of, and the gap in, research as well as stating the research questions and describing the research design, chapter two discusses the theoretical framework.

The first part of the second chapter includes an interpretation of the purposes of national parks and provides practical examples of how they are implemented. It discusses the role of international organizations and describes carrying capacity and visitor management efforts in national parks in different parts of the world. The second part then focuses on bringing these aspects together and showing their interrelations. These combinations of management concepts can be used to achieve very positive results for the environment and for visitors.

Chapter three is devoted to the methodological outline of this paper and as a consequence, the data collection and analysis process will be discussed. This includes a description of the sampling method and how the researcher decided on the experts interviewed. It will explain why the chosen method is applied and why it is the best way to investigate this topic. Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research as well as the topic of ethics in research are discussed. The issue of translation bias in the analysis of the expert interviews will be mentioned, as all the five interviews were conducted in German and then translated to English by the author.

Chapter four shows the major findings of the Bachelor Paper II. Primary data gathered through conducting the expert interviews will be presented and interpreted. The immense knowledge of the experts and their yearlong experience in national park management, or related fields, brought up many interesting perspectives on how to best approach certain issues. Examples of real-life situations underline the applicability of these concepts. The results include many examples of best practices that are specific to a certain national park.

In the last section, the author comes up with conclusions and gives recommendations on how the theory gained in the data collection process can be applied in practice. Necessary practical amendments to theory will be discussed. Moreover, limitations and challenges of the Bachelor Paper II are indicated. This paper closes by the author giving theory- and practice-based recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review / Theoretical Framework

2.1. Definition of Terms

2.1.1. National Parks

The basis for the foundation of the Yellowstone National Park, the worldwide first national park, opened on March 1st, 1872 in Wyoming, USA, was to have “a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people” (Yellowstone National Park Act, 1872, as cited in NPS National Park Service, 2006a, p.8). The Organic Act of 1916 states that the aim of a national park is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (National Park Service Organic Act, 1916, as cited in NPS National Park Service, 2006a, p.10). This two-fold purpose constitutes a big problem to national park management. Shall the primary function of a national park be to conserve natural resources, or to ensure visitor enjoyment, or is it both? The legislation implies that focus has to be put on the preservation of the precious resources and the wildlife within national parks as well as on guaranteeing the satisfaction of the visitor. If one of these two aspects is threatening the fulfillment of the other, nature protection has priority (Lemons, 2010, p. 82). In practice, however, different weight is put on each of these objectives depending on the country where the national park is located. In Europe, national parks are multi-purpose living landscapes used by tourists, residents and farmers including many roads, whereas in North America nature protection and recreation play a major role (Beunen, Regnerus, & Jaarsma, 2008, p.139). In certain American national parks this idea is even taken a step further. According to the National Park Service (2006b, p. 1) the Boston Harbor Islands National Park in Massachusetts has the additional goal to raise visitor use, while still conserving the resources specific for this region. Also the Hohe Tauern National Park in Austria was identified of having a triple function. It consists of “preservation of a beautiful authentic mountain environment; provision of sustainable living space for the resident population which guarantees the maintenance of a traditional but evolving cultural landscape; and establishment of a recreation area based on a concept of ‘gentle tourism’ “ (Stadel, Slupetzky, & Kremser, 1996, p. 2).

2.1.2. The IUCN

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) is comprised of members “including states, government agencies, large and small non-governmental organizations, and scientific and academic institutions [...] as well as volunteer experts” (IUCN, 2012, p.6). Its mission includes among other things providing guidelines for the management of protected areas worldwide. National Parks are regarded as IUCN category II protected areas and are defined as “large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities” (Dudley, 2008, p.16). The IUCN outlines, in very detailed objectives, all six categories of protected areas. It is for example also stated that protected areas must “[b]e operating under the guidance of a management plan, and a monitoring and evaluation program that supports adaptive management” (ibid., p. 12). As defined by the IUCN, national parks also have distinctive objectives and distinguishing features. These differences to other protected areas make them unique. Dudley (2008, p. 17) states, among other differing features, national parks may include infrastructure and higher visitor numbers, will often include core zones with strict visitor counts, focus on maintaining an entire ecosystem rather than a single feature in nature, are larger and fairly self-sustaining landscapes and are in the process of being restored to natural systems.

Even though not directly related to national park management, the renowned IUCN Red List for Threatened Species “identifies species that would benefit from site-level interventions, such as protected areas” (Rodriguez, Pilgrim, Lamoreux, Hoffman, & Brooks, 2006, p.74). Once these endangered species and their habitat are identified, these areas might become preserved and that way, more and more protected areas and national parks might be established.

2.1.3. Carrying Capacity Management

An increase in tourists who use national parks for recreational purposes can negatively influence natural resources and visitor experience. Management often uses the concept of carrying capacity to define “the number of visitors an area can sustain without degrading natural resources and visitor experiences” (Prato, 2001, p.322).

A major difficulty, however, is the assessment of how much impact is too much, referred to as the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Stankey, Cole, Lucas, Petersen, & Frissell, 1985). The problem is that a certain degree of subjectivity is always included when trying to determine the allowed effects of visitors on the environment in a national park. Since the establishment of a public law in 1978, general management plans of the National Park System shall contain the “identification of and implementation commitments for visitor carrying capacities for all areas of the unit“ (U.S. Congress, 1978). This means that every national park in the U.S. must manage carrying capacities. Even though the National Park System accepts this responsibility, methods and approaches to set carrying capacities for parks are still not sophisticated enough. This, once again, leads to the question of how many visitors can be accommodated in a national park without endangering the same and what amount of environmental impacts can be accepted.

Carrying capacity management is closely linked to the fundamental purposes of national parks. “Resource [or environmental] carrying capacity refers to impacts that visitors can have on environmental and cultural resources, including soil compaction, destruction of vegetation, disturbance of wildlife, and damage to cultural artifacts. Social [or psychological] carrying capacity refers to impacts that visitors can have on the quality of the park experience, including crowding, conflicting uses, and aesthetic degradation“ (National Park Service, 2006b, p. 2). In other words, the focus of carrying capacity concepts is not only on the number of visitors that are allowed to enter an area and its environmental conditions, but also on social aspects influencing the visitor experience. The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) framework is an example for a contemporary approach to manage carrying capacity and to guarantee sustainability. It starts with the foundation of management objectives, desired outcomes, and “focus[es] on indicators and standards of quality. Indicators of quality are measurable, manageable variables that define the quality of the resources and/or the visitor experience. Standards of quality define the minimum acceptable condition of indicator variables. Carrying capacity is managed by monitoring indicator variables and taking management action to maintain standards of quality“ (ibid.). “If standards have been violated, carrying capacity has been exceeded“ (Manning, 2002, p.308).

Figure 1 gives an overview of the different elements of the VERP framework that are then demonstrated practically in an example of the Arches National Park, USA in Section 2.2.5.

Figure 1: Overview Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP) Framework

Framework Foundation

1. Assemble an Interdisciplinary Project Team
2. Develop a Public Involvement Strategy
3. Develop Statements of Park Purpose, Significance, and Primary Interpretive Themes

Analysis

4. Analyze Park Resources and Existing Visitor Use

Prescriptions

5. Describe a Potential Range of Visitor Experiences and Resource Conditions (Potential Prescriptive Zones)
6. Allocate the Potential Zones to Specific Locations in the Park (Prescriptive Management Zoning)
7. Select Indicators and Specify Standards for Each Zone; Develop a Monitoring Plan

Monitoring and Management

8. Monitor Resource and Social Indicators
9. Take Management Action

Source: Manning (2002), p. 309

“The number and diversity of parks suggests that a wide variety of indicators and standards of quality will have to be formulated. This requires a substantial investment in park planning and related natural and social science research. It will also require a long-term program of park monitoring and a commitment to implementing management actions designed to maintain standards of quality“ (Manning, 2002, p. 312).

When trying to manage carrying capacities, it must once again be said that the USA plays a leading role. According to Burns, Arnberger, and von Ruschkowski (2010, p. 32) there are very few nature resource management frameworks and concepts requiring data about visitation and quality of experience in Europe that are internationally recognized. In other words, usage information of national park visitors is still missing. However, having this data is important as a satisfied visitor can contribute tremendously to nature protection.

2.1.4. Visitor Management

According to the objectives of IUCN category II protected areas it is necessary “[t]o manage visitor use for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes

at a level which will not cause significant biological or ecological degradation to the natural resources (Dudley, 2008, p. 16). Therefore it is of highest importance to collect data about the visitors and to monitor their behavior and flow. It is essential for national parks to know what its pull-factors are, what motives tourists have to visit and to check whether the visitor is satisfied and his or her expectations are fulfilled. It is necessary to understand that no tourist is effected by only one motivator; they are influenced by a number of them (Swarbrooke, & Horner, 2007, p. 55). There is wide range of what these motivators can be and they are different from person to person. It is common in some national parks to ask visitors for feedback and one part of these surveys often is about visitor motivations. The frequency of such surveys can differ a lot from park to park. A study on the Flinders Ranges National Park in South Australia (Wolf, Hagenloh, & Croft, 2012, p. 21) revealed, for example, that for almost 72 percent the enjoyment of the nature and being outdoors is the main motivator. Other motivators identified are viewing the landscape, wildlife, relaxation, vegetation, solitude or physical exercise. Similar motives to visit can be found in all national parks, but the extent to which they are valid might differ from park to park. Besides examining travel motives of national park guests, emphasis should also be put on the monitoring of visitors and visitor flows in connection to the establishment and management of carrying capacities. This is important, as very few parks worldwide have implemented “any coherent system for [the] management of tourist carrying capacity through combined monitoring of visitors and development of related indicators and standards“ (Brandt, & Holmes, 2011, p. 8).

2.2. Interrelations between the Key Concepts

So far in the paper, the concepts of carrying capacity management and visitor management in order to decrease negative environmental impacts of tourists on the natural assets of a national park have been looked at separately. This was necessary in order to communicate the basic ideas behind these concepts. What is missing up until now and what many national parks do not actively consider in their daily business, is the examination of their interrelations. There is a strong connection between these concepts or tasks of a national park and understanding, and using them can be of big help for ruling authorities.

2.2.1. Applying Visitor Management to define Carrying Capacities

Important variables in defining the social carrying capacities for national parks include the “visitor’s behavior and attitudes, their wishes and motivation for the visit of [the] protected area, their knowledge what is unique, [...] typical for [the] visited area [and] what types of visitor’s rules are valid within the area“ (Stursa, 2002, p. 368). These variables can increase or decrease the amount of negative environmental impacts of tourists dramatically and it is therefore suggested to ask visitors for feedback, to monitor their behavior, to request the opinion of the public and to permanently educate and patiently explain what sustainable development in tourism involves (ibid.). Informed visitors might impact nature differently than non-informed ones and carrying capacity assessments might therefore be revised. For this reason, national parks have to know and understand their target groups.

Furthermore, category II protected areas can use the tool of monitoring visitor flows to determine carrying capacities. If a national park knows the routes visitors take most frequently and where the main attractions are, then carrying capacities can be managed by guiding visitors through the park. Some routes and attractions can bear more guests than others. Before a national park guides its visitors, it has to decide whether it wants higher concentrations around certain points, or visitors to be distributed over the entire park area. Unfortunately, not every national park has this choice. In a study examining the Donau-Auen National Park in Austria, in the area of the Upper Lobau, which is close to the city of Vienna, “50 per cent of visitor-kilometres referred to only 20 per cent of total trail-kilometres, indicating a high concentration of visitors on a few trail segments“ (Arnberger, & Hinterberger, 2003, p. 262). In this area the effects of visitors on the environment are visible.

2.2.2. Carrying Capacity Management to increase Visitor Satisfaction

The situation in Lobau does not only have an influence on nature, but also on the visitor experience. As many people share the same trails, some of them might perceive the feeling of crowding. Visitor satisfaction is, as already discussed, very important in the management of national parks as in return “high-quality visitor experiences are more likely to develop public appreciation of, and support for, conservation of national park resources“ (Manning, 2002, p. 306). Due to the fact that many national parks worldwide have to face the issue of crowding, visitor satisfaction might decrease. The more people visit a national park, the more people claim that it is overcrowded. Setting visitor limits might be a solution. What makes managing this issue

even more complicated are the subjective components to it, such as how much impact on the natural resources and the quality of experience is accepted. Due to this fact, many management actions are made on the basis of informed decisions. "Carrying capacities [...] are not scientifically determined sizes. They are a result of political decision processes among stakeholders, balancing use and protection preferably based on scientific and/or experiential cognition" (Garthe, 2005, as cited in Brandt, & Holmes, 2011, p. 4).

Coming back to the issue of visitors perceiving crowding, it has to be mentioned that it is definitely an issue in many national parks. The Donau-Auen National Park in Austria, for instance, experiences this especially on Sundays. Due to the fact that too many visitors come to the same place at the same time, they are disturbing each other to a certain extent. For that reason, many visitors relocate their activities to other areas of the park, leave trails, etc. This has two meanings: Social carrying capacities are exceeded and the consequent behavior affects wildlife in a negative way (Burns, Arnberger, & von Ruschkowski, 2010, p. 40). This can be seen as a chain reaction. The social carrying capacity is exceeded, visitors are no longer fully satisfied, and that has negative consequences for nature.

2.2.3. Management Tools to decrease Environmental Impacts

A major issue in many national parks worldwide is that there is no strategic tourism master plan for their region. An explanation could be that "ideologies, concepts and buzzwords on sustainability often are used noncommittal at the political level" (Brand, & Holmes, 2011, p. 4). Consequently, a sustainable tourism management and planning is often not implemented in the management and planning procedures. Installing such master plans in national parks that do not have one yet might be of big benefit for the environment in the protected area.

Another interesting aspect is checking for national park affinity. Arnberger, Eder, Alex, Sterl and Burns (2012, p. 52) evaluated visitors of the Gesäuse National Park in Austria and found that for 7 per cent the national park played a crucial role in their choice to come to the region and for 26 per cent it was an important factor. This leaves 67 per cent of visitors for which the national park did not play an important role or had no influence on their decision. 2 per cent of them were not even aware that they are visiting a national park. This leads to the question whether the people for whom the national park plays a crucial or important role would rather stick to rules than the 67 per cent for whom the park is not a major or no motive at all. It can how-

ever be assumed that those who do not even know that they are visiting a national park are more likely to not act according to the rules. As they are not aware that they are in national park there might be a higher probability that their behavior is not compliant with the rules. In other words, somebody who does not know that he or she is visiting a national park cannot consciously stick to the rules of a national park that are applicable in the moment of the visit.

Apart from that, some national parks that do not actively manage carrying capacities and the connected negative attributes such as crowding, some do, however, practice monitoring. The US National Park Service developed an Action Plan stating “preservation depends on acquiring accurate information about the condition of natural resources, monitoring how that condition changes over time, and developing standards to evaluate changes in condition and the effectiveness of management actions” (National Park Service, 1999, p.10). This is also done in Europe. Many national parks look at the past, evaluate the present and think about possible future conditions and changes. In severe cases, management actions are taken and continuously checked for their effectiveness.

Stursa (2002, p. 365), examining the impacts of tourism load on the mountain environment of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park in the Czech Republic, identified two types of impacts. Primary impacts include picking up plants, noise disturbance of wildlife, soil erosion through trampling, increased amounts of waste, air pollution by traffic, etc. Strict control by park authorities and regulations might reduce these impacts. Secondary impacts on the mountain nature of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park are much more serious. Stursa (2002, p. 366) argues that they come along with unreasonable infrastructure development including a continuing growth of lodging capacities, traffic, roads, water consumption, etc. As a consequence, these impacts irreversibly change the natural landscapes and reduce biodiversity. In order to keep these influences at a minimum, having the above mentioned development master plans is essential. These plans could guaranty sustainability in using or developing the resources of the national park. Looking at the past, analyzing the present and developing plans for the future development and for the handling of environmental impacts of visitors are the keys to a sustainable usage of national parks.

2.2.4. Carrying Capacity Management to decrease Environmental Impacts

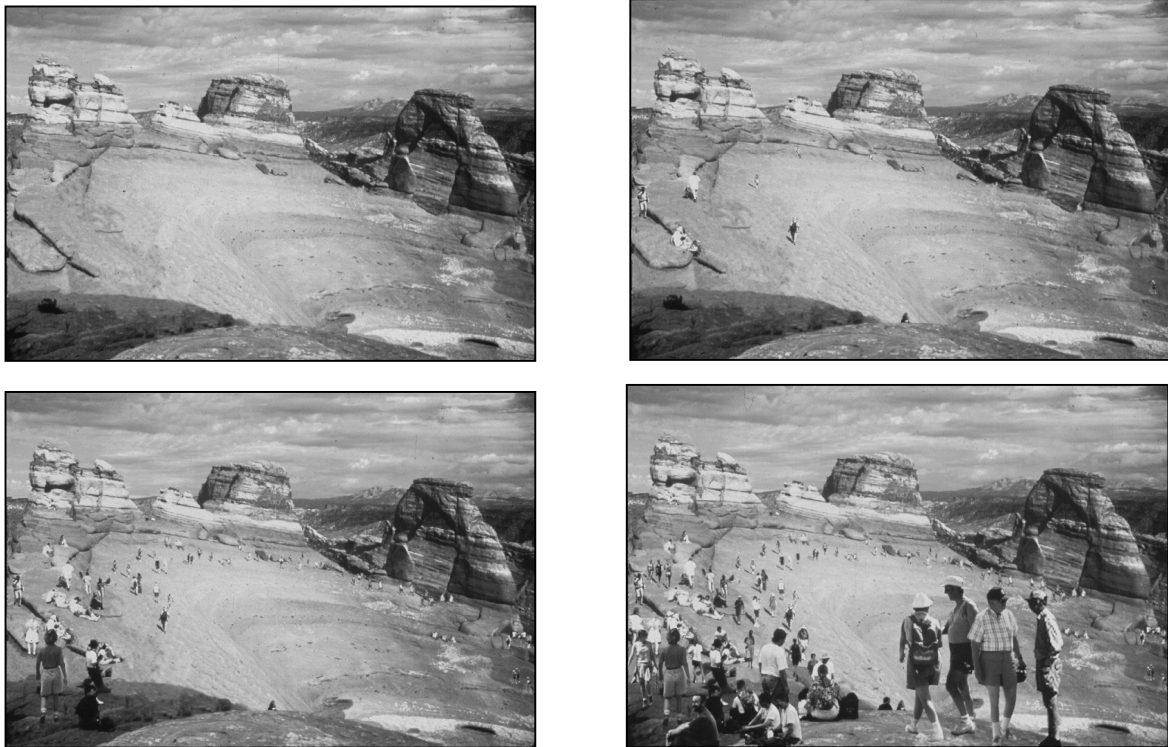
It cannot be assumed that if the number of tourists is small, the amount of negative effects is also little. That is also valid vice versa. High visitor numbers do not auto-

matically mean bigger environmental impacts. The amount of positive or negative effects depends on the visitor. If, for example, five people enter a national park, leave the trails, make noise and throw away waste everywhere, this causes more disturbance to nature than twenty people who stick to the trails, are quiet and take their waste with them when they leave the national park. This simple example illustrates how difficult it is to assess carrying capacities and to set limits. Carrying capacity management is not only about an absolute number of visitors allowed to a certain area, it is also about visitor behavior. Even though there is no guarantee that fewer people cause fewer impacts, the probability is still higher that it is the case. Therefore, limits on allowed visitors to an attraction might positively affect the ecosystem in a national park.

2.2.5. Best Practice Management Examples

According to Manning (2002, p. 309) the Arches National Park in Utah, USA, is a role model for applying the VERP framework in order to identify and manage carrying capacity in the U.S. national parks system. Following the nine steps provided in Figure 1, an interdisciplinary project team was formed (Step 1), a public involvement strategy created (Step 2) and workshops performed to develop statements about the purposes of the park (Step 3). As the next elements, park resources and visitor experiences were put on a map (Step 4) and a range of resources and social conditions that are desired was identified (Step 5). This analysis was used as a foundation to develop a system of nine park zones going from primitive to developed (Step 6). In the course of step 7, in which indicators of quality were selected and associated standards of quality specified, personal interviews and focus groups were conducted. Manning (2002, p. 310) continues that certain indicators of quality such as the visitor numbers on trails and near major attractions, the number of vehicles sighted along streets, soil and vegetation impacts or the condition of trails, were identified. A survey of over 1,500 park visitors in all nine park zones was done to develop associated standards of quality. One of these standards was identified as the number of people at one time (PAOT) at Delicate Arch, a major sight in the pedestrian zone of the national park. For many visitors, the PAOT is important in evaluating their experience quality. The tourists were shown a set of 16 pictures showing different visitor use levels and were asked how many people they would accept at a sight. Figure 2 illustrates how such a set of pictures looked like.

Figure 2: Different Visitor Usage Levels at Delicate Arch

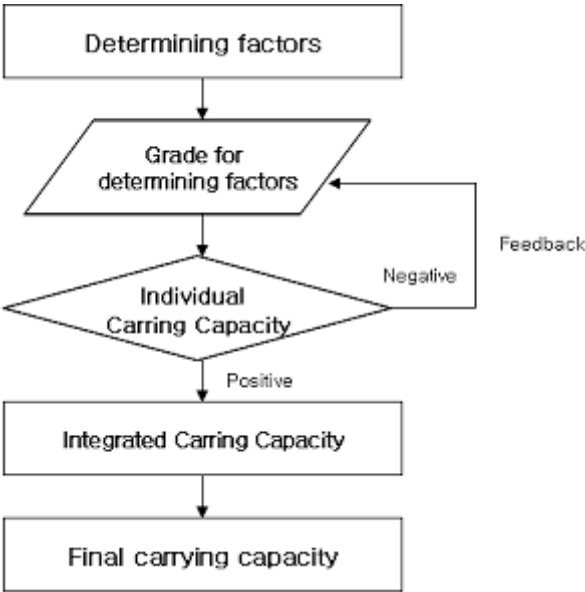


Source: Manning (2002), p. 311

The result showed that the more people there are at a sight at one point in time, the less it is accepted by visitors. In general they accept up to 30 PAOT. This is an indicator of crowding and a standard of quality in assessing social carrying capacity. For this reason, 30 PAOT was selected as a standard of quality for this zone of the park. This was done in a similar way also for the 8 other zones of the Arches National Park. Afterwards, a monitoring system to address the issue of monitoring resource and social indicators (Step 8) was implemented and management actions were taken (Step 9). The maintenance of the standards of quality is monitored and management actions such as adapting the trailhead parking lot sizes, issuing camping permits or educating tourists about their impacts, were undertaken. Manning (2002, p. 311) also identifies standards of quality that can be found in other areas of the national parks system. For instance, the maximum waiting time in certain national parks, people per view on trails at the Grand Canyon National Park, the number of boats encountered at the Canyonlands National Park or the number of snowmobiles seen in the Yellowstone National Park.

Lee, Son and Kwak (2005, p. 3) made a study assessing the carrying capacity in the Chi-Ri National Park, the first National Park in South Korea. However, the method applied in the course of the study can theoretically be applied everywhere on this planet. Three carrying capacity types were identified. The study defines a capacity of facilities, a capacity of natural environment and a regulatory capacity. In addition, factors determining these capacities are indicated. The usage of parking or camping areas can be used as factor for facility capacity or public law can be used as a factor for regulatory capacity. These determining factors for each capacity type were then given a grade. The result was an individual carrying capacity for each of the three carrying capacities categories. The facility capacity was, among others, determined by the intensiveness or distribution of facilities in the region. The environmental capacity was defined by the capacities of slopes, water systems, roads, forest reserves, natural monuments and the ecological area. The regulatory carrying capacity was calculated by including land use law and the land development plan. These three results were then combined into the integrated carrying capacity, which was then the basis for the final carrying capacity. The final carrying capacity is the one that is able to guarantee the satisfaction of visitors without damaging the natural ecosystem. Figure 3 gives an overview of this approach.

Figure 3: Assessment Process of Carrying Capacity



Source: Lee, Son, & Kwak (2005), p. 3

One of the most famous approaches to setting limits on visitor numbers is done in the Galapagos National Park in Ecuador. According to Reck, Casafont, Oviedo, Bustos and Naula (2008, p. 57) the Galapagos National Park was able to prevent any impacts that are measurable, mainly through only allowing a limited number of groups. The group sizes were also limited, and it was decided that a naturalistic guide must lead each group. Also the system of trails is limited in size. However, uncontrolled tourism development is taking place, leading to higher tourism numbers, more traffic between the archipelago and the continent and higher resource demand.

There is an alternative approach to carrying capacity management that is less based upon mathematic formulas, known as Acceptable Visitor Load (AVL). Emphasis is more on subjective information like the type and quality of visitor experience, different levels of crowding or isolation perceived or visual impacts. Many factors are considered, for example “the category of each site, its area, the length of trails, the minimum distance between groups for each zoning category [...], visibility factors, and the time required for a complete visit” (ibid., p. 58). The AVL framework is often used as a guideline for setting limits on visitor numbers.

3. Methodology

This section describes the methodological outline of the Bachelor Paper II. It explains, among other things, the data collection and the data analysis process in detail. It provides information regarding the sampling processes, the methods applied and gives justifications for the choice of the methods. Ethical research behavior was valued and applied throughout the entire creation process of this paper.

3.1. Data Collection Process

The data collection process was split up into areas: Literature review, obtaining secondary data and expert interviews, obtaining fresh, primary data.

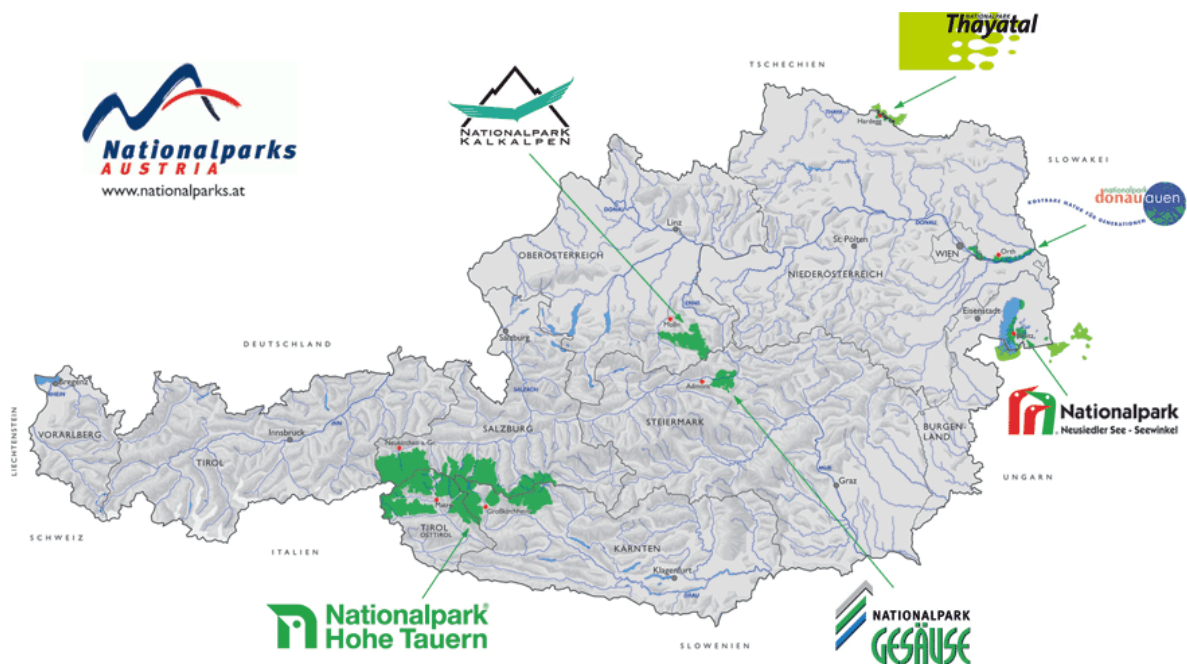
3.1.1. Literature Review

High-quality literature from well-known experts in their field of research and regulatory frameworks of governments and international organizations make up the foundation of the Bachelor Paper II. A major factor in the collection and the later-on selection of literature was its relevance to this paper and to answering the research questions. Literature gathered from the library of the Vienna University is one of the sources used in this paper. In addition, documents and information brochures were collected directly at Austrian national parks during the expert interviews as well as official documents, such as guidelines, regulations and management policies downloaded via the Internet from international organizations, such as the IUCN, and national ones, such as the U.S. National Park Service. All sources used are properly referenced and indicated to the best knowledge of the researcher.

3.1.2. Expert Interviews

The researcher himself conducted five face-to-face interviews with experts in their respective fields in five out of six existing national parks in Austria. The Austrian national parks work together in a union called Nationalparks Austria. Figure 4 illustrates where these six parks are located. No interview was conducted in the National Park Hohe Tauern due to the factor of convenience and due to the limitations addressed in Section 5.3. of this paper. The Hohe Tauern National Park was however mentioned at several occasions during interviews with experts from the other five parks.

Figure 4: The Austrian National Parks



Source: Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (2010), p.7

A qualitative research approach was chosen, as the ultimate goal of this paper is to provide general ideas and concepts rather than doing a comprehensive statistical analysis. Consequently, the disadvantage to this method is that many theories and frameworks presented lacked statistical proof. The experts were identified based on certain criteria including their relevance to the topic, their experience in the field, their position within the national park organizations, the convenience to get in contact with them and the diversity of views the researcher thought they might possess. In general it can be said that judgmental sampling was applied and that quality, not quantity, determined the sampling size.

Some of the experts have a touristic background, others have a nature protection or a scientific background. Having these different points of view and having experts from different national parks with different conditions participate, allowed the researcher to collect a variety of ideas and approaches and by that to achieve maximum variation in the data. For this reason, there was a high level of new insights expected for each interview. As all experts are very experienced and know the practical deviations of theories, their knowledge was invaluable for the creation of this paper. All interviews took place directly in the respective managing units of the national parks such as administration offices, visitor bureaus, information centers and scientific units.

The first interviewee was Mr. Alois Wick (AW), head of the visitor center Ennstal, of the Kalkalpen National Park in Upper Austria. He was selected as an expert because he has already worked for the Kalkalpen National Park for twenty years and is chairman of the tourism board Großraming, a village in the commuting area of the park. Mr. Wick sees himself as having far more tourism than nature protection background.

The second interview was conducted with Dr. Christian Baumgartner¹ (CB), divisional director of natural environment management and science, in the Donau-Auen National Park in Lower Austria. He studied biology, zoology and botany and was part of the projects during the planning process of the park. He has worked for the national park since 1997. The author chose him as an expert as he is deeply rooted in nature protection and has no professional connection to tourism.

Mr. Alois Lang (AL), head of public relations and ecotourism of the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park in the province of Burgenland, was the third interview partner selected. He has worked for the local tourism bureau since the beginning of the 1980s and was then part of planning meetings of the national park. He has been in his current division since 1993. From 2005 to 2008 he took a break from the national park and worked for the IUCN. His professional know-how was seen to be indispensable by the author for answering the research questions.

The fourth person interviewed was DI Herbert Wölger (HW), chief executive officer of the Gesäuse National Park in Styria (for transcript: see Appendix II). He studied forest and wood management at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, worked in the lumber industry and then worked for a project in a biosphere park in Argentina. He has no touristic background and took over his current position one year ago. Mr. Wölger was interviewed because one of his tasks as national park director is to bring all interest groups of the park under one umbrella. Therefore he could provide information regarding the bigger picture of national park management.

The last questionee was Christian Übl (CÜ), a national park guard and educator of national park guardians, who is also responsible for visitor management, natural en-

¹ The expert Dr. Christian Baumgartner of the National Park Donauauen has by coincidence the same name as Dr. Christian Baumgartner, the supervisor of the Bachelor Paper II. It is not the same person nor are the two related.

vironment management, biology and fishery, as well as research in the Thayatal National Park in Lower Austria. His knowledge in managing the visitors and the environment of a national park was one of the reasons why he was chosen as an expert.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach, as this was, in his discretion, the best method to tackle the problem. An interview guide (see Appendix I) with well thought-through questions served as a basis for the expert interviews. However, flexibility was needed in order to discuss issues specific to the national parks where the interviews took place. This approach was also chosen as the author regarded it to be the right method for the analysis of the paper, as the topic required a certain degree of flexibility also in terms of interpretation. All interviews were conducted in German and recorded with the agreement of the interviewee. The average length to the interviews was between 55 and 80 minutes. The experts were asked for their consent that their name will be used in this paper and were informed about its publication through the IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems.

3.2. Data Analysis Process

When analyzing the data gathered, the author put special attention on using literature to back up the findings of the expert interviews. The researcher studied the literature, assessed its contents, used it as a source for theories and ideas and linked it to what is currently applied in national parks in practice.

After conducting the interviews, word-by-word transcripts were done in German. The primary reason for this was to facilitate the analysis of the gathered data and to have a better overview of what was said during the interviews and thereby facilitate the analysis process. The researcher then analyzed the importance of the primary data gathered for answering the research questions. Relevant statements were grouped by content into different categories. In a next step, the interpretative model was used to present the results. The author selected illustrative ideas by the experts and summarized them. The statements and concepts were then translated to English and their meanings and practical implications were interpreted. The results were then used as a basis for drawing conclusions and giving recommendations. As concepts, statements and ideas of experts that are used in this paper were translated to English by the author, a certain amount of translation bias might still be contained in the Bachelor Thesis II, although tried to be kept at a minimum.

4. Findings and Results

This chapter presents the main outcomes of the data analysis process. Due to the immense knowledge of the experts in the daily, hands-on work of a national park, the findings are presented in a very practical and applied way. Many management examples and real cases are provided. Special focus was also put on the readability of this section. This chapter solely covers Austrian national parks. For this reason some concepts or ideas might not be applicable elsewhere. The findings are presented in a way that for each topic a short introduction is given, then the experts' statements are quoted and lastly the findings are interpreted.

4.1. Practical Implementation of the National Park Purposes

As discussed in chapter two, national parks have a purpose composed of several functions. In practice, however, a certain degree of trade-off from these objectives cannot be avoided. General national park objectives are interpreted differently from national park to national park, or from country to country, and focus is put on different aspects of these objectives.

Albeit, one of the similarities Austria has with other countries national parks, is a disparity between nature protection and making the parks come alive for the visitor.

- The function of a national park is the protection of nature, but hardly any national park was built solely for this reason. They are also established to vitalize the entire region (AW).
- Tourism is never a goal of a national park, but an authentic nature experience and relaxation is, subordinate to nature protection. This idea is then used for tourism by the national park's surrounding region (CB).
- The national park law states that the highest goal is nature protection, followed by research, education and vitalization of the visitor experience in a non-hierarchical order. The last point is some sort of tourism; the creation of an educational and recreational area. In case visitors endanger the environment, nature protection is of higher importance (HW).
- Ensuring nature protection, visitor relaxation and that the interests of the local population are regarded are objectives of a national park. Depending on the situation, compromises are made (CÜ).

It can be said that there exists a link between the nature protection aspect of a national park and a certain need for visitors. Through the creation of a national park, all parties involved should profit. Furthermore, politics want to claim that they have done something good for their province, but would have difficulties in creating additional national parks without making it possible for locals to get any economic benefit (AW).

- The problem is that for people providing funds to a national park it is easier to adorn themselves with regional development than with nature protection (CB).

Another critical area was identified:

- In European national parks it can (still) be expected that the majority of the population understands the concept of nature protection. In America, national parks are used for landscape sightseeing with an average stay of visitors at hotspots of thirty seconds. Nevertheless, more and more European national parks see the staging of landscape and the creation of a fast landscape experience as a major task (AL).

The key is to find a balance so that tourism, research, education, the province, locals and other interest groups can profit from a national park without endangering the precious protected resources. Having management plans and short and long term goals might be one way to achieve this.

4.2. Application of Laws and Guidelines

Many regional, national and international guidelines try to govern the management of national parks. Laws and guidelines rule all Austrian national parks. They either come from IUCN, from UNESCO or from the national or provincial level. As already mentioned, national parks also sometimes set their own, more specific objectives.

- We have the IUCN guidelines that are applicable to all Austrian national parks, and we have the Upper Austrian Provincial Law as well as our own long and short term goals and strategies. The concept of having 75 per cent wilderness area is an example for one of our own initiatives (AW).
- Besides the fundamental principles of a national park, there are no real guidelines. There is no law on setting carrying capacity limits. Identifying critical areas and developing proper reactions is basically up to the national park authority. The UNESCO requires the following: having a management plan and complying with the objectives formulated therein, having core zones, having a monitoring system, etc. (CB).
- The country of Austria only says that the provincial laws are valid. Those do not go beyond IUCN guidelines with zoning and visitor management. The IUCN guidelines are international and therefore not very specific. Each European country interprets them differently. Fact is that the IUCN requires that 75 per cent of the national park area is not used for private agricultural activities (AL).
- The IUCN says a management plan must state how to deal with visitors. Additional guidelines to this come from Nationalparks Austria, like the requirement to monitor sensitive species and in case of problems, to intervene (HW).
- We have the case that we are also a Natura 2000 protected area with specific guidelines like a deterioration prohibition. In addition, there are international conventions and the red list of species of the Thayatal (CÜ).

In general it can be claimed that many laws, statutes and regulations exist that govern a national park. International guidelines are the basis and national or provincial laws are then more specific to a certain national park.

- In Austria, even though the country claims to be futuristic, nature protection is still up to the provinces (HW).

The experts provided some examples for provincial laws and how they should be applied.

- There is the law on national parks of the province of Styria as well as the national park plan, which indicates how the law has to be applied (HW).
- The Lower Austrian Provincial Law and the specific act on the national park Thayaal regulate the size, the objectives and the possibilities of the national park authority (CÜ).

This can be seen as good or bad. On the one hand provincial laws are adapted to the situation of the national park(s) in the region, on the other hand there are few nation-wide standards and regulations. So, comparisons between the parks are difficult and measures are based on the decisions of single national park authorities. Working in a union and putting efforts together for the sake of nature protection might be the right way to go.

4.3. Sustainable Management in National Parks

Sustainability is a big issue in the contemporary management of a national park.

Category II protected areas are created to protect natural resources from urbanization and to allow nature to sustain itself.

- We came up with a guideline saying that we must have 75 per cent wilderness area. No human influence is happening there. Our nature protects itself (AW).
- Nature as such is not sustainable due to its ongoing development. A national park doesn't preserve the status quo, it grants this natural process of change. Sustainability is relevant when it comes to safeguarding the values of nature protection in the long run (CB).

This indicates that sustainability also has an emotional component. If nature is of high value to a person, he or she might be more likely to support its preservation.

- It is important that we set the cornerstones for our development and then feed them back to all interest groups and partners. Sustainability for us means harmonizing the interests of all groups. Being flexibility is essential. We want to achieve

sustainability also through a better seasonal distribution of visits, longer stays and offering regional products to visitors (AL).

- In terms of visitors, sustainability means waste management and a good program that ensures that there are no severe negative influences on the environment. We also work on gentle transport concepts (HW).
- Sustainability fits perfectly to the area of tension between nature protection and visitor offerings. It means ensuring a responsible usage of natural resources in order to preserve them in the long run (CÜ).

The experts named different components of sustainable development which shows how complex the topic is, and it also shows what can or needs to be done.

Furthermore, based on an important UN report it can generally be said that “investing in greening the tourism sector [...] would significantly boost its economic and social benefits while mitigating its environmental impacts“ (World Tourism Organization, 2012, p. 24). Tourism and nature protection would profit.

4.4. Applied Carrying Capacity Management

As already discussed, there exists an entire spectrum of theories, concepts and approaches on how to best manage carrying capacities in national parks and keep negative influences of visitors at a minimum. The following statements illustrate approaches of Austrian category II protected areas to tackle this issue.

- We have a limited number of entrances. All our entrances are gated. Due to missing trails and our topography of gorges and valleys, the National Park Kalkalpen cannot be overrun by visitors. In addition, we set a limit right from the beginning saying that 90 per cent of visitation has to take place in no more than 10 per cent of the total protected area. At the moment, we are at 5 per cent (AW).
- There is no determined carrying capacity for the National Park Donau-Auen, It is probably not even definable, because it depends on the strength of influence from infrastructure and visitors. One person might be enough to disturb a breeding animal and thereby the carrying capacity would be exceeded. (CB).
- Our trail system consists of public trails; therefore, setting limits is from a legal perspective not possible. When it comes to making corrections, the national park can only make suggestions, but it is not the actor. As animals build their shelter in their natural flight initiation distance, they do not care how many people use these trails. The problem arises when people leave them. Exceptions to enter sensible terrain can only be made by the nature protection authority of the province, not by the national park director (AL).
- There is no absolute number of how many people are allowed to be in the park, but we have that for certain territories. For example, there is a limit of how many rafting boats are allowed to be on the river Enns at the same time. Secondly, we monitor species and keep track of their behavior and development. Visitors have no access to very sensible areas. What is also done during the winter season is that our staff lays, in the early morning hours, tracks for ski and snowshoe tours, so that visitors stay out of sensible areas (HW).

- Extensive examinations of animals and vegetation were done when the National Park Thayatal was established. We monitor and see how the situation changes. Instead of establishing limits for visitor numbers, we have restricted areas, a trail system, time-wise restrictions for certain regions and limit on fishing boats allowed. (CÜ).

It was identified that the general situation in Austria is that national parks do not set limits on allowed visitor loads in absolute numbers. They use other methods instead. It should also be mentioned that situations were identified in which visitor groups self-regulate their negative impacts on nature.

- Some problems often regulate themselves because other visitor groups intervene when they witness negative behavior (AL).

The environment can profit from conflicts between different visitor interests. If a person wants to take a picture of a certain animal behavior and another visitor is interfering by leaving the trail and approaching the animal, the photographer will try to keep that from happening (AL). Sometimes it can be as easy as that. Besides that, there are many different approaches to carrying capacity management amongst Austrian national parks. They focus more on practical applicability than on having a basis in literature. But not a single national park investigated could give a figure of what the carrying capacity of their park is and how many percent of the overall budget is invested on this issue. In general it can be said that Austrian national park authorities do not yet see the urgent need to set carrying capacity limits. It was shown that national parks in Austria have different approaches to manage visitor numbers. Statements about a possible future of carrying capacity management in Austrian national parks are quite similar.

- We have too few guest beds. Carrying capacity management is not an issue (AW).
- I wish for a notable reduction in trails or better, even though I come from a nature protection background, to establish an entire new trail system with reduced access on the one hand, but a closer nature experience for the visitor on the other (CB).
- We set limits for certain critical areas of the national park where it is already necessary today. When looking at the entire national park area, we do not have the problem of high visitor loads due to our remote location. Regular walkers and hunters, however, do sometimes enter sensitive terrain when looking for new tours. This issue has to be addressed in the near future (HW).
- At the moment the pressure from visitors is rather small, but with a tendency to increase. Our nature here is quite untouched and with a growing amount cultivated landscape, the Thayatal might become one of the few places Austrians can experience nature. Carrying capacity management might become necessary (CÜ).

Even though carrying capacity management is, according to the experts, not a major topic now, it might become one in the future due to increasing visitor numbers.

- Since the establishment of the park, overnight stays increased by 30 per cent (AW).
- Visitor numbers are increasing again, but right now they are still low compared to the 1970s (CÜ).

Proper and scientifically proven techniques should be applied when the pressure of visitors on nature becomes too big. This requires a lot of research in advance that might be worth starting now. This poses a challenge to national parks and requires investment, but in the long run, the positive effects on nature will outweigh current challenges.

4.5. Visitor Management

As it was already shown, visitor monitoring and counting are essential for carrying capacity management. However, these practices are not applied in all national parks. Statements by the experts about methods that are actively implemented in Austrian national parks follow:

- We started with photo counts on our main entrances, but we also count via video and sampling surveys. Then we have the labeling of motor vehicles and reckonings from the province of Upper Austria. We also installed radar units. Rangers are always around on weekends during our main season, but their task is more to inform than to count visitors (AW).
- In the starting phase of the park we paid external companies to count visitors. Now we do it ourselves, but not on a regular basis. Close-by universities are playing a big role in research activities. Visitor monitoring is done on weekends when most of our visitors come for a day trip (CB).
- Visitor counts in the National Park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel, are due to financial reasons not possible. Even if we had the money, other objectives would be more important. Eight guards are responsible for visitor monitoring in their assigned territory (AL).
- We have light barriers in our visitor centers. In other words, we count where we invest in infrastructure. There are no counts in the rest of the national park. Sometimes we count the number of rafts on the Enns. We have never tried any scientific approach to monitor visitor behavior in the Gesäuse national park. Organs check visitors on their behavior, give advice and, in rare cases, report illegal behavior to the police (HW).
- Counts by national park guards allow us to get an approximate picture. We are thinking about installing an automatic system for certain park areas just like our Czech colleagues did. The strongest direct influence of visitors is on wildlife when they leave trails and enter retreats of animals. NP guards monitor and intervene in case of this unwanted behavior (CÜ).

In general, roads are obvious points for carrying out visitor counts and they are the key park access points (Cessford, & Muhar, 2003, p. 246). However, the situation in Austria is more complex. While only a limited number of access roads exist in the US, Austrian national parks face the situation that their areas are accessible via dozens of entry points.

- The situation here is different from the United States, as we have many access roads and hiking trails, most of them without barriers. This makes counting nearly impossible.

A reduction in entrance points is often, due to certain conditions, not possible. Authorities therefore develop their own methods to capture visitor numbers and sometimes only count where they invest in infrastructure. Regional planning is required in order to make the gathering of visitor numbers for the entire park area easier. Table 1 provides an overview of possible visitor tracking methods. As shown, some of them are also applied in Austrian national parks.

Table 1: Overview of Visitor Counting Methods

Methods	Examples
Interviews	Oral and written surveys
Direct Observations	“Hiking Observers” (e.g. National Park Service), fixed observation point
Indirect Observations	Automated cameras, videos, aerial views, satellite picture
Counts	Tickets, permissions, participation, pressure-sensitive mats
Self-registration	Trail-, summit-, huts-registers
Traces of Use	Trash, vegetation damage, footprints, erosion

Source: Henning, & Laube (2005, p. 199), translated by the author.

Another integral part of visitor management is analyzing visitor flows. This is crucial in understanding the behavior of visitors (Orellana, Bregt, Ligtenberg, & Wachowicz, 2012, p. 672).

- We have a lot of visitors in the area of Hengstpaß, a beautiful landscape with many hiking trails. The key is, that this region is less sensitive than others and visitors cannot cause that much damage there. (AW).
- Most visitor concentration is in the Upper Lobau, with a strong sphere of influence from Vienna. Delicate species have long left this area. We clearly try to concentrate visitor flows around certain areas where the impacts then are visible, for example near a restaurant, rather than distributing them over the entire national park with having a little bit of impact everywhere (CB).

Knowing where the visitors are to be found in the national park can be very helpful. In case they are concentrated in an unwanted area, authorities can make attempts to guide them away from there. This way, negative environmental effects can be controlled and impacts of tourists can be limited via leading them to other, more favorable and less sensitive areas of the park. The Gesäuse National Park, for example, guides its visitors via high-quality signage and information (HW).

Another critical issue in visitor management is examining the motives of why people visit an attraction. These motives differ of course depending on the natural conditions of a national park. Each person visiting a national park has its own subjective motivations as to why he or she does so. Visitors do not only have one, but many different motives to visit a protected area and these motives can differ a lot from person to person. The following statements by the experts give an insight into what national park authorities in Austria think the motives for visiting them are.

- As soon as people hear the word national park, they know that the nature and surrounding are in excellent order. That's their motive. (AW).
- Up to 90% of the visitors come to the National Park Donau-Auen, because they want to walk their dogs or play with their kids. Some of them do not even know that it is a national park. Less than 5% come to really see the nature. The main motive is definitely that it is a nearby recreation area for people from Vienna (CB).
- National parks are nowadays the only areas that offer a non-virtual nature experience. We offer real nature that people just know from Apps, TV, pictures, etc. Some are here to see the spring blooming, to go bird watching or to see the flight of the dragonflies, while others come to ride their bike or just to relax (AL).
- The Gesäuse was a famous mountaineer destination even before the national park was founded. Activities of visitors include climbing, hiking, rafting, wildlife observation, taking photos etc. (HW).
- We haven't investigated travel motives as such. During guided tours and excursions, our staff gets in contact with the tourists and based on these informal talks, we think that the beautiful, untouched landscape is the main motive (CÜ).

It can be summarized that the main motive for visiting a national park in Austria is to experience intact nature. Consequently, it is questionable if people would come to national parks when nature would be visibly affected by negative environmental influences. This assumption is supported by Floyd, Jang and Noe (1997, p. 407) stating that those visitors who are more concerned about intact nature, are less acceptable of environmental impacts. One of the problems is that a certain percentage of visitors are not aware that they are visiting a national park. How can they then behave in the right way? Education, information and awareness raising are keys to changing this situation.

Visitors have high expectations and national park authorities put high effort into trying to meet them.

- Visitor centers, info stands, guided tours and exhibitions aim at increasing the satisfaction of visitors with their experience (HW).
- We try to meet the expectations via [...] high quality visitor programs [...], having well-educated rangers guiding attractive tours, targeting pupils and offering packages including accommodation, catering and transport (AW).

As a next step, it is necessary to evaluate to what extent this is the case and to what extent visitors are satisfied with the work of a national park.

- We get very good feedback from individual guests in regards to the information services we provide. It is even better when it comes to the satisfaction with the excursions we offer. Another indicator for high satisfaction amongst visitors is also that we have many guests from foreign countries (AL).
- On different occasions in the past, studies were undertaken to examine the influences of visitors on each other's satisfaction level, like, during river cruises. Crowding sometimes is an issue. Other studies ask about the satisfaction with our infrastructure, like information centers. We do, however, not ask about the satisfaction with the nature experience (CB).
- We measure visitor satisfaction together with the union of the 6 Austrian national parks called Nationalparks Austria. This allows comparison. We measure via feedback questionnaires and because of the high quality of our events and rangers we always get very good results (HW).
- Besides not asking for travel motives, not asking about whether the expectation of our visitors are fulfilled or not is another gap. However, after guided tours, we ask for feedback in regards to the organization, our rangers and our tours (CÜ).

The experts stated that the overall feedback the national parks receive is always very positive. It might be useful to evaluate to what extent visitors beautify their feedback during direct surveys or interviews. "When environments and visitor reactions are only represented by words, there may be [...] reasons for worrying about the validity of verbal survey results" (Cole, & Daniel, 2003, p. 270). They might not be willing to give negative criticism via verbal surveys. Furthermore it needs to be investigated to what extent the proportion of people not giving feedback is satisfied and what reasons are for people to not come back. It can also be argued that a higher level of satisfaction increases a national parks' right to exist in the eyes of the visitors. Moreover, they might be more conscious about their behavior and think about the consequent effects. Hence, nature protection profits.

Connected to visitor expectations and satisfaction levels the researcher examined if there are any expectations that national parks know that they exist amongst visitors, but cannot or do not even want to fulfill for certain reasons.

- More and more inquiries come from groups that want to make tours themselves without any guide. Permissions for this are rarely given (AW).
- Visitors want to experience nature, but do not bring the time to do so. We cannot present our national park as fast as a documentary can. And we do not want to. Another area of dissatisfaction exists where people cannot enter an area by car. This is applicable especially for photographers, as they have to leave some of their heavy equipment behind. A third problem is that some visitors are not informed and want to see a courtship display of birds in August. This cannot be offered (AL).
- When offering wildlife observations, success can never be guaranteed. Even if tours are guided by professional hunters. Sometimes people get disappointed. A second thing is that it rains a lot in the Gesäuse, but people want to have sunshine (HW).
- Some people want to make a boat cruise on the Thaya, others want to make a bicycle tour alongside it. Guests sometimes even offer to help our staff to combat Himalayan balsam just to be on a boat on the river. We do not fulfill these requests. Certain other things are offered in our program (CÜ).

The results show that nature is something unpredictable. Experiencing it takes time, knowledge and patience and solely for these reasons, some visitors might get disappointed. National parks should not try to change this. It is anyways the case that national park authorities have only little influence on natural happenings.

Our modern lifestyle says that everything has to be fast. This is one of the things that make nature so valuable for people searching for ways to escape their daily routines. National parks work hard in developing interesting offers for customers, but there will always be expectations that not get fulfilled.

Visitor satisfaction in Austrian national parks was found to be very high. Nevertheless there are many ongoing efforts to further improve it. Experts were asked what the national park they are working for is currently undertaking to please their visitors even more.

- We started a 'hiking bus' bringing people from the city of Steyr to the national park. We take them through areas where there is no individual traffic and allow them to get a deeper insight and understanding of this protected area (AW).
- The oral and written feedback we get is so good that the only potential we see for improvement is offering new themes and further developing our infrastructure. We also have our center for environmental education and work a lot with children. In addition, guests who stay overnight receive the NeusiedlerSee-Card with many offers and discounts (AL).

- When it comes to gastronomy, we have an excellent offer. We have gourmet mountain huts with regional dishes and a good trail system with nice signage. In general, we try to make the national park attractive without installing too much visible infrastructure. We have nice brochures and are working on a professional web-appearance. Furthermore, we are currently establishing a comprehensive smart-phone application, including maps, points of interest, pictures, plant and animal detection (HW).
- The national park thinks about building an observation tower. Such new attractions increase satisfaction (CÜ).

One problem was identified that is a critical issue in the contemporary management of a national park and addressing it could increase satisfaction levels.

- As many other national parks we do not show what our national park really is all about. Other countries or continents are miles ahead when it comes to this. This is also the case when it comes to conveying nature. We have to work on these things (CB).

As demonstrated, national parks put a lot of effort into satisfying the guests. Different players were identified who are responsible for improving the visitor experience.

- We, here in the public relations department of the national park, are responsible for visitor satisfaction (AL).
- Everybody is responsible who is active in the region. This also includes locals. Some of them focus more on this aspect like tourism associations, accommodation providers, caterers, etc. I see us, as a national park, as somebody who brings them under one umbrella (HW).
- The national park law imposes this on the authority of the protected area. In bigger national parks you have a department that is responsible for it. In the Thayatal national park individual staff members are responsible for satisfaction (CÜ).

A very interesting viewpoint is that not only staff members or departments of a national park are responsible for visitor satisfaction, but also the entire region where the park is located. When looking at the bigger picture, it becomes clear why cooperation between regional players is so essential for the visitor experience. Public transport schedules, for example, need to be geared to opening hours of shops and restaurants in the region as well as to the national park itself. Having a positive attitude towards visitors, serving local produce, providing hearty services and offering nice accommodations is of highest importance and makes visitors happy. Zooming in, it is crucial for national parks to focus on efforts to increase guest satisfaction. This added value from a touristic point of view might in return affect nature positively as the value of a national park for a visitor increases.

4.6. Meeting Visitor Expectations and Protecting Natural Resources

Due to several reasons, tourists in general, but also national park visitors, are getting more and more travel experienced. As a consequence, their expectations are rising and they demand more from a travel experience. National parks, as well as other tourist attractions, have to live up to this new situation. On the contrary, they still have to guarantee that the natural resources are protected.

- As other national parks, we are dependent on tourism as it contributes significantly to the welfare and the financial situation of the region. There is a touristic offer. Nevertheless, we have 75 per cent wilderness area, where tourists have no access. The Hohe Tauern National Park has more problems as they have many areas that are accessible for tourists and less wilderness area (AW).
- The problem we have is that we are located between Vienna and Bratislava with a lot of entry points in between. The resources of the National Park Donau-Auen are vulnerable from many points. The protection from visitors means a restriction in access and a reduction in penetration depth by closing down trails. A new, but reduced trail system allowing better and closer nature experience might increase visitor expectation and satisfaction (CB).
- We do not want an increase in visitor numbers, we want an added value for tourism. We keep the number of programs quite low and offer a better experience instead. High-quality regional product, a better seasonal distribution of visits and longer stays through increased satisfaction levels help to minimize negative environmental effects (AL).
- Our visitor program aims to be as attractive as possible. So-called organs protect our resources from visitor impact. They are something like the national park police and information service by order of the Styrian provincial government. They check for compliance with the law and inform visitors (HW).
- Visitors want untouched nature. Our visitor program offers that through exceptional, special interest tours. We meet visitor expectations and protect nature with such offers. These tours are always guided by a ranger and take place at less sensitive times of the year to decrease disturbances to wildlife. In general, we have a positive development in our natural resources (CÜ).

An overview of different opinions and methods to regulate this issue was provided.

Many sophisticated approaches to guarantee a good visitor experience while still protecting natural resources were identified by the experts. However, these methods are not developed and applied with a theoretical or scientific background. Linking them to proven techniques might increase their effectiveness.

4.7. Efforts to Minimize Negative Environmental Effects

The first thing to mention here is transport management. Austrian national parks argue that the current situation is very difficult, but they cannot deny how critical this

topic is for the preservation of the environment. The experts mentioned many ideas and concepts regarding transport solutions.

- We organize transfer for people using the West-Bahn. We have good bus connections; however, most individual visitors still use the car as highways are close by. Despite some difficulties at the beginning, the usage of hiking taxis and busses is exploding now. In addition, we have bike and e-bike rentals. The biggest problem we have is that the amount of public transport connections is extremely little and non-transparent. Furthermore, the Austrian Railways try to close our nearest station as some investment for restoration is needed (AW).
- People come by car. Public transport partly exists, but it is not interesting for visitors. Those coming by bike, drive through. Only a few come by bicycle to really visit the park (CB).
- We work together with our partners and try to animate visitors to use public transportation. This allows us to offer the NeusiedlerSee-Card with which all public transport is for free. We were one of the first providers of NextBikes, bikes that can be activated via mobile phone. We rent out eBikes and bought a solar-catamaran that is now part of our visitor program (AL).
- We are part of an international project supported by the EU working on mobility systems. Its live operation starts in June. A hiking taxi will be orderable via App. Then we have a shuttle bus from and to the nearest train station in Liezen and there is a small project with electro-mopeds. Trips with a steam locomotive are also offered. The GseisCard gives discounts on public transport (HW).
- Transport is a difficult topic. The Thayatal is a typical rural area, so everybody is coming by car. The train connection to Retz works well and from there buses take over. There is however the tendency to reduce public transport connections. We neither have the finances to offer innovative transport solutions in the park nor can we act outside the national park borders (CÜ).

As shown, Austrian national parks face the situation that most visitors come by car. “The problem of car usage in countryside areas affects Western Europe more than similarly designated national parks in most other parts of the world. This is largely because of higher population densities, higher levels of car ownership and an advanced road infrastructure“ (Eaton, & Holding, 1996, p. 55). In addition, public transport connections get reduced. Therefore, creativity on the part of finding ways to convince visitors to leave their cars at home is important. The presented concepts should provide input for national park authorities worldwide about what transport management measures could be applied and how people can be convinced to leave their cars at home.

Besides gentle, public or alternative transportation, there are many other ways to decrease negative environmental effects of tourists in national parks. What follows is a very detailed summary of different things that need to be considered.

- If somebody sets a private initiative to decrease his or her environmental impact, we will do everything to assist. We also forbid fishing and created parking lots at areas with a higher frequency of visitors in order to avoid people parking at places where they shouldn't. In addition, through the creation of a wilderness area, wildlife has gained space to retreat from visitors. Nevertheless, through the establishment of roads, some animals are limited in migration possibilities. The national park feeds the animals that have to stay in the area for that reason to ensure their continuance (AW).
- The main problem caused by tourism is not the negative impacts directly caused by a visitor, it is the fact that trails are built. You already have a negative influence without having one single visitor. The establishment of trails is a bigger problem than the frequency of their usage. A second problem we have is with visitors coming to gravel banks that are essential for certain species. We try hard to avoid any impacts by supervising the adherence of visitors with our zoning concept stated in the management plan that says that certain gravel banks are reserved for nature. Another issue we have with high-density areas, with a lot of boat traffic. Certain areas were identified where visitors are disturbing each other and as a consequence animals also get disturbed and start to avoid these regions (CB).
- We installed a system of waste separation in 1993. We uninstalled it later on as we realized that we actually only attracted visitors to bring their garbage. Now we are in the situation that people who bring their rubbish take it with them when they leave. Many other national parks did the same (AL).
- Two main aspects: information and visitor guidance. Visitors are, for example, not allowed to take any plants with them or are not allowed to enter certain forests. People go where trails are, so we provide them. We have handshake-agreements with climbers that they do not enter sensitive terrain. Moreover, we have some problems at riparian areas where rare birds breed, at wildlife feeding areas and with mountain bikers as they tend to leave trails. We are addressing these problems (HW).
- We sometimes have problems with people who collect mushrooms, as they often enter sensitive areas. We intervene as soon as we get notice of unwanted behavior and increase our guardsmen. Furthermore we check that our interests don't fall short when it comes to influences from outside, like the establishment of a new wind park or power plant. The best measure to minimize negative effects on nature is to extend the national park borders and to provide more funds to national parks for more research in order to enhance nature protection (CÜ).

These highly interesting trains of thought can be summarized by saying that Austrian national parks do a really good job in dealing with negative environmental effects of visitors. It is however obvious that each national park comes up with its own measures. A better information exchange within the parks of Nationalparks Austria would be favorable. Category II protected areas should also look outside the borders and bring in measures applied in other countries. In general, it needs to be mentioned that Austrians value nature and its protection a lot and consequently show responsible behavior.

4.8. New Trends amongst National Park Visitors

Globalization, Internet, fashion, new media and other trends have a huge influence on society. National parks have to be aware of these movements and should aim to make visitors happy by catering to these needs. Many different approaches exist to handle this issue.

- Geocaching is definitely a new trend. More off-road bikes and eBikes are used. My subjective impression is that there is a decrease in hiking and an increase in walking. Nature photography is booming due to better and cheaper cameras (CB).
- There are smaller and bigger trends. eBikes and digital photography are becoming more and more popular. Digiscoping, a mixture of digital camera and telescope with an extreme focal distance, is a small trend. The most important trend for us is that Eastern European Countries start to use our region as a hub. This means we are not only a travel destination but also function as a distributor (AL).
- We do not actively research trends, but we see that tourists ask for better-quality accommodation, more service, more guided tours and more regional cuisine. Rafting is already quite an old trend. There is also the trend towards ski-touring and snowshoeing (HW).
- We were able to prove the existence of the wildcat that is regarded as an extinct species in Austria. This became a new trend. Hiking, climbing and geocaching are also increasing in popularity (CÜ).

After this extensive overview of new trends, it is worth mentioning that the National Park Kalkalpen has quite a unique way of thinking in terms of meeting new trends. They say that they create their own trends. They founded a new wilderness camp and started to offer snowshoe tours during off-season. National park crossings, two to three day tours leading through the entire park, are also a new trend they offer. Such tours take place four times a year (AW). One perspective is to see this as a good approach because the national park always has control over the visitors. Apart from that, national park management always has to ask itself if what they offer really is what visitors want. National parks should try to be up-to-date when it comes to trends. They should use the trends coming from the visitors and combine them with the ones they create themselves. Control of negative environmental effects could be enhanced. So far, many trends have been identified, but the question also is to what extent these new trends are met.

- We do not provide any eBikes as people would not use them to come to the national park. They would still use their cars and then change to the eBike to explore the national park. Their penetration depth would enhance and there would be more negative impacts (CB).

- In order to go with the new trends, we offer digiscoping courses, we work together with the administration office of the protected areas in term of program development, and offer the 'bird experience', a 9-day program with 3-day bird-fair. We try to attract as many target groups as possible without forgetting about our nature protection mission (AL).
- We overslept the first years of the geocaching trend, but we are now working our way into the geocaching community. Rangers guide geocaching tours and demonstrate how to work with a GPS. Moreover, we founded a classroom up on a mountain, where pupils can learn about the nature. Furthermore, we got the climate protection award for our ecological footprint. It is a walkable, 70 meter-long labyrinth where people can learn about the concept of the ecological footprint (HW).
- Trends are only picked up in rare cases. We have school programs and we try to convey nature impressions via Facebook and Youtube (CÜ).

Although trends do not directly affect nature protection, there still might be some impacts noticeable. Therefore, knowing about them is important. Visitors doing ski tours, taking photos or performing geocaching might show a higher probability to leave trails and thereby negatively influence vegetation and wildlife. In such cases, national parks need to intervene and educate. By going with trends, national parks can offer guided geocaching tours and that way impacts can be kept to a minimum. Or by knowing about the existence of the ski-touring trend, national parks can counteract and lay track in the snow.

4.9 Positive Effects of Tourism and its desired Future Development

Throughout the Bachelor Paper II, threats of increasing tourism numbers were elaborated in detail. However, examining some the positive effects of tourism on national parks might lead to a different attitude of nature activists. Now it is time to see what the experts said about its positive effects.

- In my opinion, the recreational usage leads to a certain right to exist for national parks in the eyes of many people. Another aspect is that we are always concerned that future generation will not care about nature protection any longer. Having people who come to the region, bring ideas and take a stand for nature protection is good. Kids need to experience the value of nature through education (CB).
- Due to the establishment of a national park visitors come to the region and stay in local accommodations. The accommodation providers, as a consequence, also have to deal with the issue of nature and nature protection. The region becomes more aware. This is a crucial contribution of tourism to nature protection. Another point is that we deliver content, photos and texts, but do not spend one single Euro on advertisement and marketing. Tourism is doing that (AL).
- Even though we had a lot of tourism in the past, now we are a region that is weak in structure. Due to its unique landscape, our region can offer gentle tourism. We never wanted mass-tourism. Tourism is a stimulus for development. However, we focus on vitalizing the nature experience rather than tourism. We want to focus on

kids and want that each Austrian child at least once visit a national park throughout the course of his or her education. We are on a good way (HW).

- If visitors have a positive experience, the status of a national park increases and this effects nature protection. People who are emotionally bound to a national park will try to protect the area. Visitors also bring welfare to the region, through overnight stays for instance (CÜ).

As presented, the emotional component plays an important role in nature protection. If a visitor has positive associations and feelings about a national park, he or she wants it to be preserved. Friends and relatives might also be influenced by the behavior of this visitor. It was furthermore mentioned that tourism might bring awareness for nature protection to the region surrounding a national park. Locals might be affected by visitors of the park and share value in its existence. Even though positive aspects of tourism for nature protection could be doubted, its advantages for the region cannot.

- We are a company and we need income. If there is no tourism in a national park, it will be closed. It is questionable if we want to focus on tourism, but we cannot disregard it either. Our region needs it to generate income through accommodation, transport, catering (AW).
- I cannot see any direct positive effects of visitors to the park, but I know examples where they had a positive effect on the region. The region here doesn't define itself by the national park like it does at Lake Neusiedel, Gesäuse or Hohe Tauern. The National Park Hohe Tauern tries to get the visitor flows down to the villages as the entire region lives from tourism (CB).

Finally, different perspectives in what direction the touristic development in and around a national park should take place needs to be discussed. The question of who would be responsible for a touristic development also needs to be answered.

- For many developments, the national park is the initiator in the region. We have to work together as partners, introduce gentle tourism and prolong the average tourism stay. Those responsible for tourism are mainly the tourism associations, followed by leading institutions like the church in Admont, the national park and bigger hotels (HW).
- We have the capacities in our region for increased visitor numbers. The national park works together with Retzer Land that is responsible for tourism. The perfect development scenario would be an increase in park size (CÜ).
- Our region is not a touristic region and only a very small percentage of our visitors are tourists. The Donauauen national park would not profit from having more people from Vienna visiting the Lobau (CB).
- We can contribute a lot that touristic development happens according to the national park objectives. The big problem is that the nature protection people complain about touristic development without making suggestions of how to do it better. We always need to consider ecological and economic aspects (AL).

In general it can be said, that there are many different points of view regarding tourism amongst the interviewed experts in national park authorities. Statements might be influenced by their professional background, whether it is tourism or nature protection. As national parks cannot deny the importance of visitors, they need to find a balance. Rather than being strictly against tourism, national parks should be thinking about desired future tourism development and plan in advance. This could make a huge difference and nature protection could profit immensely. A set of tools as provided throughout the Bachelor Paper II like managing carrying capacities, visitor expectations, visitor flows, transport and trends can be of big help in this planning process.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This last chapter summarizes the findings of the expert interviews and shows how the gained knowledge can be used by national parks to better fulfill their objectives. The limitations and challenges the author faced during the creation of the Bachelor Paper II are outlined. Gaps in research as well as in the daily practice of national parks are highlighted and discussed. Finally, this chapter provides the readers with recommendations for further research.

5.1. Conclusions and Discussion

The first research question set out to answer what the motives of visitors coming to a national park are and what they find appealing about these protected areas. Several visitor motivations were discovered. It was found that an authentic nature experience is the main factor attracting national park visitors. Whether it is a relaxing day on a lake or an active one in a mountainous environment, people want to experience untouched nature. Nevertheless, they expect to find touristic infrastructure like visitor centers and hiking trails. Being able to do nature-based activities is something very attractive to visitors. Amongst many others motives for coming to a national park, wildlife observation, hiking, climbing, mountain biking, rafting, taking photos, walking the dog, geocaching, ski touring, snow shoeing and boat rides were found to be of high interest. People also find guided tours very appealing as they are themed with certain topics of special interest and allow deeper insights into the ecosystem of the national park.

National park authorities can use the gained knowledge about travel motives for product development. Knowing what is of interest to the visitors and what their expectations are can be a big help in planning and developing processes. Products and services can be tailor-made to the guests and expectations might get exceeded. Educating but entertaining products might be a strategy to also attract younger generations and to increase their satisfaction with the national park experience. Bringing the value of nature closer to people, starting from an early age, might turn out to be the key. This ensures the protection of precious natural resources in the long-run. By meeting visitor expectations and by providing them with the experience they want, benefits of having a national park might become clearer and the acceptance of a category II protected area might rise.

In general it can be said that national park visitors give a positive feedback. However, they are very sensitive to visible negative environmental impacts. This makes ensuring the balance between nature protections and making nature come to life for visitors even more important. It was found that Austrian national parks still are in the favorable position that visitors understand the concept of nature protection and do not have serious impacts on the environment. Therefore these protected areas are able to meet the needs of nature and visitors very well. Feedback from visitors backs this up. Investments in visitor centers, info stands, national park programs, signage, attractions, exhibitions and transport are attempts on behalf of national parks to further increase satisfaction.

Furthermore, several visitor expectations national parks know about, but cannot or want not fulfill, were found. It was shown that our modern lifestyle also has an impact on visitor expectations. Visitors want a fast, but comprehensive nature experience. It is however not possible for national parks to serve this to them, as bringing the nature closer to a visitor takes time and patience. They do not even want to present their natural resources that way. Lack of knowledge and being informed via more instant media, was identified as reasons why visitors expect unrealistic things like a particular reproduction behavior of an animal at times when the wildlife has other priorities. It is important, because by educating and informing people that certain expectations cannot be fulfilled, visitors might not expect them any longer and satisfaction might increase.

The second research question of this paper referred to the two-fold purpose of national parks and asked how they can meet the requirements of increasing tourism numbers while at the same time conserving the precious and often endangered natural resources. Some highly interesting approaches were explored. One method is to try to attract a reasonable number of visitors, but only open some part of the national park to them. The opened areas should possess less sensitive natural resources while those areas where access is denied should be of a wilderness status, being of a more vulnerable nature. This concept is closely linked to the question if national parks authorities should concentrate visitors in certain areas or spread them over the entire protected region. A well thought-through and properly managed and maintained trail system ensures a better and more close-to-nature experience for the

guests and at the same time leads them away from critical areas where animals have their retreats. Managing visitors, executing controls to ensure that nature protection guidelines are complied with and implementing carrying capacity management measures will help to preserve nature. The positive effects of proper visitor management and nature protection will also affect customer satisfaction.

Offering extensive information and guided tours in the program of a national park is another approach to allow nature and visitors to get their fair share. Highly interested people that way get the opportunity to learn more about the unique ecosystems predominant in national parks. Rangers might also guide tours for visitors with special interest in certain topics. Allowing visitors to experience nature in its entire splendor will astonish them and the perceived value of it will rise further. Moreover, national parks can determine when and to what conditions these tours take place and what they want visitors to experience and learn. This method was proven to be very effective. If more national parks would offer such tours and the variety of them would increase, more visitors might make use of these offers and negative environmental impacts could be drastically reduced.

In order to answer the third research question it was examined what measures are available to keep the negative environmental effects of tourists at a minimum. As discussed in detail throughout the paper, carrying capacity management and visitor management are two powerful tools to protect natural resources from visitor impacts. However, other less complex methods were identified to minimize negative environmental effects of people coming to a national park. Good signage, education and information play an important role. Kids programs ensure that especially young people learn to appreciate the value of nature for our all well-being. They are our future and by educating them, long-term nature preservation can be strengthened. National park guards are crucial in informing visitors and controlling their compliance with rules and guidelines. A higher portion of funds should be invested for this, but also for research activities. Knowing scientific approaches is an important cornerstone in the management of national parks. An extremely interesting finding in regards to waste management was that the uninstalling of garbage bins decreases the amount of waste brought to national parks. As people find no opportunity to get rid of their trash, they either do not bring it at all or take it home with them after their visit.

Transportation concepts were found to be of immense significance to protect nature. More funds should be provided for this issue and the current development of reducing public transport connections should be reversed. Many national parks find themselves to be located in remote and hard-to-reach areas with few public connections and a low frequency of services. Furthermore, they have very limited influence on transport management outside their borders. In order to persuade people to leave their cars at home, a new system is needed. Amongst others, hiking taxis, hiking buses, ebikes, scooters and a good cooperation between train and bus networks were identified to tackle this issue. Knowing the visitor base might be of help when developing new offers. In general it can be said that good efforts on the part of national parks in regards to transport management are being made, but as it is such a critical issue, the focus on finding new and better solutions should still be more emphasized.

It was also shown that less sophisticated approaches can have very positive results for protecting natural resources from visitor influences, which implies that not always only very complex and scientifically proven approaches are necessary. However, knowing about famous theories and concepts and what methods are applied in other national parks around the world can build the foundation for innovative solutions customized to the specific situational needs of a park. The Bachelor Paper II should be regarded as a source for ideas for national parks and should help them to better meet their manifold objectives.

5.2. Implication of Theory

Literature on the topics of carrying capacities, visitor management, transport management, environmental impacts and purpose interpretations of national parks is very broad and it can easily be identified that a lot of research was already done throughout the last decades. Even though some basic concepts have already existed for a while, it can be said that research in the respective fields is done on a regular basis and that it is up-to-date. However, a lot of concepts and theories are very specific to the parks of the US National Park Service and therefore might not be applicable in other national parks around the world. Furthermore, it was identified that some theory misses the link to practice. Many concepts exist that sound nice on paper but cannot easily be applied in reality. Therefore, the author handpicked popular and proven techniques and showed in many examples how they can be actively applied in contemporary national park management.

When interpreting the statements of the experts, it was aimed at demonstrating how theories, methods, concepts and strategies could be applied and implemented in practical settings on a global level. It was found that some literature did not always fully describe a situation, present a situation in the best way or sometimes it was even contradictory. Also laws and regulations on national parks sometimes possess the later characteristic. The researcher therefore sees a need to do some amendments to literature in order to ensure that it can practically be implemented in management processes. Additionally it should be mentioned that the author did not always agree with the opinions of the expert. It was then tried to understand the reasons of the experts for their statements and use the information provided to see things from another perspective, to learn and to draw conclusions.

Within the literature, a gap in showing the interrelations between important concepts was identified. A major problem also is to spot literature that outlines good and practical examples of carrying capacity management in national parks. Due to its complexity and the many factors influencing the establishment of capacities in absolute numbers, its management is still a critical and very difficult issue for national parks. Only some research is specific to the particular situations of individual national parks, as especially smaller protected areas are limited in funding to do high-quality and extensive research. The biggest challenge for research is to provide national park authorities with more or less easy-to-apply tools to manage visitors and carrying capacities. As natural, cultural and social conditions are specific to the different national parks, it is in general not possible to provide them with equally valid concepts and guidelines. Nonetheless, the researcher tried to present the issues in such a way that every national park can gather or learn something from this paper.

5.3. Limitations and Challenges of the Bachelor Paper II

Over the course of composition of the paper, the researcher had to face many obstacles and challenges and quickly found where the limitations lie. The restriction in funds available became an issue when searching for literature and realizing that many articles are only accessible for money, but also when the author had to drive to the different national parks in Austria and pay for gas. One major challenge was to obtain high-quality literature as a basis for the literature review and for interpretation purposes. For that reason, the author travelled to the library of the University of Vienna, but also researched the Internet for official publications by relevant authors and

organizations. Expert interviews via Skype were avoided. On the one hand, this is due to the perceived risk that the connection might be bad, on the other hand, it was avoided in order to allow the researcher to get a personal impression about the given conditions in the different Austrian national parks. The researcher also wanted to feel and experience subconscious reactions and emotions of the experts.

With qualitative research being applied, a certain problem with reliability, not only in terms of the information gathered from the experts, but also regarding the analysis of the data, exists. The author was, throughout the entire data collection and analysis, well aware of this issue and tried to keep the paper free of subjectivity. Reliability, defined as “the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date or with a different sample of subjects” (Veal, 2006, p. 41) was tried to be achieved at an optimum level. The author also tried that validity in terms of that “the information collected by the researcher truly reflects the phenomenon being studied” (ibid.) is given in the Bachelor Paper II.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

Possibilities for future research on the core topics of this paper, carrying capacity management, visitor management, nature protection, negative environmental effects of tourism, etc. are plentiful. In general it can be recommended that research should especially focus on the applicability of theories in individual national parks. Such case studies would allow management to implement proper measures and the environment could profit tremendously. The effects of different visitor behavior on the resources of a national park should also be further examined in order to set more sophisticated limits on visitor numbers. By the creation of the Bachelor Paper II, the author aims to provide a basis and a stimulus for further research into these directions. Deviations and similarities in research should also be examined. As already mentioned, research provides endless theories and concepts, however, the actual effects after their implementation are rarely scientifically investigated.

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ANNEX

Appendix I: Interview Outline Expert Interviews

INTERVIEW GUIDE

National Parks as Tourism Attractions – Increasing numbers of tourists and their effects on these protected areas

Forschungsfragen:

- What do national parks think that tourists nowadays find appealing about these protected areas and how far can NPs fulfill these expectations?
- How can national parks meet the requirements of the increasing numbers of tourists while still protecting natural resources?
- What are measures to minimize the environmental impact of tourists on these protected areas?

Datum:

Uhrzeit – Beginn:

Uhrzeit – Ende:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Beruf:

Alter:

- Vorstellung des Interviewers
- Beschreibung des Projekts / Themas
- Einverständniserklärung für Aufzeichnung
- Einverständniserklärung für Verwendung des Namens
- Daten werden in der Bachelorarbeit verwendet und durch die IMC FH Krems veröffentlicht

1. Einstieg

- Könnten Sie mir kurz etwas über Ihre Person erzählen?
- Wie lange sind Sie schon in Ihrem derzeitigen Beruf tätig?
- Was ist ihr beruflicher Bezug zum Tourismus?

2. Nationalparkmanagement - Aufgaben / Tragfähigkeitsgrenze von NPs

- Ausgehend von den Aufgaben eines NP, worin sehen sie die praktische Abwägung teilweise konkreter Ziele?
- Wie wird das Thema der Nachhaltigkeit im NP gemanaged?

- Wie wird die Tragfähigkeitsgrenze (Carrying Capacity) im Nationalpark bestimmt und gemanaged?
- Welche Managementkonzepte werden diesbezüglich angewandt (generell und im konkreten NP)?
- Welcher ungefähre Prozentanteil des Gesamtbudgets wird für Carrying Capacity Management aufgewandt?
- Wie werden Besucherzählungen im Nationalpark gehandhabt?
- Worin sehen Sie Verbesserungspotential?
- Gibt es Vorgaben? Wenn ja, von wem (Staat Österreich, IUCN, UNESCO)?
- Wie können Nationalparks den Erwartungen wachsender Besucherzahlen Stand halten und zugleich die natürlichen Ressourcen schützen?
- Wie wird das Verhalten von Besuchern im Nationalpark kontrolliert?

3. Nationalparkmanagement – Besuchermanagement

- Was sehen Sie als Haupt-Reisemotive von Nationalparktouristen?
- Inwiefern werden Erwartungen von Nationalpark-Besuchern erfüllt?
- Gibt es Erwartungen, die nicht erfüllt werden (können)?
- Wie könnte der NP die Zufriedenheit von Besuchern weiters steigern?
- Wer ist für die Besucherzufriedenheit verantwortlich?
- Was wird unternommen um die Einflüsse von Touristen auf die Umwelt in Nationalparks zu minimieren?
- Wie werden diese Einflüsse gemessen?
- Gibt es Vorgaben bzgl. der Handhabung dieser Einflüsse im NP?
- Was könnte man zukünftig besser machen um diese Einflüsse zu minimieren?
- Was sind die positiven Auswirkungen von Tourismus auf Nationalparks?
- Was wird hinsichtlich Transportmanagement unternommen? (Auto vs. Öffis)
- Was sind aktuelle Trends unter den Besuchern?
- Wie geht der Nationalpark auf neue Trends ein?

3. Ende

- Wie sehen sie die Zukunft vom Carrying Capacity Management in NPs?
- Sollen Nationalparks verstärkt auf Tourismus setzen?
- Wer wäre dafür verantwortlich?
- In welche Richtung sollte diese Veränderung dann stattfinden?
- Gibt es noch etwas, das Sie hinzufügen möchten?

Dankeschön für Ihre Bereitschaft am Interview teilzunehmen!

Appendix II: Interview Transcript Nationalpark Gesäuse

Datum: 22.03.2013
Uhrzeit - Beginn: 15.55
Uhrzeit - Ende: 16.48
Interviewdauer: 52:36 Minuten
Ort: Weng bei Admont (Steiermark)
Interviewer: Jürgen Haluzan (JH)
Interviewee: DI Herbert Wölger (HW)
Beruf: Geschäftsführer, Nationalpark Gesäuse

JH: Könnten Sie sich bitte kurz vorstellen und mir etwas über Ihre Person erzählen?

HW: Mein Name ist Herbert Wölger, ich stamme aus Hall bei Admont und leite seit genau einem Jahr den Nationalpark Gesäuse. Von der Ausbildung her habe ich Forst- und Holzwirtschaft auf der Universität für Bodenkultur in Wien studiert. War dann in der Holzverarbeitenden Industrie tätig, dann in einem Projekt in einem Biosphärenpark in Argentinien, und wie gesagt, seit einem Jahr im Gesäuse.

JH: Was ist ihr beruflicher Bezug zum Tourismus?

HW: Zum Tourismus selbst habe ich keinen beruflichen Bezug. Ich bin der Leiter des Nationalparks (NP). Komme aus dem Naturraummanagement.

JH: Also eher mehr Naturschutz als Tourismus.

HW: Genau.

JH: Ausgehend von den Aufgaben eines NP, worin sehen Sie die praktische Abwägung teilweise konkreter Ziele?

HW: Wir haben ganz konkrete Ziele im NP Gesetz, das beschreibt was mit der Gründung des NP Gesäuse bezweckt wird. Da steht drinnen Naturschutz natürlich als oberstes Ziel, dann Forschung, Bildung und Erlebbarkeit für den Besucher. Dieser letzte Punkt ist nichts anderes als eine Art Tourismus. Also es ist eindeutiger Auftrag des Gesetzgebers und Eigentümers des NP, für Besucher einen Lern- und Erholungsraum zu schaffen im NP.

JH: Aber vordergründig steht dennoch der Naturschutz?

HW: Das steht nebeneinander. Das oberste Ziel ist der Naturschutz. Unser NP ist ein NP nach den IUCN Kriterien Kategorie 2, wie fast alle anderen in Österreich (Ö) auch. Es geht ganz einfach darum, dass man die natürliche Dynamik zulässt. Das ist das oberste Ziel. Im Gesetz sind die Ziele aber nicht hierarchisch gereiht.

JH: Aber nehmen wir jetzt mal an, dass der Besucher den Naturschutz gefährden würde. Was steht denn dann im Vordergrund?

HW: Der Naturschutz.

JH: Wie wird das Thema der Nachhaltigkeit im NP gemanaged?

HW: Nachhaltigkeit und Umwelt kann man bei uns so sehen, dass die Umweltprozesse stattfinden sollen können. Wenn eine Lawine herunter kommt, kommt eine Lawine runter. Wenn es eine Überschwemmung gibt, gibt's eine. Also diese dynamischen Prozesse sollen nicht gestört werden. Das kann man als natürliche Nachhaltigkeit bezeichnen, ansonsten Nachhaltigkeit aus Besuchersicht heißt, wir wollen keinen Müll drinnen haben. Wir wollen das Besucherangebot so anlegen, dass man es nachhaltig verwenden kann. Dass es also keine groben Auswirkungen auf die Natur

gibt. Wir beschäftigen uns auch mit nachhaltigen Verkehrskonzepten, d.h. wir wollen sanften Verkehr haben. Wir fördern zu Fuß gehen in erster Linie, dann Rad fahren, Taxibetrieb und Sammeltaxis. Da gibt's ein ganz konkretes Projekt, wo es darum geht, dass man den eigenen PKW daheim lassen kann.

JH: Und Bahnverbindung schaut in der Region eher schlecht aus oder?

HW: Ja, es gibt nur zwei Personenzüge pro Woche die durchs Gesäuse fahren. Ist für den Besucher eine Frage der Zeit. Also Bahn ist tot.

JH: Welches Verkehrsmittel wird vom Besucher am ehesten benutzt?

HW: Auto. Autobus.

JH: Wie wird die Tragfähigkeitsgrenze (Carrying Capacity) im Nationalpark bestimmt und gemanaged?

HW: Tragfähigkeit bei uns heißt nicht Tragfähigkeit der Infrastruktur, sondern im Naturschutzsinne. D.h. wie viele Besucher können den NP besuchen, ohne dass jetzt die Natur darunter leidet. Oder sagen wir stärker leidet, weil einen Einfluss gibt es immer. Messen tun wir das durchs Monitoring. Wir monitoren wichtige Arten, das heißt „wie ist der Zustand und wie verändert er sich im Lauf der Zeit?“ Wir haben z. B. ein paar Brutvogelarten die recht selten sind. Dann schauen wir, wie viel wir vorher gehabt haben, wie viele haben wir heuer und nächstes Jahr. Wenn es in einem gewissen, sensiblen Bereich Probleme gibt, z.B. mit so Zeigerarten, dann schauen wir, dass wir dort die Besucher weglenken.

JH: Gibt es eine absolute Zahl, wo man sagt, okay, so and so viele Besucher sind in diesem Bereich des NP zugelassen?

HW: So was gibt es nur für die Enns. Wir haben Rafting an der Enns. Das heißt wir machen das nicht, wir kontrollieren es. Da gibt es eine zulässige Höchstzahl an Rafts, die gleichzeitig auf der Enns unterwegs sein dürfen. Das ist das einzige Limit. Hat aber auch nicht viel Sinn, weil 10 Boote die leise unterwegs sind haben viel weniger Einfluss, wie eines das eine schreiende Affenhorde drauf hat.

JH: Sehen Sie, dass es in der Zukunft eventuell einen Bedarf gäbe, die Carrying Capacity (CC) besser zu managen und so eine Grenze aufzustellen?

HW: Nein. Wir haben hier das Problem nicht, weil wir von allem sehr, sehr weit weg. Der NP Donauauen wird ganz einfach von Wiener Tagesgästen überschwemmt und die haben ein Problem, das wir überhaupt nicht haben. Diese CC gibt's bei uns nur punktuell. Wie gesagt, ich habe die Brüter angesprochen. Wir haben brütende Adlerpaare da. Das sind dann kleinräumig schon sensible Gebiete, wo eventuell eine Person schon die CC überschreiten würde. Da muss man halt dann Lenkungsmaßnahmen ergreifen. Wir haben im Winter auch Lenkungsmaßnahmen, die in dieses Kapitel hineinfallen. Wir haben die Raufußhühner da, Auerhahn und Birkhahn. Das sind recht seltene Vögel und prioritäre Arten. Das ist der EU Naturschutz, und auf die schauen wir natürlich. Da gibt's Skitouren, die durch Winterrückzugsgebiete durchgehen und durch Balzgebiete, und da schauen wir, dass wir diese Touren verlegen. Das machen wir recht erfolgreich mit verschiedenen Besucherlenkungsmaßnahmen, mit Informationstafeln, mit Legen von Spuren bei Neuschnee. Der übliche Skitourengeher geht eh dort wo eine Spur ist. Mit Informationskampagnen, wir machen da Print-Sachen. Auf der Homepage kann man sich erkundigen. Also das sind sensible Bereiche wo wenige Leute die Carrying Capacity überschreiten würden.

JH: Wie werden Besucherzählungen im Nationalpark gehandhabt?

HW: Wir haben bei unseren Erlebniszentren Lichtschranken, seit einigen Jahren, wo wir Besucher zählen. Dort wissen wir genau, wie viele Leute es sind. Dort wissen wir durch Kontrollzählungen, wie wir das Zählergebnis abgleichen müssen um auf den

wirklichen Wert zu kommen. Weil es gibt ja immer wieder Leute die drei Mal durchgehen. Für den Rest der Fläche haben wir keine Besucherzählung. Wir wissen nicht wie viele Leute unterwegs sind. Wir haben im Vergleich zu anderen Parks, in Amerika gibt's das z.B., wo es drei Zufahrtsstraßen gibt, überall mit Schranken, dann zahlt man Eintritt und geht rein. Unser NP hat rundherum eine Vielzahl von Wanderwegen und es wäre also unmöglich das zu machen.

JH: Gibt es Ranger, welche im Park unterwegs sind und gezielt Zählungen machen oder Kennzeichenzählungen bei Autos?

HW: Nein, das machen wir nicht. Wir zählen hin und wieder die Rafts stichprobenartig, weil es dort eine Höchstzahl gibt. Ansonsten zählen wir die Besucher nicht. Es gibt schon wissenschaftliche Methoden mit so Simultanzählungen, mit einer gewissen Unsicherheit, um abzuschätzen, wie viele Leute im Gelände unterwegs sind. Haben wir bis jetzt noch nicht gemacht.

JH: Sehen Sie hier Verbesserungspotential bzw. den Bedarf so etwas zu machen?

HW: Besucherzählungen sind immer interessant, weil die Anzahl der Besucher eine Messlatte ist für die Region. So haben wir zum einen ein Naturschutzprojekt und zum anderen ein Regionalentwicklungsprojekt und wenn man nachweisen kann, dass so und so viele Leute herkommen, dann ist das gut. Und das machen wir im Erlebniszentrum. Dort wo wir Infrastruktur investieren, dort zählen wir die Leute und dort wissen wir, wie viele kommen.

JH: Welcher ungefähre Prozentanteil des Gesamtbudgets des NP wird für Carrying Capacity Management aufgewandt?

HW: Kann man nicht sagen.

JH Welche Vorgaben gibt es im Hinblick auf Naturschutz, wie man die negativen Einflüsse von Besuchern minimieren kann und hinsichtlich Besuchermanagement? Und von wem? Dem Staat Österreich, IUCN, UNESCO?

HW: Es gibt keine strikten Vorgaben jetzt von der IUCN, wie wir das Thema Besucher zu handhaben haben. Es gibt eine Vorgabe, die heißt, man braucht einen Managementplan. Das heißt, man muss irgendwo festschreiben, wie man mit dem Thema umgeht. Bei uns gibt es einen Managementplan Besucherlenkung mit über 200 Seiten. Dort steht alles drinnen über Rechtsobergrenzen und was wir mit den Besucherströmen im Gesäuse machen. Also relativ detailliert.

JH: Es gibt aber keine Vorgabe, dass CC gemanaged werden muss oder?

HW: Das heißt anders bei uns. Es gibt die Vorgabe, dass Monitoring gemacht werden muss. Wir sind dazu verpflichtet, die sensiblen Arten zu monitoren. Und wenn die zurückgehen in der Anzahl oder die Qualität vom Lebensraum nachlässt, dann müssen wir nachschauen, warum das so ist. Und da könnte natürlich ein übermäßiger Besucherdruck schuld sein. Es gibt dann vom Zusammenschluss der 6 österreichischen NPs, Nationalparks Austria, auch teilweise Richtlinien zu diesen Managementplänen. Es ist da gerade auch ein Projekt im anlaufen, wird 2015 dann fertig sein, wo es dann Vorgaben geben wird, wie so ein vernünftiger Managementplan ausschauen soll.

JH: Und vom Staat Ö oder vom Land Steiermark, gibt's da was?

HW: Es gibt vom Land Steiermark auch was, in der Rechtsmaterie. Es gibt den NP-Plan. Das steiermärkische NP-Gesetz regelt also grundlegend den NP und der NP-Plan ist die Durchführungsverordnung zum NP Gesetz. Dort steht zum Beispiel drinnen, was Besucher tun dürfen und was nicht. Da steht in der Verordnung z.B. drinnen „in der Naturzone, die Kernzone, ist das Begehen von Höhlen untersagt“. Das

sind die wesentlichen Rechtsgrundlagen. Das kommt vom Land, wird mitgetragen vom Bund. Der NP ist eine GesmbH und die zwei Eigentümer, Bund und Land. Dort gibt es einen sogenannten §15a, Vereinbarung, heißt Staatsvertrag, ist aber ein Vertrag zwischen Bund und Land. Dort steht drinnen, dass Bund und Land gemeinsam diesen NP finanzieren in erster Linie. Was wichtig ist, Naturschutz ist ein Landesgesetz. Ein Beispiel für den futuristischen Staat Ö, d.h. die eigentlichen Gesetze sind noch Landesgesetze.

JH: Wie schaut es mit der UNESCO aus, gibt's da Vorgaben?

HW: Kann ich jetzt nichts sagen.

JH: Kann man eine generelle Tendenz in den Besucherzahlen feststellen, ob sie steigend oder fallend sind, auch wenn sie nicht überall gezählt werden?

HW: Es ist steigend. Uns gibt es seit 10 Jahren und seit 10 Jahren sind die Zahlen steigend. Im Vorjahr waren sie stark steigend, weil wir eine Attraktion dazu bekommen haben. Wir haben den ökologischen Fußabdruck installiert. Der hat den österreichischen Klimaschutzpreis bekommen. Und das hat einen deutlichen Sprung nach oben gebracht.

JH: Wie können Nationalparks den Erwartungen wachsender Besucherzahlen Stand halten und zugleich die natürlichen Ressourcen schützen?

HW: Wir haben ein Veranstaltungsprogramm mit, glaube ich, recht hochwertigen Veranstaltungen, welche ständig an die Zeit angepasst werden und ans Publikum. Man lernt.

Es lebt ständig und ist unmittelbar für die Besucher gemacht. Geleitet werden die Veranstaltungen von NP Rangern. Das ist eine zertifizierte Ausbildung seit kurzer Zeit. Man hat 45 Tage Intensivausbildung und eine grundlegende Ausbildung in Richtung Forstwirtschaft und Biologie, d.h. das sind spitze-trainierte Leute. Das ist der Garant dafür, dass wir hochwertige Führungen anbieten können.

JH: Versucht man auch die natürlichen Ressourcen auf diese Art zu schützen?

HW: Das macht der Ranger weniger. Es gibt sogenannte Organe. Das ist so was wie die NP Polizei und Informationsdienst. Von beidem ein bisschen. Die sind nicht in unserem, sondern im Auftrag der steiermärkischen Landesregierung unterwegs und schauen, dass das Gesetz eingehalten wird und informieren zugleich. Die sind aber nicht ständig unterwegs. Das ist also was, was wir nur sehr spärlich machen und auch nur sehr spärlich machen müssen.

JH: Was sehen Sie als Haupt-Reisemotive von Nationalparktouristen im Gesäuse?

HW: Das Naturerlebnis, ganz sicherlich. Wir sind NP und zugleich Gesäuse. Ich trenne das jetzt, weil das Gesäuse gibt es schon lange. Es ist eine Bergsteigerdestination, gerade für den Großraum Wien, und ist seit 150 Jahren recht bekannt. Es gibt Leute die kommen zu uns weil es ein NP ist, andere weil sie klettern gehen im Gesäuse und für die ist der NP jetzt nicht so wichtig. Wir haben beide Gruppen, den Zuwachs aber durch das Gütesiegel NP.

JH: Was sind denn die Hauptaktivitäten von Besuchern?

HW: Die wichtigste Aktivität ist Bergwandern, Klettern – freies Felsklettern oder Klettertouren das Zweitwichtigste. Dafür steht das Gesäuse. Wir haben jetzt ein paar Fertig-Klettersteige, aber das ist nur sehr eingeschränkt verfügbar und bauen wir auch nicht weiter aus. Diese Steige, wo ich als Sonntagskletterer in die steilsten Wände rein komme, die sind nicht unsere Stärke, sondern anspruchsvolle naturnahe Klettertouren. Rafting, eine rein kommerzielle Sache. Schlucht-Canyoning, Schluchtwandern, Schluchtklettern, das ist auch eine kommerzielle Geschichte. Tierbeobach-

tung ist natürlich auch ein Thema, gehört aber dann auch schon zu unserem eigenen Veranstaltungsprogramm. Wir bieten an, mit Berufsjägern, da kann man Hirsche, Gämse und Murmeltiere, und jetzt um diese Zeit dann Auerhahn und Birkhahn entweder nur beobachten oder auch fotografieren. Foto ist einer der großen Schwerpunkte in unserem Programm.

JH: Inwiefern werden Erwartungen von Nationalpark-Besuchern erfüllt?

HW: Die Besucherzufriedenheit messen wir. Das machen wir zusammen mit NP Austria. Wir wollen einfach dieselben Maßstäbe und Messkriterien haben, um uns untereinander vergleichen zu können. Sie wird gemessen vor allem bei unseren Veranstaltungen über Feedbackbögen. Wir haben sehr viele Schüler da. Dann werden die Lehrer abgefragt, wie es ihnen gefallen hat. Mit Formular und Fragebogen dazu. Dann wird das ausgewertet und dann wissen wir ungefähr, wie sich die Sache entwickelt. Durch die hohe Qualität der Veranstaltungen und der Ranger haben wir immer sehr positive Rückmeldungen.

JH: Gibt es Erwartungen, von welchen sie wissen, dass der Besucher sie hat, die aber nicht erfüllt werden (können)?

HW: Welche Erwartungen hat der Besucher? Vielleicht gibt es Leute, die kommen her, sagen „es ist ein NP, da gehe ich von der Straße 5 Meter weg und dann sehe ich alle möglichen Tiere.“ Das erfüllt sich nicht. Alla Universum. Wildtiere zu beobachten ist nicht ganz einfach. Das machen wir auch mit Berufsjägern, aber der Erfolg ist keineswegs garantiert. Eine zweite Sache könnte sein, die Erwartung des schönen Wetters. Bei uns regnet es sehr viel und ich kann Tage unterwegs sein und nie mehr als 50m sehen. Ansonsten, glaube ich, kommen die Leute recht gut vorbereitet her. Internet, und die Leute wissen, was sie erwartet. Wir haben in punkto Gastronomie gerade in der Fläche, d.h. Schutzhütten, ein hervorragendes Angebot. Eine so eine große Dichte von Gourmetschutzhütten kann man nirgendwo anders finden in Ö, und das trägt natürlich zur Zufriedenheit bei.

JH: Kann ich mir vorstellen. Der hungrige Wanderer. Wie könnte man sonst noch die Zufriedenheit von Besuchern weiters steigern? Welche Bemühungen gibt es seitens des NP?

HW: Wir schauen, dass der NP attraktiv ist, und auf eine solche Art und Weise, ohne zu viel sichtbare Infrastruktur zu installieren. Ein gutes Wegenetz ist eh da. Da gehört dazu, ich würde sagen, unsichtbare Lenkungsmaßnahmen. Eine zurückhaltende, aber gute Beschriftung. Also keine großen Tafeln, aber man sollte sich nie fragen müssen, wie es weiter geht. Also sie sollen gut lenken. Eine zweite wichtige Sache ist der Zustand der Wege. Für die Erhaltung sind die alpinen Vereine zuständig. Wir haben auch ein großes Projekt, startet jetzt im Mai für 3 Jahre, kostet ziemlich viel Geld, wo wir in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Tourismusverband und den alpinen Vereinen mit einem Profiteam, die ganzen Wege sanieren, weil sie zum Teil Sanierungsbedürftig sind. Ein guter Weg hat was mit Sicherheit am Berg und Zufriedenheit zu tun. Ich muss ja nicht gleich herfallen um unzufrieden zu sein, aber wenn der Weg gut ist, dann steigert das sicher die Zufriedenheit. Ansonsten schauen wir ganz einfach, dass wir eine gute Information haben vor Ort, dass wir hochwertige Prospekte haben und einen hochwertigen Internetauftritt. Haben wir noch nicht, wird aber neu und in 2 Monaten fertig sein. Und wir arbeiten gerade an einem sehr umfangreichen App, einer Smartphone-Applikation, weil wir der Meinung sind, dass das, das Informationsmedium der Zukunft ist, und vor allem auch weil es sehr viele Tafeln und Eingriffe in die Natur erspart. Mit meinem App habe ich dann meine Karte mit, meine

Points Of Interest, habe verschiedenste Fotos drauf. Das geht bis zur Pflanzen- und Tiererkennung, und Vogelstimmen. Also sehr umfangreich. Und das Taxi kann ich auch rufen damit.

JH: Wer ist für die Besucherzufriedenheit verantwortlich? Der NP, die alpinen Vereine?

HW: Es sind alle die verantwortlich, die irgendwie was anbieten und tätig sind in der Region, und auch die Einwohner der Region. Alle gemeinsam müssen an der Besucherzufriedenheit arbeiten. Es gibt ein paar die systematischer dafür sorgen wie z.B. der Tourismusverband, die Beherbergungsbetriebe, die Gastwirte. Und ich sehe uns, als NP, als eine Organisation, die da herum ein bisschen eine Klammer macht.

JH: Wie wird der NP generell in der Region aufgenommen?

HW: Bei der Gründung gab es natürlich viele Schwierigkeiten so wie überall. Das war vor 10 oder 12 Jahren. Wie überall, wo NPs gegründet werden. Jetzt ist es gerade im nördlichen Schwarzwald der Fall, wo es also ziemlich starke Kämpfe gibt. So hat es damals polarisierte Parteien gegeben; entweder stark dafür oder dagegen. In der Zwischenzeit haben sich die Wogen ein bisschen geglättet. Es ist nicht mehr so polarisiert. Es gibt viele, die sagen, „es ist positiv, die Region entwickelt sich positiv.“ Die Gegner sind ruhiger geworden, weil sie gesehen haben, so gefährlich ist es ja nicht, was da kommt. Viele interessieren sich auch nicht mehr, denn „jetzt ist er eh da.“

JH: Aber die Besucherzahlen haben sich gesteigert nachdem der NP eingerichtet worden ist?

HW: Die Besucherzahlen im NP sind gestiegen, die Nächtigungszahlen nicht. Jetzt könnte man nur mutmaßen, wie weit sie gefallen wären, wenn es den NP nicht gäbe. Es sind also Tagesgäste. Was ist unsere hauptsächliche Attraktion neben dem NP? Die Kultur beim Stift Admont, die Bibliothek. Das ist hauptsächlich Bustourismus. Wir haben auch keine gescheite Hotelinfrastruktur gehabt. Die alten Frühstückspensionen, wo auf der Haustür oben steht „Warmwasser“, sind nicht mehr der letzte Schrei. Wir haben jetzt allerdings seit Herbst ein großes 4-Sterne-Hotel in Admont. Damit ist die Bettenkapazität eine ganz andere, und auf ein ganz anderes Qualitätsniveau auch gehoben worden. So, Schritt für Schritt, entwickelt sich das weiter.

JH: Was wird unternommen um die Einflüsse von Touristen auf die Umwelt in Nationalparks zu minimieren?

HW: In erster Linie Information und Besucherlenkung. Wir haben vom Gesetz her die Möglichkeit das zu kontrollieren, was das Gesetz vorgibt. Und das ist recht wenig. Also ich darf nichts ausreißen und mitnehmen aus dem NP. Pilze und Beeren zu sammeln ist aber erlaubt. Und ich darf überall hingehen. Also ich darf den Wald betreten. Im NP gilt das Forstgesetz. Sprich, der Wald ist von jedem betretbar. Ausgenommen sind Jungwuchsflächen oder Wildfütterungen. Und ich darf im Bergland, über der Waldgrenze auch überall hin. Das ist das Gesetz der Wegfreiheit im Bergland. Wir haben nicht die Möglichkeit zu sagen „Das ist ein sensibles Gebiet. Da ist Eintritt verboten.“ Wir können nur lenken und informieren und sagen, dass jemand aus diesem Grund hier bitte nicht reingehen soll.

JH: Gibt es hier im NP auch ein Kerngebiet, wo man sagt, es gibt nicht wirklich Wege - wo weniger Touristen sondern rein Natur ist?

HW: Die Leute gehen dort wo Wege sind, denn in unserem Bergland kann man ohne Wege eh nicht gehen. Vor allem im felsigen, steilen Gelände. Dort gibt es auch ein paar wenige Flecken, wo selbst die Kletterer nicht hingehen. Das ist so eine Handschake-Vereinbarung. Nichts Niedergeschriebenes. Und auch keine Verbotszone. Wo wir halt wissen, dass sind die letzten Felsen, wo es noch keine Klettertouren gibt, wo

noch keine Haken eingeschlagen sind. Jetzt zurzeit brüten gerade die Wanderfalken dort. Das ist ein Kletterer-Ehrenkodex. Dort geht man nicht hin.

JH: Welche negativen Einflüsse gibt's denn mit Touristen, z.B. Müll, Wege verlassen?

HW: Große Probleme haben wir keine. Es gibt hin und wieder Probleme mit dem Betreten von sensiblen Ufergebieten. Brutgebiete, wo wir ersuchen, dort bitte nicht hinzugehen. Enns und Johnsbach. Dort wo die Schotterbrüter ihre Eier ablegen. Da reden wir von 2 bis 3 Individuen, die es im gesamten Gesäuse gibt. Dort ist es dann nicht gut, wenn man auf die Eier steigt. Sensible Wildfütterungen gibt es auch noch. Die sind auch Sperrgebiet. Die Raufußhühner habe ich schon erwähnt. Ansonsten fallweise. Wir haben 3 Adlerpaare, die hin und wieder Brutversuche unternehmen und da gibt es ca. 15 Adlerhorste, wo er sich dann jedes Jahr einen aussucht. Wenn wir wissen, dass er den angenommen hat, dann schauen wir, dass nicht gerade dort die Leute hingehen.

JH: Wie werden diese Einflüsse gemessen?

HW: Übers Monitoring. Nicht direkt sondern indirekt. Wie entwickelt sich die Natur? Monitoring hat bei uns nichts mit Besucherverhalten zu tun, sondern wie sich die Pflanzen- und Tierwelt weiterentwickelt.

JH: Wird aber auch das Verhalten vom Besucher kontrolliert oder gemonitored?

HW: Jetzt nicht explizit. Implizit natürlich schon. Diese Organe, im Auftrag vom Land, reden mit den Leuten, und wenn sie sehen, da will jemand gerade einen Busch ausreißen, dann gehen sie hin und sagen, dass das ein NP ist und dass man das nicht darf. Wir haben jetzt nicht einen wissenschaftlichen oder strukturierten Ansatz um das Verhalten der Besucher zu erforschen.

JH: Gibt es Vorgaben bzgl. der Handhabung dieser Einflüsse im NP?

HW: Das ist im Besucherlenkungskonzept drinnen; also im Managementplan zur Besucherlenkung. Unsere Leute, die Angestellten, Ranger und Organe, die auf der Fläche, haben sehr wohl Information, wie sie mit den Leuten umzugehen haben, die irgendwas verbotenes machen. Eines habe ich vergessen zu erwähnen. Wir haben drei Mountainbikestrecken, und die Mountainbiker trifft man halt wo anders auch an. Das ist eine Gruppe die relativ schwer zu handeln ist; wo es immer wieder kleinere Probleme gibt. Dann ist halt mal z.B. einer im Wald unterwegs, wo er nicht sein sollte. Es gibt halt Leute die sagen „ich fahre wo ich will.“ Wir haben den Auftrag zu informieren und erst in letzter Konsequenz zur Strafanzeige überzugehen. Das kommt nur ganz, ganz selten vor. Man informiert. Der Besucher, auch wenn er es gewusst hat, sagt dann halt, dass er es nicht gewusst hat, dass man hier nicht radeln darf und „ich drehe jetzt eh wieder um.“

JH: Was wird hinsichtlich Transportmanagement unternommen?

HW: Wir haben ein großes Projekt, das heißt „Access to Mountain“, EU-gefördert, mit Partnern in mehreren Ländern. Wir haben einen eigenen Projektmanager, der sich 3 Jahre lang mit nichts anderem beschäftigt und der hat seit einem Jahr jetzt Verkehrs- und Mobilitätssysteme entwickelt, die jetzt im Juni in Echtbetrieb gehen. Zum ersten Mal. Es gibt verschiedene Elemente drinnen: ein Taxisystem, das über Telefon oder App angefordert werden kann und welches logistisch viel Know-How drinnen hat. D.h. ich ruf nicht ein Taxi an, sondern alle Taxis in der Umgebung bekommen den Ruf und der Nächstgelegene nimmt dann die Fahrt an. Es funktioniert ein bisschen als Sammeltaxi; mehrere Anforderungen mit einer Fahrt werden abgedeckt. Dann

gibt es einen Shuttlebus zum Bahnhof in Liezen. Der wird dann auch anlaufen. Es gibt ein kleines Projekt mit Elektromopeds zum Ausborgen, weniger Transport- sondern mehr Spaß-orientiert. Es ist ein Gesamt-Paket, dass auch in Zukunft ausgebaut wird. Wir haben Fahrten mit einer alten Dampflok, die wir mit Eisenbahnvereinen durchführen. Hier gibt es aber nichts wie die NeusiedlerSeeCard, wo alle Öffis gratis sind. Es gibt eine GseisCard. Die wird's geben und mit der bekommt man Taxis und Shuttle günstiger. Öffis sind bei uns sehr zurückgefahren. Hat also auch keinen Sinn darauf zu setzen. Es gibt zwar eine getaktete Buslinie durchs Gesäuse, aber mit der fängt unser typischer Besucher einfach nichts an. Der nächste Bahnhof ist in Liezen und ewig warten und 5 mal umsteigen für 20 km ist nicht gut. Im Gelände drinnen kommt es häufig vor, dass einer eine Bergüberquerung macht. Mit dem eigene Auto ungut, weil das fährt mir nicht alleine nach. Für diese Situationen haben wir das Taxi. Da bin ich unabhängig und kann von A nach B gehen.

JH: Was sind die positiven Auswirkungen von Tourismus auf Nationalparks?

HW: Wir sind eine sogenannte strukturschwache Region, wir haben in den 50er und 60er einen recht starken Tourismus gehabt, der damals durchaus mit Schladming vergleichbar war. Im Laufe der 60er, 70er ist das dann eingeschlafen, weil man die großen Investitionen nicht mitgemacht hat. Man hat kein Skigebiet entwickelt, keinen neuen Hotels gebaut. Heute haben wir ein bisschen Gewerbe mit viel Forst- und Landwirtschaft und vereinzelt Industrie. Was wir haben im Raum zwischen Wildalpen und Admont ist eine recht naturnahe Landschaft, die in der Größenordnung und Ausprägung relativ einzigartig ist. Im Waldviertel sind solche Bereiche stärker beeinflusst vom Menschen. Wir haben eine andere Topografie hier. Dann ist das schwieriger. Wir sind auch von der Natur her wunderbar ausgestattet und von der Lage besser geschützt als andere NPs. Das ist ein großer Wert für die Region. Damit kann die Region sanften Tourismus machen. D.h. nicht, dass man keine Leute haben will, sondern keinen Massentourismus. Wir fördern natürlich Tourismus, aber wir wollen keine 500-Betten-Hotels oder große Skigebiete. Man kann trotzdem sagen, wir wollen Übernachtungen haben, Leute die etwas Zeit hier verbringen, keinen Tagestourist. Wir wollen eine gewisse Art von Leute, keine Jugendlichen zwischen 17 und 25 die Remidemi und Disco und Kletterpark haben wollen. Sondern wir wollen Familien. Unser Wahlspruch ist „Zeit für Natur.“ Leute die sagen „ich will auf althergebrachte Weise die Landschaft genießen und regionale Küche in sehr hoher Qualität und ich möchte in einem schönen Haus schlafen.“ Das ist die Richtung, in die der Tourismus hier will. Dazu gehört auch Abenteuerurlaub mit Rafting an der Salzach. Palfau ist das Raftingzentrum in Ö. Zwar außerhalb des NP, aber sie haben 30 bis 40000 Rafter pro Jahr. Das ist dann aber ein anderes Publikum. Die sind eher jung und nächtigen auf Campingplätzen.

JH: Was sind aktuelle Trends unter den Besuchern?

HW: Profunde Aussage kann ich keine machen, weil das haben wir nicht untersucht. Die Trends, die wir hier spüren, ohne es jetzt genau zu untersuchen, gehen Richtung höherwertiger Unterkunft, mehr Service, mehr geführte Touren. Ganz stark Richtung regionale Küche. Es ist in Ordnung wenn kein Zertifikat drauf ist, weil man weiß, es kommt vom Bauern und der Wirt verkocht das. Ein großer Trend, und wir sind hier sehr gut. Wir haben Partnerbetriebe, Landwirte, Verarbeiter, Wirte, die ihr eigenes regionales Netzwerk haben. Rafting ist kein neuer Trend. Das geht seit 15 oder 20 Jahren. Unsere Flüsse sind unverbaut im NP, also keine Gefahr für Rafting. Woanders ist das schon der Fall. Wir sind dabei Geocaching zu beobachten. Das haben

wir etwas verschlafen in den letzten Jahren, fangen aber jetzt an uns in die Community einzuschleusen.

JH: Also wie geht der Nationalpark auf neue Trends ein?

HW: Wir entwickeln ein App, schleusen uns in die Geocaching-Community ein. Haben in den nächsten Wochen die erste Veranstaltung zum Thema Geocaching, die von unserem Ranger geführt wird und wo man sich damit vertraut machen kann und lernen kann, wie man mit einem GPS umgeht. Ich glaube wir sind recht innovativ unterwegs, weil wir auch viel mit Fördererprojekten arbeiten und Fördermittel bekommt man nur dann, wenn man was innovatives macht. Alte Sachen weiter zu treiben wird nicht gefördert. Wir haben auch immer neue pädagogische Programme für Kinder und Jugendliche. Wir eröffnen heuer eine „Hoch“-Schule, ein Klassenzimmer am Berg. Kinder gehen nicht in die Klasse sondern behandeln Felsen, Tiere, Pflanzen im Hochgebirge, etwas Schnupperklettern. Eine alte Schutzhütte haben wir dafür adaptiert. Also nicht wirklich Hightech, aber pädagogisch wertvoll. Unser ökologischer Fußabdruck ist innovativ und hat Österreich-weit Furore gemacht. Hat den Klimaschutzpreis bekommen.

JH: Was ist das genau?

HW: Das ist der erste, wilde, begehbare ökologische Fußabdruck. Ca. 70m lang, ein Labyrinth aus Pflanzen gemacht, Buche, Hecke. Das ganze hat eine Fußabdruckform und man bekommt drinnen das Prinzip, was der ökologische Fußabdruck sagen soll, vermittelt. In der Ferse ist eine kleine Bühne für Lesungen oder Theaterstücke.

JH: Wie sehen sie die Zukunft von Carrying Capacity Management in NPs? Sehen Sie eine Notwendigkeit?

HW: Im Sinne von overall, wie viele Besucher hält der NP aus, das wird in den nächsten Jahren sicherlich kein Thema sein. Für sensible Gebiete ist es heute schon ein Thema und dort werden wir weiterarbeiten. Wir haben eine Arbeitsgruppe, die sich mit Besucherlenkung befasst. CC ist bei uns im Winter speziell ein Thema. Nicht nur im NP sondern im ganzen Gebiet. Da spreche ich Schneeschuhgeher und Skitourwanderer an. Das explodiert und wird zum Problem. Weil Viel-Geher suchen sich immer neue Routen und dann gehen sie halt überall hin, wo es lawinentechnisch möglich ist. Die gehen dann in die ganzen Winterrückzugsgebiete der Tiere hinein. Da gibt es auch mit der Jägerschaft und Forstwirten ein Problem. Das ist eine Reaktionskette. Wenn das Wild beunruhigt wird, hat der Jäger keine Freude, es macht einen Schaden im Wald, dann hat der Förster wieder keine Freude, usw.

Diesem großen Thema muss man sich widmen in der nächsten Zeit. Wir im NP haben Besucherlenkungskonzepte, stellen Tafeln auf und haben Informationsfolder, im Internet und auch vor Ort. In der Früh machen wir Spurenlegen. Da haben wir es gut in der Hand im NP, aber rundherum ist einiges zu tun.

JH: Gibt es vielbesuchte Bereiche, wo negative Einflüsse von Besuchern sichtbar werden?

HW: Im Sinne, dass zu viele Leute aus einem Weg einen Trampelpfad machen und die Vegetation zusammentreten, haben wir das nicht.

JH: Soll der Nationalpark verstärkt auf Tourismus setzen?

HW: Lassen wir mal das Wort Tourismus weg und bleiben bei Erlebbarmachen und Bildung. Das ist keine Spitzfindigkeit, sondern eine spezielle Art vom Tourismus, und die werden wir sicher weiter fördern. Diesen Anspruch stellt die Region zurecht. Wir bauen unser Bildungsprogramm aus. Mehr, und bessere Kurse für mehr Leute werden jedes Jahr angeboten. Wir haben ein großes Ziel: Jedes Kind soll ein Mal in der

Schulzeit einen österreichischen NP besuchen. Bis wir das Ziel erreicht haben, wird es wahrscheinlich ein bisschen höher gesteckt. Wir sind aber auf einem guten Weg. Wir wollen viele, viele Kinder hier haben. Wir wollen, wie gesagt, den sanften Tourismus weiter entwickeln, d.h. wir wollen nicht das jeden Tag wer mit dem Auto kommt und dann wieder heimfährt, wir wollen, dass er 5 Tage hier bleibt, dann ist auch schon fast egal ob er mit dem Auto oder Zug kommt. Das gibt eine ganz andere Bilanz als ein 3 Stunden Ausflug. Mehr Nächtigungen und viele Leute, die mit Zeit für die Natur kommen. Es geht nicht nur um den Touristen, sondern auch ums Naturerlebnis. Denn, wenn wir ein gutes Naturerlebnis vermitteln, dann gehen die Leute heim und sagen „Natur ist was schönes und ist es wert bewahrt zu werden.“ Das ist der Hintergrund des gesetzlichen Auftrags der Naturerlebbarkeit. Die Gesellschaft hat was davon, wenn die Leute am Montag wieder erholt in die Arbeit kommen.

JH: Wer wäre für diese Entwicklung verantwortlich? Der NP, die Region, das Land?

HW: Wie schon gesagt. Es ist die Kombination von all diesen Institutionen. Bei uns ist der NP für viele Sachen der Initiator. Wir haben professionelles Material, wir können Sachen in die Wege leiten; und das machen wir auch. In erster Linie für die Weiterentwicklung des Tourismus zuständig ist der Tourismusverband. Dann kommen Leitbetriebe wie der NP, Stift Admont, die größeren Hotels.

JH: Gibt es noch etwas, das Sie hinzufügen möchten?

HW: Nein. Ich danke fürs Gespräch.

JH: Vielen Dank.