

Tourism and community development in parks – the role of spatial planning for integration

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My academic background

- Applied Geography and Environmental Planning Working Group
- Jean Monnet Chair
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- German Association of Geographers – Rural Geographers Working Group



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



Zentrum für nachhaltige
Raumentwicklung in Oldenburg



Agenda

- Tourism and community development in parks
- The role of spatial planning for integration
- Experiences from the Wadden Sea region of Lower Saxony, Germany
- Conclusions

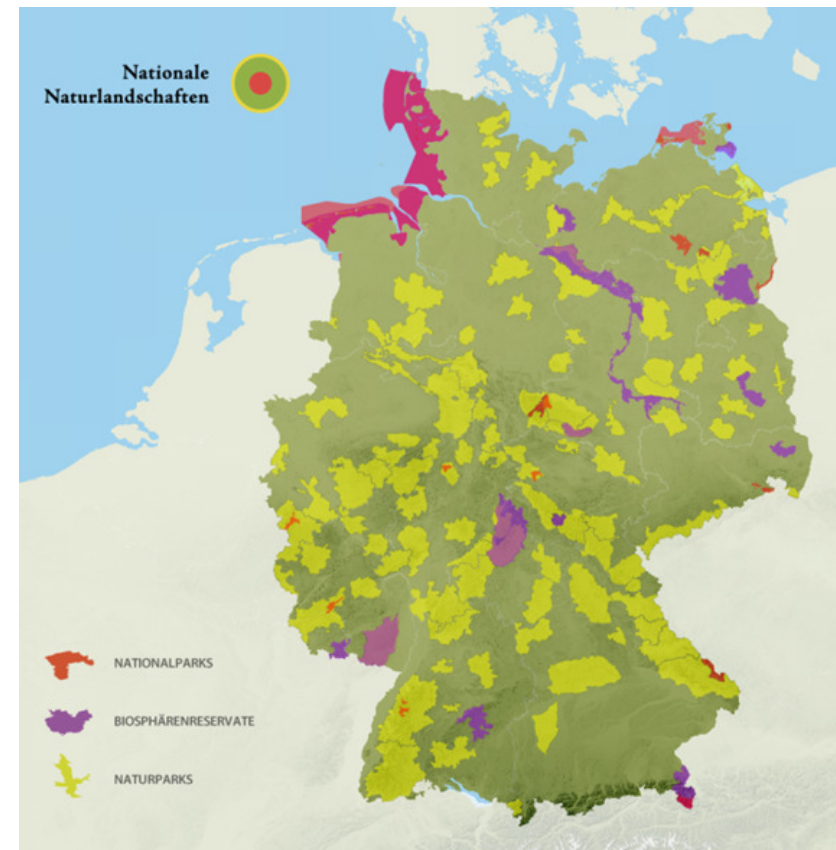


Tourism and community development in parks

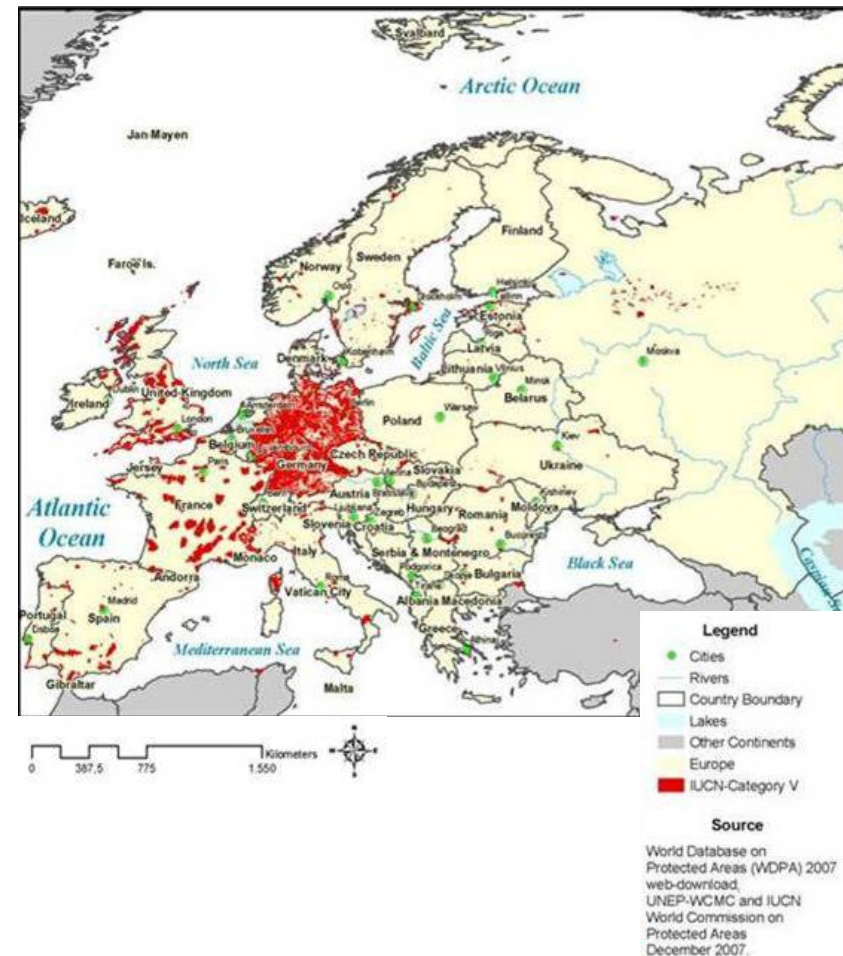
- Parks resp. protected areas are of increasing importance as tourist destinations – worldwide, in Europe, at national level
- Park attractions: natural and cultural assets of landscape, and related activities
- Increasing diversification of the tourist offer



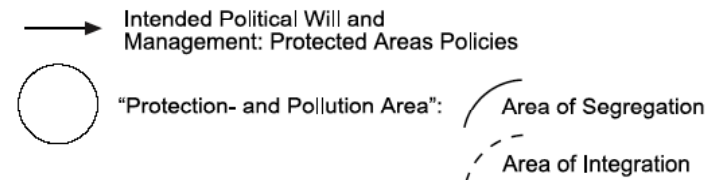
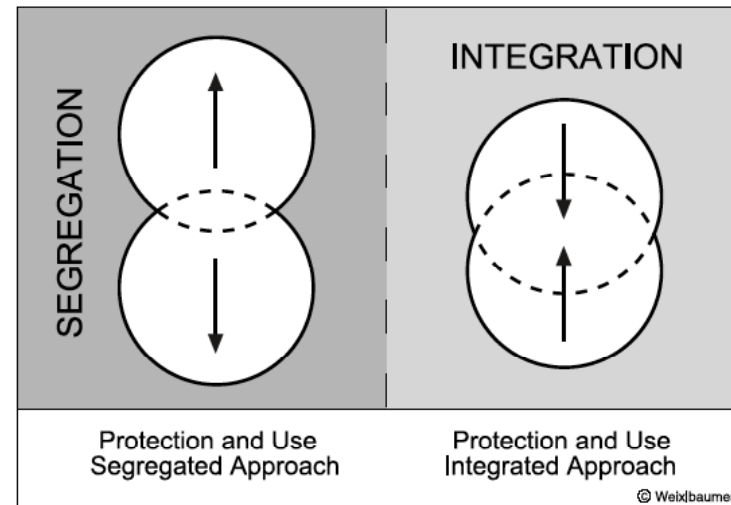
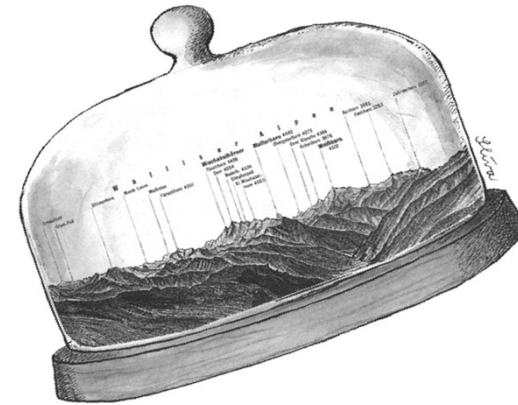
- In Germany wide range of different parks attract visitors
 - National Parks
 - Biosphere Reserves
 - Nature Parks
- Increasing number of visitors (however, difficult to measure)
- Economic impact of park tourism pretty high in cases
- However, also various problems resulting from tourism in parks



- Majority of parks in Germany and Europe are IUCN category V: „Protected landscapes/seascapes“
- Focus of these parks on interaction between man and nature: „Multifunctional or working landscapes“
- Thus many parks are both inhabited and visited



- Observations relate to underlying conceptual discourse (Weixlbaumer 2005)
- Shift of paradigm versus co-existence of competing paradigms (Weichhart 2008)
- In any case increasing focus on interrelations between parks and local communities
- Model of cheese cover thereby constantly losing its relevance



- Furthermore, parks are now even regarded as „future labs“ of sustainable development (Schneidewind 2015, in print)
- Particular emphasis on UNESCO biosphere reserves and similar types, but also national parks
- Community development and tourism of major importance for successful implementation of parks

„As practical experiences from many biosphere reserves show, these have been able to mobilize the touristic, the cultural and the ecological capital of regions equally at the same time (....) This has been beneficial both for conservation and development (....) Thereby biosphere reserves provide a valuable contribution to safeguarding the life of local communities.“
(Erdmann & Niedeggen 2007)



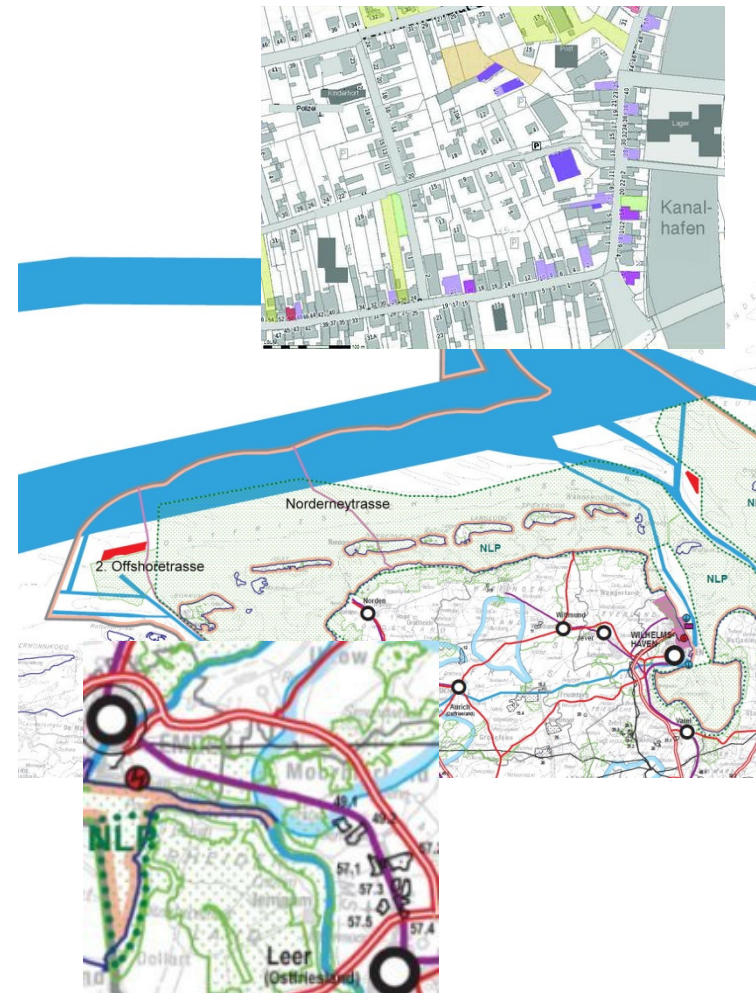
- Involvement of various actors and stakeholders to be considered
- Potential of competing if not conflicting interests
- Thus, need for appropriate means of management and steering
- Spatial planning provides specific potential for integration of actors and interests



The role of spatial planning for integration

- Generally speaking, planning is the coordination of practices and policies affecting spatial organization
- As such it looks at methods and approaches to influence distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales
- Furthermore planning is a process with decisions taken at various levels from analysis of the case to the final plan
- Form of planning largely diverges and co-evolves with societies and their governance systems

- Multiple dimensions of planning:
 - Territorial levels:
National, regional
and local
 - Subjects of planning:
Land use planning
and regional
development
planning
 - Types of instruments:
Formal and informal



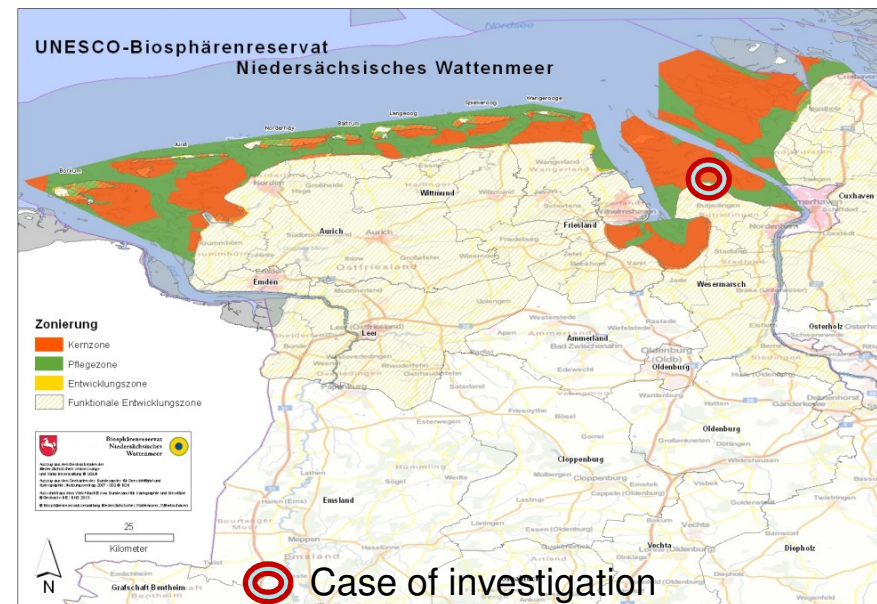
- Role of spatial planning for park development of particular interest – and often contested
- How can spatial planning contribute to the integration of tourism and community development in parks?
- Selected case from Wadden Sea region of Lower Saxony for illustration

Integrative qualities associated with spatial planning:

- Different territorial levels
- Holistic view regarding multitude of land-uses
- Consideration of various actors and stakeholders involved
- Combination of multiple instruments
- Differentiated time frame

Experiences from the Wadden Sea region of Lower Saxony, Germany

- Second largest park system in Germany: 3,458 km²
 - National Park 1986
 - Biosphere Reserve 1992
 - World Natural Heritage Site 2009
- Main target: protection of Wadden Sea region
- Major tourist destination of Germany (11,8 mio. overnight stays)



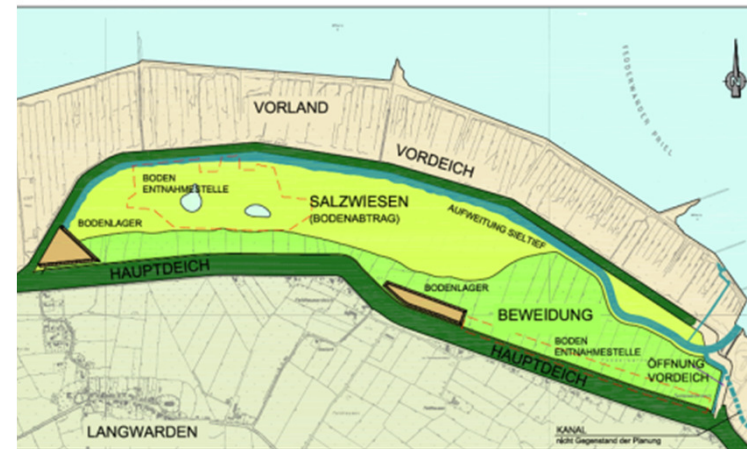
- Major role of spatial planning for implementation of park system
- Layout of internal zoning system based on spatial planning, too
- Spatial planning also concerned with tourism and community development

Structure of zoning system:

- Core zone: strictly reserved for nature conservation
- Buffer zone: limited access for visitors
- Recreation zone: priority for recreation and tourism
- Functional development zone: test-bed for sustainable regional development

- Case of investigation: Project of „Langwarder Groden“
- Since 2010 idea for re-opening of a 130 ha polder created in 1930 to allow periodical flooding
- Background: means of compensation according to conservation law
- At first massive protest among local population and stakeholders against intended project

LANGWARDER GRODEN
Alternative Förderverein vom 24.02.2012



- Spatial planning challenged with need to address interests of local community and tourism in the region
- Formal planning process accompanied by informal consultation
- Target: integration of local people's views with official plans
- Since 2012 realization of project in several steps



- Successful opening of „Langwarder Groden“ to the public in 2015
- Success of project owed to several synergies:
 - Diversification of tourism offer
 - Additional income opportunities for tourism and farmers
 - Recreational potential for local population
 - Enrichment of the landscape and ecological benefits
 - Building positive image of community



Conclusions

- Decisive role of spatial planning for implementation of protected areas - including park system in Wadden Sea region of Lower Saxony
- Park planning contested by complexity of land-uses and stakeholders involved such as in tourism and community development
- Thereby communication of planning gains major importance: exchange of ideas on same eye level
- Combination of formal and informal instruments: problems of legitimacy and liability
- In result park planning takes role of mediator and enabler rather than executer

- Several prerequisites of relevance:
 - Provision of additional personal and financial resources
 - Extension of time frame
 - Willingness of stakeholders to participate
 - Openness of planners regarding outcome of communication process
- Equally above factors can become obstacles for successful realization of plans
- However, as experiences show participatory planning is without alternatives
- Successful development of dynamic parks highly depends on acceptance among local tourism businesses and communities at large

Thank you very much!
Tussen tack!
Vielen Dank!

Further information under:
www.uni-oldenburg.de/geo/

