BARRIERS TO NATURE CONSERVATION IN GERMANY: A MODEL EXPLAINING OPPOSITION TO PROTECTED AREAS

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Abstract

Germany is particularly plagued in its nature conservation strategies by widespread and persistent opposition to the designation and management of protected areas through local resistance. This opposition is continuing, despite Germany’s commitment to international and European mandates to enhance biodiversity within its borders. This paper seeks to explain why this opposition is so coherent and so protracted with reference to research into the attitudes of residents, landowners and managers on both sides of the debate. The research involved the use of grounded theory approaches, sensitive interactive interviewing, and the gradual application of social psychological theories of social identity and reactance. The evidence is strong that there are powerful emotional and cultural drivers that divide nature conservationists and local landusers and residents into two camps, maintained by stereotyping and group bonding. Based on these findings, practical and constructive ways are proposed to reconcile these differing perceptions.

Introduction

The designation and subsequent management of protected areas are statutory and international obligations for nation states. In Europe, a legacy of historical legislation for wildlife conservation, national parks, biosphere reserves and protected landscapes is supported by new obligations under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity ¹, and the Habitats Directive of the European Union ². The main strategy for implementing nature conservation is the establishment and appropriate management of protected areas (“in-situ conservation”). It is also considered desirable to extend the basis of protection to adjacent and connected areas. This approach incorporates the sympathetic actions of people to avoid continuing damage to species and ecosystems (SRU, 2000: 29). According to the IUCN (The World Conservation Union), protected areas support the well-being of societies, through maintaining those essential ecological processes that depend on natural ecosystems, preserving the diversity of species and the genetic variation within them, safeguarding habitats critical for the sustainable use of species, securing landscapes and wildlife that enrich human experience through their beauty and providing opportunities for community development, scientific research, education, training, recreation, tourism, and mitigation of the forces of natural hazards’ (McNeely, 1995: 2).

In Germany, the drive to protect potentially threatened areas is so strong that inadequate attention is paid to the sensitivities and traditions of local landusers and residents. This lack of empathy on the part of the German nature conservation authorities has led to widespread resistance to protected areas management and a strong sense of solidarity in opposition. This paper examines the social-psychological processes at work, and indicates possible ways forward towards possible reconciliation.

Contradictions in German nature conservation

The current picture of nature conservation and protected area establishment and management in Germany is characterized by twin contradictions. One is that the German Government appreciates the widely accepted goals of nature conservation and protected areas in the first paragraph in its Federal Nature Conservation Act (Bundesnaturschutzgesetz § 1 Abs. 1). This Act rests on a fundamentalist position...
regarding the protection of nature (SRU, 2000: 28). In support of this objective, the German Council of Environmental Advisors bemoans the continuing damage to whole ecosystems, resulting in the widespread loss of natural and semi-natural habitats and species (ibid: 28). Yet a noted feature of German nature conservation policy lies in the inability to reverse these disappointing outcomes (Fremuth, 1995: 48; Panek, 1999: 268; SRU, 2000).

The complementary contradiction is that when the Länder (Federal states), constitutionally responsible for the establishment of protected areas, seek to implement nature conservation regulations they face considerable opposition from the people living in and around the areas affected. The German Government points out that ‘in the past, there was never a less disputed subject in society than nature conservation. Everyone, from ecologists to the Conservative camp of politics, shared the view that it made sense to protect nature for its own sake. These days, rather than being a point of agreement, nature conservation is riddled with conflict. The debates about the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea (Schleswig Holsteinisches Wattenmeer) National Park and the Lower Oder Valley (Unteres Odertal) National Park dominate entire election campaigns. What is new today is that conflicts over National Parks involve extensive polarisation’ (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety 1999:12).

The reasons for this continuous conflict can partly be explained through social-psychological perspectives, hence the purpose of this article.

This kind of opposition isn’t a particular German phenomenon. ‘Open protests and rallies against protected areas, attacks on park guards, poisoning of animals, deliberate burning of forests have become common in many countries’ (Pretty & Pimbert, 1995, 7). McNeely (1995: 28) indicates that the most important general problems protected areas face are ‘weak national constituency, conflicts with local people, conflicts with other government agencies, insufficient management, and insecure and insufficient funding’. Most of these dilemmas can be found in Germany, as this quote about the German experience concerning the status of national biodiversity planning shows:

There were several obstacles or challenges in the strategy process, including the lack of adequate personnel, potential problems concerning the willingness of the local government (Länder) to carry out nature conservation efforts, and insufficient financial resources (Miller & Lanou, 1995, 96).

Weak national constituency

The general policy framework for nature conservation policy has changed in recent years. There has been a growing tendency to neglect nature conservation in order to focus on a range of social and economic problems such as unemployment. Given this background, nature conservation is losing political status to be replaced by a sense of international obligation and symbolic significance (Möller, 1995: 28; Panek, 1999, 266).

The low political weighting given by politicians over the implementation of nature conservation policy is a matter of concern to the German conservation lobby:

Nature conservation policy is an unattractive field for politicians. Nature conservation doesn’t enjoy the advocacy of interests with considerable political and societal clout. This is wholly in contrast to the positional power of the lobbies in other areas of society and economy. Political engagement over nature conservation is not at all capable of winning a majority and is not regarded as relevant for the maintenance of power (SRU, 1996: 53).

Problems of protected areas in Germany

Conflicts with other government agencies

In Germany the commentary by McNeely (1995: 3) applies: ‘the agencies responsible for protected areas
tend to be relatively weak in the government structure, leaving them vulnerable to policy conflicts and budgets cuts.

The demarcated sectoral structure of political institutions makes the cross-policy handling of nature conservation issues much more difficult to ensure. The strong influence of other political sectors and the so-called ‘resort egoisms’ reduce the room for manoeuvre for nature conservation policy. This inadequacy of policy cohesion is also noticeable in the handling of land use planning. The result is a patchwork of inconsistent decisions that adversely affect the integrity of the landscape (SRU, 1996: 59; Panek, 1999: 268).

Inadequate management

This inadequacy is especially noticeable in nature reserves and national parks, the two strictest categories of protected areas from a nature conservation viewpoint. These two designations are aimed at little or no human intervention, so as to favour the conservation of the greatest possible variety of indigenous plants and animals. A review of existing and potential national parks in Germany has shown that national parks continue to be exploited, making a mockery of their purported classification (FÖNAD & BfN, 1997: 257). For nature conservation zones a further review (Haarmann & Pretscher, 1988) has shown that about 20 per cent of them are in a bad ecological state, with the majority moderately impaired. About 80 per cent of such reserves showed distinctly adverse traces of human intervention (Haarmann & Pretscher, 1988).

Some conservation managers misread these circumstances. They ‘have considered their challenges to be primarily ecological rather than social, economic, and political; they have thus considered their management problems in a narrow ecological sense rather than in terms involving adjacent areas, local people, and other sectors’ (McNeely, 1995: 4).

Insecure and insufficient funding

The funding of protected areas is regarded as insufficient to ensure the integrity of nature conservation measures (Panek, 1999: 268). For German nature parks the funding for management is not only low. It is also very unstable and decreasing, so that comprehensive and prolonged intervention and protection, so essential for reliable nature conservation, is impossible (BTE, 1993: 27; SRU, 1996: 59). The national park administrations do not even have enough money to meet their statutory obligations (FÖNAD & BfN, 1997: 246).

Conflicts with local people

Opposition to protected areas in Germany comes primarily from local social and political interests intent on safeguarding what they regard as their traditions and their liberties. Opposition is aimed both at the processes of designation, and also of subsequent proposals for conservation management of land and natural resources. Opposition is expressed by local and regional authorities in particular by some mayors and by politicians, sometimes representing parties opposing the local or regional government, but sometimes even representing the governing party. Conflict is also evident amongst forest administrators, farmers and via active citizens’ groups. The latter are mostly organized in local, regional or national citizen initiatives, e.g. in the ‘Federal Association of Persons Concerned by National Parks’/‘Bundesverband der Nationalparkbetroffenen’, a union of about 40 different regional associations. Opposition to protected areas is also manifested in other ways, from public demonstrations, to boycotts of public meetings seeking the establishment of such areas. Persistent protest against protected areas can also take on violent forms: in some protected areas signboards were stolen or destroyed, barriers were pulled away, and where prohibitions laid down in individual regulations for protected zones were deliberately disregarded (for more detailed overviews see Stoll, 1999; Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a).

We shall see that this opposition is not, in itself, a function of misplaced and misapplied management based on a weak mandate. It is actually coherent in its own right. Even if management measures were to be strengthened, the reasons for the opposition need to be understood before it can be constructively incorporated in future management practice. This is the purpose of the model introduced below.

Methodology

Social psychologists have recently begun to address the issues associated with the promotion of nature conservation strategies. Consequently there are still relatively few specific theories to apply (see Stoll, 1999; Schenk, 2000; Hofinger, 2001). Stern & Oskamp (1991: 1059) state—referring to conservation of land and biological resources—there appears to be
almost no psychological literature on them. Some areas of analysis that have been looked at by social psychologists that could be used here include the different perceptions of user groups and managers (see Pitt & Zube, 1991), the underlying causes of social dilemmas (see van Vugt et al., 1996; Dawes & Messick, 2000) or literature and research on conflicts about siting industrial plants or solving long existing group conflicts through mediating such conflicts (see Fietkau & Weidner, 1998; Zillessen, 1998).

Up to now the analysis of opposition to nature conservation strategies has focused on conflicts due to overlapping or competing uses of resources. This is not the 'core' issue in Germany (see Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety 1999: 12). It also usually starts from an assumption that opposition is based on incomplete knowledge or concern for the environmental benefits associated with natural areas designation. Consequently, solutions tend to rely on strategies like financial incentives or environmental education. Such approaches have not proved to be very successful (Gardner & Stern, 1996, 5). This conclusion is reinforced by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU 2000: 4–5) which also calls for a stronger recognition and integration of social scientific knowledge for the solution of the problems in this field (ibid., 413).

The analysis set out below suggests that such approaches should be revised so as to incorporate a new type of measures. Many disputes over nature conservation issues are rooted in social conditions and attitudes shaped by social networks. Accordingly, protected area policy has to be much more sensitive to the 'human factor' in designing planning and management procedures (see, for example, Wells & Brandon, 1992; Pretty & Pimbert, 1995).

From a methodological point of view the study reported on here was based not so much on hypotheses tested from established theory, as on the exploration of a variety of theoretical approaches based on the application of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We shall see below that social-psychological findings are relevant for this analysis, in particular, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Theory of Psychological Reactance (Brehm, 1966). Both theories have already been applied to environmental issues (e.g. Bonaiuto, Breakwell & Cano, 1996 for the Social Identity Theory, and Hübner, 1998 and Schenk, 2000 for the Theory of Psychological Reactance). These theoretical approaches became incorporated as the field work evolved. This integration of methodology and theory is an important feature of the research design adopted in this study. It led to the development of a model that seeks to explain the causes of opposition to the designation and management of protected areas.

Grounded Theory methodology is 'now among the most influential and widely used modes of carrying out qualitative research' (Strauss & Corbin, 1997, vii). 'Grounded theory is a reverse of the empirical approach. Rather than developing and testing hypotheses from theory, one relies on the data to develop theory, a bottom up, inductive approach' (Price, 1999: 4). Grounded theory was employed in order to generate unexpected insights as to underlying motivations based on interview evidence and associate data. The intention was to explore such meanings, so the emphasis lay on conceptualization rather than on description or measurement.

Fifty-nine problem-centred interviews (Witzel, 1989) were conducted in seven different protected areas in Germany between the summer 1995 and winter 1997. In contrast to the narrative interview, the problem centred interview follows guidelines in asking open-ended questions (see Table 1). The order of the questions depends on the flow of the interviewee's answers. This procedure makes it possible for the interviewee to speak authentically and in a relaxed manner, so that the salient issues are highlighted and significant connections to other issues are raised and explored.

The actual interviewees were selected from various interests involved in the conflicts already outlined. Some worked for authorities responsible for the establishment of a protected area and/or engaged in nature conservation. Others were planners, representatives of non-governmental organizations, scientists, stakeholders (e.g. land users), as well as residents who were directly affected by nature conservation measures (for a detailed description of the sample see Stoll, 1999, 51f). 27 interviews were held with residents and stakeholders, and the 32 with 'experts' in the sense of administrators, planners, rangers or scientists.

Interesting questions raised by this approach concerned the different social identities (see below) of the various groups of interviewees involved. One feature included the potential hazards of qualitative research methods in this kind of 'person-centred' approach to interviewing. For example, are the participants fully representative of their group membership? Are their responses influenced by the interview, and might these aspects differ across groups? For instance, one might expect that a 'land user' would have a very different identity than an...
authority responsible for the establishment of a protected area. Were these differences reflected in the interviews? There were no contradictions between or within groups based purely on the interview material. In addition, the author conducted an extended content analysis of German national and local journal articles. These were used to reinforce the evidence of the character and strength of underlying motivations. Furthermore, participant observation was also involved through living in the protected areas, particularly in one location. This involved taking part in different events connected with the designation process. Examples included attending consultation procedures or being in the field with the park rangers as they went about their business.

Participants showed a huge willingness and ability to reflect and criticise themselves concerning their handling of the brewing conflicts in protected areas. Self-criticism included the admission by most interviewees that it would have been better to involve the residents and land users earlier in the designation process, or that they blamed other nature conservationists for their moralising and/or arrogant behaviour, notably towards farmers. There were a few examples when residents blamed other local people for their inflexible attitude and behaviour towards managers and the concept of protection. Even some of the farmers admitted that they profit very much from some nature conservation measures and privately regarded the vehemence of opposition as being too great. A number of interviewees responded to the invitation to discuss the findings of the discussions. This was designed to ensure that no misinterpretation took place. In general, there was a gratifying coherence between the statements of the different groups involved.

The sample of interviewees evolved according to the method of ‘Theoretical Sampling’. This meant interviewing a number of persons selected in advance, and then determining the selection of further interviewees on the basis of the evidence being collected. Glaser and Strauss regard this as a strategy of gradually ‘deciding about selection and composition of empirical material (…) in the process of gathering and evaluating data’ (Flick, 1995: 81). It is directed by the question: “What empirical data will be suitable to advance the development of theory?” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The decisive criterion for integrating statements of interviewees into the analysis was the relevance of additional information for providing a more comprehensive understanding of underlying motivations to resistance and opposition (Flick,

### Table 1

Selected questions of the interview guidelines used in this research project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used for the local people</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel about the planned designation of this protected area?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What positive/negative aspects do you believe will be associated with designation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you know the opinions of other people living around here about these proposals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do they express their acceptance/opposition of the protected area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What, in your opinion, are the causes for this acceptance/opposition/ignorance towards the proposed designation of the protected area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should be done to decrease the opposition to, to increase the acceptance of, and to improve the interest in the protected area?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used for the “experts”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do the inhabitants of this protected area react towards new regulations connected with it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What problems may result from the implementation of strict nature conservation measures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do local decision makers react towards the new regulations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which proposed measures are supported by the local people and which are declined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which are the different causes of the opposition for the different actors concerned?</td>
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<td>In what ways is the proposed conservation strategy being implemented?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have social and economic conditions been considered in the implementation of the conservation strategy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much do the local people know about the conservation goals in their protected area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which communication structures are in place?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do any mechanisms exist to reduce or eliminate the conflicts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How far could the support of sustainable regional development (e.g. ecotourism) contribute to greater acceptance for protected areas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What legal, political and institutional developments might be introduced to further the cause of nature conservation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stoll, 1999: 52
No further interviews were conducted when each category of analysis was ‘theoretically saturated,’ i.e. when no further data were found that could have facilitated further elaboration of qualities of perspectives and relevant social meanings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Subsequently 19 expert-interviews were conducted with nature conservation agency officials in Germany (12), Austria (2), the UK (3) and with two senior managers representing multi-national organisations. The interviews were designed to discover whether or not the strength of opposition still holds today. Furthermore, the interviews were used to assess the persistence of a “strong conservationist” perspective amongst German nature conservation agencies in the teeth of powerful opposition. This is particularly interesting in view of guidance from the European Commission that more participatory management plans for protected areas should be encouraged (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001b).

All interviews were recorded and the tapes transcribed, with the transcribed passages being labelled with codes (see Table 2). Coding assigns categories to as many interview passages as possible as empirical evidence of relevant themes of further analysis in each phase of the project. Those categories are not fixed, but represent reliable empirical constellations. Codes can be subdivided into subcodes for particular profiles. Initially, coding is performed as creatively as possible, not caring for any direct theoretical relevance, but emphasizing proximity to the subject (inductive elements). Even at this early stage, theoretical considerations cannot always be avoided. One example was that knowledge about a possible inadequate involvement of people in the designation process as a cause of opposition was too obvious to ignore. Therefore the code ‘lack of participation’ was inferred as a potential cause of opposition by introducing a particular question in the interview guideline (deductive elements). The process of developing codes through an ‘oscillation’ between, on the one hand, inductively gaining them from data material (inspiration) and, on the other hand, deriving them from theoretical considerations (orientation by the original question) proved to be very fruitful (see Geissel, 1999). The following description of coding categories illustrates the approach used (see Stoll, 1999, 56f, summarized):

- The principal motivation and attitudinal linkages derived from the empirical data were elaborated further by exploring their underlying meanings, and social contexts. The coding process was driven mainly by the guideline showed in Table 1.

### Table 2

Summary of coding strategy following interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Subcode</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features of opposition to protected areas</td>
<td>verbal expression (spoken or written)</td>
<td>written petitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ignorance of protected area rules</td>
<td>demonstrations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vandalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of opposition to protected areas</td>
<td>real or expected restrictions</td>
<td>impression of “top-down” nature conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lack of participation by local people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fear of change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stereotypes and prejudices towards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nature conservationists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political circumstances/framework conditions</td>
<td>weak national constituency</td>
<td>Federal principle in German nature conservation policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenges to local economic livelihoods</td>
<td>insufficient and insecure staff availability and financial funding for protected areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>economic conditions</td>
<td>conflicts with other government agencies, mainly agriculture and forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>general neglect of nature conservation interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for action</td>
<td>existing strategies</td>
<td>environmental education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proposals for new strategies</td>
<td>sustainable regional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participatory strategies like round tables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of similarities and differences were denoted and combined into organized structures. In this way, a comparison of individual interviews yielded inter-individual commonalities. Comparability was ensured by conducting the interviews according to these guidelines, supported by the other observational data (see Stoll, 1999). Existing written reports about other protected areas were also integrated into the process of category formation. Finally, the connected categories were linked to theories of social sciences. Thus, and the model described below was developed.

**Results and Theory**

Evidence gained by this research project indicates that deeply rooted social-psychological processes are at work in shaping attitudes and behaviour towards protected area management in Germany. Even when appropriate incentive schemes are on offer, there is still resistance, and, at times, increased resentment against the nature conservation mission. Clearly it is vital to understand why this view is so entrenched and so widely held. This is the purpose of the model that follows.

*Interpreting a model of opposition to protected area designation and management from a social psychological perspective*

The model discussed in Figure 1 combines key social psychological variables which interact with each other to influence and to result in opposition to the designation and management of protected areas. What follows describes the single variables and how they interact. That includes their scientific theoretical and empirical basis.

The major drivers that lead to opposition to protected areas are group processes encouraging social identity together with communication and perception barriers which mutually cause and reinforce each other. These core factors of the model are also influenced by emotional and cultural drivers.

The theoretical underpinning of the model is based on ‘plausibility’ and ‘common sense’. This means it is more than a hypothetical model but less than a completely empirically proved model (Stoll, 1999: 165). Some interactions have already been carefully researched and investigated in the literature as e.g. the interaction between values and perceptions (Lantermann & Döring-Seipel, 1990; Ernst, Bayen & Spada: 108: 116ff, 125; Lantermann et al., 1992: 131ff). Others need more detailed analysis, such as the influence of group process, e.g. the role of social identity on the acceptance of protected areas (Stoll, 1999, 165).

The interactions between the model components can broadly be described as follows. Emotional drivers such as the impression of facing restrictions on day to day decisions due to nature conservation regulations, and cultural drivers, such as the challenge to traditional values and habits, influence the perception and communication of those involved in and affected by the protected areas. All this raises the perception and communication barriers, and causes the behaviour of local land users and residents to be shaped in such a manner as to distort attitudes towards nature conservationists. There are also interactions between both of these drivers (cultural and emotional) in that way on the removal of liberty, for example, reinforces a feeling of victimization and lack of respect for traditional values and practices. Indeed it is this reinforcement of emotion that strengthens a sense of group identity, further aggravates stereotyping, and increases a sense of aggrieved solidarity.
The interaction between the model components 'communication and perception barriers' on the one hand, and 'group processes encouraging social identity' on the other is particularly strong and reinforcing. The differing social perceptions of involved actors, shaped by the particular value systems ('cultural drivers') of the groups they belong to leads to differences in particular actor perspectives. This process operates in such a manner as to inhibit any scope for supportive ways of communication and interaction between the involved groups. These problems in communication and perception, which are very much group related, cause further negative emotional experiences for both agency staff and managers on the one hand, and local interest groups on the other. Interaction can also operate between cultural drivers and group processes encouraging social identity. This is because traditional values and accustomed ways of life are — especially in rural areas — primarily shared with, and strongly influenced by, the particular social group to which an individual belongs.

**Emotional drivers**

There are many emotional drivers which lead to negative perceptions and experiences regarding nature conservation. Nature conservation officials also experience emotional underpinning to their management behaviour which inflame local opposition. One example is the fear of losing too much of the core conservation mission when confronted with the demand to include local interests earlier in the designation process than is the case at the moment (see Stoll-Kleemann, 2001b).

Perceptions of nature conservation as authoritarian and threatening. The following quotes show how far proposed nature conservation regulations associated with designation are perceived as restricting personal rights:

Already the smallest restriction of habits causes aggression; the(se) people here are stubborn (Interviewee 32, resident about other citizens in a protected area).

I am sure that for many people here this is simply too much. They just see another law, another regulation. There are so many regulations already, people are lost among them. They only understand this protected area as another prohibition (...) that could restrict their personal freedom. It does not actually have to be a restriction. The fact that it could be one is already enough (Interviewee 5, employee working in the administration of a protected area).

In this context, Brehm's Theory of Psychological Reactance provides a useful explanation for this phenomenon (Hübner, 1998: 64f; Stoll, 1999: 116f; Schenk, 2000: 22f; Stoll 2000: 11). This states that reactance arises when personal rights to decide and act are threatened, reduced, or eliminated—for example via regulations, prohibitions and controls (Brehm, 1966). This is restricted to behaviours that the person itself—that means of its subjective perspective—perceives as threatened. In protected areas, people feel restricted in a lot different ways such as their individual preferences (e.g. in their leisure activities, like camping or fishing), in their way of using land (agriculture, forestry, or hunting), and in their freedom of pursuing their professional activities without co-ordinating with conservationists (examples see below). Such a situation provokes reactance and arouses efforts to regain lost rights, e.g. in form of the opposition described above (Stoll, 1999; Schenk, 2000). Brehm defines the following conditions for the emergence and strengthening of reactance:

1. the expectation of free behaviour, that means a person believes that he/she is able to decide deliberately between given alternatives
2. the strength of threat
3. the importance of the threatened free behaviours
4. the implications a threat may have for further freedoms of choice.

The following quotes make clear that misguided expectations amongst citizens in the New Länder (Federal States of the former East Germany) towards emerging democracy have led to many disappointments. These grievances become transferred into opposition to nature conservation measures.

People here believe that, following reunification with its new democratic system, they will have total freedom. (...) Now there are continuing limitations. This suggests that their expectations were wrong (Interviewee 1, head of the rangers of a protected area).

The people think they now have a jester's licence following reunification. This is a misinterpreted liberty (Interviewee 28, resident).

Here two strands of reactance combine. On the one hand the importance of freedom is very high for most residents in the protected areas in the former GDR because of their history of repression up to 1989. So they are extremely sensitive towards further restrictions. On the other hand there is an
assumption that restrictions would be removed in the brave new world. Furthermore, in some existing nature conservation areas nobody bothered about nature conservation regulations in the past, because nature conservation was not a major political issue for the communists. Therefore, some believe that they now have even more scope for free choice. Here is the view of a local mayor:

You have to point out one thing: precisely at the time when 'instant coffee' arrived (that means after the reunification of West and East Germany) a host of protection measures started to take place. They disturbed and restricted us in important planning measures and in constructing new buildings for public and private usage. (...) The construction law is sufficient to tell us how to handle the growth of our community. Therefore I don't want the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation to interfere in these matters (A local mayor of a community in a protected area in one of the new Länder of Germany in a public TV discussion).

Lack of inclusive and meaningful participation in nature conservation management

The view of the residents. In Germany a widespread lack of participation during the process of planning and implementing of nature conservation measures is an important factor that fuels opposition. This can be seen in a close connection to the Theory of Psychological Reactance because if decisions are taken without the involvement of affected citizens reactance can occur (Stoll, 1999; Stoll, 2000; Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a). The following quote is typical of how residents feel about not being involved in the designation process: “They just impose this nature park on us” (Interviewee 33, resident in a protected area).

In nature conservation policy as laid down in German law, the formal procedures for consulting citizens contain obvious weaknesses. Some stakeholders are allowed to make a petition in a written form. But there is no continuous dialogue, no ‘real’ communication between the involved citizens, in which different interests and points of view may be understood and accommodated, developed and resolved, in face to face discussions (Fietkau & Weidner, 1998, 19f). The biggest weakness is that the point where participation is invited is far too late. The acceptance of nature conservation measures is also dependent on whether the decision-making procedure is perceived to be fair or unfair (Stoll, 1999; Stoll, 2000; Stoll-Kleemann 2001a). Findings from the psychological social dilemma research⁵ confirm this evidence in the field of water conservation. These findings suggest that people are more willing to support authorities when these authorities use fair decision-making procedures (Tyler & Degoey, 1995: 482).

One German nature conservationist situated in one of the new federal states describes this problem as follows:

“It would have been much better to involve people from the beginning. A lot of people are offended that nobody has asked them. This is a fact. The process passed them by. The whole project was a surprise attack in just the way the former SED dictatorship would have done it. But that is the same for all protected areas, for the whole National Park Programme of the former East Germany, if you look at it truthfully. The basic principles of a young, new, growing democracy weren’t considered. It was simply announced: ‘we are doing a good thing for the people.’ (...) The nature conservationists threw their weight around here. No one was in control and they grabbed the reins (...)’” (Interviewee 1, head of the rangers of one protected area).

Why do those responsible for the designation of protected areas refuse to involve local interests, and how do they respond to seemingly intractable opposition? Arising from interviews with senior officials from a number of these agencies as outlined in the methodology section, emotional aspects play an important role (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001b).

The view of the conservationists. As already mentioned, nature protection remains a politically weak component of German policy. Officials feel let down by national and regional politicians who always appear to sacrifice protection for economic gain, job creation or retention, and electoral advantage. Furthermore, they believe that if participation is encouraged, this would make it even more difficult to ensure adequate ecological and landscape protection. One senior director noted:

“This talk of participation is very dangerous. Nowadays the enemies of nature conservation want to be involved—foresters, hunters and anglers. Nobody can seriously want that! Furthermore, my officials do not wish to talk to such people.”

Agency officials feel a strong sense of common identity over seeking to protect nature against the forces of local opposition. Local resistance strengthens this resolve to retain current ‘top down’ management approaches precisely because they have so few successes. One interviewee said: ‘If we seek to implement a national park management plan, we do so on an ecological and species basis. Try to gain acceptance beforehand and nothing will be achieved.’
The outcome of this ‘identity reinforcement’ is that nature conservation planners choose to avoid contacting local landowners. Again to quote a senior manager:

My employees think participation is a waste of time. They claim that the existing laws are being correctly followed. They think the way to remain strong is to pursue these laws and that to introduce participation is to invite compromise. They have already had too many unsatisfactory experiences when they tried to involve local people. Nature conservation was always the loser.

Once again, the science and management of nature conservation are set within a political framework of inadequate powers and political dispute. Nature conservation science becomes legitimised as a protection against political weakness and administrative ambivalence.

Cultural drivers: challenging traditional values

Pitt & Zube (1991, 1015) note that those responsible for nature conservation face two main difficulties regarding environmental value conflicts. Firstly the scope of values that must be considered has expanded significantly in recent times; and secondly the personal and even the professional value orientations of conservation managers ‘are now more likely to conflict of those individuals and groups using the environment.’ In Germany, the two main antagonistic groups involved in these conflicts have very different values systems:

‘The people here in and around the protected area feel disturbed through it and they love their common way of life. They just don’t want to change this usual way of life’ (Interviewee 25, resident about other residents).

Conservationists often insufficiently take into account the extent to which the designation of a protected area interferes with customary behaviours of the local population, and especially, how far that apparent imposition affects their values. Modifications of familiar landscapes and different ways of land use strengthen the dislike of protected areas (Stoll, 1999). If, for instance, the ‘wilderness concept’ means that cultivated forests are to be allowed to evolve into near-nature (virgin) forests without human interference, the local population, which has long been used to exploit and cultivate its forests, perceives such areas left to themselves as ‘untidy’ and contradicting their traditional landscape values (ibid). Similarly, part of the resistance to compensatory payments lies in a socially shared viewpoint amongst rural landusers than being paid for apparently doing nothing, namely by maintaining the existing mix of habitats and species, is regarded as morally wrong and contrary to a responsible work ethic. Furthermore, land which seems to be ‘neglected’ in favour of wildlife survival can be regarded as a sign of lazy and disinterested farming.

Resistance to proposed changes in land use practices long held dear can be very strong. Farmers and foresters are not sympathetic to conservation law and practice that seek the status quo in nature. They appreciate traditional ways and regard them as a sign of responsible management and a manifestation of best practice through shared management norms.

Group processes encouraging social identity

Group membership itself is an important explanation for the conflicts in the German protected areas (Stoll, 1999; Stoll, 2000; Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a). The next interview passage illustrates that internal bonding processes within social groups may account for a powerful rejection of protected areas. Such conforming attitudes are frequently found in the group of farmers with their often negative attitude towards nature conservation:

‘There are many farmers who greatly profit from the nature park but who nevertheless support us too little in public. Because this would entail conflicts with the majority of their profession, I think. In a personal conversation, however, they say: ‘it’s fine what you do, I am glad about the possibilities I have in connection with you. This is not just empty talk, many farmers really have understood that. But they haven’t got the courage to utter it in the farmers’ union or to members of the parliament’ (Interviewee 1, head of the rangers in a protected area).

An explanation for expressing more negative attitudes to nature conservation in social conversations may lie in group expectations of their roles (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a: 126).

Social psychologists have long looked at the effects and consequences of how people treat members of their own group compared with members of other groups to which they do not belong or identify with. They do so from two perspectives. The first is where two or more groups are in competition for resources (Sherif, 1966: ‘Realistic group conflict’), and the second is ‘how group membership per se affects a person’s attitude and behaviour’ (Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 1999: 326). The latter one is the Social Identity Theory\(^6\) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and provides a better explanation of group-related aspects of opposition to protected areas in...
Germany. It applies here because as mentioned above conflicts due to competing uses of resources is not the ‘core’ issue in Germany (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, 1999: 12).

The basic assumption of Social Identity Theory7 is that social categorization results in social discrimination because people make social comparisons between in-groups and out-groups. An example in how far the distinction between ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ suffices to provoke the rejection of the out-group—here: the conservationists—without any competition for resources8 existing among the groups (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a: 125). This is reflected in the following interview passage, referring to the relationship between (official) forestry and nature conservation. The quote shows that—apart from management issues (for instance balancing ecological against economic criteria in forestry)—emotional aspects like competing professional attributes are highly influential in distinguishing the two groups:

‘Forest offices are absolutely antagonistic to us. If you talk to forest officers, they say: ‘We don’t need those conservationists, they are practically superfluous here in the nature park. Nature conservation in the forest is what we have been doing for a long time.’ They ignore that our work is by no means restricted to nature conservation in the forests but applies to open landscapes, and lakes as well. They are true opponents, seeing us as competitors’ (Interviewee 1, head of the rangers of a protected area).

Foresters dislike the charge that their competence is being impugned by conservationists. Furthermore, they jealously wish to protect their established professional freedoms which they regard as being threatened (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a: 126).

Social Identity Theory further states that people make social comparisons because they need to provide themselves with a positive identity (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, Turner, 1982, 33). Positive social identity is important for a person since it enhances self-esteem and self-worth. Comparisons made between in-groups and out-groups in relation to status, value and perceived worth lead to social competition. This reflects the desire people have to put the groups they identify with in such a light as to believe their group to be ‘better’ than the out-group (Turner, 1982, 34; Pennington Gillen & Hill 1999, 331). Membership in a group, on the one hand, relates to external criteria (e.g. being a conservationist or farmer or forester). Identification with this group, on the other hand, depends on internal criteria, among them cognitive aspects (like the awareness of being a group member, evaluative aspects (like the social prestige of group membership), and emotional aspects (like positive or negative feelings associated with group membership). Turner (1982, 27) suggests in this context in order ‘to understand how social groups are formed one should also focus on variables such as ‘common fate’ or ‘shared threat’ (ibid, 27). These obviously play a role in the example outlined here.

One lesson that can be learned from social dilemma research in this context is that people in such situations ‘attend more to the groups payoffs than to their own, either automatically or to behave appropriately’. But whereas social identity elicits cooperative behaviour in dilemmas, it is generally only for the benefit of an ‘in-group’. Dilemmas between groups (requiring self-sacrificial behaviour within) are often the most extreme. Consequently the framing and manipulation of group identity is critical to cooperation rate’ (Dawes & Messick, 2000, 111). When people act as individuals who are interacting with other individuals, they are far more cooperative than when they form groups that interact with other groups (ibid, 114).

There is huge evidence that ‘favouring the ingroup over the out-group is extremely common in intergroup relations’ (Turner, 1982: 34; see also Doise, 1978; Tajfel, 1978). The out-group is attributed with negative values and exaggerated stereotypes (see below ‘communication and perception barriers’), while the in-group is perceived to have positive characteristics and values (Pennington, Gillen & Hill 1999, 331). This is illustrated by the following remark of a resident of a protected area regarding the nature conservationists: ‘They are only small-time activists. They just count birds and frogs’ (Interviewee 25, resident concerned).

Even a manager of the same protected area confirms that this quote is very typical and the view presented here is widely held:

‘Sometimes you are even reproached to be ignorant of the world. Conservationists are said to have a biased orientation. They are said to care only for the protection of species and not for any human business. So they are seen as little realistic or pragmatic, too much idealistic or utopian’ (Interviewee 7, head of an administration of a protected area).

That brings us to the point to emphasise that it has also been discovered that there is a strong sense of conservationist identity that is felt individually as well as collectively. One senior official admitted that his staff tends to become emotional and ‘moralistic’ about the importance of their mission to the point where they cannot communicate with the
public or landowners without getting into dispute. Part of the reason for their dedication is a deep belief that ‘the public’ does not understand the importance of protecting wildlife and habitats since the modern culture is too isolated from the wild, and too indoctrinated with materialistic comforts (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001b).

An additional reason for the reinforcement of social identity amongst nature conservation officials is the fear that their power base will be eroded if their approach is publicly challenged. The same nature conservation director explained:

‘All specialists (especially biologists) fear a loss of power. Where affected interests are allowed to challenge their actions they fear that their precious professional knowledge is compromised. And if lay people, ‘who know nothing’ are allowed to make the final decisions, then the basis of all their knowledge is invalidated. This is bad for morale.’

In this context Pitt & Zube (1991: 1016) provide a useful perspective. They think that the particular professional background of nature conservation managers (in Germany they are usually educated and trained in biology) equip them with a specialist perspective; for example, a wildlife biologist would be biased by basic concern for animal habitat. They further state that professional elitism tends to cause managers to view themselves as uniquely qualified to resolve problems related to the management of natural environments (ibid, 1016). A general problem of the particular ecology based training of nature conservationists is that ‘it often ignores defining a natural environment as a setting for human behaviour’ (ibid, 1016).

Perception and communication barriers

It has been outlined above that stereotypes of out-groups are one important consequence of social identity processes. All members of the out-group ‘nature conservationists’ are attributed with possessing those stereotypical characteristics and the individual’s unique personal characteristics are ignored (Pennington, Gillen & Hill 1999, 336). Stereotypes are usually highly simplified images. Stereotypes referring to outgroups are often of a derogatory nature and based on, or leading to, clearly visible differences between groups (e.g. in terms of physical appearance) (Zebowitz, 1996 in Hogg & Vaughan, 1998: 56). From this description of stereotypes it can be seen that they are similar to prejudicial attitudes that people hold about social groups. A person holding a stereotype will show a tendency to note and recall subsequent information about the social group which fits the stereotype (Pennington, Gillen & Hill: 1999, 336). The following two interview passages illustrate these facts:

‘They always say: ‘it is you greens who have done that’, for instance, when they find a barrier on some forest path. And when I ask: ‘What greens?’ they don’t care. They just call everybody ‘green’, even when it’s forest law which is responsible for that barrier’ (Interviewee 5, employee working in the administration of a protected area).

‘The ‘green’ image—and we are clearly perceived as ‘green’ although we are just an administration—has been run down so completely by the current politics that we don’t meet with the least acceptance’ (Interviewee 4, ranger of a protected area).

Actual events in protected areas have to be understood in the context of these stereotyped relationships between nature conservation and other social and economic interests. They are extremely difficult to modify when—as is the case in many German protected areas—social tensions and conflicts have arisen among groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 1998: 47). Recent research has acknowledged that stereotypes have both cognitive and emotional undercurrents that inflame judgements about social groups. Situations which include strong, negative emotions (such as anger or anxiety) have been found to increase a person’s use and reliance on stereotypical thinking (Mackie & Hamilton, 1993; Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 1999: 337). Such emotional drivers can be found extensively in German protected areas as described above. Here the link between these different model components becomes particularly obvious. Stereotypes negatively affect communication among opposite groups. Sometimes conservationists face disapproval even before they have any direct contact with residents, as the following quote shows:

‘On the other hand, you simply have to admit that the population has a basically negative opinion of the notion of ‘nature conservation’. They immediately assume a negative attitude and keep their distance as soon as they hear about it’ (Interviewee 2, employee working in the administration of a protected area).

Perceptions of conservation by landusers, and judgements of landuse practices by conservationists are almost equal in their strength, misrepresentation and opposition. Bonaiuto, Breakwell & Cannon, (1996: 159) emphasise an interesting correlation between social identity and ‘biases in the perception and evaluation of environmental features’. In order to strive for a positive social identity, people might deny negative characteristics of their own local or national environment, especially if those were
initially attributed by a powerful and disliked out-group institution’ (ibid, 160). Their study suggests that environmental perceptions and evaluations in this case do not seem to be affected by traditional socio-demographic variables or by environmental concerns but that ‘the relevant matching dimensions of the inhabitants, social identities become key factors’ (ibid, 171). In the protected areas local people also tend to overcome any dissonance they may feel about not being custodians of nature (as challenged by conservationists) by justifying their traditional practices as being beneficial for wildlife. Furthermore, because they do not share the conservationists’ views of wildlife protection, they cannot see how their continued actions may damage wildlife survival in the future.

It is difficult to change these attitudes because information concerning these matters is absorbed and processed in a very one-sided manner. For example, the residents of protected areas select sources of information about protected areas from which they can expect (e.g. because the title of a journal article seems to promise that) that their (pre)attitudes, values and (pre)knowledge will be confirmed. As is shown above, the attitudes, values and emotions of residents in protected areas are very often biased against nature conservation. Therefore, they seek information that reinforces this bias, while challenging the credibility of any information that contradicts their attitudes. Because values and emotions act as powerful criteria for the selection and processing of information (Lantermann & Döring-Seipel 1990; Lantermann, Döring-Seipel & Schima, 1992; Ernst, Bayan & Schima, 1992), so they have a negative influence on the acceptance of protected areas. Such processes have to be taken into account when searching for adequate strategies to deal with the opposition that nature conservation measures face (for a detailed description see Stoll, 1999).

Conclusions and possible ways forward

Opposition to nature conservation in Germany is rooted neither in economic conflict nor priorities over land use. It is very much a function of social identity, stereotyped images, and how particular social groups are regarded and approached. A lack of knowledge on the part of the conservationists concerning the importance of these social-psychological processes has led to an escalation of opposition. This final section summarizes the combination of theory and research evidence that reveals the social-psychological influences underpinning this opposition.

In order to manage of protected areas successfully, nature conservation needs to be seen as constructive and supportive for local interests, yet clear in its mandate and intent. One essential precondition is to ensure adequate political and economic support for nature conservation, to award it higher priority, and to fund it appropriately. Such an approach should release resources for more agency personnel, plus supportive training in facilitation techniques.

Social psychologists suggest three main ways in which attempts have been made to reduce prejudice and discrimination, as explained through social identity theory. These are through (1) setting superordinate goals; (2) redrawing the category boundaries, and (3) establish contact. To create agreement amongst conflicting groups in the pursuit of superordinate goals may be awkward in Germany because it is difficult to find superordinate goals which have ‘genuine appeal’ to both, nature conservationists and local people (Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 1999: 343; see also Brown, 1996: 554). Similar problems arise for the third approach, namely the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), which suggests that contact between members of different groups lessens intergroup prejudice and hostility. This is because some of the necessary conditions for the success of this strategy are very difficult to meet in German protected areas. Such conditions require that the groups in contact are ‘roughly equal in social and economic status’ or that ‘contact between social groups should be seen as inevitable and supported by society’ (Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 1999: 346). One possible condition, that contact between groups should be informal and facilitate individuals getting to know one another’ does seem to be feasible (see below).

The second approach—keeping in mind that social categorization is sufficient to cause discrimination to an out-group—assumes ‘that if members of two groups could redefine themselves as belonging to a single superordinate category then the erstwhile ‘out-groupers’ would be recategorized as fellow members of the new larger ingroup and a more favourable attitude towards them should ensue’ (Brown, 1996: 555). Gaertner et al. (1990) state that a core factor which brings people to regard themselves as part of a larger group is when they work together co-operatively. Another possibility in this context is to break existing social categories into smaller sub-units, perhaps too small that each individual seems him or herself
as unique. Emphasising individual uniqueness should result in social groupings becoming less important or salient for the individual (Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 1999: 344).

How can we use these findings to devise more sensitive designation-management processes? When designating a protected area, it is important to consider that membership of a certain group may create resistance to nature conservation. It may be useless to expect some forms of co-operation in nature conservation from members of certain groups—when this would transcend the group-defined scope for action. Furthermore, it follows that the opinion a person holds in public or as a representative of a group, have necessarily to be compared to opinions expressed in private conversations within the group (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a: 127). A helpful strategy may therefore be to develop common interests and to build up informal contacts between conservationists and those affected by nature conservation measures, to remove the communication barriers outlined in this paper. This may be done by establishing some kind of park-centred user forum to receive reports on ecological research and ecological safeguards, and to be part of the mechanism for shaping management agreements. One example that already exists are landscape preservation associations. These join together conservationists, farmers, and communities for the purpose of caring for a certain natural habitat or communal area. Co-operation through these associations may lead to contacts among different groups, which would make it easier to take the interests and needs of persons concerned into account and to harmonise them with nature conservation measures (ibid, 127).

Such an approach might also help to address the feelings of restricted personal and professional freedoms, as well as the lack of meaningful participation. Recommendations one can make that build upon the findings described in the section ‘emotional and cultural drivers’ (including theory of psychological reactance) are that the implementation of protected areas should not be managed by decreasing nature conservation measures from the top (see, for example, Wells & Brandon, 1992; McNeely, 1995; Pretty & Pimbert, 1995; Fietkau & Weidner, 1998; Zillessen, 1998). Instead increased involvement of those directly concerned and affected through sensitive participatory procedures may reveal alternative courses of action (as for example in landscape preservation associations or through mediation (Fietkau & Weidner, 1998; Zillessen, 1998); consensus conferences; citizens jury/panel; citizen/public advisory committee; focus groups).

More egalitarian and network-based communication among all parties may well increase acceptance of protected areas. Such participatory structures are best established at the planning stage of a protected area, since decisions about acceptance or rejection of a protected area are usually made then. Positive relationships and confidence can be fostered in this initial phase. Stakeholders will feel that their freedom to decide is respected—a crucial element in reducing opposition (Stoll, 1999; Stoll-Kleemann 2001a). Public participation also helps include local particularities, such as different social values and particular cultural norms (see above), into decision-making, and hence avoid potential (negative) consequences of designation and management, of which professional conservationists have not initially been aware (see, for example, Pitt & Zube, 1991; Wells & Brandon, 1992; McNeely, 1995; Pretty & Pimbert, 1995; Fietkau & Weidner, 1998; Zillessen, 1998; Stoll-Kleemann, 2001a).

Such an approach has successfully been tried in the Uckermark Lake Nature Park in Brandenburg (see Stoll-Kleemann & O’Riordan, 2001 for a further description). The key to this success lies in an interactive approach to consulting with local interests, led by a strong, experienced and respected Park manager. He is a man with vision, communication skills, so that he regained trust and restored credibility. His leadership has helped to reduce the scepticism and suspicion within the Nature park over the essential purpose of nature conservation. The administration takes the views of local people very seriously, even when they speak ill of the Park and its aims. The Park staff have learned to treat personal relations as a first priority. This reinforces local respect and generates a constructive sense of stewardship. In essence, the success of this remarkable Park lies in a staff in its empathetic management style, sensitive to people and to place, listening and caring, and constantly pursuing a coherent strategy for biodiversity protection. Such good practice needs to be trumpeted and reinforced elsewhere. The best practice can thus provide a basis for training in facilitation.

The Uckermark case study shows that social and communicative skills and connected abilities like flexibility, frankness, public relations abilities, and empathy are crucial to the success of protected areas. Pitt & Zube (1991, 1017) state that ‘in recent decades, environmental management has become people management as well as resource management.’ Park managers generally are ill-equipped by their professional natural science based training to resolve the conflicts they find themselves
in, and very often lack the necessary communicative skills. It follows that employees of administrations of protected areas should be supported in career development in developing the necessary co-operative skills for planning and implementing nature conservation measures in a participatory way, for constructive negotiating, for balancing interests, and for managing conflicts. This would help to create a professional staff capable of redefining participatory procedures (Müller-Glodde, 1994).

Such a facilitated approach already takes place in the German development agencies, most notably with regard to biodiversity protection (see Stoll-Kleemann 2001b for a fuller analysis). Since 1992 the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) has developed a scheme called ‘Natural Resources Management by Self Help Promotion’ (NARMS). This recognizes the complex and interactive character of natural resources management in developing countries, the significance of participatory and process-related methods, and fresh approaches to learning and teaching. NARMS also offers training in facilitation and institutional capacity building in the recipient organizations (GTZ, 1994: 45).

This research indicates that social-psychological approaches to integrating methodology and theory can help enormously to clarify the motivations underlying the management of nature conservation. It particularly reveals how various social interests shape prejudices, bond in alliances, and create the scope either for conflict or conciliation. If training programmes, backed by the resources to enter into appropriate land management agreements, could be put in place based on the evidence revealed by this research, then the kinds of successes now found in the developing world by German-based agencies could be constructively repatriated into German domestic experience. The signs are good. The European Union is anxious to match regional development funds to biodiversity-based income support (see Stoll-Kleemann 2001b). The major agencies in Europe are taking seriously various forms of participation throughout the management process. We may indeed be entering a new era of co-operative conservation in which social psychological research and analysis should play an invaluable facilitative role.

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Notes

(2) The EU Habitats Directive was signed in 1992 in response to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Its official code is 92/43/EEC.
(3) Interviewees were taken from different protected areas to test if a generalisation of reasons for opposition against protected areas is possible.
(4) The Interviewees were drawn from the following agencies: Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Nature Conservation and Environment Brandenburg, Agency for Protected Areas Brandenburg, Bavarian State Forest Administration, Bavarian State Institute of Forestry, Wildlife Society Munich, National Park Administration Carinthia (Austria), Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, German Development Service, GTZ, English Nature, WWF International and WWF Europe.
(5) In social dilemma situations, each individual always receives a higher payoff for defecting than for co-operating, but all are better off if all co-operate than if all defect (Dawes & Messick, 2000, 111).
(6) Tajfel & Turner (1986, 34) emphasise that the Social Identity Theory is “intended not to replace the Realistic Group Conflict Theory, but to supplement it in some respects”. They regard it as essential for an adequate social psychology of intergroup conflict to focus “upon the processes underlying the development and maintenance of group identity and possibly autonomous effects upon the in-group and intergroup behaviour of these “subjective aspects of group membership” (ibid, 34).
(7) The four main concepts of Social Identity Theory are: Social categorization, social identity, social comparison and psychological group distinctiveness (Tajfel, 1978, 61).
(8) Tajfel & Turner (1979, 46) point out that anyway “it is nearly impossible in most natural social situations to distinguish between discriminatory intergroup behaviour based on real or perceived conflict of “objective” interests between the groups and discrimination based on attempts to establish a positively-valued distinctiveness for one’s own group”.
(9) To avoid an “overkill” of theory in this article it has been decided not to explain the theory of cognitive dissonance by Festinger 1957 although that would have made sense in this particular context. An application of Festinger’s theory concerning opposition to protected areas can be found in Stoll, 1999, 136ff.

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A Model Explaining Opposition to Protected Areas in Germany


