Can natural forest ecotourism deliver income streams for local communities?

“New initiatives from a decade of progress”, Bratislava, 20/11/2019
Protection of natural forests is controversial

use restrictions, loss of income

supposed economic benefits
Procedure

1. Literature search
2. Identification of key messages and example cases
3. Report in English — in progress —
4. Translation into Eastern European languages
5. Publication on website
Focus on national parks

- widely spread protected area category
- high standards
- Europe: most national parks \( \equiv \) natural forests
- much research in national parks
The main factors influencing the regional economic benefits of national park tourism

• Number of visitors
  • length of stay
  • national-park affinity

• Visitor spending

→ Calculation of number of jobs (full-time equivalents) generated through tourism
German national parks

Data from 2007-2014

Visitor counting + interviews

Full-time equivalents:
61 - 34,525 (all NP visitors) /
20 - 3,830 (NP visitors in a narrower sense)

→ Economic benefits in all national park regions

Finnish national parks

Visitor survey by Finnish forest administration in 2018

Full-time equivalents:
0 – 612 (all NP visitors) /
0 – 411 (NP visitors in a narrower sense)

→ Economic benefits in 35/40 national park regions


https://www.nationalparks.fi/en/nationalparks
Swiss National Park

Visitor survey in 1998

120 full-time jobs directly depending on national park tourism

A few things to consider

1. Current state of research leaves much to be desired
   only German-speaking countries well covered; grey literature; lack of long-term studies

2. The topic is quite complex
   many business sectors involved; every park is unique; no international methodological standard

3. There are also costs (monetary, social, ecological)

4. It is unlikely that the economic development will set in automatically
Success factors of protected area tourism

1. General conditions

• Serious political support

• Funding of park administration
Success factors of protected area tourism

2. Communication and cooperation of all stakeholders

- communication platform
- joint conflict resolution
- positive attitude towards park
Success factors of protected area tourism

3. Tourism services and visitor management

- Intact landscape!
- Tourism infrastructure and attractions
- Effective marketing
- Information and guidance
- Visitor monitoring
Thank you!

This study is part of the project

Research into Information, Policy & On-ground Action for Primary Forest Protection: Boreal and Temperate Primary Forests

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