Recreation and tourism - socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts on protected areas in Norway

Knut Bjørn Stokke, Kristian Bjørnstad, Morten Clemetsen, Jan Vidar Haukeland

Protected areas in Norway

- Protected areas cover almost 15% of mainland Norway
- The first National park established in 1962 (Rondane)
- Common right of access and simple outdoor recreation activities important
- Many new protected areas in recent years
- Mainly mountains areas, but now more focus on forests and the coastal zone
- Now the key question is: How shall the areas be managed?
Protection policy and management

- Traditional policy on protection through top-down regulation
- Less emphasis on active management
- Management by the Environmental Department at the County Governor (the Directorate of Nature Management and the Ministry of Environment)
- Consultative Supervisory Board with participation from municipalities, local organisations, etc.
- In spatial planning much power is delegated to the local municipalities according the Planning and Building Act

Socio-cultural impacts

- Long traditions for huge conflicts
  - Between the state and the local remote communities
  - Between conservation and use/local development
- Socio-cultural impacts:
  - Protected areas have marginal influence on traditional agriculture, but on new businesses as tourism, etc.
  - Local feelings of distrust to the community’s ability of managing landscapes
- A movement towards more participation and dynamic management
  - More participation from stakeholders in conservation processes
  - Local management models for larger protected areas (co-management)
  - Management plans are now more normal
  - But still marginal resources for active management
Socio-economic impacts

- National parks are still poorly developed as tourism attractions in Norway – they are more like 'wilderness areas' with scant facilitation and visitor services
- 'Traditional, simple outdoor recreation activities' are accepted – in accordance with the principles of common access (allemannsretten)
- Recent political initiatives underline NPs' branding effect on international tourist markets and their significance as regional development tools – the ban on commercial activities inside NPs was lifted in 2003
- Still management agencies lack the professional competence to develop tourist provisions in NPs – managers probably also lack the will to include tourism visions and goals for the NPs
- The 'static-preservation' approach still seem to prevail over the 'dynamic-innovation' approach (cf. Mose 2007) – leading to serious concerns and frustrations among local tourism entrepreneurs (cf. Haukeland 2011)

Socio-economic impacts, continued

- **National parks have a great appeal to foreign tourists in Norway:**
  A survey among German, Danish and Dutch motor tourists in the summer 2008 demonstrated that:
  - 50% of the respondents maintained that the NPs have a 'very great appeal'
  - 28% said that the NPs had (to a larger or smaller degree) influenced their decision to visit the country
- **The economic impact is significant:**
  A study in a national park area in Norway, i.e. the alpine region Nord-Gudbrandsdalen in Southern Norway, revealed that
  - 25% of Norwegian tourists’ expenditures in the area could be directly attributed to the NP status of the local mountains
  - 40% of foreign tourists’ expenditures are explained by the NP status
- **Local residents acknowledge the significance of NP tourism:**
  It was showed in a recent survey in Nord-Gudbrandsdalen that
  - 90% of the local people deemed the importance of NP tourism as 'rather' or 'very high' for income/jobs in their local communities
  - 80% saw the importance of NP tourism as 'rather' or 'very high' for the level of services/infrastructure in their local communities
Regional parks – a new tool for dynamic management in Norway

Kristian Bjørnstad

Norway/Scandinavia:
3 established regional parks
8 established landscape parks
3 regional park projects
Regional parks in Norway

- Projects grown locally/regionally throughout the 1990s. Secretariat supported by 3 ministries (Regional, Agriculture, Environment)
- New national program for parks from 2012 (approx 1.5 mill. Euro). Inspired by Swiss model of Parks (local support required/no area protection)
- Interest and activity increasing. Newly formed Norwegian Parks Association.
- New projects: Haldenkanalen, Finnskogen (NOR/SWE), Numedal, and on Iceland.

Ongoing research projects and education at UMB

- Prospects of Managing Tourism Development in Protected Areas in a Period of Transition. Norwegian Research Council
- Ideals, models and practice in natural resource management – does local management matter? Is Regional Parks based on partnership models relevant for nature and landscape conservation? Norwegian Research Council
- Reindeer management and regional planning
- Masters Courses: Strategic landscape planning (20 ects), Nature based tourism (20 ects)
- Will establish a resource group with focus on dynamic landscape management based at UMB