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# Timelines of Tension: Trajectories of Protected-Area Creation in the Austrian Alps

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## Introduction

- 1 “[T]he motivation to protect [...] [high mountains] rose with the growing awareness that the mountains are sensitive indicators of the global climatic change, genetic reserves for endangered species, a storage for increasingly scarce resources like water, energy, and minerals, a retreat for old cultures, have potential for many economic sectors like tourism, sports, and services, just to mention some of the most important facts” (Borsdorf and Braun 2008). Conflicts and challenges emerge between institutions, stakeholders and locals participating in the discussion of protected areas (PAs) designation. In the European Alps close interactions between humans and the environment exist and people depend heavily on ecosystem (or environmental) services (EEA 2010; Grêt-Regamey *et al.* 2010) and on the use of resources for tourism and energy infrastructure (for an overview, see Bender *et al.* 2017). The creation of PAs is frequently preceded and accompanied by emotional debates (see, for example, Berchtesgaden National Park in Pichler-Koban and Jungmeier 2017) and discussions around human land use (see, for example, Rwenzori Mountains National Park in Steinicke and Kabanaukye 2014).
- 2 Alpine countries’ governments have signed international treaties to protect environmental assets. With the ratification of various conventions, Austria committed itself to protect areas which form the backbone of biodiversity conservation. On a global scale, the Bern Convention, the United Nation Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention were key political milestones for transnational approaches for the conservation of sites (Jones-Walters and Čivić 2013). The Bern Convention for the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats was adopted by the Council of

Europe in 1979 and ratified by Austria in 1983. It led to the implementation of the Bird and Habitats Directive, known as Natura 2000. Today 27% of Austria's territory is protected under different nature conservation laws (BMLFUW 2014).

- 3 Nature protection in Austria is the responsibility of the nine federal states, which leads to different modes of implementation of, for example, Natura 2000 areas as observed by Geitzenauer *et al.* (2016). In Austria's federal state of Tyrol, nature protection has a long history. The first law for the protection of nature in Tyrol was issued in 1924. Since then a total of 81 PAs have been established which cover almost 25% of Tyrol. They are covered by different and sometimes overlapping protection categories (Table 1).

Table 1: Nature protection categories applied in Tyrol

Category	Definition
<i>Landschaftsschutzgebiete</i> - Protected Landscape <sup>1</sup>	Areas with a special character, high aesthetic or recreation value.
<i>Ruhegebiete</i> - Quiet Area <sup>1</sup>	Areas for the protection of nature and for recreation.
<i>Naturparks</i> - Nature Park <sup>1</sup>	Protected landscapes, Quiet Areas, nature PAs and special PAs can be designated as Nature Parks.
<i>Geschützter Landschaftsteil</i> - Protected Landscape Unit <sup>1</sup>	Small-scale PAs
<i>Naturschutzgebiete</i> - Nature Conservation Area <sup>1</sup>	Protected natural and cultural landscapes.
<i>Nationalpark</i> - National Park <sup>1</sup>	Areas with an IUCN II category.
<i>Naturdenkmal</i> - Natural Monument <sup>1</sup>	Protected special natural feature.
<i>Sonderschutzgebiet</i> - Special PA <sup>1</sup>	Areas in which any intervention is prohibited.
Natura 2000 <sup>1</sup>	Natura 2000 is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types (EC 2017).
Ramsar Convention <sup>2</sup>	The Convention on Wetlands is an inter-governmental treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

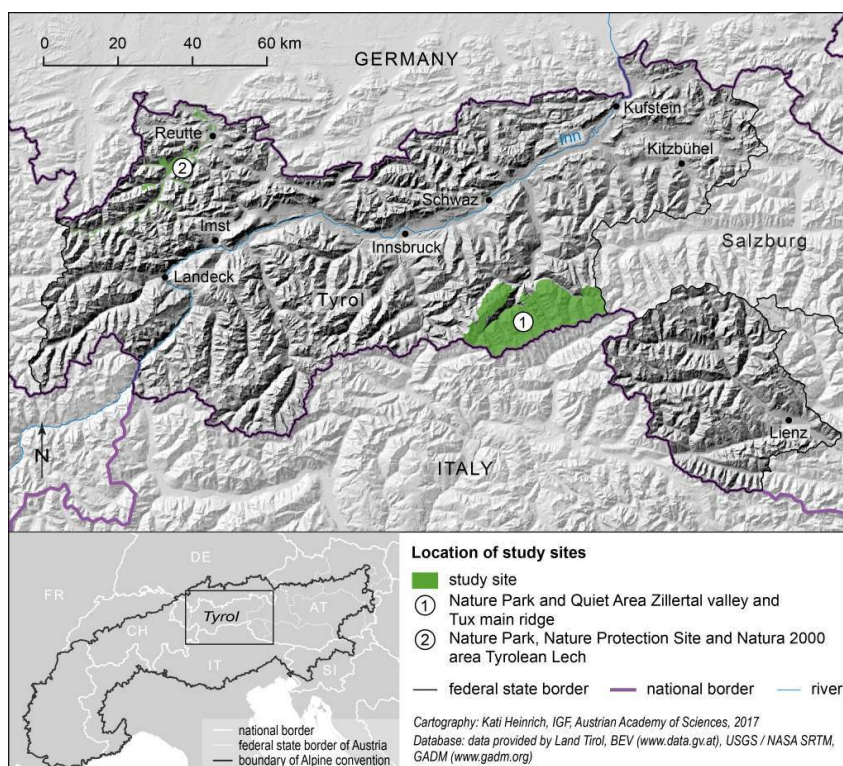
Source: <sup>1</sup> Tyrolean law on nature conservation (Tiroler Naturschutzgesetz 2005); <sup>2</sup> Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt 2018)

- 4 An increasing amount of literature focuses on the establishment of National Parks (IUCN category II) in the Alps (see also Kupper 2012; Kupper and Wöbse 2013; Kupper *et al.* 2014; Pichler-Koban and Jungmeier 2015, 2017) or in other mountainous areas, e. g. the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan (Cunha 2017). While, for example, in France the *Parcs Naturels Régionaux* are well studied (see Lajarge 2000; Lajarge and Baron-Yelles 2011; Cheylan and

Gumuchian 2002), less attention has been paid to the creation of Nature Parks (NaPs) in Austria, which are thought to be more open for human uses (Mose and Weixlbaumer 2007). The two case studies in this article are both NaPs and mirror the overall conflict between the use of resources and the protection of biodiversity. The NaP and Quiet Area Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge (see Zanon 2001) is in close vicinity to large ski resorts, and the NaP, nature protection and Natura 2000 area Tyrolean Lech is one of the last wild streams in the northern parts of the Alps, see Figure 1. Both areas are NaPs, which according to Mose and Weixlbauer (2007) share a common goal to link conservation with sustainable regional development.

- By tracing the trajectories of these two NaPs in the Austrian Alps, the present article aims to document and illustrate the process.

Figure 1 – Location of study sites



## Data and methods

### Archival research

- For records and literature on the two NaPs, we started searching in the archives and the library of the Tyrolean State Museum, the library of the University of Innsbruck, the online library of Upper Austrian State Museum “zobodat.at” and the archives of the Austrian Alpine Club. We searched for grey literature, newspaper articles, articles in notifications of the environmental authority of the federal government, and records on the legislative framework. The citations in the bibliography of Pangerl (1993) and in the joint thesis by Sandner *et al.* (1996) on the Zillertal valley and in the thesis of Walter (2004) on the Lechtal valley proved a good starting point for further literature research.

The articles were screened for and cross-referenced with keywords on Nature Park, Quiet Area, National Park, Tyrol, federal government, spatial planning in Alpine regions, Zillertal and Lechtal (all in German).

## Interviews with experts

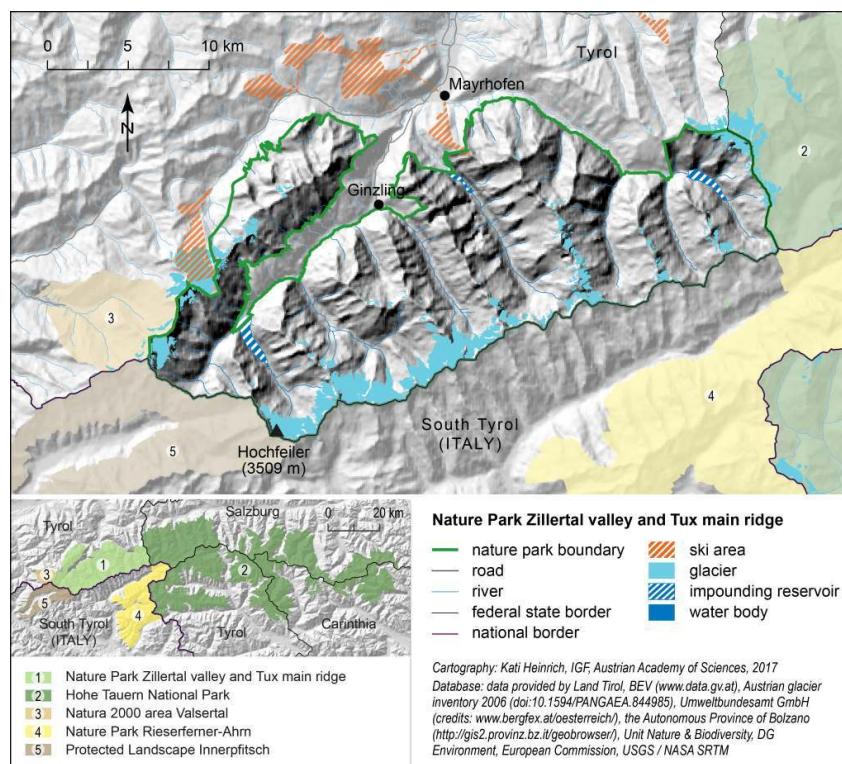
- 7 In addition to the archival research, we carried out expert interviews. These were primarily open-ended interviews aimed at complementing and/or assessing the results of the archival research. In the present case, we interviewed the current managers of the two NaPs and a former representative of the Austrian Alpine Club who was involved in the designation of Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge NaP.

## Study area

### Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge

- 8 The NaP is situated in the southern part of the Zillertal valley towards the border with Italy, see Figure 2. Five municipalities have a share in the NaP. The lowest elevation is at the small village of Ginzling (1000 m), while the highest point is at 3509 m (Mt Hochfeiler). High mountains, valleys, Alpine pastures and glaciers characterize this diverse landscape. The NaP forms the largest PA assemblage in the Alps with the adjoining NaP Rieserferner-Ahrn / Vedrette di Ries-Aurina (Italy), the Protected Landscape Innerpfitsch/Vizze di Dentro (Italy), Hohe Tauern National Park and the Valsertal Natura 2000 site (Austria) (Weiskopf and Seifert 2015).

Figure 2 – Nature Park Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge and adjoining protected areas

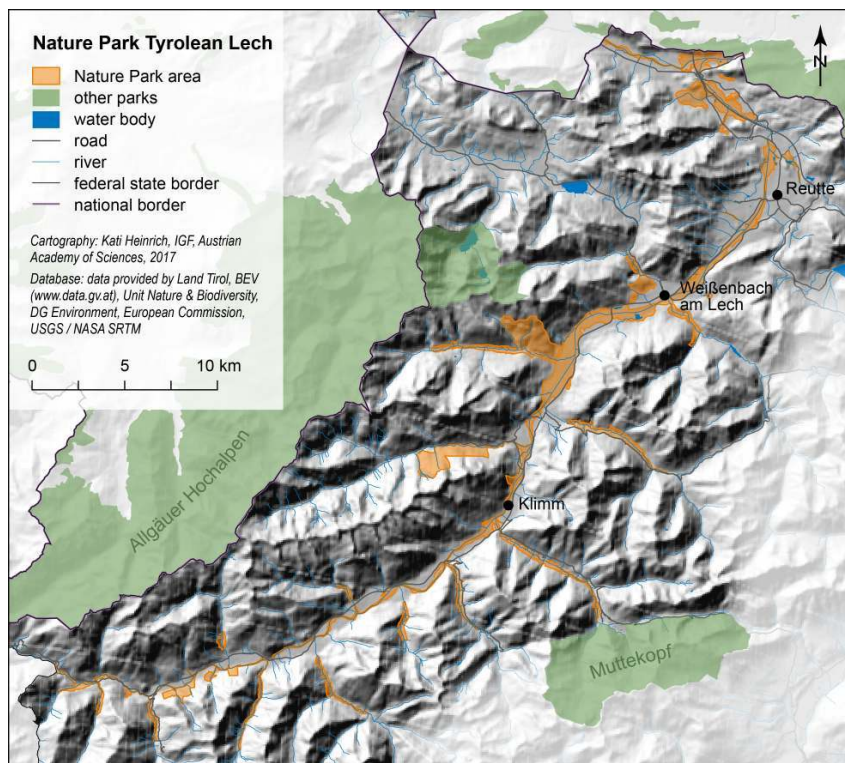




## Tyrolean Lech

- 9 The river Lech has its origins in the federal state of Vorarlberg (Austria), see Figure 3. It runs through the Lechtal valley in Tyrol and finally flows into the Danube in Germany. The Lechtal Alps to the north and the Allgäu Alps to the south, which are both part of the Northern Limestone Alps, delimit the Lechtal valley. The Lech is a braided stream with exposed gravel banks and alluvial forests (Walter 2004). The Tyrolean part of the Lech is classified as a coherent and still functional river system and belongs to the 0.6% of unregulated bodies of water in Tyrol (Kostenzer 2006).

Figure 3 – Nature park Tyrolean Lech



## Results and Discussion

### Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge

- 10 The process of designating the Quiet Area in the Zillertal valley took two decades. The Austrian Alpine Club and the federal government of Tyrol were the driving forces towards this goal.
- 11 The first attempt to protect parts of the Zillertal valley which are now situated within the NaP was in 1971 (Baumann 1971). The task force *Rettet den Zillergrund* (save the Zillergrund area) was formed to prevent the construction of an impounding reservoir, which was eventually built.
- 12 In the years between 1980 and 1990, the skiing infrastructure in the Zillertal valley doubled, e. g. at Zillertal Arena, Mayrhofner Bergbahnen, Hintertuxer Gletscher, and,

eventually exceeded the goals of the 1981 regional development plan for the region by 40% (Haßlacher 1991a, b; 1995a). Yet the proposed designation of 18 PAs in the regional development plan were not realized. These areas had been designed as ecological compensation areas in the 1981 regional development programme (*Regionales Entwicklungsprogramm für die Planungsräume „Vorderes Zillertal und Hinteres Zillertal“*) and aimed at protecting undeveloped parts of the Zillertal valley. The 1981 regional development plan was way ahead of its time, considering that Austria did not ratify the protocol on tourism of the Alpine Convention until 19 years later. It states in article 10 that Quiet Areas need to be established where no tourist facilities will be developed. As early as the late 1970s, the Austrian and German Alpine Clubs, in an Alpine regional development plan, had demanded protection of the high Alpine landscape from further technical development (Sandner *et al.* 1996; Haßlacher 2007). This demand never became legally binding but had great influence.

- 13 In 1981 the operator of the glacier ski area Hintertux, together with the village of Ginzling-Dornauerg demanded a second access to the glacier ski area via the Schlegeis impounding reservoir and Italy (Steger 1995).
- 14 One year later, local politicians proposed the construction of another road from Italy to the Zillertal valley. Opponents feared that such a road could be turned into a highway; an idea from the 1970s, when – according to local newspapers – the so-called Allemagna motorway was proposed as a further trunk road from Italy to Germany (Tiroler Tageszeitung 1983; Dolomiten 1983; Sandner *et al.* 1996).
- 15 Those debates about further development of the high mountains in the Zillertal valley eventually led the Austrian Alpine Club in 1983 to submit the first application for a Quiet Area to the federal government (Haßlacher 1995b).
- 16 In 1982 the Tauern hydro-power plant was eager to extend its capacity by redirecting two brooks, which are now both within the current boundaries of the PA (Rieser 1995, Sandner *et al.* 1996). However, the opposition of farmers, tourism association and the Austrian Alpine Club was so strong that these extension plans were finally abandoned in 1987. Since the early 1920s, the production of hydroelectric power in the Zillertal valley has played a major role (Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 1981a) and as a result there is only one small stream, situated outside the PA, without a power station or water outflow pipe. Today there are three impounding reservoirs within the PA, which were built before the PA was established.
- 17 The ongoing pressure of the hydropower industry and the constant high traffic volume into the Zillertal valley led to the foundation of the citizens' initiative *Lebensraum Zillertal* (living space Zillertal valley) in 1987. The initiative was very successful in drawing attention to conservation but lost some supporters once they also argued against the continuous expansion of skiing infrastructure, as winter tourism was – and still is – the main source of income for the inhabitants of the Zillertal valley (Haßlacher 1991b).
- 18 In 1988, efforts to expand the glacier ski area towards the Schlegeis impounding reservoir (Sandner *et al.* 1996) forced the Austrian Alpine Club and the federal government to step up their efforts to finally realize the Quiet Area. In 1991, the federal government designated a high-Alpine area of 372 km<sup>2</sup> in the Zillertal valley as a Quiet Area (Act [ *Landesgesetzblatt*] LGBl. 1991/65). There was intense debate between proponents and opponents and the decision made by the federal government to finally implement the Quiet Area was seen as a top-down intervention (pers. comm., CIPRA 2015). Landowners,

the Austrian chamber of commerce, farmers and Tauern hydropower (Seifert 2016) strongly opposed the implementation, but the personal commitment of one government official and mediation talks with mayors and farmers associations finally made the designation possible.

- 19 Two years later, in 1993, the Austrian Alpine Club installed a manager for the Quiet Area, who was paid in equal parts by the Austrian Alpine Club and the federal government (Fischer 1995). Nowadays the federal government funds the major part of the PA budget, with further contributions by the municipalities, the Austrian and German Alpine associations, the local tourist association and private donors (Seifert 2007). The area management plays an important role in raising the awareness and acceptance of the locals towards the PA (Kostenzer 2007; Mair 2012). According to Oberleitner and Tiefenbach 2007, the management must have specific understanding on the natural environment as well as management, communication and economic skills to successfully mediate between possibly diverging interests of land owners, management goals, authorities, NGOs and the public. Oldekop *et al.* (2015) state that positive conservation and socioeconomic outcomes of PAs are more likely to occur when co-management regimes are adopted, local people are empowered and sustainable use of resource is promoted. The first manager was successful in implementing first steps to integrate the new protected site with the local population in a bottom-up way (Sandner *et al.* 1995; CIPRA 2015). This led to an amendment in 1997 of the Tyrolean conservation act that a management of conservation areas can be contractually agreed on (Act [*Landesgesetzblatt*] LGBL. 1997/33). In the same year, the association *Ruhegebietsbetreuung Zillertaler Hauptkamm* (Quiet Area management Zillertal main ridge) was founded in an effort to involve the local population in the management and politics of the PA (Fischer 1997; Mair 2012).
- 20 Three acceptance studies were conducted in 1996, 2007 and 2015 (Sandner *et al.* 1995, 1996; Fröhlich 2007; Mayrhauser 2015). They revealed a rise of awareness and acceptance within the population of the Zillertal valley. The designation of the PA is no longer seen as an obstacle to further development. The former mayor of one of the municipalities in which the PA is situated pointed out that since the PA came into existence 25 years ago, all stakeholders have been working actively together (Naturpark Zillertal 2016). Young *et al.* (2016) highlight that increased trust through fair processes makes conflict resolution more likely and Hirschnitz-Garbers and Stoll-Kleemann (2011) stress that the benefits for local inhabitants have contributed to PA management success, mirroring the experience in the Zillertal valley PA.
- 21 In 2001 the Quiet Area was granted the label *Nature Park* (Act [*Landesgesetzblatt*] LGBL. 2001/31). A NaP house was opened in 2008 and serves as an office for the PA management, and the municipal administrator. It also offers room for a year-round PA exhibition. According to Gamper *et al.* (2007), an Austrian NaP protects a landscape which has developed through the interaction of man with nature and which includes little or no wilderness. Austrian NaPs are drivers for integrative regional development for the entire region.
- 22 More recently, in 2016, parts of the Tux high Alps were added to the already existing NaP, which now covers an area of 422 km<sup>2</sup>. This process took eight years. Landowners and agricultural associations in particular needed to be convinced of the extension, as local newspapers reported (Tiroler Tageszeitung 2016). Table 2 shows the timeline of interactions of stakeholders and their respective actions.



Table 2: Actors involved in the process of designating the PA. NaP Zillertal valley and Tux main ridge

Year	Identified stakeholders	Action taken	Source
1971	NGO <i>Rettet den Zillergrund</i> (Save the Zillergrund)	Formed to protect and to preserve the valley to prevent the construction of an impounding reservoir.	Baumann 1971
1981	Federal government	Tyrolian regional development plan 1981: Proposal to establish PAs as ecological compensation areas	Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 1981a
1982	Glacier ski resort and the village Ginzling-Donauberg (municipality of Mayrhofen)	Demand for a second access road to the skiing area via Italy	Steger 1995
1982	Local politicians	Plan to construct the motorway (Allemagna) from Italy through Austria to Germany	Tiroler Tageszeitung 1983, Dolomiten 1983
1982	Tauern hydropower	Plan to expand hydropower water intake	Sandner <i>et al.</i> 1996
1983	Austrian Alpine Club	First submission to the federal government to apply for a Quiet Area	Haßlacher 1995b
1987	NGO <i>Lebensraum Zillertal</i> (living space Zillertal)	Opposition against the increased traffic volume and the further expansion of hydropower water intake	Haßlacher 1991b; Rieser 1995
1988	Glacier ski resort and the village Ginzling-Donauberg (municipality of Mayrhofen)	Plan to expand the glacier ski area Hintertux towards the Schlegeis reservoir	Steger 1995, Sandner <i>et al.</i> 1996
1988/1989	Austrian Alpine Club and department of environment of the federal government	Second submission to the federal government to apply for a Quiet Area	Steger 1995
1988	Agrarian landowners, the Austrian federal chamber of commerce, farmers and Tauern hydropower	Strong opposition to the plans for designating a Quiet Area	Seifert 2016, pers. comm.

1991	Federal government	Final decision to designate a Quiet Area	Law [LGBL. 1991/65]
2001	Federal government	The protected area receives the label Nature Park	Law [LGBL. 2001/31]

## Tyrolean Lechtal valley

- 23 Many different protagonists with divergent and polarizing opinions emerged in the 30 years until the final designation of a Nature Conservation Area and Natura 2000 site. The local population, in particular, who had tried to protect themselves from the Lech River against flooding, river depositions etc., could not understand why it was the river now that needed protection. According to Micoud (1993, cited in Mathevet *et al.* 2016), local stakeholders often question the legitimacy of neo-rurals, NGOs and government agencies to manage their territory according to a definition of nature that the locals do not share. The process of designating the Lech into a Natura 2000 site and subsequently labelling it as a NaP was associated with conflicts of interest, conflicts over beliefs and values, conflicts over information and structural conflicts as described in Redpath *et al.* (2015).
- 24 The first attempt to protect parts of the river Lech started in 1970, when the federal government tried to designate a PA to preserve the occurrence of *Typha minima* (Lentner 1998, Lentner 2000). The species is listed under Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern Convention, and is an important management indicator species for Alpine rivers (Müller 2015). Over the next years, the task force *Lebensraum Außerfern* (living space Außerfern) was founded and committed itself to protecting and preserving the habitat of the Lech (Walter 2008, pers. comm.). In 1980 the *Tiroler Verein für Heimatschutz und Heimatpflege* (Tyrolian association for native tradition) issued a survey highlighting the area's importance as a habitat of *Juniperus communis* ssp. and as the location of riparian forests (Lentner 1998, 2000, pers. comm.). The attempt to protect the river failed, mainly because both the local population and the hydropower industry were concerned about further development constraints in the area.
- 25 In 1981 and 1983, the federal government administered two development plans (Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 1981b, 1983) for the Lechtal valley, including the demand for guaranteed preservation of recreation areas (1981) and the protection of specific areas (1983).
- 26 In 1984 the federal government tried to designate three Nature Conservation Areas along the river – but ran into opposition from the relevant municipalities (Lentner 1998, Lentner 2000). Yet in 1990 some municipalities expressed the wish to create a PA and in 1993 the idea of creating a cross-border biosphere reserve emerged, which was not realized because of resistance from the local population.
- 27 In 1988 the ministry of agriculture and forestry, the federal government, the municipalities of the Lechtal valley and the regional hydropower company jointly commissioned a regional survey, the so-called *Lechtalstudie* (Lechtal report), to capture the natural environment, human land use and hydropower capacity. The study was completed in 1996 (Riedl 1996) and revealed the high quality of the natural environment,

- i.e. that the basics for designating a National Park with an IUCN label were present. In 1997 the federal government presented the concept for a National Park in the region. A National Park usually has a zoning concept that strictly regulates human intervention. These possible restrictions triggered opposition from actors of the agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishery sectors. According to Walter (2004), around 60% of the local population feared that a National Park designation would restrict their recreation and leisure options. These fears stemmed from the concepts of the very first National Parks, which were designated with the belief that biodiversity had to be protected from humans. As a result, local residents had been excluded from their own lands and from the decision-making process. The shift towards a concept of linked development and conservation did not evolve until the late twentieth century (Hirschnitz-Garbers and Stoll-Kleemann 2011).
- 28 In 1985 and 1998, the regional hydropower company filed plans to the federal government to gain permission for hydropower development (Haßlacher 1998). In 1999 the department of the environment of the federal government refused authorization for the construction of a hydropower plant for environmental reasons (Lentner 2000).
  - 29 In 1996 the NGO WWF complained to the European Commission (EC) that the Lech had still not been designated as a Natura 2000 site (Lentner 2000; pers. comm.). The EC enforced proceedings about the missing designation of the Lech River as a Natura 2000 site, and in 2000 the federal government designated 41.38 km<sup>2</sup> of the river landscape as a Natura 2000 site.
  - 30 The processes of creating a protected area need sufficient time to create consciousness among the local population, planners and policy makers. However, a long time span – as in the present cases – can be too long for endangered habitats or species. Protected areas are able to contribute to stop habitat and biodiversity loss: The LIFE project called “Wild river landscape of the Tyrolean Lech” started with a budget of € 7.82 million (between 2001 and 2011) to emphasize the renaturation of control structures, the opening of check dams at feeder streams and their reconnection to the mainstream, species conservation and resettlement, visitor management and public relation. In 2016 a second LIFE project for the revitalization of the river was approved, running until 2021, with a budget of € 6 million (LIFE Lech – Dynamic River System Lech).
  - 31 In 2003 the idea of establishing a National Park came up again. The mayors of the region, however, decided against the proposed National Park, but were in favour of a NaP, which the federal government subsequently designated.
  - 32 In 2006, the association *Naturpark Tiroler Lech* was founded. The board of the association consists of 11 members: mayors of the region, the district headwoman, a representative of the Province of Tyrol / Environment Department as well as of the WWF, the chairman of the Reutte District Chamber of Agriculture, the chairmen of the tourism associations of nature park region, a representative of regional development Ausserfern form the board of the Tiroler Lech nature park.
  - 33 In the same year, the “regional economic programme for the NaP unregulated river landscape Tiroler Lechtal” (*Regionalwirtschaftliches Programm für die Region Naturschutzgebiet-Naturpark Wildflusslandschaft Tiroler Lechtal*) started (Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 2008), disbursing € 10.9 million within the following 10 years. The programme aims to (1) enhance cooperation and regional networks, (2) underpin the

high quality of the environment by developing regional strength, and (3) enhance education options and support new technologies.

- 34 No acceptance study of the population towards the PA has been done to date. But Hoffrohne (2009) investigated the expectations of the hotel sector in the region to find out who views the NaP as an opportunity for developing innovative touristic concepts.
- 35 Table 3 shows the timeline of interactions of stakeholders and their respective actions.
- 36 Table 3: Actors involved in the process of designating the PA. NaP and Natura 2000 area Lechtal.

Year	Identified stakeholders	Action taken	Source
1970	Federal government	Attempt to protect areas where <i>Typha minima</i> occurs	Lentner 1998, Lentner 2000
1970	NGO Lebensraum Außerfern (living space Außerfern)	Formed to protect and to preserve the habitat.	Walter 2008, pers. comm.
1980	NGO Tiroler Verein für Heimatschutz und Heimatpflege (Tyrolian association for native tradition)	Issued a survey highlighting the area's importance as a habitat of <i>Juniperus communis</i> ssp. and the location of riparian forests.	Lentner 1998, 2000, pers. comm.
1981	Federal government	Plan to designate the Lech riparian landscape as conservation areas.	Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 1981b
1983	Federal government	Plan to designate the Lech riparian landscape as conservation areas.	Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung 1983
1984	Federal government	Attempt to designate three Nature Conservation Areas	Lentner 1998, Lentner 2000
1985 and 1998	Hydropower company	Request to the federal government for a new hydropower site	Haßlacher 1998
1988-1994	Ministry of agriculture and forestry, federal government, the municipalities of the Lechtal valley and the regional hydropower company	Commissioned a regional survey, the so-called Lechtalstudie (Lechtal report)	Lentner 2000, Riedl 1996
1990	Municipality of Lechaschau	Request for a protected area	Lentner 1998
1993	Mayor of one municipality	Proposal to establish a cross-border Biosphere Reserve	Lentner 2000

1996	NGO WWF	Filed complaints at the EC	Lentner 2000, pers. comm.
1997	Federal government	Presentated a concept for a National Park with an IUCN label	Lentner 2000
1999	Federal government	Denied the construction of a hydropower plant	Lentner 2000
2000	Federal government	Designation of a Natura 2000 area	Natura 2000 – Standard data form, AT3309333
2004	Mayors of the region	Decision for the designation of a NaP	Walter 2008
2004	Federal government	The protected area became a Nature Conservation Area and received the label Nature Park	Law [LGBL 2004/84]

## Conclusion

37 The identified participants involved in the designation process include stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit (or voluntary) sector, see Table 4. This is in line with the typology of landscape actors introduced by Gerber *et al.* (2009), who identified observers, landscape providers and users of basic resources and possible conflict configurations. In the present case, the observed tensions seem to represent mostly conflict types A and B described in Gerber *et al.* (2009), who state that “[c]onflicts A and B involve the opposition between a group of observers [NGOs] or a provider and a user of basic resources [the agricultural, energy, and/or tourism sectors], for example, when the latter’s activities impair the material basis of the landscape”. However, to carry out a consistent categorization of actors is not an easy task; especially the role of the public sector cannot be ascribed easily to either the category of observers, providers or users, for it consists of different groups with often opposing interests. Governments, for example, are often responsible for nature conservation, but at the same time they can be shareholders of hydropower enterprises. Yet for heuristic reasons, such a typology may definitely represent a helpful step in understanding the timelines of tension from an actor’s perspective.

38 Table 4: Types of stakeholders involved, according to Salamon and Anheier 1992.

Public sector		Non-profit (or voluntary) sector		Private sector	
Type	Example	Type	Example	Type	Example



Regional governments	Federal government of Tyrol	Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	Austrian Alpine Club	Business owners	Ski areas
Municipal governments	Municipality of Mayrhofen; hamlet of Ginzling-Dornauberg			Business networks	Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Agriculture, Tourism Associations

- 39 Even though both PAs have different geneses and land uses, they share similarities. The stakeholders involved in each designation came from the same sectors (see Table 4). Both cases went through decades of discussions and conflicts until the final PA designation, followed by the establishment of a NaP. The described process illustrates that the federal government plays a fundamental role and provided early impulses for designations. NGOs were involved in both cases, as well as local initiatives explicitly formed for the protection of the area.
- 40 The case study of the Lechtal valley highlights the conflict between periphery and the federal capital about the fear of economic losses from the designation of PAs. Rural people in the study areas seem to perceive the urban centres as economically vibrant places, whereas the periphery is seen as economically disadvantaged and underdeveloped. The local population did not perceive the designation of a PA as a boost for the economic and job development. They experienced the designation as imposed by policy makers based in urban centres, who use the resources of the rural periphery for recreation, but do not depend on them economically.
- 41 The case study of the Zillertal highlights the conflict between tourism and hydropower industry and conservation. The Zillertal valley is known as a tourist centre, with the main income coming from winter tourism. Now the NaP has become an attraction for visitors because of its intact cultural landscape. Yet economically the “gentle” tourism promoted by the NaP lags far behind the big player winter tourism. The co-existence of PAs and glacier ski resorts is a well known issue in the Alps. According to Mayer and Mose (2017), in Hohe Tauern National Park in Austria and in Vanoise National Park in France conservationists and glacier ski resorts compete for the high-Alpine landscapes.
- 42 Given its topography, the skiing industry does not play a major role in the Lechtal valley compared with the Zillertal valley. Yet the argument that the designation of PAs would prevent further infrastructure projects (e.g. hydropower plants for energy production) was also presented. The Lechtal valley is mainly a summer destination for tourists and with projects promoting the NaP new guests are coming and tourist overnight stays are rising (Land Tirol 2017). According to Hammer and Siegrist (2001), nature-based tourism in protected areas contributes to regional development in Alpine peripheral regions.
- 43 The park managers of both cases emphasized that not only intense communication with the local population enhanced the trust in their work and in conservation but also the construction of a NaP house. The NaP house not only serves as an office for the staff of the NaP and offers interactive tours, but is also a place for community meetings. In both

cases the local population perceives the house as a visible manifestation of an abstract NaP concept. Also essential for a positive perception were the regional and EU funds flowing into the regions, especially in the Lechtal valley.

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## ABSTRACTS

The establishment of protected areas is often preceded by tensions and intense discussions between stakeholders of differing interests. Governmental bodies, environmental conservation groups and local actors, such as farmers or locals involved in tourism, are either in favour of or in opposition to the designation of protected areas in their home regions. Using two protected areas in the Eastern Austrian Alps as cases in point, the present study combines the methods of oral history and archival research to trace these timelines of tension and to identify the actors involved and the issues debated on the way to designation. Our results reveal the complex nature of both cases shaped by a variety of actors from the public, non-profit (or voluntary) and private sectors. After up to 30 years of discussions, both protected areas now seem to be accepted by large parts of the local population and are even well-integrated in the regional agrarian and touristic setting. To shorten these “timelines of tension” in future conservation projects, communication measures and strategies could clearly be improved and past experiences of protected area designations made available to present policy makers of the Alpine region. In this way, new protected areas could be established without undue tensions and pave the way for sustainable development in sensitive environments of the European Alps.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Nature Park, protected area, designation, stakeholders

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