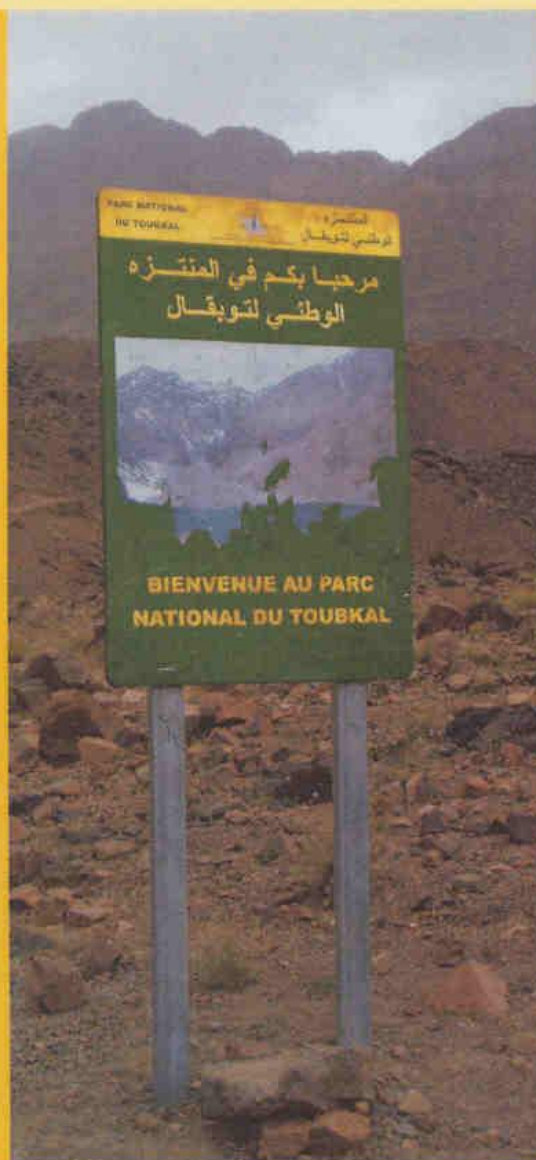
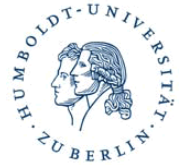


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Développement d'une Stratégie de Tourisme Durable dans les Aires Protégées du Maroc
Tome 1: Le Cas du Parc National du Toubkal



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Zusammenarbeit)

**Développement d'une stratégie de tourisme durable dans les aires
protégées du Maroc.
Tome 1 : Le cas du Parc National du Toubkal**

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Executive Summary

The aim of this study was to produce a development plan for sustainable tourism in Morocco, taking the Toubkal National Park (PNT) in the High Atlas Mountains as an example (volume 1). Furthermore, a handbook of methods was compiled, outlining individual steps for a future sustainable tourism strategy in nature reserves (volume 2). The Moroccan High Commission for Water, Forests and the Struggle against Desertification and GTZ Morocco commissioned the study.

Tourism is a major economic sector in many countries. It creates jobs and generates income, particularly in economically underdeveloped rural areas. On the other hand, non-regulated tourism is frequently accompanied by social conflict, the degradation of natural resources and low economic gain for the local population. The objective of “sustainable tourism” is to develop tourist structures that are environmentally sound, economically viable for the population and socially just.

Morocco is one of the leading tourist destinations in the world. In the interests of future expansion of this sector, the Moroccan government introduced a national programme in 2003 entitled “Vision 2010”. Apart from stepping up beach tourism, it includes reinforcing hinterland tourism by creating regional marketing and communication structures, the so-called pays d’accueil touristique (PAT). The PAT Al Haouz is currently being established south of Marrakesh, a renowned tourist centre. This is the location of the Toubkal National Park.

A growing number of both international and domestic hiking tourists visit the National Park and its surroundings. Local, regional and international tourist actors, such as tour operators, travel agencies, hostel owners, mountain guides, muleteers and foreign investors, offer their respective services. Up until now, the management of the National Park has played only a minor role in the complex actor landscape and consequently has little influence on tourism. However, in order to guarantee its major objective, i.e., the protection of the resources and biodiversity of the PNT, the administration is keen to see tourism take a stronger Direction towards sustainability in the future. This study is a contribution to this aim.

The environmental, economic and social situation in selected PNT valleys and the surrounding areas were examined and the impacts of tourism investigated. The relevant actors were identified, their forms of communication analysed and their ideas for the future of the PNT discussed. The most significant results of this data analysis are listed in the following:

- **Communication structures:** the Park administration is not visible on site for supervision and awareness raising. The obvious lack of personnel and the fact that visitors and indeed the local population are frequently unaware of the

confines of the Park makes this patently clear. Communication platforms for the exchange of ideas and coordination between the political decision-makers and tourist actors on the topic of tourism and its development in the region are few and far between. Participation of the local population in decision processes and the development of tourism is considered inadequate.

- **Environmental conditions and tourism:** evidence of degradation in the National Park and its surroundings, such as deforestation, erosion damage, water pollution, adverse effects on vegetation of treading and increased waste cannot be attributed to tourism alone. Tourism does, however, multiply environmental problems, particularly in areas with a high tourist concentration, i.e., in the villages and paths along the main routes to the Toubkal summit.
- **Economic conditions and tourism:** tourism generates extra seasonal earnings rather than a stable income for the local population, whose main source of income is commercial farming. Gains from tourism are unequally distributed and concentrated in the two most frequented valleys in the north of the High Atlas Mountains. This is due for the most part to their proximity to Marrakesh. As a result of the rapid growth of informal structures, local tourism actors such as muleteers and mountain guides are exposed to heavy price pressure. In addition, the worth of local and traditional handicraft products and agricultural produce has not been sufficiently acknowledged up to now.
- **Tourism and society:** tourism also strengthens the modernization of society in the Toubkal region. Its effects are perceived as both positive and negative. Due to lack of tourist awareness and much to the annoyance of the local population, there have been repeated occurrences of inappropriate tourist behaviour.

In order to steer tourism in the PNT in a more sustainable Direction, a strategy for the PNT and its surroundings was to be developed within the scope of the present study. The recommendations for sustainable tourism were worked out with various actor groups in the tourism sector and representatives of the local population. These were refined by the Park administration and laid down in a tourism development plan. The aim of the projects outlined in the plan is to make tourism more compatible, to improve environmental and socio-economic conditions, and to intensify communication and cooperation among the actors concerned. The recommendations do not therefore refer solely to regulatory and monitoring measures related to spatial planning, but call for internal restructuring of the Park administration and a more advantageous positioning in the complex actor landscape of tourism.

The strategy is based on recommendations developed for three areas, the content of which will be elaborated in the following:

- Reflection and realignment of the organization's internal structure

- Positioning the Park administration in the actor landscape
- Spatial planning measures to regulate tourism

Reflection and realignment of the organization's internal structure

- Develop the Park administration vision: the administration of the Park has developed a model for sustainable tourism that incorporates both environmental and socio-economic issues. Furthermore, the aims and results aspired to by the Park administration were rendered more concrete.
- Define the role of the Park administration: due to its authority in the central zone, the Park administration assumes a key regulatory and supervisory role. It plays a consultancy role in the surroundings and with its vision and development aims must position itself correctly.
- Recognize capacities: the extent to which the Park administration can assume its role depends on the human and financial resources available. Increased hiring of personnel, such as nature watches or rangers, is essential.
- Identify alternative financing: It is essential to establish alternative financial sources if more personnel are to be recruited for the grounds and urgent issues attended to in a flexible manner. The introduction of tourist taxes, admission fees or donations are possible sources of income that should be further envisioned.

Positioning the Park in the actor landscape

- Make use of communication platforms: in order to communicate its vision and development interests to actors in tourism, it is essential that the Park administration position itself more prominently on existing communication platforms.
- Establish cooperation: cooperation with bordering communities, the science community, representatives of the local population and village associations as well as with private tour operators were identified in order to offset the Park administration's lack of capacity, to gain the necessary acceptance and to develop a coherent system of waste disposal, e.g., beyond the confines of the Park itself.
- Develop agreements: an agreement in the form of a charter, for example, which will spread and share the idea of sustainable tourism from local through to national level should be devised. Bilateral agreements will be drawn up in the case of externalized tasks and activities, where rights, obligations and rules of conduct in the Park are laid down.
- Bolster participation of the local population: in order to advance the acceptance of tourism, participation of the local population in the planning and design, but also in

the gains of tourism should be sought more vigorously. Closer cooperation with existing village associations (associations de développement local) is called for in this case.

Spatial planning measures to regulate tourism

- Install monitoring system: the establishment of a monitoring system is indispensable to assessing the impact of tourism. The system will be developed scientifically and should be designed in such a way as to accommodate data recording by the nature watch or cooperating mountain guides.
- Carry out checks: a system for improved control of the tourist stream and compliance with regulations in the Park should be introduced. It must be both transparent and consistent, and include compensation for restrictions suffered by the local population.
- Carry out sensitization of tourists: awareness-raising measures to achieve appropriate behaviour by tourists in terms of the environment, but also of the culture and traditions of the local population, should be intensified.
- Promote deconcentration of tourism: in order to reduce the pressure on natural resources along heavily frequented axles and allow the population in marginal areas to profit from tourism, tourism itself should be – with the aid of the relevant regulatory measures – deconcentrated. This calls for the zoning of the Park, so that particularly fragile areas can be excluded from tourist activities.
- Introduce measures to regulate tourism: entrance gates and information points serve to raise awareness among visitors to the Park that they are in a nature reserve. Furthermore, sign-posting trails, drawing up and distributing hiking maps and producing information leaflets are useful in regulating the stream of tourists.
- Support local development: the Park administration should support development projects that are advantageous to achieving their own aims, i.e., the protection of natural resources, environmental awareness-raising of the local population and the environmental-friendly training of mountain guides.

Three phases for the chronological implementation of these recommendations in various projects were laid down in a development plan:

The most urgent issues, e.g., zoning, introduction of a waste disposal system and the development of a compatible monitoring system, will be drafted in the first phase. Simultaneously, cooperation with various actors should be squarely addressed in order to implement the projects and activities that have been prioritized. Furthermore, the public image of the Park administration as a major tourism actor should be reinforced on existing communication platforms.

The second phase involves carrying out measures to regulate tourism, i.e., design and distribution of maps and information brochures, and the initiation of pilot schemes as tourist attractions in marginalized valleys. Networking and cooperation should be expanded and intensified in this phase also.

The third phase focuses on Park presence, e.g., transfer of the Park administration head office to the grounds of the Park, network maintenance and expansion, and improved cooperation with other National Parks.

The strategy for sustainable tourism in the PNT and its surroundings should not be seen as a static process with a rigid succession of projects. On the contrary, what is required is dynamic and flexible planning, where projects and activities, and their impacts, are carefully monitored to allow for prompt reaction to possible mistakes and the planning of new strategies.