SLOW DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS PARK CREATION: A HISTORY OF THE BLACK FOREST IN POST-WAR GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Germany can boast of being among the most eco-friendly industrialised nations, thus drawing attention in the field of modern environmental history. A remarkable development in post-war (West) Germany is the spread of nature parks and national parks as instruments for large-scale nature conservation. However, its most beloved wooded mountain range, the Black Forest in the state of Baden-Württemberg, had been an 'empty area' for decades: it was not until 1999/2000 that the local municipalities formed nature parks in this region, and the state government established the Black Forest National Park only in 2014. This paper traces discussions among government officials and interest groups from the 1950s to the 2010s to scrutinise factors in discouraging park creation in this region.

While recognising that forestry interests and municipality heads were influential opponents of the state government’s park plans, this paper also focuses atten-
tion on other contexts and social groups. Nature parks were primarily intended for the promotion of recreational land use during the post-war economic boom years. However, this aspect had no timely relevance in the federal state and especially in the Black Forest, where serene woodlands had already begun to attract massive numbers of holidaymakers. In fact, the envisaged creation of new nature-based attractions provoked dissent among conservation officials and other social groups, who expressed concern that tourist-oriented parks would disturb the natural environment. National park projects of the early 1990s and the early 2010s were also not unchallenged. A circle of hikers asserted that local secondary forests were not an ideal location for a national park. Opposing residents also argued against the ecological principle of ‘let nature be nature’ in terms of maintaining the carbon sink properties and other environmental functions of forests.

The ‘slow development’ of park-making in the Black Forest thus can provide various interpretations and also seems to be a sharp reminder of the importance of paying attention to the historical context of national park formation. Although conservationists in Germany spoke of US national parks from the late nineteenth century onwards, the diversity of alternative views continued to influence the German conservation debate. Amid the growing popularity of tourism among motives for large-scale protection, this diversity gradually lost ground, eventually leading to the establishment of parks in this ‘empty area’ in the south-west corner of the nation.

KEYWORDS
Modern Germany; Black Forest (Schwarzwald); nature conservation; landscape protection; national park; nature park

1. INTRODUCTION

The Black Forest (Schwarzwald) is a wooded mountain range in the south-western German state of Baden-Württemberg. Bounded by the Rhine valley to the west and south, the region is roughly rectangular in shape, extends from north to south for about 160 kilometres, and covers an area of over 600,000 hectares. Its hills have a dark appearance seen from a distance because of dense coniferous forests (Figure 1). Although an old name of the region (Svarzwald) had already appeared in a ninth-century document, conifers became predominant only in the nineteenth century as a result of afforestation and reforestation.¹ Forests comprise two-thirds of the whole region – especially the northern part is heavily forested, while the south includes open grassland areas – and provide habitat for various animals such as red deer, wood grouses, and Eurasian lynxes. The relatively mild climate, lakes, spas, and historical towns add attractiveness to the region as one of Germany’s most popular tourist destinations.

Given its outstanding natural scenery, it is no wonder that the tradition of protecting nature in the Black Forest dates back about a century. The northern part in particular, where the proportion of state-owned forests is higher than in the whole Black Forest (about 40 per cent versus 30 per cent of woodland), has been a major target of state conservation policies since the early stage of the German conservation movement. In 1911, for example, the state forestry authority of Württemberg designated a 75-hectare area around the Wilder See, a small tarn near the Ruhestein mountain pass, as a Bannwald – a piece of state-owned woodland protected from silvicultural practices. In the southern Black Forest, too, there has been no lack of effort to conserve scenic spots. The Wutach Gorge, to give just one example, was placed under protection in the late 1930s; in the 1950s, a dam project of a power company, which was to draw much of the water from the canyon-like river valley, failed in the face of opposition from conservationists and citizens.

However, somewhat surprisingly, the Black Forest had been an ‘empty area’ for decades on the map showing large-scale park locations (Figure 2). In Germany, a ‘nature park’ (Naturpark) is the most common form of landscape protection. In 1956, the Society for Nature Protection Park launched a nature park program for the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Since then, federal, state, and local governments have supported the program and engaged in park planning. Today, there are over 100 nature parks in the whole of Germany, and many of them are in regions with a high density of trees. Of course, nature park supporters had seen the Black Forest as a suitable area for this type of park since the beginning. Still, it was not until 1999/2000 that two nature parks were established in this range (the Southern Black Forest Nature Park and the Black Forest Nature Park
Central/North).

Turning to the specific concept of the ‘national park’, the story is typically begun in the United States, which pioneered the national park movement with the launch of Yellowstone National Park in 1872. In the Federal Republic, where individual conservation measures fall not within the jurisdiction of the federal government but within that of the state governments, the state of Bavaria created Germany’s first national park in the Bavarian Forest in 1970. By contrast, a plan to establish a national park in the northern part of the Black Forest, proposed only in 1990 by a conservation organisation and promoted by the state government of Baden-Württemberg, failed in 1992. In 2011, the Green-Social Democrat state government announced a renewed national park plan; the state parliament managed to pass a bill to create the Black Forest National Park in 2013 (Figure 3).

By using archival records of the state government of Baden-Württemberg, newspaper reports, and other materials, this paper examines factors that had discouraged the development of nature parks and national parks in the Black Forest. On the environmental scene today, Germany enjoys an enviably green reputation in the industrialised world. Many scholars have traced a growing ecological awareness in post-war Germany, and, in the field of environmental history, the nature park movement and the creation of the Bavarian Forest National Park are now known as examples to illustrate the German path. Against this background, it is not surprising that the exceptional slow tempo of park formation in the south-west

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corner of the nation has not attracted particular attention.

Historical case studies on the creation and evolution of national parks and other protected areas have been the subject of attention for many environmental historians. As such, the particularities of this Black Forest case study has broader implications beyond the regional context. Also relevant here is the fact that many scholars tend to think of parks as environmental ‘goods’ and have thus neglected to see the problems and hardships created by protected areas, especially on the European continent. Historical research on obstacles to park formation in Europe has only recently gained momentum, and it still contains a limited range of analyses. A study on natural parks in Portugal, for example, showed that park creation of the country got off to a late start in the 1970s, attributing it to a general lack of tradition of conservation and to the rural society’s emphasis on economic land use. The present case study, too, will acknowledge that land-use conflicts played a role in slowing down the park debate. And yet, this was, to some extent, true in every region of Germany, and the Black Forest was part of the German trend of protecting nature. Without suspecting a combination of several factors, it appears difficult to explain the uneven distribution of parks within the nation.

So far, the main research focus on the problematic aspects of national park formation has centred on developing world countries, where park projects have often come under scepticism or criticism from local communities for their colonialisist appropriation of scenic and wildlife resources. Critical studies of various park


geographies have challenged the supremacy of the US model of national parks or Western science, drawing lessons from local voices for the future development of conservation. In his critique of the American emphasis on wilderness preservation, the Indian scholar Ramachandra Guha stressed that 'agrarian populations have a finely balanced relationship with nature'.

A lot of empirical articles followed this view. Amita Baviskar, for instance, paid attention to an alternative discourse about grazing and the collection of medicinal plants within the Great Himalayan National Park. According to the interpretation, villagers do not exploit natural resources but deepen understanding of ecological balances and limits through these activities; Baviskar saw that an NGO played a significant role in mobilising such ‘indigenous knowledge’ to keep the debate away from ‘park versus people’ confrontation. Interestingly, Guha compared Indian environmentalism to that of Germany, arguing that both ‘allow for a greater integration of ecological concerns with livelihood and work of the local population’.

Although this classification leaves some room for discussion, it seems unwise to tell the history of Black Forest merely as an unsuccessful one on the German park scene; rather, it may provide further insights into the spectrum of interpretations of conservation.

This motivation is surely appropriate considering recent transnational observations, which highlighted that the spread of national parks was not so much a triumphant march of ‘America’s best idea’ as a global project. ‘Both in the United States and beyond’, in Karen Jones’s words, ‘the national park project of civilizing

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8 Guha, ‘Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation’: 81.
nature allowed for many translations in detail and design’. Paul S. Sutter also understood that national parks had not always been a ‘great idea’ based on a national consensus, even in parts of the world where US influence had been strong; neither had they held steady across time and space. More specifically, Bernhard Gissibl saw Germany’s first national park in the Bavarian Forest as a product of protagonists’ inspiration from abundant wildlife in Africa rather than a copy of the US model. Given these things, one can assume that Germany itself exhibits diverse views on park creation, and that the path of the Black Forest is a variation on this national character. For this reason, the present paper devotes quite a few paragraphs to the German context and situates the regional case in it to draw a conclusion.

This paper begins with a history of conservation and the national park concept in pre-war Germany. I then discuss the nature park movement from the second half of the 1950s until the late 1960s, scrutinising attitudes of government officials and interest groups in Baden-Württemberg. There follows an exploration of state government initiatives to create nature parks and consequent social reactions in the Black Forest in the 1970s. The next part starts with the birth of Germany's first national park and then deals with the situation in the Black Forest in the last decade of the twentieth century: the failure of the first attempt to create a national park

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and the establishment of the two nature parks. Lastly, I come to an analysis of controversies about the national park project from 2011 onwards.

2. NATURE CONSERVATION AND DEBATES ABOUT NATIONAL PARKS FROM THE KAISERREICH TO THE THIRD REICH

Since the High Middle Ages, when settlements began to expand in the Black Forest, the woodlands had been forced to meet various human needs. The metal and glass industries consumed vast amounts of wood fuel, and extra quantities of logs were tied together into rafts and transported by water. The local population needed timber and firewood for household use, while forests shrunk in the land-use competition with farms and pastures. In the nineteenth century, then, afforestation and reforestation gathered momentum; fast-growing spruce trees were the preferred species. The nineteenth century was also the time when territorial lords strengthen supervision and management of forests for continuous use. The state forest law of Baden of 1833, for example, stipulated that young trees should be raised without delay after logging of exploitable forest stands; the forestry authority allowed clear-cutting only in exceptional cases.

While such strategies left a mark in the history of forest management, the conservation movement began to flourish in the decades around 1900. In the course of

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industrialisation and urbanisation, educated middle-class Germans articulated anxieties about damage to natural scenery, thus establishing numerous private conservation associations. The proclamation of the Kaiserreich in 1871 not only ushered in a new era of the search for unifying symbols in the German landscape; it also stimulated regionalists’ anti-centralistic attachment to the countryside. Many initiatives came from the homeland movement (Heimatbewegung), which concentrated their attention on, besides cultural monuments, notable individual trees, bushes, or rocks, to protect them as ‘natural monuments’ (Naturdenkmäler).

Large-scale protection was not a minor issue among some circles, and the most significant point of reference was the United States, where the world’s first national park, Yellowstone National Park, was founded in 1872. However, the majority of German conservationists found it unrealistic to have their own national parks, recognising that no ‘wilderness’ or ‘untouched’ nature remained in their densely populated homeland. Even in rural areas, the creation of national parks seemed impossible because of conflicts with landowners and agricultural and silvicultural interests. In a 1904 memorandum to a Prussian authority, Hugo Conwentz, a botanist and the most influential protagonist of natural monument protection, rejected the creation of US-style national parks in terms of feasibility.14

However, the concept of national parks did not cease to motivate some conservationists. In 1909, over 30 nature lovers from Germany and Austria established the Society for Nature Protection Park (Verein Naturschutzpark, hereafter VNP). One of the leading members of the society, Kurt Floericke, a naturalist and writer,

stressed that natural monuments were not enough to deal with landscapes as whole entities. The VNP aimed to create large-scale reserves called ‘nature protection parks’ and saw three types of land as characteristic of Central Europe and worthy of protection: high mountain ranges, low mountain ranges, and lowland areas. The VNP took action soon in the Lüneburg Heath, a lowland area near Hamburg. The heathland landscape formed by long-term grazing was in danger of losing its scenic beauty because of the speculative construction of a villa colony. From 1910 onwards, the society bought several pieces of land in the Lüneburg Heath; ten years later, the Lüneburg Heath Nature Protection Park covered about 4,000 hectares. The VNP created the other nature protection park in the Austrian Alps near Salzburg; this park is now part of the High Tauern National Park.

The VNP concept found no favour with Conwentz, who had become the director of the State Office for the Protection of Natural Monuments in Prussia in 1906. Although Conwentz spoke of smaller reserves (Naturschutzgebiete) to protect nature, he stressed that ‘park’ meant not a protected area but a private or public ‘artificial ground’ in the German language. Furthermore, arguing for the rigorous exclusion of human influences, Conwentz could not share the VNP’s view that nature protection parks could, if necessary, serve as resources for tourism in remote areas. Even though the state government of Prussia recognised the core area of the Lüneburg Heath park as a nature reserve in 1921, state and regional conservation authorities were not deeply involved in the debate concerning large-scale protection until the end of the Weimar era. Since negotiating with property owners to buy private land was a time-consuming and expensive process, they could not recog-
nise it as a usual conservation practice.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the park debate gained new momentum under the Nazi dictatorship. The main driving force was Germany’s first nationwide conservation law, the National Nature Protection Law (\textit{Reichsnaturschutzgesetz}) of 1935. The passage of this law came from the passion of Herman Göring, who, as the forestry and hunting minister, wanted to have authority over conservation. Despite the lack of specific provisions for national parks, the concept of landscape reserves (\textit{Landschaftsschutzgebiete}) in this law – less strict, but larger-scale protected areas compared to nature reserves – marked a significant step beyond Conwentz’s tradition. The conservation law focused, in effect, not only on individual, ‘undisturbed’ natural monuments but also on cultural landscapes of the countryside.\textsuperscript{16} Besides, the international cooperation that climaxed the adoption of the 1933 London Convention seems to have had stimulated the national park debate in the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{17}

Actually, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, conservation officers were considering establishing large-scale reserves. Being an intimate friend of Göring, Lutz Heck, the Berlin Zoo director and a champion of fauna in colonial Africa, took charge of conservation within the forestry ministry in 1938 and developed national


\textsuperscript{17} Chaney, \textit{Nature of the Miracle Years}, p. 216.
park plans.\textsuperscript{18} Conservation officers discussed mainly a plan for the Bavarian-Bohemian forests, working on a draft landscape reserve ordinance. Of course, the project was not free from conflicts of interest. Assuming that US parks were serving as a model for the project, the Bavarian regional planning authority argued particularly against the restrictions the national park would place on the local population’s freedom of movement and forest economy. By contrast, conservationists viewed that the park would stimulate tourism and bring an additional source of income to the impoverished border region.\textsuperscript{19} Under the pressure of World War Two, the execution of the Bavarian-Bohemian forests project was officially postponed in 1943 until the end of the war.

Looking at the south-west corner of the nation, there appears to have been no lack of effort to protect nature before 1930s. As early as 1911, the state forestry authority of Württemberg designated an area around the Wilder See as a Bannwald. The German term ‘Bannwald’ originally refers to a wooded area controlled by and reserved for a territorial lord in medieval and early modern times; the forestry authority chose it as the title of the protected area probably because there was still hostility among conservationist to foreign words such as ‘reserve’ or ‘reservation’.\textsuperscript{20} The conservation authority recognised this piece of woodland as the core of a 766-hectare nature reserve (Wilder See-Hornisgrinde) in 1939.


\textsuperscript{19} The Conservation Commissioner for the Administrative Region of Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate to Professor Lutz Heck in the Reich Forest Office, 19 Feb. 1939, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch) B 245/41; notification of the landscape reserve ordinance (draft), 4 May 1939, BArch B 245/41; Hubert Weinzierl, ‘Chronik einer Idee’, in Hubert Weinzierl, Hans Bibelriether, and Georg Sperber (eds), \textit{Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald} (Grafenau: Verlag Morsak, 1972), pp. 35–36.

In Baden, the decade before World War One saw a surge of public interest in protecting individual objects – partly thanks to efforts of the Black Forest Society (Schwarzwaldverein), one of the oldest hiking and mountaineering clubs. Still, it was under the national regulations of 1935 that the creation of reserves experienced a boom. Between 1937 and 1942, the conservation authority of Baden established 58 nature reserves encompassing over 7,100 hectares; in the Black Forest, Mount Feldberg, the highest mountain in the region (1,493 metres), the Wutach Gorge, and several wetlands were placed under protection. Of course, the increasing number of reserves did not necessarily mean a triumph of conservation principles. In the Feldberg area, which had served as a big ski resort since the turn of the century, transport and accommodation infrastructure projects were threatening natural landscapes.21

3. NATURE PARK MOVEMENT OF THE POST-WAR MIRACLE YEARS AND REACTIONS IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

After World War Two, the VNP intensified lobbying activities for more success. The person at the centre of discussions was Alfred Toepfer, an entrepreneur and owner of a trading company in Hamburg, who became the chairman of the society in 1954. In April 1956, when Toepfer stayed in New York, he wrote to Chancellor Konrad

Adenauer of West Germany about the popularity of national parks in the United States; he advocated creating comparable parks throughout West Germany to add to the Lüneburg Heath Nature Protection Park. Toepfer officially announced his idea at the society's annual meeting in Bonn in June of that year. VNP saw a couple of dozens of regions as ideal park locations, and many of them were forested low mountain ranges such as the Harz (Lower Saxony), the Sauerland (North Rhine-Westphalia), and the Bavarian Forest.

The launch of the VNP program was a timely event to meet the growing public demand for rural recreation areas. While West Germany experienced an economic miracle from the early 1950s onwards, more and more people wanted to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in the countryside to escape the noise and air pollution in cities. Shorter working hours and the rapid spread of cars encouraged this trend. Herbert Offner, the officer for conservation in the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, supported Toepfer’s idea and quickly began to discuss with the VNP and conservation officers at the state level. International trends convinced the VNP and its supporters of being behind, thus stimulating the debate: though densely populated, Japan and the Netherlands could boast their national parks since the 1930s, and the UK’s law of 1949 produced ten parks within a single decade.

Most of the conservation officers accepted the concept of new parks. Although it seemed, during the economic boom, unrealistic to leave quite a few areas un-

touched by human activities, the declaration of landscape reserves within the meaning of the National Nature Protection Law of 1935 (in force at the state level) served as the legal basis for the creation of new parks. This type of park came to be called ‘nature park’ after recreation parks in Sweden. Sponsor organisations at the local level – registered private associations formed mainly by local communities and private organisations, or public associations, wherein several communities united – assumed the work of establishing and managing nature parks. They spend funding from the federal and state governments on conservation measures and facilities such as car parks, hiking trails, and campgrounds. Between 1957 and 1967, 34 nature parks were erected throughout West Germany, and North Rhine-Westphalia, the heavily industrialised and most populous state, had the most parks with 13.

The state of Baden-Württemberg, in contrast, distanced itself from the concept of nature parks. From the beginning of their campaign, the VNP announced that the Black Forest was one of the ideal areas for nature parks. For Baden-Württemberg, other woodlands such as the Schönbuch (south-west of the state capital of Stuttgart) and the Odenwald (in the border region of Baden and Hesse) were also potential locations. Interest groups, too, propagated nature parks: the Black Forest Society, which gained influence on the environmental scene through its battle against the Wutach Gorge dam project, declared its support for park planning and

lobbied the state and federal governments for preparation work.\textsuperscript{27} However, in July 1962, the State Ministry of Cultural Affairs as the highest conservation authority issued a decree ordering all subordinate conservation offices not to declare landscape reserves to be nature parks.\textsuperscript{28} Indeed, Baden-Württemberg was the only federal state where no official nature parks existed until the early 1970s.

The state government’s response reflected several considerations. First, nature parks provoked protests from landowners who feared restrictions on economic, mainly agricultural and silvicultural uses of their property in protected areas. Although the VNP and national interest groups of property owners agreed that nature parks should not prevent existing land uses per se, individual projects at the regional and local levels often met with scepticism. When the president of the Black Forest Society stressed his support for nature parks at its annual meeting in 1960, for example, the Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners of Baden-Württemberg (*Forstkammer Baden-Württemberg*) sent a letter to the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, insisting on the primacy of traditional land uses in potential parks.\textsuperscript{29} The forestry ministry responded to such concerns and suggested to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs that they should issue an official statement. The forestry authority did not argue for preventing park creation itself but intended to assure landowners that the state government would not support


\textsuperscript{28} The State Ministry of Cultural Affairs to the Regional Authorities of North Württemberg, North Baden, South Baden, and South Württemberg-Hohenzollern, 20 July 1962, HStAS EA 7/502 Bü 64.

\textsuperscript{29} The Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners to the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 31 May 1960, HStAS EA 7/502 Bü 64.
any property restrictions in the name of nature parks.\textsuperscript{30}

To some extent, forest owners expressed similar anxieties in every corner of West Germany. And yet, in several states, such feelings were neither their only reaction nor a decisive factor in slowing down the nature park movement. Looking at discussions at the local level, it is noticeable that forest owners were realistic about changing economic and social circumstances – a continuous decline of profit from wood production and a sudden surge in holidaymakers visiting forests; some of them even tried to take advantage of park formation. Especially the central part of the federal republic illustrates this point, where motoring visitors flooded out of the Ruhr area, Germany’s most heavily industrialised and densely populated region, into the surrounding, relatively small woodlands. A prime example is the Diemelsee Nature Park on the border of North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse: it was local forest owners who initiated the designation of this Reservoir area as a nature park in the mid-1960s; they expected to have additional sources of income by encouraging the local tourism and also an area status to protect their forests from an avalanche of visitors.\textsuperscript{31}

In the south of Germany, it was hard to imagine for forest owners to discuss the creation of nature parks as a possible choice. The well-organised umbrella group of forest owners in Baden-Württemberg recognised that the federal state as a whole was, ‘thanks to its natural beauty and wealth of forests, a land of travel’ or ‘a big nature park’. They could not accept the designation of particular areas as parks

\textsuperscript{30} The State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry to the State Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 14 Feb. 1961, HStAS EA 7/502 Bü 64.
\textsuperscript{31} On the creation of this nature park, see Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abteilung Rheinland, NW 453 Nr. 481.
because it could cause massive concentrations of tourists in the designated areas, whether the consequences would be favourable or unfavourable for the local people. As an alternative, the Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners lobbied for grants which forest owners could receive for the public, recreational use of their forests without demarcating boundaries.\footnote{32 The Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners to the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 13 Jan. 1961, HStAS EA 2/701 Bü 264.}

Looking beyond forest owner circles, one can say that this was a general trend in the south of Germany. Already at one of the first internal meetings to discuss the VNP program in 1957, the relevant state ministries of Baden-Württemberg shared the view that, in the federal state with many popular recreational forests, nature parks were not essential to meet the public demand.\footnote{33 File note, ‘Besprechung vom 9. Oktober 1957 beim Kultusministerium’, HStAS EA 7/502 Bü 64.} The program did not arouse quick enthusiasm among municipality heads either, while local communities were significant initiators of nature parks in other federal states. The Odenwald seems to have been the only exception. When municipalities in the Hessian part of this wooded region created a nature park in 1960, these of the Baden Odenwald also began seeking a park status to avoid losing its popularity and potential financial support from the federal government in competition.\footnote{34 The District Authority of Heidelberg to the Regional Authority of North Baden, 12 Nov. 1959, HStAS EA 3/102 Bü 32.} In other regions including the Black Forest, officials and the public lacked even such passive motivations. The same can be said for the other state in the south of Germany, Bavaria, where the state government recognised no need for nature parks at first; but in Bavaria, probably stimulated by the national park debate (see below), several nature parks were established in the late 1960s.
However, the most crucial factor behind the state government’s response was discussions within the conservation authority. More clearly than anyone else, the jurist and conservation officer in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Eberhard Bopp, stressed ‘complete authority of the state’ to stop landscape deterioration in the boom years.\textsuperscript{35} In February 1957, when representatives of the VNP and conservation officers gathered in Bonn, Bopp was the only participant to express strong concern. In his words, nature protection would be ‘watered down’ by creating nature parks. Taking Mount Belchen in the southern Black Forest as an example, he illustrated that tourist-oriented places would inevitably be equipped with transport facilities such as chairlifts and thus threaten the natural environment.\textsuperscript{36}

Conservation officials at the regional level, too, questioned the VNP concept. At a meeting with Bopp in 1958, they shared the understanding that serene spots in the Black Forest and the Schönbuch were attracting too many motoring holiday-makers. Theoretically, nature parks – more precisely, the federal government funding for facilities – were supposed to help officials to control traffic flow and people’s movement. However, the participants were afraid that the propagation of parks would only worsen the current situation; it might produce, in one participant’s words, an intolerable ‘bustling funfair’ (\textit{Rummelbetrieb}) in forests.\textsuperscript{37} At an inter-ministerial meeting, an officer from the forestry ministry also expressed concern that the propaganda would bring the ‘bustle’.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} Meeting minutes, ‘Sitzung der obersten und der höheren Naturschutzbehörden des Landes Baden-Württemberg, am Mittwoch, dem 26. 3. 58’, 1–6, HStAS EA 3/102 Bü 32.
Significance of nature parks in terms of conservation was an issue where nature park supporters had an entirely different perspective. In a letter to the state officer for regional planning, for example, the president of the Black Forest Society argued that existing nature reserves in the Black Forest formed only ‘an unharm- 
nious mosaic’: these areas seemed too small and too isolated from each other to protect flora and fauna sufficiently. He accused the state conservation authority of not seeing the nature park movement as an opportunity to place the whole Black Forest under protection. However, the state conservation authority was firmly of the opinion that the National Nature Protection Law did not allow the setting up of parks for recreation. In his article with the title ‘Why one makes no nature parks in Baden-Württemberg’, which appeared in a journal for conservationists in 1963, Bopp reaffirmed that ‘without the will to defend, and without the readiness to fight where necessary, there is no effective nature protection’.

4. STATE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO CREATE NATURE PARKS IN THE 1970S

In the early 1970s, environment protection became a central socio-political issue in many Western countries. Especially under the influence of the United States, where President Richard Nixon’s enforcement of environmental legislation and the first Earth Day in 1970 were symbols of the new era, the West German Social-Liberal

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39 Prof. Dr. Asal, the president of the Black Forest Society, to Dr. Ziegler, the regional planning of- ficer in the State Ministry of Home Affairs, 11 Nov. 1960, 2, HStAS EA 2/701 Bü 265.
government under Chancellor Willy Brandt put the issue high on the agenda. Nature conservation and outdoor recreation, too, attracted increasing public attention, especially because the Council of Europe designated the year 1970 as European Conservation Year.

Environmentalism pushed the state government of Baden-Württemberg to take action, and the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry took the initiative. For the 1970 Conservation Year, the forestry authority carried out a study of environmental and recreational functions of the Schönbuch and drew a plan for further development of this 15,000-hectare wooded area. Then, in internal discussions in 1971, the forestry minister suggested creating a Schönbuch nature park. His initiative is not so surprising if one considers nature park supporters’ criticism in previous years: they tended to blame the forestry authority for the government’s policy against nature parks, although the conservation authority, as seen above, played a more significant role; now, amid growing public environmental awareness, further criticism must have been unacceptable in terms of public image. The Schönbuch was a relatively ideal place to start with because almost the entire region was covered with publicly owned forests and already under landscape protection. At a cabinet meeting in March 1972, the minister insisted that they should rethink the ‘classical’, ‘self-satisfied’ conservation policy against nature parks. Although other ministers hesitated, the Minister-President supported the

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44 Meeting minutes, ‘Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Ministerrates am 21. März
forestry minister’s initiative, and the cabinet decided to create the Schönbuch Nature Park.

At the same meeting, the forestry minister also suggested working out a master plan of nature parks for the entire state. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs as the state conservation authority was concerned about the negative impacts of tourism on the environment.\footnote{The State Ministry of Cultural Affairs to the Working Committee for Homeland Protection of South Baden, 11 Aug. 1972, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/2.} However, the plan did not suffer a setback, partly because Eberhard Bopp had retired from the conservation office in 1970. Besides, an administrative reorganisation enabled the forestry authority to lead further discussion: in the course of 1972, the state government reorganised the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry into the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and the Environment, transferring the jurisdiction over conservation from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to the new environment ministry. The environment ministry developed a ‘nature park concept for Baden-Württemberg’ as a symbol of its environmental policy, which was adopted by the state government in December 1976. With this master plan, the environment ministry intended to establish eight additional nature parks after public hearings.\footnote{Press release, ‘Zwölf Prozent der Landesfläche werden als Naturparke ausgewiesen’, 15 Dec. 1976, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/2.} In 1979/1980, four nature parks – the Neckar Valley-Odenwald nature park, among others – came into existence.

Supporters of nature parks in the Black Forest tried to take advantage of this policy change. In a 1972 letter to the Minister-President, the Working Committee for Homeland Protection of South Baden (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Heimatschutz Südbaden), a regional conservation group, called for nature parks in the Black For-
They required parks not only to protect natural landscapes from the development of accommodation infrastructure but also to arouse broader public interest in conservation.\(^{47}\) The Black Forest Society and the Regional Association of the Northern Black Forest (\textit{Regionalverband Nordschwarzwald}), a public body responsible for regional planning, also started to consider potential nature park boundaries.\(^{48}\) Of course, the state government’s nature park concept of 1976 included plans for this region: one nature park for the northern, and the other for the southern part of the Black Forest.

Nevertheless, the hearing process from 1977 onwards never became a decisive event for park creation in the Black Forest. Although quite a few municipalities, particularly those located on the periphery of the region, welcomed the concept in terms of tourism promotion, others were worried that the nature park planning initiated by the government would harm local planning autonomy.\(^{49}\) Moreover, officials and interest groups doubted whether nature parks were compatible with conservation practices. The conservation commissioner for the district of Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis, for example, feared that ‘an “avalanche of recreational developments” would flow down the landscape’.\(^{50}\) Although its primary concern was restrictions on forest use, the Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners of Baden-Württemberg suggested in a 1978 statement to the environment ministry that there was a dichotomy between the cause of conservation and the

\(^{47}\) The Working Committee for Homeland Protection of South Baden to the Minister-President, 9 Feb. 1972, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/2.
\(^{49}\) On reactions of municipalities, see HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/16 and Bü 102/17.
\(^{50}\) The District Authority of Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis (Lower Conservation Office) to the Regional Authority of Freiburg (Higher Conservation Office), 23 Jan. 1978, 2, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/17.
creation of 'bustling fairgrounds' (*Rummelplätze*). Another agricultural interest group shared this sentiment, complaining about the problem of rubbish left behind by tourists. In a 1980 conference for tourism in the Black Forest, the director of the regional authority of Freiburg gave a more explicit warning. Referring to the erosion of mountainsides caused by a stream of visitors, he rejected decidedly recreation-oriented regional planning as a threat to nature protection; he also interpreted nature parks as 'bustling fairgrounds' which would worsen the situation.

In addition to these critical opinions about the concept of nature parks per se, the issue of where the park boundaries should run complicated the debate. Contrary to the environment ministry's original plan, the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Economy advocated smaller nature parks to leave some room for infrastructure projects. In the 1976 concept, accordingly, the northern and southern parks were supposed to cover only core areas in each location, thus producing quite large 'negative space' around them. Since this could draw dividing lines within each of natural or cultural landscapes, the plan caused concern among some municipalities, especially those that the state government informed of belonging in 'negative space'. Representative bodies lobbied for reconciliation. The Regional Association of the Northern Black Forest argued that the northern nature park should

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51 The Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners to the State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and the Environment, 23 Feb.1978, 3, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/5.
cover about 250,000 hectares, while the government saw only 107,000 hectares in its concept.\textsuperscript{55} The regional association continued to lobby during the following two decades, but the attempt did not produce direct results.


Although German mainstream conservationists regarded nature parks as alternatives to national parks, another movement suddenly emerged in July 1966. The key figure was the Frankfurt Zoo director and a champion of large fauna in Africa, Bernhard Grzimek, who proposed the state government of Bavaria to establish a national park in the eastern part of the Bavarian Forest. The state forestry authority accused Grzimek of not considering ecological balance because his plan intended to increase populations of animals – including red deer and roe deer, which could cause severe damage to local trees. However, his scheme gathered more momentum than that of Lutz Heck under the Third Reich: Grzimek was famous for his films and television series on wildlife, thus mobilising enthusiastic support from the public. Local municipalities united in an association to promote the project as early as 1967, expecting that Germany’s first national park would revitalise the region’s economy. In addition, not only West German citizens but also conservationists abroad pressed the Bavarian government. ‘So many countries, even the

\textsuperscript{55} The Regional Association of the Northern Black Forest (association director) to the municipalities in the association’s territory, 26 Sep. 1977, HStAS EA 7/503 Bü 102/16.
underdeveloped countries of Africa nowadays boast reserves and national parks’, an English conservationist complained in a petition letter. ‘I am really surprised that a progressive country like Germany dose not feature any’.56

Amid the mounting public pressure, the state parliament of Bavaria approved the creation of the Bavarian Forest national park in June 1969. The national park officially opened in 1970 to celebrate the European Conservation Year, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognised the national park in 1972. The Federal Nature Protection Law of 1976 defined a national park as a large-scale reserve that is entirely or almost unaffected by human impact and contributes to the conservation of native plants and animals; the creation and administration of parks continued to fall within the jurisdiction of the federal states. In 1978, Bavaria established the Berchtesgaden National Park as Germany’s second one.

To a certain extent, Grzimek saw himself as a reformer of the German conservation movement during the national park debate. Lobbying the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, for example, for example, Grzimek argued that nature parks were of little relevance to nature protection, adding that this was the reason for the refusal of Baden-Württemberg to create nature parks.57 However, since the Bavarian project started with the charismatic figure’s unique attachment to wildlife, it seemed too exceptional to follow as a model in other federal states. In Baden-Württemberg, soon after the neighbouring state passed the national park bill, a local newspaper asked experts for their opinions about the possibility of cre-

57 Bernhard Grzimek to the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 19 Dec. 1966, BArch B 116/26243.
ating a similar park in the Black Forest. Two of respondents – a regional forester and a district head who was also representing a local tourism interest group – were cynical about the idea primarily because it appeared hard to exclude human activities from vast land. A zoo director as the other respondent also rejected the creation of a national park, arguing for nature parks combined with ‘wild parks’ to exhibit animals. Germany’s third and fourth national parks followed only in 1985/1986. Against the background of growing international interest in wetland conservation, the states of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony established the Wadden Sea national parks.

Quite unexpectedly, the German reunification in 1989/1990 produced a more decisive national park boom. Focusing mainly on the Müritz region in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the debate started as part of the democratisation process of East Germany just after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The area, where forests cover the land around Lake Müritz, was a symbol of power and prestige of the disappearing socialist regime: it contained a state-owned reserve serving as a private hunting ground of the Prime Minister of East Germany. A local action group led by museum biologists lobbied the East German government to create here a national park open to the public. In their proposal, the nature lovers also suggested the need for park creation as a protective measure, predicting a surge in holidaymakers from West Germany and the resultant landscape deterioration. The govern-

ment accordingly passed a national park program in September 1990, which produced five national parks including the Müritz National Park, three nature parks, and six biosphere reserves just two days before the German reunification.

The wave of conservation debate also reached the West German state of Baden-Württemberg. At the end of 1989, an East Germany citizen visited Stuttgart for information exchange with conservationists. While recognising West Germany’s leading role in fighting against air and water pollution, he saw that there was still room for improvement in biotope and species protection. The nature lover wrote a letter to the Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg, asking him to plan a national park in the Black Forest. The state government rejected this personal request, replying that, unlike Bayern, Baden-Württemberg lacked entirely or almost untouched nature within the meaning of the federal law of 1976. After that, the German Society for Conservation of Nature (Naturschutzbund Deutschland, or NABU), which had been established initially as the League for Bird Protection (Bund für Vogelschutz) in Stuttgart in 1899 and now took over the new name of the East German partner, intensified lobbying activities. At its annual meeting in October 1991, the Baden-Württemberg branch of this society announced a national park plan for the northern Black Forest. They advocated the concept of ‘soft tourism’ (Sanfter Tourismus), contrasting it with ‘hard’ leisure activities such as downhill skiing.


60 V. H. to the Minister-President, 27 Dec. 1989, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 187.
In NABU’s plan, the national park should consist of two separate natural areas called Grindenschwarzwald and Enzhöhen to cover 14,200 hectares in total, where the proportion of state-owned forests amounted to about 80 per cent. The Grindenschwarzwald area was the larger one located roughly in the heart of the northern Black Forest and contained Mount Hornisgrinde (1,164 metres); some spots had already been placed under protection, including the aforementioned ‘Wilder See-Hornisgrinde’. This potential park area also involved municipality-owned forests and a significant portion (about 2,000 hectares) of the woodland owned by the Murgschifferschaft. The Murgschifferschaft, a cooperative of timber traders and sawmill owners based in the town of Forbach, had its origin as the timber rafting company of the Murg valley before the beginning of the early modern period.

After some hesitation, two responsible state ministries – the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Rural Affairs, Food, Agriculture and Forestry – supported the NABU’s initiative and arranged an information session for the local population. However, when the municipal mayors gathered for this event in the local spa town of Bad Wildbad in January 1992, it turned out that the national park project was not welcome on site. The majority of the municipality heads rejected it, asserting the national park would undermine the local autonomy, economy, and


64 The State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and the Environment was divided into the two ministries in 1987.
tourism industry, and that conventional instruments were sufficient to protect landscapes of ecological value. Among economic lobbies, the quickest response came from the Association of Sawmill and Wood Industry of Baden-Württemberg (Verband der Säge- und Holzindustrie Baden-Württemberg). In a letter to the forestry ministry, the interest group complained that restrictions on cutting down trees for commercial purposes within the park area would reduce the wood supply and put local small- and medium-sized businesses at risk.

Some groups looked at the issue of forest use from other angles. Residents in Hundsbach, a remote village of Forbach, collected signatures against potential national park regulations. They defended ‘the right of free access to “our” forest’ for the collection of wild berries and firewood. Nature park supporters, too, presented opposing views. The Hornisgrinde local group of the Black Forest Society criticised an idealised image of the Black Forest as a region of natural forests suitable for a national park. They indicated the historical development of local secondary forests with the words: ‘There is no area here that has remained totally or even partially unaffected by humans for long.’ The local group argued then that the potential closure of hiking trails would diminish the attractiveness of the region, seeing even a violation of the civil right of free access to nature for recreation enshrined in the state forest and conservation laws.

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67 The Mayor’s Office of Forbach to the State Ministry of Rural Affairs, Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 27 Aug. 1992, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 189. The village of Hundsbach itself is located not in the territory of the Murgschifferschaftswald but in a state-owned forest area.
68 Statement of the Black Forest Society, Gau Hornisgrinde, Jan. 1992, 2–5, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 187. In Germany, the federal and state forest laws guarantee the right of free access to forests for recreation. On this topic, see Kazuki Okauchi, ‘Wem gehört der Wald? Die Entwicklung der moder-
Another noteworthy point is that interest groups discussed, albeit briefly, the problem of carbon dioxide emissions – at a time when the threat of climate change did not lie at the very centre of popular environmental discourse. All of the Black Forest Society, forest owners, and wood industry interests argued that existing managed forests could serve as carbon sinks effectively than untouched natural forests. While wood used for construction could continue to store carbon, decaying trees in a national park would, in their view, only release carbon into the atmosphere. Limitations on logging were now not a measure entirely unchallenged in terms of environmental protection, although this was not among main issues which affected the course of the national park debate per se.

Amid the wave of disapproval, the state government announced in November 1992 that it would no longer pursue the national park plan. Although some local conservation groups and citizens outside the planned site lamented the decision in their letters to the ministers, the national park issue faded out soon after that. Still, the debate seems to have had indirect consequences considering initiatives in the rest of the decade. In 1995, for example, the forestry minister presented a concept for expanding the total area of protected forests (Bannwald and Schonwald within the meaning of the state forest law) in the northern part of the Black Forest from one to three per cent of woodland (from 27 to 47 in number). The forest


\footnotesize{Statement of the Black Forest Society, Gau Hornisgrinde, Jan. 1992, 4, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 187.}

\footnotesize{the Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners to the State Minister of Rural Affairs, Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 26 Feb. 1992, unpag. (3), HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 188; the Association for Sawmill and Wood Industry to the State Ministry of Rural Affairs, Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 19 Feb. 1992, attachment, 7, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 188.}

\footnotesize{Letters in HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 190.}

\footnotesize{‘Ökologisches Entwicklungskonzept’, *Der Schwarzwald*, 1995, no. 1: 25.
authority created these reserves to conserve local biodiversity, although each of them covered at most 100 to 200 hectares, dotting mainly state-owned forests.

The Black Forest Society also began to advocate nature parks anew. Focusing on the concept of cultural landscapes to suggest the compatibility of agricultural and silvicultural land uses with conservation, the society lobbied relevant interest groups and conservation offices to create a nature park in the southern part of the Black Forest. As seen above, to reach a unanimous agreement of local municipalities on park boundaries was a tough task and seemed practically unlikely. However, towards the end of the 1990s, when rural economy grants from the state and federal governments and the EU were supposed to decrease, the region followed the state government’s suggestion of a reserve status as a precondition for getting alternative funding. In February 1999, 97 municipalities established the Southern Black Forest Nature Park. In the north of the region, where the Regional Association of the Northern Black Forest had been considering a park plan since the mid-1970s, 116 members (municipalities and associations) launched the Black Forest Nature Park Central/North in December 2000 to boost tourism marketing.

The two nature park could boast of being the largest ones in Germany (about 320,000 and 370,000 hectares respectively), encompassing the entire Black Forest. Conservationists did not always welcome this hasty park formation. The chair of the Baden-Württemberg branch of the Union for the Environment and Nature Conservation Germany (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, or BUND)

73 ‘Was bringt der Naturpark Südschwarzwald?’, Der Schwarzwald, 2000, no. 1: 5–6.
criticised in their magazine the ‘inflation of new nature parks’ for ‘false advertising’; the nature parks seemed to promote only the tourism industry, while conservation measures in the park areas appeared insufficient.\(^75\)

6. CREATION OF THE BLACK FOREST NATIONAL PARK

In May 2011, partly under the influence of the anti-nuclear campaign stimulated by the Fukushima disaster in Japan, the Greens and the Social Democrats formed the state government of Baden-Württemberg. The new government under Winfried Kretschmann – Germany’s first Green head of government – announced in its coalition agreement that it aimed to create a national park. The national park was supposed to facilitate the expansion of the ‘Natura 2000’, an ecological network of protected areas based on the 1992 Habitats Directive of the EU.\(^76\) General conditions were more favourable to launch national parks than in the early 1990s. In 1997, European representatives of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), a commission of the IUCN, defined the concept of ‘developing national park’ (Entwicklungsnationalpark). Germany enshrined this concept in the new Federal Nature Protection Law of 2002, allowing future national park authorities to have a transition period (for up to three decades) to meet conservation standards.


after their declaration of the park status. Apparently, the second attempt had symbolic importance: there were 14 national parks erected throughout Germany by this time, but Baden-Württemberg had no national park.

Conservationists did not miss this opportunity. The Baden-Württemberg branch of the NABU published a ‘screening’ report concluding that the northern part of the Black Forest, and the Grindenschwarzwald in particular, was the only area meeting all criteria as a national park location.\(^7\) Alexander Bonde, the State Minister of Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection (responsible for nature conservation and forestry), soon declared its intention to commission an independent expert report on the potential advantages and disadvantages of creating a national park in this region. In September 2011, the ministry distributed flyers with reply cards to 120,000 houses in the northern part of the Black Forest to encourage public debate, although the government was not yet specific about park boundaries.

The contrast between positive and negative sentiments was striking among the local population. As early as the late summer of 2011, anti-national park residents formed the interest group ‘Our Northern Black Forest’ (Unser Nordschwarzwald), while local supporters set up the Friend Circle of Black Forest National Park (Freundeskreis Nationalpark Schwarzwald) three or four months later. In a survey commissioned in May 2013 by the Friend Circle and the German branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), 52 per cent of the 1,000 respondents in the

northern part of the Black Forest supported the national park plan.\textsuperscript{78} However, just one day after the release of this information, newspapers reported the result of another non-binding survey of 50,000 residents carried out by seven local municipalities: with an average turnout rate of 55 per cent, between 64 and 87 per cent of respondents rejected the plan. The town of Forbach, where a Hundsbach resident acted as the leader of ‘Our Northern Black Forest’, was among the most vigorous opponents with an objection rate of 82 per cent.\textsuperscript{79}

It goes without saying that one problem was restrictions on commercial logging in the park area. When the state government held a hearing in Bad Wildbad in September 2011, local protesters blocked a road to the town. ‘We live on the forest. If the national park comes, I will shut down’, said a sawmill operator.\textsuperscript{80} However, the national park debate proceeded not only along the lines of ‘economy versus ecology’; divides between different ecological perspectives were more evident than in the early 1990s, and the central issue was potential bark beetles.\textsuperscript{81} National park supporters idealised intact ecosystems with the slogan ‘let nature be nature’, and the spread of bark beetles in dead tree forests seemed to them a normal, even a positive future development. Opposing residents questioned this idea, arguing that unless the bark beetle population was controlled using artificial measures, the insects would ruin an unexpectedly large area of the Black Forest, degrading the

\textsuperscript{81} In the early 1990s, too, national park opponents referred to the problem of bark beetles, but their main focus was on the resulting economic damage (the Association for Sawmill and Wood Industry to the State Ministry of Rural Affairs, Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 18 Dec. 1991, 2–3, HStAS EA 7/505 Bü 188).
recreation, water storage, and air filtration functions of local forests. They also criticised the banning of tree cutting and the resulting non-use of wood in the context of carbon footprint and climate change.\textsuperscript{82}

In April 2013, two consulting firms published a 1,200-page independent expert report commissioned by the state government. This report, written by dozens of experts from various fields, confirmed that logging limitations could lead to a decrease in regional wood supply in the long run. However, report authors raised doubts about its direct effect on the carbon balance. The amount of fixed carbon would, in the popular view, increase through the dominance of wood over other materials in the product market. By contrast, the report suggested that whether this ‘material substitution’ would function also depended on other conditions such as personal preference and price, and that only a universal decline in wood supply could adversely affect the popularity of wood. Report authors also saw that there would not be a significant risk of uncontrolled forest devastation by bark beetles – at least in comparison with the Bavarian Forest National Park at the time of its creation in 1970, where relatively monotonous forest structures subsequently led to a beetle population increase.\textsuperscript{83} In general, the expert report expected that the national park would serve as a stabiliser of biodiversity.

The minister Alexander Bonde, whom opposing residents did not hesitate to label as an ‘eco-dictator’, announced a specific plan for the national park in June


2013. The park was set to comprise two separate zones in the Grindenschwarzwald and cover about 10,000 hectares in total: the smaller, northern zone was an area around Mount Hoher Ochsenkopf, and the larger, southern one contained the Ruhestein mountain pass. Five of the seven anti-national park municipalities were excluded from the planned sites; while the Hoher Ochsenkopf zone should consist largely of state-owned forests in Forbach, it did not involve the village of Hundsbach and the Murgschifferschaftswald, thus separating itself from the Ruhestein zone (Figure 3).

Although the government seems to have tried to minimize the stretch of the park, the vote on a bill for the Black Forest National Park in November 2013 faced a demonstration of over 200 opponents outside the state parliament building (Figure 4). ‘Our Northern Black Forest’ had collected about 30,000 signatures and presented them to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which had been propagating an alternative plan for ‘Citizens’ National Park’ (Bürgernationalpark) to create a smaller park on local initiative. The Greens and the Social Democrats defended the government project in terms of species protection, referring to a conservation strategy announced by Chancellor Angela Merkel to free five per cent of Germany’s woodland entirely from human influence by 2020.84 Except for one delegate, all members of the CDU and the Free Democratic Party opposed the bill with 63 votes, but the ruling parties passed it with 71.

The national park administration started its work as early as January 2014. Dissenting voices did not disappear, but the opponents seem to have lost their

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momentum. Although ‘Our Northern Black Forest’ and CDU politicians announced their intention to inspect the park creation process, they began to refrain from making a direct challenge to the national park itself.\textsuperscript{85} Their attitude may not be surprising, considering the worsening prospects of the local economy. As an article of Der Spiegel understood it just before the parliamentary vote, amid the declining popularity of overnight stay, the local population had almost no alternative but to expect renewed impetus to tourism; as a glimmer of hope, an investor was initiating the construction of a ‘nature park hotel’ combined with outdoor facilities in Forbach.\textsuperscript{86} Indeed, the national park demonstrated a magnetic effect soon: in 2014, the National Park Centre (former Nature Conservation Centre) on the Ruhestein received 26,500 visitors – more than twice as many as in the previous year.\textsuperscript{87} ‘Protest against the national park has given way to pragmatism’, said a municipal tourism director from the Black Forest at a tourism fair in Stuttgart.\textsuperscript{88}

7. CONCLUSION

Given the region’s tradition of nature protection and growing national environ-

mentalism, there must be multiple explanations for the ‘slow development’ of park-making in the Black Forest. As a general point, the fate of park plans depended on whether officials and local communities could see some advantage in nature parks or national parks. During the post-war boom years, Baden-Württemberg could boast a wealth of recreational forests, which let the state government believe that there was no particular need to support tourist-oriented nature parks. The forestry and environment authority took the initiative from the early 1970s onwards, but, in the Black Forest as the most popular tourist destination, not all the municipalities were willing to jump at this opportunity. Only the reduction in government grants towards the end of the 1990s prompted the region to establish its first nature park.

Taking a closer look, it is obvious that forest owners and wood industry interests were among influential park opponents. The conflict between the state and municipality heads over local autonomy also discouraged the region from supporting park creation. And yet, what is more remarkable is that environmental considerations served as counter-arguments. While nature parks, as a product of the time of economic miracles, were intended for recreational use, the nature park movement also facilitated the creation of landscape reserves within the meaning of the National Nature Protection Law of 1935. However, the conservation authority of Baden-Württemberg rejected the VNP concept firmly, seeing it as a threat to the cause of conservation. Conservation officials were highly sensitive to potential environmental burdens brought about by uncontrolled tourism development just because they had insight into actual unfavourable situations. In the 1970s, other social groups began to express concern in the same context, comparing nature parks
to ‘bustling fairgrounds’. Although the main focus changed, environmental criticism continued to resonate in the national park debates. It is indeed hard to predict how national park projects affect environmental functions of local forests and the carbon balance in the long run, as ‘Our Northern Black Forest’ argued being concerned about the spread of bark beetles and restrictions on wood production.

While each of these counter-arguments deserves attention, the present case may not be as full of unique ecological narratives as ones in developing world countries. Some local residents defended everyday uses of forest resources, but neither they nor the whole local population appears to have highlighted some environmental knowledge rooted in their ways of life. Of course, the concept of cultural landscapes, which the Black Forest Society in particular advocated suggesting the history of local secondary forests, has the potential to enrich our debates about conservation strategies. The problem is that such guiding ideas or some ‘indigenous knowledge’ could not gather full momentum to unite local communities; this may be natural considering changing economic and social circumstances, and the lack of general dynamism is comparable to that of the Great Himalayan National Park documented by Amita Baviskar.\(^{89}\) Although Ramachandra Guha admired ‘a greater integration of ecological concerns with livelihood and work of the local population’, it continues to be not so much a reality as an ideal in both Germany and India.

The significance of this regional case becomes more apparent when we put it back into the German historical context. US national parks served as a point of reference among German conservationists from the late nineteenth century onwards,

but national parks were never the goal for the majority. The VNP conceived nature protection parks and then nature parks as alternative concepts, taking into consideration geographical characters of the nation and the possibilities and limitations of nature protection. Not to follow the trend towards designating such parks was also one possible option, and actually, Baden-Württemberg distanced itself from the nature park movement. The German conservation debate as a whole possessed a multiplicity of views, at least until the late 1960s.

Since then, however, waves of environmental concerns have repeatedly hit the south-west corner of the country, pressing the state government to demonstrate its political will to protect nature. Amid the gloom over rural economies, the importance of additional tourist attractions has become increasingly recognised among local communities. As this paper has shown several times, park initiators and supporters, whether of nature parks or national parks, can offer two arguments about tourism: park formation can promote local tourism, and it can also reduce environmental impacts of the tourism development. While not everything has gone well for these players, nature parks have almost reached an ‘inflation’ throughout Germany, and the former decades-long ‘empty area’, the Black Forest, features now even a national park. In effect, if not the US model, the belief that national parks are a ‘great idea’ has gradually taken root in this nation. There seems to be little room left to reject the creation of parks or to conceive other ideas for large-scale protection.

The regional history serves here as a reminder of the diversity of ways of conservation thinking. While the rest of the world has witnessed severe conflicts between parks and people, it appears that the European continent is also going
through a difficult time, because, for national and state authorities, the creation of national parks or other comparable protected areas is a quick way to respond to EU conservation directives. Whether we can see constructive dialogues on the park creation scene probably depends on balanced views of a mediator, namely the public outside planed sites. The path of the Black Forest is one of the stories we need here, which suggests that to support specific park projects is never the sole option for the environment.
Figure 1. View of the northern Black Forest. ‘Murgtal, Sasbachtal near Forbach, Northern Black Forest’, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Murgtal_Sasbachtal_near_Forbach_Northern_Black_Forest.jpg (accessed 1 Mar. 2020, ©Tom Lück).
Figure 2. Large-scale protected areas in Germany, 1996. The blue areas show national parks, and the green areas show nature parks. There were still no parks created in the Black Forest (Schwarzwald) in the south-west corner of the country.

Figure 3. Large-scale protected areas in the northern Black Forest, 2013. The red line shows the boundary of the Black Forest Nature Park Central/North (about 375,000 hectares), and the light green areas show the two zones of the Black Forest
National Park (about 10,000 hectares). 'Nationalpark Schwarzwald: Lage im Naturpark Schwarzwald Mitte/Nord',

Figure 4. Demonstration against the national park bill, 28 November 2013 © Franziska Kraufmann/dpa Picture-Alliance).