Abstract This chapter discusses “mass tourism” in Western Europe, the most important hotspot of world tourism in the “short” twentieth century (1918–1989). Chronologically structured in three sections, it aims to untangle tourism’s tricky relationship with regional development and nature conservation. First, the rise of a Taylorist tourism model accompanied the emergence of different forms of “social tourism” in the interwar period (e.g., the socialist Naturfreunde movement and fascist tourist organization such as Kraft durch Freude). Second, the rapid rebuilding of the tourism industry and its infrastructure from the 1940s to the 1960s, joined by the establishment of a network of conservation areas, played a vital role in promoting “landscape tourism”. Third, the 1970s and 1980s, which can be characterized by a final stage of mass tourism but also growing ecological awareness, calling for more sustainable forms of “eco-tourism”. This analysis reveals that, while (mass) tourism could be called a pan-European phenomenon, its characteristics were shaped on different levels and by a diverse set of actors with distinct, but very unequal agency.

Keywords tourism; regional development; nature protection; planning; actors and agency

By realizing their heart’s desire, tourists actively destroy that which they seek to find, German author Hans Magnus Enzensberger argued in his much-cited treatise on tourism in 1958.¹ Many tourists long for scenic pristine landscapes. However, when they subsequently share their touristic experiences with those at home, they also create powerful imitation effects, especially if the desirability of these places is reinforced by advertising from the tourism industry. (Landscape) tourism can also be a major economic force and trigger regional development and the creation of tourist infrastructures. By doing so, tourism generates economic growth in peripheral regions affected by deagrarianization and depopulation and simultaneously threatens its very foundations through its environmental impacts. From the early days of “romantic”, landscape-based tourism, this ambivalence has also elicited vigorous resistance from nature conservationists and sparked a variety of protective measures as well as “alternative” visions of sustainable tourism.
This chapter aims to untangle the ambivalent relations between tourism, regional development, and nature conservation in (Western) Europe, focusing on the phenomenon of “mass tourism” from 1918 until the end of the Cold War. Europe – and Western Europe in particular – was (and still is) the most important hotspot of world tourism. Not only did most tourists originate from European countries, but Europe also attracted most holiday-makers, both from within the continent and from abroad (especially the US). While tourism was certainly not an exclusively European social phenomenon – Japanese “onsen” spa resorts, for example, can be traced back for at least a millennium² –, many developments in “modern” mass tourism derived from – and were concentrated within – the industrialized countries of (Western) Europe with their flourishing middle classes. As a matter of fact, the interwar years can be regarded as a turning point in the development of mass tourism and nature conservation, with more and more members of all social classes participating in both activities.³ Moreover, European governments and administrations increasingly committed themselves to supporting both. Since the 1920s, “invisible exports” from tourism were considered a vital part of national trade balances.⁴ The 1920s also saw the establishment of inter- and transnational lobby organizations which created an institutional framework for tourism and nature conservation (part 1 of this paper).⁵ In the post-war period, efforts to promote tourism as a means of economic – and regional – development intensified. We argue that, contrary to popular belief, the rise of modern mass tourism in Europe was not only a result of economic growth, market activities, and consumer choices, but also shaped by substantial political and administrative intervention. The 1950s and 1960s could even be regarded as the heyday of regional/national planning of tourist infrastructures. The nature park movement of this era also brought an intensification of efforts to “harmonize” tourism, regional development, and nature protection (part 2). In the 1970s and 1980s, these two developments converged, as tourism turned into a mass phenomenon and, simultaneously, environmentalism entered the societal mainstream, resulting in intense debates on “sustainable” tourism (part 3).

These three shifts in the entangled history of tourism, regional development, and nature protection were transnational developments that spanned all of Europe. Europeans crossed borders more frequently and in ever-larger numbers to explore (new) tourist destinations. Starting in the 1970s, reactions to (mass) tourism and its environmental impact, while often rooted in local initiatives, were increasingly also part of larger trans- and international networks and discourses. Responses to the “smokeless industry”, however, remained mostly within regional and national frameworks and were directed at specific phenomena, e.g., water and air protection, waste disposal, plant and animal protection, or nature reserves. In contrast to established approaches to tourism history,
which focus more on tourism’s cultural aspects, we argue in this chapter that nature and environmental protection activities generally refer to concretely planned or implemented, infrastructural mediated economic activities. As most works on tourism and nature conservation consist of regional or national case studies,\(^6\) the interrelations between tourism, regional development, and nature protection in Western Europe has been neglected so far.\(^7\) Post-war mass tourism with its severe environmental impact is a particular lacuna in the historical literature, especially regarding comparative, quantitative data. Some individual aspects of mass tourism have been investigated in detail, e.g. the visual history of tourism, including tourist images/branding,\(^8\) or tourism/recreation in the “Eastern bloc” – a complex story of its own that will only be touched upon in this chapter.\(^9\)

This chapter scrutinizes the development of both mass tourism and “sustainable” landscape tourism in (Western) Europe, with a particular focus on the underlying driving forces and transnational discourses. This analysis reveals a certain asymmetry: while tourism as an industry has frequently been promoted on a national level, nature conservation and environmental protection were often undertaken at a local or regional level by NGOs with more limited financial resources – at least until the ecological turn of the 1970s. Therefore, this chapter deals with very unequal actors and stakeholders with different levels of visibility (an imbalance that extends to the source material). Despite such limitations, there is still much to be learned about how specific actors – from governments and tourist organizations to businesses and vacationers – shaped tourism and the environment in the twentieth century, and how these efforts and experiences varied within Europe and beyond.

1 Social Tourism and the Failed Democratization of Travel (1920s/30s)

In the interwar period, tourism and recreation – formerly a privilege of the upper and middle classes – were increasingly “democratized”, albeit not necessarily in a democratic way or within democratic societies. Both socialist associations such as the transnational Touristenverein Die Naturfreunde (which were particularly strong in Austria and Germany)\(^10\) or the French Colonies des Vacances\(^11\) and fascist tourist organizations such as the Opera Nationale Dopolavoro (OND) in Italy or the National Socialist Kraft durch Freude (KdF)\(^12\) targeted the middle and working classes, (at least ostensibly) attempting to open up access to formerly exclusive destinations for larger segments of society.\(^13\) Both varieties of “social
tourism” also emphasized tourism as a powerful instrument for fostering international peace and understanding – until the late 1930s, even fascist organizations paid lip service to the classic trope of intercultural learning through tourist encounters, while at the same time practising racist exclusion from holiday destinations and services.¹⁴ In these increasingly politicized discourses, nature was framed and instrumentalized as a fountain of youth that strengthened the bodies and minds of vacationers.¹⁵ Nature conservation – at least in its bourgeois variety – struggled with these developments, caught within the conundrum of promoting the protection of nature on the grounds of its importance for tourism and recreation, while at the same time lamenting the disfigurement and loss of natural beauties and “oases of tranquillity”.¹⁶

However, despite the importance of ideas and ideologies in framing tourism, tourism as an industry has always been and still is also heavily reliant on broader economic developments.¹⁷ This connection was particularly strong during the interwar period. Most European national economies, including South Eastern and Central Eastern Europe, experienced a period, however brief, of economic growth in the 1920s which triggered an expansion in (inter)national travel and tourism. In 1929, an estimated one million visitors travelled to Switzerland and a similar number to France, 1.25 million to Italy, and 1.95 million to Austria.¹⁸ As a result, holiday travel and leisure excursions became huge sources of revenue.¹⁹ Participation in tourism varied from country to country, however: while less than 15 per cent of all Germans could afford holiday trips of at least five days, almost 40 per cent of the British travelled at the time, particularly to seaside resorts.²⁰

This remarkable boom in tourism also led to the establishment of inter- and transnational lobby organizations, resulting in an institutionalization and professionalization of tourism at the European level. At the Congrès International des Organismes Officielles de Tourisme, founded under another name in The Hague in 1925, fourteen national tourism organizations met to exchange tourism promotion experiences, resulting in a joint publicity campaign for the US market in 1927 with the brochure “Europe Calling”.²¹ At its sixth congress in 1930, participants formed a formal union of national tourism organizations, the Union Internationale des Organismes Officiels de Propagande Touristique (UIOOPT), to speak with greater weight on tourist matters.²² While these organizations aimed to overcome national fragmentation in tourism marketing and planning, the growing nationalism in the countries represented hindered these efforts. In addition, the stock market crash of October 1929 and the Great Depression also severely hurt European businesses and made international collaboration in tourism difficult.
Even though transatlantic tourism declined by about 50 per cent between 1930 and 1934,²³ the Great Depression did not necessarily stop people from travelling. When European national economies slid into crisis, experts and politicians focused on so-called “invisible exports”, among them tourism, as opposed to the production of “tangible exports”, such as machinery or goods.²⁴ As the tourism industry was less capital intensive than heavy industries, governments all over Europe strove to boost tourism by promoting the beauty of national landscapes.²⁵ In addition, as part of this emphasis on (nature) tourism and leisure activities, several European nations passed legislation granting citizens a right to paid vacation time.²⁶ In order to enhance domestic tourism, some countries, most notably Nazi Germany, also took active measures to prevent their citizens from travelling abroad for leisure, utilizing tourism as a political weapon against “enemy states” (e.g., the notorious “1000-mark barrier” of 1933 that restricted German citizens from travelling to Austria by requiring them to pay a fee).²⁷ Thus, tourism and vacations became “site[s] for competing cultural policies and heightened political mobilization”.²⁸ Government strategies to promote domestic tourism were also intrinsically linked with the “branding” of national landmarks and landscapes, with visiting such sites being virtually regarded as a patriotic duty that could strengthen national identities along with the physical bodies of the tourists.²⁹ For example, Aruna D’Souza demonstrates how “[m]ythic constructions of place – in this case the French Mediterranean coast – were woven into various nationalistic discourses”. As a result, “a new cult of the natural guided vacationers’ notions of leisure”³⁰ emerged in the interwar years. In Ireland, the landscape became a source of national identity after independence from the UK in 1922: Irish travel writers and landscape painters actively invented Gaelic folk traditions, facilitating travels to a “pre-colonial golden age located in the rural west”.³¹ Peripheral, rural regions in particular became the focus of production of such nationalistic tourist destinations, staged as timeless antipodes to industrialized urban areas. Local reactions ranged from resentment of and opposition to the appropriation of homelands and the streamlining of local traditions – especially if the tourism interfered with other forms of land use and superimposed external (often middle-class) expectations of (seemingly) time-honoured customs on the communities –, to an active commercialization of local landscapes and customs in order to cater to tourists’ tastes.

Tourism was thus often expected to fulfil political purposes: invigorating national economies, stirring patriotic feelings, and/or bringing tourists in line with state or party ideologies. This politicization of tourism was not limited to Europe’s autocratic regimes – though it was most pronounced here. The Italian OND (1925) was the first to translate Taylorist ideas of cheap, serialized production into a new mode of standardized (mass) tourism.³² Fascist organized tourism
was an amenity tailored to the lower and middle classes (at least, if they fit the desired racial profile), a prestigious symbol of the supposedly classless *Volksgemeinschaft* and an attempt to win over workers who previously had not been able to enjoy holiday travels. The German KdF – which soon became the world’s largest travel organization³³ – had sold an estimated seven million vacations by 1939, one-tenth of which were ocean cruises to Norway, Madeira, and Italy, and an additional 30 million short and day trips. Yet despite these huge numbers, only one-tenth of German domestic tourism was organized by KdF – and few workers, particularly families, were able to afford these trips.

In order to increase its reach, KdF initiated an ambitious scheme for the creation of five seaside resorts on the Baltic Sea in 1936, which would have been able to accommodate up to 200,000 vacationers simultaneously for an estimated 20 RM per person per week, massively transforming ecosystems and landscapes in its wake. Only one of these resorts, Prora on the island of Rügen (see figure 1), was actually built: with a total cost of 100 million RM, it was at the time the world’s largest holiday resort, stretching over five kilometres with about 7,000

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**Figure 1:** Sketch of Prora seaside resort. Drawing by Gerda Rotermund, published in “die neue linie” IX, No. 10 (June 1938). Courtesy of Archiv Dokumentationszentrum Prora.
identical beach-view apartments. However, it was never opened for vacationers due to the start of the war. In contrast to the Prora project – which was basically a tourist town in itself, not unlike the enormous hotel complexes in Italy or Spain of the 1970s and 1980s –, most KdF hostels were modest in size and often located in peripheral regions such as the Eifel or the Bavarian Forest. The choice of such locations was meant to stimulate economic development, but it was also motivated by the resentment of commercial tourist establishments towards KdF vacationers, who, they felt, drove off financially stronger customers. KdF thus illustrates the ambivalent relations between “romantic” and “collective” forms of tourism. While sociability within the fascist Volksgemeinschaft was at the very heart of the fascist tourist experience, it also relied heavily on the allure of “traditional” bourgeois nature and health tourism – now transformed into a spa for the people, mitigating the vile effects of unwholesome city life through bodily and visual consumption of nature.

As a tool for promoting health and loyalty as well as for pacifying potentially unruly segments of society, fascist tourism was both a variant of and a reaction to social tourism. Starting in the late nineteenth century, workers’ associations such as the Naturfreunde established a broad network of tourist facilities and infrastructures throughout Europe, including cabins, lodges, and travel agencies. While the club’s main objectives were improving workers’ leisure and travel opportunities as well as fostering the development of socialist society, the protection and careful shaping of nature were also a vital part of the agenda of the Naturfreunde (added to its statutes in 1910), making it one of the largest transnational nature conservation organizations of the time. At its pre-war peak in 1930, the Naturfreunde had more than 214,000 members in nine European countries, namely Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Hungary, and Switzerland, as well as the US. Founded in Vienna in 1895, the Naturfreunde strove to democratize access to nature and the ability to travel (see figure 2). In 1906, they organized an early civil disobedience campaign to achieve right of way to mountain tops or lakesides blocked off for the public, commenting derisively in their journal: “Any man whose entire merit lies in the fact that he can list off any number of ancestors of the same sort [as himself] and wears a multi-pointed crown on his underwear can exclude thousands of working, creative, i.e. useful people from enjoying nature.” The central idea of the Naturfreunde was “social hiking”, combining physical enjoyment of nature with the class struggle for socialism and equality. Organized hikes to rural areas were supposed to provide workers a chance to recover from their physically strenuous labour, while also offering them opportunities to experience nature and promote social democracy through their interactions with the locals.
Bourgeois advocates of nature conservation viewed such efforts to “democratize” nature with concern. Throughout Europe, most conservationists had an ambivalent relationship with the “masses.” Workers were welcome as members in most bourgeois conservation groups – who hoped thereby to shield them from the “corrupting” influences of social democracy.⁴⁰ Access to nature was something entirely different, however. Traditionally focused on preserving natural monuments and/or protecting cultural landscapes, many conservationists feared the “defilement” of sites of natural beauty if more people entered protected areas.⁴¹ They often contrasted the tasteful, “enlightened” enjoyment of nature (by themselves) with “crude” mass tourism – a distinction that was also central to later rhetorics of eco-tourism.⁴² This tension between promoting recreation in nature as a means of healing modern society, while, at the same time, fearing its destruction via mass tourism (as well as a lack of exclusivity) has been a unifying theme in European nature conservation throughout its history – and one that would become even more pronounced in the post-war period.

Figure 2: Stamp celebrating the one-hundred-year jubilee of the “Naturfreunde” organization in Austria, 1995. Courtesy of Österreichische Post AG, Vienna ©. The anniversary stamp utilizes the cover illustration of the association journal “Der Naturfreund”, published from 1896 to 1934 (Der Naturfreund 5, no. 1 [1901]: 1 [ANNO/Austrian National Library, ÖNB]).
2 Tourism in Regional Development and National Policy (1950s/60s)

The early post-war period was the heyday of regional/national planning of tourist infrastructures and developments, although regional and tourism planning continued to shape the spatial development of tourism infrastructures in the following decades as well. Under the conditions of the gradually escalating Cold War, tourism was regarded throughout Western Europe as a way of replenishing empty foreign exchange reserves. Accordingly, tourist infrastructures were financed from international (Marshall Plan) and national reconstruction funds (Monnet Plan, Fondo Lire, counterpart funds), as will be elaborated later in detail. Starting in the 1950s, and particularly in the 1960s, new stakeholders – regional planners and members of civil society – also engaged with tourism and reflected on the status of protected areas for recreation. One of the most prominent attempts to link tourism/recreation, nature protection, and regional development was (and still is) the nature park movement with its principle of zoning, i.e. designating specific functions to specific areas of a park or region. This policy mirrored the anthropocentric strategy most conservationists employed during the “boom years”: nature was to be protected not for its own sake, but “from humans and for humans”. The focus on nature parks also reflected culturally conservative aversions to “unwholesome” urban culture and, last but not least, earlier expansionist Nazi planning concepts that sought to remodel European landscapes according to völkisch ideals (see chapter 4 by Wöbse/Ziemek).

After the heavy destruction and casualties of World War II, tourism and recreation were not the most pressing concerns of the immediate post-war years. However, despite unfavourable conditions such as trade balance deficits, tariff barriers, and delayed infrastructure reconstruction, Western European societies soon experienced rapid growth in tourist demand, with the established tourism regions – e.g. Italy and Switzerland – taking the lead. Tourism also re-entered social and political agendas. In 1948, the United Nations codified the “right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay” in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 24). In the same year, an international group of tourism experts met in Locarno, Switzerland, to discuss the prospects of international tourism in light of the newly negotiated framework for the European Recovery Program (ERP, commonly referred to as the “Marshall Plan”). The implementation of the Marshall Plan was accompanied by the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which became the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
in 1961. The OEEC was dedicated to the idea of European integration through economic growth, and the promotion of a transnational tourism industry was a key part of its activities, represented, for example, by the OEEC Tourism Committee, the Travel Development Section (TDS), and the European Travel Commission (ETC) (see figure 3). In the following years, it did everything in its power to capitalize the Marshall Plan for (Western) European tourism, especially through joint advertising campaigns.

The Marshall Plan was in effect from 1948 to 1952. During this period, a total of USD 13 billion were distributed among long-term reconstruction projects that had been drawn up by the participants under supervision of ECA and OEEC. While tourism itself was not a high priority for these projects, the Marshall Plan proved to be crucial for the Western European tourism industry, as it supported the (re)construction of key infrastructures such as railways, roads, airports, harbours, communication lines, cable cars, power supply lines, and much more.

Even more important for tourism were the ERP counterpart funds, which prolonged the national economic effectiveness of the Marshall Plan beyond the actual funding period. In Austria, the ERP credits remained the most important state aid instrument for tourism projects into the 1990s (see figure 4). The Italians set up the Fondo Lire to modernize accommodation and transport infrastructure, and the French initiated the Monnet Plan using these funds. In 1950, American officials claimed to have financed over 85 per cent of all tourism development projects in France, such as airports, skiing areas, and seaside resorts, via the Monnet Plan.

The Marshall Plan marked a truly European moment in tourism history. One only has to consider that, on an organizational level, it overlapped with the activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which was essentially concerned with the (infrastructural) integration of European nations and thus also contributed to the revival of the European idea. However, its role must be seen in context of the larger social and economic developments of the post-war decades. Most importantly, in the 1950s and 1960s, the economy of scarcity of the immediate post-war years gave way to an affluent consumer society. During the “boom years”, many European societies experienced a period of (almost) full employment, with noticeable increases in real wages and holiday entitlements. This was also the era of mass motorization. Fuelled by low-cost petrol, cars and motorcycles in post-war Europe (much as had happened previously in the United States in the interwar period) transformed within the course of a decade from exclusive status symbols into everyday commodities, fundamentally changing mobility and recreational practices. In addition to cars, many other goods and services were now being produced for the mass market.
Figure 3: Europe as you want to see it. ETC advertising campaign of 1955. Courtesy of the European Travel Commission, Brussels.
– including tourism. In 1950, 27 European nations had registered nearly 18 million foreign tourist arrivals (66.5 per cent of world tourism). By 1963, this number had almost tripled to 66 million arrivals (73 per cent of world tourism). Accordingly, tourist expenditures rocketed by about 75 per cent.

Policy makers attempted to govern and channel these developments. In federal systems such as West Germany and Austria, regional and state administrations were particularly active. In the late 1940s, for example, “wild camping” on lakeshores and in forests had become a mass phenomenon, particularly amongst young people, eliciting heavy criticism from regional stakeholders on moral, san-

Figure 4: Use of ERP funds to improve road connection to Lech am Arlberg. United States Information Service, 1950. Courtesy of the Image Archive of the Austrian National Library (ÖNB).
itary, and ecological grounds. Administrative efforts to regulate illicit campsites via prohibitions and the establishment of a network of “official” camping grounds not only domesticated unruly vacationers, but also raised awareness about conflicts between recreation/tourism, nature protection, and other forms of land use and justified planning interventions. Stakeholders frequently turned to spatial planning to utilize tourism and recreation for regional development and, sometimes, for safeguarding protected landscapes and nature reserves. Regional planning in particular was regarded as an instrument for resolving conflicts of interest, particularly during the 1960s to mid-1970s, which – in East and West – were marked by an extensive “planning euphoria” that went hand in hand with the institutionalization and scientification of planning processes. In tourism planning, ecological considerations initially played only a minor role. However, from the mid-1960s, the environment also started to receive greater attention in tourism planning, although the role of nature advocates was initially limited to providing advisory opinions. This development built on contemporary debates about the carrying capacity of ecosystems and landscapes.

One of the earliest and most influential attempts to bring together tourism/recreation, nature protection, and regional planning in Europe was the nature park programme. In West Germany, these efforts were spearheaded by the grain trader and millionaire philanthropist Alfred Toepfer, who was president of the Verein Naturschutzpark from 1954 to 1985. Today, Toepfer is regarded as a controversial figure because of his activities in pan-Germanic networks during National Socialism as well as his employment of former Nazi leaders in his charities after the war. In 1956, the West German government announced the creation of 25 nature parks. The idea was to develop about five per cent of (West) German cultural landscapes – particularly in remote areas and near urban agglomerations – for tourism and recreation, in order to improve living conditions for rural inhabitants and preserve their cultural heritage and scenery. Following a concept similar to that of the national park, nature parks were divided into three zones, each of which had specific functions: a protected area at the core, surrounded by recreational zones for hiking, and finally developed areas, where most tourist infrastructure was concentrated. Nature parks were envisioned as model landscapes characterized by a (supposedly) harmonious balance between humans and nature, countering environmental and social degradation alike. Toepfer’s vision of nature and humanity – as well as that of many early promoters of nature parks – was highly reactionary, however, with a strong völkisch undercurrent and deep dislike of “unhealthy” urban life and mass culture. But these culturally conservative notions, as much as they dominated early nature park discourses, were rarely translated into planning practice. In reality, there were few restrictions on economic uses of the parks.
In little-developed areas such as the Eifel in North Rhine-Westphalia, nature parks were tailored to the needs of tourism — not surprisingly, since they were usually planned and managed by the regional authorities and subject to tremendous pressure from those with economic interests in the area.⁷⁰

Despite, or perhaps because of, these deviations from the original concept, the nature park idea proved a huge success. Starting with the rebranded Naturpark Lüneburger Heide (founded as a Naturschutzpark in 1921) in 1956, 62 nature parks had been established in West Germany by 1980, covering roughly 20 percent of its land.⁷¹ Originally a German phenomenon, the nature park idea also spread to other European countries in the 1960s, not least because of heavy lobbying from Toepfer and his supporters. Based on a memorandum by Austrian geographer Walter Strzygowski, in 1960 the Council of Europe contemplated establishing a European network of nature parks as part of its agenda for nature protection, with a particular focus on their recreational value (see chapter 4 by Wöbse/Ziemek). In 1965, Toepfer conducted the first “European Working Conference” on nature parks, with 30 delegates from 13 countries.⁷² The nature park idea particularly caught on in France, Italy, and Austria, starting with the formation of the Parc naturel régional Scarpe-Escaut in France in 1968.⁷³ In 1973, the Europarc Federation was founded in Basel, Switzerland, in order to share experiences and promote nature parks on both sides of the Iron Curtain, with founding members from West Germany (including the ubiquitous Toepfer, the federation’s first president and primary financier), Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Most of the federation’s activities, however, were still located in West Germany.⁷⁴ Today, most European and a number of non-European countries, including the Philippines, have nature (or natural) parks that are (at least in theory) dedicated to the idea of balancing nature protection, regional development, and tourism/recreation.

While the late 1940s and 1950s might be regarded as a period of recovery for European tourism and a turning point towards the era of mass tourism,⁷⁵ in the 1960s mass tourism came into its own — with severe impacts on the environment. Due to increased (auto)mobility and falling airfares starting in the late 1960s, European tourists began exploring new holiday destinations, particularly sunny Mediterranean beaches.⁷⁶ Travel modes also changed — educational journeys in the tradition of the “Grand Tour” lost ground to more fun- and action-oriented activities. The “collective” tourist gaze interested in convivial gatherings and social entertainment gradually supplemented and supplanted the “romantic” touristic gaze focused on passive enjoyment of scenic landscapes and picturesque buildings.⁷⁷

Organized package holidays in particular targeted this tourism segment, courting potential customers with lavishly illustrated catalogues.⁷⁸ Established
travel agencies like Thomas Cook found themselves under heavy competition from new vendors such as Club Méditerranée (1950), Touropa (1951), Necker-mann (1963), or TUI (1968), which brought market innovations such as cost-saving modular options and all-inclusive offers. In spite of these developments, however, most tourists still travelled on their own within Western Europe. Organized travel arrangements were even more important in the countries of Eastern Europe under communism, where holidays were rarely bought on the market, but assigned as a privilege by one’s employer, party, or state travel organization. In East Germany, for example, the Reisebüro der DDR (Travel Bureau of the GDR) controlled the travel industry; it owned most hotels and coordinated international travel with the travel organizations of other states, e.g. the Soviet Intourist. International tourism within socialist countries, in particular to the Baltic Sea and Hungary, significantly increased since the 1960s but remained heavily regulated. Domestic tourism offered more loopholes, with a large number of citizens holidaying in their own dachas.

Despite the best efforts of governments, administrations, planning bodies, and travel agencies to enhance, control, and channel tourism, its actual development was thus still subject to a large degree of contingency – as well as a growing amount of criticism concerning its social and ecological costs. During the boom years, most conservationists – from the local to the international levels – had been eager to emphasize the economic and social benefits of protecting nature, particularly for tourism and recreation. From UNESCO’s point of view, for example, nature conservation policy was also tourism policy. As Anna-Katharina Wöbse has pointed out, “nature conservation without the possibility of tourist use, i.e. public access to natural beauty, seemed pointless”. Nature was to be protected from humans and for humans – not for its own sake. At UNESCO’s first nature conservation congress in 1949, several hundred international experts discussed “how national parks should be used as tourist sites for nature experience and environmental education”. Indeed, many conservationists regarded tourism and recreation as allies in their fight to preserve scenic landscapes. In some environmental conflicts, this resulted in fruitful alliances between conservationists and local tourism – for example, in movements against the construction of power plants or dams, when tourist attractions such as waterfalls or lakes were jeopardized. Likewise, since the late nineteenth century, local tourist associations had encouraged landscape preservation to cater to urban middle-class nostalgia for rural landscapes. However, these alliances between environmentalism and tourism often fell apart when tourist infrastructure was at stake. Cable cars were a particularly sensitive topic for most conservationists. With ready money available from the ERP counterpart funds, many mountainous regions invested in the construction of cable cars, ski lifts, and slopes
starting in the late 1940s to enhance and strengthen the winter season. But while conservationists were still more or less alone in their criticism of the “cable car disease” and other “tourist excesses” during this period, public opinion on these matters – and on the environmental impact of tourism in general – would change perceptibly at the start of the 1970s.

3 Between Mass Tourism and Sustainable Tourism (1970s/80s)

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by concurrent increases in mass tourism and environmental awareness. The tremendous boom of European tourism changed many tourist landscapes, particularly the Alps (see chapter 9 by Aschwanden et al.), which were affected both by being along the tourist transit route to Italy and by the creation of a winter tourism season with ski lifts and cable cars. This tourism infrastructure was now cited as the cause of a general destruction of nature, including unauthorized construction projects, sprawling petrol stations, road construction, widespread advertising signboards, and littering, and these concerns sparked civic resistance, the establishment of protected areas and national parks, as well as debates on alternative, sustainable forms of tourism.

John McNeill has argued that the “overarching priority of economic growth was easily the most important idea of the twentieth century”. Criticism of growth did not gain significant support until the late 1960s (see chapter 15 by Seefried). Until then, economic growth was accepted as positive and desirable, and renowned European organizations (OEEC/OECD) directed their efforts towards promoting and managing it. Tourism was no exception to this embrace of growth. When the UNO and the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) declared 1967 the International Year of Tourism, they celebrated “the spectacular growth of international tourism”, contemplating how developing countries could also benefit from tourism. UNESCO, in a series of articles in its Courier on “Sparking tomorrow’s tourist explosion”, especially promoted cultural tourism as “the unexploited treasure of economic development”.

While spectacular growth rates were primarily a cause for euphoria, they also elicited tensions between traditional and newly-discovered tourist destinations. With falling airline prices, more and more tourists could afford to visit the less developed European peripheries of the “sunny south”, particularly the beaches of economically disadvantaged southern Italy (including Sardinia and Sicily), Greece, or the Spanish Mediterranean coast. In 1950, 84,000 tourists
vacationed on the Spanish island of Mallorca. In the years that followed, the island experienced a tourist explosion, with visitor numbers growing from 362,000 in 1960 to 1.9 million in 1970. In 1975, seven million air travellers visited Mallorca; by 1995, the number had nearly doubled reaching 13 million. To accommodate tourists, huge hotel blocks were erected, filling the waterfronts along the previously picturesque and rustic Mediterranean beaches. Benidorm on the Spanish Costa Brava is a particularly extreme example, transforming from an idyllic fishing village into a city with one of the highest densities of skyscrapers worldwide within two decades (see figure 5).

Tourists’ desire to explore fresh and preferably sunny locations not only troubled environmentalists, but also gave rise to concern in traditional tourist areas. To avert loss of customers, stakeholders equipped their locations with as many amenities as possible. Faced with stronger competition for summer tourism, the Alpine countries – which today host about 25 per cent of the world’s tourism – responded to the growing popularity of a second holiday for winter sports and invested heavily in the winter season starting in the mid-1960s. In order to manage mountain environments and make them more suitable for conspicuous consumption, local communities also intervened in ecosystems and topographies, improving dangerous slopes, manufacturing immense quantities of artificial snow, and providing easy access to high peaks. In the 1990s, Switzerland had more than 1,200 ski lifts and 500 cable cars for its visitors, and Austria approximately 3,900 ski lifts and 150 cable cars. While Austrian and Swiss winter tourism was still dominated by family businesses, Italy and France put significant effort into creating large-scale development with high-rises and linked ski arenas. As a result of these developments, Alpine nature was not only increasingly commodified, but also reframed as a comfortable and easily accessible space. These trends were not limited to Alpine regions, but could be seen in all forms of nature tourism, as, for example, Scott Moranda has observed for seaside resorts: “resort owners around the world transformed wetlands, controlled interior climates, and battled mosquitos and other [...] nuisances to make [beach tourism] both safe and vital for tourists”.

The resulting tourism landscapes were not universally welcomed. Winter tourism in the Alps – a focus of tourism criticism since Leslie Stephen’s “The Playground of Europe” from 1871 – was especially contentious. Opposition to cable cars and skiing infrastructures primarily took place on a regional level, led by the local sections of the German and Austrian Alpine Associations as well as a growing number of citizens’ initiatives; however, these movements were embedded in broader debates on the impeding collapse of Alpine ecosystems. Starting in the late 1960s, a number of critical reports were published by conservationists (particularly the Commission Internationale pour la Protection des
Alpes, CIPRA), Alpine clubs, and heritage organizations, as well as by the Alpine countries themselves. In 1972, the Association of Alpine States (Arge Alp) was

Figure 5: Spain: Nightmare tourism. Cover picture of the German weekly magazine Der Spiegel, no. 35 (1973). © DER SPIEGEL 35/1973. Courtesy from SPIEGEL-Verlag Rudolf Augstein GmbH & Co. KG.

Alpes, CIPRA), Alpine clubs, and heritage organizations, as well as by the Alpine countries themselves. In 1972, the Association of Alpine States (Arge Alp) was
founded in Mösern (Tyrol) to tackle shared problems of Alpine countries, especially regarding transit traffic. It would take almost twenty years and considerable civil societal and regional pressure, however, until European governments finally addressed the issue of the sustainable development of the Alps in 1991 via an internationally binding treaty, the Alpine Convention (see chapter 9 by Aschwanden et al.) – which included a commitment to sustainable tourism.

The concept of sustainable tourism emerged in the mid-1970s. In 1976, taking up a long tradition of European critique of tourism, Gerardo Budowski, general director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), argued that tourism could be detrimental to conservation. Too large a number of tourists could overburden limited resources, “leading to physical damage, poor waste disposal, or vandalism”. He further pointed out that “other factors, however, which usually pass unrecognized, seem to be much more important – including the construction of buildings and roads and other facilities for tourist visitation in natural areas”. Budowski identified three possible relationships between tourism and conservation: conflict, coexistence, or symbiosis. However, he concluded, “for the majority of cases at present, [this] relationship [...] is usually one of coexistence moving towards conflict – mainly because of an increase in tourism and the shrinking of natural areas”. Budowski called for stronger alliances between tourism developers and ecologists/conservationists, arguing that they shared common goals and could both contribute greatly to regional development, “leading to a better quality of life for all concerned”.

Budowski’s deliberations on how to salvage the dysfunctional relation between tourism and nature protection was only one example – albeit a prominent one – of many. In the mid-1970s, the familiar dystopian warnings and vague demands for a new kind of tourism in harmony with nature were increasingly supplemented by more concrete ideas and practices. Inspired by environmental and developmental discourses, particularly the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, the idea of “soft tourism” emerged as a socially and ecologically conscientious alternative to conventional “hard tourism”. Soft tourism, or eco-tourism, started as a niche phenomenon within Western European “eco-leftist” circles. It proposed a “responsible”, small-scale nature tourism without “artificial” tourist infrastructures or harmful ecological side effects and with the potential to directly improve the well-being of local inhabitants. According to this model, in order to reduce negative impacts of (mass) tourism, tourist flows should be regulated and channelled to remain within the carrying capacity of eco- and social systems. Eco-tourism also aimed to foster respectful interactions between tourists and locals – as well as between humans and the environment. With this agenda, eco-tourism (the term “sustainable tourism” only became popular after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992) was a child of
the environmental and One World movements of the 1970s and 1980s, but also traced its roots back to interwar social tourism.

Despite its lofty ambitions, bottom-up eco-tourism rarely translated into concrete tourism policies or practices until the mid-1980s. Amongst the first to experiment with “alternative” tourism were the Alpine Associations and their proletarian counterpart, the Naturfreunde. Both initiated pilot schemes as early as 1980, for example in the Austrian Virgental, and have continued their engagement to the present. Sustainable tourism has also often been linked to the development of national parks, e.g., in case of the Abruzzo or Tauern National Parks in Italy and Austria. Another prominent variant of eco-tourism was (and is) agro-tourism. Dating back to the early nineteenth century, farm-centred tourism gained popularity throughout Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, profiting from rural nostalgia as well as financial support from the EC/EU, particularly the Leader Initiative funds set up in 1991.

Indeed, the European Community (EC) has launched a number of schemes since the 1980s that aim at utilizing sustainable tourism for regional development, particularly in marginal areas. Prominent examples of such agro-tourism initiatives can be found in Wallonia (since 1976), Italy (since the 1950s, but booming in the 1990s due to EU funds), Slovenia and Croatia (since joining the EU), Germany, and Austria (in combination with biosphere reserves/UNESCO). Conversely, tourism has been integrated into various national and EU initiatives for sustainable development, including the LIFE Programme initiated in 1992 as the EU’s primary funding instrument for environmental and climate action. EU funding (e.g. European Development Fund, European Social Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) also supported the creation of a growing network of thematic hiking trails and regions (e.g. on wine, cheese, olive oil, etc.) – a way of branding the cultural, natural, and culinary heritage of European peripheral regions as particularly European and sustainable. These examples demonstrate that “tourism” was not a monolithic, straightforward phenomenon – and nor was its relation to nature, landscapes, and the environment: tourist interests often clashed with each other – sometimes opposing, sometimes joining forces with environmental stakeholders and demands. Eco-tourism was also not without its ambivalences, increasing environmental awareness but also fostering the commodification of nature and opening up formerly less-developed regions for “alternative” tourism (followed soon after by mass tourism).

With the environmental zeitgeist of the time, the notion of eco-tourism also found its way into broader political debates of the 1970s. In 1976, Western European nations prompted the creation of a special OECD committee to investigate the environmental impact of the tourism industry. This expert group, composed
mainly of employees of government ministries, worked out framework conditions for the member states to implement environmental politics in the tourism sector.\textsuperscript{125} Its report assessed the general situation of tourism and the environment, including an outlook on future projects and their anticipated environmental effects as well as 19 case studies.\textsuperscript{126} In 1980, the OECD published the summary which stated that “market mechanisms alone cannot be expected to ensure that environmental degradation will not take place”.\textsuperscript{127} Therefore, to compensate for the environmental deficiencies of market-based developments, OECD countries would have to implement appropriate regulations, including environmental education, financing measures to limit air and water pollution, establishing environmental standards and regulatory instruments, and finally the planning and management of tourism areas according to environmental criteria.\textsuperscript{128}

Given OECD’s role as Western Europe’s most important lobby organization for economic growth, this initiative demonstrates that the issue of environmental protection had permeated to the very core of tourism politics in the late 1970s. This translated into national wastewater treatment, garbage removal, and spatial planning strategies in the 1980s, particularly in mass tourism destinations that had been transformed into urban centres within only a few decades and thus often lacked the necessary public infrastructure capacities. Changes in policy were often reactions to worsening environmental conditions as well as to vocal environmental protests from citizens and (sometimes) the tourists themselves.\textsuperscript{129} From the late 1970s onwards, for example, a number of algae infestations plagued the waters of the North Sea, the Baltic, and the Mediterranean; caused by an oversupply of nutrients from agriculture and lack of sewage treatment, the algae resulted in declining tourism. To prevent this, tourist regions introduced regulatory measures, from sewage treatment to building rules and green taxes, and sometimes altered tourism policies in general, e.g. to encourage a more environmentally friendly “quality tourism”.\textsuperscript{130} A certain degree of environmentalism also entered the tourism industry itself.\textsuperscript{131} Being environmentally conscientious was good business: it made individual tourist enterprises more resource- and cost-efficient (e.g., by not replacing towels daily) and gave a boost to their reputations in an especially image-sensitive business sector. Because of this strategic dimension, labelling tourist enterprises and locations as eco-friendly has frequently been accused of being greenwashing – with regard to the tourism industry and to (eco)tourists themselves, who open up scenic, remote areas to mainstream tourism and consume precious resources on site and while travelling – an inherent ambivalence of (nature) tourism that more than 150 years of heated debate have not been able to solve.
4 Summary

This chapter has explored the ambivalent relations of tourism, regional development, and nature protection in twentieth-century (Western) Europe, focusing on activities from NGOs, local, regional, national, and transnational authorities to regulate, encourage, or channel tourism as a social phenomenon, economic driver, and ecological impact factor. (Mass) tourism was (and is) a pan-European phenomenon – not least because Europeans cross borders in ever-larger numbers to reach and explore (new) tourist destinations. Reactions to tourism and its environmental impact can be located on several spatial scales, from the local to the global. The first efforts to coordinate the activities of the tourism industry at the European level were made as early as the 1920s, although most of the initiatives were short-lived. Although the global economic crisis of this period affected all countries in Europe, reactions to it were characterized more by nationalism than European solidarity and cooperation, with tourism being promoted as an instrument of national (economic and spiritual) recovery, politicizing and instrumentalizing nature and landscapes as national treasures and “fountains of youth”. At the same time, the popular transnational workers’ organization Naturfreunde demonstrates the opportunities and limits of merging leisure/tourism and nature conservation – demanding both greater access to natural beauties and effective measures for nature protection but with no further consideration as to how to bridge the tensions between these goals. Bourgeois nature conservationists disdained such attempts at (mass) nature tourism. As part of a cosmopolitan elite, they viewed (nature) tourism through a culturally conservative lens that in turn rarely appealed to local tourism stakeholders. As a result of these factors, there is little evidence of a European moment that transcended national and social boundaries during the interwar period.

In the tourism sector, at least, this lack of internationalism and inclusiveness changed fundamentally since the late 1940s. While reconstruction efforts in the immediate post-war years were largely nation-state based, both the Marshall Plan and the OEEC shaped Western European tourism for decades – not only helping finance vital tourist infrastructures, but also influencing commercial tourism, and, since the 1970s, environmental policies. Alternative forms of (nature) tourism, such as nature or national parks, established a European moment of their own – translating into a pan-European network of landscapes which were utilized for tourism but also under protection. In connection with the growing environmental awareness of the late twentieth century, these activities also pioneered new, bottom-up forms of soft and eco-tourism, which later received special EU support. In sum, the histories of tourism, regional development,
and nature protection were not only entangled in manifold ways, but also inter- and co-dependent on European processes and developments.

Many questions are still up for debate, however, including such fundamental ones such as the aggregated numbers of domestic and foreign tourism across Europe, or the respective quality of European tourism in global comparison. Post-Cold-War histories of tourism and nature protection present a particular lacuna. We know little about how the collapse of the Iron Curtain affected travel throughout and beyond Europe; in addition, the history of eco-tourism has also barely been explored. And, last but not least, there is still much to be learned about how tourism might have contributed to the creation of a shared European identity and environmental consciousness, for example by challenging national stereotypes and creating awareness for the beauty and fragility of European natural landscapes and environments, or whether it rather functioned as a (semi)colonial force, strengthening preconceived notions and socio-economic power relations between (urban) centres and (rural) peripheries as well as between classes, for tourist destinations were often socially stratified – one of the many ambivalences of tourism as a social and environmental phenomenon.¹³³

Notes

3 Christine Keitz, Reisen als Leitbild: Die Entstehung des modernen Massentourismus in Deutschland (Munich: dtv, 1997).
9 Heike Wolter, “Ich harre aus im Land und geh, ihm fremd”: Die Geschichte des Tourismus in der DDR (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009); Christopher Görlich, Urlaub vom Staat: Tourismus in


22 Ibid. After World War II, UIOOP was restructured as the International Union of Official Travel Organizations, a non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the role of tourism in international trade; it was later transformed into the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, in operation since 1974). Jacques Lévy, *L’invention du monde: Une géographie de la mondialisation* (Grenoble: Presses de Science Po, 2013).

23 Schipper et al., “European Travel”, 42.


26 Ibid., 16.


31 Ibid., 204.


34 Spode, “Seebad”.


37 Lampasiak et al., *Berg frei*, 38, 42.


40 John Alexander Williams, “‘The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature’: The Movement to Preserve the Natural Heimat from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich”, *Central European History* 29 (1996): 339–384, here 353.


55 Counterpart funds were established to convert foreign aid into accounts in the domestic currency of the recipient countries. The US administration delivered goods and food aid to the recipient governments, which then sold the aid deliveries in local currency. The participating governments were obliged to collect the proceeds to set up counterpart funds.


Urry, Consuming Places; Urry and Larsen, Tourist Gaze.


Banaszkiewicz, Graburn, and Owsianowska, “Tourism”.

With approximately 2.6 Mio. datchas in the 1980s, the GDR had the largest concentration of weekend cottages worldwide. See Isolde Dietrich, “Ne Laube, ’n Zaun und ’n Beet: Kleingärten


85 Ibid., 196.


91 Wöbse, “Tourismus und Naturschutz”; Hasenöhrl, Zivilgesellschaft.


93 McNeill, Something New, 335.

94 Ibid.


96 Ibid., 11–13.


101 “Alpen: ‚I fahr’ todsicher nimmer nei‘”.


103 Denning, Skiing.

107 Ibid., 279.
113 Ibid., 27.
114 Ibid., 31.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., 8.
128 Ibid.

130 Steinecke, Tourismus, 107–278.

131 Christoph Hennig, Reiselust: Touristen, Tourismus und Urlaubskultur (Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig: Suhrkamp, 1997), 116–123; Steinecke, Tourismus.


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