

High mountain pastures in the Austrian Alps and the White Mountains in Crete and the role of tourism

Results from the pilot study:

Grazing & Biocultural Diversity – A Transdisciplinary System Approach ***How to optimize pastoral land use from an ecological and socioeconomic viewpoint***

Institute of Integrative Nature Conservation Research¹ and Institute for Sustainable Economic Development² (BOKU-University) and the Institute of Theology & Ecology at the Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC)

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Background

**Sustainable management of high mountain pastures and meadows
= Biological & cultural diversity conservation by utilization**

Pastoral land use



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	Nature Park Söltkäler	Omalós/Lakkoi
Geographical position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comparatively remote places 	
Pastoralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thousands-of-years-old pastoral tradition in both areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable form of land use 	
Alteration of socioeconomic circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change of the traditional land use style (e.g. stop/reduction of transhumance/alpine dairy) ▪ Living only from the own products became nearly impossible (e.g., low price for meat, milk, cheese, wool) 	



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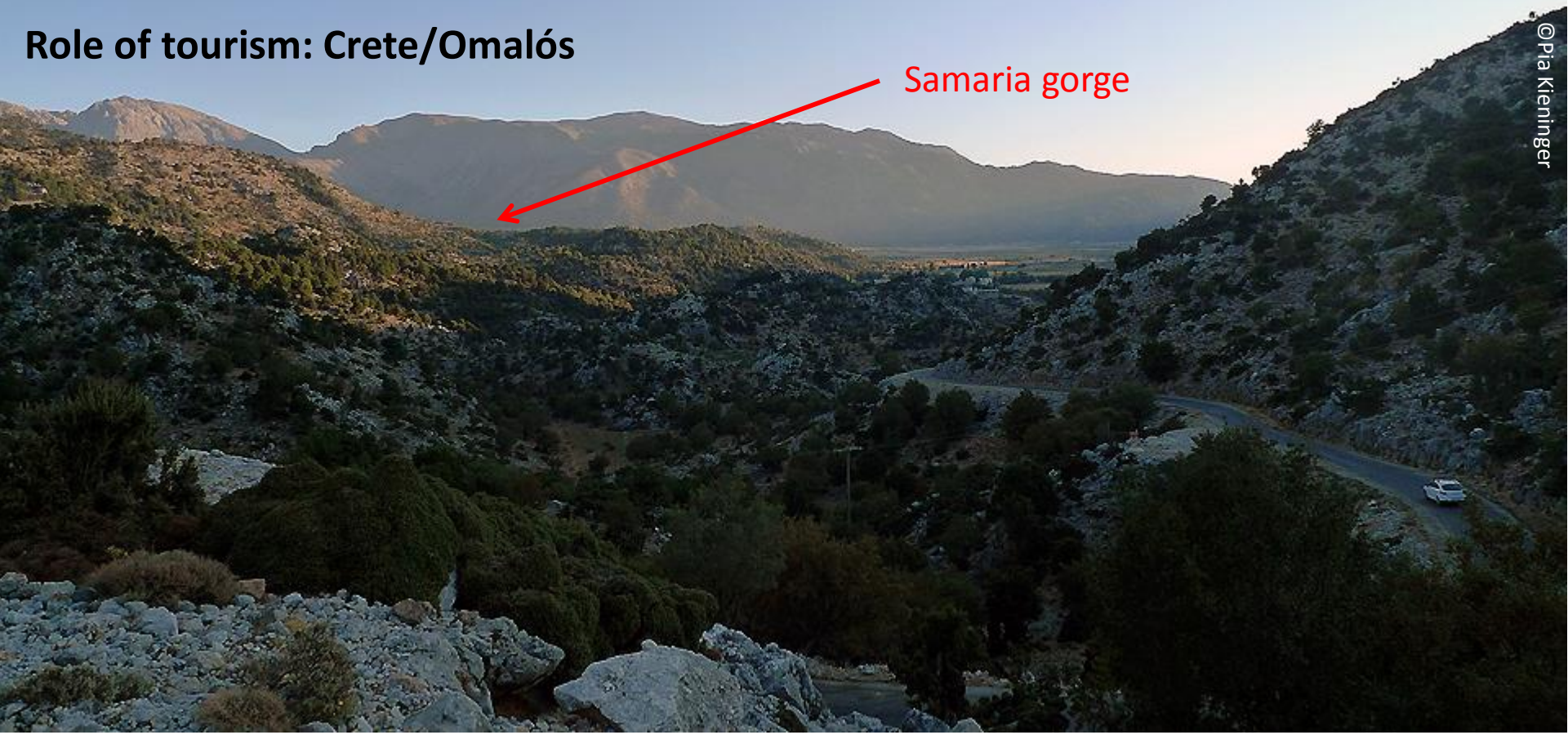


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	Nature Park Söltkäler	Omalós/Lakkoi
<p>Political intervention = (EU) subsidies, in order to keep high mountain management/ support European agriculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 main “pastoral” subsidies, in Ø 2,841€/farm household in 2005 (<i>data: Wallner, Holzner, Winter, 2007</i>) ▪ Additional motivation to keep pastoralism/revival of pastoral culture ▪ However, by trend, still undergrazed extensive high alpine pastures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Per capita subvention (20-25€/animal; <i>data: Lorent et al. 2009</i>) ▪ Big part of income → high numbers of animals (up to 2,000/farmer) ▪ Downfall of the sustainable pastoral culture ▪ Partly strongly overgrazed, erosion, social conflicts

Role of tourism: Crete/Omalós

Samaria gorge



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- ~ 3,000 day trip visitors/day, on very busy days (May – October) for Samaria gorge
→ 5,7 million visitors between 1981 – 2005 (*data: Forest Directorate Chania*)
 - Little profit for the local area – mostly all inclusive holidays (mass tourism), concentrated along the seaside
- Poor tourist facilities in the mountainous areas
- Few direct marketing/marketing of regional processed goods → e.g., farmers depend on quantity of animals



- Summer tourism → important income source for both valleys of the Nature Park
- Guest houses/ bed and breakfast, farm tourism (no big hotels)
- Direct-/ marketing of local products (e.g., bread, bacon/sausage, clothes, beverages, cheese, yoghurt)
- Main attraction for the tourists are the high mountain pastures („Heidi-feeling“)

Local high mountain pasture product: The “Steirerkas” [Styrian cheese]



- Strong role plays the Nature Park Sölktaier

The Austrian concept of Nature Parks anticipated the idea of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves - to combine regional development with nature conservation

4 pillars:

Conservation

Recreation

Education

Regional development



Mainstreaming awareness for the importance of alpine pastoral agriculture for the preservation of bio-(cultural)-diversity and the alpine landscape, e.g., by promoting sustainable tourism, local products or organizing training courses as the “*High mountain pasture management diploma*” or volunteer’s activities for nature conservation



©Nature Park Sölktaier, Foto: Erich Hagspiel



Conclusio:

- External impacts can have detrimental consequences on traditional-sustainable ways of land-use
- Sustainable tourism can be a chance for rural development
- Best: botton-up approach (e.g., 4th axis „Leader“ of the EU CAP)
- However: Intelligent & integrative support/incentive by an institution, e.g., a Nature Park, can be helpful

Thank you very much for your attention!

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