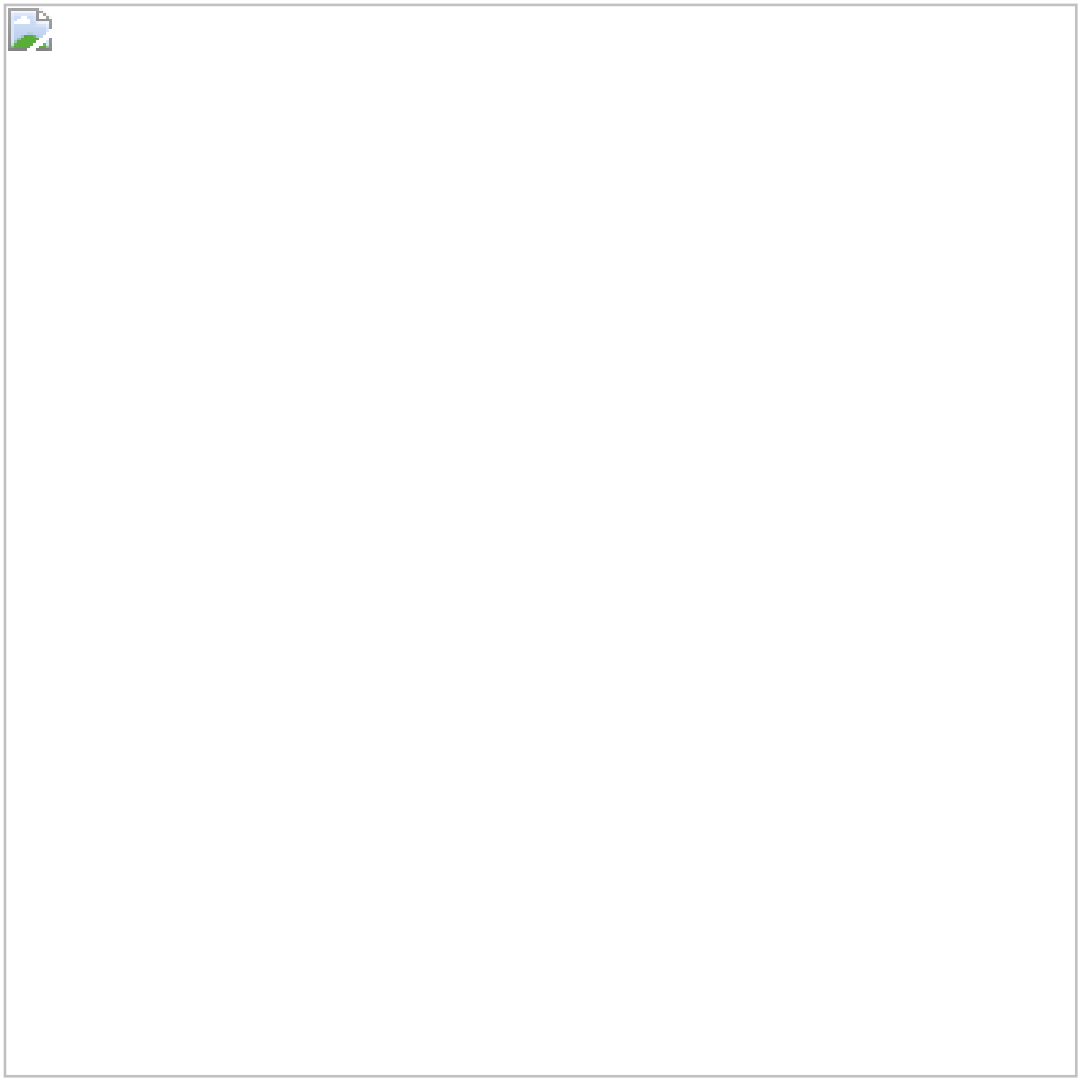

Atlas du Parc National Suisse: les 100 premières années [Atlas of the Swiss National Park: The First 100 Years]

Authors: Houet, Thomas, and Galop, Didier

Source: Mountain Research and Development, 35(1) : 98

Published By: International Mountain Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1659/mrd.mm152

Mountain Research and Development (MRD)
An international, peer-reviewed open access journal
published by the International Mountain Society (IMS)
www.mrd-journal.org

Atlas du Parc National Suisse: les 100 premières années
[Atlas of the Swiss National Park: The First 100 Years]

Edited by Heinrich Haller, Antonia Eisenhut, and Rudolf Haller. Bern, Switzerland: Haupt, 2013. 248 pp. € 59.00. ISBN 978-3-258-07837-3.

This atlas provides a detailed description of past and current research on the first national park of the European Alps. It offers a remarkable compilation of spatial datasets and a consistent summary of multidisciplinary research done over the last 100 years. The book is available in French and in German and is supported by a website (www.atlasnationalpark.ch) for navigating across all the maps and scientific themes. It represents the latest step toward an integrated monitoring and information system for the Alps (Price 1999).

The atlas has 8 chapters. Chapter 1 ("Fundamentals") presents the general context—the history, location, geography, geology, etc—of the Swiss National Park, which covers an area of 170.3 km^2. Chapter 2 ("Retrospective") focuses on studies of the past, ie the history of the environment and anthropogenic land use changes. Chapter 3 ("Comparison and Cooperation") looks at how this national park is embedded in its geographical surroundings—the entire European Alps—and in its institutional environment. The 2 following chapters ("Plants" and "Animals") each provide an issue-centered summary of studies that illustrate the respective biodiversity of this national park, focusing on specificities and diagnosis regarding 2 questions: (1) Where are we now? and (2) Where do we come from? Some of these studies are site specific and do not necessarily cover the entire national park, but they deal with a phenomenal diversity of ecological applications. Chapter 6 ("Humans") lists current human activities in the park, as well as how they are monitored and how the national park manages them. Interestingly, the national park is considered to be a driver of possible controlled and uncontrolled anthropogenic disturbances, not just a natural protected area. Chapter 7 ("Research") presents the long history of research within the park, as well as ongoing projects that use new geospatial techniques, focus on ecological interactions, or both. The final chapter ("Scenarios and Perspectives") explores the possible impacts of climate change and management strategies on the landscape.

This atlas highlights the benefits of interactions in scientific research in an exceptional mountainous long-term observatory over the past century. Given the incredible number of multiscale issues that it maps, more specific comments on them cannot be provided here. The atlas abounds with illustrations (240 maps and 244 figures). It gives a good overview of the amount and diversity of research undertaken, presenting it in short articles (2 to 4 pages) that can be read independently. Nevertheless, some illustrations might be seen as dedicated only to an experienced audience. Also, the large number of multiscale issues that are mapped makes it difficult to fully understand where these issues are located (even if a location window is provided), how and whether they overlap, and where possible spatial interactions among some of them might take place. At the same time, the importance of precisely locating phenomena is assumed and claimed by the editors in the preface (p 10).

On the one hand, this atlas is original in terms of its structure, contents, and available tools (the website offering access to a geographic information system), which typically rely on studies of landscape ecology and landscape dynamics (Houet et al 2010). Past changes are considered to be a basis for exploring the future, accounting for the current ecological diagnosis and identifying interacting natural and anthropogenic processes. Moreover, the atlas lists all publications that concern this study area, facilitating future inter- and multidisciplinary studies and reviews. On the other hand, such a compilation of (relevant) studies questions the Swiss National Park's scientific strategies with regard to long-term monitoring and financial support to research laboratories. Which of the issues presented have been investigated in one-time studies, and which are part of long-term monitoring studies?

The attractive printed atlas is highly recommended for any scientist or environmental institution working in mountain areas because it gives a good overview of what can be expected from research on mountainous socioecological systems. It could also be of high interest to anyone who loves the Swiss Alps and mountainous national parks. It goes beyond other conventional printed atlases by providing an online interactive version of all maps, coupled with videos and illustrative pictures. After reading this book, one would expect more interdisciplinary work, leading to results that integrate spatial and temporal processes and their interactions. The editors identify this challenge as a next step for the Swiss National Park: "This version will have to be restructured entirely in the future to integrate the spatial and temporal aspects of scientific research" (p 11). This has to be considered an indicator concerning the interest of such an atlas.

REFERENCES

Houet T, Verburg P, Loveland T. 2010. Monitoring and modelling landscape dynamics. *Landscape Ecology* 25(2):163–167.
Price MF. 1999. *Cooperation in the European Mountains. Vol 1: The Alps*. Gland, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature.

AUTHORS

Thomas Houet* and Didier Galop
**Corresponding author:*
thomas.houet@univ-tlse2.fr

Environmental Geography Laboratory (GEODE), GEODE UMR 5602 CNRS, University of Toulouse, 31058 Toulouse Cedex, France