



Book Review: Adygea: Nachhaltige Entwicklung in einer Bergregion des Kaukasus

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Adygea: Nachhaltige Entwicklung in einer Bergregion des Kaukasus

Edited by V. Akatov et al. Berlin: Naturschutzbund Deutschland e.V. (NABU) and Arbeitskreis Nordkaukasus der Grünen Liga e.V., 1999. 130 pp.

This small volume in German is a feasibility study: it examines opportunities for socially and environmentally sustainable development in the mountains of the northwest Caucasus. It is based on fieldwork conducted in the Republic of Adygea, one of the smallest republics in the Russian Federation. The book presents the research area, reflects on the theoretical framework derived from UNESCO's MAB Programme, on the Agenda 21 process and on transition theories, and gives some recommendations.

A working group consisting of legal scientists and experts in forestry, agriculture, tourism, economics, ecology and sociology studied the region in order to implement the Fisht ecological and tourist area project, immediately north of the recently designated Western Caucasus World Heritage Site. The authors argue that this area should have the status of a nature park, with tourist resorts as a primary source of economic activity, but that it should also provide ecotourist activities in order to comply with the concept of sustainability.

What are the strengths and weak points of the study? Until now, research within the former Soviet Union has been highly dependent on scientific networks. In this case, close and fruitful cooperation between German and Russian scientists was established. But contacts between the research group and local authorities were also furthered. However, the results of the study are not really sophisticated and do not have much

depth, perhaps as a result of the difficulties that the working group had in accessing statistical data and existing fieldwork publications. The book is therefore a short and standardized feasibility study rather than an example of regional geography. This is unfortunate if we consider the lack of micro- and meso-scale studies in the area, but is understandable in view of the conditions under which research was conducted in the area. All things considered, however, even such a small contribution to the study of the Western Caucasus ("the only large mountain area in Europe that has not experienced significant human impact, containing extensive tracts of undisturbed mountain forests unique on the European scale", according to the World Heritage Committee) and of the issue of nature conservation in the area is welcome.

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