



Universität Zürich

## Remoteness in the Southern Swiss Alps – An opportunity for hiking tourism

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### Abstract

Remote areas are defined as valleys that can only be accessed and traversed by foot - a rarity in the highly developed Swiss Alps. This master thesis analyzed the supply and demand for hiking tourism in remote areas of the southern Swiss alpine regions Sopraceneri and Moesano.

The first step was to create a GIS-based inventory and classification of all 67 remote areas larger than 5 km<sup>2</sup>. In a second step, two case studies were carried out in the *moderately* remote Val Cama (canton Graubünden) and the *extremely* remote Val di Lodrino (canton Ticino).

A questionnaire-based survey of hikers in these two areas during summer 2006 provided 230 answers with 120 variables each.

According to 18 answers covering their attitudes towards the preferred extent of human influence in remote areas, the hikers could be classified into three types of visitors on a “purism scale” (Stankey 1973, Fredman 2000): *purists*, *neutralists* and *non-purists*. Purists prefer as little human influence as possible while non-purists are looking for infrastructure and security rather than “pure” wilderness. The share of purists in the extremely remote Val di Lodrino was 45%, significantly higher than in the moderately remote Val Cama with 24%.

Looking at the visitor’s landscape valuation it was determined that the elements of the traditional cultural landscape reach the highest preference values. The re-afforestation of agricultural land is regarded as something positive only by a minority of hikers (22%), while as 67% regret this development. 11% are ambiguous; they do not have strong feelings either way.

For the management of remote areas it is important to know that the preservation of existing infrastructures (e.g. paths, huts, cultural landscape elements) and “soft” measures (e.g. more information, better signposting) are regarded positively by all types of visitors, whereas the construction of *new* huts and paths is very controversial and the construction of new road access is clearly refused by all types.

The results also show that the sensitivity towards an over-use of remote valleys is high: 74% of the visitors in Val di Lodrino and 53% in Val Cama prefer to encounter fewer than 10 persons a day.