

***Governing recreational activities in Ireland: a partnerships
approach to sustainable tourism***

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Abstract

In Ireland increased public access for recreation presents challenges to policy makers concerned with tourism and rural development. Recreation activities such as mountaineering, walking and cycling can contribute to the regeneration of marginalised rural areas and enhance residents' quality of life. However, de facto access to common and private farm land also generates conflicts between recreationists, landowners and government authorities. Using common pool resource theory we describe the formation and development of two partnerships in the mountains of Mourne (Northern Ireland) and the Wicklow uplands (Republic of Ireland). Our findings indicate that partnerships can reduce recreational conflicts involving complex property rights and diverse stakeholders by re-positioning incentives yet avoid changes in land ownership and property rights. Community based contracts and access agreements between the state, partnerships and landowners has lead to the adoption of new rules by walking associations, regulation enforcement and public-private investment in trail development.

Keywords: Common Pool Resources; Property Rights; Public Access; Conflict Resolution; Recreation Activity; Environmental Partnership; Community-Based Environmental Management

JEL Classification: Q0

1.1 Introduction

Since the late 1980's, there has been a growing interest by policy makers in partnerships as an institutional tool of environmental governance (Long & Arnold, 1995, Poncelet, 2001). In the rural tourism and agricultural sectors, partnerships can contribute to the provision of environmental amenity, a strengthening of institutional capacity and to rural tourism (Scott, 1994; Michaels *et al.*, 1999; MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003).

We investigate an economic rationale for partnerships and their presence in the tourism, recreation and agricultural sectors in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (hereafter referred to just as Ireland). The chief concern addressed in this study is how to govern recreational access to multiple-use upland landscapes during a period of increasing demand for open air outdoor recreation. Despite its outstanding recreational appeal, Ireland has very few designated public rights of way in both the north and south of the island and access to recreational areas is dependent on by-product access such as private farm land, common land and public forests. Landowners have been confronted with increased costs affecting their business activities and difficulties of excluding recreationists. The problem has been compounded by the popular perception of walking in the Irish uplands as a free good due in part to the historically permissive attitude by landowners on commonage or common land¹. This has generated conflicts between the state, landowners and walking associations and it has had a negative environmental impact on Irish upland ecosystems including severe erosion in some areas (Bleasdale and Sheehy-Skeffington, 1995; Flegg, 2004).

This study thus investigates how stakeholders in Ireland and Northern Ireland have addressed growing conflicts between recreationists and landowners through the formation of locally based environmental partnerships. We show how partnerships have re-aligned incentives faced by land owners and recreation users without reassigning property rights. Indeed, it is the rights of access to private and commonage land without altering fundamental property rights that gives rise to the major policy issues which concern this study.

The paper is organized as follows: first, we describe and discuss partnerships; second, we provide a background to recreational conflict and property rights in Irish upland areas; third, we use the theory of property rights, public goods, externalities and common-pool resources to shed light on recreational

conflict; fourth, we contrast the provision of recreation in protected areas versus managed landscapes that integrate traditional economic activities with recreation provision; fifth, we provide background to the case studies and present our survey results; finally, we conclude with a discussion on the economic and policy implications of our findings.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Environmental Partnerships

Partnerships have become increasingly popular as a form of collaborative policy making with examples of their implementation in natural resource planning (Leach and Pelky, 2001), international development (Gonzales et al., 2000; Meadowcroft, 1999) rural development (McDonagh, 2000; OECD, 2001; Moseley, 2003) and rural tourism (Roberts and Simpson, 1999). Partnerships have received growing support from the European Union (European Commission, 2003), international development agencies (OECD, 2001) and state agencies and, increasingly, authorities have earmarked funding in support of local partnerships (Teague and Murphy, 2004).

Michaels *et al.*, (1999) define ‘partnerships’ as “*voluntary collaborations formed by two or more parties, that enable them to work together to achieve shared objectives*”. The OECD (1990) has suggested that the essence of any partnership is the orchestration of policy and execution based on shared objectives and priorities. According to Long and Arnold (1995) “*environmental partnerships convey a sense of constructive and voluntary collaboration among different stakeholders in environmental protection and natural resource management.*”.

In this paper we focus on environmental partnerships involved in recreation provision and rural tourism. Figure 1 can be used to characterise these partnerships. They both include representatives from statutory agencies, private interest groups and citizens’/community representatives who meet as a group periodically to discuss environmental protection or natural resource management issues of mutual concern.

Figure 1: Partnerships compared to regulatory activities. Source: (Long and Arnold, 1995).

As Figure 1 shows, collaboration between stakeholders is voluntary and non-regulatory. Partnerships also usually involve at least two organizations which jointly define decision-making and activities and share a common environmental goal. The partnerships we describe are not involved in regulatory development, their activities are not set in stone or directed according to certain statutory-driven policies but are instead jointly defined by stakeholders.

Examples of partnerships in Ireland include social partnerships (O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998), LEADER programmes which focus on rural development initiatives (Varley and Curtain, 2002) and partnerships with an environmental mandate with a focus on the Irish Uplands (Stelfox, 1996).

Currently there are six upland partnerships, five in the Republic of Ireland and one in Northern Ireland. They share a common goal: to promote sustainable economic and ecological development in the Irish uplands. All are involved with access, conflict resolution, provision of environmental public goods and, to some extent, rural tourism. They all include a highly heterogeneous group of individuals including local citizens, landowners, businesses, national and local recreation groups, multiple government representation including state, local authorities, service agencies and elected officials. Given such diversity, participatory policy making can involve greater conflict than would be the case for homogeneous groupings or fora who share a common vision from the outset and it is to this issue which we now turn.

1.2.2 Recreational conflict in the Uplands

The growth of open-air outdoor recreation and increased public access to the Irish uplands involves a number of complex effects on the rural economy and on the rural population. First, it represents an important means of regenerating local communities in the study areas. Tourism development is important in areas like the Irish uplands where other opportunities for growth are limited. In particular, given the low population density and scenic quality of upland areas, they provide good opportunities for recreational tourism. In Northern Ireland, there were 74 000 visitors whose main purpose was recreational walking in 2004 (NITB, 2006). In Ireland, the number of overseas participants in hiking and walking amounted to 259,000 during 2004, of which 32% were engaged in hillwalking (Failte Ireland, 2005).

Second, the health benefits of walking and cycling are increasingly recognized. A number of campaigns highlight the importance of physical activity to public health².

Third, traditional uses of the landscape such as agriculture are in decline. In the 1960s, a third of the population in Ireland were engaged in either agriculture, forestry or fishing. In 2004, farmers made up less than 6% of the working population in Ireland (CSO, 2004) and constituted 7.2% of the working population in Northern Ireland (DARD, 2004).

Fourth, despite the potential economic benefits to the rural economy, public access has become an increasing concern for many rural dwellers and policy makers involved in rural development (Flegg, 2004). Recreationists generate a number of distinct conflicts which impose external³ costs on other users. External effects can be categorized according to the origin of economic activity as well as the sort of economic pursuit they impact on (Perman *et al.*, 2003).

Figure 2: Examples of three types of recreational conflict and associated external costs imposed on users in both the north and south of Ireland.

Figure 2. illustrates three key conflicts revealed by this study and the type of consumption and production externalities to which they give rise (one way arrows show unidirectional effects; two-way arrows indicate reciprocal impacts).

In upland areas, conflict occurred at three levels. The first was due to an infringement of property rights from increased pressure placed on upland farmers to accommodate the demands by recreationists from nearby metropolitan areas.

Figure 2 shows Type 1 conflicts which arose – at times openly hostile – when landowners asserted their right to exclude users from their land, while users claimed that their user rights were infringed through this assertion. Figure 2 shows how an asymmetrical externality arising in consumption by walkers impose external costs on landowners. These include production externalities - increased costs affecting farm business activity, legal costs of property right enforcement and consumption externalities - reductions in the amenity qualities of a property for the landowner concerned. Type 2. conflict in Upland areas involved reciprocal externalities whereby walkers impose costs on other walkers due to severe congestion in hotspots in close proximity to urban areas. In Wicklow Type 3 conflicts involved disputes between walkers and off-road motorcyclists and ATVs (all terrain vehicles). These both involve consumption externalities. Jacob

and Schreyer (1980) refer to Type 2 and Type 3 conflict as “goal interference” attributed to the behavior of another. This involves conflict of a reciprocal nature where the physical presence of one individual or group interferes with the goals of another individual or group (Carothers *et al.*, 2001).

1.2.3 Property Rights in the Uplands

Some background on property rights in Ireland and the provision of public access is relevant to the conflict that occurred. Historically, the land-reform process in Ireland has given rise to a strong social significance attached to private land ownership - one of the highest levels of owner-occupancy of any country in the EU (Lafferty *et al.*, 1999). All land in Ireland is owned, either by private individuals or state bodies and recreationists do not have a legal right of entry to land (MCI, 2003). In Ireland, there are very few designated formal public rights of way and areas developed specifically for providing recreational access are very limited (Flegg, 2004). Although rights of way do exist in places in the form of traditional paths, these are not protected by law and they can be difficult to prove and any conflict over them would need to be resolved through the courts. Many of these traditional paths have, over time, become unused or have been reoccupied by landowners and much of the walking is on public roads - generally not considered the optimal walking experience. The Irish Sports Council found that of the 850 trails in Ireland, 55% of walks were on county roads and half of all the walking on long distance way-marked ways were on public roads (ISC, 2005).

There is also a dependence on by-product access. Some access is available on public land or quasi-public land, but frequently this is a by-product of ownership concerned with other goals – forestry, protected areas and private farm land (including commonage). In a recent assessment of walking trails in Ireland the Irish Sports Council found that 53% of “off road” trails were provided by Coillte the public forest authority.

Notably, private land ownership of walking trails is low at 14%, with some 15 counties in the republic having less than 25km per county.

An important land category which is managed not by the state but by private farmers and land owners in the Republic and the north of Ireland is commonage. Commonage land and recreational access are inextricably bound because most of the areas of high recreational value are found in remote

mountainous or coastal regions of the country which occupies commonage land. Commonage has been a crucial resource for outdoor recreation users because a tradition of freedom of access by the public to commonage land has developed. This distinctive historic tradition of open access to commonage land has arisen principally due to: low population density; marginal economic land value; difficulty of property right enforcement and consequent permissive attitude of many landowners. Indeed, recreational access to unenclosed commonage land for walking and mountaineering usually requires no payment and therefore has the non-excludability characteristic of a public good (Cornes and Sandler, 1991).

Type 2 conflicts have been compounded by the fact that unlike private land, historically, a freedom to roam has emerged on commonage. Although this has instilled a strong perception of public access rights; a view of commonage as a “free good”; and a vocal “keep Ireland open” lobby; the law concedes exclusive use to the landowner who owns the commonage grazing rights. Any individual accessing commonage land, challenges the right to exclusive use, and may be expected by the landowner or shareholders to leave. Recreational access to commonage land in both areas is therefore not an enforceable right, and some landowners have displayed signs prohibiting trespassing on commonage (Rafferty, 2005). In some instances therefore the benefits of access are made available to the public *de jure*. In other instances, as with commonage land, there is *de facto* access although the property rights lawfully remain the exclusive right of the landowner (Flegg, 2004).

The response by the Irish government to meet demands for recreational space through statutory designations has had a limited impact. Under REPS⁴ – an agri-environment scheme - farmers could receive payment for the maintenance of walking routes. However, this scheme was discontinued in 1999 under new European Legislation. For their part, government proposals to expand protected areas has been resisted by local landowners who have been reluctant to give up their land and legal clarification was required to establish landowner rights (Coffey, 1996). Recently the Irish government has formed a recreation council - Comhairle Na Tuaithe – but this organisation has yet to reach an agreement with landowners over access.

Clearly, issues relating to improved access to private or commonage land and walking rights are not sufficiently catered for within any existing statutory designations in both countries. It can be seen as a policy failure of the Irish State, or more generally of the policy on property rights in Ireland. As a result partnerships are forced into existence by market failure (externalities created by Type 1 conflicts) and

intervention failure (an absence of any statutory policy instruments – targeted at access provision). The property rights issue is particularly important in understanding the nature of conflict between stakeholders and it is to this issue which we now turn.

1.3 Conceptual background

1.3.1 Private and common property rights

The literature indicates that optimal management of natural resources is possible under both private (Demsetz, 1967, Anderson and Hill, 1990) and common ownership (Ostrom, 1990; Bromley 1992; Baland and Platteau 1996; Feeny *et al.*, 1996; Ruttan 1998; Hegan 2003). Clearly the conflicts generated between stakeholders, constrain rural tourism, and the presence of external effects and economic inefficiencies in the case studies described are a concern to policy makers. The environmental damage caused by excessive uncontrolled use of trails is also a subject of concern. In what follows we briefly review the literature on private and common property rights. We then explore how rural institutions can bring about Pareto improvements by reducing conflict under both private and common property rights.

Bromley (1991) defines property as a benefit (or income) stream and property rights as a claim to a benefit stream that the state will agree to protect through the assignment of duty to others who may covet or somehow interfere with the benefit stream. Bromley (1997) asserts that rights are not relationships between an individual and an object, but instead constitute relationships between an individual and others with respect to an object.

Strictly speaking, the case studies considered occupy privately owned land which cannot be defined as open access. However, it will be seen that both partnerships involve commonage which involves a long standing tradition of common access. Also both partnerships have experienced Type 2 conflicts which involve reciprocal externalities. The standard interpretation of open-access regimes is that no one has a legal right to exclude anyone from using the resource (Bromley, 1991). Common pool resources represent an example of an open access regime since they are rival but non-excludible [Stevenson, 1991]. If such a resource generates valuable products, then one can expect that the lack of rules regarding authorized use will lead to misuse and over-consumption (Ostrom, 2000b). This class of resources exhibits the property of “subtractability whereby each user reduces the availability of the resource to others” (Adger

and Luttrell, 2000). Stevenson (1991) comments on the symmetric negative externalities this resource produces. Each entrant to resource use imparts a negative externality to all other producers but similarly these other producers have negative external effects on the new entrant i.e. the externality is reciprocal.

Common property on the other hand differs from open access. Common property involves members of a clearly demarked group which have the legal right to exclude non-members of that group from using a resource, thus creating the potential to avoid the tragedy of the commons so typical of open access (Bromley, 1991). Importantly, access to a given resource is restricted to members of a community and common property is in essence private property for the group of co-owners, and in that sense it is a group decision regarding who shall be excluded. Individuals have rights and obligations in situations of common (non-individual) property. According to Ostrom (2000b), “common property” regimes typically involve participants who are proprietors, who have the right of access, right of withdrawal (extraction), right of management and right of exclusion over a resource.

Access to a given commonage is confined to a group of shareholders who have the legal right to exclude non-shareholders thus creating the potential to avoid the tragedy of the commons so typical of open access. Commonage can thus be thought of as a Common Property Regime and not open access. However these rights only relate to agronomic activities such as grazing/cropping decisions amongst shareholders, no such rights exist with respect to recreation provision for non-shareholders.

Recently, common pool resource theory has been used to address recreational conflict by Marcouiller (1998), Burger and Leonard (2000), Vail and Hultkrantz (2000), Vail and Heldt (2004). Common pool resource theory is useful for clarifying a number of distinct problems in both case study areas. Bank holiday congestion in the Wicklow uplands provides an example of Type 2 conflicts amongst hikers. Reciprocal externalities involve acute congestion during peak periods on preferred walking routes. Congestion increases costs and reduces the quality of an amenity. It involves overcrowding, trail degradation and hostilities between recreationists.

Heywood (1993) employed a game theoretic approach to explain the emergence of norms and conventions as a solution to conflicts over recreation resources. Anttila (1999, 2001) has also employed game theory to model contracting arrangements between landowners and snowmobilers in Sweden. This research investigates the voluntary provision of maintained trails through contracting arrangements

(between landowners and snowmobilers) as an outcome of social network mobilization and social sanctions. A lose-lose prisoners' dilemma game is contrasted with a repeated cooperative game. Prior to the formation of a contract, landowners prohibited access, warned against trespass and threatened recreationists with prosecution and landlords consequently faced heavy enforcement costs. Contracts for purpose-built trails with self-monitoring by snowmobiling clubs increased both landowner and snowmobiler' payoffs. Landowners were able to restrict trail use to specified areas and reduce enforcement costs, and snowmobilers avoided risk of prosecution. Two conditions brought about a Pareto improvement: improved trails encouraged greater use of designated purpose-built routes. Second, asymmetric information – risk of prosecution by other snowmobilers ensured that self-policing was a more effective mechanism than state or landlord enforcement. Of particular interest, was group discouragement of non-compliance through moral suasion and by informing state rangers of rogue sledding.

Ostrom (2000b) has also suggested that rules can provide a solution to *free riding*⁵. Free riding can be overcome when beneficiaries of established CPRs commit resources to scrutinising and sanctioning the actions of others. By employing a game theoretic approach, Ostrom (2000b) explains the action of players according to distinct personality categories. Here utility maximisers familiar to students of neoclassical economic theory aim to optimise short-term payoffs and are referred to as *rational egoists*. Where they predominate the outcome of the game is a prisoners' dilemma. Other types of players described as *conditional cooperators* indicate that under certain conditions cooperative strategies can increase collective payoffs.

The occurrence of free riding has been noted in both study areas. Under open access walkers don't have much incentive to contribute towards the cost of establishing and maintaining footpaths. The maintenance of high quality walking routes involves substantial investments in trail drainage, signage, construction of bridges and environmental interpretation. The high costs involved in excluding tourists from trails further erodes landlord incentives to invest in access provision. In remote upland areas, the high costs of monitoring tourist behaviour such as damage to fences, littering, harm imposed on livestock discourages landowner investment incentives in value added tourism. Under open access, little incentive exists to contribute to trail development and maintenance, resulting in a decline in trail quality. Poor trail quality in turn fails to attract walkers and reduces the incentive to use them.

1.3.2 Recreation activities on protected areas versus managed landscapes

Recreational access can be enhanced through statutory designations involving protected areas (White and Lovett, 1999) or in managed landscapes which involve local communities and landowners (Benson, 2001, Ryan and Walker, 2004). Both governments in the North and South of the country have been under increasing public pressure to meet demands for recreational space and have responded with proposals to develop a series of national parks and interpretive centres across Ireland.

However, in the Republic of Ireland land for national parks is owned by the state, and replaces private economic activities such as farming with biodiversity conservation, heritage and recreational uses. Property rights do not attempt to integrate the interests of private landowners with the concerns of recreationists and conservationists. This is not the case in Northern Ireland, where National Parks and AONBs are implemented on private property, are not managed directly by a statutory agency yet they also involve significant environmental and recreational goals. In what follows we review the theory on the provision of recreational access using these two quite different approaches. We begin with protected areas.

An increase in the demand for recreation in many developed countries has motivated environmentalists and the tourist sector to expand reserves and protected areas. National parks are generally thought of as being quite successful at fulfilling nature conservation and recreation goals.

However there are a number of problems with this approach: protected areas cover a limited area – approximately 11% of the earth's surface (WRI, 2003); the distribution of protected areas is very uneven, for example 16 % of US is protected whilst only 5% of India is covered by reserves (WRI, 2003); protected areas involve restrictions which generally exclude economic activities and they can impose costs on land managers and prevent future economic opportunities from taking place (Saberwal *et al.*, 2001); protected areas are usually owned and managed by the state and their creation can cause conflict with local communities (Trakolis, 2001, Matose, 2006, Cernea and Schmidt- Soltau, 2006). Bishop *et al.*, (1995) note that the lack of integration of protected areas into other aspects of public policy creates external difficulties with the approach. Failures to incorporate local communities into decision – making calls for more integrated management of national parks (Trakolis, 2001, Matose, 2006).

Local attitudes can be influenced by the perceived level of benefit or disbenefit generated by protected areas. Many empirical studies applied to parks, reserves and public forests indicate that the value of recreational and other non-market values can be substantial (Hanley and Craig, 1991; Willis, 1991; van Rensburg *et al.*, 2002; Mill *et al.*, 2007) but it is important that the local population supports protected areas (Walpole and Goodwin, 2001). However studies also show that the commercial ventures based on nature-based tourism can result in environmental degradation (Cater, 1994). The integration of conservation and recreation goals is challenging and demands more stakeholder involvement in tourism planning and development according to Cihar and Stankova (2006). Support for conservation becomes easier when local people are actively involved in tourism planning and development (Goodwin, 1996). Trakolis (2001) cites Steenkamp and Hughes's (1997) study of Richtersveld National Park in South Africa as an example of successful integration of local communities, who still exercise and use their land rights, in developing national park plans with the park authorities to achieve substantial tourism benefits for the local communities.

An alternative to nationalisation is to keep land in private use and integrate economic activities with recreational access. Some studies indicate that recreational activities can be part of human-dominated ecosystems and that economically valuable managed landscapes do not necessarily have to exclude recreation goals. A range of consumptive recreational activities may occur in the presence of productive human activities (Fennell and Weaver, 1997). Benson (2001), suggests that the use of privately – owned land for recreation is becoming increasingly important in the US. According to Ryan and Walker (2004) funding difficulties of buying large tracts of land for public recreation requires planners to develop innovative landscape planning and management techniques based on promoting public-private partnerships. Many governments are involved in policy innovations which decentralise environmental management and promote community-based conservation and recreation activities (Li, 1996; Kilipiris, 2005). Pressure to accommodate recreationists on limited National Park land creates inter-group conflict and can reduce enjoyment of the recreational experience (Jackson *et al.*, 2003). Vail and Hultkrantz (2000) underline four property right challenges needed to sustain nature-based tourism under private property right regimes: keeping demand pressure within the system's carrying capacity; balancing tourism and non-recreational activities in a multi-function ecosystem; controlling irreversible landscape changes and strengthening

landowners' incentives to invest in conservation and value-added tourism. Healy (1994) argues that common pool regimes which involve community control or reciprocal actions among individuals have potential for addressing common pool problems characterised by susceptibility to resource damage and overuse caused by lack of incentives for productivity - enhancing investment. Sidaway (1998) shows how conflict between recreation and conservation along coastal areas can be resolved using management techniques and negotiations at a local level.

The implication of these findings suggests that private provision of recreation is a viable alternative to the protected areas approach. Correct institutional arrangements to facilitate negotiations and public-private partnerships can enhance opportunities for rural based recreational tourism (Ryan and Walker, 2004, Shafer and Choi, 2006). The case studies here illustrate the preservationist⁶ perspective which led to the establishment of the national park in Wicklow by the state, versus an initiative in the Mourne, Northern Ireland which integrated recreation and conservation with agricultural activities on private farm land. Findings suggest that efforts to integrate recreation activities with agricultural concerns can result in less conflict, enhanced recreational experiences and sustainable nature-based tourism without jeopardising traditional agricultural economic activities. We first report on field research undertaken with key informants involved in both partnerships.

2.1 Field research

In September 2003 the authors conducted an investigation which identified six environmental partnerships involved in outdoor recreation activities in Ireland. After meeting each partnership, the MHT and WUC were chosen on the basis that they included at least one statutory representative, at least two individuals representing opposing interests such as recreation representatives, a member of the local community or an environmentalist and at least two landowners.

For each partnership, we a) interviewed four key informants using semi-structured interviews, and b) sent a survey by post to all partnership participants.

The four semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted in order to convey the role played by partnerships in affecting conflicts between landowners and recreationists. This is supplemented by consultant reports, visitor surveys and minutes from meetings. The early history of the MHT is provided

by Tony Gates, the MHT's director and the early history of the WUC is provided by Sean Byrne, a founding member of the WUC. MHT interviews also include Desmond Patterson a representative of local landowners and Carol-Lynne Ferris and Dawson Stelfox representatives of walking interests. For the WUC, interviews include Murtagh O Keefe a representative of local landowners and Richard More O Farrell, a walking representative. We also gather views from State agents for each partnership. This field research is conveyed as a narrative, largely in a qualitative fashion.

The postal survey included a series of general questions on participant motives for joining the partnership. In addition the authors included a number of questions on the perceived effect of the partnership on specific problems in the area (such as on resolving conflict) and the perceived impact on the respondents' own attitudes such as whether respondents believed that the partnership influenced their behavior and attitudes towards community and environmental issues.

Data collection began simultaneously for the two partnerships in January 2004. For both partnerships, the final datasets contain good response rates. A total of seventy four individuals were surveyed in the WUC. Of this number, 90% completed the survey. For the MHT, 71 individuals were sent surveys and 94% completed the survey.

We now discuss the results from the case studies to illustrate the initiatives taken by partnerships working with state agencies to improve public access. These show how the partnerships have resolved conflicts between stakeholders and above all have generated a new recreationist ethic, reflecting a greater sense of responsibility toward landowners, other recreationists and nature conservation. We begin with the WUC.

3.1 Results

3.1.1 The Wicklow Uplands Council

The Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) is an environmental partnership which represents non-statutory interests in the upland areas of Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, South Dublin and Dublin City. It is based in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow and includes representatives of various organizations and individuals, grouped into four categories: farming and landowning representatives, environmental and recreational representatives, community represents and economic and tourism representatives. The WUC is a voluntary

organization with a staff of three – one administration officer, one program officer and one development officer (part- time).

The Wicklow Uplands contains Ireland's second largest national park (Wicklow Mountains National Park), established in 1991 which covers 17 000 hectares and receives a number of conservation designations under National and European legislation⁷. The park was introduced by the Irish government in response to increasing demand for outdoor recreation. It represents a major tourist attraction for Wicklow with over one million visits each year.

As Figure 3 shows, the WUC was born in response to a particular set of circumstances which acted as a catalyst for the development of the partnership.

Figure 3: Recreation demand and Type 1 conflict leading to the formation and development of the WUC partnership

Conflict arose due to a threat to landowner property rights for two reasons. First, concerns arose by landowners over a government proposal to build an interpretative centre to complement the National Park at Luggala in North Wicklow. In Ireland, the National Parks service pursues a preservationist policy whereby the protected area is managed exclusively for its flora and fauna which excludes productive activities including agriculture.

This has important implications for private property rights because land for National Parks and Visitor Centres is usually bought from private farming families under a compulsory purchase order by the state. Existing legislation and property rights do not allow for a land management policy which would integrate the interests of private landowners with the concerns of recreationists and conservationists. In the case of Luggala, a decision had been taken by the OPW (Office of Public Works) to go ahead with the centre without consulting the community.

Consequently three landowners brought legislative action against the OPW claiming that they could not invoke sections of the Planning Act for the interpretative centre proposal. Landowners were concerned that they would lose their land and that the centre would displace agriculture. This emphasises the message portrayed by Saberwal *et al.*, (2001) that landowners will be reluctant to accept protected areas

if they prevent their future economic opportunities from taking place. In Wicklow, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the landowners, the OPW were prohibited from building the centre and landowners retained the land.

Second, during the conflict over Luggala, landowners became concerned at the high volume of recreationists walking across their land without permission. Despite the presence of the National Park, recreation demand was so high and trail provision so restricted that more and more recreationists began to use private land. The Wicklow Way, which was the first way-marked way to be established in Ireland helps illustrate the problem (Figure 4). Land ownership on this walk reflects property rights of most Irish trails. All way-marked ways⁸ that cross private land involve access agreements with landowners and they do not represent a formal public right of way as such. It begins in Tinahely, ends in Dublin and covers a distance of 127km. Much of the walk is on tarred county roads (41km), is highly dependent on by-product access from Coillte⁹ (57km) and covers a relatively small amount of state land (National Park 16km) and private (13km) land.

Recreation demand was especially high in the Lough Dan and Glenmalur areas. However this spill-over generated a Type 1 conflict which imposed costs on landowners.

Figure 4: Location of the study site for the Wicklow Uplands Council partnership

Negative externalities created by the recreationists included: parking in undesignated areas, loss of amenity values, nuisance effects on business activities and growing uncertainty over owner-occupier liability and insurance issues. These depress landowners' economic returns and involve emotional stress which can be significant for individual farmers as expressed by one key informant landowner:

“People arrived in the mornings, leave their cars parked at the end of your walkway, so you can't get in or out all day. The walkers were going along laneways where they had no right to go, leaving gates open, causing problems with stock“. We were worried about insurance and a barrister at a meeting explained that if the judge feels sympathetic to the

walker he could award against the landowner. It has left farmers very uncertain about whether to let people across land...(O' Keefe)''

With little prospect of plans by the state emerging as a solution to the conflict, the need for a partnership concept involving all key stakeholders was realised by landowners, and representatives of recreation groups and the wider community.

The WUC partnership does not run the National Park. This is managed by the National parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG). However, the WUC has jurisdiction for the area covered by Figure 4 because it was in these areas that the conflict occurred and the partnership now works with all stakeholders in Wicklow County to reduce conflict and promote access.

3.1.2 Survey Results

Notably, results from the survey show that 30% of all participants cite conflict resolution as a primary motive for joining the WUC (Table 1). Table 1 also shows that 58% of landowners and 54% of stakeholders representing recreation and environmental interests identified conflict resolution as the main reason for joining the WUC.

Table 1: Motives for joining the WUC partnership, grouped by major stakeholder categories. Values for WUC (n = 66).

Given the significance of the conflict issue for all groups, an important question for this study is “whether participants feel the partnership has been successful at reducing conflict”. This question was put to respondents in the survey. A response to this question is shown diagrammatically in Figure 5 which indicates that about two thirds of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their partnership had reduced local conflict.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who agree* that the WUC partnership has reduced local conflict (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC (n = 66).

It is worth recalling that Type 1 and Type 2 conflicts generally occur only between farmers and recreationists. This required that we investigated the groups separately to establish whether some stakeholders felt more strongly about the conflict issue compared to others. Notably, as Figure 6 shows, the survey revealed that more than 50% of farmers and 23% of recreation groups strongly agreed that the partnership had reduced local conflict. It is precisely between these two stakeholder groups and their members where the most acute Type 1 and Type 2 hostilities arose in the first place.

In order to deal with the conflict, it was the landowners themselves who took the initiative to develop the partnership by working with recreation groups (as shown in Figure 3). Statutory agencies remained isolated and were not involved in the creation of the organisation. Table 1 shows the breakdown of WUC membership highlighting how few statutory agents are represented in the partnership. This emphasises the failure of public agencies in developed countries to integrate protected area management into other public policy sectors such as agriculture and tourism as suggested by Bishop *et al.*, (1995).

Figure 6: Percentage of landowners and recreation/environmental members of the WUC who agree* that their partnership has reduced local conflict (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC (n = 66).

The WUC realised that a solution had to be found which did not alter property rights to private farm land. Landowners realised that by working with recreation groups, they could reduce the external costs associated with recreationists and retain property rights to their land. Affecting the behaviour of stakeholders in order to reduce conflicts and hostilities appears to be one of their principal achievements. The WUC placed emphasis on minimising costs to the landowner rather than generating benefits from value added tourism. It achieved this first by facilitating communication and debate amongst all the main interests within the Wicklow Uplands and secondly by initiating a number of projects.

The projects run by the WUC appear to have played an important role in reducing conflict and establishing cooperation between stakeholders (Byrne). Figure 7 shows how the projects developed by the WUC have helped to achieve this by reducing Type 1 and Type 2 conflicts. Steps taken by local stakeholder groups such as the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) and local landowners in four projects include marking out walking trails, formulating access rules, developing a code of practice and agreeing long-term contracts with landowners over access.

Figure 7: Projects developed by the WUC used to reduce Type 1 and Type 2 conflicts and improve public access.

In a first project, the MCI has informed its membership about landowner rights, urged them to seek permission from landowners to cross their land and to comply with a code of good walking practice which respects the rights of landowners. Although this permits a potential Pareto improvement, this does depend on the credibility of walking clubs' commitment to confine recreationists to designated trails. The MCI has maintained a strong link with the WUC over several years and these initiatives have helped to reduce free riding and Type 1 conflicts between walkers and landowners.

In a second project, a voluntary warden scheme set up by the WUC known as *mountain methail*, helps reduce weekend congestion on popular walking routes. Volunteers carry out trail restoration and maintenance and act as volunteer guides for walkers. Trail zoning, signage and use of a walkers code of practice in *Glenmalur and Enniskerry* at the request of local farmers was enforced by local volunteers. In Glenmalur and Enniskerry all of the "off road" sections of the Wicklow Way is on private farm land under a way-marked way agreement (Figure 4). In this way volunteers ensure that the public comply with agreed norms. The WUC county wardens liaised with the walking clubs, obtained copies of their walking programmes and negotiated a re-routing with clubs to reduce congestion caused by Type 2 conflicts in hotspots. The approach specifically aimed to improve the quality of walking amenities by dealing with reciprocal externalities generated by congestion. In time clubs began to cooperate amongst themselves and jointly planned walking schedules and routes to avoid clashes. This highlights Ostrom's (2000) hypothesis

that repeated interactions and reciprocal ties strengthen incentives to make long-term contracts. One-time players are less easily influenced and require tangible incentives or sanctions to comply.

Grafton's (2000) notion of self-governance worked in this case due to the high degree of club membership. Relatively few one-off walkers from outside the community made it easier to achieve voluntary compliance based on mutual understanding and ties amongst club members. Many trails which are eroded due to congestion and overuse act as a disincentive to use them. The investment of rental fees from donations and amenity car parks helps to keep walks in good condition and reduces free-riding. This has also led to improved natural resource management (NRM) as shown in Figure 7. Now that the partnership is established, public agencies in Wicklow have also lent support to the partnership in several ways: trail investment; prohibition zones; policing with county rangers; laws that support the landowner.

A third initiative included the development of guidebooks and policy documents and print media (by MCI). The Guidebooks included descriptions of specified walks based on contracts and arrangements between landowners and club members. This reduced the number of walkers using non-designated trails and improved relations with local landowners.

Finally, success of the partnership in engaging landowners and recreational users in recreational planning has prompted the Uplands Council along with the Wicklow Rural Partnership (WRP) to study the feasibility of establishing a Wicklow Countryside Access Service (WCAS). The aim of the service is to establish a network of access routes over private land of high scenic and amenity value. The study initially engaged with six landowners who have granted access on their land. The WUC and WRP are currently seeking funding for the project, with the potential for development of a network of 20 routes over a 3 year period.

Aside from conflict resolution, community involvement and environmental reasons are singled out as the two primary reasons for joining the partnership (Table 1) by 37% and 30% of all respondents respectively. In this vein respondents were asked if the partnership had increased their awareness of environmental and community issues. Figure 8 shows that approximately half of respondents agree/strongly agree that the partnership has increased their awareness of environmental/land issues.

Figure 8: Percentage of WUC participants who agree* that they have become more aware of environmental/land issues as a result of joining the WUC (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC (n = 66).

The question on community issues produced a mixed response with almost half of WUC members disagreeing that they have a better understanding of community issues (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of WUC members who agree* that they have become more aware of their local community as a result of joining the WUC (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC (n = 66).

Finally, respondents were asked if they thought their partnership was successful. Clearly the WUC participants feel that the WUC is doing a good job. Figure 10 reveals that about half of all respondents feel strongly that the partnership has been successful with very few members disagreeing with the proposition.

Figure 10: Percentage of WUC members who agree* that the WUC is successful (has achieved things that would not have been possible were it not in existence) (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC (n = 66).

It is unusual for stakeholders involved in environmental partnerships to share a common view when they first join a partnership (Long and Arnold, 1995). However in time a consensus view is arrived at. Clearly, the WUC serves as one such example of this process since the partnership has gone some way toward strengthening relations between landowners and recreationist groups. In the main the WUC's activities have focussed on enhancing recreational access not tourism as such. Nevertheless the Wicklow model is being noticed for its efforts in dealing with conflict, with the countryside council, and new partnerships in neighbouring counties sourcing funding for their own initiatives (MCI, 2005).

3.1.3 The Mourne Heritage Trust

The Mourne Heritage Trust (MHT) is an environmental partnership which represents stakeholder interests in the upland areas of Mourne in Co. Down, Northern Ireland. It is based in Newcastle Co. Down and includes representatives of various organizations and individuals, grouped into four categories: farming and landowning representatives, environmental and recreational representatives, community representatives and economic and tourism representatives. The MHT employs 12 staff members including the managing director, four administrative staff, two countryside officers, two sustainable tourism managers, a biodiversity projects officer, an area ranger and a volunteer coordinator.

The Mourne Mountains have outstanding conservation and scientific value. The area has received a number of National and European level conservation designations¹⁰. In addition to the conservation value of the Mournes, it has been classified as an “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” due to its high scenic quality. Such designations help protect against irreversible landscape changes; a criteria set down by Vail and Hultkrantz (2000) as necessary to sustain nature based tourism under private property rights.

Figure 11 below traces three major events that preceded the emergence of the MHT partnership. First, fierce resistance during the late 1970s by Komrad¹¹, a group of local activists¹² who felt the conservation of the Mournes would be compromised by the Department of Environment (DOE) plans to develop a dam (Kinnahalla) in the uplands. Komrad challenged the DOE at a public enquiry, successfully stopped the construction of the Dam and immediately formed the Mourne Advisory Committee (MAC). The MAC was a local organisation which represented a number of interests¹³. Its purpose was to act as a voluntary environmental watchdog to pressurise the DOE to address local community concerns (Mitchell, 1998).

Figure 11: Recreation demand, Type 1 and 2 conflicts, and statutory inspired rural tourism initiatives leading to the formation and development of the MHT partnership.

Second, during the early 1990s the MAC became increasingly concerned by the lack of managed public access created by strong recreation demand. Many of the well known trails were in a state of disrepair and were poorly maintained. Unmanaged access generated Type 1 and 2 conflicts which imposed costs on landowners and recreationists and led to serious erosion and misuse of many of the trails.

The Mourne Way, a new way-marked way to be established in Northern Ireland helps illustrate the problem of property rights (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Location of the study site for the Mourne Heritage Trust partnership

The route connects Rostrevor and Newcastle and covers a distance of 39 km. Like the Wicklow Way, it is not a formal public right of way, some of the walk is on county roads (2km), is dependent on by-product access from the public forest service (15km) and commonage (18km) and covers a relatively small amount of “off road” public rights of way (1km). Unlike the Wicklow Way little state land (4km) is involved because it uses the AONB which does not require the government to take over land for protected areas.

Third, as indicated by Figure 11, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) recognised strong recreation demand (due to the unique Mourne landscape) which could lift the local economy through recreation based tourism (Scott and Associates, 1994). They acknowledged though that the wider community would not stand to benefit unless access was properly managed and tourism facilities developed.

Meanwhile other government authorities were wrestling with the implementation of a new AONB (the designation used to protect Northern Ireland’s best landscapes) for the Mourne which required close working relationships with local councils and local user groups such as farmers, which they did not have.

In the Mourne, property rights and conservation legislation encourages a conservationist¹⁴ approach by the National Parks Service toward the development of AONBs. Unlike SSSI (sites of special scientific interest) or nature reserves, AONBs are implemented on private property and are not managed directly by a statutory agency. Crucially, although landowners have to comply with conservation guidelines they do not have to sell their land. AONB designations require agreement and support from landowners and the integration of agricultural, recreationist and conservation interests:

The majority of land which concerns the MHT is fenced in privately owned farm land. Our definition of a national park is very different from a national park in the Republic of Ireland, instead it involves a living working landscape. When you get to a situation like the Republic where you have to take land off people because you can't trust them to manage it, you are getting into dodgy territory because the landscape is shaped by the people that own and work it (Gates).

Because the AONB designation did not alter fundamental property rights it did not create the type of conflict that arose in Wicklow whereby landowners felt they would lose their land and the economic opportunities that go with it.

The MHT was designated as the management body for the AONB shown in Figure 12 because it could galvanise community and landowner support for the AONB and work with statutory agencies. It now works with all stakeholders in County Down to reduce conflict, promote access and develop sustainable rural tourism.

3.1.4 Survey Results

Results from the MHT survey show that very few stakeholders joined the MHT in order to resolve conflict (Table 2). Table 2 reveals that none of the farmers joined for this reason.

Table 2: Motives for joining the MHT partnership, grouped by major stakeholder categories. Values for WUC ($n = 67$).

Because the AONB designation did not affect property rights it did not incite as much conflict as Wicklow. It also provided an incentive for statutory agencies to form a partnership, secure support from landowners, develop trust and work toward a common goal of resolving access issues and promoting conservation and tourism. Statutory authorities recognised the importance of working with local communities and landowners to try and integrate protected area designations with agricultural and tourist sectors as suggested by a number of other studies (Trakolis, 2001, Matose, 2006). In the case of the

Mournes, although the partnership was inclusive of community and landowner representatives it was inspired and funded by statutory agencies including local councils, the DoE and the NITB. The stakeholders represented on the MHT board reflects this interest. Table 2 shows significant differences in the number of statutory representatives compared to the WUC.

During the formation of the MHT, government bodies were aware of three issues: first, that a solution had to be found which did not alter property rights to private farm land. Landowners realised that by working with recreation groups, they could reduce the external costs associated with recreationists without giving up property rights to their land.

Second, statutory agencies recognised the importance of working with pre-existing community networks as represented by the MAC which had well developed ties to the community and a track record in planning, leadership and an ability to address community and landowner concerns. Thus government bodies incorporated the MAC into the MHT during its formation.

Third, although the MHT realised the importance of dealing with landowner concerns and Type 1 conflicts, it placed far more emphasis on generating benefits from value added tourism for the whole community. This is reflected in Table 2 which reveals a notable emphasis on economic reasons as a motivation for joining the partnership. The board of trustees, statutory agents, community interests and staff all emphasise the importance of economic reasons for membership.

These stakeholders took the view that the success of the AONB and preservation of the Mourne landscape depended on thriving small family farms. Although traditionally farmers and walkers have maintained a good relationship, farmers have been increasingly concerned with the use of the Mournes as a recreational site from which they can capture market benefits. With this in mind the MHT placed emphasis on managing existing access well, rather than trying to secure new access agreements. They began to manage existing public access which is improved, zoned and maintained and which helps reduce landowner-recreational conflict and increases the recreational appeal of the area.

Altering both the behaviour of walking club members as well as landowner attitudes in order to reduce conflicts and create opportunities for value added tourism has been an important achievement of the MHT. It achieved this first by facilitating communication and debate amongst all the main interests within the Mournes and secondly through a number of different projects. Figure 13 shows how four projects

developed by the MHT have reduced Type 1 and Type 2 conflicts and created opportunities to develop rural tourism.

Figure 13: Projects developed by the MHT to reduce Type 1 and Type 2 conflicts, improve public access and enhance rural tourism.

In a first project, developing trust with local landowners was an important milestone for the partnership. The walks run by the MHT all focus on managing existing access routes and encouraging individual farmers to provide new private access and trail services themselves. The higher Mourne are considered open access areas not through legal enforcement but through a historical tradition of permissive use. Although technically many landowners can assert their legal right to exclude walkers, the MHT has worked with local landowners to ensure that they do not. As acknowledged by one government official, farmer representation on the trust allows them to broker a deal with other farmers when conflicts arise over access.

We are part of the DOE and with the best intentions in the world we are still seen, as part of government machinery and that is not always terribly welcome. So it is much better to have a locally organised, locally accountable body in the front line, when it comes to talking to farmers about specific access problems.”(Government Representative).

In a second project, farmers’ concerns about insurance implications are more pressing in the Mourne compared to Wicklow. In Wicklow, the Occupiers Liability Act (1995) so carefully negotiated by the farming sector has greatly reduced landowner liability against claims by walkers for damages in the case of injury. In Northern Ireland, the issue has not received legislative clarification and farmers remain fearful of their liability in the case of injury to recreationists while using private property. The MHT has been vocal in lobbying government to invoke a rule where recreational users would have trespasser rights thus indemnifying the landowner against all claims by walkers of a route. (Gates).

Third, the MHT countryside officers and conservation volunteers engage in trail maintenance and restoration; it provides information for visitors and provides nature conservation skills training. Volunteer rangers enhance communication between the MHT and local stakeholders, undertake environmental monitoring and provide guided walks. The volunteer ranger service works with a farmer liaison group on a regular basis which involves 25 farmers.

Fourth, the MHT has developed a number of initiatives aimed at influencing walker behaviour and norms including policy documents, print media, countryside code – all aimed at respecting landowner rights and encouraging responsible use of the countryside. Maps, guides, route cards and signboards ensure walkers keep to designated trails based on landowner contracts and reduce trail erosion and damage to farmland. Guided walks and site supervision also helps to reduce walker - based congestion on walking sites.

“What we have tried to do is provide users with more information, interpretation, certainty and better facilities on our published routes. We are trying to manage the people to avoid areas that are over used and to direct them to other less intensively used areas (Gates).

Fifth, tourism in the Mourne is now acknowledged as an important rural sector by the state (McIlveen and Associates, 2002). The MHT is well resourced; its perceived importance is reflected in £10 million of seed and recurrent capital financed by the government. The trust employs twelve full – time staff enabling it to make a significant impact in the area through its tourism projects. The MHT encourages market provision of recreation activities. With declining EU farm support, the economic viability of small farms would increasingly depend on environmental stewardship, high nature value farming, environmentally sensitive area schemes, farm diversification and a buoyant rural tourist sector. In the Mourne the primary goals have always been based on community development and tourism. Statutory authorities in the Mourne recognized that recreational and other non-market values associated with protected areas can be high (Hanley and Craig 1991; Willis, 1991) but that it is important to develop mechanisms and incentives which ensure that locals receive some of the economic benefits (Walpole and Goodwin, 2001). Here, a distinction between different types of access bestowed by the market is helpful.

Activities such as fishing and hunting involve well developed markets which in general do not require government intervention. In contrast the market for walking, mountaineering or mountain biking in the Mourne remains less developed although there are some exceptions. Increasingly farmers are providing private access, car parks, toilets and accommodation and refreshment facilities:

I have got around the access problem and turned the whole thing into a business, people come for walking holidays, we watch their cars and provide food and we feel we should get a pound off them. A lot of farmers are beginning to come around to our way of thinking, sometimes it takes someone with a radical view to open the whole thing up - do something for a few years and then everybody will start to do it. (Patterson)

The MHT also recognizes that recreation services for tourists comprise an indirect means of pricing nature's goods. Private amenity car parks reduce nuisance effects on farming operations, prevent theft and vandalism and ensure direct access to walking routes and facilities, provide an income to farmers and do not require the sale of private farm land to the MHT or the council for public car parks. Tourists who pay for package tours frequently do so as a means of guaranteeing a high quality recreation experience. Access to an area includes a land use fee, an arrangement between the guide and the landowner, professional guide services and the use of specialised equipment. A growing number of web sites and promotional material offer activities such as golf, walking, archaeological visits, cultural, heritage visits. Most guides go to some lengths to inform their clients about environmental stewardship and common courtesy in respecting landowner property rights.

Like the WUC, the initiatives developed by the MHT have addressed local conflicts. However, in the Mourne, incentives to support rural tourism have also created new opportunities for small towns and villages in the area. The MHT has programmes in three key areas that enhance community based tourism. These include expenditure on: public infrastructure and visitor management; tourist enterprises in the Mourne¹⁵: a Mourne – living landscape¹⁶; and, product development and marketing¹⁷ (Mc Ilveen and Associates, 2002).

We're offering grant aid to develop sustainable approaches to tourism in the area, we are funding public rights of way, we are funding enhancement of villages, we are funding private sector tourism businesses, we are funding farm diversification initiatives into agric tourism like accommodation, new tourism businesses, on farm initiatives – car parking, tea shops, hostels things like that. (Gates)

These initiatives go some way toward strengthening tourism's contribution to local economies of the area. Clearly the MHT has placed emphasis on sustainable economic development and regeneration activities which use the Mourne landscape. Given the importance of the economic and sustainability issues for the MHT, participants were asked if they believed the MHT is achieving sustainability objectives. Figure 14 shows that about two thirds of participants agree that the partnership is achieving sustainability objectives.

Figure 14: Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they believe the MHT is achieving sustainability objectives (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT (n = 67).

Efforts taken by the MHT to integrate recreation with agricultural activities has yielded benefits to the local community as well as farmers without jeopardising traditional agricultural economic activities.

Apart from economic reasons, environmental reasons and community involvement are conspicuous as the two primary motives for joining the partnership (Table 2) by 46% and 39% of all respondents respectively. Consequently it is important to establish whether participants feel that the partnership is effective in terms of these goals. In the survey, respondents were asked if the partnership had increased their awareness of environmental and community issues. There appears to be a mixed response to the environmental issue with only about one third of respondents agreeing that the partnership has made them more aware of environmental issues (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they have become more aware of environmental/land issues as a result of joining the MHT (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT (n = 67).

Figure 16 shows that the MHT has had a modest impact in terms of making its members more aware of community issues. Most participants do not feel strongly either way in response to this question with around one third agreeing that the partnership has changed their awareness of community issues.

Figure 16: Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they have become more aware of community issues as a result of joining the MHT (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT (n = 67).

Finally, an aim of this study was to establish whether participants felt that the partnerships were successful or not. In general the MHT appears to be doing a good job with more than 80% of participants agreeing that the partnership is successful and has achieved things that would not have been possible were it not in existence (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Percentage of MHT members who agree* that the MHT is successful (has achieved things that would not have been possible were it not in existence) (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT (n = 67).

4.1 Concluding comments

The partnerships described here contribute toward a developing body of literature on stakeholder partnerships as an institutional tool of environmental governance. They highlight the achievements made by local community institutions with state support to address local conflicts, enhance the provision of recreation and environmental amenity and promote rural tourism.

Both partnerships have achieved several milestones including agreements on proposed projects between landowners and recreation clubs, trail restoration, education and monitoring and enforcement of rules by users. Both partnerships are seen as very successful in many respects and on the whole the majority of members seem to think quite highly of them.

A key question of this paper was to examine how partnerships have dealt with growing conflicts between recreationists and landowners over access, given the shortage of formal public access in Ireland. An important stated goal of the WUC and its members was to reduce conflict, we discuss the conflict issue with respect to Wicklow first.

One of the clearest findings for the Wicklow partnership is the positive feedback from stakeholders on the conflict issue. Results show that all stakeholders strongly agree that the partnership has been successful at reducing conflict. This is a result of the Wicklow partnership's inclusive approach of encouraging all to participate, which demonstrates the potential for multi-stakeholder cooperation to address conflicts between landowners and recreationists and to enhance the latter's compatibility with landowner interests. This is underscored by Wicklow's strong grass-roots membership particularly landowners, recreationists and community representatives.

Arguably less conflict occurred in the Mourne because landowners did not have to give up their land in order to enhance access. Instead the MHT has focussed attention on improving the quality of existing access in order to reduce congestion and goal interference due to Type 2 conflicts of a reciprocal nature as described by Carothers *et al.* (2001).

A second question was to explore the economic implications of partnerships. There are three aspects to this: access provision; recreation demand; rural tourism. The environment is a public good and because most land in Ireland is privately owned, landowners play an important part in its provision. We discuss the provision of the public good first. Prior to the formation of the partnerships, many landowners faced significant costs associated with excluding recreationists. Our findings indicate that by working with partnerships landowners have successfully reduced the external costs they face which are associated with Type 1 externalities; they have enhanced access provision – thereby improving provision of the public good to recreationists; and, they have not had to alter property rights to their land. These factors have been their main motivation and landowners have been central to the process of conflict resolution, particularly in

Wicklow. In this sense both partnerships have been quite successful as perceived by their members. This sanguine finding is particularly significant in the south of the country where policy makers and land managers have been calling for solutions to conflicts which have arisen between landowners and recreationists over public access in recent years (Flegg, 2004).

However, an important limitation is that our survey data are based on perceived impacts by members, rather than an objective measure by respondents who are external to the partnership (Coglianese, 2001). It is possible that participants may exaggerate their partnership's impact. To avoid discrepancies between the organisation's goals and its actual impacts, future research on these partnerships should focus on quantifying changes in external costs attributed to the partnerships. These could take the form of surveys targeted at landowners themselves (rather than their representatives), in order to objectively measure external costs associated with Type 1 conflict as suggested by Crabtree *et al.*, (2000).

We now turn to the issue of demand for recreational access. For their part recreationists have benefited from greater access, improved trail quality and reduced congestion as a result of the projects initiated by the partnership. Our findings indicate that walking clubs have made substantial investments in print media and in providing volunteer guides in order to enhance access and encourage uptake of a walkers code of good walking practice. Again, these findings are based on perceived impacts and more research is required to evaluate this demand. In this vein, a survey carried out by Bogue (2005) which investigated public opinions on access to the countryside, revealed that over half of the respondents were willing to pay a nominal charge to guarantee access to privately owned farmland and notably, urban dwellers were most in favour of the costs being met by the state. A recent study by Hynes *et al.*, (2007) also indicates that respondents' willingness to pay to access commonage farm land in Ireland may be considerable. Other studies also attribute significant economic values to managed agricultural landscapes (Kline and Wichelns, 1996; Fleischer and Tsur, 2000; Randall, 2002).

Both organisations claim that a stated goal is to support sustainable rural tourism. Most stakeholders in both partnerships perceive that the partnerships have been successful in achieving sustainability goals which is one of their stated objectives.

The Mountains of Mourne and Wicklow attract several million visitors every year, drawn by the outstanding beauty of the farmed upland landscape. Whilst the local economy (hotels, retailers, and

catering) undoubtedly benefits from recreational tourism, farmers and landowners (custodians of the landscape) receive little direct benefit and as seen above may incur substantial costs.

Sustainable access provision over the longer term requires that: recreational activities coexist alongside productive farm activities; recognition that farmers face costs due to provision; farmers and landowners are actively involved in and benefit from provision.

In the south of Ireland, protected area management involves a preservation approach which excludes productive activities. Proposals to develop an interpretive centre in Wicklow put landowners on the defensive because it meant they would have to forfeit their land and the economic opportunities that go with it. Alternatively, maintaining these landscapes requires that policy instruments should integrate agricultural concerns with those of recreational demand on privately owned farmland as suggested by Ryan and Walker (2004). Policies which involve restrictions which generally exclude commercial farming activities could create conflicts with landowners, and will not contribute toward sustainable access provision and should be avoided. This emphasises the failure of public agencies to integrate protected area management into other public policy sectors such as agriculture and tourism as suggested by Bishop *et al.*, (1995).

Market provision of recreation activities can also contribute toward sustainable provision although to date the impact on farmers is somewhat limited. Several projects show how both partnerships have been quite successful at improving the quality of trails and recreation facilities in order to attract tourists. Investment of rental fees from amenity car parks keeps the walks in good condition, has curbed serious erosion in these upland ecosystems and has reduced reciprocal externalities generated by weekend congestion. In general the MHT appears to be more successful than the Wicklow partnership at fostering entrepreneurship and enabling community members and individual landowners to derive benefits from market based recreation services. The MHT has been able to focus on tourism initiatives whereas the WUC's activities mainly relate to recreation provision. Payment for nature's services on private land provides a means of funding recreational amenities. However, for the MHT this effect has been limited to a few highly innovative landowners who have benefited from the market. It is doubtful whether these activities are sufficient to persuade the farming community to guarantee access provision over the longer term.

If the farming community as a whole is to benefit, both partnerships as well as policy makers need to consider landowner incentives which are directly linked to provision and value added rural tourism. Consideration should be given by policy makers and those involved in partnerships to using agri-environment schemes which involve greater landowner participation in access provision.

Greater landowner involvement in provision could be facilitated through management agreements under agri-environmental schemes such as REPS. The current system of farm payments (consolidated as Single Farm Payment) funded by the European exchequer rewards farmers for stewardship (Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003) and farm production. It does not cover the costs involved in enhancing recreational access. Crucially, these upland landscapes depend on landowners and the livestock grazing systems which they manage. Agricultural abandonment could alter the upland landscape, an issue of possible concern in a decoupled policy environment (NUI Maynooth *et al.*, 2005).

A major obstacle to sustainable based tourism is insurance and occupiers' liability. Both organisations need to press for regulatory reform and to make more effective use of way-marked ways whereby landowners are indemnified against all claims.

Arguably, a good case can be made that tourist activities which rely on open air outdoor recreation require amendments to national property law which are unlikely in the short term. Despite this, the case studies presented here indicate that there is significant scope for decentralised community-based approaches which can bridge the gap between prevailing property rights and the development of non-consumptive recreational land uses and sustainable tourism.

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Key Informant Interviews

- Byrne, S. WUC Founding member, Roundwood, Co Wicklow, Ireland.
- Gates, T. MHT Director, Newcastle, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.
- Lynne, C-L. Network Manager, Countryside Access and Activities Network, Barnetts Demesne, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- More O Ferrall, R. Individual Member of the WUC, Moyne, Co Wicklow, Ireland.
- O Keefe, M. Cheviot Sheep Owners Association, Hacketstown, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.
- Patterson, D. Member of the Donard Group, Ulster Farmers Union, Newcastle, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.
- Seymour, G. Representative of the Environmental Heritage Service, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Stelfox, D. Chairman, Countryside Access and Activities Network, Barnetts Demesne, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

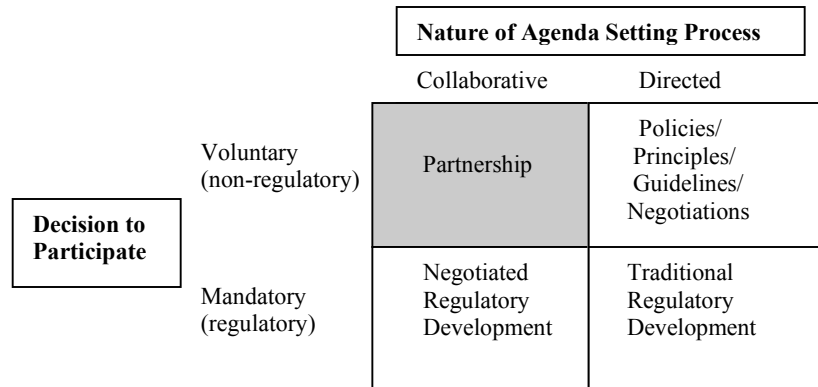


Figure 1. Partnerships compared to regulatory activities. Source: Long and Arnold, 1995).

Conflict Type	Externality Generator		Externality Sufferer	Externality Arising in	Externality Affecting
One	Walkers	→	Landowners	Consumption	Production & Consumption
Two	Walkers	↔	Walkers	Consumption	Consumption
Three	Walkers	↔	Other recreationists	Consumption	Consumption & Production

Figure 2. Examples of three types of recreational conflict and associated external costs imposed on users in both the north and south of Ireland.

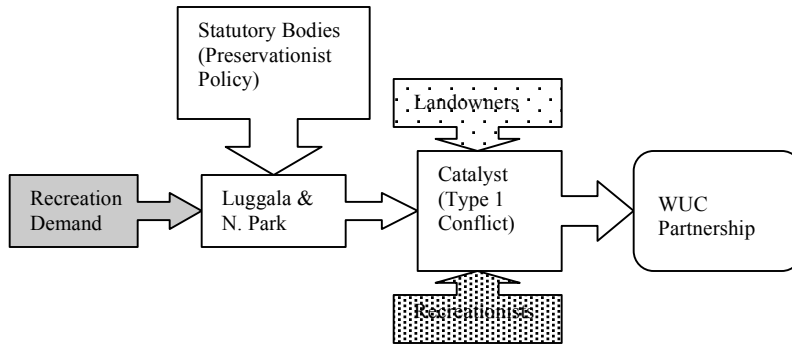


Figure 3. Recreation demand and type 1 conflict leading to the formation and development of the WUC partnership

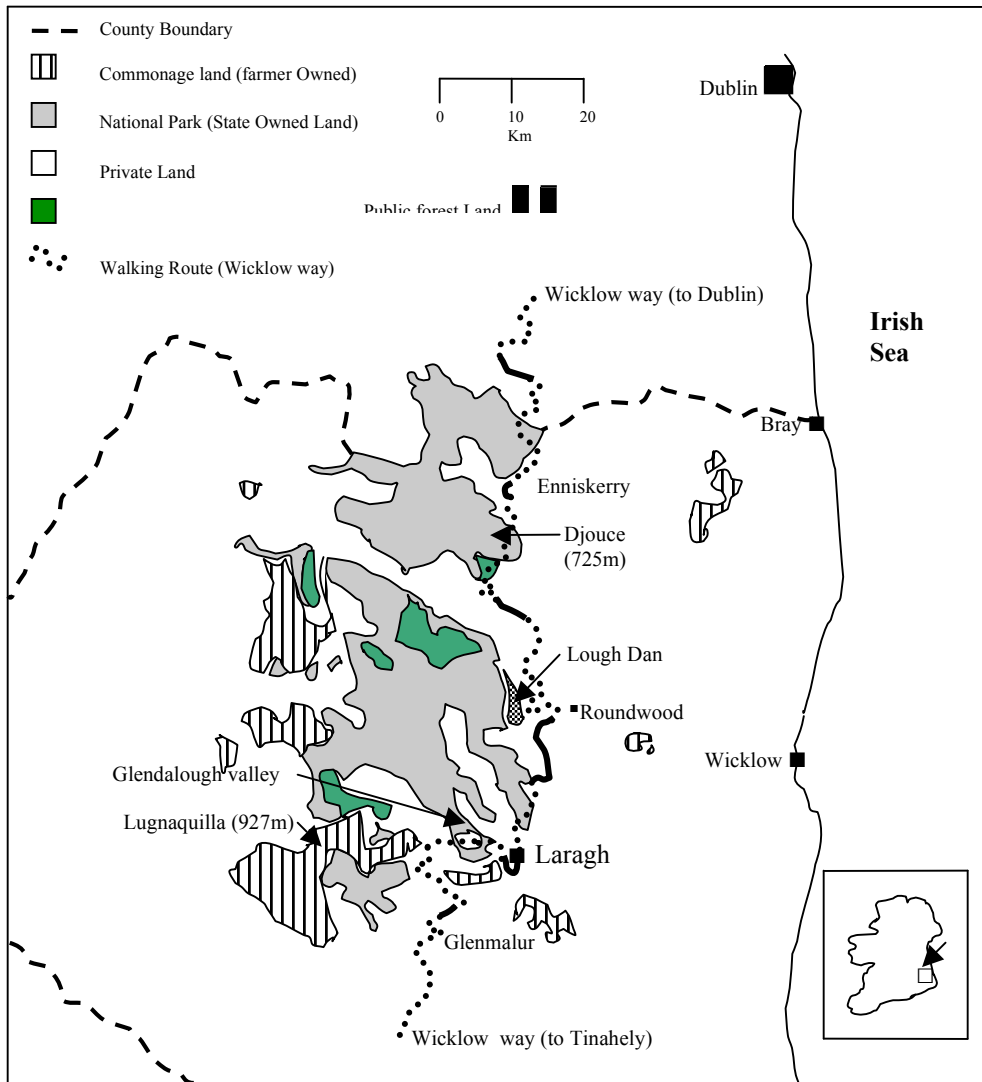


Figure 4. Location of the study site for the Wicklow Uplands Council partnership

	All	Board of Directors	Farming and Landowning Panel	Environmental and Recreational Panel	Community Panel	Economic and Tourism Panel	Individual Panel	Administration
Proportion of all participants		9%	17%	21%	8%	6%	35%	5%
Reasons for participating*								
Moral Obligation	17	0	0	29	20	50	17	0
Social Reason	5	0	9	0	0	0	18	0
Conflict Resolution	35	33	55	57	40	0	22	0
Community Involvement	44	67	27	43	80	50	39	33
Economic Reasons	8	17	0	7	0	25	0	67
Environmental Reasons	35	0	18	57	0	25	52	0

*Percent of respondents for whom the reason is important

Table 1. Motives for joining the WUC partnership, grouped by major stakeholder categories. Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

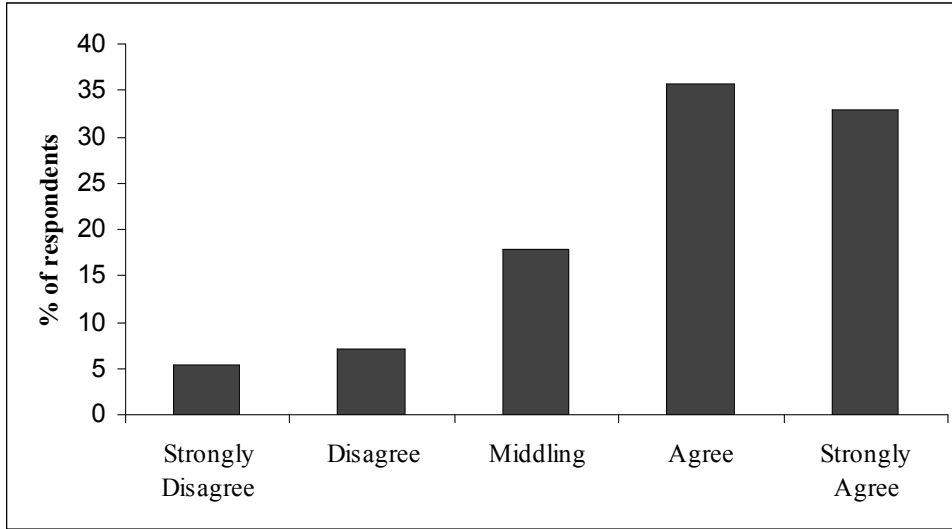


Figure 5. Percentage of respondents who agree* that the WUC partnership has reduced local conflict (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

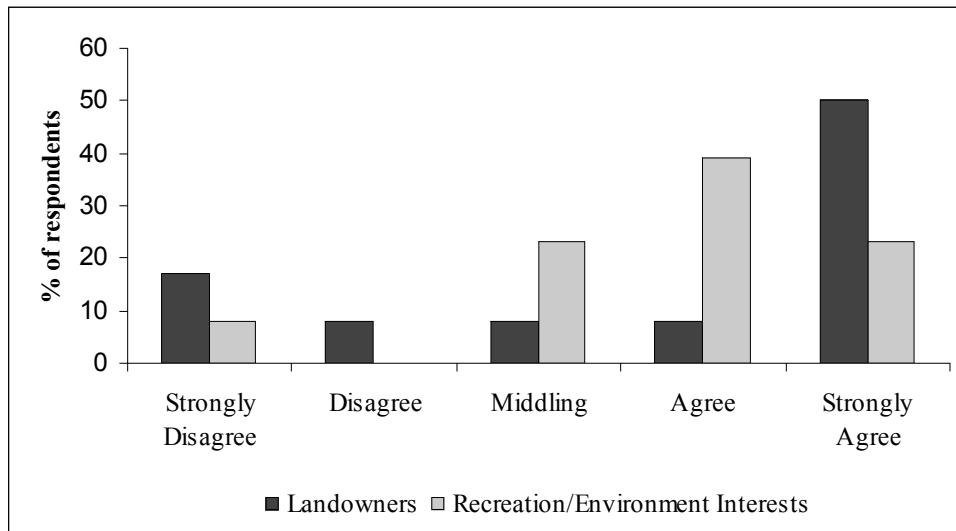


Figure 6. Percentage of landowners and recreation/environmental members of the WUC who agree* that their partnership has reduced local conflict (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

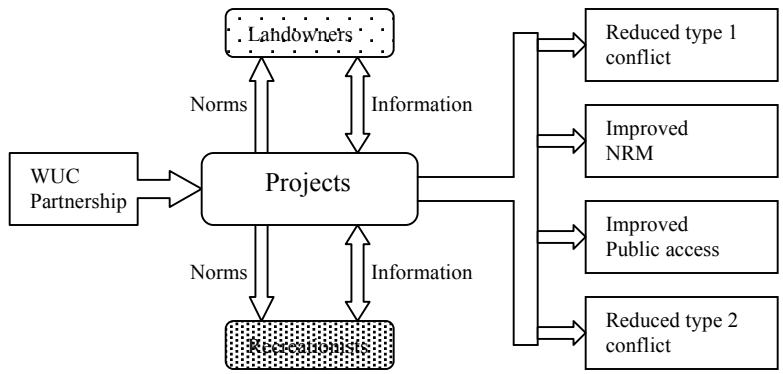


Figure 7. Projects developed by the WUC use to reduce type 1 and type 2 conflicts and improve public access.

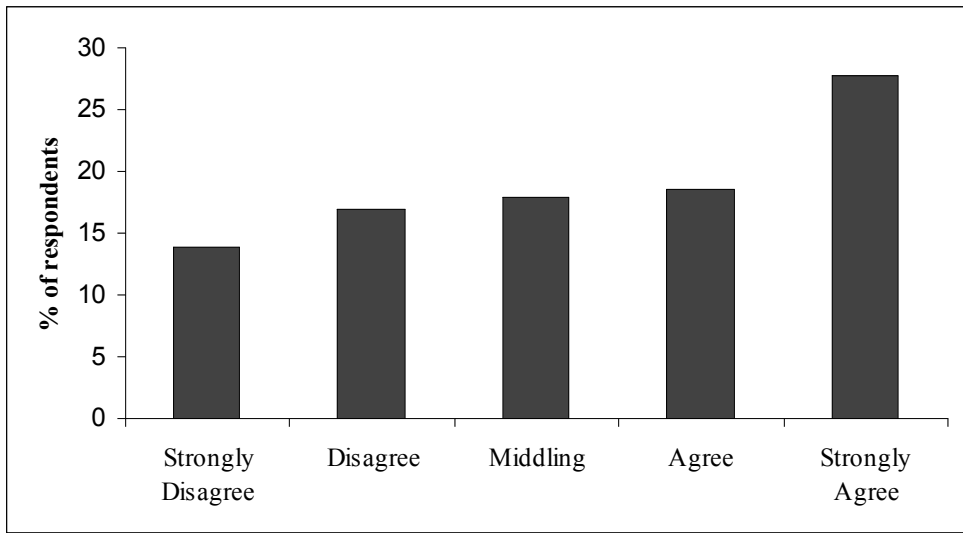


Figure 8. Percentage of WUC participants who agree* that they have become more aware of environmental/land issues as a result of joining the WUC (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

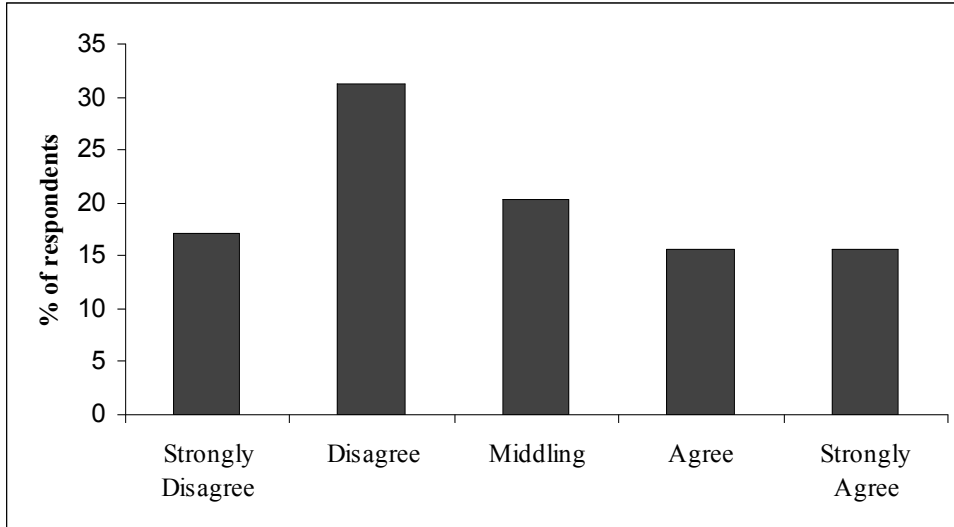


Figure 9. Percentage of WUC members who agree* that they have become more aware of their local community as a result of joining the WUC (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

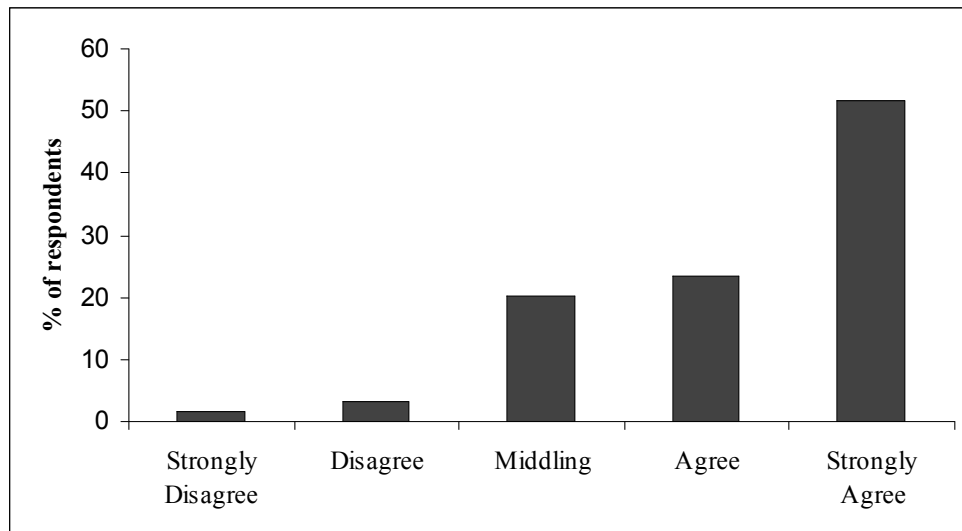


Figure 10. Percentage of WUC members who agree* that the WUC is successful (has achieved things that would not have been possible were it not in existence) (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for WUC ($n = 66$).

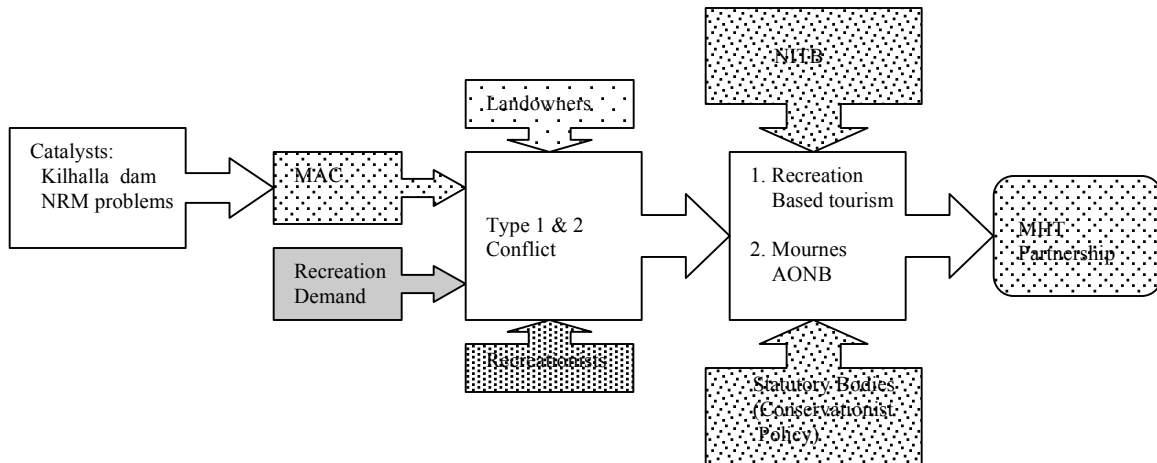


Figure 11. Recreation demand, type 1 and 2 conflicts, and statutory inspired rural tourism initiatives leading to the formation and development of the MHT partnership

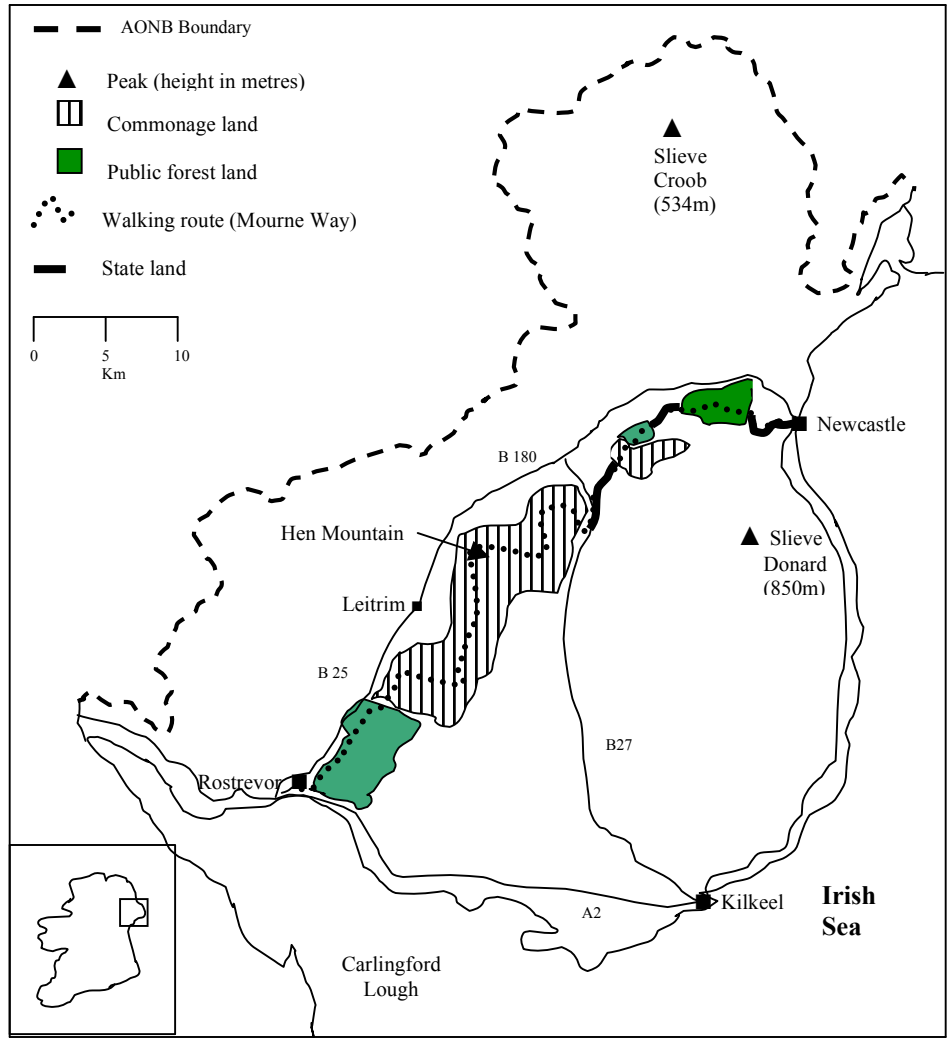


Figure 12. Location of the study site for the Mourne Heritage Trust partnership

	All	Board of Trustees	Act on behalf of Statutory Agents	Economic & Tourism Interests	Represent Landowning Interests	Represent Community Interests	Represent Environmental Issues	Passive Participation	Staff
Proportion of all participants		27%	36%	18%	22%	19%	18%	5%	16%
Reasons for participating*									
Moral Obligation	8	22	0	17	7	15	25	0	0
Social Reason	5	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0
Conflict Resolution	3	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	9
Community Involvement	33	67	21	42	53	77	17	0	9
Economic Reasons	39	39	42	67	27	31	33	33	46
Environmental Reasons	46	44	41	50	40	39	83	0	64

* Percent of respondents for whom the reason is important

Table 2. Motives for joining the MHT partnership, grouped by major stakeholder categories. Values for WUC ($n = 67$).

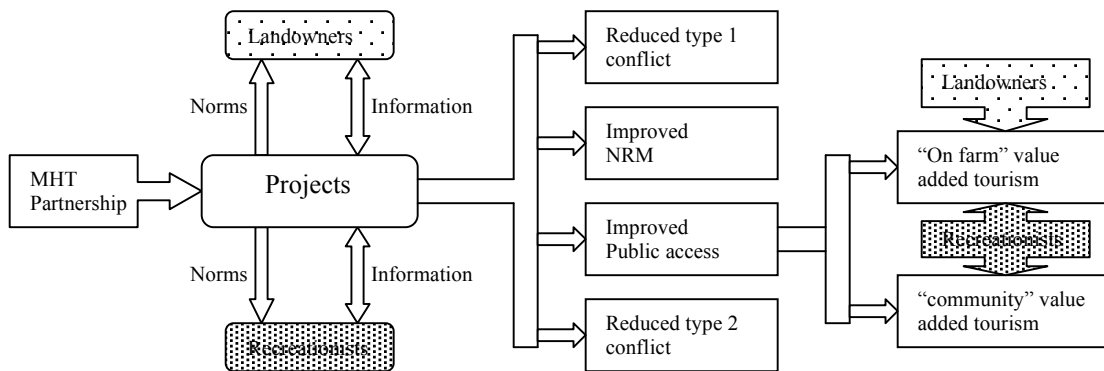


Figure 13. Projects developed by the MHT to reduce type 1 and type 2 conflicts, improve public access and enhance rural tourism.

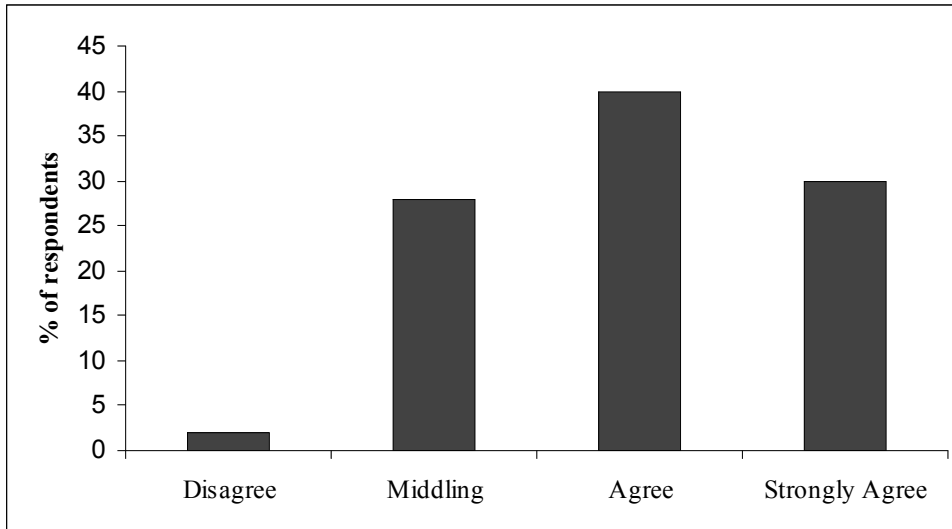


Figure 14. Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they believe the MHT is achieving sustainability objectives (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT ($n = 67$).

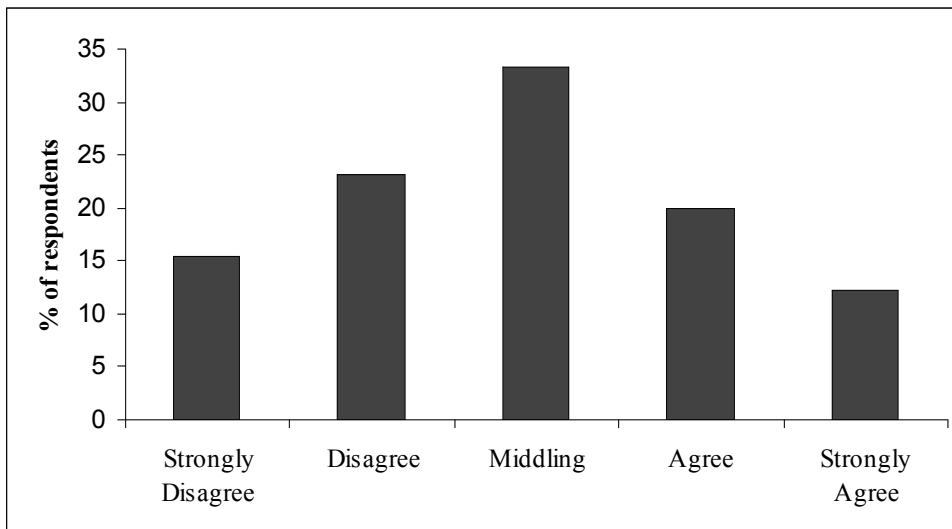


Figure 15. Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they have become more aware of environmental/land issues as a result of joining the MHT (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT ($n = 67$).

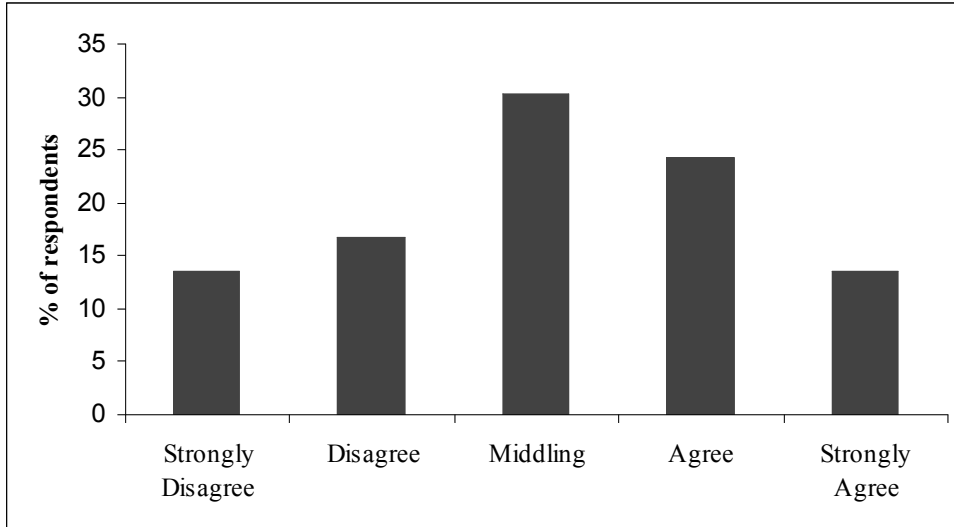


Figure 16. Percentage of MHT participants who agree* that they have become more aware of community issues as a result of joining the MHT (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT ($n = 67$).

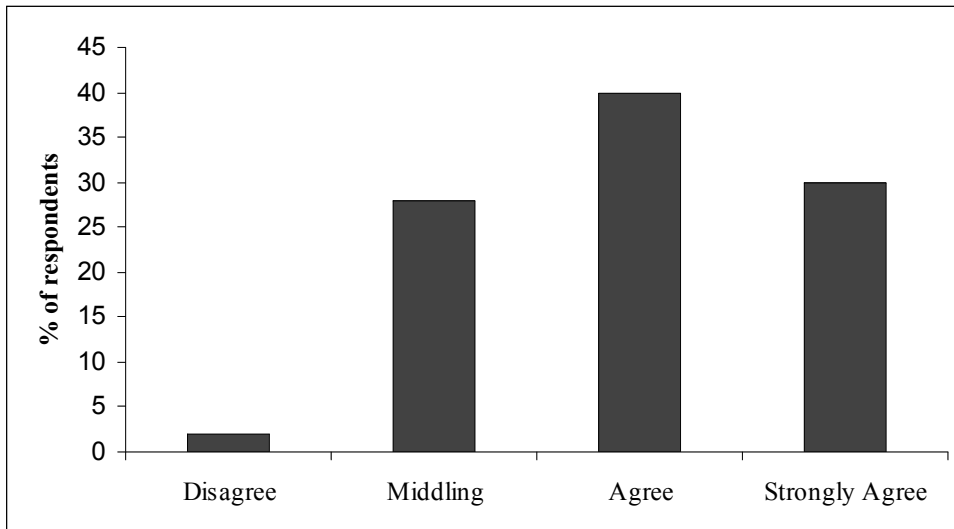


Figure 17. Percentage of MHT participants who believe* that the MHT is achieving sustainability objectives (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT ($n = 67$).

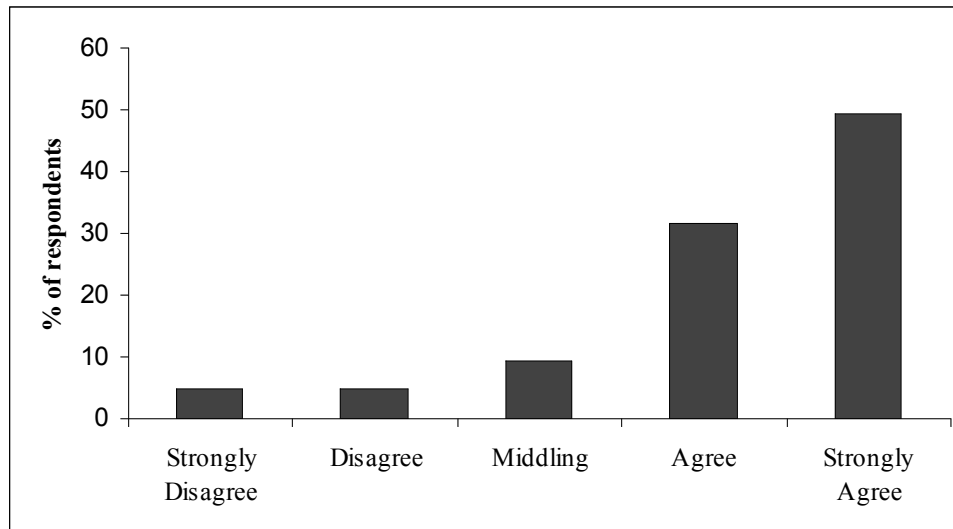


Figure 18. Percentage of MHT members who agree* that the MHT is successful (has achieved things that would not have been possible were it not in existence) (*Specifically the respondents response is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values for MHT ($n = 67$).

¹ Historically, Irish tenants with very small holdings were given commonage grazing rights by the state. Commonage thus refers to unenclosed land on which two or more farmers have pasture rights held in common (Lyall, 2000). Commonage dominates Ireland's uplands and represents a major land use type which covers 426,124 ha and involves about 11,837 farmers (Bleasdale & Sheehy – Skeffington, 1995).

² The initiatives include the “Get a life, get active” campaign launched in Northern Ireland in 1999, the 2001 all island “get a life, get active campaign” and the 2003 “let it go, just for 30 minutes” campaign launched in Ireland.

³ An externality occurs when the production or consumption decisions of one agent have an impact on the utility of another agent in an unintended way, and when no compensation is made by the generator of the impact to the affected party (Perman *et al.*, 2003).

⁴ EU Council Regulation 2078/92, known in Ireland as REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme). The measure was introduced in 1994 in order to encourage farmers to extensify and farm in an environmentally friendly manner. The first phase (REPS I) included an additional grant which paid farmers for access (Supplement 5). Payment was conditional on access being on a specific route or area agreed by a Local Authority and farmers were held responsible for the maintenance of the route/area. When REPS II was introduced in 1999, a decision by the EU held that Supplement 5 did not accord with the Schemes objectives and it was simply "Paying for Access" which was contrary to EU policy. Hence REPS II has not included a Supplementary measure relating to public access since 1999.

⁵ A free rider is a person who does not reveal their preferences for a good in order to enjoy the benefits without paying for them (Hanley *et al.*, 1997).

⁶ Preservationist policy implies managing the area exclusively for its flora and fauna which excludes all other activities including agriculture. The Republic of Ireland subscribes to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature definition of national park (as does the USA).

⁷ These designations include; a special area of conservation (SAC), a special protection area (SPA), a natural heritage area and a nature reserve.

⁸ A way-marked-way is defined as a quality walking trail. The ways are based on permissive access agreements with landowners, they are not formal rights of way (Irish Sports Council). The ways are established by local committees with the cooperation of Bord Failte, Coillte, local authorities, private

landowners and volunteer walkers. The Irish Sports Council provides insurance on the trails and they are maintained by Local Authorities.

⁹ Coillte is a state- owned company operating in forestry, land based businesses and added – value processing operations.

¹⁰ These include an area of scientific interest (ASI), an area of special scientific interest (ASSI), a SAC, and a national nature reserves (NNR).

¹¹ Komrad = Kingdom of Mourne Revolt Against Destruction of the Environment.

¹² Including individuals, environmentalist and fishermen.

¹³ The interests included landowners, communities, elected officials, user groups and environmentalists.

¹⁴ Conservationist policy implies integrating conservation, recreation and productive activities (such as farming and forestry) in the same area.

¹⁵ Initiatives under this theme are targeted towards improving the quality of tourist accommodation, upgrading of existing and support for new tourism related activity businesses and support for farm - based tourism

¹⁶ Initiatives under this theme include support funding for community and activity festivals, protection and enhancement of key natural and built heritage and management of sites with visitor pressure.

¹⁷ Under this theme training is provided for local people and business in the tourism sector and the MHT markets the Mournes as a rural activity based holiday destination.