

Parks & Landscapes in Europe: Towards An Integration of Policies and Management

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Abstract

Because of the risks connected to the global change and the continuous worsening of environmental conditions, biodiversity conservation objectives assume an important role in third millennium strategies.

In particular, the current situation challenges the effectiveness of area-based nature conservation policies, such as typically those of **Protected Areas** (PAs).

The “new paradigms” for the conservation of nature proposed by IUCN (Durban 2003; Bangkok 2004; Barcelona 2008) stimulate innovative proposals about nature conservation policies.

Landscape, conceived by the European Landscape Convention as a bridge between nature and culture, can support this integration process as it invites not only to broaden the conservation action to the whole territorial context, but also to consider both natural and cultural values, looking at the quality of life and at the identity values.

This presentation will focus on the potential relationships between nature conservation policies and landscape policies - a relevant subject also due to the current need of reviving cultural and natural heritage conservation policies, today affected by a general effectiveness deficiency - starting from the outcomes of the research programme “Parks & Landscapes: a territorial research programme”, that CED PPN (the European Documentation Centre on Nature Park Planning, Polytechnic of Turin, Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning) launched in the 2008. The outcomes of the research activity have been discussed on the occasion of many international meetings (IUCN WCC 2008, 2012; EUROPARC Conference 2010; EUROPARC WS Reims 2010; Federparchi-San Rossore Group 2011; Roma 3 University 2011; ISCAR et al. 2011). Two important steps of this work have been the survey on the “New frontiers of conservation” (2010) and the recent initiative of a Research-book “Parks & Landscapes” that will discuss and suggest innovative visions about the relationships between nature policies and landscape policies.

Keywords

Nature Conservation, Protected Areas, Landscape, Policies, Planning and Management

Introduction

Globalization revives the crucial importance of integrating nature conservation policies into territorial policies. Facing the effects of global change by adaptation and mitigation strategies, trying to defend biodiversity avoiding irreversible damages to ecosystems, nature conservation policies are more and more related to issues such as cultural diversity, social and political security and economic sustainable development. Biodiversity conservation objectives have assumed a crucial role in territorial strategies. In particular, the current situation challenges the effectiveness of area-based nature conservation policies, such as typically those of **Protected Areas** (PAs).

The “new paradigms” for the conservation of nature proposed by IUCN (Durban 2003; Bangkok 2004; Barcelona 2008) stimulate innovative proposals about nature conservation policies; particularly, they ask for a better integration of PA policies into territorial policies. The “territorialization” of nature conservation policies implies that they inevitably cross landscape policies, as conceived by the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (CoE 2000). According to the conception, **Landscape**, as a bridge between nature and culture, can support this integration process, inviting not only to broaden the conservation action to the whole territorial context (beyond protected area boundaries), but also to consider both natural and cultural values, looking at the quality of life and at the identity values.

Further, ELC promotes the acknowledgement of the role played by people and local communities in building and managing landscapes and supporting PAs as effective tool for social and economic development.

In such a frame, the landscape concept is assuming a pivotal role for nature conservation and new alliances are envisaged, referring both to the cultural landscapes (as particularly the IUCN Category V – “Protected Landscapes” or the World Heritage UNESCO Cultural Sites) and to the overall policies having influence on landscape such as those concerning forestry, water management, agriculture, urban processes, infrastructure. The alliance between nature conservation policies and landscape policies is therefore a relevant subject, due to the current need of reviving cultural and natural heritage conservation policies.

But in order to improve our knowledge and understanding of the underlying relationships and interactions between nature and landscape, new cultural and scientific approaches are required. In fact, this subject is strictly linked to some important processes that are now taking place at international level, such as the revision of global strategies for biodiversity conservation (CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets) and the prospects of a World Landscape Convention proposal for Rio+20 Conference (Limoges, September 2011). It is also strictly connected to the topics of the most recent European financing programmes for research (such as Horizon 2010 -2020).

In this direction, the CED PPN launched in 2008 an innovative research programme “Parks & Landscapes: a territorial research programme”, largely based on a previous investigation on European Protected Areas. The Centre has been working on such relationship since the beginning of the 90s and the issue has had several opportunities for discussion and debate at national and international level (IUCN WCC Barcelona 2008; Polytechnic of Turin 2009; EUROPARC Conference Pescasseroli 2010; EUROPARC WS Reims 2010; Federparchi-San Rossore Group Florence 2011; Roma 3 University 2011; ISCAR et al. 2011; IUCN WCC Jeju 2012). Among the CED PPN main researches, two initiatives may be recalled, representing important steps in this process: the international survey conducted in 2010 on the topic “New frontiers of conservation” and the initiative that is now in progress of the Research-book “Parks & Landscapes”, collecting innovative reflections, on this theme. Both are shortly presented in the following pages.

New Frontiers of Conservation. Five Questions for the Experts Suggestions and Perspectives

An international survey was launched in 2010 about the topic “New frontiers of conservation: suggestions and perspectives”, submitting to a group of well-known international experts some general questions as the following:

1. Which are the **new frontiers** for the international scientific communities, in view of carrying out more effective policies for the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage?
2. Which are the sense and the scope, to this end, of **landscape policies**?
3. Which role have to play the **local communities and indigenous people**, in the presence of value systems and risk factors of an over-local significance?
4. Which role can play the **normative approaches** (particularly the institution and protection of areas of specific value) towards multilateral governance strategies?
5. Which missions can be assigned to **planning**, with the aim of a more effective integration of conservation policies into the overall territorial policies?

The scope of this test is wider, as well as the cultural background of the experts, linked to different contexts (not only Europe), therefore the received answers reflect a variety of points of view and make reference to different management experiences, such as, for instance, those related to the US National Park Service, or to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, or to the initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of indigenous people in the developing countries.

In the light of the received answers we could define some “**dominant themes**”, which pervade most of the received answers: **climate change, fragmentation, landscape, governance**.

A first remark concerns (and no surprise for it) the common emphasis on the **climate change**. We can observe that this issue is strictly tied with other wider issues, first of all the ecosystem based management, aiming to ensure a friendly use of the natural resources and a strategic far-sighted perspective for adaptation and mitigation policies. To this regard, many answers underline the need for the integration of eco-management and planning in sectorial policies (for forestry, farming, energy, infrastructure, recreation, and so on), not without reminding the risk of submitting the ecological options to the sectorial ones.

“For natural and cultural heritage conservation, my simplistic answer is that unless we can reduce CO₂ levels in atmosphere to 350 ppm there is no hope in the long run for conserving either. Thus every measure must be taken to preserve the important carbon sinks-oceans, forests, grasslands, wetlands, tundra. Formal Protected Areas have a major role, but it takes nature-friendly land management on ALL lands, to make a difference (...)” (L. Hamilton).

“Science must address the issues associated with climate change and impacts on the significant international natural and cultural landscapes. I am particularly interested in effects of rapid climatic changes on forests, farms, urban areas and how protected areas managers can adapt to an uncertain and unprecedented change” (J. Di Bello).

A second remark concerns a topic of a great momentum, particularly in Europe: how to contrast the **fragmentation** of ecosystems and the related insularization of habitats and protected areas. Most of the answers stress the need for protection policies *outside* parks and protected areas. Bio-regional management and planning, and landscape scale planning are different and complementary ways for ensuring a wider protection and an adequate connectivity in the whole territory.

“A very important point for safeguarding biodiversity is the topic of habitat fragmentation. The necessary paradigm shift from the static conservation of single species in specific protected areas towards a flexible protection that takes the dynamic of global change into account still needs to be implemented (...)” (A. Ulrich).

“The Nature Conservancy has expanded its approach to protecting important habitats from focusing on habitats directly to advancing conservation of entire landscapes” (P. Bray).

“Understanding how landscape protected areas contribute to wider conservation strategies is critical (...). Also the way in which protected areas are integrated into the wider landscape and seascape is increasingly important” (N. Dudley).

A third remark concerns **landscape** and its role in conservation policies. There is a large consensus among the experts on the idea that landscape is the main device for taking care of the whole territory, both in spatial and in cultural terms. This idea is consistent with the ELC landscape conception, that overcomes the concept (still largely diffused) of “natural beauty” and draws the attention on the needs and perceptions of local communities. Strengthening their responsibility and reaffirming the identity values of the subjects closest to the “actual” resources is the main road for contrasting the over-pressure of the driving forces (commerce, tourism, mining, urban processes and so on) on natural and cultural heritage. To this end, landscape policies must be developed as a part of the regional planning, landscape issues must be integrated in multi-sectorial policies and Protected Landscapes (cat. V IUCN 2008) should be more spatially diffused.

“Landscape policies should reflect long standing cultural importance of landscape to society and the changing understanding of human linkage to landscapes in a world that is becoming ever more urbanised; landscape policies should ensure that the natural and cultural components are fully integrated and mutually reinforcing” (R. Croft).

“I believe that the Category V approach is one that provides a model to which many countries can relate. We need stronger international support for the Category V model and to encourage higher standards of management. But the strength of the approach is that it links people and nature, recognises what communities have created and values the sustainable practices that underpin valued landscapes (...)” (A. Phillips).

Last but not least, a fourth remark concerns the **governance** topic. Many suggestions stress the importance of local communities, but at the same time others underline the need for a multi-lateral governance, aiming at protecting supra-local values, with inclusive and overarching approach. While some experts stress the lessons that modern societies should learn from local communities and indigenous people (for example, for a conservative and appropriate use of the natural resources), others remind that much must be done to support them in maintaining or even recovering their traditional linkages with the earth. The complexity of the present territorial systems requires at the same time flexible and strategic policies (inside and outside the protected areas) giving space to local creativity, and a public effective regulation of local processes.

“The integration of local communities (including indigenous people) with their specific local knowledge is absolutely crucial. Especially when it comes to the discussion on values we have to be aware that these can only be defined in a very broad sense on an overlocal level and that the negotiation of which values are at the core of conservation and landscape protection has to be done on the local level” (A. Wallner).

“In my view, the importance of the role of local and indigenous communities cannot be overstated: it is fundamental. A few examples include: knowledge systems - local knowledge of specific places, including not only their natural features but their cultural features, not only tangible values, but also intangible values; local/indigenous management practices - including customs, rituals and celebrations; providing models of sustainable practices that can be taken up by the broader populations well as possible tools for resilience in the face of dynamic changes, such as global climate change” (J. Brown).

“(...) The English landscape sets a context for peoples' lives which provides both a physical and an emotional presence. It is a meeting-ground between the past, the present and the future as well as between both natural and cultural influences. People's perceptions are an inherent part of how landscape and its character and qualities are experienced and valued” (R. Partington).

“My guess this is true of many types of traditional peoples, including those in many of the cultural landscapes of Europe (...). I think the key is to look for opportunities (...) for territorial level participatory planning. The problem is the lack of institutional capacity to plan and perhaps most importantly, invest at the territorial scale” (J. Manno).

A Research-Book Program

With reference to the international survey experience and believing that the topicality of the emerging issues could stimulate an interesting debate, the CED PPN is still developing the research-book “Parks & Landscapes”, aiming at taking stock of reflections, researches and experiences that could strengthen the thesis of a mutual benefits. The aims are verifying if, and at which conditions, landscape policies may strengthen the role and effectiveness of Protected Areas and, inversely, whether PAs can be a privileged field for the application of landscape policies.

Confirming the international and interdisciplinary vision, several experts are been contacted, coming from international contexts (Europe, U.S.A.), various disciplinary backgrounds and institutional bodies.

The invited authors could contribute to the “Research-book” in different ways, which would reflect their own specific competences, suggesting innovative visions on the subject concerning the above relationships. In particular, the comparison and interaction between the different authors' papers should allow to investigate those

relationships through some main topics: (i) regulations and institutional frameworks, (ii) policies, (iii) actions and tools. Such investigation has pointed out the need and possibility of overcoming the traditional and still dominant separation between nature and landscape domains, in favour of more integrated approaches, requiring:

- on the one hand, that the conservation of nature, with particular reference to the IUCN “new paradigms”, which should guide biodiversity and PA policies should be considered as a part of wider landscape and territorial issues and strategies;

- on the other hand, that the conservation of landscape, with particular reference to the European Landscape Convention and the international strategies for the conservation of cultural heritage (UNESCO 2011) should be considered as a part of, closely linked to nature conservation and territorial ecological issues and strategies.

Considering the whole of the reflections gathered, the scope of the research-book, is to enlight common and different author’s positions, aiming to suggest innovative visions, issues and problems to be faced in order to build the alliance which is the focus of this presentation.

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