



TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF AN ACTION PLAN AIMED AT THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION¹

A prerequisite to achieve the necessary integration of the Mediterranean protected areas into their social and territorial environment, is the definition of a specific model for the management of Mediterranean natural areas, focused on achieving ecological integrity and, at the same time, human development, by providing boost to a territory having a high degree of ecological heterogeneousness and equally high rates of renewal allowing a high degree of territorial permeability, favoured by the multiple use of its marine and continental ecosystems.

In the search of this goal it is basic that the management be active, dynamic, participative and shared, supported by the best available knowledge, based on the prevention principle and accompanied by a policy of integration and coordination among the bodies and institutions having responsibilities for the protected areas or whose activities have a repercussion, either direct or indirect on the same.

Among the general principles upon which the management of the Mediterranean protected areas must be based the following are of special significance:

- To preserve the ecological integrity (structure, working and dynamics) and the resilience of the marine and continental ecosystems,
- To apply the best multidisciplinary scientific knowledge (ecological, sociological and ecological),
- To judiciously outline the multiple use of the landscape,
- To promote the integration of the conservation policy into the regulation of the territory,
- To foster social awareness and participation,
- To facilitate the coordination and the cooperation inside each authority and among all of them,
- To develop preventive management models,
- To foster adaptable management based on assessment and monitoring, and
- To promote models based on environmental equitableness and ethics.

¹This section includes the findings from the meeting Environmental Connectivity: Protected Areas within the Mediterranean Context (CMA-UICN, Malaga, September 2002) as well as those from the workshop Linkages in the marine/terrestrial landscape held as a part of the Mediterranean Conference Protected Areas within the Mediterranean Context. Towards a rational Use of Protected Areas (UICN, Murcia, March 2003).



According to these principles, the delimitation and the management of protected areas must be fully integrated into the framework of territorial policies, by envisaging its natural, social and cultural, economic and infrastructural dimensions and incorporating the following criteria:

- The preservation of networks connecting the territory, essentially those related to hydrological flows, superficial as well as subterranean,
- The preservation of biological flows (movement of species on different space and time scales),
- The persistency of populations of protected species and of those ecologically essential such as key or engineering species (functional biodiversity),
- The preservation of the integrity of biological communities and ecosystems,
- The persistency of man - made landscape elements strengthening ecological connectivity (livestock ways, hedges, walls, etc.),
- The preservation of elements, regardless of their size, enhancing the connectivity and the ecological permeability of the territory,
- Treating local uses as the starting point to achieve sustainable development and the objectives of the protection of natural areas,
- To explicitly take into consideration natural fluctuations when management plans are to be formulated,
- The preparation of management guidelines dealing with the different space and time scales in which essential biophysical processes find their expression,
- The preservation of Mediterranean traditions and lifestyles, and the maintenance and fostering of traditional exploitation ways in the region,
- The restoration of social links between the inhabitants of urban and rural areas, and
- To promote the use of IUCN Category V.

In the Mediterranean context the establishment of linkages in the landscape must envisage the following actions and stages:

1. Identification of the social and cultural context and of the conservation objectives in the region's and the territory's general scope.
2. Identification of the key processes determining the ecological and social connections in the landscape and their relationship with the scale factor.



LINKAGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE

Towards the definition of an action plan aimed at the management of natural protected areas in the Mediterranean region

3. Development of an ecological cartographical base, at different detail scales, from local to regional, incorporating, in addition to basic information:
 - The space and time scales of the key identified processes, and
 - The main limiting factors of these processes from a social and environmental point of view.
4. Development of an inventory, classification and cartography of Mediterranean cultural landscapes for the purpose of laying down adequate management measures for their conservation.
5. Identification of the system's constituent elements, the relationships among them and the functions and objectives of each individual element and those of the system as a whole, from the point of view of the conservation of the region's natural and cultural resources. The ecological networks and the conservation systems in the Mediterranean region must envisage as main elements at least the following ones:
 - The protected areas, as biological cores and corridors and as living observatories of good conservation practices;
 - The rivers, the river - banks and bodies of water - seasonal as well as permanent; superficial and subterranean - at a basin level;
 - The small natural or semi - natural tesserae remaining in the agricultural landscape
 - The territories coinciding with the movements of the species on different time scales (e.g.: circadian and seasonal);
 - Marine corridors defined on the basis of biophysical processes.
6. Detailed analysis, at the different administrative levels, of the necessary legal and institutional framework for the establishment of conservation systems, including not only the existence of institutional regulations and mechanisms, but also their effectiveness.
7. Establishment, by taking the achieved results as a starting point, of specific actions to be undertaken for the planning and the management of ecological networks and landscape linkages, on different work scales, and in a coordinated and integrated manner with the administrative networks and the groups of interest coexisting within the territory.

The strategy must envisage the different territorial management units for the maintenance of the key identified ecological processes; must boost the active conservation and must incorporate social participation and shared management, as



well as integrating conservation objectives into the set of sectorial policies having a territorial scope.

The devising and the carrying out of the necessary actions for the establishment and the maintenance of linkages in the system must be a continuous and dynamic process, adaptable over time and throughout space to potential environmental, social, cultural and political changes. It is necessary to develop a legal framework promoting the environmentalization of sectorial policies and inter - sectorial and inter - administrative integration, as well as the mechanisms adapted to the social, cultural and natural peculiarities of each individual area, with a view to encouraging environmental awareness and the participation by society in the maintenance of the conservation systems.

The main challenges that protected areas in the Mediterranean region are faced with include:

- Evolving towards an integrated and integrative management,
- Integrating the territory's conservation and integration policies,
- Increasing the environmentalization of the productive uses,
- Developing and implementing a Mediterranean sustainability model,
- Introducing a system of protected areas including marine, coastal and terrestrial environments,
- Preserving the lifestyles configuring the region's cultural landscapes,
- Sectorial integration,
- Reducing the differences between the northern basin and the southern basin of the Mediterranean, and
- Extending the achievement of results to the different space scales.

The main opportunities to respond to these challenges would be found in:

- The use of the conceptual weft and the methodological ecosystem management procedures,
- The increase in the interdisciplinary scientific knowledge of the region's ecosystems,
- The use of protected area Category V approach as established by the IUCN,
- The development of integrated management plans,
- Working along with society and for society,
- Unifying management systems,
- Adding value to the cultural heritage,
- The cooperation, the education and the involvement by different sectors,



LINKAGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE

Towards the definition of an action plan aimed at the management of natural protected areas in the Mediterranean region

- Encouraging the twinning of the northern and southern protected areas, and
- Developing from - top - to - bottom planning systems for protected areas.

In this regard, the priority actions to be undertaken in the Mediterranean Basin must be aimed at:

- Promoting ecosystemic management models by taking an ecoregional approach (development of new networks, of linkages connecting the ecosystem function to the preservation of biodiversity, etc.), and providing specific responses in the short, the medium and the long term;
- Developing medium - term sustainable development plans in the protected areas included in Category V;
- Developing quality - based economic activities as well as the ecological certification of products from protected areas;
- Promoting scientific projects related to the functionality of biological diversity in the Mediterranean region and the characterization of key ecological processes in both the marine and the continental environments;
- Promoting the making of social and ecological charts on different scales, including the social and cultural factors in the delimitation of the region's natural and cultural ecosystems;
- Developing initiatives to prevent and to reverse the current trend towards the depopulation of rural areas;
- Promoting multiple links (scientific, cultural, social and administrative) aimed at the improvement of the capability to manage the protected heritage;
- Encouraging the establishment of a documentation centre on Mediterranean protected areas; and
- Encouraging scientific work on the network to improve the knowledge of the Mediterranean ecosystems.

