

Review of Best Practice, Similar Projects & Policy



T1.2

Guiding Principles and Policy Development for Upland Path Management

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This report delivers against ASCENT activity target T1.2; review of best practice and similar information and policy

It summarises a desktop review carried out of similar projects to ASCENT in order to provide information that would be helpful in the development of the project.

The main criteria used in the review were projects that:

- Were on a European and international scale that addressed the challenges facing the natural environment
- Worked across a broad stakeholder group and national boundaries
- Developed innovative approaches
- Developed shared thinking and standardised approaches
- Aimed to inform policy

The emphasis was on the strategic level rather than a review of projects dealing with the same technical aspect as ASCENT i.e., erosion control.

Chapter 2

Review of similar projects

2.1

Europe

2.1.1

SITxell: Territorial Analysis

One of the main objectives of the Barcelona Provincial Council (Diputació de Barcelona), developed primarily through the Department of Territory and Sustainability, is promoting territorial balance and sustainability. In this context, one of the lines of work of the Technical Office for Planning and Territorial Analysis is to improve knowledge of the open areas in the province of Barcelona. The ultimate aim is to provide information and criteria to support local administrations in their land planning and management responsibilities and to strengthen their participation in regional projects affecting them. Since 2001, Barcelona Provincial Council has been drawing up a territorial information system: the project SITxell (acronym in Catalan for Territorial Information System for the Network of Open Areas in the province of Barcelona), which contains a categorisation and assessment of non-urban land based on the analysis of its ecological and socio-economic characteristics.

SITxell is a cartographic and alphanumeric database on a 1:50 000 scale, run on Arcgis software, which helps with the study, analysis, evaluation and planning of the open areas in the province of Barcelona. The conceptual basis of this tool lies in the conviction that the open spaces as a whole are the basic territorial system, upon which settlement and infrastructure systems must be properly placed, so that open areas maintain their key ecological and socio-economic functions. It is therefore essential to understand the main features of these areas, i.e., both their intrinsic characteristics and the attributes associated with overall processes within the network of open spaces.

On the technical side, SITxell is a project concerning territorial analysis, which is structured through different layers of geographical information and intended to study and evaluate the open areas of the province. On a political level, SITxell is a tool intended to influence land planning processes, on both local and regional scales,



by providing accurate and reliable socio-economic and ecological information and criteria for plans and projects developed by the competent authorities. The success and influence of SITxell since its launch have been based, firstly, on the strength and usefulness of the information, applicable in land use planning at different scales and in other specific types of planning (water, agriculture, conservation of habitats and species, strategic environmental assessment, etc.). Secondly, strong partnerships with various levels of government, universities, research centres and private sector (specialised consultants, farmers associations and NGOs) have been established, that have ensured the quality of information and the maximum objectivity of analysis.

In recent years, this commitment to integrating the conservation of natural values in land use policies (especially in land planning) has spread to many countries in Europe. In this context, the SITxell project has been shown in various forums (DG Environment of the European Community, European Institute of Public Administration, EIPA) as an example of good practice in making the protection of nature compatible with human land uses.

<http://www.sitxell.eu/en/default.asp>



2.1.2

DanubeParks – The Danube River Network of Protected Areas

The Protected Areas along the Danube preserve and restore the most valuable habitats of this international river, thus safeguarding an important part of Europe’s natural heritage for future generations. Cross-border and transnational cooperation is an indispensable part of this work. Nature doesn’t recognise state borders, so nature protection needs cooperation across borders as well, if results are to be achieved.

DANUBE PARKS – the Danube River Network of Protected Areas – was founded in April 2007 through the signing of the Declaration of Tulcea. Eight protected areas were among the founders of this network, and many more joined their work during the early years. In 2014, the DANUBE PARKS Association was founded to provide a more stable framework of cooperation and a stronger joint voice. Step by step, all former network partners are integrated into the association.

The goal is to finally bring together all Protected Area administrations along the Danube, as well as the bigger tributaries (Prut, Sava, Tisza, Morava, etc.), which share the same problems and are therefore able to solve these issues more efficiently by closer cooperation.

Based on the principles of the Ramsar Convention and the Convention and Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (Sofia, 1994), the Declaration of Tulcea solidifies the aims of the Network:

- Enhance nature conservation of Danube River Protected Areas
- Manage Danube Protected Areas wisely
- Exchange and promote expertise in management
- Improve knowledge of the ecological status of the river, as well as the economic, social and environmental impacts and the management of the Danube Protected Areas
- Take actions for the prevention, control and reduction of pollution in the floodplains and wetlands in the Danube Basin
- Promote awareness of the international importance of the Danube River
- Promote sustainable development
- Influence the implementation and future development of public policies

www.danubeparks.org

2.1.3

Europarc Federation: E-learning for PA Managers

Increasing education opportunities on sustainable development for Protected Area managers in Romania (EdOppPa).

In partnership with ProPark Foundation (RO), EUROPARC was successful in applying for a project with the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) on "Increasing education opportunities on sustainable development for Protected Area managers in Romania". The project aims at developing, implementing and promoting innovative tools and approaches (on-line learning) to increase knowledge transfer to Protected Area professionals on nature conservation management.

The Romanian Protected Area management system is relatively young (in place since 1999) and huge efforts have already been made to designate new Protected Areas in the country. However, Protected Areas are still quite often places where lack of knowledge and competence for management, lack of communication and stakeholder involvement lead to conflicts and ultimately to unsustainable resource use and investments. ProPark Foundation, established with the aim to help Protected Area professionals to develop their competencies, is pioneering the establishment of comprehensive capacity building programmes. Efforts are also made to support stakeholders in actively contributing to Protected Area management.

The project aimed at supporting ProPark to introduce new approaches into the capacity building programme by using modern technology. With developing on-line training, the time of face-to-face training sessions can be reduced, resulting in more cost (and time) effective training for Protected Area staff and their employers - important when resources for staff development are limited.

EUROPARC supported ProPark in delivering the project with its vast network of Protected Area professionals. The innovative approaches to capacity building for Protected Area staff developed in this project will be shared across the Federation network.

The project started in December 2013 and lasted for 30 months.

<http://www.europarc.org/tools-and-training/education-opportunities-pas/>

Tools & Training

EUROPARC Webinars

Toolbox

Communication Skills

Signpost Seminars - Training for

E-learning for PA managers



2.2 Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus

2.2.1 Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites, Phase II

The Emerald Network under the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats is set up to ensure that all high biodiversity areas of European importance are identified, their ecological inventories completed and their importance recognised legally. The identified Emerald Network sites will then benefit from adequate protection, while allowing human social and economic activities and encouraging sustainable human-nature interaction.

This European Union/Council of Europe project contributes to the establishment of the Emerald Network in seven target countries.

The Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, an ecological network launched by the Council of Europe in the framework of the Bern Convention, is an equivalent initiative to the EU Natura 2000 Network. Both the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive are international legal instruments aimed at the conservation of wild flora, fauna and natural habitats. Their main differences come from the territory they apply to (European Union Member States for the Directive and the whole of Europe and part of Africa for the Bern Convention) and to the legal approach they are built on.

The “Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites - Phase II” project follows-up on the work achieved in the frame of a previous Joint EU/CoE Programme, implemented in the period 2009-2011. It targets seven countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Through the project, they support the work on the establishment of the Emerald Network in all seven countries.

<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/emerald-network/home>



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Emerald Network website. It features the logos of the Council of Europe and the European Union, followed by the text "COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN UNION". To the right, it says "Joint Programme Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites, Phase II". Below the navigation bar is a menu with items: Home, News, About the project, Targeted countries, Resources, Project activities in 2014, Project activities in 2015, and Project activities in 2016. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page: "You are here: Emerald Network Nature protection sites Phase II / > Home /". The main content area has the heading "Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites, Phase II" and a paragraph of introductory text. To the right of the text is a logo for the Emerald Network, which consists of a stylized yellow animal (possibly a bear or dog) surrounded by blue stars, with the words "EMERALD NETWORK" below it.

2.3

The Americas

2.3.1

National Park Foundation

- Community Partnerships

The National Park Foundation is a national leader in the field of park philanthropy. They provide strategic support and valuable resources to local non-profit philanthropic partners, or “Friends Groups,” as well as volunteer groups and cooperating associations across the country, which share the common goal of enhancing America’s national parks for present and future generations. They also partner with leaders from a variety of other fields, all of whom are committed to the continued protection, connection, and engagement with the national parks.

Local Park Support: The National Park Foundation serves as a catalyst, resource, and national voice for local philanthropic park partners, also known as Friends Groups, to protect and enhance America’s national parks for present and future generations. The Foundation believes that a continuum of philanthropic funding – from local to national – enhances the ability to protect national parks and connects all Americans with these treasured places and all they offer. This support also raises awareness for all the National Park Service does to enrich communities from coast to coast and inspire the next generation of park stewards.

Friends Groups are individual, non-profit organisations that support the success of a specific national park(s) with time, expertise, and privately-raised funds. As champions of parks, Friends Groups frequently engage area communities in the park and garner financial support and volunteer time in support of park priorities.

The Foundation works to help grow and support the continued success of philanthropic park partners by offering a range of technical assistance options and helpful tools. For example, NPF connects Friends Groups with mentors where possible, sponsors and hosts webinars, and plans special events and other services that help aid in the success of philanthropic park partners.

National Park Friends Alliance is an informal network of Friends Groups leaders, which meet twice a year to discuss issues relevant to park philanthropy. The Foundation provides both technical and financial support for these convenings.

<https://www.nationalparks.org/about-foundation/partnerships/community-partnerships>



2.3.2

The NatureServe Network

NatureServe is the hub of a large, impactful and consequential network of 86 governmental and non-governmental programmes located in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. Each day, Network Programs and their staff are working tirelessly to protect and conserve the plants, animals, and ecosystems in their jurisdictions.

The Power of a Network

- Expertise: 1,000 conservation professionals with a wide-array of expertise, including ecologists, zoologists, botanists, data specialists, and much more. The professionals have expertise in acquiring, managing and sharing knowledge; assessing status, risk and condition; planning, and measuring results.
- Geographic reach: Eighty four Network Programs located in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. Vast geographic reach offers both local, regional, and global information. Work within the network is applied throughout the world to address global challenges. Conservation projects or needs that cross jurisdictional lines or involve large landscapes can easily be covered by the network. Specific local needs can be met by individual Network Programmes. NatureServe can accommodate any project with our access to on-the-ground experts throughout the network. Scientists from Network Programs are in the field, assessing and collecting data on rare species and ecosystems.

- Data collection: Data collected through the network is of the highest quality because the network is trained using NatureServe's rigorous core standards and methodologies. Using NatureServe's data management tool, Biotics, data that is collected throughout the network is aggregated and compiled. Data is managed and analysed by NatureServe and shared throughout the network and incorporated into products and services through easy-to-use tools and visualised.

<http://www.natureserve.org/natureserve-network>



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The NatureServe Network

2.4

Worldwide

2.4.1

Sacred Natural Sites

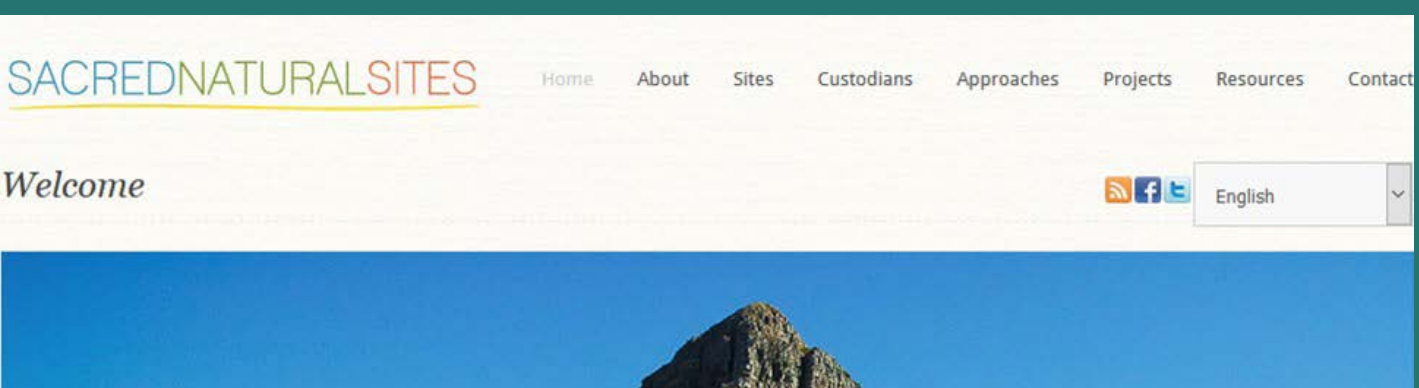
The Sacred Natural Sites (SNS) Initiative works with custodians, traditional knowledge holders, conservationists, academics and others in support of the conservation and revitalisation of sacred natural sites and territories.

The initiative is emerging from 14 years of work of the IUCN Specialists Group on the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas. The initiative works on projects based on community strengths and resources including material, social and spiritual. The project aims to support locally-motivated and defined cultural and biological conservation efforts at sacred natural sites that are set within the context of communities and landscapes. Sacred natural sites are areas of rich and diverse nature that have special spiritual significance to individuals and communities. They occur across the globe in all countries and across different ecological systems and cultural beliefs. This initiative is continuously building an archive of example sites and cases studies.

The initiative is intended to provide a number of key elements. These include:

- A network of advisors – including custodians – to guide the initiative
- Implementation, support and networking of field projects
- Dialogue with key SNS stakeholders in conservation and other sectors
- A knowledge and learning centre
- Guidance and policy development
- Communications and dissemination
- Funding

<https://sacrednaturalsites.org/about/>



2.4.2

TEAM

Tropical Ecology Assessment & Monitoring Network – Early Warning System for Nature: Tropical ecosystems are the biologically richest places on the planet, yet what we know about them comes from scientific studies so specialised that the results rarely make the local news. “Most ecological studies last fewer than five years at a single study site, with measurements focused on an area of only ten meters squared,” explains Sandy Andelman, Vice President of Conservation International for the Tropical Ecology Assessment and Monitoring (TEAM) Network. “Ecology needs to scale up to address global climate change and other environmental threats.”

Scaling up to global proportions is precisely what TEAM was created to do. This ambitious programme is devoted to monitoring long-term trends in biodiversity, land cover change, climate and ecosystem services in tropical forests. Tropical forests received first billing because of their overwhelming significance to the global biosphere (e.g., their disproportionately large role in global carbon and energy cycles) and because of the extraordinary threats they face. About 50 per cent of the species described on Earth, and an even larger proportion of species not yet described, occur in tropical forests.

The idea behind TEAM is deceptively simple: to measure and compare plants, terrestrial mammals, ground-dwelling birds and climate using a standard methodology in a range of tropical forests, from relatively pristine places to those most affected by people. TEAM currently operates in 16 tropical forest sites across Africa, Asia and Latin America supporting a network of scientists committed to standardised methods of data collection to quantify how plants and animals respond to pressures such as climate change and human encroachment.

Everyone knows that deforestation is a global crisis, but simply increasing the area of forests protected by reserves won't necessarily solve the problem, particularly given what we now know about climate change. Climate change forces adjustments to wildlife ranges. It alters the transmission rates of disease. It might affect the timing or length of the seasons or the annual distribution of rainfall. Scientists have little quantitative data about how animals and plants are responding to these environmental perturbations, especially in the tropics. The TEAM Network is collecting data to help us understand the impact of climate change on ecosystem health.

By using a standard methodology at a global scale and by sharing our data publicly, the TEAM Network is creating a new culture of ecology. The traditional portrayal of ecological study, in which a scientist at one site builds a career on the data from that site, has less relevance in today's world, where the environmental threats caused by people happen on large spatial and temporal scales – magnitudes too large for a single scientist at one site to observe. In another major departure from standard practice among ecologists, TEAM makes all of the network data publicly available as it is collected, in near real time. Accessible, near real-time data makes TEAM an early warning system for nature.

<http://www.teamnetwork.org/about>



Summary

The reviewed projects illustrated common themes:

- Extensive sharing of knowledge and skills.
- Strong emphasis on influencing policy at a national, regional and global scale.
- Identification that inconsistent approaches taken by different stakeholders inhibited the development of strategic and effective solutions.
- Strong focus on innovation.
- Standardisation of research methods.
- Facilitation of improved monitoring and management of natural resources.
- Importance of networking and ongoing collaboration.
- Commitment to partnership working of multi-discipline agencies.
- Development of stakeholder participation and influence.
- Utilisation of both formal and informal networks.
- Shared problems that are solved more effectively by close cooperation.
- Effectiveness of active networks helping facilitate inter country performance on shared obligations.
- Establishing robust analysis of natural heritage to raise its value in balance with socio-economic and cultural aspects.
- Improving accuracy, reliability and transferable aspect of research.

- Cost effective and straightforward access to data, participation, and training.
- Online learning, training and sharing of free data.
- Cost effective, quick and repeatable online training and 'how to' guidance, and online tools.
- Facilitation of friends groups to raise funds, support practical activity and influenced plans.
- Recognition that the challenges have to be addressed in an increasingly wider perspective, ultimately with global significance.

Recommendation

The ASCENT approach is consistent with the common themes identified in the review.

It will be important to maintain that perspective in the development of the work in order to have a chance of informing policy, achieving strategic significance, and to sustain international cooperation. This should be an underpinning theme of the project.

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