

PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS - PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Protected natural areas have the primary role in preserving biodiversity, but the appointment of a large number of such areas is not sufficient to solve environmental problems. Moreover, there have been changes in the role and function of protected areas with socio-economic development. There are no longer seen as simple spaces to protect valuable natural elements but involves extensive contributions in the proper organization and operation of current and future societies. Appropriate management effectively depends largely on the loyalty they meet the basic principles of sustainable development. This mechanism is quite complex and sophisticated, requires new forms of governance of protected natural areas involving active participation, collaboration, partnerships, finance growth. Romanian company is undergoing a period transit between the government and governance of protected areas, to accommodate to new approaches to the European legislative framework, providing a collaborative management involving all relevant actors.

Key words: *governance, government, management, protected area, sustainable development*

JEL Classification: *Q56, Q58*

I. INTRODUCTION

The designation of some protected areas is a first step in achieving sustainable development. Beyond the central objective to maintain or restore the fragile natural heritage, a natural protected area should help create the economic and social welfare of the people. Recent surveys show that, the higher the number and perimeter of protected natural areas, the greater the benefits to the environment and local communities. This is also proven by the Territorial Sustainable Development Indicators which influence the environment used by the European Communities' Statistical Office (Eurostat), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization (OECD). These indicators are translated into specific monitoring tools which are integrated in the concept of sustainable development (economy, society and natural capital).

II. GOVERNANCE VERSUS GOVERNMENT

In regard to the conservation and management of natural resources, the indicators being used are the employment rate of the *Nature 2000* sites and the

protected natural areas of national interest, part of developing regions of Romania. In Figs. no. 1 and no. 2 the predominance of the natural protected areas in some developing regions such as North West, Western Region South West as a result of natural and cultural values, the poles of sustainable development in Romania, can be easily observed.

The appropriate management of the protected areas ensures the correspondence between problems and needs in the conservation of the natural habitats, of natural and anthropogenic landscapes and the socio-economic issues of the human framework. The term used for everything related to the decision-making system is *governance* which raises some questions on a national level on the manner of approach and organization. This term is closely related to sustainability, guided by common principles which require a balanced relationship of collaboration between the public society performers and the private society ones. Unlike the government, where citizens have an advisory role (but in reality, the only moments they can express their opinions are the elections), governance includes the active participation in decision-making process regarding all problems and the solutions are the result of negotiations (C. Iașu, C. Alupului, 2013).

The definition given by Graham et al. (2003) to this new type of political organization shows "the interaction between structures, processes and traditions that determine how to exercise the power, how decisions are being made on issues of public interest and how citizens and stakeholders can express their opinion" (quoted by E. Stanciu, F. Florescu, 2009). Looking back at the differences between the modernist approach to governance and the classical

Williamson, 1975 cited by N. Bertrand, P. Moquay, 2004). In the second debate, the territory appears as a central point whose representations have evolved from the limited concept of support or framework of human activities, to structural variables that can determine the success of development projects with economic impact (C. Iațu C. Alupului, 2013).

Strictly referring to the governance way of the protected areas, there are the following types¹, according to the classification proposed by Borrini-Fezerabend G. (2003) in an unpublished report of the Protected Areas International Commission (WCPA) coordinated by the International Nature Conservation (ICN):

1. **Government protected areas (state government)** - the decision, management responsibility and resource management belongs to the national ministry or responsible agency. This is very common in Europe (Fig. 3) and, to some extent, in North America.

2. **Protected areas under collaborative management (collaborative governance)** usually involve complex mechanisms to allow sharing of responsibilities and decision between different stakeholders from the national level to the local (representatives of local communities, owners and operators of land and resources, private entrepreneurs). Depending on the degree of cooperation, there are several subtypes:

- mild forms of co-management: authority and responsibility are held by state structures which are obliged to consult other non-governmental actors;

- intermediate forms of co-management: the management of the areas is achieved through the interaction between state and non-government actors, through proposal developing by several categories of stakeholders and approval by a determining authority, which will consider the submitted proposals;

- advanced forms of co-management: managing the protected area is made up of structures made of various stakeholders who have full authority and responsibility. This form of governance is more widespread in Africa and Oceania.

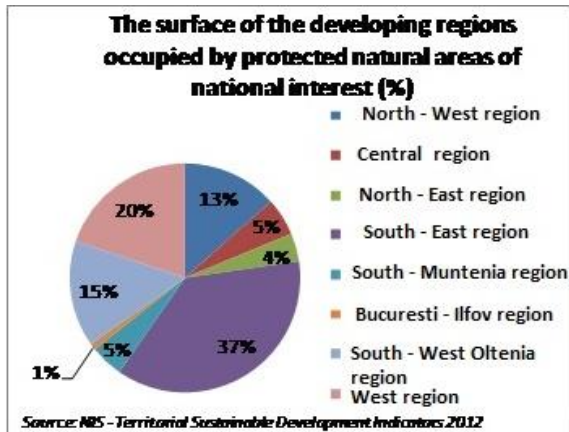


Figure 1 – The employment rate of the developing regions with natural protected areas of national interest

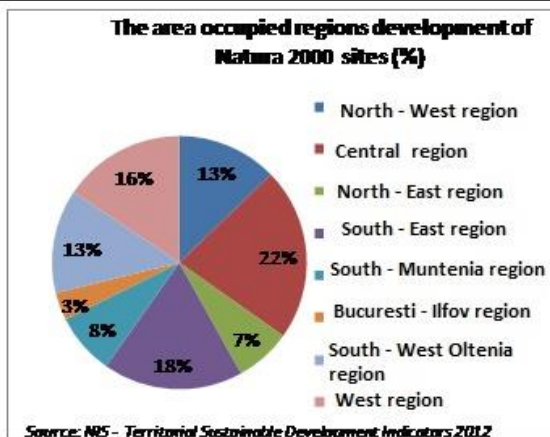


Figure 2 - The employment rate of the developing regions of *Natura 2000* sites

approach to government, the first assigns a special role to partnership, being capable of combating centralized bureaucracy, in favor of entrepreneurship development. Thus, the state's role is diminished and the number of potential partners is increased (C. Iațu, C. Alupului, 2013) and enables the renewal of the reflection on territorial government, types of management and administration. In economic terms, governance aims above all to explain the market's complementary organizational forms from which two debates arise: the first concerns the productive factor and the nature of the coordination between individual and collective agents; the second refers to taking into consideration the spatial dimension as an intrinsic part of the productive factor (Coase, 1937 Commons 1934;

¹ Stanciu E., Florescu F. *Ariile protejate din România – noțiuni introductive*, Ed. Green Steps, Brașov, 2009;

3. **Private protected areas** - conservation decision and responsibility lies with the private owner of land who practices conservation management of the owned or managed land. In this case, the administrator's public accountability in terms of conservation is limited. It is very important in North America and Oceania.

4. **protected areas preserved by communities and indigenous people** - the decision and

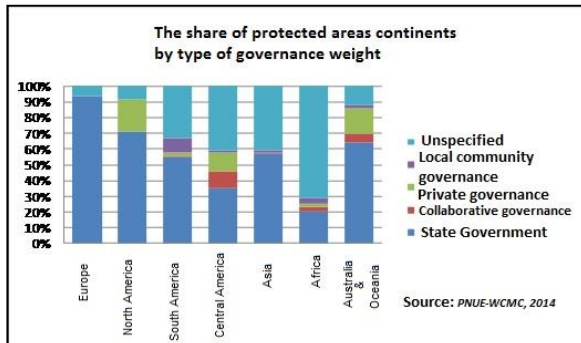


Fig. 3 - The shares of protected natural areas continents, by type of governance (2014)

responsibility lies with the local community, administration forms being established by it, areas common in South America, Oceania and Central America.

The network of protected national areas has a legislative framework which places them, with few exceptions, in the first category, but is growing trends which provide a collaborative management approach. The Romanian company is still in a transition period marked socio-economic and political tensions and the partnerships between the different groups of actors do not reach the desired standards of cooperation. Collaboration is most often understood as information and consultancy manner between partners and the quality of decisions regarding the management of the protected area is reduced from the start. Ideally, it is recommended to make it possible for stakeholders to develop and approve, following negotiations, the relevant provisions related to the management of the protected area, then be the subject of working and decision making entity. For effective governance, the following principles are recommended in order to support the protected area management's objectives.

United Nations Conservation² provides some examples of successful organization of an effective system of protected areas due to the need of understanding and implementation of governance suited to each type of company. Some countries are beginning to understand the role of their system of protected areas by recognizing the new management

² G.B. Feyereabend et al., Governance of Protected Areas - from understanding to action, Best Practice Protected Areas Guidelines No. 20, Gland, Switzerland, IUCN, 2013.

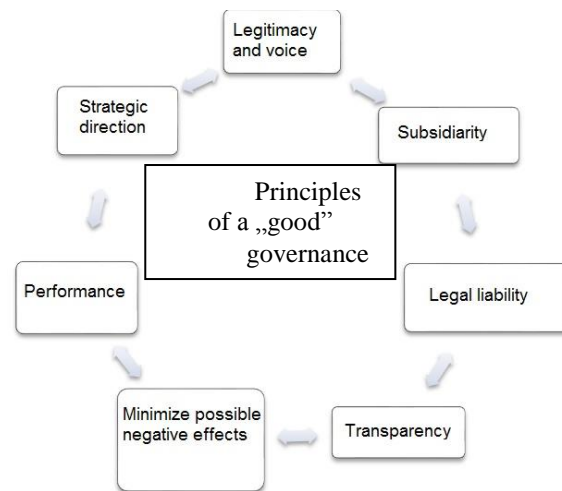


Figure 4 - Principles of good governance effective protected areas Adapted Abrams et al. (2003) and Dudley (2008)

category and new types of governance other than those that have proved ineffective. Starting from a conclusion drawn by Leisher et al. (2007) in a report on the study of south Asian protected areas, the governance motto regarding the relationship of interdependence between people and protected areas can be established in the following simple, but comprehensive, words: "protected areas need local communities and local communities need protected areas".

The second type of governance, the participatory type, desirable in every state, is provided by the country with 30 years of experience in addressing a collaborative management of protected areas, France. Each of the 44 parks is governed by a board of elected officials and other key players which oversee the multidisciplinary technical team in the management of parks in order to achieve common objectives. In 2006, a law regarding a similar governance of all the country's national parks has been approved. In a similar way, in Brazil, the National Strategic Plan of Protected Areas in 2006 wants all protected areas, called „units of conservation", to be established by a multisectoral committee comprising elected representatives of the government, of the native population and of the Afro-Brazilian population (Quilombola). This law, thought to be progressive in terms of environmental protection, is not fully applied, but it is going in this direction.

Columbia in 1960 had all protected areas under the government administration. The environmental conservation status has changed between 1990 and 2000, when there was introduced a number of new protected areas under participatory governance. During this time The National Parks System was created, a national class organization that implemented a *Policy of Social Participation for Conservation* which encourages the creation of regional or local

reservations whose responsibility of administration belongs to the indigenous people, the local authorities, the rural communities or to the private owners.

A governance arrangement made by the indigenous people and the local communities involves the possession of an institution which imposes regulations on the protected area and takes the necessary decisions. This institution must be recognized by the government as the legal administration of the local community and it must operate in legitimacy. Protected areas under this type of governance are among the oldest in the world, most of them being an illustration of the sustainable management of ecosystems, namely the expression of local populations, directly concerned by the protection, restoration sites or sustainable use of natural resources. In this case also, numerous examples are the African continent, Asian, American.

The Collaborative Framework System of the protected areas in Romania requires that protected area administrations work with an Advisory Board of Administration and a Scientific Council, composed of professionals specialized in nature protection issues, with practical experience. Both councils are closely established by ministerial order, the first consisting of institutions, and the second of individuals. The management is carried out by the managers of the protected areas' management structures which can be set up for respectively administrations of protected areas, or custodians (NGOs, local councils). Such institutions or organizations may be the administrators or the custodians of the protected natural areas based on a contract with the Central Environmental Authority (now the Environment, Water and Forests Ministry) and agree to fully allocate the necessary financial resources and personnel for the management of the protected area.

The acute problem of many of the protected areas in Romania is insufficient finances, the majority being in the situation of self-financing. Romania is the only EU country which does not support at all financially the management of the protected areas network (except The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve), offering only the possibility for administrations to obtain income from various sources (self-financing) or to attract funds from partnerships with stakeholders (NGOs plants, projects financing or co-financing)³. It is therefore very important that partnerships and collaboration with various institutions, NGOs, associations or private organizations can provide financial support for the protected areas management.

A study conducted within the project "Improving the financial sustainability of the network of protected areas in the Carpathian Mountains" under the coordination of the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented in 2010-2013, proposes the development of the protected areas by an analysis of ecosystem services⁴, as a generating factor of individual and social welfare. The study applied to a number of five Pilot protected areas (The Apuseni Natural Park, the Retezat National Park, The Piatra Craiului National Park and Maramures Mountains' Natural Park) analyzed the key ecosystem services for each one and the economic ties between these services and the achievements in agriculture, tourism, forestry, water and natural disaster prevention. This method of analysis is based on a study comparing two scenarios: *Business as Usual* (BAU) currently occurring in the management of all natural areas in Romania and *Sustainable Ecosystem Management* (SEM) whose objectives for managing the natural protected areas are closely related to the conservation. In some protected areas the SEM scenario begins to be adopted increasingly by more and more managers, but this process requires a long time to be able to fully replace by the BAU scenario. Thus, the management of protected areas in the country reflects a combination of elements of both scenarios, with a predominance of the BAU scenario.

The differences between the two scenarios are that the BAU scenario is characterized by a poor management of the protected natural areas and the lack of tact of the administrators in the sense that the human, institutional, financial and information resources are limited. Conservation objectives of protected natural areas depend on modest budgets that do not have programmatic priorities. Also, domestic financing is often hampered by the restriction if the national funds, outdated legal and regulatory frameworks, the lack of transparency and political will in supporting plans and financing strategies. Another aspect of the BAU scenario is that it focuses on immediate income and the short-term (usually less than 10 years), which comes in contradiction with the principles of sustainable development. This is why the managers of protected natural areas prefer the BAU scenario with short-term gains, despite the depletion of resources.

The SEM scenario is an advanced method of administration with various funding sources which ensure high budgets, capable to satisfy the function of protection and conservation of the biodiversity at a high level. The managing of natural protected areas takes place with higher human, financial, institutional and informational resources, and this reflects on maintaining the ecosystem's balance. The gains are

³ NGO Coalition Natura 2000 Romania, protected areas in Romania. Threats to protected areas and problems faced by managers, 2010.

⁴ Ecosystem services - flow of resources from the environment or services that people benefit directly or indirectly. They can be: supply (wood, medicinal plants, fish, etc.), control (carbon sequestration, water regulation), cultural (acquired intangible benefits through tourism and education) and adjacent (soil formation, nutrient recycling).

long term (10-20 years). Even if the early years involve high investment and the revenues are imperceptible, results are oriented towards profit. In conclusion the benefits outweigh the costs and administration costs will be recovered in a long time, but surely.

As in the natural protected areas of the country, in the management programs of Vrancea county the majority of elements of the BAU scenario are found (irrational exploitation of forests and pastures, inadequate use of non-timber forest resources, lack of wastewater treatment plants, not granting subsidies to landowners, tourist infrastructure incompatible with visiting requirements, small investment in tourism, orientation of flows only towards certain natural protected areas, to the detriment of inaccessible others).

Based on the experience of Protected Natural Areas in which this management system has proven effective, managers of protected areas in Romania, aware of the long-term benefits, adopt elements the SEM scenario (government agencies support tourism and programs for protecting ecosystems, accessing European funds for the implementation of conservation programs, the administrations of the protected natural areas introduce a visitation tax, developing self-financing projects to increase revenues and support the local economy). It can be said that it is situated in the pioneering stage in addressing the SEM scenario, being a process as complex as it is difficult. They involve coherent and concrete scientific and feasibility studies, allowing the adoption of specific strategies to meet future needs by solving current problems facing the natural protected areas. Also, a testing period of at least 10 years is required for visible results and trends for the

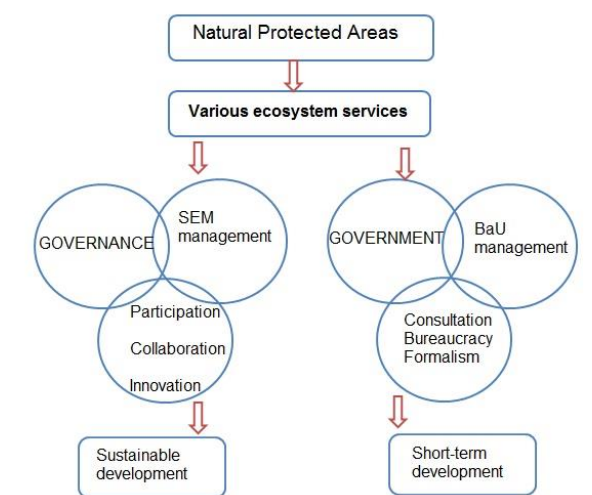


Figure 5 - Types of management of protected natural areas and development's results

upcoming years to take shape. The objectives pursued by the SEM scenario are only possible in agreement with the objectives of democratic governance based on collaborative and participative management.

The adopting of a participatory and adaptive management must face the highly complex and dynamic ecosystems, but also the political, social and economic field, which is constantly affected by instability and continuing changes. To make a more feasible, a more efficient management, the adoption of a common management is recommended, under agreements with a broad range of partners, not just in the formal sector of nature protection (local companies, local farmers, agencies providing services in various sectors, volunteers, researchers, etc.). Although these collaborations and partnerships exist in official records, according to the legal framework that obliges managers in this respect, in reality there are a lot shortcomings in the functioning of these partnerships. Romania, part of former socialist countries block, is going through a period of adjustment to the participatory approach of government. If the Western European countries have entrenched this view, some countries in Central and Eastern Europe still make considerable efforts to develop collaborative governance and participation. The problems that must be solved in our society come from the political, social and economic: weak development of civil society and mutual distrust in the relationship with government authorities, failure to determine political power, pursuing personal interests rather than common ones, insufficient public awareness of the importance of protected areas manifested in the irrational exploitation of natural resources and reluctance to protective measures, exercising political influence in most decision-making acts, orientation of society towards an immediate and short-term economic development, fragmentation of large protected areas based on the form of land ownership, management of protected areas performed by the government in the high proportion and the denial of sufficient funds for maintenance and development.

Starting from the theory of Hesselink et al. (2007), a successful collaboration lies in people's behavior and their ability to use complementary tools: "To make a change in the people, who determine the achieving the goals of biodiversity conservation, communication must be used most often in combination with other instruments "(quoted by A. Ionita, E. Stanciu, 2012).

Table 1 - The benefits of the stakeholder's involvement in decision making regarding protected areas

Collaborative attitude	Effects
Information and consultation	* Share knowledge, ideas, experiences, visions
Open dialogue	* Understanding of the socio-economic impact * Integration of needs * Taking problems into

	consideration and their prevention * Legitimacy development of protected area management * Representation and negotiation of common or personal interests for integrated development
The public involvement	* Creating a sense of ownership of the process and its results * Encouragement of civic responsibility, understanding and support * Public trust in institutions
Active participation through collaboration	* Communication mechanism based on dialogue, exchange of views, expressing concerns * Adoption and diffusion of innovations * Successful implementation of consensual decisions * Citizenship development, social equity
Access to comprehensive and relevant information	* Transparent and open collaboration * Information and awareness of stakeholders
Openness and mutual trust	* Understanding of the stakeholder interests * Detecting conflicts, divergences and imminent threats and their resolution
Permanent positive	* Reduction of political instability and political interests * Limitation of expenditure control and application of coercive measures

III. CONCLUSION

Worth mentioning are the collaborations of the representatives of protected areas in Romania with associations, organizations and foundations, regional, national and international authorities, most of them ending with fundraising through various European funding programs. Moreover, the possibility of accessing non-refundable European funds is the main tool that makes possible the implementation of some measures of developing protected natural areas, by the high value of financial resources, according to the SEM scenario. The rate of successful European projects is related to the ability of those who access and implement them to channel investment in poor segments, which also support this kind of intervention. The results of the collaboration within European programs were also felt in each sector, in local communities, but on short or medium term, contrary to the principles of sustainability which provide long-term solutions. In many cases, the actual results partially coincide with the objectives or some objectives lack measurable applicability.

The interest and active involvement of associations, private organizations and volunteers who pool their environmental beliefs into action for biodiversity conservation, landscaping and contribute in increasing the quality of life of local communities is to be noted.

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