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# Partnerships and Protected Landscapes: New Conservation Strategies that Engage Communities

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## Introduction

In North America, as in other regions of the world, conservation strategies are becoming more inclusive, recognizing multiple values, encompassing the interests of local communities and indigenous peoples, and relying on collaborative management approaches that involve diverse stakeholders. Community involvement and inclusive approaches to conservation are central to an emerging new paradigm for protected areas worldwide as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Contrasting protected area paradigms (from Phillips 2003).

Topic	As it was: protected areas were ...	As it is becoming: protected areas are ...
<i>Objectives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set aside for conservation</li> <li>• Established mainly for spectacular wildlife and scenic protection</li> <li>• Managed mainly for visitors and tourists</li> <li>• Valued as wilderness</li> <li>• About protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run also with social and economic objectives</li> <li>• Often set up for scientific, economic and cultural reasons</li> <li>• Managed with local people more in mind</li> <li>• Valued for the cultural importance of so-called wilderness</li> <li>• Also about restoration and rehabilitation</li> </ul>
<i>Governance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run by central government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run by many partners</li> </ul>
<i>Local people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned and managed against people</li> <li>• Managed without regard to local opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run with, for, and in some cases by local people</li> <li>• Managed to meet the needs of local people</li> </ul>
<i>Wider context</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed separately</li> <li>• Managed as “islands”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned as part of national, regional and international systems</li> <li>• Developed as “networks” (strictly protected areas, buffered and linked by green corridors)</li> </ul>
<i>Perceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewed primarily as a national asset</li> <li>• Viewed only as a national concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewed also as a community asset</li> <li>• Viewed also as an international concern</li> </ul>
<i>Management techniques</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed reactively within short timescale</li> <li>• Managed in a technocratic way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed adaptively in long-term perspective</li> <li>• Managed with political considerations</li> </ul>
<i>Finance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid for by taxpayer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid for from many sources</li> </ul>
<i>Management skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed by scientists and natural resource experts</li> <li>• Expert led</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed by multiskilled individuals</li> <li>• Drawing on local knowledge</li> </ul>

This is particularly true for protected landscapes. Protected landscapes are protected areas based on the interactions of people and nature over time. Living examples of cultural heritage, these landscapes are rich in biological diversity and other natural values not in spite of but rather *because of the presence of people*. It follows that their future relies on sustaining people's relationship to the land and its resources. It is this complex mix of cultural and natural values, of tangible and intangible heritage, that makes protection of landscapes so vital, and at the same time so challenging. It requires an approach that is interdisciplinary, inclusive, and that engages people and communities.

This paper introduces the protected landscape approach and explores its application. Drawing from the book *The Protected Landscape Approach: Linking Nature, Culture and Community* (Brown et al. 2005), it provides brief descriptions of examples of protected landscapes from different regions of the world, including experience from North America.

### **The protected landscape approach**

The *protected landscape approach* links conservation of nature and culture, and fosters stewardship by people living in the landscape. While grounded in experience with IUCN's category V protected landscapes/seascapes, this approach is broader than a single protected area category or designation. Rather, it relies on different tools and designations to achieve protection, and on an array of processes and traditional systems to sustain people's relationship to the land.

The protected landscape approach recognizes that the cultural and natural values of landscapes are inextricably linked, and embraces the central role of communities as stewards of these landscapes. It puts them at the heart of management of these protected areas, sharing in the benefits and responsibilities of conservation. It is an inclusive approach, relying on participatory processes and partnerships that link a diverse array of stakeholders in stewardship and sustainability.

Protected landscapes are often part of a mosaic of protection tools, and can help strengthen linkages between more strictly protected areas and the broader landscape. It is important to stress here that an approach that emphasizes lived-in landscapes should in no way be seen to reduce the importance of strictly protected areas. Rather it is a complementary model—one that is particularly appropriate in settings where biodiversity and cultural practices are linked, and where management must accommodate traditional uses, land ownership patterns, and the need to sustain local livelihoods. This is often the case when conservation objectives are to be met over a large area of land (often referred to as “landscape-scale” conservation). Protected landscapes can contribute to the viability of more strictly protected areas (such as national parks and nature reserves) by strengthening linkages within the broader landscape and connections among protected areas.

Central to the protected landscape approach is the idea of *stewardship*. In its broadest sense, stewardship refers to the essential role individuals and communities play in the careful management of our common natural and cultural wealth for now and future generations. More specifically, it can be defined as *efforts to create, nurture and enable responsibility in landowners and resource users to manage and protect land and its natural and cultural heritage* (Brown and Mitchell 1999).

The protected landscape approach engages local communities in stewardship of landscapes by reinforcing individual and community responsibility for resource management. It builds on existing institutional responsibilities; and encourages flexible arrangements for management of resources, including collaborative management agreements and the range of private land stewardship tools.

### **What are protected landscapes and seascapes?**

Landscapes may be protected by a variety of designations and tools, including some that are not formally recognized within national or international protected area systems. Examples of three models are introduced briefly in Table 2.

### **Experience from diverse regions of the world**

A growing body of experience worldwide illustrates how the protected landscape approach can work in very different settings, addressing a variety of conservation objectives and challenges. A few examples are presented briefly here.

#### **Central Europe: sustaining landscapes in the White Carpathian Mountains (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and the Jizera Mountains (Czech Republic)**

In the White Carpathian Mountains along the Czech–Slovak border (Figure 1), a category V protected landscape encompasses upland meadows, which have a great diversity of orchid species. The special traditional landscapes of this region largely survived land collectivization during socialism, because other agricultural land was more accessible. However, today they are threatened by abandonment. As people leave aside traditional practices such as haying, the upland meadows are threatened by encroachment of scrubby vegetation, which in turn threatens the region's rich biodiversity of orchids.

One way that the government protected landscape authority and other conservationists are working to slow this trend is to create partnerships with local landowners and help to support continued haying in these upland meadows, which in turn maintains biodiversity. Another partnership among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local government, and the protected landscape Authority supports the planting of old varieties of fruit trees. The partnership not only provides trees to the farmers, but has helped create a market for these products through the construction of a traditional fruit-drying facility and a juice plant to produce cider, which is marketed nationwide in the Czech Republic.

This case study and others from Central Europe, such as the Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape in northern Bohemia, Czech Republic, illustrate how engaging communities in stewardship can contribute to rural economic development, community revitalization, and fostering civil society in the post-Communist societies of the region. In the protected landscapes of these two mountainous regions an approach that reinforces local people's relationship to nature, supports their resources and traditions, and encourages sensitive management of the landscape can contribute to economic strengthening of rural areas. In both cases NGOs have played an important role in bringing new vision and innovation to traditionally conservative rural areas (Kundrata and Huskova 2005).

Table 2. Examples of designations and tools to protect landscapes/seascapes.

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**Category V protected landscapes/seascapes.** A primary tool is through formal designation as a protected landscape/seascape, which is category V in the IUCN system of protected area management categories. According to the IUCN *Guidelines for Protected Areas Management Categories*, the definition of a category V protected landscape/seascape is “an area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity” (IUCN 1994). (For a comprehensive introduction to category V protected areas, and guidance for managing these areas, refer to Phillips 2002). The category V designation explicitly recognizes that safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection and evolution of such areas, making category V protected landscapes both a designation and a process aimed at sustaining people’s relationship to the landscape.

**World Heritage cultural landscapes.** Since 1992 the World Heritage Convention, an international treaty, has recognized and protected cultural landscapes, which are selected based on the outstanding value of the interaction between people and their environment. The operational guidelines for convention define “cultural landscapes” as “illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal and as a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment” (UNESCO 1996). Examples include the Rice Terraces of the Philippines Cordilleras; Uluru–Kata Tjuta, Australia; Fertő/Neusiedlersee, Hungary and Austria; and Qadisha Valley, Lebanon (see Lennon 2005; Phillips 2005; Rössler 2005; Villalon 2005).

**Community-conserved areas (CCAs).** One important way that indigenous and local communities conserve biological diversity in the landscapes they inhabit is through CCAs. These encompass the array of strategies that indigenous and local communities have been using for millennia to protect land and natural and cultural resources important to them. Long ignored by governments, and not included in the accounting of official protected areas, CCAs are now receiving growing attention in the protected areas field. These areas, which are found worldwide, can be defined as “modified and natural ecosystems, whether human-influenced or not, and which contain significant biodiversity values, ecological services, and cultural values, that are voluntarily conserved by communities, through customary laws and institutions” (Barrow and Pathak 2005). Examples include sacred groves, watersheds protected for communal water sources, coastal areas protected for fishing, traditional agricultural systems, and areas reserved for grazing and forage by pastoralist peoples. (For more on CCAs, see Jaireth and Smyth 2003; Barrow and Pathak 2005; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2005).

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Figure 1. Meadows in the White Carpathian mountains (Czech and Slovak Republics) support rich biodiversity, particularly orchids. To maintain meadow ecosystems in the protected landscape area, NGOs are working with local farmers to continue traditional haying practices and reintroduce sheep grazing. Photo courtesy of Brent Mitchell.

### **Andean South America: a community-conserved area in Peru**

Andean South America is a region rich in landscapes shaped by traditional land uses that have proven sustainable over centuries. Writing about Andean landscapes, Sarmiento et al. (2005) note that culture and nature are interlocked in a closely knit fabric where the resulting mosaics of land uses have provided diversity and stability to the ecology of mountain landscapes. Their case studies from Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia illustrate the role of indigenous communities and *colono* communities in sustaining landscapes. They argue that landscape conservation based on traditional knowledge, practices, and innovation systems is likely to have greater success in conserving the local landscape, while providing for livelihoods, than those that rely solely on conventional conservation approaches (Sarmiento et al. 2005).

An excellent example of this approach is found in the Sacred Valley of the Incas in Pisac, Peru, a landscape that, since Inca times, has been essentially agricultural in character. It is a recognized microcenter of origin for potatoes, with over 2,300 cultivars being grown. At the heart of this cultural landscape, six Quechua villages have come together to manage their communal land jointly and to sustain their traditional ways of farming. They have created *El Parque de la papa* (“the Potato Park”) to protect the astonishing genetic diversity of the area (Figure 2). Working with the Quechua Aymara Association for Sustainable Livelihoods, a Cusco-based indigenous NGO (known by the acronym ANDES), the communities are using principles of integrated landscape conservation to manage this community-conserved area. Bordering areas of the park link the agricultural landscape with high-mountain native forests, grasslands, and wetlands that play an important role by hosting a rich variety of endemic



Figure 2. The Sacred Valley of the Incas (Peru), whose agricultural landscape was shaped by pre-Colombian Inca cultures, today is managed by Quechua communities who have created El Parque de la Papa, or Potato Park. The traditional patterns of land use that have created this cultural landscape contribute to biodiversity, support ecological processes, and have proven sustainable over centuries. Photo courtesy of Alejandro Argumedo.

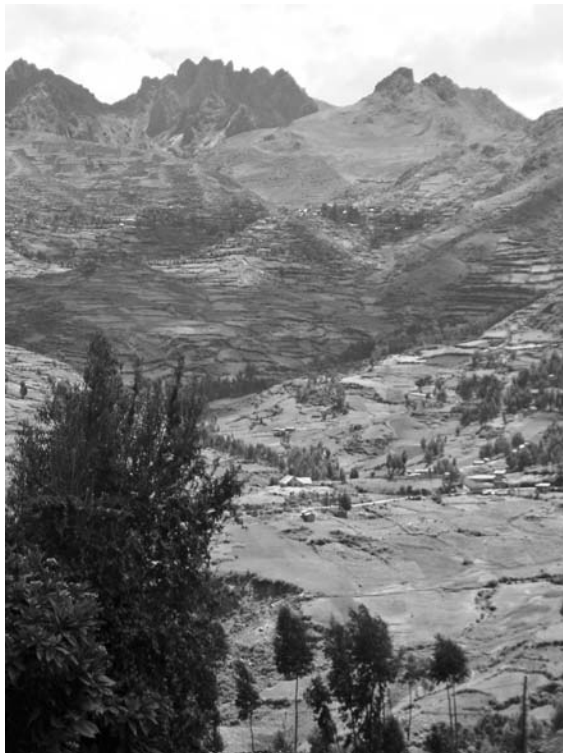
plant and animal species. An important element of the project is to gather traditional knowledge about these practices and secure the intellectual property rights of the indigenous people (Sarmiento et al. 2005).

### North American experience

There is growing recognition of the conservation values of lived-in landscapes in the United States and Canada, and a broadening of protected areas systems in both countries to include a greater diversity of sites and an array of management partnerships. Increasingly, the new areas being added under the auspices of the U.S. National Park Service (USNPS) encompass lived-in landscapes, whose management depends on partnerships (Brown et al. 2003). Called “nontraditional units” or “partnership areas,” they include long-distance trails (such as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which spans 14 states), wild and scenic rivers, and heritage areas and corridors. While these kinds of protected areas are familiar in the Northeastern part of the country, with its longer history of settlement and high proportion of privately owned land, they are now found in every region of the United States. This trend can be seen also in Canada, where similar partnership areas are increasingly being designated (Tuxill et al. 2004).

Following are three examples from the United States and Canada that illustrate the importance of partnerships, community engagement, and participatory governance models.

**John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor** (Massachusetts and Rhode Island, United States). The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, listed by IUCN as Category V, was designated by the U.S. Congress in 1986 to preserve and interpret for present and future generations the nationally significant values of the Blackstone Valley (Figure 3). The designation encompasses nearly 400,000 acres located within central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island along 46 miles of the Blackstone River, and includes 24 cities, towns, villages and almost 1 million people within the valley landscape, whose distinctive character was shaped by the American Industrial



Revolution. The heritage corridor designation has three broad purposes: to enhance and protect cultural landscapes and natural resource values, improve public understanding and heritage appreciation, and stimulate community and economic development.

A Corridor Commission for this heritage area provides a management framework to engage the USNPS, the state governments of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, dozens of local municipalities, businesses, nonprofit historical and environmental organizations, educational institutions, and many private citizens in working together to protect the valley's special identity, develop and implement management programs, and prepare for its future (Creasey 2001). The commission has reached out to other institutions and built cooperative linkages to address management issues within the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor such as river water quality and public access for recreation. These and other projects help to create connections among the many environmental, historical, and economic and community values of the landscape.

create connections among the many environmental, historical, and economic and community values of the landscape.

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park** (Ohio, United States). Cuyahoga Valley National Park preserves the rural landscape along twenty miles of the meandering, northward-flowing Cuyahoga River in northeastern Ohio. Established in 1974, the park today includes a complex network of land ownership and management practices. Of the over 32,000 acres in the park, only 19,000 are in federal ownership, with the remaining acreage owned by other public entities, private and nonprofit institutions, and individual private landowners.

Even though agriculture has been an important part of the of the Cuyahoga River valley's history, preservation of "rural landscape" character and values has only recently been recognized as a priority. To ensure the perpetuation of agricultural land use or traditions, the park has proposed a new rural landscape management program called the Countryside Initiative. Working in part-



Figure 3. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (Rhode Island and Massachusetts) is one of 24 national heritage areas in the United States. The valley's distinctive character was shaped by the American Industrial Revolution. Photo courtesy of U.S. National Park Service.

nership with a local NGO with agricultural expertise, the initiative integrates privately supported, economically viable, and environmentally advanced approaches to agricultural practices within a national park setting, and develops markets for locally produced products. Its goal is to sustain the agricultural heritage of the valley in a way that is consistent with best



environmental practices and USNPS rural landscape management objectives, and, through this value-added economic strategy, to preserve the remaining agricultural land and buildings (Debo and McMahon 2001).

**Sahyoue/Edacho: protected landscapes and First Nations** (Northwest Territories, Canada). To the Sahtu Dene people, the two peninsulas of Sahyoue and Edacho on the western shores of Great Bear Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories are sacred sites, used since time immemorial. In this area of 5,587 sq km, the Sahtu Dene continue their traditional land use and lifestyle activities of hunting, trapping, fishing, camping, gathering medicinal plants, and knowing the land. As Susan Buggey writes, the fundamental relationship of the Sahtu Dene with the Sahyoue/Edacho peninsulas is expressed in the continuing cultural meaning, ecological integrity, and biological diversity of the landscape (Mitchell et al. 2005). The association of place and story contained in the narratives sustain Sahtu Dene culture by transmitting language, prescribing behavior, and identifying sacred sites (Buggey 1999). Protection of these sacred sites and the associated story-telling are therefore essential to the continuity of Sahtu Dene culture and livelihood.

The landscape was designated a national historic site in 1996. To afford further protection to Sahyoue/Edacho, the Sahtu Dene community drew upon the powers and processes of the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy (NWT PAS). Sahyoue/Edacho was the first protected area moved forward under the NWT PAS (NWT 1999). Developed collectively by First Nations organizations, governments, industry, and environmental groups, the NWT PAS responds to intensifying threats to territorial lands from mining development and proposed pipelines with a framework for identifying and establishing protected areas.

In a region such as Canada's North, landscape protection needs to be integrated—by means of a participatory process—with community priorities, local planning, economic development, tourism initiatives, and their associated funding sources. Sahyoue/Edacho illustrates how many parties working from the community base may provide a model for cooperative action between native peoples, NGOs, and government in protecting such areas (Mitchell et al. 2005).

## **Conclusions**

The protected landscape approach is a “new face” for conservation. Most fundamentally, the goals for conservation are dramatically expanded from protection of nature and biodiversity to include a broader cultural context and social agenda. For it is within this broader context that a wide diversity of people can find their connection to biological and cultural heritage, and commit to stewardship. These large-scale landscapes are cohesive venues for conservation due to their regional identity, shared history or culture, and shared ecosystem boundaries. These are complex landscapes with multiple values where nature and culture exist alongside human communities, often for many generations. In many cases, the value of the landscape is intimately influenced by the interaction with people over time, and the protection of the landscape requires sustaining these relationships and associated stewardship. It is within these complex and challenging settings that innovative approaches to conservation are being crafted.

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