

The Evolution of the Planning of National Parks and Protected Areas in Romania

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Summary

The value of the natural capital of Romania has imposed early measures of protection, whose evolution can be grouped around the following steps:

1928-1944 – period in which 36 territories are being protected through the “Journals of the Council of Ministers” as natural reservations, national park, monument of nature, reaching 15 000 ha. However, due to the efforts specific of the beginnings, the focus was only on the creation of a legal and institutional incipient frame and on the construction of a limited number of protected areas and almost no attention was given to the administration of the constituted protected areas.

1944-1989 – period in which the measures of protection of the nature were based on the institutional efforts made before the war by renown scientists as Al. Borza or Emil Racovita. In 1972 the number of constituted protected areas reached 190 objectives, with a total of almost 100.000 ha. Unfortunately, the protection measures were resumed only to the declaration of protected areas and almost nothing about their administration.

1990 until today – once the communist era was over, an opening and a bigger efficiency were expected in relation to the creation of a national network of protected areas which would cover the whole diversity of national ecosystems but also concrete legal and institutional measures which would ensure an efficient management of protected areas. But the results proved that these expectations are very difficult to meet.

Keywords

national parks, protected areas, Romania

It is mainly national recognized that Romania has a great and diversified natural potential. This statement is based on the Romanian natural settings which include: mountains, hills, plains, rivers, wet areas and one of the largest delta systems in Europe, The Danube Delta. Due to its geographical position, flora and fauna species interfere bringing northern European elements, subtropical in the south and south-west, dry from the east and oceanic from the west.

Traditional life style of population especially in forestry, agriculture and the lower level of economic development than in other European countries determined a lower exploitation of resources.

Subsequently, this is reflected in keeping the fauna and flora diversity, expressed by large wolves, bears, lynxes chamois populations among other areas of Europe and obviously in the preservation of forest and alpine habitats specific to the Carpathians. Thus, the Romania's natural capital value imposes cross history measurements of protection for its natural heritage.

The diachronic analysis of all measurements and instruments of protection and conservation through the protected area reveals the following stages:

– stage 1928-1944 is characterized by the first formal measures for conservation and protected areas setting up in Romania. During this period, 36 sites, covering almost 15,000 ha, were declared and partially managed as natural reserves, national parks and natural monuments. But, due to the efforts which characterized every starting point, it was focused firstly on the regulations' framework and institutions, on a limited number of protected areas and more or less upon their management.

– stage 1944-1989 –when the former laws for environment protection formulated by scientists as Al. Borza or Emil Racoviță played a key role. Thus, in 1972, the total number of protected sites or elements increased to 190, covering an area about 100,000 ha. Unfortunately, they remained on a

declarative level and less applied into practice, that spoiled and threatened them as vulnerable and fragile sites. Investments for their planning, guarding, conservation and protection missed or were at a very low level. Even though statistics show an increasing in area, the ratio of protected space was only by 0.0042 % from the Romania's total surface, which was insufficient for preservation of the entirely diversity of landscapes or ecosystems of the country.

There were several attempts to setting up of great protected areas- national parks in Apuseni, Călimani, Ceahlău, Bucegi, Piatra Craiului, Cozia, Valea Cernei, Cheile Bicazului, Rodna Mountains, but without results. Meanwhile, small natural reserves were created by the counties authorities, followed by local legislative acts. In many cases, local initiatives for protected areas hadn't a scientific support or studies, they acted just to meet a central request of the communist government or as a local patriotism feeling. They never benefited by a proper management, the aim was to be not to function.

In 1973, the Law no 9 (Environment Law) was adopted. It stipulated the general legal framework for natural monuments and reserves, but nothing for the protected areas management, administration regulations as Poland or Czechoslovakia had at that time.

During this period, the large esteem protected area of Romania were internationally recognized; the reference year was 1979, when Retezat and Pietrosul Rodnei were designated as Biosphere reserves under UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program. Although this fact could improve their state they remained out of any proper administration.

– after 1990s stage – the communist collapse opened a new era for a real protection which emphases new laws configuration, new types of management and a national network for conservation able to satisfy all specific environment needs of the natural Romanian heritage. The aims were difficult to be achieved and the positive results are still expected. One of the main difficulty was related to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of measurements required in conservation by institutional actors and mainly by The Waters, Forests and Environment Ministry. Thus, only in 1997 was sett up a Department for Biodiversity Conservation which main mission was that to coordinate and manage of all activities about conservation in protected areas.

The natural capital value of Romania was once again international recognized by the Danube Delta inclusion (over 50% of its area) as Ramsar Site in the World Natural Heritage, in 1991. In 1992, it was named Biosphere Reserve. It is a paradox here, meanwhile at the international level it represents a large space for protection, inside country several wet areas benefit of real conservation program.

As a result that Romania has adhered and ratified the Convention for Biological Diversity (at Rio), in 1996, with the financial support of the World Bank was realized "The national strategy and action plan for biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization of its components in Romania" which plans on the short, medium and long terms all activities to fulfill the Rio de Janeiro Convention. In 1995 the Environment Law (no 137) was adopted, a law which also includes regulations for nature conservation, protected areas and recognizes all previous protected sites without exception of acts, law, decision's stipulations etc.

Thus, today, the Protected Areas Network includes 579 protected sites (besides 13 national parks) which represents 4.8% in Romania surface (1.140.590 ha). Three of them in the UNESCO MAB program were declared as Biosphere Reserves: Retezat, Pietrosul Rodnei and the Danube Delta. The last one belongs to the World Heritage and as Ramsar site – wet zone of international importance.

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